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A Study of Aditya Chopra's *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* as a Postcolonial Film

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Abstract:

This paper is about the issues of homelessness, nostalgia, patriarchy, feminism and culture raised through the film *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* directed by Aditya Chopra. This Bollywood blockbuster of 1995 completed twenty years in one theatre in Mumbai. This film is relevant from the point of view of the problems of immigrants, the system of patriarchy, sacred institution of marriage and deep rooted cultural values and love of the country and homeland. Keeping in view all these issues, an attempt has been made to study the film from the perspective of postcolonialism where these issues have been raised exhaustively throughout the film.

Keywords: Patriarchy, feminism, culture, homelessness, love, values.

Literature is the mirror of society and mirror to the society. As a scholar of literature, one must have heard this line and must have experienced it. Not only the books but films, television serials and radio are also the part of literature. All these forms of literature are not only for entertainment but also reflect the reality of life and give voice to the problems and issues not spoken widely but felt from the heart. In the recent years, film studies as a subject has emerged and is taught in universities as films are not only about fantasy but reality.

In this paper an attempt has been made to study the 1995's blockbuster film *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*. At that time when I watched the film, it was only the form of entertainment to me. I always loved watching this film whenever it is telecasted on television. Recently, this film meant different to me from the perspective of many issues related to immigration, home, homelessness, culture, patriarchy and marriage. In the contemporary world, these issues have been discussed a lot and are currently in discussions among the elite class.

The film *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* starts with Chaudhary Baldev Singh's soliloquy in which he is clad in three piece suit with kurta, feeding doves and says:

This is London, the greatest city in the world. For 22 years I have lived here.
Every morning I take a walk down this street. Every morning the street asks me

my name. Chaudhary Baldev Singh? Who are you? Where are you from? Why are you here? Do I have a reply? After half a lifetime spent here, this land still remains alien to me: and I to it. No one here knows me, none, except these doves, because they're like me. Neither do they belong to a country. Just drop down where they find food, have their fill, then fly on. When shall I fly? I don't know. Of necessity, my wings are clipped. I'm shackled to my bread. But someday I'll surely go... to my land. To my Punjab. (*Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*, 1995)

This soliloquy of Chaudhary Baldev Singh has much in it. He is a first generation immigrant who has been living in London for twenty two years but never felt himself at home and still finds himself as a stranger in the city. It seems to him that the place still needs his introduction and the reason for his staying there in London. But he has no reply. He compares himself to the doves, which drops down for the food and then flies away. He is also like those doves. He has left his homeland just for the food. He wants to go back to his homeland but in earning the bread and butter, he is being shackled to the necessities and requirements of the family. But he is confident and hopeful that one day he will go to his home, his Punjab (a state of India).

While feeding the doves, he closes his eyes and lost in the thoughts of his home land, Punjab, and hears the following music deep in his heart:

Koyal kuke hook uthaye, yadon ki bandook chalye,
(A cry arises from koyal (singing bird) which brings up memories)
Baagon me jhoolon ke mausam wapas aaye re,
(In the gardens once again there is a season of swings (here *happiness*))
ghar aaja pardesi tera des bulaye re
(Come home you foreigner, your country calls you)
(*Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*, 1995)

This song is important from the perspective of immigrants who always think of their homes and eager to return to their homelands. They are always in the memories of their homelands and unable to detach themselves from the memories of their homes. There is always a voice from the homeland to come back to the home. They find a refuge in the memories of the past.

Chaudhary Baldev Singh is also one of those immigrants who have the memories of his homeland with him. He is portrayed as a character who is dressed in three piece suit with kurta instead of shirt. His is in half Indian – half English clothes, or can be termed as hybrid attire. Having an umbrella just like English men but not holding it according to them. This opening scene of the film has assertion about the homelessness, nostalgia, hybridity and immigration.

Chaudhary Baldev Singh has been portrayed as a character, which lives physically in England while his heart lies in his home country, which is India.

Since the very beginning, Baldev's family is portrayed as a typical Indian family, whose head is always a male. He has a wife and two daughters named Simran and Rajeshwari (Chhutki) in the family. His wife never addresses him by his name, always use typical Punjabi words like *Wo, Unhe, and Ji*. His daughters, brought up in the English culture have dual identities, wear western clothes as well as Indian clothes, respects their father and his attachment of this home country. It has been depicted that when their father is out they enjoy western music but when there is a time of their father to be at home, they switch the music from western to Indian.

The issue of home, nostalgia and culture is raised through the incident when Baldev receives a letter from Punjab, by his dear friend Ajeet. He can smell the fragrance of Punjab from the letter. He asks his elder daughter Simran to read aloud the letter, and when it comes about the marriage of his daughter with his friend's son Kuljeet, Simran stops there and leaves place. On seeing this, Baldev is happy that it is their culture, where daughters feel shy when it comes to discussion about their marriage. He feels proud of his parenting by instilling the feeling of Indian culture. Being in London, he considers it as a success that his daughter has no effect of the culture of England.

When Simran's friends plan for a tour to Zurich, she agrees and wants to see the beautiful places. But, for her it is only possible when her father gives permission to go with her friends. According to Indian culture, a young girl is not allowed to travel without any male from the family. At this point she has to ask her father first. This act raises the system of patriarchy in Indian or Asian culture.

Nationalism, as a part of diaspora literature, is taken up through several incidents. In the first half of the film, this is depicted when one the friends go to buy drinks from the store of Baldev and is refused by the owner as he has closed the store. This boy returns without drinks, and then Raj, the hero of the film, also a Punjabi, whose father migrated to England and now doing well, says that he is going to bring the drinks and asks his friends to keep the car start. He goes to the store owner Baldev and tells him that he suffers from sinus and needs analgesic, also says that at this time only an Indian can help another Indian. On hearing about the nationality, Baldev opens the store and gives him the medicine. This incident brings to light the unity among the citizens who share the same origin. This feeling of nationalism is strong enough who lives outside the borders of the country of their origin.

Raj, good in everything except studies, has interest in everything like parties, outings, friends and girls. He is depicted as a boy who flirts with the girls and not at all serious in the relationships. He is a product of English culture, who drinks beer with his father, shares his desires about the beauty of the girls.

When Raj plans a tour to Zurich with his two friends, he coincidentally meets Simran in the train. They both struck in a compartment and then Raj starts flirting with Simran. And on their tour they meet at different occasions accidentally. On one occasion when Simran misses her train and there she meets Raj, who has also missed his train, ask Simran to come with her to another city and there they will be with their friends. First Simran refuses, and then comes with him in his car.

Their car broke off and Raj asks for one night stay in one house, he was offered help. When Simran comes to know that the owner has offered one room, she at once leaves the room and goes to the stable. This decision of leaving the room of warmth and going to the stable instead where there is no heating is about the culture and values of the traditional Indian family where an unmarried girl is not supposed to stay with any stranger in a single room. Simran has dual identities; she lives in London, wears western clothes, but cannot stay like other British girls with any stranger in a single room.

While waiting for the train at the railway station, when Raj asks Simran about her dream husband, she says that she is going to be married to her father's friend's son. Her father had fixed her marriage in childhood. She says that even she has not seen her future husband. Raj is shocked to hear this. He could not believe that in this modern time how a girl can live the person whom she has not seen. This instance of marriage arranged by the father raises the issue of feminism where a girl is not supposed to make her choice. She has no opinion about her life partner with whom she is going to spend her whole life. This system of arranged marriage is a part of Indian culture.

On return from the tour, when Simran shares her experiences with her mother and tells her that the face of the stranger, whom she has often thought, has come in her life. She dares to express her desires and dreams. Here, Simran behaves like other girls who openly express their consent for marriage. She is torn between the ideas relationships in the west and in the east. When her father hears her discussion with the mother, he blames Simran for breaking his trust in her. When Simran weeps, he asks her wife to let her weep as only she is responsible for this. He at once decides to sell off the house and going back to his country, his home. The film presents a gap between two different viewpoints. There appears to be an unbridgeable gap between two civilizations represented by Baldev Singh and Simran. This story invokes the terms and tropes made popular by Homi K. Bhabha in his famous book *The Location of Culture*. John McLeod remarks:

The Location of Culture addresses those who live 'border lives' on the margins of different nations, in-between contrary homelands. For Bhabha, living at the border, at the edge, requires a new 'art of the present'. This depends upon embracing the contrary logic of the things like history, identity, and community. (McLeod 217)

When Raj comes to meet Simran to her house, he comes to know through the neighbour that the family has sold everything and has returned back to India. He decides to go there and bring with him her bride, as guided by his father to enter home with the bride. While in Punjab, India, Simran is not at all at ease. She is missing her love and often she hears the music played by Raj in England. This state of mind, in which Simran is being shown, is the one who is longing to meet her first love. Whenever she hears the music, she puts her hands on her ears. And one day while she was sitting beside the window, lost in thoughts, her mother comes and makes her understand that women have no rights in comparison to men, her studies were stopped because her brothers had to study, and says that we the women have to sacrifice at every step of the life. This statement of her mother reflects the patriarchal system and gender bias where girls are not entitled to get the same education as boys. It shows as how people want their boys to get education and discontinue the education of girls when they have limited financial resources. This can be seen in the light of gender discrimination, where a girl is not entitled just because she is considered as inferior to a boy. She has not the privilege to complete her education whether she is good at studies.

True love never cheats, and the same happened in the film. In search of his love, Raj comes to Punjab. He is able to meet Simran and ask her that he will marry her only with the consent of her father. Raj was confident that he will be able to marry her and he asks Simran to give him support in achieving his goal. It is decided that both will be strangers. And soon Raj plans to achieve his goal. He approached through Kuljeet, the fiancée of Simran, and able to befriend him by saving Kuljeet's life.

In a dramatic way, Raj enters in the house of Kuljeet and starts living there. Simran's and Kuljeet's house was opposite to each other in the same lane. Raj goes to meet Simran daily in the late night. One day Simran's mother sees Raj and her daughter, Simran, with each other. She brings both of them in the room and gives them her jewels and asks them to run away from and to get married. This step from the side of a mother is presented in the light of culture and patriarchy where there is no importance of love. She says that Simran's father will not let her daughter to marry her love. She says that nobody will understand their love. She advised them to leave the place soon and run away. But Raj refused to run away and ask her that he has full faith in his love. This faith has the roots of values which he received from her mother when he was a child. He says that he has been told that right way has some difficulties but for short time and then it leads to peace. This upbringing of Raj brings to light his cultural roots with which he is firm and determined to marry his beloved with the consent her father.

Raj becomes the favourite of the two families by his behavior. He is seen everywhere in the two houses. And this continues till the time of the marriage of Kuljeet and Simran. Raj's father asked him to go to Simran's house and bring Simran with him. His father asked him to meet at the railway station and Raj goes to Simran's house. There Simran's father was raging in anger with a photograph in which Raj is giving a flower to Simran. When Raj comes to him, all

the family members were standing there and Simran, crying, makes complaint to Raj that she had told him to flee away from there but he refused. His father slaps Raj in front of the family members. One and another and in this way he gives many slaps on Raj's face. But Raj remains silent.

Addressing Simran, he says that they couldn't flee from their parents, who brought us up and love us. He further says that these parents think of betterment for us, and does best for their children. He asserts his love and says no matter he loved Simran like mad one, no matter that he couldn't live without her, and saying all this he gives Simran's hand in her father's hand and says that he wanted to marry Simran with his consent, he wanted to win hearts and not to break them.

These statements of Raj give another dimension to his personality. A boy of London, who flirts there and never consider love as a sacred feeling, but when he falls in love, it becomes the sacred feeling for him, it becomes his passion and his belief in marriage as a sacred institution reflects his identity as an Indian. His love remains only for Simran and he is mad for her. Here, he wins the hearts by not taking Simran without the consent of her father. He dares to face his father because his love was pure. He did not took the step of taking Simran away with him without the consent of her father because he understands the reputation and condition of girls in the Indian society who runs away and marry by their choice. According to Raj, where would one go after running away from the family? This assertion of family in his dialogue gives a clear picture of his roots where one has no importance without the family. Family has its importance and value in India and has always been the source of love, care and support.

After this, Raj leaves for the railway station, where his father was waiting for Raj to come with Simran. When he sees that Raj is alone, he asks him about Simran. Raj says that her father will bring Simran to him. And the same happens in the end. When Raj boards the train and train moves, Simran asks her father to leave her and let her go with Raj. He holds her hand and when he sees that Raj is continuously looking Simran but not saying anything. Finally Baldev leaves the hand of his daughter Simran and says that nobody can love her more than this boy and ask her to go with Raj.

There is another dimension added to the personality of Raj, who has full faith and confidence on his love and the values he has inherited from him Indian mother. In all, it can be said that the film *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* reflects the true picture of Indians and Indian society. No matter an Indian lives in UK, USA or any other part of the world, India and Indian values remain with the Indians. Indians are so much attached and connected to their roots that no matter where they live, they never forget the fragrance of their soil, aroma of their food, values of the culture and the respect of the elders.

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