

## Cultural Amalgamation of Love and Marriage from Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice*

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### Abstract

Love and Marriage has always played a prominent role through the novels of Jane Austen, specially “*Pride and Prejudice*”. Book adaptations have always been under the eyes of criticism. This paper is devoted to juxtapose the Indianized version of the novel, directed by Gurinder Chadha, titled “*Bride and Prejudice*”. The concept of love and marriage are compared closely in both the movie and the novel to represent the blending or amalgamation of both the Indian and Western culture.

**Keywords:** Love, marriage, social status, culture, women, relationships.

### Introduction

Fiction (Latin ‘Fingere’) in its more restricted sense means narratives drafted in prose (either novel or short story). It need not always be reservedly apparitional. Sometimes it is used as a metonym to novel. Novel, on the other side came into prominence in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Unlike fictions, novel’s grandeur lies in the numerous heterogeneities of its characters, intricate plot and profuse background.

Adaptations exerts to either suit the entertainment industry or to modernize or modify a less known work. As people spend immense time watching audiovisual media, it has an important role in shaping the lives of the audience. It is somehow not easy to adapt a literary work. The

scriptwriter experiences many sticky wickets. The insertion and omission of situations and characters and the conflicting outlooks of viewers between reading and watching are the few underlying crisis. Literature has always enkindled filmmakers. According to Westbrook “between a remake and an adaptation, the former being a film based on previous film, while an adaptation points to a literary source” (Albrecht- ‘Crane and Cutchins 27). Adaptations are retelling the stories with a new perspective of a particular reader. There is an likeness with aberration from the original work. If an adaptation is made after a certain period of time or after a decade, the attitude of the audience changes. It gives a chance to think over the plot from a different angle.

The association between film making and literature is unending. The Bible itself is the greatest muse for many successful films in Hollywood. Many movies which have been adapted from books were blockbusters give people a chance to see their characters all alive. They can watch their favourite characters walking, talking and interacting.

But many a times, book adaptations are criticized rather than appreciated from those who have read the book and expect a lot from the motion picture. It is not actually easy for a director to convert a book into a movie. He has to go through the text several times. But there is also a brighter side to things where these movies can be enjoyed by people who rarely read books. It can also diminish the geographical, cultural and language barriers. Films with subtitles are more attainable to a wider audience. Often films are not able to do full justice to a book. The filmmakers restraint the whole book into a 2 ½ hour movie. They fail to bind together the integral parts the book into their visual art.

“Pride and Prejudice” by Jane Austen is exercised with all the elements of a novel. It has been the most filmed novel from her collection. The novel presents a benevolent and retained English social order and the confined outlook of the upper-class society. The novel is about Elizabeth Bennet and all her marriageable aged sisters whom their mother is trying hard to find desirable grooms. The whole plot revolves around complicated relationships and the luxurious upper-class society of England during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, the time when Romantic Movement dominated not just English literature, but also French and German. The approach towards the work is a gentle satirical humour without any discourse or grandiloquence.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen takes a keen interest with superficial details and day to day affairs in the lives of the upper-class people who never interact with anyone outside their circle. The narration of each event is in a subtle method with no agitated or frantic language or scene in the novel, even the elopement of Lydia is discussed gently. Jane Austen used the side themes spinning around the main plot with a logical use of sentiments, unlike her contemporaries. There is no deprival of any characters as the plot is level-headed.

Let us now focus on the Indian adaptation of Austen's "*Pride and Prejudice*" which was adapted as "*Bride and Prejudice*" by Gurinder Chadha, who through her movies reconnoiter the lives of Indians in the UK. "*Bend it like Beckham*" (2002), *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) are just few of the many to mention.

Gurinder Chadha, director of *Bride and Prejudice* comments:

"I chose to base the film on "*Pride and Prejudice*" because it was my favourite book at school and I knew Jane Austen's themes were alive in modern day India. I wanted to show that for women all over the world there is still that pressure to get married and that some how you're not complete until you do so. Whereas Austen was exploring class distinctions, I wanted to modernize and Indianize the story and at the first impressions we make of each other culturally around the world. (Interview with Subhash. K. Jha).

Chadha sticks to the plotline of the novel and clings to the crux of the original work. Not only the story but the whole characters were Indianized by her. The director recreates the eighteenth-century English society into an Indian Punjabi Culture as a tribute to Hindi cinema and Hollywood musicals. The characters were selected with a perfection. On one side Martin Henderson plays the role of the arrogant Darcy, Aishwarya Rai leads the role of Elizabeth Bennet. The Bennets become a middle-class Punjabi family, Bakshis. Like many Indian family concept, here also we can see the Bakshis yearning to get their daughters married to wealthy NRIs.

The primary elements of the movie "*Bride and Prejudice*" are romance and comedy with sufficient amount of song and dance sequences with colourful and vibrant setting just as the Bollywood audience prefers. The word 'Prejudice' in the movie "*Bride and Prejudice*" is more applicable to the central characters Darcy and Elizabeth. Darcy is seen prejudiced about India and its intricate culture. He stereotyped India as chaotic and confusion. We find him

reluctant to start a business in India as he thinks them as “poor”. This is actually a common misconception among the Westerners. They believe that the streets are dirty, crowded with people and stray dogs and cows. Darcy and his friend also came up with the same notion.

Lalitha changes the whole delusion of Darcy with her bold and charismatic nature. Unlike the typical Indian women who are often subordinated in a patriarchal society, Lalitha and her sisters were exceptions. They were highly educated and talents with good looks. It is Lalitha who refined Darcy to appreciate the real India. We can see a humbler and meeker Darcy by the end of the story in an Indian attire and Tilak on an elephant as a groom, madly in love with Lalitha and ready for acculturation.

## **Love and Marriage**

Love is always seen as a strong emotion we feel for someone. It is not just the intimate feeling you feel to someone but also the passionate and emotional closeness in familial ties and religious devotion. Love and romance are the most prominent themes in Jane Austen’s novels such as *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*. She often ironically presented the reliance of young girls in courtship and marriage for cordial benefits and financial stability. Love and Romance are often followed by courtship in Austen’s works to the holiness of marriage.

Marriage is a public and cordial coming together or legal contract between two individuals. There are many reasons for marriages, mentioning some are emotional, economical, devotion and lust. In India, marriages are considered sacred. The concept of arranged marriage is more prevailing in the mindset of Indian society and is intended to be made in heaven. For Indian parents with more than one daughter, marriage is the apical on their heads. The same ideology is used by Chadha in most of her movies, especially, “*Bride and Prejudice*”. The wedding she represents is replica of a big fat Punjabi wedding. To make it realistic, the whole street is invited to join the on-screen carousal. Chadha gives utmost importance to the settings and costumes to connect it to Indian audience. The whole lane is decorated to make it realistic.

In both the novel “*Pride and Prejudice*” and the movie “*Bride and Prejudice*”, Darcy and Elizabeth (or Lalitha) get married to each other after falling in love and knowing each other

well. A marital relationship is based on three integral constituents. The first one is a physical attraction or sexual allurements. The second one is the relationship between the couples to make up a family apart from their interest. The third one is the relationship where the two-person come to know each other and perceive their strengths and flaws together. The relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth in “Pride and Prejudice” and Darcy and Lalitha in “Bride and Prejudice” is based on the third one. They understand one another to the core.

The prominence is given to marriage with purpose like wealth, status, convenience and love in both the movie and novel. In 18<sup>th</sup> century, marriages were for raising one’s economic status and public figure and very uncommonly for love. For many of Austen’s characters, marriage was a way to solve their financial instability. In a way Austen’s novels “allow us to prove the complicit relationship between patriarchy and capitalism in transitional societies” (Rajan 2005:11). Jane Austen through her novel “Pride and Prejudice” mirrors the realities of marriages. They are not always perfect and the nuptial knot is not enjoyed forever by all. One among the list is the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet.

In both “Pride and Prejudice” and “Bride and Prejudice”, we can see both the mothers hoping to get their daughters married off to wealthy men. Even though, both the movie and novel are an amalgamation of Eastern and Western culture, matriarchal feelings are similar fighting all geographical and cultural differences. As Mrs. Bennet says: “If I can see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield... and the others equally married, I shall have nothing to wish for” (9). The same is the concern of Mrs. Bakshi in the movie.

The movie “Bride and Prejudice” begins and ends with vibrant and colourful Punjabi wedding ceremonies. Chadha herself is from a Punjabi family who love splendor and grandeur in their festivals and celebrations. As a diasporic director, she blows off each scene of the wedding ceremony with picturesque setting like a big carnival and music and dance.

Both the novel and film represent three archetypes of love initiating to marriage; Lydia and Wickham [Lakhi and Wickham]; Jane and Bingley [Jaya and Balraj] and Darcy and Elizabeth [Darcy and Lalitha]. The love and marriage of Elizabeth and Darcy is entirely different from the other two couples. The love between Jane and Bingley [Jaya and Balraj] is passionate and from the beginning they shared the same monotonous feeling. On the contrary side, the marriage between Lydia and Wickham [Lakhi and Wickham] after the elopement is a kind of

forced one to save the family from disgrace. Elizabeth and Darcy [Lalitha and Darcy] marriage case is a bit complex one in the whole plot. They don't get attracted to each other at the initial stage and were prejudiced to their thoughts. It is after a long roller coaster ride of ups and downs and dramatic emotions; they share a mutual feeling of respects and affections.

## Conclusion

Wiping off all the cultural and geographical differences, both Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" and Chadha's "Bride and Prejudice" present and share more or less the similar aspects of both love and marriage. Gurinder Chadha has done a fair justice to the themes by collaborating both the eastern and western cultures together and maintaining the true jest and crux of the novel. The storyline of 18<sup>th</sup> century English society is presented as a colourful Indian Punjabi society in the streets of Amritsar. Apart from all the barriers of history and geography, both the novel and movies are closely connected with the concept of love and marriage.

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## **Author's Bio**

Luna Johny is a Post Graduate in English Language and Literature, working as an Assistant Professor in Kristu Jyoti College of Management and Technology, Kerala. 8 years of teaching experience played a vital role in shaping her thoughts and views in regards to her academics. She is skilled in digging deep into the various nuances of English language and establishing how it has a profound and intricate effect on culture. Her works and research towards how culture influences the psychological and philosophical aspects of human life is insightful. Her career is inclined towards enriching young minds with the valued treasures of literature.