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## **Bride And Prejudice As An Indian Film Adaptation Of The Famous Novel Pride And Prejudice By Jane Austen**

What makes the ideas of love, marriage and relationships universal? These ideas are relevant to all cultures around the world. All humans are capable of love and create relationships, whether they are familial or romantic. Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* is a modern adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and explores the enduring themes of love, relationships and marriage in the twenty-first century. The film uses the interracial relationship between Lalita and William Darcy to discuss differences in race, tradition and cultural imperialism.

Jane Austen's acclaimed novel *Pride and Prejudice* is set during the Regency period in England, where marriage is essential in order to gain financial security and social status as a woman. The book follows the story of the middle-class Bennet's and their five daughters, with their sole purpose in life being to marry off their daughters to successful men. The modern adaptation *Bride and Prejudice* takes place in Amritsar in India, and follows a similar plot to the Austen's original, with Mr and Mrs Bakshi frantically seeking the perfect, wealthy husbands for their four beautiful daughters. However, their eldest daughter Lalita, is intent upon marrying at her own choosing, for love and an emotional connection, rather than wealth and social status. She endures a number of hopeful suitors, but the prideful American William Darcy is unlike many others she's met. Writer and director Gurinder Chadha is renowned for focusing on Indian women reconciling their culture and traditions with modern day living.

In the film, Lalita embodies Elizabeth's strong values of independence, intelligence and feminism. Her views and opinions about the world she lives in are incredibly modern. Lalita Bakshi is introduced to the audience as the most intelligent and sensible of the four sisters. Unlike her sisters, she is hesitant about the idea of an arranged marriage and is not fond of the superficiality behind it. Marriage is an important aspect in both Regency England and the contemporary small-town India where the film takes place. Both mothers of the Bennet and Bakshi family were eager to wed their daughters to suitable and affluent men, as it was the only ways for their families to gain social status. Lalita's resistance to an arranged marriage is evident in a scene with Mr. Kohli, a comical adaptation of Mr. Collins. Mr Kohli enters the Bakshi household only to brag about his wealth in America and to eat with his mouth full. The family at the table are tense by Mr. Kohli's peculiar character. He reveals to the family that he is in India because "As they say, no life without wife." The sisters snicker at his remark as Lalita sighs and rolls her eyes at his impertinent character. The scene cuts to an amusing musical number called "No Wife Without Life" with Lalita and her sisters, singing about wanting to marry a man that she loves, and not wanting to be a 'trophy wife'. The song opens with a mid-shot of the sisters mocking Mr. Kohli's character as Lalita lays in her bed, rolling her eyes in disgust. The sisters dance to the song, following Lalita around the house making fun of Mr. Kohli's intent to marry her. Her facial expressions and the tone of her voice convey her thoughts and opinions of the superficiality of arranged marriages. Lalita smirks as she joins her sisters, singing "I don't want a man who's crude and loud, who wants a pretty wife to make him proud". The sisters smile in agreement.

Culture and religion are factors that are still heavily influential on relationships in modern-day

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society. Differing cultural backgrounds can propose a challenge to a romantic relationship, as well as the inflicting opinions of family. In the film, Chadha explores the impact that the clashing cultures and expectations can have on a relationship. In *Bride and Prejudice*, the main challenge other than wealth is the cultural divide between American Mr. Darcy and Lalita of Indian heritage. Through their relationship as people from two different cultures, the film conveys the treatment of Indians and their culture by the West. The audience's first impression of Mr. Darcy is supported by his prideful yet arrogant attitude and personality. At the first wedding party, he quietly stands to the side of the room with a nonchalant expression, with his hands to his sides, and observes the guests dancing, almost as if he is looking down at the people that are inferior to him. In a later scene, Darcy asks Lalita to show him traditional Indian dancing, and makes a rude and racist comment mocking her cultural traditions, offending Lalita. The camera closes up to Lalita furiously making her way down the stairs, already in disbelief of his arrogance. Darcy smirks - "Listen, I'm a hopeless dancer but this just looks like you're screwing a light bulb with one hand and pet the dog with the other." Lalita scoffs, clearly offended by his uncivilised and impolite manner. He is ironic and arrogant by comparing traditional Indian dancing to simple everyday tasks. Lalita, her prejudice against Darcy now heightened, replies to him saying - "I think you should find someone simple and traditional to teach you to dance like natives." Darcy's lack of respect towards Lalita's culture and traditions further develops her preconceived prejudice towards him. This scene resembles Mr. Darcy's rude behaviour in the novel at Sir William Lucas's ball, where he makes a comment about the act of dancing only being done by a polished society. Sir William attempts to engage in small talk with Mr. Darcy when he makes this remark - "It (dancing) has the advantage of also being in vogue amongst the less polished societies of the world; every savage can dance. Mr. Darcy's attitude towards dancing is juxtaposed with the setting of the ball and social etiquette. He compares dancing to something a savage can do, and claims that the Lucas's are uncivilised, when in reality he is the one that is uncivilised. *Bride and Prejudice's* William Darcy

Love is a key theme in *Bride and Prejudice* and is explored through the interracial relationship of protagonists Lalita and Mr. Darcy. The film embodies the novel's message of finding your equal, and someone who holds similar values to yourself. Throughout the film, like Elizabeth, Lalita holds a preconceived prejudice against Darcy for his arrogant and rude behaviour, and they both hold prejudices against each other's cultures at the beginning. However, her views and feelings towards him begin to change through further interactions between them. Chadha portrays the character development of the protagonists through their appreciation of each other's culture and mutual understanding. As they spend time with each other in America, they begin to develop a deeper and emotional connection. By the end of the film, at Jaya and Balraj's wedding, Darcy appears into the scene, smiling and playing traditional Indian drums, conveying his new appreciation for Lalita and her culture. A close-up shot of Lalita is shown with her smiling, as she slowly runs up to Darcy. Darcy looks up at the Bakhsi family for a moment, and they are shown smiling and celebrating in approval, highlighting that he now feels included in the culture. The couple embrace in a hug, as they are content and have both found their equal.

It is evident that through its focus on the complexity of interracial relationships, *Bride and Prejudice* explores the enduring themes of love, relationships and marriage. It is a modern adaptation that successfully embodies the key ideas and themes of the original, and presents them in a way that is relevant to a modern audience. Director Gurinder Chadha's cultural approach on the timeless classic delves into the modern day challenges of cultural divides and social status on romantic relationships, whilst still keeping true to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

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