



The Study Of The Cinematic Rendition Of Jane Austen's "Pride And Prejudice" As The Film Bride And Prejudice And "Emma" As The Film Aisha

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to do an in-depth study of the Bollywood film Bride and Prejudice (2004) directed by Gurinder Chadha, which is adapted from the most notable Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice" (1813) and the film Aisha (2010) directed by Rajshree Ojha which is another adapted film from the most popular Jane Austen's novel "Emma" (1815). The Indian film Bride and Prejudice starring the gorgeous Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Martin Henderson, Anupam Kher, Namrata Shirodkar, Naveen Andrews, etc, made an outstanding attempt to wholeheartedly depict and reciprocate the novelist's thematic concerns, a replica of which is evident in the cinematic representation. On the other hand, The Indian film Aisha starring the beautiful Sonam Kapoor and Abhay Deol etc., made a striking attempt to wonderfully showcase westernized Indian culture through the protagonist giving justice to the novelist's plot and scenes, portraying an ahead of time mindset of the central character. This paper reveals that book-to-film adaptation is similar in terms of their intertwining plot and storyline yet very different in terms of cinematically portraying the intricate social and cultural differences and attempts to highlight the same with the help of a comparative study.

Keywords - Adaptation studies, Bride and Prejudice film, Comparative studies- book to film, Pride and Prejudice novel, Aisha film, Emma novel

Introduction

The Bollywood film Bride and Prejudice (2004) directed by Gurinder Chadha attempts to represent Jane Austen's story into a cinematic form of representation. The film wonderfully succeeds in showing how the cultured society of Indian origin treats a lady who is considered to be of age to get married and the tensions haunting the parents of the Indian household bearing a girl of age eligible to be married for her marriage. The close-knit well-built relationship among the 4 sisters in the film helps us to see through their story how women can support each other and nurture women in an interconnected world. The film portrays an overall outlook towards prejudice against women of Indian origin. Simultaneously, the paper will explore how the film subtly gives the audience a message to focus on preconceived notions of the native Indian land, people, values, and cultures. The plot of the novel and film are similar in terms of depiction of the institution of marriage, the urge to rise the social and economic hierarchy irrespective of the fragile web of life that interconnects all the family members and defends cultural diversity. The pressure of finding a suitable suitor for marriage and getting married at the earliest makes Lalita Bakshi who depicts Jane's character from the novel feel left alone by her family due to the contradictory ways of thinking. The Punjabi backdrop and socio-cultural setting act as the major difference in the book-to-film transition. The film showcases the Indian values instilled in the protagonist Lalita and her 4 sisters namely Jaya Bakshi, Lakhi Bakshi, and Maya Bakshi. The course of action and preceding scenes in the film clear out the theme of misconception and misunderstanding among the varying characters.

The Indian film Aisha (2010) starring the beautiful Sonam Kapoor and Abhay Deol directed by Rajshree Ojha inspired by Jane Austen's novel "Emma" in its cinematic form showcases the modern Indian society and the

journey of the protagonist Aisha Kapoor. The film revolves around clueless Aisha trying to do matchmaking of her friends namely Shefali Thakur, whom she considers as a project instead of her friend and her best friend Pinky Bose whom she ends up hurting towards the climax of the film. Aisha is shown to be highly fashionable when it comes to her sense of styling herself or the characters around her. She is a modern Indian girl with no absolute goal. The film revolves around the central character Aisha and her act of matchmaking and manipulation of her friends and relatives. The climax is more of a revelation of truth and self realization of the protagonist. In the end, she discovers her true love namely Arjun Burman and apologizes for her naive wrongdoings to her friends done unintentionally. Both the film and the novel portrays the journey of the central character, marking the major similarity between the two. However, the major difference between the film and the novel lies in the cultural and social depictions of the characters and the society the film is set in.

Adaptation studies and its relevance

It refers to a pre-existing work of art that has been converted into the form of a cinematic representation. The film is considered to be the most powerful technological and cultural discovery of modern times that could influence worldwide audiences. There are multiple obstacles in terms of adapting a novel and converting it into a film and requires phenomenal talent and hard work to provide justice to the book-to-screen representation of the story. Adaptations are generally literary pieces or art or theatrical work which can be in the form of musical theatre, non-fiction or fiction, short stories, comic books, etc have made their journey to cinematic representation. In the modern scenario, it is noted that adaptation studies provide a great deal of persuasion amongst the students in the field of education. The interest of students wanting to pursue adaptation studies is growing day by day contributing to the successful growth of this branch of study. Moreover, filmmakers around the globe are now inclining towards the story books in search of a great story to be converted into a film which later acts as a delight to the global audience with respect to the worldwide viewership. With respect to the book based films being produced each year around the world, the scope of adaptation studies goes on increasing simultaneously.

The Setting - In Bride and Prejudice and Aisha

The film *Bride and Prejudice*, which is set in India and centers on the typical Punjabi traditional Bakshi family, manages to be both contemporary and grounded in the small-town, agricultural setting of Jane Austen's novel. In Regency England, a woman's world was limited and mostly determined by her family. She was shielded from any suggestion of scandal or sexual relations with other men and was never permitted to spend time alone with men who weren't related to her by relation. The charming, humorous musical by director Gurinder Chadha brings that experience to the modern Punjabi farming family and replicates the aforementioned scenario in the Indian context adding an outstanding flavour to the cinematic representation for its audience to endure and enjoy. The Indian film *Aisha* (2010), is culturally and geographically set in India. It highlights the modern upper class and beautifully showcases the mannerisms of the Indian rich society. On the other hand, the novel "Emma" is set in Highbury, England. The novel depicts the early nineteenth century, contrary to the film which depicts the modern era. The setting of both the films *Bride and Prejudice* and *Aisha* differs from the adapted novels "Pride and Prejudice" and "Emma" respectively majorly due to the time gap between the time in which it was written and the time it was filmed.

Thematic concerns - In Bride and Prejudice and Aisha

The major themes showcased in the film *Bride and Prejudice* are values attached to the customary Indian marriage system, the concept of love, rank, the importance of family, fixed gender roles, economic hierarchy, and socio-cultural diversity. Following are a few central themes discussed- Love and adoration- One of the most beloved love stories in English literature may be found in "Pride and Prejudice": the courtship between Elizabeth and Darcy in the novel and Lalita and Darcy in the film *Bride and Prejudice*. Like in any good love story, the couple has to avoid and go beyond a lot of obstacles, starting with the tensions brought on by their traits. Because of her pride, Elizabeth in the novel and Lalita in the film form a negative first impression of Darcy. Darcy's prejudice against Elizabeth's low social status temporarily prevents him from seeing all of her many positive traits in the novel.

Rank and reputation- A woman's reputation is paramount in the society that "Pride and Prejudice" portrays. There are expectations about how a lady should act. She faces rejection because she deviates from social norms. This motif is explored in the book when Elizabeth walks to Netherfield and, much to the dismay of Miss Bingley and her friends who are worried about their reputations, arrives wearing dirty skirts. Other times, Mrs. Bennet's rude, foolish actions make her unpopular with the more sophisticated and snobbish Darcys and Bingleys, similarly varying scenes in the film *Bride and Prejudice* portray the importance of rank and reputation in the setting of the film.

Gender - The novel "Pride and Prejudice" is set in an era when men and women had vastly distinct options and influences, and gender roles were extremely rigid. For female characters such as Charlotte Lucas and the Bennet sisters, marriage is a crucial issue because it is the only path to financial security and self-determination for women and such is the case in the film *Bride and Prejudice* showcasing gender as a crucial theme.

Marriage and union - To the female characters in the story of both the novel and film, marriage symbolizes their aspirations for the future more than just a means of expressing love or forming a relationship. Because

women were not allowed to own property in Regency England, the Bennet sisters will need to rely on their husbands or other male relatives for security following the death of their father and so is the case in terms of Bakshi sisters. For them, marriage therefore signifies long-term stability. Although in the novel, it's simple to see Mrs. Bennet's joy at Mr. Bingley leasing Netherfield as naive, she implies that one of her daughters would become "established", a term that denotes long-term security if she marries Mr. Bingley.

The major themes showcased in the film Aisha are -

Social Status and Marriage- Both the film Aisha and the novel "Emma" have strong female characters and their journey throughout the preceding story highlights the importance of the institution of marriage with respect to the social status of the characters both in the film and the novel. The story revolves around the central theme of love and marriage in both the film and the novel, where the status of the characters are seen to be playing a crucial role. Shefali in the film belongs to the low class and Aisha belongs to the upper class. Their portrayal of way of living like clothes, way of talking etc., depict the class status in the film.

The blinding power of imagination and matchmaking- The character Aisha is shown to be extremely imaginative and lives in her self created bubble which has blinded her from seeing the actual truth. She believes that she is a perfect matchmaker but is actually the opposite. The blinding power of imagination and matchmaking behaviour is observed dominant in both the central characters Aisha in the film and Emma in the novel.

Life of a Woman- The lives of the women shown in the film Aisha differ from that shown in the novel "Emma". The occupation especially differs and the reason behind it is the time gap between the cultural development of the society. Women portrayed in the novel depicts the typical early nineteenth century woman, on the other hand, in the film the women depicted are more outgoing in nature. Both the film and the novel portray strong, independent protagonists namely Aisha and Emma respectively.

Pride and Vanity- The central female character Aisha is portrayed to be very clueless as far as her ambition in life is concerned. She is known to be fickle minded when it comes to her hobbies and aim in life leading to the development of false pride and vanity in the character fuelled by her high social class and supportive father's blind love. She is a self centered girl spoiled by the attention of her friends and her family, which is somewhat similar yet different from Austen's character Emma.

The Protagonists and plot- - In Bride and Prejudice and Aisha

In the film Bride and Prejudice, Lalita Bakshi is the protagonist, who is a young lady who resides with her family in Amritsar, India. The family receives an invitation to a friend's wedding, where Lalita meets Will Darcy, an attractive and well-off American who has been friends with Indian-British barrister Balraj and his sister Kiran for a long time. Like Darcy, Balraj is drawn to Lalita right away, and so is Balraj to Jaya. Lalita dislikes Darcy during the wedding reception, but she eventually decides to go when Balraj invites Jaya to Goa and Mr. Bakshi wants her to go as well. Lalita and Darcy argue about women's roles and India's economic prospects while in Goa. Lalita later that evening, Lalita meets Johnny Wickham, an old London acquaintance of Darcy, on the beach, and he confirms her low opinion of Darcy. Lakhi takes advantage of the family's layover in London to sneak out and meet Wickham. Lalita receives an apology from Darcy, who also informs her that Balraj and Jaya have made up. After realizing that Darcy was correct about Wickham, Lalita asks him for assistance in finding Lakhi. Darcy tells how Wickham, who tried to marry Georgie for their family's money when he was sixteen, got her pregnant and fled when his scheme failed. Together, they save Lakhi, and Lalita agrees to Darcy's suggestion. In the climax, there is a double wedding between Lalita and Darcy and Jaya and Balraj.

The film Aisha, which is also set in India, the protagonist Aisha Kapoor is an upper-class woman. She is highly fashion inclined and wastes her father's money on shopping for herself and her friends every now and then. She thinks she's ideal for arranging marriages between her friends and considers herself as an expert. She keeps on changing her hobbies throughout the film from painting to matchmaking to shopping etc which is very unlike the character of Emma mentioned in Austen's novel marking out the major difference between the protagonist of the novel and the film. Aisha's neighbour Arjun Burman and Aalia's elder sister are always berating her for her shallow ways and matchmaking schemes and advising her to stop meddling in other people's affairs but she refuses to accept the same until the end of the film when she realizes her love for Arjun and her ill actions done towards her friends resulting in her having sour relationship with them. The climax of the film is a happy one where Aisha is united with her love and resolves her relationship with her friends which is very similar to Emma finally reuniting with her love Mr. Knightley at the end of Austen's novel. The climax of both the film Aisha and the novel "Emma" are very similar when it comes about uniting couples. In the end of the film, the couples Aisha and Arjun, Shefali and Saurabh and Pinky and Randhir are united and in the end of the novel, three marriages are announced: Emma Woodhouse and Mr. Knightley, Jane and Frank and Harriet and Mr. Martin marked the major similarity between the book and the film.

Similarities and Differences in the Social and Cultural Depictions - In Bride and Prejudice and Aisha Transnational films are the results of cultural hybridization that goes beyond borders based on discrimination and unequal power dynamics, as well as the limitations of cinematic genres. Hollywood, Bollywood, and British cinematic traditions are all incorporated into Chadha's 2004 cross-border film Bride and Prejudice, which

metaphorically depicts the resurgence of old prejudices in modern interactions between Eastern and Western cultures. This paper reflects upon the conflicting meanings and interpretations that the film presents when situated against its globalized cultural setting using a methodological approach from cultural studies. In the film, *Bride and Prejudice*, depictions of songs in varying languages, colorful Punjabi attires, sweet dishes like ras malai and jalebi, and varying dancing forms like bhangra (Punjabi dance form) and Garba (Gujarati dance form) brilliantly bring forth the rich Indian culture on screen which is contradictory to the British customs and traditions mentioned in Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice". However, the plot, the central storyline, and themes of the film are similar to those of Austen's novel yet differences are noticed through the exchange of dialogues and preceding scenes in the film. Both the film and book give utmost importance to social gatherings and interpersonal relationships.

The major similarity between the film *Aisha* and the novel "Emma" is the culture of outing portrayed in both the film and the novel. Culture of going for picnics and outings in nature is prevalent. On the other hand, in the film the central characters also go for a river rafting camp. The novel is based on English language whereas the dialogues of the film is in the native Hindi language marking the language difference between the novel and the film. Both *Aisha* and *Emma* belong to the upper class society and have an excellent sense of fashion and are strong, independent in nature. The major difference yet again lies in between the western and eastern culture such as that of the mannerisms and etiquettes, Indian setting, Indianized characterization of characters etc. The usage of varying songs in the film are very delicately depicted as a cultural representation of Indian society. There are multiple songs in the film which are missing in the novel due to the obvious reasons of time gap and cultural differences. The song "Gal Mitthi Mitthi Bol" by Tochi Raina in the film *Aisha* shown during the climax of the film showcases the Indian cultural wedding set up. It also shows the Indian attire, saree, worn by the female characters in the film whereas the male characters are seen to wear sherwani and kurta pajamas. The songs, dressing sense, cultural and social set up shown in the film is an outstanding view of the modern Indian society depicted in the film by the filmmaker Rajshree Ojha which is extremely different to the social and cultural set up of Austen's novel "Emma".

Conclusion

Bride and Prejudice intricately weaves a cinematic narrative that explores the intersectionality of Austen's central theme of love, marriage, prejudices, cultural norms, and values through the journey of the character of Lalita Bakshi in the film. Her connection with the challenges of societal norms echoes the marriage institution's belief in the intrinsic bond between women and men. The derogatory labeling of the Indian bride who is expected to behave in a certain way reflects upon the prejudice which is similar yet very opposite to that of Austen's protagonist Elizabeth Bennet. The urge of Manorama Bakshi (mother) of Lalita Bakshi and her sisters to get married to a rich husband and settle abroad highlights historical patterns of exploitation. However, it can be concluded that the principles of marriage, exemplify a harmonious coexistence and relevance between the Bollywood film *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) directed by Gurinder Chadha, and Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice" (1813), furthermore, emphasizing the importance of interconnectedness and rejecting artificial boundaries as shown in the climax.

The film *Aisha* accurately succeeds in portraying Jane Austen's central theme of social status and marriage, the blinding power of imagination and matchmaking, life of a woman and pride and vanity in the cinematic representation. The scenes and plots of the film differs culturally and socially in terms of the Eastern and Western context but the art of characterization of the female central characters namely *Aisha* in the film and *Emma* in the novel are pretty similar with respect to the qualities and attributes they possess such as belonging to the high social class, matchmaking tendencies, good sense of fashion, upper class rich woman etc. However, it can be concluded that both the film and the novel are unique in their own ways with respect to the time and generation gap of film and the novel production, yet, they are very similar in highlighting the storyline, art of characterization, scenes and primary essence of the novel.

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