

Fashion and popular culture: Punjabi cinema through last five decades

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ABSTRACT

Popular culture has brought a new wave and broken down the conceptual barriers between high and low culture. It encompasses a diverse media – Cinema, television, comics, calendar art, magazines, internet and the like. Divisions between high and low culture have been increasingly seen as political distinctions rather than aesthetic or intellectual ones. The term popular culture is also associated with “culture industry”, which refers to the panoply of organizations and institutions engaged in the production and dissemination of a range of cultural products in modern mass societies (Adorno,2000). Culture changes constantly and uniquely occur in place and time. It forms currents and eddies and represents a complex mutual interdependent perspective. Likewise culture forms values that influence society in various ways. In the contemporary times the changes are found in lifestyle, dress and fashion, food habits, recreational activities, marriages, and functions. These variables are easily influenced by popular culture. The present study reviews five decades of Punjabi cinema and examines its influence on people of Punjab. Film making in Punjab has acquired industry status and consequently has greater accountability to its public. The study finds out the impact that Punjabi Cinema has made on clothing styles of people of Punjab through last five decades.

Key Words : Fashion, Culture, Popular culture, Punjabi Cinema

INTRODUCTION

Fashion is the process involving collective behavior. It is pleasurable mass involvement that features certain amount of acceptance by society and has a line of historical continuity (Lofland, 1981). In reality, fashion enters every aspect of life where choices are not dictated by sheer necessity. German sociologist George Simmel (1957) first drew attention in 1904 to the way people imitate the prestige groups through fashion. He argued that in an open class society the elites attempt to set themselves apart from the lower classes and the poor emulate the ways of the affluent in order to appear to have higher status. People can acquire prestige not only by resembling the elite but also by being “in fashion” – irrespective of the source. Conforming to the latest trend in fashion may also reflect the ability to spend money to alter ones lifestyle. The individual, who is in style, conveys the impression that he or she can afford to be in style no matter at what cost (Blumer, 1969). Fashion allows people to identify with something different

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from dominant institutions and symbols of culture. This has been globally viewed and accepted through all the four corners of the world. Fashion has peeped into the context of Indian culture as well. India has accommodated and assimilated various outside elements into its growing culture. Just as a new born develops into a young, then an adult and even later into an old person, so does the culture of a society grows. Pooser (2007) states lifestyles have changed tremendously in the past twenty years and both men and women face with the demand to adjust to their appearance to fit any number of occasions. The development of satellite and cable television has made a significant contribution to the knowledge of cultural diversity and cultural growth. In a country like India with diversities woven together as a complex culture, media shapes cultural values. The popular culture is product of post modernism and globalization which has added new dimension to culture. Williams (1972) calls it as a “unified social intake” wherein cultures at wider platform diffuse, generating popular entertainment common to all.

Popular culture has brought a new wave and broken down the conceptual barriers between high and low culture. It encompasses a diverse media – Cinema, television, comics, calendar art, magazines, internet and the like. Divisions between high and low culture have been increasingly seen as political distinctions rather than aesthetic or intellectual ones. The term popular culture is also associated with “culture industry”, which refers to the panoply of organizations and institutions engaged in the production and dissemination of a range of cultural products in modern mass societies (Adorno, 2000). In the contemporary times the changes are found in lifestyle, dress and fashion, food habits, recreational activities, marriages, and functions. Film making in Punjab has acquired industry status and consequently has greater accountability to its public.

Objective of the study :

- To review the clothing trends of women in Punjabi cinema in the last five decades.
- To assess the existing trends of Fashion among Punjabi women.
- To evaluate the relation between popular culture in Punjabi cinema and fashion.

METHODOLOGY

The present study reviewed the last five decades (1985-2015) of Punjabi cinema and assessed the existing trends of fashion among Punjabi women. Thereafter, an interview was conducted. The sample area consisted of ward no. 51 of Amritsar- I, which was selected randomly. This ward included Green Avenue area which is one of the urban hubs of district Amritsar. A total sample of 50 respondents was selected from every 50th household. The interview schedule was prepared on the basis of review of available literature. Interview was patiently conducted and each interview took 15-20 minutes. After collecting the data, it was coded, tabulated and analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is discussed under two sections- the first section reviews ten popular movies released in Punjabi Cinema during the last five decades and shows the changes that have come across in clothing styles. The second section discusses the clothing pattern among the respondents on the basis of their response.



Fig. 1 : Clippings from movies released from 1985 to 1990

Section I :

Table 1 : List of movies (1985-1990) viewed with the details of clothing styles observed				
Year of release	Title of movie	Director	Genre	Clothing pattern
1985	Yarri Jatt Di*	Veerendra	Action	Fitted suit in one color with darts, long loose sleeves, loose paunchas, fabric used probably synthetic with sheen.
1986	Laung da lishkara*	Harpal Tiwana	Family Drama	Knee length shirt, 3/4 th sleeves, Sheen in fabric, zardozi work broad gold borders.
1990	Chann Pardesi*		Romance, Action	Printed-knee length suit in cotton fabric, matching sheer dupatta with taping and embroidery in bold pattern.
1995	Nain Preeto De*	Yogesh Chhabra	Romance, Action Drama	Interesting and new colors with contrasting dupatta, long sleeves with gathers at top, loose fit kameeze below knee length.
1999	Mahaul Theek Hai*	Jaspal Bhatti	Comedy on political scenario	Interesting structural designs at yoke, short sleeves, loose jacket suit, kameeze above knee length, handloom starched dupatta.
2006	Mehndi Wale Hath*	Harinder Gill	Romance	Shirt length reduced salwar and duppata of contrasting colors, short slits, collar necklines, short sleeves, multicolored handwork on suits, elaborate jewellery
2010	Virsa*	Pankaj Batra	Romance, cultural differences emphasized	Frequent use of Western clothes, Jean –Top with Cascade necklines.
2012	Jatt* and Juliet	Anurag Singh	Romantic Comedy	Bright new color schemes, conceptual suits, crop jacket- top-Jeggings, skin fit Jeans, Long boots, use of Scarves.
Dec. 2014	Saddi* love story	Dheeraj Rattan	Romantic Comedy	Thigh-length body hugging kameez, back zipper, scooped neck, sleeveless with deep cuts. Matching sheer fabric for long sleeves, paired with tights, slacks, off shoulder mini dress showing impact of Hollywood.

*Vernacular Punjabi terms

Section II :

Table 2 : Clothing preferences among the respondents (N=50)		
Sr. No.	Question	Percentage of respondents
1.	Percentage of income spent on clothes	
	5%	42.00
	10%	40.00
	20%	10.00
	More than 20%	8.00
2.	Average expenditure per month	
	Less than Rs. 1000	40.00
	Rs. 1000-2000	40.00
	Rs. 2000-5000	20.00
3.	Frequency of shopping clothes	
	Once in fortnight	20.00
	Once in a month	30.00
	Once in 3 months	28.00
	On Occasions only	22.00
4.	Decision maker	
	Yourself	56.00
	Male head	22.00
	Young children	22.00
5.	Frequency of viewing Punjabi Movies	
	Daily	10.00
	Once a week	16.00
	Once a Fortnight	36.00
	Once a month	38.00
6.	Mode of influence	
	Movies	64.00
	Television	20.00
	Friends and relatives	16.00
7.	Preference factor	
	Fabric durability and quality	10.00
	Cost	14.00
	Brand	20.00
	Color	16.00
	Design	40.00

Data collected during the interview reveals the clothing pattern and choice of the respondents (Table 2). Fig. 2 and 3 show that 52.00 per cent of respondents spend 5% of their income on clothes, 40.00 per cent spend 10% of their income whereas only 8.00 per cent of respondents spend 20% and more of their income on clothing.

40.00 per cent of respondents spend less than Rs. 1000, while 20.00 per cent spend an amount between Rs. 2000-5000 on clothes. Again, it is found that 40.00 per cent of respondents spend an amount of Rs. 1000-2000 as clothing expenditure. Maximum respondents (56.00 %) themselves take decision of buying clothes, 22.00 per cent respondents each follow the decision either of male



Fig. 2 : Clippings from movies released From 1991 to 2000



Fig. 3 : Clippings from movies released From 2001 to 2015

head or of young children. The data reveals that 38.00 per cent of respondents view Punjabi movies, once in a month and 36.00 per cent view once in a fortnight. The respondents who view Punjabi movies once in a week constitute 16.00 per cent, while 10.00 per cent respondents view them daily. Maximum respondents (64.00 %) are influenced from movies regarding their clothing styles, whereas 20.00 per cent from television serials and 16.00 per cent from friends and acquaintances. Most of the respondents (40.00 %) consider design of the garment as important factor while making a choice. It is seen that 20.00 per cent consider brand, 14.00 per cent go in with cost factor and 16.00 per cent respondents view color as the major factor in selecting their clothing. The rest of 10.00 per cent respondents go in for durability and quality of clothing.

Conclusion :

The findings show that clothing of Punjabi women has witnessed considerable modifications in the last five decades. The Punjabi movies portray a clear picture of changes that have come up over previous years. It is seen that around year 1985 long, straight-fit kameeze with fish darts paired with salwar in loose paunchas was a common outfit. The sleeves were long and fitted. The most preferred fabric was synthetic in single, solid color. Over a span of time, kameeze length gradually decreased and kameeze turned into thigh-length, cut –sleeved. Finally, in the year 2015, off shoulder mini dresses, Crop tops, Tights, Long boots, Scarves and the like are in picture. Further, it is observed that fashion and popular culture are directly related to each other and making a vice-versa impact. Clothing styles of Punjabi women thus clearly show an impact of Cinema fashion and a drift towards popular culture.

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