

A Semiotic Study of (Mis)Representation in Punjabi Cinema

Malik Haq Nawaz Danish
Government Postgraduate College Gojra

Abstract

This study investigates the misrepresentation of Punjabi culture in the Punjabi Movies. The focus of the study is to investigate the multiple signs as means of communication employed in the movies carrying certain meanings for the audience. The study investigates the issues related to the misrepresentation of indigenous culture of Punjab on the big screens. The key theoretical concepts running through this work are those of misrepresentation, cultural studies and semiotics. The study attempts to probe into the manner of producing meanings through signs and constructing reality in the cinema regarding the cultural lives of the people of the Punjab. The tools of analysis employed in this investigation are primarily those of semiotic analysis and Critical theories to investigate into the apparent and hidden messages in the images. Different images from different movies have been selected for the analysis subjected to a detailed analysis using Pierce's Model for sign analysis. This is a multidisciplinary study that incorporates various disciplines including semiotics, cultural and media studies. The study is basically qualitative in nature.

Keywords: *sign, misrepresentation, semiotics, images, culture*

1. Introduction

In this postmodern age, where every new day brings forth some discoveries and developments, replacing the previous ones and further exploring the hidden realities about the general makeup of life, media act as a powerful engine of socio-cultural change. Electronic media has become the sole and immediate source of information as well as the best entertainment provider. 'One of the primary focuses of the study of mass communication has been the social, cultural, and psychological effects of media content and use' (Perse, 2008, p. 1). Graeme Burton duly recognized the influence of media via acts of communication and labels the media industries as the producer of meanings. "All acts of communication produce meanings. It is the power of these meanings, what we do to them, that shapes relationships, exercises influence, models reality, generates behaviours of domination and feelings of subordination" (Burton, 2005, p. 1).

Media orchestrates the society with its powerful influences over the audience; in fact, it shapes the ideology of the audience in the desired way. There have been intoxicating effects on the cultural, social and moral lives of the people in

Pakistan due to the influence of electronic media, maintaining a strong spell over the population. The influence of the print media fades out due to the low literacy competency of the people throughout Pakistan, giving way to the electronic media as it does not require advanced literacy for comprehending its images and oral communication. Moreover, the impact of the visual scenes on the audience exercises more influence than the print media with everlasting effects as Dan Laughey quotes, claiming the legality of Meyrowitz`s views on electronic media, 'With the advent of television, telephone and radio, however, Meyrowitz claims that access to knowledge and information is shared by all, regardless of literacy skills. So electronic media help to blur class, age and other social differences' (Laughey, 2007, p. 84-85) .

One of the most significant agents of socio-cultural change in the media is film industry. It is primarily based on the notion of providing entertainment to the audience with no exception of class and gender. It is taken as a cheap source of available entertainment within the reach of a layman. Besides offering some moments of entertainment to the public in general, it also inculcates ideology in the minds of the spectators. Perse asserts the effect of media saying,

The direct effects model focuses on media content as the most important explanation for media influence. Effects are seen as immediate (occurring fairly shortly after exposure), relatively uniform (similar across all audience members), and consistent with the goals of the media producer. (Perse, 2001, p. 29)

Films cannot entirely propagate the culture or attitudes they represent, but somehow they manage to create a breach in the lives of the audience resulting in continuous engagement of the audience with the text fabricating certain (or uncertain) meanings consciously or unconsciously. As Graeme Burton maintains:

Media texts intend to engage people, to convey some kind of information, and to produce reactions in their audiences which justify their continuing production. Even when treated as part of the environment they can never been seen as passive in the way that the façade of the building or wallpaper is passive. (Burton, 2005, p. 45)

These involvements with the texts create a smokescreen in the vision of the audience and they perceive the world in a different way, the way it is projected on the cinema screens, for example. These films propagate an alien culture in the texture and misrepresent the culture they ought to promote. The representation by the media about the social groups and their culture should be realistic manifestation of their cultural background and their values.

2. Culture

Culture is one of the most multifaceted words in English, as Williams has put it. It has also been reviewed that culture is being defined in 164 diverse meanings by the anthropologist Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (qtd. in Inglis, 2005, p.05). The term culture covers a number of various descriptions of everyday practices, values and beliefs, customs, rituals and objects in which the values of the society are shaped. It becomes difficult to concisely define the term culture in few words, but is quite relevant to equate the meaning of the term with whatever is practised by the members of the society in particular space and time. Catherine Belsey proposes the distinct definition of culture in *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction* (2002); 'culture: the inscription in stories, rituals, customs, objects, and practices of the meanings in circulation at a specific time and place' (qtd. in Miles, 2007, 192). The definition legitimizes the acts of the people in a society with reference to a particular period of time in which they are practised. Culture is not a confined set of values or beliefs. It is rather arbitrary. It absorbs the entire actions and the ideologies by a group of people or a nation as a whole. The term 'Culture' remains ambiguous as many theorists define it in different ways and it becomes impossible to accept one definition and ignore the other. It is, therefore, appropriate to view some of the definitions given by some leading theorists. Belsey writes about culture thus;

Culture constitutes the vocabulary within which we do what we do; it specifies the meanings we set out to inhabit and repudiate, the values we make efforts to live by or protest against, and the protest is also cultural. Culture resides in the representations of the world exchanged, negotiated and contested in a society. (qtd. in Miles, 2007, p. 30)

Culture is ordinary and common place, having its own social backgrounds. These assessments are advocated in an essay by Williams,

Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expressed these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of the society is the finding of common meanings and direction. (qtd. in Couldry, 2000, p. 24)

3. Representation in Media

There has been massive growth in the electronic media in Pakistan during the last few years. With the establishment of private media houses, viewers are at liberty to watch multiple channels inculcating different ideologies in their minds. However, the film industry of Pakistan remains under the same dominance of some producers, directors and actors, producing movies in the same lot as ever. The film industry of Pakistan has failed to mark consistency and has become a dead business for the investors to produce high budgeted films with laudable

structures. Owing to such deficiency of investment along with the interests of the investors, the various aspects of production ranging from the selection of actors to the script writers has been compromised.

The Pakistani film industry remained passive to the latest techniques and technologies in the production and had produced low standard films in the past. The decline in the film industry not only claims to be the output of low investment, but several other driving forces such as political instability, economical crisis, lack of piracy laws and inattention of the heavy audience also contributed towards the deterioration. Moreover, the mounting ratio of the easy access to the cable network also contributed to the decline of the film industry because people save their time and energies which are otherwise to be spent by going to cinema halls and return discontented, rather demoralized.

Cable access has made infotainment at choice providing varieties of channels within the reach of the consumer. This easy access makes the audience flaccid to participate in the rows of the cinema halls and furthermore, Pakistani films, when compared with the other Hollywood and Bollywood films being telecast at different channels, fail to lure the audience towards their viewership. Such a passive attitude towards a particular genre reflects the disinterestedness of the audience who intends to gain a good deal of infotainment from media and the modern consumer is ever ready to extract meanings out of the media text in order to relate them with his own cultural background and prior knowledge.

Burton, in the same approach, propagates the ideas of Tolson about the decoding skill of the reader to extract meanings out of the text: 'Tolson (1996) talks more about the 'reader' of texts and about the process of making sense of them: meanings are derived from meaning systems to Which everyone in our culture has access' (Burton, 2005,p.46).

It has become difficult for the modern consumer of the media to relate the text with his surroundings, with the local culture, but it becomes easy for the consumer to manipulate the culture in the same fashion as propagated in the media. It exercises deep effects on the lives of the viewers and is responsible for structuring public opinion. Media influence has become a major discipline in the media-oriented societies for the researchers to probe into the ways in which it shapes the lives of the viewers and enables them to derive 'desired' meanings. There have been a couple of researches regarding the application of semiotics to visual text, especially pertaining to the advertisements of national and multi-national companies to inculcate desired ideology about the world around them. Some of them are conducted by Alexandar Clare on Magazine Ads for Men's Fragrances, Mazari on Misrepresentation of Pakistani Culture in Coka Cola Ads, Sarah Richard's Analysis of *Wallis* Adverts, Merris Griffiths on Children's Televised Toy Adevertisements, Nadin Reschke on Cosmetics Ad and Its Interpretation by Readers, Michael Steven on Three Beer Advertisements

,Annisa Dhanial Burty On Movie Posters Of Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows, Doerin Maria On Construction Of Gender Identity In Indian Tv Adverts, but there is a gap in the research areas regarding the local cultures and the effects of the misrepresentation of indigenous culture on the viewers and their minds.

General masses in Pakistan lack the capacity to comprehend the messages encoded in media screens and they have their own opinion about whatever they view on television. These messages also construct reality in the minds of the audience regarding some event, social/ ethnic group or particular entity through representation.

This study is hoped to shed the garbs put on the reality which media project and make people conscious to remain alert while watching the small box that occupies very little space in their homes.

In this study, attempt is made to investigate the multiple layers through which the culture is being misrepresented in the Pakistani Punjabi movies neglecting the real culture of the Punjab and to meet the following research questions:

1. How do movies represent the indigenous culture of the Punjab?
2. How do misrepresentation of the local culture of Pakistan, particularly Punjabi, in the movies influence the Pakistani people and their culture?

For this purpose, I have analyzed still images from four Punjabi movies that got popular acclaim, *Muala Jatt* (1979), *Gundi Run* (2007), *Sher e Lahore* (2001). The selection of the movies as samples has been made on the massive public response, popularity of the films among the masses, the wholeness impact they exercised on the immediate target audience and their effect on society as general. It is hypothesized in my study that the culture being represented in the Pakistani Punjabi movies is alien, having no roots in the people of rural or urban Punjab. It may have some traces of the local culture but only a small segment of it is practiced and owned by the people in general. Besides the dress code, impression and other visual elements producing meanings, the language consumed in the movies is also alien in its semantic and phonological traits. The Punjabi culture is rich in its use of language, the fact that most of the mystic poets have preserved their richness of thought in Punjabi. Its present use in the movies creates breach in the audience, deforming the moderate medium of communication in the Punjab. This study seeks to investigate how the Punjabi cinema has been presenting a distorted picture of the rich and ancient culture of Punjab.

4. Significance of the Study

This study is aimed at inviting the researchers to carry on further studies in the same pattern as the theme is serious enough and thought provoking. This research is aimed at the people from all the disciplines of life including the

scholars and academicians whose culture is at stake due to the eroding mechanism of cultural misrepresentation. Such a misrepresentation disrupts the ideology of the people being represented in a different colour. This marginalization damages the confines of the cultural identity of the country and asserts serious threat to the social fabric. The study is a humble attempt to make people conscious of the designed cultural tools which are eroding their cultural identity and shaping their world views in a different manner. Furthermore, the research in the area of cultural misrepresentation, especially Punjabi culture, needs to be conducted by the research scholars. Cultural misrepresentation is a serious issue, often noticed in the advertisement and television serials, but it needs authentic consideration by the research scholars because the encroaching trends of the foreign culture maintain a strangle hold and the purity of the culture is giving away. The study is likely to arouse both the common people and film critics alike to gain consciousness about the misrepresentation of the culture of Punjab. In this way, it is likely that the writers, directors and actors would try to refrain from such distortions while making movies. The study may also provide guiding principles for the film critics in the print/electronic media to develop informed critiques of such films, paving the way for the improvement in the thinking patterns of the people concerned. The theme of the study is quite serious and thought provoking.

5. Theoretical Framework

The main theoretical framework of this research is semiotics and falls within the domain of cultural studies. Multiple layers of signs occupy the visual screen in the movies and these signs are replete with a number of implicit and explicit messages. It is therefore required that the approach to expose hidden implications in the signs should be theoretical and critical. Semiotics, the systematic study of signs, is an approach appropriate for exploring the multiple layers of the signs (visuals) employed in the movies, in order to dig out their hidden meanings.

It is to be considered seriously that most of the attempts to (mis)represent Pakistani Punjabi culture take place in the Punjabi movies. Five Pakistani Punjabi films have been selected, as visual texts, released during the last few years. Still images from the movies as a text for the analysis have been taken. The selection of these still images is made with a view of getting rich text for the analysis of the misrepresentation of the culture in the movies. Images of the main characters, concerning the issue of misrepresentation of culture have been narrowed down. The selection of images from the film narrative had been random, but rich enough in its interpretation of the signs employed by the film makers. Qualitative research method is employed to get an insight about the thinking patterns of the people, the way they are, and why they are, what they believe and what meanings they attach to various activities. I have selected five movies as case studies. The approach is process oriented and inductive. I have

sought help from critical theories like deconstruction and structuralism in discussing issues of cultural identity and diversity of cultures in Pakistan. Furthermore, the signs employed in the movies are investigated by using Charles Sender Peirce's triad model. These signs are further categorized as symbolic, iconic and indexical to give deep insight of the signification. He gives three part model:

1. The *representamen*: the form which the sign takes.
2. An *interpretant*: not an interpreter but rather the sense made of the sign.
3. An *object*: to which the sign refers.

Peirce categorized the archetypes of meaning in signs as *iconic*, *symbolic*, and *indexical*. An *iconic* sign, in one or more respects, is the same as the object signified. It is a sign which represents its object by the virtue of similarity or resemblance as in the case of diagrams, statues and portraits. Iconic sign displays the same patterns of the represented object, for instance, in a photograph a person being pictured resembles the actual person.

A *symbol*, according to Peirce, means something 'thrown together' making a contact or convention. 'Symbolic signs, completely arbitrary signs which depend on conventions, codes, rules and cultural practices for their recognition' (Forrester, 2002:08).

An *index* is a sign, affected by or physically linked to, its object. It also denotes to the cause and effect relation between the sign and the interpretant. For instance, a cry for help may indicate someone in need. Similarly, a knock on the door may indicate that there is someone at the door. According to Peirce, indexical sign is 'determined by its dynamic object by virtue of being in a real relation to it' (Stam *et al.*, 1992, p. 6). An indexical sign engrosses an existential link between the sign and the interpretant.

All these three types of signs are used in visual communication. The knowledge of these various types of signs can help us in interpreting the text that is fabricated with these different types of signs. Peirce, in his essay, 'Logic as Semiotics', writes;

A Sign may be termed an Icon, an Index, or a Symbol. An Icon is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own, and which it possesses, just the same, whether any such object actually exists or not....An Index is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object....A Symbol is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas which operates to cause the Symbol to be interpreted as referring to that Object. (Pierce, 1986, p. 8)

Representation and misrepresentation through media are major issues of this study. It is requisite to provide in detail the issues of representation and misrepresentation in film semiotics and the resources which are materialized in this regard. For Peirce, language constitutes the human being, 'The word or sign which the man uses is the man himself...thus my language is the sum total of myself' (Peirce, 1931, p.189).

The validity of representation is supported by the fact that it may influence the audience to think about particular group in a desired way. For instance, in Hollywood movies, the Muslims are being represented as terrorists, having a beard, wearing particular dress and plotting inhuman activities. The way they are filmed, influence the people to nourish their doubts about the Muslims around the world and to strengthen their existing ideology about them. The idea about a particular group is not supposed to be stereotyped, but still the recurring practice of constructing reality about any such group, leads towards the prejudice against what is represented. It may in turn, modify the behaviour and attitude of 'represented' as 'others'. Moreover, the sustained repetition and re-use is likely to replace the real object being represented and the represented form of the object is considered 'real'. All the representations are likely to be interpreted in order to comprehend the meanings they contain. Halls states that the reality itself is subjected to have multiple meanings and in the same manner, the representation constitutes multiple meanings. 'There is no one thing that is so fixed that it will always be represented in a certain way. True meanings depend on the meanings that different people derive from a representation' (qtd. in Smith *et al.*, 2005, p. 528).

Representations are made in the film in the form of codes and the signs being employed. The inference about the codes and the signs in the film is the focus in order to analyze the intended meanings. Signs bear meaning, and therefore, they have to be inferred. These signs can be words, images or even sounds. These signs always surround us and we interpret them accordingly.

'Humanities are connected by their common interest in communicative objects, or texts' (Scholes: 1982: 01). In the view of Scholes, human beings produce texts, they are text producing animals, and they are 'primarily engaged in the analysis, interpretation, evaluation and production of the text'. (Scholes, 1982, p. 01)

Film, in general, reflects the culture of the society in which it originated. Films can provide insight into the cultural setting and conditions that led to their development and the factors that led to the patronage of audiences. Yet, film reflects reality, or various aspects of it, in a distorted manner. Most of the time, movies reflect what audiences wish to see rather than the actual state of affairs in the society. In addition, the movie can also be the vessel through which various

messages are transmitted . These messages depend on the persons or institutions that produce the films.

6. Discussion

In this section, I have tried to analyze the misrepresentation of the Punjabi culture in Punjabi movies. I have also investigated the patterns of misrepresentation in the movies and the ways in which the local culture of Punjab is being marginalized and an alien culture is propagated in lieu of indigenous practices of the people of Punjab. I have selected three different movies *Muala Jatt* (1979), *Gundi Run* (2007), *Sher e Lahore* (2001) that secured a huge block buster response from the audience for the analysis.

The images in the movies serve as text for the analysis. I have discussed each sign at length while looking at its denotative and connotative significance with its cultural implications. I have followed the following procedure/format for analysis employing Peirce's Model making the analysis systematic.

I have analyzed the dresses of the different characters, setting of the movies, colours in the image, gestures and expressions of the characters and their signification for the audience. I have selected images from five different movies representing the above-mentioned visual elements for the semiotic analysis.

Image 1

Image 2



from the dress code, the hero is wearing a qameez and patka. He is holding an axe, *Gandasa* in his right hand and displaying gestures of anger and anguish. The setting of the scene is façade of a rural house with an open door. There is also a tree in the court yard of the house.

Dress is a strong cultural tools, defining the type of the character and referring to the class to which he belongs. In image 1, the dress worn by the actor is a cultural sign, having mixed pattern of blue check on white and similarly, white

check on blue on his patka. His dress code signifies his relation to the rural community. Moreover, the buttons of his qameez are undone at the top, his sleeves are tugged, symbolically signifying his rebellious attitude and arrogance. The colour pattern of his dress is equally symbolic of his multi-faceted character, but also points to the fact that he is forced to violence by some unknown factors. Colour pattern signifies his cool and calm nature, but the circumstances seem to be otherwise, compelling him to be brutal. The setting is simple in the background, a simple village house, signifying a peaceful life in open atmosphere.

The Gandasa(Axe) in his right hand is another sign . It indexically signifies the brutality and signs of violence. The holding of the gandasa in the right hand also signifies the command of the hero over the weapon and readiness for the action; rather he is ready for any violent situation whatsoever. His determined eyes signify his persistent and resolute nature and his expressions on the face are symbolically signifying his contempt and anguish. The overall impression of the hero is iconic, as he is an icon of explosive and aggressive nature of man.

Image (2) is from the same movie Moula Jatt. The villain is lying helpless on the ground. He wears Qameez of dark blue colour. He is also holding an axe in his right hand. He is littered with blood and the qameez is tattered. He is badly injured but not ready to yield yet. The dark blue colour of his qameez signifies his passion towards evil. The blood on his chest indexically signifies his being badly injured. His undaunted nature is symbolically signified by his stance of upholding his blood stained axe, a symbol of violence and brutality in itself. The expressions displayed by the actor symbolically signify his stubbornness and not ready to yield. The images misrepresent men in general in Punjab. Bloodshed and violence is found in every society of the world, but the *gandasa* culture is attributed to the people of Punjab as they are represented brutal, savage and blood thirsty. The frequent exposure to violence is dominant in Punjabi movies. People are not as violent as projected in the movies. Moreover, frequent exposure to violence with reference to a particular group indoctrinates others to form ideology and it evokes people to be violent in behavoiur. Burton asserts ‘It is a truth often proposed that the media contain ‘too much’ violence, and that this violence is in some way to blame for violent social behaviours’ (Burton,2005, p.108).

Image 3

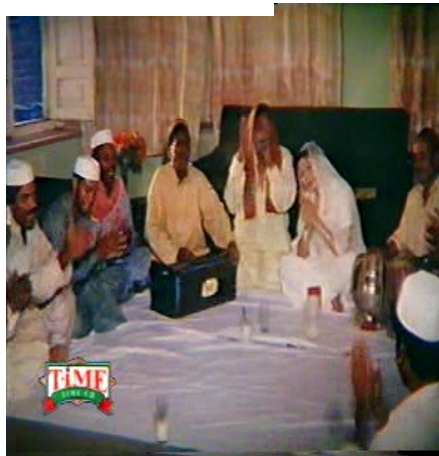


Image 4



Another misrepresentation of the Punjabi culture is evident in the image (3) in which the setting is indoors, having devotees sitting on the floor in group and singing Qawali. The Qawal is sitting with the harmonium player on the right, and a table player next to the woman on left and the rest of the musicians and the chorus surround him. The setting signifies the arrangements for the rituals. The floor is matted with a white sheet, signifying rituals in the house with devotees all around. White colour here signifies the purity and the sanctity of the devotees, and the holiness of the occasion. The scented wood on the floor indexically signifies the decorum of the rites and rituals, omitting fumes in order to make environment pleasant for the occasion. The Qawals and the members of the group have covered their heads with white caps and a bandanna, signifying reverence and spiritual bond in their offerings. The gesture of clapping by all the members signifies the unity of purpose, seeking divine blessings through the prayers in qawali. The different colours worn by the members symbolically signify their different ethnic backgrounds and distinct disposition, but they themselves are signs, signifying brotherhood and proximity among themselves.

The odd figure among the qawals is the woman, clad in white dress, sitting besides the qawal, signifying transparency and purity of the soul. Her gesture signifies her state of ecstasy during the offerings. The proceedings of the ritual on the floor signify the modesty of the devotees in their offerings. The room is not well lit, but airy, as the window is kept open, symbolically signifying that the divine blessings can be conferred upon the people, who keep their hearts open for the guidance, even though they are deserted and barren at the core.

The woman in the image (3) is equally misrepresented in the context, as the presence of a woman amidst the Qawals is out of question. No woman, throughout the Punjab ever takes part in the qawali, a genre specified for the male devotees to express mysticism. The need for mysticism in the woman cannot be denied, but participation in the qawali is purely a male activity. Moreover, the setting of the qawali is indoors, whereas, such an occasion is usually organized in the open, or at least at some feasible place where the spectators can relish the spirit of qawali.

In image 4, there are two young women, accompanied by an elderly woman, most probably the head of the family, in the presence of police. The police in the background seem to be in a fix, while both the young ladies are confident enough to maintain an atmosphere of mirth and joy in their presence. The aged woman, in her white shawl, signifies her authority and old age, while the young women are dressed in blue and yellow colour. Both the colours signify the good-humoured and playful nature of the young women. One of them has free hair symbolically signifying her rebellious attitude towards traditions, while the plaited hair of the other signifies her restrictions to traditions to some extent. The gestures of the women in the image signify their unrestrained attitude in the presence of the head of the family, and even in the presence of the visitors,

especially the policemen. One of the ladies poises a balance by resting elbow on the shoulder of the elderly woman, signifying her bluntness and frankness with her. One of the policemen stares at them with surprise, signifying his bewilderment at the misbehaviour in the presence of the visitors and elders. The expressions by the elderly woman indexically signify her resentment over the misconduct of the young women. The young ladies in the image wear dupatta as a prop, not bothering to cover their heads, signifying modern attitude towards life; while on the other hand, the elderly woman is properly covered, indexically signifying her strong faith in the norms and values of the society. Both the young ladies are themselves signs, iconic in nature, signifying the blunt generation of the post-modern age, that can do away with the norms and set patterns of the society.

The Punjabis normally do not allow the practice of bluntness in the presence of elders, or visitors. Women, especially, are quite confined and constrained in their limited social space. They do not even expose themselves in the presence of a stranger. The family is the first institution, inculcating behaviour and norms in the youth. They are educated in a manner to display decency to the elders and the visitors as well. They are not encouraged for their frank behaviour with the elders, especially in the presence of visitors. Such a blunt attitude, as projected in the image is purely alien. Such a misrepresentation attempts to reorganize the traditional concept of a family and the particular behaviour of the young ones with the elders.

The social fabric of the Punjab is teemed with moral values and strict norms of the society. The young ones owe much to their elders. They are not expected to act frankly in the presence of the elders, especially the women, who are always thought to be a sign of respect, dignity and honour. Women of mature age, as shown in the image (4) fail to convey moral code of displaying respect and honour to the elders. Moreover, their age is not immature enough to challenge the set norms of the society.

Image 5



Image 6



The next image (5) is also replete with symbolic signs, as a woman, amidst armed policemen, surrenders herself. She is dressed in white, a colour commonly signifying spirituality and purity, but here, signifying persistence and aloofness. All the policemen around her are uniformed, signifying discipline and obedience. They are following a woman, and even they are at their position at both the sides. The woman, a dacoit, is wearing a turban on her head as a headgear, symbolically signifying her authority and rank over her gang. She also wears a bullet belt, slung across her shoulders and a magazine bag in her belt. The equipping of arms and the necessary arrangement for the bullets signifies her readiness for action. The greenery at both the sides of the trail signifies fertility, and the track on which the convict is being led is barren, with no blade of grass or any other greenery. The sterility of the path symbolically signifies the barrenness and desertedness in the way of crime. The gesture of the woman signifies her rebellious nature and insubordination. The police at the left side are in dark, while in the right, there is visibility. The binary opposition in this regard symbolically signifies the loyalty and obedience in them and corruption and dishonesty on the other.

The women in the Punjab are treated with respect and honour. They share mutual respect and equal rights. There are rare chances of a woman to get involved in crimes as shown in the image. The image, more or less, alludes to the Bandit Queen¹. The aggressive nature of women cannot be denied, but they do not form bands or head such activities. The police are also shown in somewhat fake colours. The criminal, a woman, is not usually given such a protocol if she is to be taken to the police station. If she is disarmed, they are not supposed to display their fear, as they are in a strong position. The woman is being taken by the policemen, whereas the lady police are missing, as lady criminals are generally led by them. The dress by the lady dacoit is also inappropriate. She wears a manly dress, and even then, there are some incongruities like wearing a turban and a matching shalwar with a lungi. She gives glimpses of a Baluchi male rather than a Punjabi woman.

Some of the misrepresentations of the pure Punjabi culture are also found in the way the male characters are presented. The image 6 reflects the ideology of misrepresentation as far as the male characters are concerned. Both of the men wear baggy Qameez with open collars, signifying their rebellious attitude and a hint of feudalism. Both of them wear charms around their necks, signifying their spiritual bond with the God. The charms they wear indexically signify their relation with some religious family, where such charms are worn to avoid bad omen. At their heads, they wear a bandanna, a scarf usually worn by the clergymen in the Punjab. The red colour of the bandanna is mixed with patterns of golden, signifying the rigidity in their character with a touch of suppleness. They both carry guns in their hands with particular expression on their faces signifying proficiency in the art of killing. The yellow fog light on the rod of the

jeep signifies their interest in hunting and exploring far off regions in the darkness. The setting is urban, as the building at their back signifies perfect structure of some office building. The armed men are themselves signs, icons of brutality of human nature and feudalism.

The image equally misrepresents the real culture of Punjab, as the dress code and the props they wear are quite out of question. The white colour of the dress signifies purity and the blue stands for sensuality and passionate nature. Both these colours are worn by the people who signify brutality and aggressiveness. The charm they wear connects them with some religious family, having intimate relationship with the God and His creation, but their stance displays their rebellious attitude towards religion, having arm in their hands and expressions of hatred and brutality for the fellow men. Such exhibition of arms in the urban or rural Punjab is totally out of question, as there are strict government policies in this regard, announcing punishment for disobedience.

7. Conclusion

After a brief analysis of the Punjabi movies, it can be theorized that the culture being represented in the movies is quite alien to the local culture of Punjab. The purity of culture has been marginalized and given no consideration by the filmmakers. These deliberate projections distort the 'reality' and represent what is remote and unreal. This misrepresentation through the effective medium of film exercises effects on the viewers, specially the youth, or the people in general who have no access to the culture which is being viewed on the screen. The signs in the movies indoctrinate the viewers and lead them to assume the identity of the people in the desired way. Eventually, the worldview of the audience is manipulated through the apparent glamour and the lifestyle shown by the celebrities. Though they represent a humble background, yet the lifestyle they own would be quite different from what it ought to be. The ideologies of the audience remain unstable as they fail to distinguish the 'real' from what is represented as 'real'. The culture which is represented is marginalizing the indigenous culture of the Punjab, and propagates an alien pattern of living, dressing and attitude towards the norms of the societies.

The deliberate projection of an alien culture in the movies tends to obscure the purity of the culture of the Punjab, and tries to manipulate a global culture, mostly Indian or Western. The subliminal messages inculcate in the audience, especially the youth desires to follow the patterns being propagated in the movies. They believe the projected as real and form ideologies accordingly. The social fabric of the society is also subjected to moral degradation as the dress code and blunt attitude of the youth in the movies suggest confirmation of the audience to adopt the alien patterns of living. Eventually, the norms of the society in general, get subjected to modernization, replacing the conventional and the traditional outdated patterns of life. In lieu of such a transformation, the

generation is deprived of their pure cultural inheritance and is misled towards the foreign patterns of living, unfit for the environment and society. The sustained misrepresentation in the media leads the audience to think the way they are briefed. The gradual process of misrepresentation dislocates the reality from the minds of the audience and a new, alienated ideology is installed, without making the audience conscious of it. The initial remarks by the audience against some abnormality become harmless after getting repetition of the same text on media. A village lass in indecent clothing, dancing in public may invite harsh criticism from some sections of the society and religious minded people in general, but after continuous exposure, such misrepresentation becomes a regular matter, a thing of low significance. Such an attempt to misrepresent the local culture and to distort the reality regarding a civilization results in no retaliation after being projected without break. The audience gets hypnotized to the glamour and fashion introduced on the screens. Moreover, the curiosity to imitate the western culture or any other alien culture has always been an earnest desire of the people on the screen and the impact is accordingly accepted by the audience. In the attempt to keep pace with the changing scenario of the world's trends, the purity of the local culture receives blows from foreign eroding structures, and the victims of Xenocentrism² take pride in following the patterns of the leading nations. Television and films have far reaching effects on the lives of the audience. These effects range from our personal lives to family, from emotional to social spheres of our existence. All the sections of human society are prone to the media effects. As discussed in this study, the images on the screen work gradually on the minds of the viewers without making them conscious, resulting in mutilating the cultural sensibilities of the viewer. Their attitudes and ideology change and a new pattern of thought is installed, promoting the alien culture in the lives of the people having local cultural backdrop. It is, therefore, pertinent that the viewer should develop a habit to remain observant while watching movies, or any other program, and show a mental resistance to survive the onslaughts of the signs, being deliberately employed. Through a careful study of the signs employed in the movies, it is hoped that we may minimize the negative effects of the media and reject every attempt made to promote an alien culture, marginalizing our own pure local culture, so that we can preserve our values and traditions in order to maintain our own identity as a civilized nation.

End Notes

1 Bandit Queen was an innocent rural woman who had been brutalized and tortured by the bandits in India. She sought vengeance on them by orchestrating her own guerilla band and later on, she joined politics and won laurels.

2 Xenocentrism means a preference for foreign. It is the belief that the native culture is necessarily inferior to those which originate elsewhere. (Taken from B. Hourton and L. Hunt; Sociology, 1980). It is referred to the tendency of the People of Punjab who are under the influence of foreign media and started

considering their own rich culture as inferior and base. They try to imitate the foreign culture in all of its colours.

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