

***Bride and Prejudice: A Feminist Perspective***



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To my loving father, Rasmus Torvik, who after getting the diagnose cancer in 2005, have had several surgeries and suffered under the hard treatment of chemo therapy and lately also radiation therapy. Even so, he has still found the strength to encourage me and believe in me.

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## Norsk Presentasjon av Masteroppgåva *Bride and Prejudice*; a Feminist Perspective

I denne tesen har eg sett på likskapane mellom kvinners situasjon i India i dag i forhold til den historiske bakgrunnen til dei tre landa: India, Storbritannia og USA, gjennom filmen *Bride and Prejudice* som er produsert av den Indisk/Engelske filmprodusenten Gurinder Chadha. Ho har teke for seg eit vanskeleg tema gjennom Bollywood sjangeren Masala film, som er veldig lett og leikande og full av ironi. Eg har vidare samanlikna filmen med Jane Austen sin roman *Pride and Prejudice*, eller på norsk *Stoltheit og Fordom*, og sett kva innflytelse den postkoloniale feminismen har på Chadha sin versjon. Gjennom ulike diskusjonar og tema eg har vore innom i denne tesen, har eg funne at der er store likskapar mellom korleis kvinner vart behandla på Austen si tid, og korleis kvinner vert behandla i India i dag. Det syner at Chadha har sett fingeren på kor viktig det er at kvinner i frå alle grupper i India får den hjelpa dei treng til å få ei god utdanning og ein betra livssituasjon. Eg har og funne at gjennom å bruke denne Bollywood sjangeren har Chadha funne ein måte å nå den vestlege verda si ulike kulturbefolkning på, slik at problematikken vert tydeleggjort for alle utan at det vert for vanskeleg å forstå kva denne går ut på.

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## Introduction

Gurinder Chadha's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice, Bride and Prejudice* from 2005 is far from the first made by a film producer, but it has captured views on women and society that are new and different from other adaptations. I choose to view Chadha's adaptation as a reinvention of Austen's work in a different historical and cultural setting which offers different social and cultural challenges, in this case, especially, the situation for women in India. Whether one should call it an adaptation or a reinvention is an interesting question. There are after all many different ways of adapting a novel to the screen. According to Robert Stam there can be several views on a film adaptation, all of them based on the viewer's own taste and preferences:

the notion of the fidelity of an adaptation to its source novel does contain its grain of truth. When we say an adaptation has been "unfaithful" to the original, the term gives expression to the disappointment we feel when a film adaptation fails to capture what we see as the fundamental narrative, thematic, and aesthetic features of its literary source(Stam p. 54).

Whether this film adaptation is faithful to the novel or not is a good question, and I think it is important to establish an understanding of what the film is trying to convey. Adapting Austen's world into a modern Indian world and placing two different film industries into the production has made a unique product. The Bollywood film industry is quite different from any of the western film industries, like Hollywood and the BBC, being both religious and Asian in its expression. Their films are often a combination of drama, romance, musical, fairy tale, and thriller. These kinds of films are called Masala films since they are a mix of many genres. Masala is actually the name of an Indian mix of spices but is also used to define this special film genre. Chadha's own film production company, based in England, carries the British inheritance from the BBC as educational, informative and entertaining, and is culturally freer than Bollywood with respect to feminist interpretations and views. These two

elements combined, together with some Hollywood film moments, produce a new genre focused on reaching a multicultural audience. One could perhaps call it a new kind of Masala film for a Masala audience since it is a mix of Bollywood, Hollywood and the BBC.

I will look at Gurinder Chadha who as film producer and director has started to put her mark on the world by giving the Indian woman a face and a platform to be heard, and to give the subaltern a voice to protest against unfair treatment. Since childhood she has had a strong sense of justice and a mind to apply it on her self and her surroundings. She is Indian, brought up and educated in England and married to a Japanese American man. These circumstances have given her the possibility to see things in a different light than most, and she has taken this possibility and platform and made use of it in her films and documentaries.

When considering the fact that Chadha, in *Bride and Prejudice*, has chosen an American male protagonist, an English villain, and an Indian female protagonist, and on top of that made the world their tumbling ground, it is clearly a fresh attempt at reinventing Austen's novel in a modern, multicultural world. A love story of three continents is hereby introduced as a means of discussing differences and similarities between the characters and the continents represented.

Looking at women's rights in a modern society, one might find it difficult to see similarities between what it used to be two hundred years ago and how it is now. In the film *Bride and Prejudice* this is explored through a reinvention of Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*. The film director and producer Gurinder Chadha has given Austen's world a new perspective and a new possible meaning through a modern feminist and postcolonial view.

Placed in the twenty-first century, two hundred years after Austen wrote the novel, society has changed. One no longer speaks of social difference between the upper class, merchant class or middle class in a British context. Money is just as important as ever but now other cultural differences are more evident. To some extent pride has been transferred

from social status to national status and to the question of whether one has money. Whether one has new money or old money is of less importance than before, since people of higher class are in trade themselves in order to earn their income, and newcomers on the market are of great importance if they are successful.

Darcy and Lalita are from two different cultures and nations, but their nations share a similar past. Lalita living in India, a nation that is in financial growth, is proud of her nationality and independence. The country attracts the interest of foreign companies because of its tourist attractions and culture. Darcy, an American hotel mogul<sup>1</sup> who wants a share of this financial feast, takes pride in his nation's freedom but lacks understanding of the Indian culture and its ways. In contrast these two characters are very different from the original Elizabeth and Darcy. I will look at and discuss who is proud and who is prejudiced. Both show pride but Lalita more so than Darcy. Prejudice is also something Lalita exhibits. It seems like the roles of the novel have been changed in this new invention, and one question is: Whether Darcy has received a more modern and submissive role while Lalita has become more aggressive in exhibiting both pride and prejudice.

In Chadha's version of *Pride and Prejudice*, which can be viewed as a postcolonial feminist fairytale, the women seem stronger and more reflective than the men who seem intellectually weaker. This is where Chadha's feminist view becomes visible. It is no longer the man's prerogative to be the hero and save the day, the woman has her share of the heroic moment. Even Mrs Bakshi has a sense of social understanding which is much stronger than that of Mrs Bennet in the novel. The gender issue is also discussed in and through the different scenes between the women just like Austen lets her female characters discuss gender issues of their time. I will in this context look at the different voices of both feminine resistance and feminine submission that the film displays.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Mogul is a Hindi word and is here used on an American.



Mr Kholi, though undoubtedly a clownish character in the film, is the link between India and America for the Bakshi family. He stands for all the things that many Indian people dream of when it comes to success and financial freedom, but at the same time he disrespects his own culture. He is everything that Mr Bakshi and his daughter Lalita despise. He is consistent in his pursuit of a wife though not very consistent in his affection. Chandra who becomes his wife shocks her friend by her choice though she only does what is normal for a woman in her position. Chandra's role is important when looking at women's place in the Indian society and I will look at how she shows the dilemma that Indian women have to live with even in a modern society.

An historical background to the current postcolonial world shows how colonialism has changed how the continents interact with each other. Gender and place according to the two different cultures, American and Indian, have received new meaning and stand as a background to many of Lalita and Darcy's discussions. I therefore think it is important to have a look at the similarities between the two earlier colonies, though according to Sara Mills the colonial power had different approaches to each when it comes to the question of race. Mills writes: "The situation in the so called 'white' colonies such as Australia, Canada and the USA clearly differs from the colonisation of other countries such as India and Africa." (Mills p. 6). In America they started small white merchant colonies, while in India and Africa the East India trade company started to buy and take over land in order to start their Irish based plantations, and changed the laws as their Christian right and in that way superior to the uncivilized gentiles. (Samson p.42).

The issues and questions I have briefly mentioned here will then in my conclusion give the answer to how this adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* can change how people view the culturally mixed world in which they live.

# Chapter 1

## Jane Austen, Gurinder Chadha and Feminism: a Dialogue in Bollywood

### 2.3 Jane Austen, Bollywood and the Importance of Place

Jane Austen's stories are in many ways as ironic and amusing as the film genre that Bollywood represents. Her characters are strong, colourful and intense, and their feelings and behaviour are highly visible to the reader. The reader is being led from the beginning by the author to sympathise with the main character, and not until the end do we get to see a change of heart, and how silly and misled he or she has been in his/her actions. The reader may find him or herself feeling the same frustration and anger, joy and happiness as the hero or heroine does.

Austen wrote only about families of the middle and upper classes in small villages in the countryside. She never ventured beyond England's borders either in real life or in her writing, and she only very briefly mentioned the other continents in short comments made by her characters in some of her novels. The Australian Austen scholar John Wiltshire, in his book *Jane Austen: Introductions and interventions* (2003), discusses some of her novels and the effect they have on today's readers. In Chapter Ten, 'Jane Austen's England, Jane Austen's World', he discusses Austen as a national writer, an isolationist, who through the later colonisation period became a well known writer whose reputation rivalled even that of Shakespeare. He writes: "Austen is the only British novelist of her time whose books are taught in colleges and universities around the world" she is "increasingly understood to be the 'canonical' British author, who, as nineteenth century critics often claimed, rivals Shakespeare in her naturalness and dramatic qualities, if not in the compass and variety of her art" (Wiltshire p. 111).

The fact that Jane Austen is still so well known and popular among both young and old readers today could be attributed to the several movies that have been made from her novels, but that would be simplifying matters. As Wiltshire mentions, her novels are after all taught in colleges and universities all over the world: "...after two hundred years, Austen remains the only novelist of her time whose books are still widely available and read" (Wiltshire p. 111)<sup>2</sup>. Another more pressing idea that comes to mind when looking at why Austen is so popular could be that she writes about forbidden love, a love that transcends boundaries made by man, and some times even those made by God<sup>3</sup>. Though, in cases of the last scenario, the actions of the characters who succumb to this love become impure in the sight of some. The idea that one can be allowed to love like Romeo and Juliet, or in this case Mr Darcy and Miss Elisabeth Bennet, is enticing to the romantic soul. In the Bollywood version they transcend the boundaries made by culture and tradition which places it right into the twenty-first century. It seems as though *Bride and Prejudice* has no spiritual or political agenda like many other Bollywood films have, much because Jane Austen in my view never wrote nationalist or spiritual literature. Her novels never claimed to have all the answers to political problems, rather, she addressed problems between male and female in her nearby surroundings and to some extent criticised the class system of her time through her extensive use of irony in the depiction of characters. While she respected her religious background she made amusing and ironic critical remarks against the clergy. In my opinion she did not proclaim Englishness as the main importance of life and culture. John Wiltshire takes the opposite view, however, arguing that Austen's way of writing proclaimed her Englishness and her world as the only culture, thereby giving educators the means "to impress upon their

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<sup>2</sup> One may wonder what the case would be if England had not colonised most of Asia, Africa, Australia and America, and if English had not become the global language that it is. That question, however, will not be discussed in this thesis.

<sup>3</sup> Forbidden love that transcends boundaries made by God is shown by Lydia and Mr Wyckham in *Pride and Prejudice* shown in the elopement to London where no marriage was performed. Love that transcends boundaries made by man is for example Elisabeth and Mr Darcy's love.

audiences the power and hegemony of that culture. The subliminal message of Austen's work – English culture is culture – in effect dismisses other competitors from the field" (Wiltshire p. 112). If this were the case it would be difficult or impossible to translate the novel into anything but Englishness in whatever language or culture it was placed. In my view, *Bride and Prejudice* is proof that the opposite is absolutely possible. The producer has, in my opinion, taken several ideas from some of Austen's novels like *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey*, which I will discuss later on, and placed them into one film, based on *Pride and Prejudice*, and translated all of it into Indian culture, hereby bringing all of Jane Austen into a different culture than the English.

Up until the 1990's only Hollywood and the BBC had been making films and TV series based on Jane Austen's novels. With *Bride and Prejudice*, however, Jane Austen has been placed in a very different film industry, and a new cultural scene. Bollywood has for many years entertained the people of India through a mix of music, dance, colours, emotion, imagery of visions and ideas, heroes and villains, and mixing reality with spirituality and fable. India's film industry is based in Mumbai<sup>4</sup> and has rapidly grown to become a force to be reckoned with. It has for many years been an industry solely engaged in entertaining the Indian nation. Although India has several languages, the main language spoken and taught in Indian schools is Hindi, and therefore the film industry can reach all tribes in India. People in the Arab world also enjoy the films produced in Bollywood.

Yasmin Alibhai Brown<sup>5</sup>, a well known controversial journalist in Britain who is known for her strong opinions about women, race and religion, claims in a BBC interview in 2006 that the Indian film industry, or rather Indian movies, have played a big and important part in the independence movement. This shows how much power this industry has with the people of India. She says that the Indian movies give the people what they want; comedy,

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<sup>4</sup> The city was earlier called Bombai, but has recently been renamed Mumbai. Bollywood was a spinoff of Hollywood based on the city Bombai's name, and the fact that it was the filmcapital of India.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.alibhai-brown.com/about.php>

horror, romance, heroes, action, music, dancing, and in between all this they often put a political problem. This is all mixed together in one long three-hour movie which goes under the name Masala<sup>6</sup> movies. You can't see an Indian movie today without some of these ingredients in play. Indian movies are also generally very religious, and their culture and religion are clearly evident in everything that the characters do. Those who follow the will of the gods have favour, are beautiful and are generally heroes, while those who break the rules are villains; often Europeans and/or Americans are portrayed as the bad guys. But the films also contain plots that concern people in their everyday lives, appealing to the dreams and wishes of the young generation as well as their sense of fun and adventure.<sup>7</sup> Other things that occur in the Indian movies are the very obvious advertisements for foods and other products in the films. For example; the actor in a scene will suddenly turn and, looking directly into the camera, will hold up a product while saying how wonderful it is, how much it will help in the household or how popular you will be if you use it.

Rachel Dwyer, professor of Indian Cultures and Cinema at SOAS University of London, has authored several books about Indian films describing its history and its style in which costumes and settings are very important. One of her books, *Cinema India* (2002), co-written with Divia Patel, a writer, lecturer, and curatorial assistant to the Indian and South-East Asian Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, addresses the different film genres within Indian film and the point of view from which Indian film makers choose to tell their stories. Many films are based on the period of time in which India was a part of the British Empire, and the situation of the people under the often very strict and unfair rule. The incompetence and cruelty of some British officers and generals, often seen as "kings", in

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<sup>6</sup> Masala is actually a spice mixture which almost literally has every kind of hot spice in it, and gives Indian food its special flavour.

<sup>7</sup> "The plots are often melodramatic. They frequently employ formulaic ingredients such as star-crossed lovers, corrupt politicians, twins separated at birth, conniving villains, angry parents, courtesans with hearts of gold, dramatic reversals of fortune, and convenient coincidences."  
(<http://www.bollywoodworld.com/whatisbollywood/index.htm>) One might refer to William Shakespeare here whose plots comprised these things, almost like a blueprint.

control of the different areas in India, is shown through very lively and often exaggerated portraits which bring out the suffering of the villagers. Some films may also discuss the difficult situation between the Hindus and the Muslims in India, specifically the border conflict between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh which often involves guerrilla attacks on villages along the borders. Like the Western film industries which have portrayed the difficulties and wars in Europe and America during the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the Indian film industry also seeks to educate its audience about its country's past and present issues.

Since India has been under British rule for so long, they might have become just as English as the British. To a certain degree this is correct, but India has kept its own unique style and personality; its Indianness, in a very firm way. In small villages they are still living their lives in the traditional manner, and only in big cities like Mumbai or New Delhi do we find people in the rich upper class who strive towards becoming as English as possible in their lifestyle, or simply Westernised. They are however, as mentioned above, still Indian in their culture. The people of India have been able to continue living their lives as they always have been even though they lived under a foreign culture's rule. Only the rich were able to go to England and get an education during the colonial years, the poor kept on doing what they always had done, farming the land and practising their religion. The minute speech according to the other by Spivak explains the education plan, how to make the Indian people more British, in detail, and shows how successful this scheme was. When the rich newly educated young people returned to India they had been programmed to follow the British way to think and act, thereby justifying British rule.

I will discuss how the film *Bride and Prejudice* captures this Indianness in several of its scenes: the first scenes of the film where we see the workers in the fields, and the city traffic filled with animals and people and cars all mixed together in a cacophony of sounds

and noise, and the scenes where they sing and dance in traditional Indian manner and style. One important scene in this perspective is when the father, by telling a joke to his daughters, shows a strong unwillingness to change and go abroad like his brother in law has done simply because he sees no point in it, in contrast to his wife who entertains ambitions for him and herself in that direction. Though there are great financial opportunities in going abroad he finds it more important to keep their Indian way of life. India is his home and the only place where he feels safe and secure.

Roger Sale who has written the book *Closer to Home: Writers and Places in England 1780 -1830*, has argued that Austen through the novel *Emma* sees the importance and actuality of place (Sale p. 3). While Jane Austen's characters stay firmly within England, however, the film version takes a journey from Amritsar to Goa and back to Amritsar in India, to London England and to Los Angeles in America and back to London and then Amritsar again. That is three continents, and two of them earlier British colonies. I believe that each place brings a certain meaning to the story. Looking at the different places Lalita travels to in the film versus the places that Lizzie goes, even though two continents have been added to the story, I find that there are similarities. The implication I made earlier in the text about Gurinder Chadha bringing in meanings of place from one of Austen's other novels *Northanger Abbey* and even *Emma* and by this bringing all of Austen's work into an Indian and even global context is important here as well.

In my argument the meaning of place is important when looking at the translation from what Whiltshire calls Austen's Englishness or the British way of thinking, into Indianness, that is the Indian way of thinking. I will now take a look at the places Lalita goes while comparing them to the places in the novel and interpreting the meanings that each place has in the story.

Amritsar, Lalita's home town and place of comfort is where the confusion and misunderstandings start, and is the direct transference from Longbourn in Austen's novel. This is her place of comfort and security. Everything is familiar and docile, a place where it is easy to accept women's position in life, and keep to the traditions of her family and surroundings. Things are as they always have been.

Goa, like Merriton and Netherfield, is the place where Darcy and Lalita have the opportunity to get to know each other more intimately, and where Lalita meets Johnny Wyckham. Here the enmity she feels towards Darcy grows because of what Wyckham tells her about him and his family. In this case I find the interpretation of the place a little closer to Austen's other novel *Northanger Abbey*, though this novel is much darker, where the heroine Catherine Moreland goes to Bath. Here, the heroine meets both the villain and the hero in a mix of bathing, parties and balls. It is a place of exhibition and acquaintance much like the Goa scene with bathing and beach partying, and Darcy viewing the hotel he is thinking about buying.

Looking at London, this is a place of waiting, rejection and shame where Lakhi runs away with Johnny Wyckham. It becomes a place of wickedness, like Vanity Fair in John Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress*, but it is also where Darcy actually has his revenge upon Wyckham by fighting him in the cinema, hereby adding a violence Darcy does not possess in the novel. In the novel London is at first portrayed as either a place for the rich and the upper class, or as in Cheapside where the less impressive middle class lives and where no upper class Lady would even dream of venturing; then as a place of denial and rejection as Jane is rejected by Bingley's sister and Mr Darcy.

Later on London becomes the place of chaos and destruction when Mr Wyckham runs off with Lydia to hide there from his creditors and her father. "Where else can they be so well concealed?" (Austen p. 299). It is also the only place used in the film *Bride and Prejudice*



which is the same as in Austen's novel. No other place in the film has such dark connotations as London. In my view there is a possibility here of a slight payoff with an ironic twist towards the British as the old empire from the two previous colonies India and America. One might add that there also is a resolution in London when vengeance, redemption, healing of relationships and a possible hope for something more occurs. This brings in a mode from postmodernism. "...it takes the form of self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement" (Hutcheon p. 1). On the one hand *Bride and Prejudice* criticises England; on the other hand it redeems England. There is an unwillingness to completely turn their backs on their old nemesis. After all, everyone is entitled to change and make amends. In a world of change after the Second World War where nations developed and changed their ideals and philosophies, there had to be a solution and redemption from past faults.

Los Angeles has a double role in the film, it is Pemberly and Rosings Park put together. This is where Lalita starts to like Darcy but also where she finds out what he has done to her sister's chances with Balraj. Darcy's choice to show Lalita the multicultural scene of L.A, is to take her to a Mexican restaurant. This has a positive effect on her, and their romantic sensibilities are awakened since they both see a different and positive side of each-other. At Mr Kholi's wedding Lalita finds out what Darcy has done to destroy her sister's chances with Balraj, her heart is broken and her anger against Darcy is rekindled. The director has chosen to let these two occasions switch places and merge at the same geographical place. In the novel Lizzie is first confronted at Rosings Park with the grim truth of Darcy having spoiled her sister Jane's chances with Mr Bingley. Although his letter frees him of the other charges she has put against him this one thing destroys his chances with her. Only when Lizzie visits his home, Pemberly, her feelings change towards him as she sees his love of culture and art present in each room and the happy situation in which the estate is situated.

She even confesses to this talking to her sister again, that seeing the beautiful grounds of Pemberly has had such an effect on her.

The situations I have described here show how important the meaning of place is to the film and how one can interpret it. The fact that Austen's novel has become relocated to a present day Bollywood is also a part of the whole idea in my view, giving the present viewer a new cultural experience in a global world. It also gives the viewer a new possibility to capture the philosophy of the different cultures, by seeing, in this case, the cultural translation of Englishness into Indianness.

## 1.2 Gurinder Chadha, Feminist and Film Producer

To understand where this version of *Pride and Prejudice* comes from, it is important to have a look at the director, producer and co-script-writer Gurinder Chadha. Her background and work has much to do with the way she works. She is an Indian woman by birth, born in Kenya, Africa by Hindu parents, and married to a Japanese American man, a mix of cultures placed together in one marriage. At an early age she and her parents moved to and settled in England where she went to school. Here she got an education starting her career in Radio before moving to television and later on, film production. In television she directed several award-winning documentaries for the BBC. Through these experiences, she saw the importance of describing and showing to the world what Anglo-Indian women go through on an everyday basis. Through her films she points out the difficulties that immigrants from India, either labour immigrants or economic immigrants, go through when settling in the different countries they migrate to. Television and film are powerful media that can give people an instant understanding of a situation. A film could bring the situation of a closed society in England into focus, giving people on the outside the opportunity to understand what problems such closed societies actually consist of. The fact that Chadha herself is an Anglo-Indian and part of a first-generation immigrant family, has given her possibilities and opened doors for her to show what actually goes on within these closed societies, and has enabled her to paint a more accurate picture than an outsider would be able to produce. There is a frank openness that every situation is portrayed through which seems to give the viewer an instant understanding of the situation.

In an interview made with Paul Fisher, an Australian film critic in Hollywood, she talks of her childhood and how one of her films, *Bend it Like Beckham*, is a portrait of herself as a young girl growing up in a London suburb. Chadha was early on a girl with strong ideas on how she wanted her life to be. She says:

Like my dad has had two daughters. And you know, the story was autobiographical, and I never played soccer, but I always did things differently; I refused to follow the pattern. So like, Jess's mum wants her to cook and be a perfect kind of Indian. I refused to do that. I refused to wear Indian clothes, and I would always get out of cooking. And, guys, you know, whenever guests came, the men would sit at the table, and the women would have to serve them, and I would sit at the table as well. And everybody would be like, you can't do that. And I got away with it, because I was the youngest. But at the same time, I was extremely outspoken, and I used to say, well mum, look, I'm not cooking, you know, it's oppressive. You don't even understand. It's so sexist that you have to do it. And she would be like, "Well, you tell your mother-in-law it's sexist, and you know, you tell your mother-in-law" (Fisher 2003).

The feminism in Chadha's productions is apparent to the viewer through her choice of lyrics, suggestive camera angles, and how each scene is built up. As this interview passage shows, she had a feminist awareness at a very young age and tended to break the rules when it suited her. In her productions it is not an angry dispute, but very frank and sincere and often helped forward by a warm, dry British sense of humour. Chadha uses humour in all her productions, both documentaries and films, and her sense of comedy helps bring her message across to the viewers. It is not a humour merely developed on paper, but a big part of who she is and how she chooses to act and work. This is made visible through the actors interviewed on the set of *Bride and Prejudice* who all express how they enjoy working with her, and how much joy and fun she puts into the production and work. A good laugh is obviously her method of keeping the film set in an optimistic and good mood, making every actor and co worker do their best to make the true meaning of the film come to life, and stay on schedule at the same time. This way of handling her workspace and environment shows a need to develop a new, different workplace where her sex and authority find its place in a true and real way of producing and directing. After all, to be serious is not the same as being grim or angry, or always needing to declare where one's place is in society.

As mentioned earlier Gurinder Chadha has made several films since 1990, both cinema and TV productions. These have all had cultural identity as a theme and also Indian women's situation and problems living in another nation. One of her best known films made in this time period is, as mentioned earlier *Bend it like Beckham* from 2002. This is about a young Indian girl in England who, against her parents will, wants to play football and falls in love with a British boy. She goes against Indian traditions as she struggles to become a part of her society and tries to become her own person. Chadha, because of her background, has an excellent ability to see the many difficulties that Indian women living in the West can encounter. Another of her films, *Bhaji on the Beach* from 1994, also shows this knowledge. It portrays four Indian British women on a trip to Blackpool. There are two older women and two younger women, each with their own problem in life and marriage that comes to the surface, all four on a bus to get away from it all for a while. These kinds of situations have not been commented before much because of the closed society that these women live in. In my view, knowing the cultural code is an important issue when portraying the women in their different life situations within these closed societies. Chadha has offered access to knowledge by acting as the translator and guide, and being the one who opens the doors revealing the truth. It is an important work that Chadha has set herself to do through an open dialogue, to show the world how this closed society actually functions, and that they are not so different after all as the rest of the world might think. By opening up this dialogue she shows how Indians are being treated in British society, and how they feel about themselves in this light, comparing it to how other cultural groups are treated. She also shows their own intolerance for others that do not fit in with their standards and ways. Values like commitment, duty, honour and sacrifice are among the things that are being questioned in her films. Chadha becomes more like the invisible storyteller here though since her audible voice is not heard in her productions or her figure shown in any part of the films. But her intentions are visible and

clear to each viewer of her productions, who from a distance is given a glance into an unknown space and an opportunity to understand without actually being there. David Bordwell writes in his book *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985) that this kind of narration is difficult to prove, but that there are several theories being used today that try to explain the possibility of such a narrator.

Other theories suggest that the source of narration is akin to Wayne Booth's "implied author." The implied author is the invisible puppeteer, not a speaker or visible presence but the omnipotent artistic figure behind the work (Bordwell p. 62).

This implied author or puppeteer is also, according to Bordwell much what I as a viewer construct through my study of Chadha's film. Considering Chadha's background and how she is using it in her work, in my view the theory of an implied author seems to fit.

This film, Chadha says about *Bride and Prejudice*, she wanted to be like the Bollywood movies that she saw as a child and grew up with, but at the same time it should be reaching out to a Western audience as well. This made her choose to bring in Indian song writers who could transform the Indian beat on to the music and still keeps it appealing to the Western ear. The music was then produced by British and American music producers, and song artists like Ashanti who sings the theme song *Take Me to Love*, was brought in. Chadha did not want the film to be totally Bollywood or totally Western, but a blend of the two which would give the film Chadha's special signature. Chadha makes a point of it by saying that she wanted one of the songs, *No Life Without Wife*, and scenes in the film to be like the sleepover scene of the Hollywood film musical *Grease*.

Roger Ebert<sup>8</sup> writes that he does not see this film as a pure Bollywood film, but as a Hollywood musical with Bollywood elements, and goes on to describe what the Bollywood elements are: "Her characters burst into song and dance at the slightest provocation, backed

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<sup>8</sup> Roger Ebert is a well known film critic who on his webpage writes his comments on Indian films and cultural events.

up by a dance corps that materializes with the second verse and disappears at the end of the scene. That's Bollywood." (Eber 2005) The Bollywood strategy of using colour, which means that they simply use any colour and a lot of it, is also an important part of *Bride and Prejudice* that Eber mentions. Each scene is bursting with colour and life, and gives the film a positive and joyous outlook to the viewer, especially the song and dance number in the street, and at the different parties, where all the participants are dressed in different colours and styles to show the diversities of the people. It may also allude to the colourful differences in an increasingly mixed multicultural world where people of different skin colour and race come together like in a salad bowl where every colour is visible and does not blend in a colourless mush. He also mentions the emphasis on the mother and the father, and says that American romantic film heroes and heroines often seem to be orphans while Chadha brings the parents into focus. Here one might add that Austen's characters, Mr Darcy and his sister Georgiana are orphans since their parents died while they were still young. Chadha has given them a mother by making Mrs Katherine de Burgh into Mrs Katherine Darcy. In Indian films parents are very important and show the Indian emphasis on the importance of closeness and being a part of something strong and secure, which the word family induce. Darcy actually comments on this Indian family closeness when he is confronted by Mr Kholi on how he feels Indians have treated him. He thinks it is wonderful that a family could gather like they do and welcome strangers into their home. He comes from a broken home where he hardly sees his mother or sister. In this way Chadha explains the difference between the West's and the Indian way of thinking with regard to the importance of family structure and family life.

Chadha's postcolonial feminism applied to *Pride and Prejudice* gives the male characters of the novel less masculinity than Austen's originals. Austen's Darcy who is a highly masculine character has become a softer man of the twenty-first century. Chadha has made his character weaker than the original placing him almost beneath Lalita's level. He

struggles to be heard and understood with little success. Lalita on the other hand is a tower of strength to her father and the image of virtue and sense. In Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* the man has seemingly become the subaltern who needs the strength and guidance of woman. Austen's Darcy has an underlying insecurity and shyness under layers of masculinity and strength while Chadha's Darcy has an almost feminine softness. When considering Chadha's past as a child demanding her freedom and right to be like the men and sit at the table instead of humbly going to the kitchen helping with dinner preparations, it is not difficult to understand where she gets this ease of placing male and female characters. Chadha places some of this strength into Lalita making her even stronger than the original Elisabeth and giving her the same frankness and self empowerment that Chadha has and had as a young girl. I believe it is important for her through her work to establish her Indianness in the otherwise British environment in which she has chosen to do her work, and where she has had her upbringing. This film production is one more step closer to achieving this goal and to mirror her background and present state in a multicultural society and world.

Having looked at all these different aspects about Chadha, her feminism and her background I believe it is necessary to go further into what kind of feminism and theory that lies behind Chadha's work and thinking in this production or new invention of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.



### 2.3 Feminism in Austen and Chadha

There is a bit of madness in all the female characters in Jane Austen's novels, and as Jane Austen herself had a battle to fight for her own authorship and the right to own her own works one might see her eagerness to portray women's entrapment and feelings within a male dominant world. As she grows in maturity from the early beginnings of her writing, her heroines also mature and become more attuned to themselves and their surroundings.

Elizabeth Bennet, the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*, is one such character. Though Jane Austen lived and wrote a long time before the organised women's movement, she experienced similar frustrations because of her situation as a woman. She also had the means and willingness to portray the problems from a female point of view. Only men had the privilege to write of women and relationships and the social problems up until her time, and therefore the views on these matters were quite ignorant of women's true feelings and understanding.

Hélène Cixous writes in *The Laugh of the Medusa*:

Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies- for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text- as into the world and into history- by her own movement (Cixous p. 2039).

Many feminists regard Jane Austen as a feminist writer capable of portraying womanhood, and so her work has been important in the historical perspective. There are other feminists, though, who have thought of Austen as the opposite of a feminist since she chose marriage as a solution in her novel's endings. Female writers like the Brontë sisters took women's suffering to a much higher level where the marriage solution became of less importance. Gurinder Chadha has taken hold of the first idea, Austen as a feminist, hereby making marriage the main subject. She has chosen to transpose Austen's first novel into the twenty-first century and an alien culture to show how modern and insightful Austen was for

her time, and how her stories can be translated and placed into a modern postcolonial world where borders have changed. Chadha places Austen's heroines into a global setting where women have problems to solve just as much as within their nation, city and family. This is a new situation which feminists have just started to explore. In the women's rights movement all over the world they find that problems have not vanished just because the world has become more modern. They often find that women are struggling even more now; it has just become a global issue instead of a local issue within a nation, city or village. Since people are moving around more freely than before, and choose to live in foreign countries, they bring their cultural and religious traditions into their new situation. For many young women of today this has caused bigger psychological problems. Raised in a different culture than their parents they wish to join their peers of that culture and their ways. This creates a gap between the parents and their children, and forced marriages have become a big problem. Gurinder Chadha takes hold of her fellow Indian women's struggles in society and brings it to the surface. Through several of her films like *Bend it like Beckham* and *Bhaji on the Beach* she focuses on Indian women who struggle with their parents, husbands, tradition and religion within their British communities, and a wish to become free individuals able to follow their dreams in life. In *Bride and Prejudice* Chadha revisits her native land India through the Bollywood genre with music, singing and dancing, and she focuses on the problematic situation for women here showing the viewer that these problems do not only occur in Europe.

The fact that she is one of very few female Indian producers in this field is important. It is in many ways a male-dominated romantic genre where female true feelings are seldom given any attention. Male producers and screen-play writers tend to look at women from the outside, and do not really understand the psychological underlying struggles that women have in the different situations they place them. These male producers become the other, the

outsiders that try to push their way into the uncivilized unknown Dark Continent where they have no understanding of the language spoken, or the traditions that lie behind the female's actions. The female characters may therefore tend to become shallow and unreal like goddesses who barely tread the ground. Chadha brings forth the playful, strong and opinionated Lalita as lively and true. Lalita's emotions come to the surface and her dreams become visible to the viewer. The dream sequel that Chadha has created has made Lalita appear just like any young woman in the West. She is dreaming of a romantic wedding dressed in a white designer dress and running through green British meadows. At the same time, Lalita has her opinions on how she wishes to be treated like a man's equal in every aspect.

The fall of the heroine in the eyes of society because of the power of association is an important aspect to discuss, and also how the author, Jane Austen, has chosen to deal with the theme and its solution. Austen brings forth the unfair situation of women that men never seem to join or share in a similar way. She sees no other solution to women's problematic situation than to make the male hero into a saviour who puts all shame and decorum aside in order to reinstate woman to her elevated position because of his divine love and adoration for her. The woman seems incapable in such a society to reinstate herself to all her former glory by her own deeds or virtue.

Many women through all time have wished to be the other sex because of the status and freedom it would bring, and as William Shakespeare says through Beatrix in *Much Ado About Nothing*: "Yea I were a man.. but one doth not become a man with wishing".(Shakespeare p. 137). However, Jane Austen does not go so far as to make the heroine exclaim such a sentence. To the family in distress the male villain is of course much to blame in the matter, though, to the rest of the world only the Lady in question and her family is blameworthy;

This is a most unfortunate affair; and will probably be much talked of... loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable- that one false step involves her in endless ruin- that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful, - and that she can not be too much guarded in her behaviour towards the undeserving of the other sex (Austen p. 289).

Through Austen's careful description of the drama and the ridiculous comments of the self-important book-learned sister, she manages to show the reader the unfair and brutal reality in which women may find themselves.

Gurinder Chadha chooses to bring Lalita along on Mr Darcy's quest to find the runaway couple. In this way the woman becomes just as much a saviour in the situation as the man. She even gets the chance of revenge by slapping the villain's cheek. The woman has redeemed herself. Annette Kolodny writes in *Dancing through the Minefield* that Elaine Showalter, another female critic who wished to portray women's literary consciousness,

took up the matter of "female literary tradition in the English novel from the generation of the Brontës to the present day" by arguing that, because women in general constitute a kind of "subculture within the framework of a larger society," the work of women writers, in particular, would thereby demonstrate a unity of "values, conventions, experiences, and behaviour impinging on each individual" as she found her sources of "self-expression relative to a dominant [and, by implication, male] society (Kolodny p. 2149).

One can draw a line in this from how the subaltern, which Gayatri Spivak writes of in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, in for example India, not only the women but also the people, need to get an audible voice not only within literature, but also in film as a wider medium within the dominant-male society. Gurinder Chadha both writes and produces a story within a genre that is mostly produced by men in the male-dominant society of India and Bollywood, and she writes herself, woman, into the text of the film, at least in terms of perspective.

Some of the scenes in Chadha's production make use of nudity to show what, in my view, is the difference between the women in their mindsets and where they stand socially. Lakhi wants to wear a very revealing dress which "everyone is wearing in Mumbai"(Chadha 2005, film quote<sup>9</sup>), but she is permitted to wear it to the party; "we want Mr Balraj to look into your sister Jaya's eyes, not your mummy's"(Chadha 2005, fq). Mr Balraj's sister Kieran Bingley is wearing the same kind of dress to the party though, and is the only woman there wearing such a revealing dress. She is a free westernised Indian woman showing her freedom to wear whatever she likes without being embarrassed. The women at the party do not dare to criticise her since she is both rich and powerful. It seems as though women are often the strictest critics of their own sex, hereby establishing the power of the male-dominant view on how women should behave and be treated. Towards women above their own rank, however, they are powerless in this mission.

Another scene displaying a degree of nudity is set by the hotel pool in Goa where Lalita is wearing a full swimsuit while Kieran is wearing a tiny bikini revealing her body to all the men present. While Lalita covers her body after her swim Kieran seems to flaunt herself even more by asking Darcy to put sun lotion on her back. Lalita, though she is a free-spirited woman and wants equality between the sexes, is never shown with little clothes on. The smallest item of clothing is her swimsuit, and even this does not reveal very much. Her prudence and beauty walk hand in hand throughout the film, giving the viewer the idea of what Indians regard as virtuous and good. In this way Lalita is spiritually elevated above Kieran, even though Kieran is rich and has a high social status. This questions Cixous' theory about the importance of revealing the female body physically in the text. I am interpreting the text literally on purpose here in order to show the effect this has on film. Kieran does not get Mr Darcy's attention in the way she wishes but loses it even more through her imprudent

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<sup>9</sup> this will from now on be abbreviated as fq.

behaviour. These two situations, the dress at the party and the bikini and swimsuit by the pool, both question the freedom and liberation of the Western women. Can they really be as liberated and free as they boast of? Situated within a nation where traditionally the female body should be properly covered the Westernised woman receives unwanted attention because of her revealing dress. What becomes a much stronger force of attraction for the man in this film is the presence of a strong minded woman who is not afraid to speak her mind and hold on to her convictions of what is right and wrong. Her body becomes of less importance compared to her mind. The man is forced to change his ideas and to question his own intentions. Chadha, just like Austen, as a feminist then has her focus not on the body but on the mind and soul of women as their true identity and strength, making them able to win the heart and trust of their admirers and keeping their integrity. She in some ways tries to bind these two different aspects of woman together. In the Goa sequence of the film Chadha has chosen to use a well known Black American R&B artist called Ashanti to sing the song "*Take me to love*" which has a very sexually charged text. Ashanti's dress is more like a golden bikini with chains and veils attached to it almost like a belly dancer's outfit. Dancing with an ensemble of bare chested male dancers in jeans, Ashanti comes forth like a sensual golden goddess who has "access to her native strength... her immense bodily territories" (Cixous p. 2044), and who has control over the other sex. This is the only scene where this is brought forward in the film though. Virtue and sensuality compete but they do not merge. Yet a woman's ability to be psychologically strong and wise and sensual at the same time is being hinted at. Both mind and body are important in order to see the beauty and strength of woman. Woman can take control of her own situation through her action and education, using her mind and her body as equal parts in her battle for freedom and equality with men.

After having looked at these different aspects of feminism in Chadha and Austen, I now find the time has come to go further into the text and film and look at the different personas which Chadha has constructed, and the meaning these bring to the story.

## Chapter 2

### *Bride and Prejudice: a Cultural Interpretation*

After having discussed Jane Austen, Gurinder Chadha and feminism in the film *Bride and Prejudice*, it is time to look at the similarities and differences between the original plot and the new plot, and how the original has been translated into a modern and culturally different scene. The story of Miss Elisabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy is loved all over the world much due to colleges and universities around the world bringing Jane Austen's work into their curriculum, and the films and TV series that have been made and broadcast in most countries. Also the theme of forbidden love has made millions cherish the author and her stories. Because of this new cultural variant a new discussion of the plot is due. Looking at the main characters and the nature of their pride and prejudices can shed some light on how the cultural variant explores differences and similarities. The film is of course made to entertain with its irony and easy playfulness, but seen through Austen's novel it shows a deeper level of consciousness. I will now compare the two plots with particular reference to themes of pride and prejudice to deduce these similarities and differences, and how Chadha has placed Indianness into the characters and the plot. The term Indianness that I have chosen to use here is important and will be described and discussed through this chapter.

#### 2.1 Similarities and Differences between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, and Lalita and Darcy

In Jane Austen's England Mr Darcy's pride comes from generations of old money and estates being inherited from generation to generation. Even though it seems as though he does not have a title and is only called Mr, we can assume that his position merely has to do with his family's fortune, or that his title does not have any importance to the story. Lady Catherine de Bourgh provides the answer: "They are descended on the maternal side, from the



same noble line; and on the father's, from respectable, honourable, and ancient, though untitled families" (Austen p. 356). He has the possibility to marry a Lady of high rank, the daughter of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, since they have been meant for each other since birth. According to Lady Catherine "Their engagement is of a peculiar kind", "it was the favourite wish of his mother" (Austen p. 355). The idea that Mr Darcy should marry Miss Elizabeth Bennet is a horror to the de Bourgh family. "Should the walls of Pemberly be thus polluted" (Austen p. 357). Darcy himself says at his first proposal that her family connections were inferior to him and so decidedly beneath his own rank, and that she could hardly expect him to rejoice at such a prospect. The Bennets have family and connections within the merchant business and lawyers who live in Cheapside in London, a place where royalty and people of high rank would never go. That the Bennet family has no fortune to speak of and comprises Mr Bennet, who occasionally behaves in a rude manner, five daughters of which three are very silly indeed and an ill mannered mother with no wit or good social skills are facts that do not help. There is therefore a question of morals and pride that is being tried out in Austen's plot, and whether pride has been mistakenly used instead of a sense of morality, and a good judgement of character.

According to John Wiltshire;

'Connections' means here not just the immediate family of the heroine, but more distant relations: the fact that one of Elizabeth's uncles is an attorney and the other in trade-neither of them positions comfortably within the genteel class. Elizabeth Bennet is not simply an individual, separate from her family. As an unmarried woman particularly she is to an extent at the mercy of her family, whose behaviour, in the eyes of the world, justly, or unjustly, affects her own status and character (Wiltshire p. 6).

Elizabeth's unfortunate situation in having a sister elope with Darcy's worst enemy, Mr Wickham, and one sister trying to be more than she is by trying too hard, shows the impossible situation. To be associated with scandal was a grave circumstance no family of small means or single woman of no fortune at the end of the seventeenth century could ever

hope to be vindicated from. A family or individual, here women were especially implicated, is dependent on having a good name in society and keeping out of any financial disaster, or not getting into trouble by acting shamefully. Lizzie is here a victim of many circumstances as one can see, though she is not the one to act shamefully.

When it comes to social rules one could say that Darcy has every right to be proud and stick to his convictions; "What Darcy in his proposal speech to Elizabeth calls 'the inferiority of your connections' does not refer, as his letter to her makes clear, to their lack of comparable wealth or status, but to their 'total want of propriety'" (Wiltshire p. 6). He also has to see the importance of acting and being polite whatever situation he is in. This is also what Elizabeth accuses him of ignoring saying; "had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner", "your unfeeling behaviour towards others" (Austen pp. 192-193). This is what causes him to rethink his actions, and later on change his ways. The importance of being a gentleman to everyone he meets instead of being proud informs the changes in his behaviour and makes Lizzie see him in a new light. He has changed from being proud into having a good moral sense and seeing people for who they are instead of what they are.

By contrast, the pride issue in the Bollywood film has been projected unto Darcy by Lalita because of a misunderstanding at an engagement party. He is rather insecure about the whole situation and has problems keeping on his new Panjabi soot pants since they keep falling down. He does not dance with her because of this embarrassing situation, and runs away very quickly in order for this not to be discovered. She therefore finds him rude and proud. The American Mr Darcy has a problem with ignorance rather than pride, and this ignorance is not being corrected by his best friend Balraj. The pride issue also concerns their different cultures, American versus Indian ways of thinking and behaving, in contrast to the original *Pride and Prejudice* where their different social status is in question.

Darcy comes to India in order to buy a hotel in Goa for his mother's company. They wish to expand their hotel business and make use of Indian culture to do so. Lalita shows him how prejudiced and ignorant these ideas are through her sharp and intelligent remarks to him.

“Lalita- You said yourself that you're used to the best. I'm sure you think India's beneath you.

Darcy- If I really thought that, then why would I be thinking about buying this place?

Lalita- You think this is India?

Darcy- Don't you want to see more investments, more jobs?

Lalita- Yes, but who does it really benefit? You want people to come to India without having to deal with Indians.

Darcy- Oh, that's good. Remind me to add that to the tourism brochure.

Lalita- Isn't that what all tourists want here? Five-star comfort with a bit of culture thrown in? Well, I don't want you turning India into a theme park. I thought we got rid of imperialists like you” (Chadha 2005, fq)

She shows pride in her nation, something that her family does not reflect at times. Like many other countries in the world India and its culture have been used and exploited by commercial interests for centuries. The East Indian Company founded by the British started off by getting into the tea and spice production in India. Their need or thirst for expansion and financial advantages grew as they got to sell their products all over the world. Eventually, in the mid eighteenth century, they got control of the whole country through the help of the British government. They sent military forces to India in order to help control the workers, who rebelled against the company's harsh rule and the Rajas who wanted their power back. Even after India's independence was reached different companies from other countries wanted their share of the financial benefits of production in a low cost nation. The knowledge of India's history and the problems with foreign companies later on in India has made Lalita anxious to hinder more exploitation through companies like Darcy's. This issue of nationalism will be dealt with more thoroughly in Chapter Three in relation to pre- and postcolonialism.

The prejudice theme in *Bride and Prejudice* is much more relevant than the pride issue since we are now dealing with lack of knowledge towards one another's different cultures. In

a way we see it already in the pun in the film title where the word “Pride” has been replaced by the word “Bride”. One might say that pride is closely linked to marriage in the Indian culture especially in relation to women. An Indian woman has her pride in the financial situation she marries into, while an unmarried woman is seldom respected by her community since she has no rich prospects to be connected to. Throughout the film brides and weddings are very much in focus, and show the importance of finding a spouse with the right connections<sup>10</sup>. Cultural differences play a large part in this film, and prejudice has a way of influencing the ways in which the different cultures view each other. Darcy shows a strong tendency to air his prejudiced ideas quite openly whenever he meets Lalita and her family. He reacts to the idea of having an arranged marriage, and shows no tact in telling Lalita how hopeless he thinks the Indian way of dancing is: “isn’t it like screwing a light bulb with one hand and petting the dog with the other?” (Chadha 2005) fq. The film puts Americans and rich tourists in a bad light just like Jane Austen’s novel starts off by putting the upper class characters in a bad light. They are all represented as tactless and unfeeling towards others than themselves, much like Lady Catherine de Bourgh who is extremely self-absorbed and blames everyone else for being selfish and unfeeling.

In the film, Mr Darcy is at first portrayed as being the prejudiced one. He has no idea what he is talking about coming to a nation he has never visited before. His thoughts of the place are partly given him by Balraj and his sister Kiran Bingly who are part of upper class society in England, ironically conveyed in that they claim to have their residence close to the Queen’s palace. Darcy does and says everything that any unknowing traveller in India has done and said over the years, and makes his tactless remarks more than once. It is a story of cultural differences that is old and familiar.

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<sup>10</sup> The Indian Author Vikram Seth writes about these issues in his novel *A Suitable Boy*.

Soon we find Lalita's prejudices just as strong and wrong as Darcy's are. She bases most of her thoughts and assumptions on misunderstandings and hurt feelings. Just like the original protagonist, Lizzie, she is not aware of the realities behind Darcy's actions, as in his dealings with Mr Wyckham, and because of her already mistaken assumptions, she accepts the real villain's lies as truths. She is a strong, outspoken girl who shocks her society by speaking her mind in a way that is unusual according to tradition. Like Austen's Lizzie she speaks her mind before checking the facts. She is well educated, but foolish in her own way because of her pride and sense of self-righteousness. She sees herself as a philanthropist wanting to distribute the wealth of the privileged few among the many poor. Wyckham puts her feelings into words when they walk together on the beach in Goa saying: "If you have money you will never get to see the real India" (Chadha 2005, fq). He also flatters her by saying: "You people here have got your priorities sorted" (Chadha 2005, fq). As she falls in love with Wyckham's charm Darcy becomes wicked and cruel in her eyes.

Looking at pride, it is important to see the Indian pride and the American pride and their differences, since Darcy in the Bollywood version obviously has his pride and Lalita and her family have theirs. The Indians pride themselves in their traditions, like the dance they attend where they use sticks, and their religious rituals. One can also mention Mr Bakshi's pride in his motherland and in his farm. As mentioned earlier, a woman has her pride in marrying well, and this elevates her family as well. The American pride as seen in the film is shown first through a contempt towards the much simpler Indian lifestyle. Darcy is annoyed by the bad internet connection and the electricity which keeps shutting down. Such things hardly ever happen in America where they lead civilised lives and can afford to pay four hundred dollars a night per room. He is proud of his success, and lives the American dream. He prides himself in the liberty and freedom that his nation has provided for him and that America is not British and imperialist, which in this case is presented as the same thing.

In the novel Darcy is truly proud and sees his pride as a virtue rather than a fault, and therefore he is perceived as unreasonable and impossible to get to know. One of Wyckham's more accurate statements about Darcy says; "for almost all his actions may be traced to pride; -and pride has often been his best friend. It has connected him nearer with virtue than any other feeling" (Austen p. 81). Lizzie feels she has every right to dislike him because of his manners, and she has the whole village behind her in this view. Nobody likes him since he opens up to no one:

he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased... having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance (Austen p. 10).

The American Mr Darcy has none of these bad qualities it seems, and is shown as a very shy man who with every right hides his unfortunate situation in order not to be ridiculed. Because of this he is misunderstood by the whole family, and is placed in the same category as prejudiced tourists, though he is not disliked by others than the Bakshi family.

Gurinder Chadha has managed to bring Indianness to bear on Elizabeth and the rest of the Bennet family as well as Mr Bingley and his sister. She has also Americanised Mr Darcy, who, though he has been made to go through his changes a lot quicker than in the book, is more ignorant than proud. This ignorance is blinding him just as much as pride blinded the original Mr Darcy. His actions and behaviour is American in culture and thinking. He lives the American dream and is searching to reach higher goals.

What does Indianness and Americanness mean in this setting, and how does it function in relation to each character? The meaning of such terms lean on what knowledge we have of what it is to be an Indian, and what it is to be an American. The cultural and the religious aspects come to mind on each side as well as ethnicity. Chadha visualizes Indianness by taking beautiful shots of India with monumental buildings like the Golden Temple in Amritsar

early in the morning at sunrise and late at night at sunset behind a singing Lalita. Also the typical Indian manners of the family and Mr Kholi, whose mannerisms are exaggerated by the actor, show Indianness at the extreme. The mystery of the Hindu religion is carefully painted before us through the song lyrics and the dancing in each scene. Even the characteristic cows in the streets are focused in on to show how different this world is compared to the Western world. These scenes with dancing, singing and different imagery are typical for the Bollywood genre's special story-telling style, and all show a part of what Indianness is.

Americanness is represented by Darcy, his mother Katherine and his sister Georgiana who come from LA, and know very little of the Hindu culture other than what they have seen in the West with new age religions built on eastern religions, and the Indian restaurants with food carefully adjusted to suit the Western taste buds. Americanness is also represented by special mannerisms, cultural mind sets and religious beliefs. Music and dancing also come to mind here. Kholi plays an R&B song called, "Must be the Money" at the arrival of the Bakshi family in LA, and he tries to dance hip hop at a party in India. The song "Take me to Love" is sung by a Black American spiritual choir on the beach in LA where surfers run from the water towards Lalita and Darcy. All these small details show a part of Americanness.

The question of gender also relates to ethnicity. Being an Indian and being a woman, Chadha knows the difficulties her peers are dealing with within family and sexual politics. The problems of Jane Austen's female characters in *Pride and Prejudice* are similar to what many women in India have today. Indianness is then not only focused on culture but also on gender. Chadha channels these ideas of gender and culture directly into all the scenes shot in India, and even some scenes in America and England. Her use of the Bollywood musical is important in this connection. Being an Indian is no longer just a matter of blood and customs, but an intricate pattern of gender, politics, blood, self-awareness, religion, rearing and so on. The Bollywood musical with its unique story-telling function has a way of conveying this

story with its picturesque clichés; like the special Indian music style that can not be overheard or mistaken for anything else, the characteristic dancing, the scenery and the flow of Hinglish (Hindu/English) speaking people all charm a Western audience into total surrender.

The Bakshi Family is without a doubt an Indian family though quite modern, and all their guests play a part in bringing Indianness forth to the viewer. This applies especially to Sahib Kholi, the comical persona of the film who takes Indianness to its extreme in such a way that Westerners can recognise it. Kholi and Chandra Lamba are the dramatic foils for Lalita and Darcy, and it is important to look at how they function in this production in comparison to the novel.



## 2.2 Sahib Kholi and Chandra Lamba

Sahib Kholi is an Indian American on a visit to his native land who wishes to make a grand impression on his relatives and find a wife who is traditional and simple. Everything is big in America. Nothing compares to Rosing's Park and the graceful condescendence of Lady Catherine de Burgh. There is no end to Mr Collins/Sahib Kholi's bragging. To him the only negative thing about America is the freedom it has given to young Indian American girls who only think of their careers. To his astonishment some of them have even turned lesbians. The freedom of his new homeland has both its positive and negative effects. He still much prefers the traditions of his homeland when it comes to the upbringing of young marriageable ladies, since women's rights do not have the same strong hold in India as in America, and the young ladies there tend to be happy about a prospect of marrying well<sup>11</sup>.

Kholi is a mix of two worlds bringing with him what he finds is important to proclaim is best from each world. In India he speaks 'Hinglish' and in America he speaks modern American slang. He thinks England is finished financially and that India is too corrupt, and if one is to get ahead in the world one has to go to America. In this way he proclaims America to be the new financial world empire where anyone can share in the wealth it provides. To him it is a land of opportunities far above any other. Mr Bakshi opposes Kholi's view by pointing to the fact that India is still a very young nation after it gained its independence and that it still has a lot of potential. Therefore it is not necessary to go to America in order to dip into the wealth of the world. Lalita points to what America looked like only 60 years after it gained its independence, a time of war over slavery and digging for gold. By that comparison

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<sup>11</sup> One striking point that I have come across about this topic is that it is not only Indian girls who grow up in the States who can become lesbians, but also girls coming there to study from India who find the freedom and ability to express their true feelings and practice their sexuality freely. One such example is Suparna Bhaskaran, a feminist writer on Comparative Feminist Studies who has written the book *Made in India*. She explores the issue of being queer, female and Indian, and how she is received and perceived by her peers and her family. She mentions how the Indian marital industry has tried to catch up with her through male Indian students who sent "proposals from India via the United States with pictures posing in front of computers in their North American apartments". Bhaskaran, S. *Made in India*. New York.

p: 3. Perhaps Kholi has tried this approach while in America and received a kind of refusal as Suparna Bhaskaran would have sent these boys.

India is far beyond America. Kholi starts to brag about America and of being a green card holder again at the dinner party at the Bakshi's residence where Darcy and his friend Balraj have been invited. Darcy has had a hard time adjusting to India and its foods, and Kholi in his attempt to solace him, and at the same time trying to look like a big shot, puts himself out of Indian context by saying: "These Indians don't know how to treat tourists right, there is no sophistication" (Chadha 2005, fq). He shows no respect for his Indian heritage or his relatives by making his rude remarks publicly. Darcy feels the rudeness that is being uttered by Kholi, and comes to the family's rescue by commenting on how wonderful it is to be able to gather as a family the way they do, and treat each other with love and respect. Darcy is embracing the Indian family life and even envies it since he does not have anything like it in his own family. Kholi has offended him instead of making him a friend and companion. In this way Kholi alienates himself both from Indians and Americans.

"There is nothing you can't find in LA". With the rich possibilities that LA has, like bookstores, restaurants, Ashrams and health clubs, there is very little left to desire for a man like Kholi. There is one thing that Sahib Kholi did not find there though, and that is a wife to his liking. Apart from the fact that Indian women in LA are, according to Kholi, very career-oriented, they are not traditional in their ways or lifestyle at all and out of reach for him. America is big and he is lonely for company, and so he finds that "there is no life without wife" and decides to go to India in his pursuit of a fitting wife. He is doing exactly what Lalita criticises Darcy and his friends of doing;

Darcy – No, he asked his parents to find him a bride, actually. He was busy running his company. He just wanted it to be simple.

Lalita – I see, and so he came here. Is that what you think too? That India is the place to go for simple women? (Chadha 2005, fq).

When Kholi proposes to Lalita he finds that she is not as subservient or traditional as he had thought. She refuses him like one might suppose the women in America have done. His

financial situation and the fact that he can help her family get out of their financial problems cannot tempt her like he had thought. This causes Kholi to go where he has been treated better. The news that Kholi has proposed to Chandra Lamba comes as a shock to the entire Bakshi family. Could Chandra be making a big mistake by marrying a man like Kholi? She has after all been advocating a life of independence earlier.

Chandra Lamba, like the original Miss Charlotte Lukas, has no romantic connection with Kholi, but from the beginning she has shown a different approach to marriage than Lalita. Through her joking comments about Lalita marrying Mr Darcy, divorcing him right away and sharing the profits between the two friends, she shows her agenda. Lalita does not seem to recognise this 'fault' in her friend though. When the news comes that Chandra has accepted Mr Kholi she flatly refuses to believe it since she knows of no connection between the two. Chandra has been joking about him with her, and she can't bring herself to see her friend as a gold digger. Wyckham has no problems seeing this and does not hide the fact from Lalita while he flatters her and makes her the better person in her own eyes.

When Chandra goes to LA she finds it important to share her good fortune with her friend by inviting the Bakshi women to attend their wedding and making Mr Kholi pay for their tickets. After her arrival to LA Lalita does not wait long before she charges her friend with the accusation of being a gold digger, and how unsuitable she feels this marriage is. Chandra has an apologetic manner but at the same time she makes Lalita understand her fear of ending up alone and not finding a life partner. The fact that Mr Kholi is well endowed has only made the idea appealing in her eyes, and that he is good and kind to her helps her overlook his faults.

I know what you're thinking, but he's a good man. I'm not romantic like you, Lalita. I didn't want to take the chance in case my prince never came. I know he is not for you but he is kind and adores me. And I love it here (Chadha 2005, fq).

Lalita is left to feel ashamed of her own fury towards her friend and accepts her friend's choice. After all, this is how it works for Indian women most of the time. The love connection is of no consequence, only that they have the correct last name and connections and that their families are financially strong. This brings one to the second song and dance number of the film. This is when Lalita, Chandra and their mutual friend who is going to get married to Darcy and Balraj's friend are out shopping for the wedding. The fact that the couple has never met each other until the wedding is not mentioned, and yet the bride to be is very happy and longing for the union. "You've got what you always wanted, and for that I am glad" (Chadha 2005, fq). Lalita sings showing her approval of this kind of marriage. The bride has become "the golden girl, the centre of the world" (Chadha 2005 fq), as they sing. She has been so fortunate as to be chosen for a rich man from the UK by his parents. As Darcy states "He asked his parents to find him a wife" (Chadha 2005 fq), since he was busy taking care of his company. At this point Lalita does not mind the peculiarity of the situation and actually defends the time-old institution. Mr Kholi not being a sensible man and Darcy's words clouds her judgement over her friend Chandra's choice of husband even though it is just as valid according to tradition as the first wedding in the film. She should have no more reason to accuse Chandra than her other friend who married for the exact same reasons though her husband seemed to be a sensible man. Chandra's choice might be old-fashioned in most people's eyes, but it is a fact that many cultures still practice this kind of marriage today.

Charlotte Lukas in Austen's novel seems a bit shrewder than Chadha's Chandra Lamba. She is older than Lizzie and passed the normal age of marriage at twenty-seven. Chandra's age is not told, she seems to be at the same age as Lalita. When Charlotte tells Lizzie of her actual feelings towards Mr Collins, she is not ashamed or shy but straight forward and serious on the matter like she has been all along in the novel. Chandra seems shy and ashamed almost, not able to look Lalita in the eye when she speaks of her choice. This is

a change from India where she has been coy and has made jokes all the time. When Lalita apologises for her quick judgement Chandra is relieved and can relax with her friend again. She becomes a part of the crowd following the same values and traditional ideas like her predecessors, a woman who could have stood out since she seemed to want more out of life, but who chooses to follow the demands made on her by her family and society, and maybe even by herself. Just like a jester whose mask has been removed after a performance, Chandra shows her true self. She is after all the perfect wife for Mr Kholi, the jester whose mask never comes off. Like Mr Collins says to Lizzie:

My dear Charlotte and I have but one mind and one way of thinking. There is in everything a most remarkable resemblance between us. We seem to have been designed for each other (Austen p.216).

Chandra's choice is after all not an unusual one for a woman in her circumstances in India or in Austen's England. She has made the same choice as Mrs Bakshi did when she married Mr Bakshi. There was no love in the beginning, but love grew, even if they still have their different opinions and problems which need to be solved.

### 2.3 Mr and Mrs Bakshi's Issues.

The dispute between Mr Shamin and Mrs Manorama Bakshi is clear when looking at their different ways of viewing their own circumstances and problems, and the different approaches they have to possible solutions to them. The father's need of security and constant belonging to a place is very evident in all his actions and speeches. Sanjay Shrivastava's book *Ghummakkads, A Womans Place*, though it talks about women, discusses this need of belonging and having a native place opposite the need to journey and move on. "Colonialism, as an administrative and extractive process, and as a regime of knowledge whose most powerful capacities lay in the realms of consciousness, was fundamental to the rise of the 'native place' idea" (Shrivastava p. 401). Colonialism has created a need in Indian people to be their own masters and have their own native identity. For Mr Bakshi the idea of having to move away from his native land, and his farm which he sees as his place of identity, is unthinkable. The joke Mr Shamin Bakshi tells his daughters says clearly what he feels about leaving India and going to America while Mrs Manorama Bakshi complains about them not taking the chance her brother had made possible for them in America.

Mrs Bakshi: But we have so many. One or two can go abroad. They'll earn more.

God knows they'll need to, 'cause we cant afford to give them all decent dowries.

Mr Bakshi: Perhaps we should have drowned one or two at birth

Mrs Bakshi: We wouldn't have had these problems if we had gone to the US when we had the chance.

Mr Bakshi: Did I tell you about this Indian fellow who went to America and made it rich?  
( to his daughters)

Mrs Bakshi: My brother did all the paper work to sponsor us, but you didn't want to leave.

Mr Bakshi: This fellow went to America and bought this huge American house, and made three swimming pools in the garden.

Mrs Bakshi: Now he owns three subway franchises in New Jersey. And what do we have?  
An old house, an old farm, and new bills.

Mr Bakshi: So when his father visited from India, he showed him around his mansion and three swimming pools. His father asked "But, son, why do you need three pools?" So he said proudly "Well, one is filled with cold water for when I feel hot, the second is filled with hot water for when I feel cold". The father nodded and said "Why is the third pool empty?" and he said " Well, that's when I don't feel like swimming at all" (Chadha 2005, fq).

Mrs Bakshi has two solutions to their problems she views as important and very good both for her and Mr Bakshi, and for her daughters. Firstly she thinks the idea of going to America with the help of her brother and starting a business there, like he has, is well worth trying.

Secondly she hopes to marry off her daughters to rich men visiting their village. When discussing with her husband she addresses a serious problem and tries to bring in what to her seems to be good solutions to their financial problems. Going abroad has helped her brother financially, and she feels that the same solution would work for them as well. But she finds it difficult to break through her husband's barrier on the matter. She talks of her brother's three subway franchises in New Jersey and her husband ridicules it by alluding to the three useless swimming pools in his joke. The irony that Mr Bakshi here shows is in line with the irony in Austen's novel, and it also shows the irony of the situation where the family is incapable of bettering their situation because of a possible narrow-mindedness. Mr Bakshi finds it difficult to take his brother in law's offer seriously since he himself is more attuned to India and the possibilities his native land can develop in future.

When Mr Kholi arrives, he starts talking of the great possibilities that America have in comparison to India. Kholi bluntly states that India is corrupt and unsophisticated and that America is the only place to get ahead in the world. Mr Bakshi reacts to Kholi's impertinent remarks by stating the fact that India is still a very young nation since it became independent from Great Britain. He finds it necessary to give India a chance to develop and become just as strong and financially powerful as America. To migrate from India to America would then be to turn one's back on the possibilities of achieving something great. Mr Bakshi's wife and sahib Kholi may be right when they talk of America as a great possibility for the family to better their finances, but the fact of Mr Bakshi's dream for India totally escapes them and they cannot even start to grasp it. They are both gold diggers in their own way. Kholi is a flatterer seeking financial benefits wherever he goes among the rich in America, while Mrs Bakshi is a

gold digger on her daughters' behalf seeking rich husbands for them to get their family out of their financial crisis. Comparing this to what Lalita says about America sixty years after it gained independence, where people either killed each other over slavery or went digging for gold, brings forth the irony of it all now sixty years after India gained its independence.

In the report *India: A Rising Power* written by Yevgeny Bendersky at the news site PINR (Power and Interest News Report) the financial and political situation in India is discussed and viewed from an historic perspective, showing how India has grown as a state power in the world only since the 1980's. Its growth has been hindered by a poor and backward population which has been difficult to rule because of the widely divergent views held by different social groups, and the need for successive governments to meet their different requirements through domestic policies.

While each government has attempted to enrich the state through various political and economic means, these developments have been hampered by the near-monumental task of lifting its people out of poverty through ways that would be acceptable to all strata of the population... Most importantly, India's drive for greater power status is driven by intense domestic sentiment, which has viewed the last five centuries of foreign domination with growing contempt. It will not welcome foreign influence that will be viewed as limiting its own potential (Bendersky 2005).

Mr Bakshi is no doubt aware of the political and financial situation of his nation, but he is a visionary man who sees what the possibilities of the nation are. Gurinder Chadha produced this film in 2004, and this report is also written that same year. In my view, though she is British, she is making a political statement of India as a nation of great potential through Mr Bakshi's vision.

Mr Kholi's choice of wife is a matter of interest to Mrs Bakshi since he is a man of certain means, and he has made his intentions clear before he enters the scene. She therefore willingly ignores his rude remarks and defends him at every opportunity both towards Lalita and Mr Bakshi, and then to Mr Darcy at the dinner party. She can not contain her eagerness



though, and goes on ranting about Jaya her eldest daughter who has had many suitors before Balraj, and how lucky he is to have her. She does not realise that her behaviour destroys her daughter's chances with this particular suitor. Her vanity is easily triggered but not so easily stopped, and Mr Kholi has pushed all the buttons of her vanity.

Lalita's refusal of Mr Kholi comes as a shock to Mrs Bakshi who sees no fault in Mr Kholi. He has met all her requirements for a suitable suitor for her daughter both financially and in his connections. When complaining to Mr Bakshi she reminds him about the lack of love when they got married, and how she feels the love between them has grown afterwards. This she feels should be enough for her daughters to take heed of before entering into a marriage. "Marriage comes first then love grows", she proclaims (Chadha 2005, fq). She is outraged and shocked by her daughter's modern ideas on love and marriage and vows never to speak to Lalita again if she continues to refuse Mr Kholi. The fact that all their daughters are every day witnessing the lack of love between their parents and the way Mr Bakshi openly ridicules his wife in front of them escapes her.

Mr Bakshi does not seem to care about his wife's worries. He loves his daughters and does not wish to part with them at all. Sending them out of the country he loves is to him a punishment and not a help. "I would not wish for them to be so far away", as he says (Chadha 2005, fq). His acceptance of Lalita's feelings helps her to avoid the same tiresome and horrible marital problem that her parents are experiencing. To marry someone she despises as much as Lalita despises Mr Kholi will not exactly ensure marital bliss, not even in the long run. Mr Bakshi has recognised this, and comes forth as the understanding and overbearing parent in the household. Money is of no consequence to him and so Mr Kholi's constant assurance of helping him forth in America does not have the desired effect on him.

When their youngest daughter Lakhi announces Mr Kholi's change of heart and proposal to Chandra Lamba, only Mrs Bakshi is crushed and devastated by her bad fortune.

The rest are more amazed by the fact that Chandra actually accepted him. The phone call from Chandra wishing their presence at her wedding in LA lifts Mrs Bakshi's spirits though, and the hope of finding matches for her daughters is rekindled. Spending days and hours on the internet dating service looking for proper matches for her daughters has left her sad and in low spirits, and now she sees a hope. It is important to note here that in the novel Austen separates the family by letting only Jane, Lizzie, Lydia and Mr Bennet travel by themselves to the different destinations. In *Bride and Prejudice* Chadha assembles them as a group and lets the women travel together abroad as a family, giving security and strength to the group, though one might add that Mrs Bakshi and Lakhi do what they can to weaken this security by their follies.

Being a woman of little or no information Mrs Bakshi fails to impress the haughty sister of Balraj who invites them to tea when they visit in London in the hope of meeting him. Her lack of knowledge shocks even her eldest daughters when she manages to place a Spanish city in Italy.

Mrs Bakshi: Is that an Andy Warhol?

Kieran: Wrong decade. We have several originals Mummy found in Barcelona.

Mrs Bakshi: Oh, Italian. How nice (Chadha 2005, fq).

When they leave for America Mr Darcy encounters them at the airport and offers to switch places with Mrs Bakshi so he can sit next to Lalita on his way back to L.A. Mrs Bakshi is no fool when it comes to bettering her own comfort and circumstance and agrees. Champagne and perfume as well as a comfortable spacious seat are what she is elevated to, and she is treated like a first class VIP. This is Chadha's way of giving honour to an Indian mother in my view, and shows how much respect this culture gives to a parent.

At Darcy's hotel when they meet his mother Katherine Darcy, Mrs Bakshi exclaims: "It's first class" (Chadha 2005, fq). Her experience from first class on the airplane has made

the expression an important one for her, and it is the only compliment she can think of when complimenting Mrs Darcy on the hotel. She is a victim of the language barrier which her displacement has brought upon her. She can not perform the Englishness that is expected of her in nations where Englishness has the priority. In India she had the comfort of her own language to be able to express her inner emotions, now she has to trust in her knowledge of a language she clearly does not master. “That imperialism results in a profound linguistic alienation is obviously the case in cultures in which a pre-colonial culture is suppressed by military conquest or enslavement” (Aschroft p. 10).

After yet another failure to impress, and having failed to make Jaya meet a rich Indian American man, Mrs Bakshi ends up in London again full of self-pity. She does not know of Lalita’s refusal of Mr Darcy, but that connection has never occurred to her either since he is not an Indian. “Not a single proposal. So sad. My fate is to live in that rotten house full of spinsters and no grandchildren” (Chadha 2005, fq). This is a shame for every Indian mother. Her misfortune and failure are now complete. She sees no hope for the future since no men in Amritsar will marry her daughters because of their lack of wealth. In her desperation she lets her youngest daughter go shopping without supervision and their disgrace is complete when they find that Lakhi has run off with Wyckham.

When Lakhi arrives back safe Mrs Bakshi is the one who exclaims: “ No boy is coming more than ten miles near to you, until you get married” (Chadha 2005, fq). This is the opposite of Austen’s novel where Mr Bennet is the one who calls his daughters silly and tells Kitty that she will not be stepping out the next ten years unless it is with one of her sisters, and that no officer will be allowed within ten miles of Longborn. Lydia must get married in the original in order to save her family from the shame. In this version Lakhi is saved from Wyckham and is put back in her family. If she had married Wyckham it would have been a shame for her family since he is not Indian and is seen as a villain.

At the engagement reception when Darcy looks towards Lalita's parents, as she accepts him, they give him their acceptance and blessing as well though he is not an Indian. He has shown his respect to them and their culture through his attempt at becoming a part of their culture. And so this way Mrs Bakshi has managed to do one of the two things she set herself to accomplish from the beginning. Since moving to another country is out of the question for Mr Bakshi, marrying off their two eldest daughters to rich men has finally come to pass after what seemed to be a total failure. Mr and Mrs Bakshi finally agree on something, and their issues are solved in a somewhat traditional way.

## Chapter 3

### East meets West: an Imperial Dialectic

Take up the white man's burden  
Ye dare not stoop to less  
Nor call too loud on Freedom  
To cloak your weariness;  
By all ye cry or whisper,  
By all ye leave or do,  
The silent, sullen peoples  
Shall weigh your Gods and you  
[Source: Collected Verse of  
Rudyard Kipling (Toronto: the Copp,  
Clark Company, 1906) p. 217]

In this chapter I will consider some similarities the colonial histories of America and India, both of them former colonies under The United Kingdom, and how this history is represented in *Bride and Prejudice*. I will also look at the different feminine voices in Austen's novel and Chadha's film, and how each of these portrays the situation that women find themselves in today in India. Finally I will compare the three main protagonists with the three continents that each of them represent, and see how Chadha builds Austen's love story into a world that has become mostly decolonised. Through these three I am going to look at how Chadha explores women's situation today, and how it has developed in view of history and place.

#### 3.1 The Colonial and postcolonial world of America and India: A Discussion of Imperialism.

The respective histories of India and America have strong similarities which are interesting to consider with Chadha's film in mind. Looking at Lalita and Darcy's discussions in the perspective of imperialism and history it is important to discuss why such dilemmas occur between them and their different cultures.

Lalita: I thought we got rid of imperialists like you.  
Darcy: I'm not British. I'm an American.  
Lalita: Exactly (Chadha 2005, fq).

With these comments in mind it is important to look at how and why Lalita and Darcy differ in the understanding of the word imperialist. First I will take an historical approach to the background of the two countries and the similarities between them.

Jane Austen wrote in a time of turmoil in the British Empire. Britain had just lost America and had started to take over India. Ironically what started the American uproar against England was the Boston tea party where Indian tea from the East Indian Company was destroyed. The East India Company had settled in India for some time from the mid-seventeenth century and gradually annexed the whole country, but the crown did not get a hand on it until the mid-nineteenth century when the people of India tried to free themselves from the unfair and hard rule of the company. The following is an extract from the East India Company Charter, showing the companies privileges from the Crown:

for the Increase of our Navigation, and the Advancement of lawful Traffick, to the Benefit of our Common Wealth, ... go give and grant unto our said loving Subjects, ... That they and every of them from henceforth be, and shall be one Body Corporate and Politic, in Deed and in Name, by the Name of *The Governor and Company of Merchants of London, Trading into the East-Indies*, ... Capable to have, purchase, ... and retain, Lands, Rents, Priviledges, Liberties, Jurisdictions, Franchises and Hereditaments of whatsoever Kind, Nature and Quality so ever they be ... And also to give ... and dispose Lands ... and to do and execute all and singular other Things (Samson p.14)

The fact that the Asian nations were not Christian gave the British Crown a sovereign possibility to go in and annex the lands they needed and wanted in order to expand. Other Christian nations where respected.

In the seventeenth century English law claimed that indigenous sovereignty needed to be respected only if the inhabitants were Christian; if not England (or any other European country) could conquer and overthrow its native laws after conquest (Samson p. 42).

The policy of the company had been to divide and rule, taking advantage of the problems and enmity between the different religious and social groups and Mughals. The British crown

started to rule India directly from 1857, and in some places through local Indian Mughals. They did not bring the Indian people prosperity economically, but rather slowly drained the country of all its rich natural sources. India was under British rule from 1857 until 1947 and gained its freedom through the strong leadership of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. He was given the name Mahatma, which means living soul, by the Indian people. He managed to free the nation through a non-violence movement which made him one of the most famous leaders of all time, and he is the pride of the Indian nation still today.

Comparing the length of the British rule in America and in India we find that the American settlements were under Britain from 1607 until 1784, while India was under the British crown from 1857 until 1947 but first gradually under the rule of the East India Company from 1617. In both countries the British started off with trade posts and gradually gained control over larger areas, in America through the fur hunters and settlers and in India mainly through the growth of the company. The liberations of the two nations were different in many ways. In India the non-violence movement had the biggest effect, in America there was a bloody war. India had its bloody war after the Crown withdrew because of the difficulties between Hindus and Muslims, and there are therefore three nations now; India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Marshall pp 98-100).

National identity has been an important issue for the people of India which is seen in their government's way of showing strength towards their neighbouring countries, though, in our postcolonial time national borders have opened and the world has become much "smaller". One often finds that the old generation tends to stay closed for new ideas, while the new generation opens up to the world and the new ideas through the internet, film and other media. Rather than talk about classes in this postcolonial world, we often talk about cultural difference. Indians have moved to the UK, the USA and Australia and have settled there. Refugees from different war stricken countries have settled in their new environment, and

they bring their religion and cultural thinking with them practicing it where they are allowed. Many start up businesses like restaurants where they try to make money on their homeland's cuisine and culture, like Chinese, Indian and Mexican restaurants. When Darcy takes Lalita to a restaurant, he wants to show her the diversities of America and brings her to a Mexican restaurant with Mexican art and where the male waiters dress in the traditional Mexican style with wide-brimmed hats and big moustaches, the women wear wide skirts and colourful blouses, and a Mexican band sings Hispanic songs. Had they gone to an Indian restaurant we would have seen the waiters dressed in Panjabi suits and Saris, and there would have been Indian music. Everywhere in the world there is a strong emphasis on the different cultures, and the cultural stereotypes are exaggerated and at times ridiculed in fiction films, newspaper ads and campaigns.

Gurinder Chadha, the film producer, mixes Indian and American style in the scene where Lalita and Darcy walk along the beaches in LA. The theme song is sung by an African American choir and surfers come running up from the waves towards the couple with their hands lifted like Indian dancers. One immediate thought that comes to mind when seeing it might be that this is quite ridiculous. I think that Gurinder Chadha does this on purpose to bring the two different worlds of culture together; on the level of fiction it makes Lalita accept Darcy and open up and accept cultural diversity and differences as unique possibilities to understand and accept each other. Lalita's thinking can up until this point in the film almost be compared to a kind of socialist reasoning, though not consciously so, where the Western world, or in this case America, is the big bad wolf/capitalist and Darcy as a hotel mogul its representative. Consequently he is unacceptable to her whatever he says while in India. Now she starts to see him differently. This shows how shallow her thoughts have actually been, and that they were not grounded in true knowledge and understanding of a different culture. They were rather based on her hurt feelings and wanting to misunderstand him.



It is easy to see that Lalita Bakshi's thoughts can be compared to socialist thinking here. She is at a certain point fighting for the Indian people's rights to protect their cultural identity and run their own companies without the influence of the capitalist West. Darcy comes to India in order to buy a hotel in Goa for his mother's company. They wish to expand their hotel company and use/exploit Indian culture. Lalita shows him how prejudiced and ignorant these ideas are through her sharp and educated remarks to him. She shows pride in her nation, something that her family does not reflect at times.

As mentioned earlier, in Goa when Lalita accuses Darcy of being an imperialist, he frowns and says "I'm not British, I'm an American" and she responds: "Exactly!"(Chadha 2005, fq). The word empire has become a symbol of the past and of the British Empire which was the last one in Western eyes. Today the word empire has negative connotations for the democratic West, and nobody in America would dream of calling their nation an empire, even though they have a strong sense of patriotism like the British do. One may question the correctness of Lalita's statement because America was also once just a colony under England and France, and had to fight for their right to be a free nation as well as for the ability to rule themselves. The declaration of independence is a strong reminder to them that they once were a colony under the United Kingdom, and of the fight they had to put up in order to be a free nation, the feeling of despair when their demands were flatly refused by the British King, and the strong courage the settlers showed in their fight for freedom. Still the view that USA is an imperialist power remains strong throughout the world.

Lalita is portrayed as a girl attuned to nature, a part of the land and people around her, yet separated from them by situation. An example of her being intoned to nature is the first scene of the film where she is sitting on a tractor with one of her father's workers in a field, waving to the female workers passing by as she smiles in enjoyment at what she sees. However, her separation from the workers' situation is made clear by the fact that she is

supervising them and keeping a record of the work that is being done. Even though the Bakshi family has a farm and a well situated household, they are not among the rich. Their financial situation is not very good, partly because they have four daughters to marry off and giving them all decent dowries is not possible. But they are all well educated and Lalita shows special interest in the world around her and especially her own community, which she takes great pride in, since she has gained so much knowledge.

Lalita has a very negative perception of rich tourists which Darcy unknowingly keeps proving the accuracy of to her and her family. She is in many ways accusing him of social Darwinism which means that he sees himself as better than the Indians both in situation, philosophy, religion and race. These views can be found in larger or smaller degree throughout the world of course and not necessarily only among white people. "Survival of the fittest" has been used earlier to oppress African Americans in America and also in South Africa in the extreme form, subconsciously too, social Darwinism has had some influence on how people in the West have perceived people from the Third World and Asian nations. This may also be something that is felt more than actually experienced at times, and this is what I believe Lalita feels at this point. As mentioned earlier Darcy has come to buy a hotel in Goa in order to give rich tourists a special cultural experience. He believes himself to be making opportunities for the Indians through jobs and financial help since the tourist industry is very profitable. He has not thought about how the Indians would perceive him and his cultural way of thinking and acting. Lalita attacks him verbally at this point in a discussion by the pool in Goa saying:

Lalita: You said yourself that you're used to the best. I'm sure you think India's beneath you.

Darcy: If I really thought that, then why would I be thinking about buying this place?

Lalita: You think this is India?

Darcy: Don't you want to see more investments, more jobs?

Lalita: Yes, but who does it really benefit? You want people to come to India without having to deal with Indians" (Chadha 2005, fq).

She accuses him of being solely interested in exploiting India for his own benefit and not understanding what India is really about. In view of Lalita's own relative privileges and acceptance of work arrangement's on the farm, I find that she is hardly in a position to attack Darcy the way she does since she is one of the users of the land just as much as he is. Her hypocrisy is not clear to her though.

Many economists today think of the expansion within the financial businesses world as a globalisation process, and some even categorise it as a new form of imperialism. This is one of the things Lalita accuses Darcy of in the film. A question arises in this context. Is globalisation a kind of imperialism? According to James Petras and Henry Veltmayer, both Socialist thinkers, and authors of the book *Globalisation Unmasked*, it is. They argue that many people consider globalism in our postcolonial world a class project where only people with money and products to sell can be free to do so without any economical disadvantages like taxes. In this way globalisation can be "counterposed with a term that has considerably greater descriptive value and explanatory power: imperialism" (Petras p. 12). Until recently India, being a very young nation has often been dependent on the financial help and influence of Western companies. There is also a strong tendency in upper class Indian society to lean on their British "roots". Talking "Hinglish", which is a blend of British and Hindi, is very popular and even some of their newspapers are written in very intellectual and posh English. Many factories and companies are owned by foreign companies because of the low wages. Today India has the fastest growing economy in the world, even surpassing China and Japan, and much is due to their new computer and internet technology development.

As a capitalist Darcy is dependent on our day's space, the cyber space/ the internet. The way we viewed space earlier was by state and country where the idea of actually possessing an area was important in order for a nation to actually reach the possible financial

benefits it held, and we call it imperialism. Today the internet is our new space where borders do not exist. As mentioned above, this makes for a new kind of imperialism according to socialist thinkers like James Petras and Henry Veltmayer (Petras p.12), and would indeed make Darcy into an imperialist without him actually seeing himself as such when trading and buying stocks and properties in other countries and continents. But Darcy has problems with his cyber space because of the bad internet connections in Amritsar. Darcy complains to his friend Balraj about the situation several times since he needs the information his company sends him. He even mentions it to Lalita one time. Even Lalita uses the internet, and the Bakshi family has a computer with internet at their home where they receive email from friends, and where Mrs Bakshi spends time looking for spouses for her daughters. Lalita, being of the new generation in India, proudly proclaims to Darcy that people in India use an internet dating service now in order to find good matches. In this way Indians in America, England, Australia and India can keep in touch and find matches from within their own caste and culture. The caste system in India is still very important to them since it has been a great part of their religious beliefs for thousands of years. It has to do with purity and where destiny has put you in the circle of life or lives.

Social status is a strong force in our society since money makes the world go round, and there are still royal families in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia. It is not on the same level as the caste system though, since a good education often is what brings you further up. People live in a different world now than 50- 60 years ago when it was more difficult to get an education. Today movie stars can be seen as the new royalty of their nation, especially in America where the biggest stars are being worshipped like gods. New means of communication are being used to spread films, music, pictures, texts and even money all over the world in a matter of minutes or seconds. The Internet is in this way the biggest contributor to the border free situation, which enables men like Darcy to go into other countries and by

hotels and companies in order to earn more money and secure a larger share of the financial market. Today every rich nation of the world are interconnected through diplomatic and financial networks which also extend into less fortunate countries, and much of this can be traced back to WWI when many nations in Asia, the Middle East and Africa were divided between the western European nations who were all imperialistic. This was all done in the spirit of 'the white mans burden' in order to bring democracy and civilisation to the uncivilized. (Samson p. 225-226) As mentioned earlier The British East Indian Company had ruled in India for a century as well, and was bringing out of the country much of its values back to England right up to the 1940's.

The way women have been treated in India, America and in England throughout this time period has in many ways changed, though India has held on to much of its traditional culture. In Europe and America women no longer have an oppressed position but have become more equal to men in their civil rights. The patriarchal society we used to have is now almost nonexistent. Women's rights activists have fought for women's right to vote, have jobs outside their home and so on since the end of the nineteenth century. And today we see the positive results it has brought. In Asia and Africa the women's liberation movement has had a great effect as well, giving women the ability and strength to rise up and get higher education and jobs at the same level as men. This applies mostly to the higher classes in the cities however, and does not affect women in the small villages and the countryside where women are still largely illiterate and stick to the old traditions. Jane Austen at the end of the eighteenth century wrote of the upper class woman as a person who is to be admired almost like a goddess and placed on a pedestal above all others, but with irony in such a way that we see her criticising the system. This is much like how the upper class woman of India has been portrayed by the Bollywood film industry as someone who should be admired and treated like a goddess though in this case the irony and criticism are absent. *Bride and Prejudice* is a

reworking of the genre however, and there is a certain change since Chadha gives some of the female characters a more modern attitude and a certain feminist view on life. The female protagonist Lalita and her sister Lakhi even get the chance to revenge themselves on the male villain towards the end of the film.

One aspect postcolonial times have changed is what the film *Bride and Prejudice* suggests; that the differences between cultures are greater than between the different classes, and relationships and marriages between people from different cultures often create difficulties and as well as comical situations analogous to Austen's plots. The similarities that I have discussed in this text between America and India, and the difference in their cultures conjures up an amount of detail that Chadha has taken hold of and made clear to her audience all over the world. It is therefore now time to look at the different feminine voices through which Chadha has chosen to portray these differences.

### 3.2 Different Feminine Voices in Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Looking at the way Indian women are portrayed in Bollywood films, we often find them to be like pure goddesses who must be revered and treated as such. We are also told what terrible things can happen to Hindu women who are disgraced or give into temptation. Often there are spiritual solutions to the problems where the gods are involved, and sometimes the women just become bad characters when ridiculed by others and struck by bad karma. But a Hindu woman who is pure of heart will always be restored to become a true heroine.

If one tries to compare the situation for women in India today and their situation in Jane Austen's England we find many similarities, but we must not forget that only fifty years ago the Western world was not so far ahead in women's rights as they are today. Woman as a domestic being was still the norm, and a career outside the home in many cases was not even considered. The norm for most women was still to marry well, give birth to children and tend to her husband's needs. Being a spinster was considered a bad situation, and having an affair was a disgrace. The culture remained patriarchal in many respects. The situation in India is quite like this today. In the larger cities like New Delhi and Mumbai where the upper and middle classes are more Westernised, however, we find a more open and free lifestyle for women where having an education and a well-paid job is of importance. Still the importance of finding a spouse is there, and his caste, type of work and financial situation are still as important as they used to be.

Jaya, Lalita's eldest sister, is a girl portrayed as a pure-hearted young woman who has to fight the association that people have towards her and her sisters because of a mother with no social skills and a family in a weak financial situation. She hopes to find a man who has money and a high social standing, and she is in line with the traditional thinking of how a woman should act and think. Her sister Lalita is the one with ideas of equality and freedom.

Several of the song lyrics in the film have many lines on equality between men and women, and other lyrics that proclaim the belief in the superiority of a woman who is about to be married. In the extra material that the DVD supplies there are several interviews with the producer Gurinder Chadha and some of the actors where this subject is mentioned. One aspect the film shows as a problem is the fact that a woman has no worth in her family or society if she does not get married. The situation of the Bakshi family is desperate since they have four daughters and the eldest is starting to get too old and is almost a spinster in the eyes of society. Mrs Bakshi is therefore eager to use all possibilities there are to bring her eldest daughters forward on every occasion. She is in horror of Lalita's ideas and angry with her husband who has let her daughter read so much and help with the farm. Mrs Bakshi's feelings can be understood if one thinks of the hopeless financial situation that they live in compared to what they could have had. Dowries are an absolute necessity in India and many other Asian and African countries. It is considered the duty of the bride's parents to supply the groom and his family with a certain compensation for taking their daughter into the family. In many situations not only money is considered but also cars, TVs, new kitchen equipment like a fridge, a stove or anything else that is considered to be of great value. If the bride's parents do not meet the demands of the groom's family the bride might in some cases be rejected and sent back to her family in shame. This is more often practiced in the smaller villages in the countryside of India than in the bigger cities. Mrs Bakshi says about her daughters: "One or two can go abroad. They'll earn more. God knows they'll need to because we can't afford to give them all decent dowries" (Chadha 2005, fq).

One male view on women that Chadha chooses to portray in her film is Mr Kholi's. He has his own views on what today's women are like and how negative he thinks this is. He says that Indian women born in America are too educated and career-orientated, they are also too outspoken for his taste. This is why he hopes to find a traditional woman from his home



country who will not give him problems, as he sees it. He is also very vexed that several of the American women have become lesbian and therefore also out of reach for his kind. His condemnation of American culture does not apply to other areas, however, as shown in remarks to the effect that India is too corrupt to make it big in the world, and the UK is finished and too old-fashioned in its financial thinking. America is to him the most perfect place to make it big and to achieve wealth, but unfortunately not the place to find a suitable wife. His choice of Lalita is disastrous in this case, though she has her dreams like any other Indian girl.

Lalita sings out her wishes and hopes of a man who must be a knight in shining armour, and who will see her as his equal and respect her beliefs. 'No life without wife' is one of the song lyrics that come to mind here. In this she differs from her best friend who chooses to marry Mr Kholi simply because of his situation in life, and the fear of never finding prince charming. Lalita believes that she has no wish for wealth for herself or her husband; she has only the desire for a deep love and respect between herself and the man she will marry. She has a dream though where she sings "Sorry Mr Kholi" (Chadha 2005, fq). Here she sees herself in a white wedding dress running over English fields towards Johnny Wyckham and a church. The style is very expensive and just like a fairy tale Cinderella. By this one may deduce that she, like so many of her peers, longs for wealth and prosperity and has no wish to be poor. This is the opposite of what she conveys to Darcy though, and again her true feelings are exposed by means of irony, revealing her as somewhat hypocritical. Mr Wyckham is not wealthy but a travelling backpacker who has no property and no money. She has an old-fashioned dream of what marriage is, something many women today have, despite their educated and liberated situation. The hope of finding love is of course not taken away after feminist movement had its effect on the West. It is beside the point and has to do with the whole picture of complete happiness for women. Lalita's philosophy is obviously that women

should be able to be both liberated and happy, spiritually as well as physically, living in an equal society. Chadha's intentions with her films, looking at her earlier work, is as mentioned earlier to let the world know what Indian women go through on a daily basis, mostly in England where she herself was brought up. In this Bollywood production Chadha has based the characters in India, however, because she wanted to explore the film genre she used to watch as a little girl. At the same time she implements her ideas into this male dominated world and gives voice to the subaltern of this world, the women.

Jane Austen's women in *Pride and Prejudice* all have their distinct voices; Elizabeth, Jane, Mrs Bennet, Lydia and Charlotte Lucas. They all speak their own language of reason and intellect. Elizabeth seems to be the most prudent and outspoken in wit of all her sisters, though her folly is a prejudiced mind. This might have something to do with her being the favourite daughter of Mr Bennet who has undoubtedly influenced her. Being an acute observer of other people Elizabeth has the same pleasure in the particularities of their wit as her father. She is the opposite of her friend Charlotte Lukas with respect to her view on life and marriage. Charlotte accepts a woman's lot in life. She sees the absolute necessity of grabbing the possibilities presented to her since she is perceived in society as an old spinster of twenty-seven.

but it is sometimes a disadvantage to be so very guarded. There is so much of gratitude or vanity in almost every attachment, that it is not safe to leave any to itself. In nine cases out of ten, a woman had better shew more affection than she feels. When she is secure of him, there will be leisure for falling in love as much as she chuses (Austen p. 21-22).

Charlotte believes that every woman has to make her own luck, that the only rights she can have as a woman are the ones she manages to trick out of a man or that are presented to her by chance, like Mr Collins is to her. She good-naturedly engages his conversation, secretly waiting for what she knows will come, which is an unavoidable refusal from Elizabeth.

Jane has a soft spoken manner and only wishes to believe the best of all the people she meets. No one can be bad, and if they have done something bad there must be a very good excuse for it. She is the quiet beauty who is loved by everyone but who does not dare to show strong emotions publicly. What happens will happen, and she has no control over any of it. She quietly accepts her seeming destiny and mourns her lost love in silence.

Lydia's voice is of a spoiled child's frankness and impertinence. Her simplistic vision of the world is coloured by her mother's weak-minded influence. To be subdued by Mr Wyckham is in her view an accomplishment to brag about. Her sexuality is her weakness, and she becomes Elizabeth's foil in that respect. She gives in to temptation, and her loss of virtue in this unguarded situation is a fact. As her mother says: "for she is not the sort of girl who would do such a thing, if she had been well looked after" (Austen p. 287). Lydia's voice, like her mother's, becomes the voice of selfishness and inconsideration, destroying the possibilities of her sisters, thus rendering them helpless against all accusation. The voices of the subalterns, the women in this case, are silenced quite effectively by one of their own who has not learnt how to guard herself.

Is there a voice of protest in *Bride and Prejudice* regarding women's situation today? Does Chadha display the romantic Indian song and dance numbers in such a way that they become satirical and ironical towards an old system of belief in what marriage and life are like? One of the scenes where Chadha has chosen to make fun of the traditional Indian marriage is when the four daughters of the family envisage what life with Mr Kholi would be like. It portrays Lalita dressed in the traditional Indian sari serving her "husband" a traditional meal called Alloo Gobi, which consists of vegetables fried in spice and oil. Her world is Kholiwood, which is written in large letters on the wall. Her situation is beneath her husband, acting as a servant in his home, giving him a foot massage and tending to his every need, while he continues to act in a ridiculous manner.

One voice of protest that has come forth in feminist writings is that of the feminist writer Bharati Ray<sup>12</sup>. She writes of an Indian Muslim woman from the beginning of the twentieth century, Rokaya Sakhawat Hossain, who wrote about her situation in life with great frustration. She wrote;

let us look at the two-wheeled cart. If one wheel is larger (husband) than the other (wife), then the cart can hardly move forward. It will go round and round at the same spot. This is precisely the condition of us Indians; we are hardly able to press forward (Ray p. 435).

Bharati goes on to say;

Rokaya's thesis was that if one had to start working for the 'unnati'<sup>13</sup> of women, one had to identify the factor responsible for the degradation. She identified two: (i) selfishness of men and (ii) mental slavery of women... women had become the slaves of men... the women-turned-slaves were without proper homes. They merely resided in the homes of their male relations, and were subservient to them (Ray p. 435).

The situation of many Indian women today is still like this example I have shown here. And women writers in the feminist movement have had their work cut out for them. The Indian women were not only slaves physically but also mentally, and their husbands were not eager to change these conditions and by this lose their upper hand. Today women's situation has changed in the upper class in the major cities of India much due to the education system, but women in poor families and in the countryside are still living under the same extreme circumstances as before. Their possibilities of getting a better education are very few and often impossible to achieve because of their families' financial situations.

The girls' envisioning of Lalita's possible marriage to Mr Kholi in the film clearly portrays the situation Rokeya described in her writings one hundred years ago. It also shows what many Indian women still have to put up with on a daily basis. What Lalita has earlier accused Mr Darcy of in Goa, that is, of wanting a woman to be traditional and subservient,

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<sup>12</sup> Bharati Ray has served as a Professor of History, Pro-Vice Chancellor, and Founder-Director of the Women's Studies Research Centre at Calcutta University in India.

<sup>13</sup> Unnati is Hindi and in this case it means liberation or elevation of women's situation in life.

she actually fears ending up as in a marriage to Mr Kholi. Lalita, like Elizabeth, is a character who grows in knowledge and understanding of her own situation as the story moves forward. She goes from unknowing blind acceptance, to annoyance and anger with the outsider's views on her people's culture and values, her own feelings and actual information, to an informed understanding of the situation, a new perspective and acceptance.

Mrs Bakshi: We must make sure Jaya meets this Mr Balraj from London before anyone else.

Lalita: All Mothers think that any single guy with big bucks must be shopping for a wife.

Jaya: I'm embarrassed to say, but I hope he is.

Lalita: What? Shopping or loaded?

Jaya: Well... both (Chadha 2005, fq).

Jaya's admitting to her hopes of getting a rich husband is not met with shock or dismay from Lalita's side as one would imagine. She even accepts her mother's vision of Mr Balraj being in India shopping for a wife, though she finds it a bit simple. A woman being merchandise is nothing new though, and is accepted without even a hint of uproar. Only when she is met with this fact from an outsider like Darcy does she start to contemplate disagreeing with the old traditional thoughts.

These different female voices both in Austen's novel and in the Bollywood film version all show women's feelings, not only in the Western culture but also in the Asian culture of the year 2008. It shows how views and ideas through time have progressed or stayed firmly in the same place in different situations and areas, and that there are gaps between the old and the young generations of women that are often difficult or even impossible to build bridges across in order to solve their problems.

Now it is time to take a look at the love story of the three continents that Chadha is using in this film, and how it functions according to her plot.

### 3.3 A love story of three continents

For decades the post-colonised and the post-colonisers have had a somewhat mixed emotional relationship with each other. They are both admiring and contemptuous of the other since they are not exactly indifferent to each other. Their need of exploring each other's culture through vacationing, studying or working within each others borders is mutual. Mrs Katherine Darcy shows her interests in having her hotel business expand within Indian borders in order to exploit this fact. She is very annoyed with Lalita's interference and says: "If I had a hotel there I would have been able to travel in India" (Chadha 2005, fq). The film *Bride and Prejudice* mirrors this ambivalent relationship between the three nations through the love story that Jane Austen wrote over two hundred years ago, even before the colonization of India, though she never saw this possibility herself. Three of the protagonists, Lalita, Darcy and Wyckham can be viewed as representatives of the three continents Asia, America and Europe, where Lalita represents India, Darcy represents America and Wyckham represents England. I will now take a quick look at one view which the former colonial power has had on India, and how this has had an effect on the rest of the Western world, and on Asia before moving on to the similarities between history and story.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "A Critique of Postcolonial Reason" talks of the Western historian and politicians reasoning about Asian know-how. She mentions Macaulay's *Minute on Indian education* from 1835 where he states that:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population (Spivak p. 2198).

The total lack of respect of a different culture is shocking to the eye of a modern postcolonial Westerner who reads it, but the question is whether we still actually tend to have the same

underlying prejudiced opinions towards the Other like Spivak discusses. William Darcy displays these thoughts in his remarks both to his friend Balraj and towards Lalita in their discussions. Darcy is not aware of the actual meaning of his remarks and Lalita shocks him by pointing out to him how racist his behaviour and opinions are. Balraj Bingley and his sister Kieran Bingley are both products of Macaulay's ideas. They have not only lived in England most of their lives, but have also become British in their behaviour, state, morals and intellect, as Macaulay puts it. Balraj has kept his love for his old motherland, though, and shows a strong knowledge of and familiarity with its culture and customs. One sees this in several scenes, especially at the first party where he engages in the song and dance number. His sister Kieran is disgusted by the people, food and traditions; even though she still has knowledge of the culture she shows no love or respect for it. One never hears her speak Hindi or Panjabi in this case like her brother does when he sings at the first party. She knows the language, however, and even volunteers to translate the song to Darcy whom she is secretly in love with.

Against the indigenous elite we may set what Guha calls "the politics of the people," both outside ("this was an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter") and inside ("it continued to operate vigorously in spite of [colonialism], adjusting itself to the conditions prevailing under the Raj and in many respects developing entirely new strains in both form and content") the circuit of colonial production (Spivak p. 2200).

Lalita is the opposite of Kieran, and reflects these lines from Spivak. Even though she is of a higher class, she has become the voice of the illiterate Indian society marching for their right to stay and develop in the direction they want to instead of blindly following the lead of the "coloniser". When they go to Goa, where Darcy intends to buy a hotel to expand his business, the discussion between Lalita and Darcy points in this direction, and gives Darcy the understanding of the impact of his intentions on the Indian people. Calling Darcy an imperialist and thereby alluding to his hotel purchase as a colonisation of her country is

perhaps taking it too far when it comes to Darcy's intentions, but it still makes him change his mind about the purchase. Lalita's voice becomes important since it is the audible voice of the subaltern. It opens the eyes of the capitalist/imperialist to the realities of the situation. The female voice becomes empowered through its ability to stop this male attempt at assault. Unknowingly having achieved such a success, Lalita is yet again confronted with a new, more hidden threat she does not seem to detect.

At this point Johnny Wyckham enters the scene. His past is much like his future. Having impregnated Darcy's fifteen year old sister and then been fired by Darcy, he travels the world to find new adventures. His bohemian lifestyle leads him to India where he meets and falls in love with Lalita. Failing to attain the control he is searching for he moves on to her sister Lakhi, who is too young to understand what his real intentions are. Lalita who has just gone through a growth in female power resists his attempts to control her.

Since Wyckham is British and is portrayed as a user of other people, comparing him to The British Empire of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries makes an interesting parallel. England first sought to take America for all its riches in gold and fur in order to excel as an empire. When the people of America wanted to free themselves from the taxation and impossible demands of the British, England had to let go of this colony since it made such a strong resistance against them with the help of the French. At this point the possibilities in India started to attract the Empire, and since they already had a certain hold on the country through the East Indian Trading Company who needed their help in calming their workers and the Rajas, it became natural for the Empire to expand and take over the entire situation. In this way they secured all the riches of India for the Crown's treasury chamber. One could thus compare the situation of the two colonies with a sexual assault where the lady/nation was robbed of her/its virtue, freedom and possessions. Both in Austen's original novel and in Chadha's Bollywood film version Wyckham has this role of villain, sexual assaulter and thief;



a black-guard who does not mind walking over others and discrediting others to get what he wants. The similarities of the situations both between the main characters of the film and the situation between the three continents are strong, and though Austen never could have thought of such things while writing her novel, not being clairvoyant, the film *Bride and Prejudice* does allude to them in hindsight both through the story itself, and Lalita's accusation towards Darcy.

There is also a cultural twist to the scheme that is important to address in order to bring the two former colonies together in this love story. At the beginning and near the end of the film Darcy's cultural and ethnic background is being put forth as a problem since he is not Indian and not a part of their caste system. Balraj's family connections, being part of the Upal family of New Delhi which obviously is very rich and of the correct high class and caste, are very highly praised and admired and puts him within the Indian mothers' interests for their daughters. Kieran dryly states to Darcy: "Every mother in the room is practically wetting her knickers for him for their daughters" (Chadha 2005, fq). Darcy though he is rich and has a prosperous family becomes less interesting because he is not Indian. As Lalita's mother says: "It's a shame he is not Indian" (Chadha 2005, fq). He is of no importance to them and therefore out of the question for any of their daughters. When Jaya finally has gotten Balraj's proposal Mrs Bakshi, who is always on the lookout for a husband for her daughters, asks him if he can find Lalita a nice Indian husband and if he has any cousins. Here again Darcy is divided from Lalita by culture and decorum which up until this point he has been unaware of, and he takes heed of this knowledge. He seeks to become a part of the Indian culture and accepting and respecting it as it is by showing himself playing a drum among the wedding drummers at Balraj and Jaya's engagement party. This seems to bring him into the warmth of the villagers and Lalita's family, and she is able to accept him as a husband. It is ironic though that Chadha places him in this super-traditional Indian setting with his own everyday

American outfit on and through this suddenly making him acceptable to an Indian family. He is still after all just an intruder and a stranger in a setting not suited for him. Yet, he has not tried to make himself something he is not by putting on a strange costume, but rather appears as he is, willing to be a part of something new and showing his acceptance of the Indian traditions.

The lyrics of the song 'Show me the way, take me to love' sung by the American gospel choir at the beach in L.A. suggests the possibility of there being a world where their love can be accepted, and a way to get there; "Show them the way take them to love... show them that world take them to love" (Sic.)(Chadha 2005, fq). Darcy has to take the first step towards embracing a different culture in a deeper way than he has accepted the different cultures residing in the USA. The beginning of this knowledge for them both is started in the Mexican restaurant where Darcy has taken Lalita, and soft music is being played by the Mexican band as they look into each other's eyes. Culture embraces them in a new environment and their differences are being toned down and almost disappear or even merge within this film sequence. America and India have both very much in common when it comes to history and progress, and their ability to stretch forward and grasp the technological possibilities that lie ahead is also a part of their strength. Another thing is that though America does not have the caste system that keeps people apart socially, they still struggle with racial questions after all this time since slavery was abolished and the Jacob Crow laws were dissolved. They still have to fight poverty as well, which is a big problem in America today. But America has become much more open towards religious and cultural aspects from Asia; the Indian nation and its neighbouring countries. The new age movement which is very popular among the young and the trendy in America, and has been ever since the late sixties with the hippie movement, has large aspects from Hinduism and Buddhism in it. The Indian art industry, food industry and textile industry have also become a part of the American scene

in larger cities like L.A and New York. As Mrs Darcy says: "...with yoga and spices and Deepak Chopra, the wonderful Eastern things here, I suppose there's no point in travelling there anymore" (Chadha 2005, fq). She feels there is no need to go to India anymore with all the Eastern things that exist in America. By this she contradicts what she has said earlier in the same scene though: "So tell me everything about India, I have always been fascinated by it... It's always been a dream of mine, ever since I was a little girl, to go there. I was devastated when Will said I shouldn't go" (Chadha 2005, fq). And as Lalita bluntly proclaims; "People haven't stopped going to Italy just because Pizza Hut's opened around the corner" (hadha 2005, fq). It is the ever existing dream of the Americans to explore and expand their horizon. Maybe it is a subconscious inheritance from the English coloniser's power centre among an Anglo-American population to become colonisers as well. America is a nation of differences and is seen as a big salad bowl where people from many nations have come and are mixed together with all their different cultures and religions. This makes it natural for America to embrace other cultures as well.

The three continents, America, Britain and India have all become a mix of races and cultures where diversity is something to embrace most of the time. But their differences have also made them more eager to keep their distance in some cases. India in particular tries to keep its own specific signature while developing as a prospering nation, both economically and within science and at the same time keeping its connection to the rest of the world. Lalita is the perfect example of this with her eagerness to learn and develop within her own environment while keeping up connections with people she meets. She is a woman of her time who has her dreams and ideas as a feminist for her country and her fellow sisters.

America, as mentioned above, specialises in embracing all cultures, religions and races as much as they can while they still have the special American way of handling it all. William Darcy is such a person. He seeks to understand and embrace a new world but without really

realising the impact he as an outsider can have on this, to him, new environment. He has the ability to learn and understand what mistakes he makes and to undo them as well as he can, while his mother Mrs Katherine Darcy is a more narrow-minded type. She wants to conquer and rule as much as possible and earn more money at the cost of others. Her thinking is similar to the old British Empire, and characteristically she has a past having been married to a Brit.

England or Great Britain is today also a place where the different races and cultures have started to blend together, but earlier during its time of greatness in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they conquered and ruled other cultures, slowly draining the different colonies of their riches. Johnny Wyckham is a man, a Brit, who has no culture of his own to brag about, and he travels the world as a backpacker with his friends showing off as a man of the world who has understood what true knowledge is. At the same time he takes advantage of the people he meets and tries to rob them of their virtue.

These three protagonists Lalita, Darcy and Wyckham combined describe in Chadha's film *Bride and Prejudice*, her view on how women of her culture and race have been, and still are being treated. The history of these three continents, America, Britain and India, is in my view a very good example in this respect. Like all Masala films this film also has a happy ending, even though far from all Indian women today experience the same. The fight for women's rights still goes on, but the hope of a good ending will always be there, keeping up the good spirits of the mission.

## Conclusion

In my thesis I have tried to show, by using history and feminist postcolonial writings, how I see Chadha's reasoning on Indian women's situation today through her reinvention of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Bride and Prejudice*, and how this can affect a culturally mixed audience in their view of their circumstances. The three different chapters all deal with these two aspects: history and feminism in a mostly decolonised world, and show how women in Austen's era were scrutinised in comparison to how women are treated in India today. The film is mainly an ironic and entertaining musical where the level of seriousness is much lower than in a documentary, but I have argued that the level of seriousness is heightened when viewing it through Austen's novel. In this way I have looked at the different aspects and discussions in the film and the novel, and found a high level of seriousness lurking beneath the surface of the film. In my opinion, this adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* can change how people view the culturally mixed world they live in. Chadha's blend of seriousness, light comedy and the absurd has made it easy for her different audiences to accept the film and its message. The clash between comedy, seriousness and the absurd seems like a good recipe to make an otherwise complex discussion interesting to a light-hearted audience where the academic level is not always very high. People of all ages and education levels can in theory sit down and get a glimpse of a problematic situation while enjoying themselves, and at the same time subconsciously get an idea of the situation in question.

I have found that through making marriage the main subject of her film and discussion, Chadha has made a discussion of women's situation in India more open and available. The discussion of this subject is very important for further understanding of and possible solutions for the Indian women. The fact that this marriage industry is not only placed within India, but also affects Indian women and men in the rest of the world due to the internet's dating services, is important to consider as well. Through Lalita and Darcy's

discussions and the example of her friend Chandra Lamba's choice of marrying Mr Kholi, the film discusses whether such arranged marriages are positive for the women in question and actually gives these women opportunities they otherwise would not receive, or whether it continues a situation of enslavement for them. This is further developed in my thesis by comparing the histories of the three countries in question, and discussing the similarities between women's situation and these histories. The story Chadha has produced brings forth many underlying problems that have grown between the three continents over the last centuries, at the same time as it shows women's situation. As I viewed the different discussions and situations between Lalita and Darcy, Lalita and Wyckham, Mr and Mrs Bakshi and Chandra and Kholi while comparing them to the characters in Austen's novel, I found that there were many similarities between history and the treatment of women when comparing the three main characters to the histories of the three different countries. It also shows how this postcolonial world has become a mix of all nations trying to keep their own flavour and holding on to their own traditions while at the same time becoming more alike. For genders and nations to be able to accept each others' differences and still accept each other as equals, becomes the important message of the film. In this aspect the importance of place becomes an issue when comparing Austen's novel to Chadha's film: How Chadha has moved the characters from one continent to another in a short period of time while focusing on Mr Bakshi's need of belonging, through his and Lalita's discussions with Mr Kholi, and having an Indian native self image in order to belong. Going from Amritsar to Goa, then to London and Los Angeles are large steps in comparison to the relatively short trips made by Austen's characters, within one country and with a maximum of one day's journey. At the same time it shows how long the journey is for Lalita and Darcy to accept each others' differences.

The film director Gurinder Chadha has specialised in documentaries on Indian women in England and what they go through on a daily basis. She has also talked openly about her own background, and what has made her the way she is. Through the extra material included on the DVD film *Bride and Prejudice*, she has given her audience a glimpse of how she works and the effect her work has on her co workers and actors. Her choice of film script and story shows both her Englishness and her Indianness in this respect. The famous novels of Jane Austen make a very good story board and map for Chadha because of how similar women's situation in Austen's lifetime was to what women's situation in India is today. In many ways, time has been standing still for most women in India because of the strong influence the caste system and also other religious beliefs are still having on people there, and because so many live under very poor conditions.

The tools Chadha makes use of in this production are a mix of Bollywood's Masala film genre, Hollywood's musical genre, R&B, Indian music/lyrics, and American music mixers and singers. Her own British based film company is co working with film teams from India, England and America for each sequence of the film concerning them. A major part of the film is shot in India, and only shorter parts of it are shot in England and America. It seems as though she has placed all these different teams together on purpose to show how a mix of different cultures can work together, and make something that is beneficial to all parties. It has become a Masala product for a Masala audience where the flavour is the key to the outcome and tickles people's taste buds, hereby awakening their understanding and interest and opening up a new dialogue.

It is a fact that continuing work for women's rights in India is needed, but it is difficult to break through because of economy, culture and religious beliefs especially in the countryside and small villages where the caste system has a strong hold in the people. Chadha and other Indian female film producers are working to give people today information on the

situation for Indian women. This will hopefully affect fellow women in need of the necessary information, possibilities and help to get an education and better circumstances.



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