

Good critical thinking about no

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On a first look, the visual similarity between Pavitr Prabhakar and Peter Parker are unmistakable. Spider man's costume is unmistakable. Beyond the immediate recognition of spider man, however, are characteristics that the American audience will immediately recognize: this Spiderman wears a highly stylized and impressive version of what looks like the Indian shalwar kameez or dhoti. Together with the sandals, the representation of Indian culture is apparent. Whereas both of these superheroes learn the lesson that "with great power comes great responsibility" in the same way, the stories are different. Prabhakar does nothing to help a woman in distress; Parker does nothing to stop an escaping thug. Prabhakar's uncle gets killed trying to help the young woman while Peter's uncle dies when the thug tries to commandeer his vehicle. One could speculate endlessly what the differences represent about the American and Indian society.

The biggest difference, however, is in the story of how the superheroes acquired their superpowers. Whereas Parker's is the result of a highly advanced scientific experiment, Prabhakar's is the result of a mystic force. Parker gets bitten by the radioactive spider that gives him his powers by pure happenstance; it could easily have been someone else. Prabhakar gets his powers by destiny. Prabhakar fights for good in the eternal conflict between good and evil while Parker fights for justice in a world where injustice is brought about by human fallibility. The background also changes drastically: Parker is a relatively poor inner-city kid while Prabhakar is a poor boy from a remote village in India. Whereas in both cases the boy's intellectual and studious nature alienates them, Parker is not an alienated because of his socio-economic background while Prabhakar is an outcast

because of his poor background.

It takes a lot of creativity to blend seamlessly in stories based on radically different backgrounds the way the creators of Prabhakar have done. The American audience will enjoy this “transcreation” of Spiderman for precisely the same reason other cultures enjoy the American Spiderman: it tells an interesting story and paints a more or less accurate picture of a (different) society.

Works Cited

Adesnik, David. Marvel Comics and manifest destiny.

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