



Acclaimed
Director
Now Sets
Foot On
Bollywood
Terrain

GURINDER'S NEXT BEND

As one of the most critically acclaimed South Asian filmmakers and the creative force behind one of the most successful British films of all times, Gurinder Chadha sports a widely international audience. Still garnering loads of accolade for *Bend It Like Beckham*, Chadha is now all set to make a British film with a Bolly influence. Based on Jane Austen's famous novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Chadha's modern-day remake of this English story will include Bollywood-esque music and melodrama.

Based on the film's title, *Bride and Prejudice*, and Chadha's humour, one can expect a cheeky twist to the British classic. The story of the Bennett family of Hertfordshire transforms into that of the Bakshi family of India. Yet the film is not a parody says the director.

"Bride and Prejudice is essentially a British film – it's not a Bollywood film," reveals Chadha. "It pays tribute to some of the Bollywood films I grew up with, so it's a British film with a Bollywood influence."

Playing the lead role of Elizabeth (Lalita) will be Aishwarya Rai. Namrata Shirodkar, Meghna Kothari and Peeya Rai will play the other sisters, and Nadira Babbar, their mother (Mrs. Bakshi). *Bride and Prejudice* is supposed to have seven songs composed by Anu Malik. The film will be shot between India, the US and the UK.

The names of the male counterparts in the film are yet to be announced.

"It's a very international movie," says husband and co-writer, Paul Mayeda Berges, who has been working on the script with Chadha. "The aim is to introduce international audiences who are not familiar with Indian cinema to Bollywood films. It has everything that is wonderful about Indian films."

Born in Kenya, Chadha arrived in England with her family in 1951. She grew up as a South Hall girl and began her career as a BBC reporter. Chadha directed several award winning documentaries for the British Film Institute, BBC and Channel 4 before directing her first hit feature *Bhaji on the Beach*. The film won numerous international awards including the jury prize at Locarno Film Festival and the BAFTA nomination for the Best British Film of 1994. *What's Cooking?* was the opening night film at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival and won Chadha the award for best British director in the London Film Critics Circle 2001.

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A box office smash hit, *Bend It Like Beckham* earned over 11 million pounds - the most ever for a British film in UK box office history. It also topped box office charts in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The film won audience choice awards at film festivals in Locarno, Sydney and Toronto.

Commenting on the worldwide success of *Bend It Like Beckham*, Chadha says, "The film operates in a cultural paradigm...A film is about that experience in those countries where people try to balance different traditions and it makes sense to them. The world that they operate in is made accessible and made personal."

From *Bhaji on the Beach* to *Bend It Like Beckham*, Chadha's films also have an endearing quality to them. "It's the people around me," observes Chadha. "Ultimately what's around us affects us... people who we are close to, we see them in an affectionate way. That affection comes out."

Chadha muses, "What I do is make a film that comes from inside – by being who I am, certain things are sorted out."

WORDS PREETI THANDI
PHOTOS PROVIDED by GURINDER CHADHA