

**Reception of Cinematic Diversity: Analyzing Pakistani Audience's Response to
Bridgerton Season-2**

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Abstract



This study explores South Asian representation in the popular American show Bridgerton, which is available on the Netflix subscription streaming service and has been a global success. The research work is rooted in adaptation studies, as the show is based upon a specific series of novels by Julia Quinn and focuses on examining the responses of the Pakistani audience to the cinematic representation of diversity in the American show. An analysis of the popular reception of the Season-2 of Bridgerton in Pakistan will help us understand how diversity is received in this part of the world. The Season-2 of Bridgerton is loosely based on Quinn's The Viscount Who Loved Me, and the plot is changed considerably to include South Asian actors. Kate Sheffield becomes Kate Sharma, and her story becomes different from the novel to incorporate her South Asian lineage. Findings from the textual analysis are used to conduct structured interviews with Pakistani readers of the book series and viewers of the show. The purpose, therefore, is to investigate the reception of cinematic diversity created for a predominantly Anglophone audience by a non-Anglophone South Asian audience.

Keywords: Bridgerton Season-2, Regency Romance, Cinematic Diversity, Shondaland, Netflix, Popular Shows, Adaptation Studies, South Asian Culture

Introduction

Reactions to popular shows have far-reaching consequences since they affect culture, not just an individual. When a non-Anglophone South Asian audience is interested in a show that has been created primarily for an Anglophone audience, their reception of the show can be analyzed to explore concepts of diversity, internalized racism, and power dynamics in postcolonial countries. The fascination of postcolonial societies with 'white' culture and Englishness largely accounts for the enduring appeal of Regency-era romances in South Asia. The analysis of adaptations within cinematic studies offers valuable perspectives on how modern plays and films diverge from traditional notions of authenticity and instead integrate a more diverse range of imaginative components. This research looks into the popular reception of the Season-2 of *Bridgerton* in Pakistan to explore how the concept of diversity has been received in this part of the world. It is important to focus on Season-2 as it introduces the Sharma family, particularly Kate Sharma and Edwina Sharma. Kate and Edwina Sharma are Indian half-sisters and embody South Asian values and traditions.

The popularity of Regency romance fiction and *Bridgerton* show needs to be analyzed to understand how Anglophone reading culture and televised entertainment infiltrate South Asian Pakistani society. In an article published in the *Daily Dawn*, Javaria Farooqui writes, "Pakistani women love books and shows set in Regency-era England because the exoticism of Englishness appeals to them and because they relate to that period. All the talk about *Bridgerton* compares the patriarchal, social, and economic systems of present-day Pakistan and 19th century England." She refers to a participant from her research group who has defined the relatability of the Regency world as she loves the idea of showing the girls off to possible husbands, dating, engagements, arranged marriages, and a class system focusing on matching the daughter with the guy who has the most titles, lands, etc., (Farooqui, 2022). J.M. Decker (2007) has discussed in his article that in a novel's screenplay, hundreds of pages of text may be cut, and even more major sections may be cut during the performance and editing phases. The resulting movie, which might also add characters, language, or story aspects for consistency, will thus highlight the differences and analogies more clearly. A viewer can avoid paying great attention to recognize the film adaptation as a dramatic divergence from a well-known novel because there are fewer instances of unmediated text (p.145). Brian McFarlane, in

his introduction to *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*, stated that since the beginning of film's development as a dominantly narrative medium, the filmmakers themselves have been referencing literary works, particularly novels of various degrees of cultural prominence.

Modern cinema has diverged from following the adaptation of films and movies. Hallow (2023) has given an account of many recent adaptations that have been successful, despite an alteration from the original text. Thomas Leitch, in his article "Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory" (2003), has agreed that successful films break the rules and are adapted rather than translated (151, 154). He mentioned that adaptation theory had yet to be addressed despite its venerable history, widespread practice, and apparent influence. He has considered the element of fidelity fallacious, and as it is impossible to achieve, undesirable, and theoretically possible only in a trivial sense, the fidelity of any adaptation to its source text, whether conceived as success in re-creating specific textual details or the effect of the whole, is a hopelessly fallacious measure of the value of a given adaptation. The exact translation of the text will result in the flaws of the adapted work being exposed, just as they are in a translation, because the original works are better at being themselves. Therefore, the remakes' best efforts to mimic the source material will reveal their differences even if presented in the same medium.

The research focuses solely on the second book in the series, *The Viscount Who Loved Me* (Quinn, 2000). This television series focuses on the romantic exploits of the Bridgerton siblings in Regency England. There are no characters of African descent in the books, in contrast to the television program, which attempted to increase the show's diversity in its cast. The Netflix series *Bridgerton* has gained popularity worldwide in a short time. In Pakistan, it was among the top ten series soon after its launch. According to a poll conducted by Dawn News, *Bridgerton* Season-2, which made its debut on Netflix on March 25, 2022, has been viewed for a total of 627.11 million hours as of April 17, 2022, since its debut on March 25. The streaming giant's criteria to compile its most popular list is the number of hours users spent watching content during the first 28 days that Season-1 was available on Netflix.

Bridgerton series and novel characterization are framed of the members of the upper-class society, labeled as the ton. Season-2 gives an account of the Sharma sisters, Kate and Edwina Sharma, who are shown as two half-sisters. The story revolves around a love triangle between two sisters and the Bridgerton Viscount. The Sharma sisters arrive in England to find a husband for Edwina, the younger sister. *Bridgerton* Season-2 has so far not refrained in the slightest from integrating everything that is South Asian. The production has made an effort to ensure that everything has a hint of South Asian representation, from the outfits to the accessories to the characters' speech. Viewers have taken notice of the care that the program has taken to portray its South Asian characters. The terms Appa, Didi, and Bon are regularly used throughout Season-2. All these words are used in South Asian culture. In episode six, while applying turmeric paste to Edwina's arms and face, the Sharma ladies, Kate, Edwina, and their mother Mary are shown to sit together as it occurs in pre-bridal ceremonies, something which is customary in India, as is said to bestow blessings on the soon-to-be-married pair. Another South Asian aspect is the orchestral soundtrack of *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*, a popular Bollywood movie's theme song, playing in the backdrop of the event. In the portrayal of both sisters, many South Asian practices have been shown, including South Asian values and traditions such as sisterhood, love, respect, and strong and determined women. The *Bridgerton* series takes a break from traditional white-washed cinematic adaptations produced by Anglophone media.

The Sharma sisters travel to England intending to find Edwina, the family's youngest sister, a husband. After the Queen has declared Anthony Bridgerton a diamond, he makes his advances toward Edwina. However, a rather unconventional romance develops between Kate and Anthony, eventually resulting in their marriage, thereby making Kate a Viscountess member of the Bridgerton family. Edwina is oblivious to Anthony's advances toward her. The Season-2 of *Bridgerton* has not yet shown any signs of holding back from incorporating any aspect of South Asian culture. The production team has put in much work to make sure that every aspect of the show, from the dialogue to the accents to the clothing, has at least a little bit of a South Asian flavor to it. The viewers have taken note of the attention to detail put into the program's depiction of its South Asian characters.

The incorporation of South Asian actors and actresses into a popular and devotedly watched Netflix series has resulted in a significant reaction from viewers all around the world, particularly

among South Asian viewers. Social media platforms have been teeming with various responses from people towards the show. When people saw themselves and their culture shown on film, it resulted in several emotional outbursts. Such as, @kschameleon, on her Twitter account, responded to the oiling scene, "Not enough talk about this, but Kate oiling Edwina's hair really hits home for me. Many South Asians grow up having their hair oiled routinely by a parent or older caregiver. It is so warming to see those cultural practices presented in this season" (2022).

On the other hand, there is another perspective to take into account, as there are some South Asians who place this representation in the category of being a forced inclusion, and a large majority of the South Asian audience has voiced their disapproval of the South Asian characters as represented in the Season-2. The Ghalib incident is a good illustration of this point. During Season-2, Edwina inquires of Anthony Bridgerton whether he has read "Guleeb" (Season-2). First and foremost, because of her pronunciation of Ghalib, it received a primarily negative response from the South Asian audience. The way she pronounces cannot possibly be adopted by someone born in India. In addition, Mirza Ghalib is said to have been even younger than eighteen years old at that time, raising questions about this information's veracity. Her character becomes more artificial as a result of this detail. Amaal Akhtar, from her twitter account @begumakhwrote, gives her response to the Ghalib episode as "It is difficult to pick a favorite clumsy Indian reference on *Bridgerton* 2, but mine is gotta be Edwina asking Anthony if he has read Guleeb" (Akhtar, 2022). Dhvani Solani, in her article "As an Indian, I'm So Confused About How to Feel About '*Bridgerton* 2.' I'm Not Alone," has given her enraged account of representation as:

As the season progressed, I got increasingly uncomfortable. I found myself getting angry when the Queen announced the younger Sharma sister as the season's diamond, as it got me thinking about how the only diamond the Queen needs to hand over to an Indian (or a Pakistani, for that matter) is the Koh-i-noor (2022).

Significance of the Research Work

1. This research contributes to the current literary debate on fictional authenticity, racism, and representation.
2. This study provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of the reception of Anglophone popular fiction and cinema by a non-Anglophone Pakistani audience.

The scope of this study is limited, based only on the responses of the Pakistani viewers of Season-2 of *Bridgerton* show on Netflix. The findings can be utilized by future studies on global fandom in the broader context of South Asia.

Literature Review:

The Netflix series *Bridgerton's* flimsy alternate history approach left many feeling betrayed despite the promise of a race-conscious period drama. Fred Oliver Beeby, in his article titled "The Participatory Period Drama: YouTube Responses to *Bridgerton* as Metatextual Elements," referred to Christine of the Instagram account @Sewstine, who revealed that slavery was still practiced in England in the year when the show is set and that it would be legal there until the year 1833. (2022). She goes on to wonder aloud why none of the characters seem to mention what must have been a massive event in their lifetime, particularly in the lives of the series' black characters, and she questions how the institution of slavery ended in *Bridgerton's* alternate history in contrast to the circumstances under which it was abolished in the real world. She then goes on to concede that while the series is, of course, a light-hearted romance, disregarding the reality of this past was not just poor world-building but neglectful, and she states that "if they don't want to get into that much depth at least talk about it (race) more" (2022). The producer of *Bridgerton* Season-2, Shonda Rhimes, has a long track record of producing critically acclaimed television shows, such as *Anatomy of a Scandal* (2022) and *How to Get Away with Murder* (2014). She and her team just saw the potential for *Bridgerton* to continue as a successful series and made the decision to press through with Season-2 because of her track record. According to Netflix, an interview with Shonda Rhimes represent her instance of creating an inclusive casting where she responds as:

I'm not sure that it's just important to the show's identity as it is important to television and shows in general. The idea that we don't create worlds that look like the world that we live in and that we create false societies where everybody looks a certain kind of way or is a certain kind of color or whatever feels disingenuous to me. It also feels like an erasure. We're just not interested in erasing

anybody from the story, ever. In Shondaland, that is how we do; that's just how we tell stories. Netflix staff (2022)

Bridgerton is notable for portraying Black people as affluent aristocrats with advantages that the actual Regency refused them. Communities further delve into the imaginary Regency world, which Heyer fans would see as authentic but which most renowned Regency author Jane Austen herself did not walk in, by excluding *Bridgerton* from discussions about the time or Regency-set works. "Teen Vogue" editor-in-chief Versha Sharma associates the *Bridgerton* Haldi ceremony with herself, being the spokesperson of people who associate with the series in a positive way. She mentions that she recently got married and had encountered the same with her sister and mother giving her company during her haldi ceremony. She was thrilled with joy when she watched this on mainstream media during the *Bridgerton* show (2022).

Jessica Pareez, in her article, "*Bridgerton: A Look at Season 2's South Asian Representation*," mentioned that the decision made in *Bridgerton* Season-2 to place South Asian characters in leading roles within the British ton of the Regency Era has also meant that the characters have strayed from the stereotypical roles which are often afforded to South Asian actors and actresses in mainstream media. While, in most instances, South Asian characters are portrayed as doctors, IT geeks, nerdy sidekicks to protagonists, or taxi drivers, *Bridgerton* has allowed the Sharma sisters to dominate the series and become its focal point- a fact that has thrilled South Asian fans. She further accounts Simone Ashley, Speaking at a press conference held in March 2022 about South Asian representation in the series, said, "We are representing a minority of women in particular seen on television screens, and I think it's wonderful that more South Asian women can identify themselves within these characters" (2022).

Methodology:

This study employs a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is a form of social science research that involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data. Its primary objective is to interpret the meaning of data in order to gain a deeper understanding of social phenomena, particularly as they relate to specific populations or geographic locations.

The present study employs a mixed-methods approach to examine Quinn's second book in the *Bridgerton* series, titled *The Viscount Who Loved Me* (2000). This encompasses a comprehensive analysis of the novel as a literary piece through close textual examination. Through the close reading of the novel, certain aspects of the original work have been highlighted, which serves as a source for adaptation. The study also incorporates the utilization of face-to-face interviews as a means of collecting first-hand information. The aforementioned data is utilized to obtain the reaction of the Pakistani audience regarding the portrayal of South Asian individuals in the second season. The snowball sampling technique is employed for the purpose of selecting interviewees. This method refers to using one contact to find another, who can connect you with someone else. A friend, family member, neighbor, member of a social group, or representative of a formal organization might be the first person you speak to. As the name suggests, this approach causes recruiting to snowball as the researcher accumulates more layers of connections. Open-ended discussion-based questions are developed that are used to conduct interviews. All the interviewees are residents of Pakistan.

The interviews were conducted through both virtual and physical means. Four out of the five interviews were conducted online, while one was conducted in person. The mode of conducting interviews online has been adapted through the utilization of a paid Zoom account. The duration of online interviews varies between a minimum of 29 minutes and 48 seconds, as reported by Interviewee 4, and a maximum of 43 minutes and 34 seconds, as reported by Interviewee 1. The duration of the interview with the third interviewee was 30 minutes and 36 seconds, while the interview with the fifth interviewee lasted for 36 minutes and 24 seconds. The second interviewee was physically interviewed at Kinnaird College, Lahore. The duration of this interview was 29 minutes and 5 seconds. The interviewees have been categorized with tags based on the mode of interview utilized. The following table displays the coding of the individuals who were interviewed. The table below shows the coding of the interviewees:

Coding of the Interviewees

Number	Age	Residency	Education	Mode	Duration	Tag Assigned
Interviewee1	22	Lahore	Bachelor student (UVAS)	Online	43:34	(I-1-O)
Interviewee2	24	Lahore	MS student	In-Person	29:05	(I-2-P)

			(Kinnaird)			
Interviewee3	24	Lahore	MS student	Online	30:36	(I-3-O)
			(Kinnaird)			
Interviewee4	19.5	Lahore	DVM (UVAS)	Online	29:48	(I-4-O)
Interviewee5	26	Lahore	BS Mathematics	Online	(36:24)	(I-5-O)
			(LCWU)			

Discussion:

The Netflix adaptation of *Bridgerton* Season-2 has brought South Asian characters into the series. Sheffield sisters from the novel are named Sharmas, Kate Sharma, and Edwina Sharma. The producers of the series claim to represent an all-inclusive cast, representing characters of color being the main leads in the series. Episode one of Season-2 opens with highlighting some Indian elements; Edwina is shown to have a good command of certain languages, including Greek, Marathi, and Hindustani (49:57). This includes representing some of the major dialects spoken in different parts of India. Kate calls Edwina “Bon” (42:54). The status of Lady Mary’s deceased husband is shown to be a clerk in India. This questions the matter of authenticity as Lady Mary belonged to members of the ton, the social elites in the regency era, and she is depicted as someone who left her family in order to marry an Indian clerk. Kate Sheffield mentions in the first episode, “I despise English tea” (17:21). Hasina Khatib, in her article at Vogue, has referred to Tanya Vasunia, a psychologist and devoted follower of Julia Quinn’s original works, which the show is based on, has the same opinion:

Simply placing a person of color in a prominent position in society will not change history, nor will it erase the centuries of work that it took to make that happen. Instead of trying to score woke points today with retrospective activism, it is all right for history to remain history (Vogue).

There are many Netflix movies which represent an actual representation of period pieces like *RRR*. *RRR*, a Telugu period action film directed by S.S. Rajamouli, is an abbreviation of “Roudram Ranam Rudhiram” (meaning “Fury, Battle, Blood”). The film is set in British-ruled India. The film largely depicts the exploitative and tyrannical British colonial rule. They exploit the natives for profit. The film follows Indian liberation fighters Komaram Bheem (N.T. Rama Rao Jr.) and Alluri Sitarama Raju (Ram Charan). The video shows these two warriors and the local population fighting British colonial rule. During their quest to free their people from colonial rule, the heroes form a close friendship.

Many cultural and geographical aspects of India are combined in Season-2 of *Bridgerton*. In the first episode, Edwina reveals that she is fluent in both Marathi and Hindustani. Kate, whose given name is Kathani, frequently refers to Edwina as bon, which, according to an interview with Chandran, may be Bengali meaning little sister or similar to the French word for sweet. If one listen closely, you will notice that the sisters’ accents differ when they are with family and friends versus when they’re with the rest of the ton. The oiling scene in episode three gives an exchange of love and affection between both sisters, which is a practice commonly observed in South Asian society. Adding a love triangle involving the two sisters and Anthony Bridgerton is another attempt to give the show a Bollywood touch. There’s a lot more nuance to a love triangle in Bollywood. There is always something beyond your control that’s contributing to this problem. In fiction, characters rarely develop simultaneous romantic affection for two different people. In this game, nobody ever has anything bad to say about anyone else.

One partner gives up everything for the other’s happiness, even though this rarely ever actually happens. Without a problem, they’ll take a back seat to someone else’s happy ending. In *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998), Anjali does this very thing when she abandons her best friend, Raj, for his love interest, Tina, without ever letting him know how she feels about him. In *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (2003), Aman courageously keeps his affection for Naina a secret while also assisting Rohit in winning her over after the latter learns of his terminal illness. More obviously, this occurs in *Mujhse Dosti Karoge* (2002) when Pooja and Raj, who are much in love with one another, put their relationship on the line to comfort their best friend after she suffers a terrible loss. Tina and Raj go all the way to the altar before she realizes what they’ve done for her, and the bangles play a big part in her coming to terms with it. Similarly, in the movie *Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na* (2008), a similar complexity exists where both friends, Jai and Aditi, eventually realize their feelings for each other after a complex journey.

Discussion of the interviews:

The purpose of these interviews is to get an account of the response to the series. Despite its popularity, people around the world have responded differently to the series. As mentioned in previous chapters, some people believe they responded positively, while others responded negatively. These interviews will provide insight into a specific non-Anglophone audience who have a direct or indirect relationship with literature and are Netflix users. It will also provide information on the popularity of *Bridgerton* books versus Netflix series. Five people participated in the research work. They are from different universities, but all reside in Lahore. The age group of interviewees is between 20 and 25 years old. Interviewees are interviewed in person and through an online medium using Zoom. Interviews include extensive discussion based on the developed questionnaire, which supports open-ended responses. Each interview lasted for around 25-40 minutes. The method of snowball sampling was used, where one friend referred another for the purpose of interviews.

(I-1-O) agrees that she spends more time watching television. The reason (I-1-O) came to know about *Bridgerton* is through friends and social media. (I-1-O) had no prior knowledge of Julia Quinn but felt inspired to read her books after watching the show. In terms of South Asian representation in the show, (I-1-O) thought it was unusual that they were bringing South Asian characters at that time, given that *Bridgerton* is not historically accurate. It's something that is made up for the show. Her first impression was that even though she was very excited to see the incorporation of lots of South Asian customs and South Asian music in such a hit show, she believes that the fact that Kate Sharma is represented as a South Asian is okay. But the fact that she was South Asian and was in an out-of-wedlock relationship, which is not appreciated in South Asian countries, was unusual. Secondly, if we talk about her bond with her mother and sister, that was accurate, and her principles—that she had some moral principles—that was accurate too, but if she were living in India or South Asia, her opinions would not be valued like that normally. So it is a good thing she was able to value her own choices.

One very unusual thing was that she was marrying in another country. She was marrying a foreign man who was not Hindu, and because Edwina was the season's diamond, they didn't think it was unusual. The interviewee agrees that South Asian practices are being dumbed down and claims that the entire show is written with a white gaze. Especially Season-2, which is all about finding the perfect match, which is Kate Sharma's main goal so that she can return to India and live happily ever after.

(I-1-O) believed that both sisters can be considered desi as both are portrayed as strong women like any South Asian woman. Her response to the Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham title track in the movie is the fact that the movie is about the closeness of a family and how they stick together in every situation, so by putting that music in the movie, they first try to get the Indian audience to watch the movie because the movie is very popular in India and South Asia. To emphasize the close relationship between the two sisters and their mother. When Edwina refuses to marry Anthony, they stick together and forgive each other, so she believes the movie emphasizes the closeness of South Asian families. When asked about where the series went wrong in its depiction, the interviewee believed that the series had mainly ignored South Asian practices. There is no mention of colonization, slavery, or other South Asian problems, nor of how the West has affected this region. Aside from that, she did not engage in any meaningful discussion of South Asians. The thing is that South Asia has a complicated history. If you are using South Asian characters, you have to discuss that; otherwise, it is not favorable to choose a South Asian protagonist. There is also the question of why there are no bachelors in India and why these girls have to travel to Europe. These questions do come to mind, and as per the depiction of historical romance fiction, they should not choose people of another color, which makes some sort of discrimination, and use them as entertainment without recognizing their complexes. (I-1-O) makes certain suggestions to make the representation better, which include adding more traditions other than the haldi ceremony, one South Asian tradition that was added. There are a lot of South Asian traditions, but the only ones mentioned in the series are those that show how things are being glamorized. Basically, this representation was glamorized.

(I-1-O) believed it to be an untrue representation. At the time, the British imprisoned the entirety of South Asia, which was never depicted in the series. Even though it is a work of fiction, people need to understand that even in fiction, if you show that they are from India or are South

Asian, these problems do come to mind. Along with money problems, South Asian people had many other crises, like identity crises, colonization, and decolonization, which were not discussed.

“We understand it is a romance show, but you cannot ignore these issues by coloring them and viewing them through the lens of romance.” In response to the question of whether (I-1-O) identified herself with the representation in the series, being a South Asian, She mentions, “As Kate was talking about very personal things and what kind of person she wants to be with, like the one who treats women like cattle and livestock. In that respect, yes”. These are some of the things with which she does not associate, like “the fact that Kate was hiding her feelings from her mother and making decisions on her own, and another that not many South Asian women preferred marrying outside their religion and country.” If you view her as a character and understand her choices, you can relate to her. But not completely. So overall, she does not think Kate is a perfect representation of a South Asian woman.

Bridgerton series is recognized by (I-2-P) from her friend zone. She has an equal interest in watching series and reading books. Julia Quinn believes she is the author of the *Bridgerton* series, but she has never felt compelled to read her books, even after watching the show. She responds to the prime question of South Asian representation in the show as absurd because, according to her, all of the people of this region are now in a colonial slumber and they are still dreaming in colonial land; there is no South Asian representation in *Bridgerton* at all. There was no representation because the actors, the so-called Sharmas in the show, are ethnically South Asians, but the fact that they were born and raised in England makes them more British. Not South Asians. Her main concern was that “while the show states that the Sharmas are from India, these actors spoke in a British accent and had English first names, so what kind of representation is there? Even in the 21st century, you do not quite get to see non-white actors playing main roles”. She further states, “We grew up watching white actors or experiencing white privilege. So that was a problem for me because in the twenty-first century, with so much innovation, we are still talking about inclusion. Are they attempting to erase the colonial past, or what?” (I-2-P) wants people to wake up from this colonial slumber and see these things as very problematic, including South Asian representation. “So you mean they were dressed up like the heroines we particularly see in classical literature? You know they were not wearing such”. (I-2-P) talked about many civilizations, such as the Mohra Empire, the Gupta Empire, and the Mughal Empire, which ruled for over 200 years. Also, if you see the Bollywood period pieces, we see that! This is what a Rajput prince or princess or a Mughal prince or princess would look like, unlike what they’ve created. So accordingly, “this is not a representation at all. All they were wearing were typical English gowns; it was nothing but tokenism. They are using all these non-white actors to technically dupe us”.

Referring to Season-1, she claims that in that season, the *Bridgerton* family eldest daughter, Daphne, has an interest in the Duke of Hastings, who is played by a biracial actor. So now they are talking about representation. Whereas, “if we draw a parallel with the real world, such as what Princess Meghan is going through, racism would be concerned. On the screen, you appear to be very happy, as if you are a biracial couple. (I-2-P) clearly mentions the element of colonization, saying, “All these European settlers brought alive human beings from Africa for enslavement, and now they are showing a black queen by casting black actors and the queen.” You need to know that in their entire history, the Renaissance, in the 17th or 18th century, there was no black monarch. She further states, “You know, even if now you have a black princess, you cannot accept Meghan Markle as a princess because she is half black, a divorcee, and an American, so people need to figure this out and try to erase the colonial mind, which is hard and will take hundreds of years. As a result, as she mentions, this is all about business motives for her”.

(I-2-P) believe that the OTT(over-the-top) platforms, particularly the giants like Amazon, Prime, and Netflix, at the end of the day, it is not about inclusion, South Asian representation, or black representation, it is a business motive; she says, “They simply want high ratings because the higher the ratings, the more money, so it is all about business.” As previously stated, Julia did not mention any such representation in her original work, but the makers want high viewership, and because India is currently huge, they have their own local platforms as well as a large viewership from that location.

According to (I-2-P), “In order to increase TRPs, they duped us by casting British actors of Indian descent who are not actually Indian.” In the series, (I-2-P) responds to how South Asian practices have been commodified. It was largely demolished “because the so-called Sharma clan

speaks with a British accent, has all English mannerisms, and has English first names. So, what kind of representation are you referring to?" She believed that we, as an Indian subcontinent, do not require such representation: "We have such a vast civilization, beginning with the fact that the subcontinent is the birthplace of Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism." (I-2-P) talks about the British tone of superiority. "They said Columbus discovered America, but did they did not mention that 90 percent of natives were killed when European settlements occurred and that the human slave trade is attempting to erase that legacy?" (I-2-P) believed that by casting black actors as England's monarch, they were not truly sorry, and it is past time for us to reflect on how barbaric they have been to the subcontinent. (I-2-P) concludes her response by stating that there was no representation, that this was a ruse, and that they deceived us. It is all about the highest TRPs. This is ridiculous, according to her. (I-3-O) spends her time watching shows and reading books, both. She learned about the series from Netflix's trending list. She had not read Julia Quinn's books at the time of the interview but felt motivated to do so. She felt curious to know what happens in the series, so she attempted to binge-watch the show, especially because of the character of Lady Whistledown, the famous magazine writer of the ton. In response to South Asian representation, she says that South Asians are given a representation in the series and that it was set in the 1800s when there was such a dominating white society, and in those circumstances, south Asian is best "because Kate Sharma is brown and she fits in that white-dominated society that was good. It was like there was some hope at that time too". She also watched some other series where they couldn't even tolerate brown or black people in those times. She does not consider the Sharma sisters to be desi, but rather mixed up, and their representation has been commodified in some ways, such as when they move to London, they should show that they are Indians, but instead, they are mixing up in white culture and are not representing their culture.

Their names are totally Indian. Apart from Sharma, Kate is not even an Indian name. At least they could have given them Indian names. (I-3-O) says that she was shocked to see Edwina getting the title of the season's diamond. That was because she was one of the main characters, and her demeanor was exactly what the Queen desired; everything about that girl should be perfect. The credit goes to her sister because she wanted her sister to marry some white man, and she ensured that her habits were according to the Queen's desire. She believes that the Sharma sisters are not represented as South Asians correctly: "Apart from the complexion and skin tone, South Asia is not properly represented. It could have been better". She expects them to be more realistic in the future if they focus on any other sibling and if there is South Asian representation in those seasons. During the 1800s, there was no Pakistan, just the subcontinent. Our lives were pathetic at the time, and we wanted to show how people lived in India and give proper representation of our food, culture, clothing, and language. She doesn't want producers or directors to produce wrong information: "We have not seen Europe. The only glimpse that many people get is from the series, so they should present it realistically and not try to mislead people".

(I-4-O) believes that Netflix is part of everyone's mobile apps these days. Every time people around her discuss hot topics on Netflix, which keeps a person updated as we remain updated about all movies worldwide, like Chinese and Japanese movies, etc. "We are multilingual, so we would like to see different other languages as well, like now that people like to watch Korean series and stuff, the language barrier no longer remains, so Netflix has this advantage that it gives us access beyond the language barrier and entertains us". She believes that "the way Edwina is brought up resembles the way South Asians are brought up: you have to keep your husband happy, you do not need to argue, and you need to do anything that is in your favor alone." She feels connected and agrees that there are many similarities in our society's portrayal of women.

Despite portraying the characters as strong women, (I-4-O) does not find them desi and proposes certain suggestions to improve the representation, such as, "they could have mentioned other famous writers rather than Mirza Ghalib, and poets who positively represent India could have been mentioned. In addition, instead of gowns, they could have worn sarees and traditional Indian dresses. If they really are proud, they should proudly represent it as well. Also, they could have added some scenes incorporating cultural food items such as mithai, pao bhaji, etc. Also, you know that Indians have typical dances like Chhath, etc.; they could have added those alongside the Westernized dances to add more to it". According to her, the cultural practices have been commodified, but ambiguously as they are there in the background, which is not very obvious in the overall expression as the

characters manage to fit in the overall picture. (I-4-O) feels an emotional connection with Edwina Sharma and Kate Sharma, particularly during a dance scene in which both sisters dance together: "Two Indian women danced together to represent sisterhood". Another thing that Kate does is horse riding, which is good as they are not limited to feministic activities. Despite their love story, both sisters are willing to make sacrifices for each other. It is also part of our culture to sacrifice for those we love. "The sibling relationship is stronger on the South Asian side than the connection between Daphne and Antony".

(I-5-O) is a regular Netflix user. She spent more time watching videos on her phone because it was less time-consuming. She watched the series as a friend had suggested. She has yet to learn about Julia Quinn before or after watching the show and does not seem interested in reading the book. As a viewer, she believes that the "Sharma sisters adjust very well to the series." Despite the fact that they do not appear to be Desi, they are not. They were in a different region at a different time; maybe there is a bit of fiction as well as one thing she mentioned is their values, their emotions, and how they were brought up as they were looking for a good match. That was a very Desi thing. She believes that their representation could have been improved by "including more traditional Sabyasachi dresses, or by using the red bindi, or by making more efforts to represent Mary as a South Asian widower." (I-5-O) agrees that South Asian practices have been dumbed down in representing the sisters. She proposes that they could have been shown more Desi. That is something at the tail end of character development. They could have done more work in character building; they are using more British styling elements. Her reaction to the Queen's selection of Edwina as her diamond is that "the Queen must have thought her beautiful. Just like everyone else did".

There is one thing common among all the participants: they have watched the Netflix series *Bridgerton*, Season-2, but they have not read the Julia Quinn book series. Interviewees 1, 3, and 4 have recently expressed an interest in reading the book. (I-2-P) strongly dislikes reading the book because she doesn't find the adaptation accurate and justifiable. (I-5-O) finds reading a book hectic and therefore is not interested in reading Julia Quinn's book. Another similarity between all the responses is that all the interviewees believed that South Asian practices had been dumbed down in the series. The majority of people have pointed out that the main lead characters' dresses could have been made more Indian-inspired for the series. Similarly, there is a mention of tea but no mention of Indian cuisine. Food is one of the very important aspects of the rich culture of South Asia, and Indian cuisines are renowned throughout the world, but they are missing in the series.

(I-1-O) is able to identify herself with certain aspects of the movie, such as Kate being a strong woman, but she agrees that overall there is no proper historical representation in the series. She feels excited to see characters of different colors, but the representation is historically inaccurate. According to her, the characters are too Europeanized, and the South Asian qualities of a woman have been ignored. (I-2-P) mentions that the whole matter is Netflix business propaganda. There is no actual representation. The reality of colonization still prevails, and it is problematic. She cannot identify with the South Asian representation in the series because it is merely tokenism. Interviewee 3 watched the series for entertainment and was thus able to binge-watch it, particularly Lady Whistledown. She is pleased to see dark-skinned characters in mainstream media in an early-nineteenth-century society where all representation is white. She agrees that mainstream media is a source of many people around the world understanding history because they can see our culture, and misrepresenting that will create a false image of South Asia in the Anglophone world and other countries outside of South Asia as the series lags in portraying our past. Interviewee 4 mentions using Netflix because it is a popular topic among her friends. Every time they discuss famous series and other topics. Not only that, but Netflix provides access beyond language barriers and entertains us through its language selection option. She found it charming to see that white and dark-skinned characters are living in complete harmony, despite the bigger issues that they have. She is able to connect herself with Edwina as she believes that her upbringing is similar to any South Asian girl.

In terms of representation, (I-4-O) believes that Indian food and clothing lag behind. She believes that cultural practices have been commodified, but in an ambiguous way that appears hidden in the series' overall view. There is no such cultural connection, but she feels an emotional connection with the Sharma sisters, especially in the last scene. (I-5-O) believes that the adaptation has more European-style elements. She can identify with the values the Sharma sisters held but not their style.

Although the Sharma sisters are not Desi and South Asian practices have been dumbed down, they fit well in the frame, according to her.

As a result, one can get to the conclusion that if one watches this series for entertainment, it is impossible to believe what they are seeing. The vibrant and glamorous world of the Netflix adaption will make you fall in love with it, and you will feel the desire to binge-watch the series in an effort to satisfy your insatiable curiosity about what will take place next. On the other hand, if you watch the series while considering the colonization, the history of South Asia, and the history of Regency England, the representation is wrong and ridiculous. It seems impossible to turn a blind eye to the bleak reality of imperialism, which is a picture that is wrong even in the contemporary parallel universe.

Conclusion:

This study concludes that the Netflix adaptation of *Bridgerton* Season-2, produced by Shondaland, deviates from Julia Quinn's original work. This diversion has both positive and negative aspects. The positive aspect is that in a postmodern world, it takes creativity and alters the book to such an extreme that the role of the author seems out of the question. Many people are happy to see this adaptation as they see characters of color in mainstream media. Kate Sheffield and Edwina Sheffield, two girls from the countryside in the book, have been transformed into Kate Sharma and Edwina Sharma, who traveled all the way from India to participate in the season to find a suitable bachelor for their younger sister and eventually get their elder sister in a love match with the season's most suitable bachelor. People are happy to see the representation in the series, especially if they are unaware of the colonial past. Those familiar with the grim realities of colonial history find the series absurd and racist and see it as nothing more than a Netflix ploy to increase TRPs and views. The creators of *Bridgerton* Season-2 have taken a post-modernist approach to the series, which means that they are attempting to reconstruct the history of the colonized world.

In particular, they are concentrating on Africans and Indians, who are shown to have equal wealth and power in a regency England as any white aristocrat in the Regency could exercise, or even more, given that it is revealed that Queen Charlotte is a descendant of African heritage. Postmodernism has allowed adaptation studies to include a larger range of topics, moving them beyond the realm of fidelity and faithful adaptations of literary works to cinematic mediums. It has made it possible for producers and directors to open themselves up to creativity and let their thoughts run wild. *Bridgerton's* production was massive, with a diverse cast and a colorful wardrobe containing thousands upon thousands of costumes. Soon after the show's debut, it quickly rose to the top of Netflix's list of most-watched shows, proving that Netflix's investment in the series was not wasted. The show's success led to its rapid ascent up the list. According to the findings of the interviews that were carried out, it is hard for an individual to accept what they are seeing if they are watching this series with the aim of obtaining entertainment. A person will need to binge-watch the series to satiate his insatiable curiosity about what will take place next since the vivid and glamorous world of the Netflix adaptation will make a person fall in love with it, and he would feel the want to do so.

On the other hand, the representation is incorrect and ludicrous if one watches the series while considering the history of colonization, South Asia, and the history of Regency England. It appears difficult to ignore the harsh reality of imperialism, which is an incorrect image even in the modern parallel world. There is a parallel universe in the present day.

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