

Between Homeland and Hostland: Cinematic Representations of Diaspora, Mobility, and Identity in Select Punjabi Films

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Abstract

Migration, one of the most ancient types of mobility and displacement, remains a central feature of the twenty-first-century social, cultural, and political landscape. Traditional notions of diaspora were defined by forced exile, but now encompass communities that migrate, settle, and maintain transnational ties with their homelands. Punjabis first arrived in Canada and the United Kingdom in the late 19th century, and since then, formed strong diasporic communities in both nations that have played a major role in spreading, and reshaping the Punjabi identity around the world. Punjabi cinema's focus on the migrant and diasporic experience has become more pronounced since the revival in the early twenty-first century, and has begun to depict and represent the various communities of Punjabis in the diaspora, and their interactions with others, with more nuance. nostalgia for the homeland, cultural preservation, generational differences, hybrid identities, multiple locations of culture, Family conflict, and cultural negotiations have become common themes in these depictions.

The present study critically examines three important Punjabi diasporic films, namely, Jee Aayan Nu (2002), Asa Nu Maan Watna Da (2004), and Mitti Wajaan Maardi (2007). The paper will examine diasporic subjectivities as filmic construction, focusing on the desire to return, the persistence of cultural memory, cultural baggage, the negotiation of dual and hybrid identities, and transformation of Punjabi language practices across generations in the diaspora through close textual and visual analysis. The study also examines the depiction of the paradoxes of rootedness and mobility, homeland and hostland, tradition and modernity in these movies.

The paper aims to shed light on contemporary Punjabi diasporic life and its social formations, affective structures, and cultural patterns through the engagement with the Punjabi cinema as a cultural archive of migration. It posits that Punjabi diasporic cinema can be seen as important indicators of transnational mobility and of identity negotiations and processes, as they provide clues to the imagination, memory, and reconstruction of the concept of home, belonging and cultural citizenship in a globalized world.

Keywords: Punjabi diaspora, homeland, hostland, transnational, cultural baggage, dual identities, nostalgia, Punjabi cinema

Introduction

Migration is a phenomenon that has been bound up with the history of human civilization. People and communities have been migrating across geographical barriers for various reasons for a long time now, whether it is for economic, political, social, cultural or demographic reasons. Wars, environmental crisis, natural disasters, and other types of displacements have

also caused migration in many cases. The concept of diaspora, like migration, has gained relevant theoretical and analytical importance in recent decades, and is closely related to migration. Migration is the movement of people from one place to another, whereas diaspora is a more complex phenomenon of transnational dispersal, collective memory, and ongoing relations with the homeland. While diaspora is more specific than migration in that it is primarily about international migration, it is also more inclusive as it also includes second and third generation migrants who maintain symbolic, cultural or affective connection with their country of origin (Tigau et al., 2016, p. 183).

The word “diaspora” comes from the Greek *dia-speirein*, literally “scatter across” or “scatter through”. It is historically linked with the dispersion of Jews after the exile in Babylonia in the 6th century BCE, but has grown to refer to other forms of dispersion of populations around the world. In contemporary diaspora studies, diaspora is not just a geographical state of displacement but a process of identity construction, cultural negotiation, memory building, and transnational belonging. The term diaspora has become a key one in sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, history, literature, and media studies, as mobility and interconnectedness have grown more and more common in the world.

The Punjabi diaspora is one of the many diasporas that have received scholarly attention. The term is used to describe people whose native language is Punjabi who have moved to and settled in other parts of the world. This massive diaspora of Punjabis, particularly to the Canadian, UK, US, and Australian nations, has created strong transnational networks between homeland and hostland characterized by cultural, economic, and

social interactions. The Punjabi diaspora not only has made significant contributions to the development of the societies that it has inhabited, but has also redefined and remediated the idea of Punjabi identity worldwide. Today, Punjabi identity is increasingly described as being transnational, cultural in-betweenness, and multiple and non-national belongingness.

Cinema, an important cultural product of modernity, is a powerful medium in the representation and construction of collective experiences, collective identities and social realities. Cinema is not just a medium of entertainment; it's a cultural archive that captures, interprets, and shares a community's values, aspirations, fears, and memories. Films mediate cultural meaning, and are a means of creating individual and collective identities through visual narratives. Cinema's importance in the Indian scenario is such that it occupies a unique place because of the country's linguistic, cultural, and regional diversity. In addition to the Hindi cinema, some regional cinemas have also become important cultural and representational spaces.

Since its rejuvenation in the early twenty first century, Punjabi cinema (or Pollywood as it is popularly called) has experienced tremendous metamorphosis. Although the majority of the Punjabi films of the past treated these themes of rural life, folklore, and family life, the modern Punjabi film is faring well with themes of migration, globalization, and diaspora. This change is indicative of the significant role that migration abroad has played in shaping the Punjabi society and culture. With the increasing transnational mobility of the Punjabi population, film-makers started to focus on the lives of Punjabis abroad, and on the challenges and complexities of living as a diaspora.

The turning point in this regard was the revival of Punjabi cinema with *Jee Aayan Nu* (2002) which was directed by Manmohan Singh, and had Harbhajan Mann as its lead actor. It is considered the first major Punjabi film to emphasize upon diasporic themes, and started a film tradition that was followed in later films. Other films like *Asa Nu Maan Watna Da* (2004) and *Mitti Wajaan Maardi* (2007) further extended the depiction of diasporic experience by exploring the psychological, cultural, and emotional aspects of migration. Such movies portray the themes of the return, alienation, generational differences, racial discrimination, cultural hybridity, and identity fragmentation. Diasporic subjects in these films exist between home and hostland, and are grappling with multiple identities, with a feeling of “in-between-ness” that challenges the concept of home, belonging, and citizenship.

In this context, the current study explores the image of the Punjabi diaspora in the selected Punjabi films in relation to the theories of diaspora, transnationalism, and cultural identity. The analysis in this study is conducted in close textual and visual readings of three films: *Jee Aayan Nu* (2002), *Asa Nu Maan Watna Da* (2004), and *Mitti Wajaan Maardi* (2007), which examine the filmic production of diasporic subjectivities. Emphasis is placed on the aspects of nostalgia, wanting to go home, bi-cultural and bi-dyadic identities, emotional ties to the homeland, and negotiating belonging with respect to geographical and cultural borders. The study aims to use these films as cultural documents to illustrate the ways in which Punjabi cinema can serve as an important medium for articulating diasporic consciousness and narrating the lived experiences of transnational Punjabi communities during this time of globalization.

Nostalgia for the Homeland

Nostalgia is one of the major thematic interests of diaspora studies. It is an emotional and/or psychological bond that diasporic communities have with their homeland even though they are geographically distant. In her compelling book, *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym (2001) defines nostalgia as “a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values” (p. 8). The homeland is a place of memory for migrants, of culture, of family ties, of early experiences that influence migrants' conceptions of identity and belonging. This leaves diasporic subjects often with a deep yearning for the absence of the place that they left behind, and turns nostalgia into an overwhelming part of the diasporic consciousness. Nostalgia becomes affective and more than just memory in response to displacement, loss, and the apparent gap between past and present. Relocation can evoke a range of mixed emotions and leave behind a longing for homeland people, places, and cultural environments. Gilroy (1994) is of the opinion that diasporic identity is centered “less on common territory and more on memory or, more accurately, on the social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration” (p. 208), this suggests that nostalgia is not about geography, it is about remembering shared history and past. In this context, nostalgia can be also seen as continuing homesickness over generations. For Gilroy, diasporic belonging is maintained more through collective memory, cultural remembrance, and constant re-imagining of the past, rather than geographical proximity.

Nostalgia therefore becomes an important tool for maintaining emotional and symbolic ties to one's homeland, for displaced communities.

Nostalgia is thus an important way in which displaced communities hold on to emotional and symbolic memories of their home country. This phenomenon is reflected vividly in the films selected for study, which embody a sense of diasporic life and its relationship with the memories of one's lost homeland, and continued yearning to return there.

With the emergence of Punjabi cinema in 2002 with *Jee Aayan Nu*, it was a turning point for the representation of diasporic experience on the Punjabi screen. The film depicts the realities of Punjabi migrants in the 90s in a nuanced way – emotional, cultural, and psychological. The film's story highlights the themes of nostalgia, identity, belonging, and migrants' nostalgic ties to their homeland. Very meaningfully, the title *Jee Aayan Nu* ('We Welcome You' in Punjabi) extends an invitation to the overseas Punjabis to connect with the roots and the cultural heritage.

Jasbir Singh Grewal's character is considered a typical Punjabi immigrant. He is a symbol of the hopes and paradoxes of those migrants who migrate for economic opportunities, and better life but yet have deep emotional connections with Punjab. Grewal, who has lived in Canada for the last fifteen years with his family, is very close to his homeland. He is deeply involved in developing and maintaining the culture of Punjab, and works as the owner of an entertainment firm where he conducts television and radio programs on the culture of the Punjab in Canada. This character is an example of the transnational aspect of diasporic identity, in which migrants negotiate their lives between multiple cultural spaces, while simultaneously keeping in touch with their homeland.

Grewal's love for Punjab is more evident when he visits India with his wife Kuldeep Kaur and daughter Simar. He returns to his home village, and

this brings back memories of his parents, of childhood. The ancestral house serves as a powerful memory place, and elicits strong emotional reactions and a sense of belonging to the homeland. The tears and the emotional response reveal the affective connections which many diasporic subjects have with their country of origin after years of living in another.

Kuldeep Kaur, by contrast, embodies another diasporic attitude. In contrast to her husband, she has adapted to the Canadian lifestyle, and has some strong preferences for Western ways of living. This has reduced her loyalty to the hostland, and she has lost any positive feelings towards Punjab, thus opposing the settlement of India. Moreover, she has advised her daughter Simar to not consider living in Punjab once she gets married. The film draws out the range of emotions and viewpoints toward migration in a diasporic family through Kuldeep Kaur, showing the different levels of attachment to both home and host country that can result from displacement.

Director Manmohan Singh's well-developed Inder is a representative presence of the sense of place and cultural continuity. Inder has deep roots in his homeland and is very attached to Punjabi culture, as he is a young college student. Inder is not a typical story of migration today, which emphasizes going abroad, and is not fond of the idea of living in Canada. His sense of belonging to Punjab is based on place, community, and culture.

Initially, the love affair between Simar and Inder seems to unite the cultural differences between homeland and diaspora. Simar falls in love with Inder, and both of his families are pleased at the idea of them marrying. But with the engagement comes the clash of ideologies as soon as Simar declines to stay in Punjab after marriage. Inder's dedication to his homeland makes it impossible for him to accept her aspiration to move to Canada permanently.

The engagement is cancelled as a result, and demonstrates the conflicts between different ideas of home, belonging, and identity in diasporic settings.

Yet, Inder makes an effort to convince Simar, but she is adamant on her decision, mostly because of her mother's mindset and wishes. After the marriage is cancelled, Grewal goes back to Canada with his family. Later, at his own family's urging and on the invitation of his family's leader Grewal, Inder then travels to Canada for an attempt to make peace with Simar, and convince her to come back to Punjab. The war, however, has yet to be resolved, for Simar continues to believe in the future of a Canadian nation, and urges Inder to stay there with her. Significantly, not only Inder, but also Simar's father tries to persuade her to come back to Punjab. However, with the feelings of the homeland, and wanting to see his daughter join in with her cultural roots, Grewal finds that he can't do anything to change her mind. The conflict between father and daughter is emblematic of generational and ideological differences that play out in many diasporic families, where attachments to the homeland and hostland give rise to conflicting notions of identity, belonging, and the sense of home.

To try and convince Simar, Inder asks her to come watch him perform at a musical event, during which Inder sings songs about his deep love for Punjab. The performance is not just a pronouncement of romantic love, but also an expression of cultural identity and emotional attachment to the homeland. Inder connects to his roots and values through music, an important symbol and emblem of the Punjabi cultural identity. But during the performance, as she is leaving the auditorium, however, she is still

resisting Inder's way of thinking and, at that time, not yet fully understanding the homeland's meaning in his life.

Inder gives up on his efforts and decides to leave for Punjab, disheartened by Simar's reply. The story then abruptly goes for a turn when he finds out, to his shock, that Simar has come to Punjab dressed as a bride, and with her family. This moment represents a shift in Simar's sense of identity, belonging, and cultural belonging. She has come back to Punjab thus suggesting a change in her mind about the better life that she had envisioned in Canada and the emotional and cultural connections that draw her to her native land. The purpose of reconciliation between Simar and Inder is through their joint understanding of the importance of homeland and cultural heritage. The ultimate purpose of the film is to resolve the conflict between homeland and hostland by prioritising attachment to one's homeland, and expressing the constant importance of cultural belonging. It is Simar's choice of "home-land consciousness" over "transnational mobility" that represents diasporic nostalgia and the revival of homeland consciousness. She selects Punjab, in essence, to re-experience her cultural identity and her ancestral roots, as well as her relationship with Inder. This metamorphosis is complete at the end of the film when Simar openly declares her love for her motherland, thus reiterating the main theme of *Jee Aayan Nu*: the potent nostalgia and the perennial urge for cultural belonging felt by those of the Punjabi community.

This analysis of the three selected films, shows that there is a huge generational gap in the Punjabi diaspora. The first-generation migrant has a strong emotional attachment towards their homeland and strong interest in preserving the cultural values, traditions, while second generation migrants

may have a comparatively weaker attachment to Punjab. Born and raised in the host country, second generation Diasporic subjects are often negotiating identities in the cultural frames of the adopted country. As a result, they are more likely to be affected by the influence of western lifestyle and western values and may show less affinity towards their Punjabi identity.

In *Asa Nu Maan Watna Da* (2004), the complexities of diasporic existence are explored further by director Manmohan Singh's second film. The film is primarily set in Canada, and depicts the lives of Punjabi immigrants and the multiple engagements that diasporic subjects might have with their home country. The film's plot highlights themes of nostalgia, belonging, cultural continuity, and trans-generational identity negotiations. The central character Kanwaljeet Singh is shown to be a successful business man whose construction business is thriving in Canada. Even being materially successful and having a nice life, he has a strong emotional link with Punjab. Kanwaljeet Singh is surrounded by his wife Kulwant Kaur and their children, Mehar and Aman, and relives the memories of his homeland from time to time. This attachment is set up right from the start of the film, when he is seen mowing the lawn in front of his home. This is the basic activity but in the context of Punjab a place of agriculture and green fields, it takes on symbolic meaning. The act of mowing the lawn reminds them of farming, tilling the land, and is a metaphorical link between the subject of the diaspora and the homeland in Punjab. This visual imagery in the film shows how the everyday practices of the host country turn into the spots of remembrance and nostalgia. He has made it good economically and socially in Canada, but Kanwaljeet Singh has a firm plan of returning to Punjab permanently with his family. He first confides this dream to his wife, and her

enthusiasm for it is quickly accepted. But both parents are not sure about the reactions of their kids to such a proposal. After some consideration, Mehar and Aman finally agree to go to Punjab with their parents for a year, and then they will determine if they want to stay in Punjab or go back to Canada. Such a setup is a reflection of the ambiguity and negotiation that frequently occur in diasporic lives, including the different generations having varying levels of engagement with the homeland.

Mehar plays a crucial role in the story among the family members. He is a second-generation Punjabi whose complex cultural negotiation is embodied. Mehar is an example that shows a true respect for the Punjabi culture and traditions, unlike stereotypical second-generation migrants, who are believed to be uninterested in their ancestral heritage. There are some visual and narrative cues along the way that make this connection. He is seen driving to the background of Punjabi music, further emphasizing his cultural connection. His friends at college are mostly migrants from various parts of Punjab, and one friend from Pakistan. They have a lot of conversations about memories, anecdotes, and experiences from their home countries. Collective remembrance continues to be a significant mode of maintaining cultural continuity in the face of geographical distance, as evidenced by these interactions.

This is again supported by the celebration of *Lohri* in Canada. Diasporic communities can observe the traditional festivals in the host country, and recreate cultural spaces, allowing them to preserve their cultural heritage, and emotional connection with their country of origin. This practice highlights the transnational nature of diaspora: in which cultural

practices cross boundaries of space and gain new meaning in the context of migrants.

The third movie to be considered is *Mitti Wajaan Maardi* (2007) which offers another perspective on the diasporic experience. This film differs from the earlier two films, which mainly concentrated on immigrant households who had made a home in the country, in the main concern with precarious situations of undocumented migration. It is set in the United States, and examines the personal and moral implications of illegal immigration, as well as the longing migrants feel towards their home countries. The main character Surjeet Singh comes to America as an illegal immigrant, paying a huge amount of money to agents to make the trip. When he arrives in America, he finds that the things he had hoped for in his dreams are not the things he finds when he finally arrives. He is never able to find a stable job and is always at risk of deportation, and lives in uncertainty and vulnerability. In order to become legalized, Surjeet Singh marries an American permanent resident. However, this choice is marred by the fact that he already has a wife and daughter in India. This puts him in a difficult moral and emotional position, one that in the end, tears his family apart and across borders.

In a pivotal moment in the film, Surjeet Singh finally tells Varyam Singh, who is his son from his second marriage, his past, while he is on his deathbed. He exhorts Varyam to come to Punjab, to make peace with his first wife and daughter, and to repair the rift created by migration. As soon as he makes this confession, Surjeet Singh collapses. The emotional burden of migration is captured in this scene and the un-fulfilled attachments remained that still hold diasporic subjects to their homeland.

The tale of Surjeet Singh reflects the social reality of Punjab that is not uncommon, where the desire for migration abroad can result in people taking shortcuts in the ways of achieving a visa. But migration in an illegal manner presents other problems – social exclusion, economic fragility, fear of deportation, and legal fragility. The film is very sensitive in depicting the marriages of convenience that in many cases are arranged by migrants in order to acquire the rights of residency. *Mitti Wajaan Maardi* is a story of transnational mobility and of the human price paid to achieve economic progress which exposes it through Surjeet Singh's narrative.

Surjeet Singh is as much nostalgic as the protagonists of the other two movies for his homeland. The desire to go back to his village, to see his wife and his daughter again exemplifies the emotional attachment that many people who have been scattered have to their homeland. Boym (2001) suggests that nostalgia is “a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed ... a sentiment of loss and displacement, a romance with one’s own fantasy...a superimposition of two images – of home and abroad, past and present, dream and everyday life” (pp. xii–xviii) .The film has this kind of nostalgia in a visual manner, as there are recurring images of agriculture and rural life. The very first scene depicts Surjeet Singh in America, ploughing a field, recalling his childhood days when he worked on the farm in Punjab, and giving him a symbolic link to home. These scenes are a window into the effect of nostalgia: into affective attachments that are sustained through embodied practices, and through the actions of everyday life, which enable migrants to keep hold of longing for places they have left behind. One of the other major themes in diaspora studies is the issue of "dual identity" which has been explored in Punjabi cinema consistently. In

diasporic situation, identity formation often occurs in the context of a conflict between cultural retention and social adaptation.

Dual Identities Among Diasporic Communities

Identities can be developed within the dominant institutions of society; but, as Castells puts it, “only when and if social actors internalize them and construct their meaning around this internalization” (p. 7). For diasporic groups, then, identity negotiation is a process that continues to unfold and that is shaped by negotiation with inherited cultural traditions and with the sociocultural characteristics of the host country. Punjabi migrants often face challenges with identity, belonging, and identity formation. Geographical displacement can create the sense of exile, loss of significant others, and a lack of belonging to one's homeland or hostland. Edward Said (2000) acknowledges the harsh reality of exile, “exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience” (p. 3). So diasporic subjects are frequently confronted with a double alienation, first physical and second psychological. Their search for a sense of self is complicated by having to negotiate several cultural affiliations at once.

As Brah (1996) argues, “Diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a crucial aspect of the migratory experience” (p. 190). When migrants move to a new place, they do not disappear from their culture, they bring their language, traditions, customs, values, and memories with them, which continue to shape their lives. Cohen (1997) also proposes that there are diasporic identities “between” “nation-states” and “travelling cultures”, suggesting that diasporic communities are located here and there while taking part in transnational cultural flows.

Culture is often expressed through a series of visible cultural markers that include food, clothing, language and religious practices for first generation migrants. The second-generation often finds himself in a more complicated position. They have grown up in both their homeland and hostland cultures, and are frequently surrounded by conflicting value systems and sense of belonging. This condition creates a kind of "cultural in-betweenness. When Stuart Hall (1990) says that identity is “a matter of ‘becoming’ and of ‘being’” (p. 225), he describes this situation. Identity is therefore grounded in a sense of continuity and is being formed at the same time by processes of transformation. The tension between ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ creates hybrid identities, reflected in language, behavior, thinking and lifestyle, and ways of self-representation.

Language plays a special role in the notion, creation, and expression of dual identities. In all three films Punjabi is the major language used for communication, mirroring its importance as a symbol of cultural continuity. However, language is also a space of resistance and identity negotiation that is illustrated in the films. Notably, there are instances of female characters switching between Punjabi and English when they are in conflict or assert themselves. Such a linguistic shift can be seen as an effort to move away from the normative constructions of the Punjabi identity and to express other subjectivities. In *Jee Aayan Nu* (2002), for example, when Inder asks Simar to move back to Punjab with him, she reciprocates him in English. By using English, she is not only expressing her preference for English but also expressing her autonomy and her values relating to the host society.

One of the most telling moments in *Jee Aayan Nu* (2002) is when Simar screams “I belong here” in English, which makes her claim to

Canada, and the culture that has nurtured her. Here the use of English is not a linguistic decision, but a sign of self-positioning. It is indicative of her connection with the host culture, and reflects her need to establish a sense of self apart from the cultural norms of her cultural heritage. However, Inder replies in Punjabi, which shows his Punjabi identity and never-ending love for Punjab. By answering back, he reminds readers of Simar's "roots" and "culture," foregrounding the competing notions of "roots" and "culture" that is characteristic of the diasporic experience.

A similar negotiation of identity can be seen in *Asa Nu Maan Watna Da* (2004) where Neeru, Mehar's college friend, speaks English a lot during dialogues about Mehar's plan to study for a year in Punjab. Neeru and Simar are both independent, educated, and self-determining characters, breaking gender norms. They are a new generation of the Punjabi diaspora, representing the ways in which migration and transnational movement has brought cultural changes. They make independent choices about education, relationships, and plans for the future, reflecting western social values and ideas of individual freedom.

Neeru in particular, has a great affinity with the Canadian culture and lifestyle. Her ideas on romantic relationships demonstrate how much her social relations have been influenced by the host society. She thinks people need to be well-informed, and know their partner well before marriage. This is in contrast to the more traditional view of Mehar that one's understanding and trust is built primarily after the marriage. Marriage is the base on which intimacy, and trust are built up slowly for Mehar. Hence, the contrasting character of Neeru and Mehar sets forth contrasting views of ideology that

arise when traditional cultural beliefs are juxtaposed with a contemporary and individualistic worldview.

Likewise, Simar in *Jee Aayan Nu* (2002), not only defies the typical stereotypes of Punjabi marriage roles but starts to question Punjabi standards for marriage in general. She imagines a future where her husband will live with her in Canada, which goes directly against the norm of Punjabi marriage which involves the bride moving into her husband's home. Her unwillingness to move to Punjab also reinforces her affinity for the hostland, as well as her identification with western lifestyles. But the film's plot ultimately brings Simar back to a newfound respect for her cultural heritage. At the end of the movie, she confesses her love for her country. and accepts the traditional Punjabi marriage. The transformation marks not only her own personal reconciliation with her cultural heritage, but also the film's larger affirmation of "homeland attachment" and "cultural continuity."

In addition to language, other visual and performative attributes like clothing and music serve as an important symbol of identity in the chosen films. Clothing is significant symbolic marker of generational differences within the diaspora. First-generation women are often portrayed in traditional clothing, such as salwar kameez, reflecting their commitment to cultural traditions. Second generation female characters, on the other hand, are frequently dressed in western clothes, indicating their more assimilation in the cultural context of the host country. These differences in expression and negotiation of identity between generations are demonstrated in the films through the visual contrasts.

In the building and maintaining diasporic identity, music too has played a crucial part. The use of Punjabi songs in the films is a means of

cultural memory, and they are always reminding the Punjabi diasporic subjects of their roots, their traditions, their homeland. For Kanwaljeet Singh's family, celebrating *Lohri* in Canada means singing their traditional Punjabi songs and creating a cultural space that allows them to feel a sense of connection to their homeland of Punjab. These festivities are a testament to the cultural continuity of the diasporic community in the face of geographical displacement. In the same way, when Neeru goes out to showcase her traditional Punjabi outfit in a university event, she brings to light the inter-generational continuity of cultural attachments even among the second-generation migrants. *Jee Aayan Nu* (2002) marks the beginnings of Simar's involvement with Punjabi culture, where she recorded with Inder who perform *Gidha* and *Bhangra*. These shows are more than just entertainment; they are a way of remembering and belonging.

The three films' endings are especially notable as they continue to uphold the importance of the subject/diasporic subject and homeland. In *Jee Aayan Nu* (2002), Simar is able to reconnect with Inder, and eventually admits how emotionally and culturally tied she is to the state of Punjab. Her role as a traditional Punjabi bride at the end of the movie represents her embrace of her cultural identity and her coming to terms with her roots. After spending a year in Punjab, both Mehar and Aman opt for staying in the province, in *Asa Nu Maan Watna Da* (2004). The decision is very symbolic, indicating that the home country still holds sway over emotional subjects of the diaspora. The story thus serves to reinforce the idea of the diaspora's ultimate goal, which is to be returned, either physically, emotionally or symbolically, to the homeland.

Likewise, in *Mitti Wajaan Maardi* (2007) Varyam is able to reconcile with his mother and sister Rani in Punjab. The film highlights the potential for repairing relationships disrupted by migration and displacement through this act of familial re-union. The conclusion implies that familial and cultural ties are stronger than geographical and cultural differences. As a whole, the three films concur that those of the Punjabi community, irrespective of their nationality or where they live, keep holding an abiding memory, identity, and sense of belonging to Punjab.

Perhaps the best example of this is the character of Jasbir Singh Grewal in *Jee Aayan Nu* (2002). He has made a successful life in Canada, however, his priority is to keep his Punjabi identity and cultural heritage alive in Canada. He is also active in his entertainment business to spread Punjabi culture among overseas communities, and thereby establishing a symbolic or “virtual Punjab” in the Canadian context. His work is a transnational approach to cultural preservation – the attempt by migrants to establish a homeland in the host country. At the same time, however, the fact that Grewal wishes his daughter Simar to marry Inder shows a worry regarding cultural continuity between generations. He believes this will help to foster a sense of unity among the people of Simar, based on their shared culture and attachments to their homeland. The character thus represents the aspirations of the first generation of the diaspora: on the one hand economic success, on the other, cultural ties and handing them down to the next generation.

Conclusion

To sum up, with the growing globalization, increased migration, and wider transnational connections, the cinema's function as a representational tool for diasporic subjectivities becomes a key scholarly topic. Punjabi cinema, especially, has become an important cultural space through which the experiences of Punjabi diaspora have been voiced, negotiated and spread. It has the capacity to highlight the socio-economic, emotional challenges, and successes of diasporic communities, and to play an active role in the creation and maintenance of cultural identity, collective memory, and nostalgia amongst the Punjabi community in different geographical locations.

This work has critically analyzed the evolution of Punjabi cinema in its representation of a diasporic experience, revealing an altered trajectory towards a migration, identity negotiation, and transnational belonging approach. The analysis has demonstrated the use of selected films and the thematic configurations have portrayed the complexity of diasporic life, which is marked by displacement, cultural hybridity, generation gap, emotional yearnings, and the constant yearning for return in Punjabi cinema. These films are cultural products which reflect and influence the growing shades of the Punjabi diasporic consciousness.

In addition, the study emphasizes the role of Punjabi cinema as a cultural agent, not a mere representation, and how it continues to fuel the discourse surrounding the idea of diaspora, identity, and heritage. These films offer a rich perspective on the affective and ideological aspects of migration, in that they create nuanced understandings how diasporic communities create meaning in relation to homeland and hostland. In a more globalized cultural economy, Punjabi cinema is likely to continue to be a major contributor to the wider academic and cultural discussions about

diaspora, identity making, and the reconfiguration of cultural attachments in the contemporary world.

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