

## **Chapter-IV**

### **The Journey of Punjabi Cinema**

India owes its name to the ancient river Indus on the banks of which one of the most prosperous civilizations flourished. The memories of Harappa and Mohanjodaro still refresh the Indians. A huge variety of rulers ruled over India. While some came from Central Asia others from Greece, Mongolia, Afghanistan and Great Britain. Some looted its wealth and returned; others made it their permanent abode and ruled over it for many centuries. This is one of the reasons that one comes across people of divergent origins in India. There are decedents of different creeds. As India underwent numerous drastic changes on the throne of Delhi, every ruler propounded a philosophy, religion and language which suited his interests. As a result India became a country where hundreds of languages are spoken in thousands dialects. Liberation from the clutches of the Britishers provided ample and adequate opportunities for every language and dialect to thrive in full bloom. Every language has its specific stronghold and geographical area of influence. Kannada is spoken in Karnataka, Tamil in Tamilnadu, Malayalam in Kerala, Telgu in Andhra Pradesh, Marathi in Maharashtra, Oriya in Orissa, Konkani in Goa, Gujrati in Gujrat, Kashmiri in Jammu and Kashmir and Assamese in Assam. Hindi has the maximum number of dialects. While chaste Hindi is spoken in larger areas of Madhya Pradesh, its dialects are spoken in many Hindi speaking states. Bhojpuri is spoken in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Hariyanvi in Haryana, Brijj in Uttar Pradesh and Bagdi in Haryana and Rajasthan.

The history of Punjab is traced back to the Indus Valley Civilization. The most fertile area of the civilization is known as ‘Sapta Sindhu’ in the Vedas. This area by and large falls under Punjab. Punjab of the times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was spread from river Attack to river Satluj. Afterwards the areas irrigated by Satluj, Beas, Ravi, Chenab and Jhelam rivers came to be called as Punjab. As a result the Britishers carved out another state of North West Frontier Province where Pathans were in majority. Punjabi was undisputedly regarded as the lingua and Franca of unified Punjab. It has many dialects such as Majhi, Malwai, Doabi, Puadhi, Multani, Jhangi and Pothohari etc. Even after Independence from the Britishers brought about painful vertical partition of Punjab. Anyhow Punjabi continues to be the language of Punjab on both sides of the border. The only difference is in the scripts. While Punjabi in Pakistan is written in Shamukhi script

from right to left, Punjabi in Indian Punjab is written in Gurmukhi script from right to left.

Being a frontier state Punjab had to bear the first brunt of numerous invaders. Life could never be peaceful here. But huge amount of literature is written in Punjabi language. Most of the World famous Love-legends are written in Punjabi only. It is Punjabi that rubs its shoulders with Urdu in the realm of Ghazals and Qwalies. Its rich literature provides a fertile ground for the flourishing of Cinema. Punjabis are akin to new styles of expression. They adjust to the changed circumstances and adopt change much better and faster than any other community. That's why when the first ever Indian talkie Alam Ara was produced by Ardeshir Irani in 1931, it took just four years for the Punjabis to follow the new form of art. It is a fact that Lahore, the capital city of erstwhile Punjab, was one of the biggest centers of film production in Hindustan. It was the exodus of film makers from Lahore after Independence that Bombay became a centre of film production. Again it is a fact that most of the early producer-directors and actors in Hindi cinema were of Punjabi origin.

India boasts of a land of unprecedented diversity. It encompasses a gigantic blend of diverse cultures, regions, religions and languages. This diversity has provided abundant opportunities for regional cinema to grow on the lines of Hindi cinema. Regional films present a kaleidoscopic view of great Indian tradition and culture. Regional films are the keys to the Indian cinema. India is unique in its kaleidoscope of diverse languages and cultures. There are at least 15 languages and over 2000 dialects and films are produced in most of the languages. In 2009, for example, 183 films were made in Hindi, 168 in Tamil and 148 in Telugu. The largest numbers of films are produced in these three languages. However, 78 films were made in Kannada, 71 in Malayalam, 57 in Bengali, 35 in Marathi and almost 10 in Assamese.<sup>1</sup>

India is a great country where a variety of languages are spoken. Many of the languages with large followers support their own film industry. Some of the popular regional film industries in India are Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, Malayalam and Punjabi. While Bomay film industry is known as Bollywood, Tamil film industry is called Kollywood, Bengali film industry is called Tollygunge and Punjabi film industry is called Pollywood.

### **The Birth of Punjabi Cinema:**

As mentioned in Wikipedia the efforts of producing a Punjabi film started in 1934 itself. In this year films like *Heer Ranjha*, *Mirza Sahiban* and *Raja Gopi Chand* were

started but due to one reason or the other they could not see the light of the day. *Heer Ranjha* featured Anwari, Walaiti Begum, Rafiq Ghajnavi, Gul Hamid, M. Ismail Fazal Shah and Lala Yakub. But it was never released. It is note worthy that like the first attempts in Hindi and other Indian languages, the initial themes of Punjabi films were also related to historical and love-legends. The credit of producing the first Punjabi film aptly goes to K.D. Mehra who made the first Punjabi film *Sheila*.<sup>2</sup>It is also known as *Pind Di Kudi* and it was a super hit in its times. Baby Noor Jehan made her debut as an actress and singer in this film. While *Sheila* was made in Calcutta, it was released in Lahore, the capital of united Punjab. From the business point of view it was a huge success and was a hit across the province. Its success allured many more producers for making films in Punjabi language. K.D. Mehra joined hands with M.M. Billoo to make his second film *Heer Sial*.<sup>3</sup>This film gave break to the artists like Balo and M. Ismail. Baby Noor Jehan remained an integral part of this film. *Heer Sial* also got extraordinary public support.<sup>4</sup> It can safely be counted as a successful movie. While some regional cinemas started with flop films, Punjabi cinema made its debut with thumping success.

### **Punjabi Films in Pre-Partition Era:**

As a huge majority of Punjabi population lived in and around Lahore so Lahore did not lose time in becoming a big market of Punjabi films. It became a happy hunting ground for film makers. They thought to make the most of this virgin field and incredible audience for their business to flourish. As a result film studios were opened up and many artists, producers, directors and technicians from Bombay and Calcutta started shifting to Lahore. The list includes the likes of Shanta Apte, Motilal, Chandra Mohan, Hiralal, Noor Jehan, Mumtaz Shanti, Wali, Syed Attahullah Shah Hashmi, Krishna Kumar and Shanker Hussain.<sup>5</sup> Journalists like B.R. Chopra and Ramanand Sagar also preffered to settle down in Lahore. They were working for some esteemed newspapers and magazines of those days.<sup>6</sup> While B.R. Chopra was running his Film magazine *Cine Herald*, Ramanand Sagar was associated with the *Evening News*. Syed Attahullah Shah Hashmi was publisher of the film paper *Adakar*. These journalists were immensely dependent on the Lahore Film industry for news and other saucy and crispy material.<sup>7</sup> As mentioned in wikipedia *Gul-e-Bakavali* and *Sassi- Punnu* were the other releases of 1938.Noor Jehan also figured in *Gul-e-Bakavali*. The year 1939 saw the release of films like *Puran Bhagat*, *Mirza Sahiban*, *Surdas and Mera Punjab*. Zubeida made her debut in *Mirza Sahiban*. As many as nine films were released in 1940. This fact stands as witness

about the pace of cinema industry in Punjab. *Chambe Di Kali* was the debut film of Indira Billi and comedian Kharaiti. It also had V. Gopal, P. Jairaj and Ravinder Kapoor as co-stars. Other films made in this year include *Yamla Jatt*, *Matwali Meera*, *Laila Majnu*, *Alibaba*, *Jagga Daku*, *Ik Musafir* and *Dulla Bhatti*. There were as many as seven releases in 1941. Prominent among these films were *Kurmai*, *Sipahi*, *Pardesi Dhola*, *Sehti Murad* and *Mera Mahi*. In 1942 films like *Ravi Paar*, *Patwari*, *Pattola*, *Mangti* and *Gowandhi* were released. *Mangti* was a hit film of the year.<sup>8</sup> Three films named *Mera Mahi*, *Poonji* and *Papi* were produced in 1943. While *Dasi*, *Panchhi*, *Koel* and *Gul Baloch* were made in 1944, *Champa* and *Nikhetoo* were made in 1945.<sup>9</sup> *Gul Baloch* can safely be regarded as the most successful Punjabi film in the Pre-Partition era. The political hiccups and intensified freedom struggle cast their shadow on Punjabi cinema because Lahore was one of the major hunting grounds of revolutionaries

### **Punjabi Films after Partition:**

The partition of India in 1947 served as a death-blow to the Punjabi film Industry which was picking up very well. The artists and directors who moved to Mumbai made it big in Bollywood. With the city of Lahore going in Pakistan's way, Indian Punjab lost a commendable centre for films. It not only brought about vertical communal split of Hindustan but also resulted in the exodus of film makers to Bombay or Calcutta. History witnessed unprecedented bloodshed in 1947 when the people from both sides of the border had to migrate to their respective nations. People were looted, disgraced and brutally killed on both sides of the newly drawn international border. Freedom from the Britishers did break the chains of slavery but it also brought tremendous problems which sought immediate attention and firm solution. The problem of resettlement of migrants (Refugees) from Pakistani Punjab was a huge one. It took nearly a decade for the people to forget, nay lessen, the pains caused by the scars of partition. This type of exodus and bloodshed at the attainment of freedom took place for the first time in the World history. The most prosperous areas of Punjab remained in Pakistan. The economy, industry and above all the humanity in Punjab was tattered. All the affluent film makers and actors shifted to Bombay for a better livelihood. They continued making films there. But Punjabi films had to start from the scratch and the turbulent period did not let films settle down easily.

Serious efforts were made to keep Indian Punjabi cinema alive. In 1950 a comedy *Posti* starring Moti Sood Majnu was a super hit so much so that the comedian Majnu

became a household name. *Posti* had other actors like Shyama, Manorama, Amarnath, Randhir, Majnu, Ramesh Thakur, Bhag Singh and Chand Burque. Other films made in this year include *Phere*, *Mutiyaar*, *Chhai*, *Bhaiyya Ji* and *Madari*. Before it *Lachhi* was produced in 1949. It is worth remembering that these films were made in Bombay. *Phooman*, *Balo*, *Baisakhi* (1951), *Jugni*, *Laralappa*, *Koday Shah* (1952), *Vanjara*, *Shah Ji*, *Ashtali* (1954), *Pingan*, *Muklawa*, *Hulare* (1957), *Nikki* (1958), *Jagga Daku* and *Bhangra* (1959) were released in the 50's.<sup>10</sup> Most of these films flopped.

The year 1960 saw the release of hit films like *Posti* and *Do Lachhian*.<sup>8</sup> Though these films drew great crowds yet they failed to revive Punjabi cinema. The music and songs of these films were so sumptuous that they were readily accepted by the cine-goers. The support and role of All India Radio in the promotion of Punjabi films can not be underestimated. It is worth mentioning that the songs of Punjabi movies were used to be run for months and years on All India Radio. It aroused public interest and people started queuing up to watch Punjabi films. The trend of comedies continued even after the partition. Mulkh Raj Bhakhri's *Bhangra* (1958) starring Sunder and Nishi was a super hit film which was remade by Mohan Bhakhri as *Jatti* in 1980 with Mehar Mittal and Aparna Chowdhry, which in turn was again a great commercial success.<sup>11</sup> In fact the music of Hansraj Behl in *Bhangra* became immensely popular. Songs sung by Shamshad Begum and Mohd. Rafi like 'Batti Balkay Banere Utte Rakhdi Aan, Rah Bhul Na Jave Chann Mera' and 'Chitte Dand Hasnon Nayion Rehnde' etc. were on everybody's lips.<sup>12</sup> *Bhangra* was the debut film of actress Nishi. It starred Nishi, Sunder, Khariti, Vimla, Satish Ramla & Majnu. Similarly, Johnny Walker-starrer *Vilayati Babu* (1961) was a hit and was later remade with the same name featuring Mehar Mittal in the lead role and Amitabh Bachchan in a guest appearance.<sup>13</sup> *Yamla Jatt* starring Indira Billi, Sunder, Kuldip Kaur, Uma Dutt, Renu Makkar, Rani Sachdev, Dharampal, Swaran Dada, *Kiklee* of Jagdish Sethi, Madan Puri, Tun Tun, Indira Billi, Madhumati, Gopal Sehgal, *Do Lachhiyan* starring Daljeet, Indira Billi, Krishna Kumari, Kharaiti, Satish, Sunder and *Chaudhary Karnail Singh* of Jagdish Sethi, Prem Chopra, Madan Puri, Krishna Kumari, Vimla, Sunder & Sheela were the other notable films released in 1960.<sup>14</sup> The success of all these films underlined the fact that Punjabi cinema was once again put on the right track.

Wikipedia states that in 1961 a total of five films were released out of which *Guddi* and *Vilayati Babu* were instant hits. While *Guddi* had Nishi, Karan Dewan, Achala Sachdev, Sunder, Uma Devi & Madan Puri in its star cast, Johnny Walker single

handedly ensured thumping success of *Vilayati Babu*. In 1962 films like *Pardesi Dhola*, *Dhol Jani*, *Chann Mahi* and *Khedan De Din Char* were released. Of these *Khedan De Din Char* of Manohar Deepak, Indira Billi, Gopal Sehgal, Wasti & Jagdev achieved some success. Music continued to be the back bone of these films. Prem Chopra regaled the Punjabi audience in 1963 with *Sapni* and *Eh Dharti Punjab Di*. As many as eight films were released in 1964. *Satluj De Kande* of Balraj Sahni, *Kiklee* of Jagdish Sethi, Madan Puri, Tun Tun, Indira, Madhumati & Gopal Sehgal, *Main Jatti Punjab Di* of Nishi & Premnath, *Satt Saliyan* of Indira Billi, Ravinder Kapoor, Gopal Sehgal, Majnu, Indira Bansal, Swarn Dada & Raj Rani, and *Jagga* of Dara Singh & Indira can be regarded as successful films. *Satluj De Kande* was a big-budget romantic Punjabi film of Padam Prakash Maheshwary. It had big stars like Balraj Sahni, Nishi, Wasti, Mirza Musharraf etc. worked in the film while Hans Raj Behl composed its music. This was the first Punjabi film by Balraj Sahni and it was a super hit and it also won a National Award. *Satluj De Kande* was telecast thrice on National Channel of Door Darshan.<sup>15</sup> *Chambe Di Kali* starring Nishi, Manohar Deepak, Madhumati and Rajendra Kumar was the only hit of 1965. No worth mentioning film could enter the market in 1966. Though Indira Billi continued to mesmerize the audience yet none of her two movies could leave any impact in the year 1967.

### **The Turning Point:**

As mentioned in Wikipedia the year 1969 is special in the history of Punjabi cinema. It was in this year that the first colour movie in Punjabi language *Nanak Naam Jahaz Hai* was released. Directed by Ram Maheshwari, it had Prithvi Raj Kapoor, Vimi, Somdutt, Nishi, Suresh, Veena, Tiwari, Jagdish Raj, I.S. Johar & David in its star cast. It was a religious film and an instant hit.<sup>16</sup> The film was a huge success. The film was the first really major successful Punjabi film in Post-Independent India with a major cultural impact on Sikhs at home and abroad and it is credited with the revival of the Punjabi Film Industry in India. It earned such popularity that people stood in long lines to purchase tickets for watching it. Renowned singers of those times Aasha Bhonsle, Mohd. Rafi, Mohinder Kapoor and Manna De etc. continued lending their voice to the musical symphonies of those days. The success of *Nanak Naam Jahaz Hai* triggered the enthusiasm of Punjabi film makers. Movies started releasing in huge numbers. Hindi movie actors having Punjabi descent got interested in Punjabi movies. The year 1970 saw releases such as *Kankan De Ole* (Dharmendra, Asha Parekh and Ravindra Kapoor) and

*Nanak Dukhiya Sab Sansar* (Dara Singh, Balraj Sahni, Ram Mohan & Asha Sachdev). No notable film was released in 1971. In 1972, Dara Singh once again acted in a Punjabi movie. This time he paired with Prithviraj Kapoor in *Mele Mitran De*. With Sunil Dutt, Radha Saluja and Ranjeet in lead roles, *Mann Jeete Jag Jeet* was released in 1973. It was a religious film. *Pattola* and *Tere Rang Nyare* could not leave much impact. In 1974 Dharmendra & Rajendra Kumar appeared in lead roles in *Do Sher*, Dara Singh & Feroz Khan in *Bhagat Dhanna Jatt*, Manmohan Krishan in *Sacha Mera Roop Hai* and Shaminder Singh & Radha Saluja in *Dukh Bhanjan Tera Naam*. *Dukh Bhanjan Tera Naam* turned out to be the best of all. It was a religious-historical film and it had many special appearances from Bollywood superstars like Sunil Dutt, Rajendra Kumar, Dharmendra, Johnny Walker and Dara Singh etc. In the same year Dara Singh, Feroz Khan & Yogita Bali combined in *Bhagat Dhanna Jatt* to present a rich feast of movies of high standard. However *Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh* and *Mittar Pyare Nu* failed to impress the audience. *Teri Meri Ek Jindri* was released in 1975. Along with Dharmendra this movie introduced his cousin brother Veerendra. Films like *Daaj*, *Giddha*, *Main Papi Tum Bakhshanhaar*, *Papi Tarey Anek*, *Santo Banto*, *Sardar-E-Azam*, *Sawa Lakh Se Ek Ladaun*, *Taakra*, *Yamla Jatt* were released in 1976. *Sawa Lakh Se Ek Ladaun*, *Giddha*, *Main Papi Tum Bakhshanhaar* and *Santo Banto* had strong star-cast and equally impressive themes. While Dara Singh, Navin Nischol, Yogita Bali, Rajesh Khanna, Neetu Singh & Yash Sharma acted vigorously in *Sawa Lakh Se Ek Ladaun*, Dharmendra, Shatrughan Sinha, Mehar Mittal, Veerendra & Aruna Irani showed emphatic acting skills in *Santo Banto*. Dharmendra, Yash Sharma, Yogesh Chhabra & Mehar Mittal fared remarkably well in *Main Papi Tum Bakhshanhaar* and Dharmendra, Dara Singh, Veerendra, Mehar Mittal, Daljit Kaur & Manorama were unmatched in *Giddha*. Dara Singh starred *Sawa Lakh Se Ek Ladaun* was the biggest hit. As the film had Khalsa Fauj soldiers wearing fake beards, so it ran into conflict with the staunch Sikh political parties. It was banned from screening in cinemas in Punjab by the then state Govt.

The year 1977 was an unforgettable one for the Punjabi film industry. Many films like *Sat Sri Akal*, *Shaheed Kartar Singh Sarabha*, *Jai Mata Di*, *Saal Solvan Chadeya* etc. were released. Because of the cameo-appearance by Rekha, *Saal Solvan Chadeya* won accolades. *Sat Sri Akal* starring Sunil Dutt, Shatrughan Sinha and Premnath in lead roles was a hit film. *Nachdi Jawani* of Romesh Sharma, Meena Rai and Sujit Kumar might not be big hit at box office yet it made a niche for itself. The songs of this movie were

remarkably composed and they contributed to a great extent the success of the films. Songs like 'Eh Pyar Di Kahani Sadiyan Purani' etc. are still popular amongst the lovers of Punjabi cinema. In 1978, films like *Udeekan*, *Dhyanu Bhagat*, *Jai Mata Sheranwali*, *Jindri Yar Di* etc. saw the light of the day. *Udeekan* proved to be a super hit film at the Box Office. Its songs were instantly popular. *Walayati Babu* was the first ever remake in Punjabi cinema. It was released in 1978. It was the remake of an older Punjabi film with the same name by Johnny Walker. The film is known better because of the special appearance of Amitabh Bachchan. Simi Grewal, Parikshit Sahni, Bharat Kapoor, Sanjeev Kumar & Bindu in *Udeekan*, Dara Singh, Yogita Bali, Satish Kaul, Komila Virk in *Dhyanu Bhagat* and Amitabh Bachchan, Reena Roy & Mehar Mittal in *Walayati Babu* made a mark in Punjabi cinema. 1979 was a splendid year for the Punjabi Cinema. In this year movies like *Guru Manio Granth*, *Jatt Punjabi*, *Kunwara Mama*, *Sukhi Pariwar*, *Til Til Da Lekha* were released. *Guru Manio Granth* was an instant hit. It was a religious film. *Jatt Punjabi* had special appearance by Manoj Kumar. It was also a hit film. *Til Til Da Lekha* was another hit. It got the coveted Punjab State Govt. Award for Best Story Writer and Second Best feature film 1979. In the same year the first-ever Punjabi mystery film *Vangaar* was released. But it failed at the Box Office. Dheeraj Kumar in *Sehti Murad*, Daljeet Kaur, Veerendra, Satish Kaul, Mehar Mittal & Kanchan Mattu in *Saida Jogan* and Manoj Kumar, Raza Murad, Satish Kaul, Bhawna Bhatt, Arpana Chaudhry, Mehar Mittal, Rajendra Nath, Madan Puri & Yash Sharma in *Jatt Punjabi* also did very well. 1980 proved to be another memorable year for Punjabi cinema. It saw the release of *Chann Pardesi*. Directed by Ravinder Peepat, it starred Raj Babbar, Rama Vij, Amrish Puri, Om Puri and Kulbhusun Kharbanda. Apart from a strong plot its songs were situational and tremendous in appeal. It was a super hit film. It also became the first Punjabi film to achieve the coveted National Award for the Best Film in Regional Language. *Fauji Chacha* had veteran actor of Bollywood Sanjeev Kumar in the lead as the Fauji Chacha.<sup>17</sup> *Fauji Chacha* was also a hit. A remake of Mulakh Raj Bhakhri's *Bhangra* (1958), starring Sundar and Nishi was remade by Mohan Bhakhri as *Jatti* in 1980 with Mehar Mittal and Arpana Chowdhry as star performers. Like *Bhangra*, *Jatti* also achieved tremendous success.

### **The Upsurge in 80's:**

As inscribed in Cinema of India *Gori Diyan Jhanjharan* of Dheeraj Kumar, Satish Kaul, Bhawna Bhatt, Arpana Chaudhry, Tun tun & Mehar Mittal, *Lambhardarni* of Dara



Singh, Veerendra, Aruna Irani, Mehar Mittal & Surinder Sharma and *Sardara Kartara* of Veerendra, Arpana Chaudhry, Yash Sharma, Sudha Chopra & Mehar Mittal were also notable films of 1981. Veerendra's *Balbiro Bhabhi* was the only hit film released in 1981. This film had Veerendra in the lead role. The performance of Veerendra was highly appreciated. *Do Posti* did good business as a comedy. It had Anil Dhawan, I.S. Johar, Rajendranath, Jaishree, Mehar Mittal, Kanchan Mattu & Satish Kaul as star cast. Apart from it *Lachhi* of Satish Kaul, Raza Murad & Bhavana Bhatt, *Josh Jawani Da* of Satish Kaul, Yogesh Chhabra & Babli and *Sajjan Thug* of Navin Nishchal were other films of some repute. In 1982 two major movies namely *Ucha Dar Babe Nanak Da* and *Sarpanch* were released. Gurdar Maan made his debut in *Ucha Dar Babe Nanak Da* had Tanuja, Preeti Sapru, Kalbhooshan Kharbanda, Aruna Irani, Nirmal Rishi, Shammi, Girija Shankar, Yash Sharma & Surinder Shinda as co stars. *Ucha Dar Babe Nanak Da* was a religious film which was an instantaneous hit because of the songs and the theme of the film. This film established Gurdas Mann as a star.

Wikipedia affirm that *Sarpanch* dealt with a variety of burning social issues. It was again a hit-performance by Veerendra with Preeti Sapru, Yogesh Chhabra, Yash Sharma & Mehar Mittal. *Rano* of Satish Kaul, Veerendra, Bhavana Bhatt, Shobini Singh, Kanchan Mattu & Mehar Mittal, *Vehra Lambran Da* of Satish Kaul, Yogesh Chhabra & Mehar Mittal, *Reshma* of Anil Dhawan, Raza Murad, Bindiya Goswami, Shailendra Singh, Mehar Mittal & Birbal and *Chhammak Chhallo* of Bhavana Bhatt, Satish Kaul, Ram Mohan & Raza Murad did not succeed in making any notable impression. But there is no denying the fact that the songs of *Reshma* were spontaneous hits. A poor attempt of cashing the popularity of Jatts proved futile with the failure of *Jatt Da Gandasa* of Satish Kaul, Daljit Kaur, & Shobhini Singh. Inept story line and non-resemblance of Satish Kaul with Jatts can be the reasons behind the crushing failure of this film. A number of movies were released in 1983. But *Putt Jattan De* stands heads and shoulders above others. The movie was one of the finest blends of multi-stars and had good songs. Owing to its plot & music, it proved to be a super hit film. Its star cast boasted of Dharmendra, Shatrughan Sinha, Daljit Kaur, Baldev Khosla, Mehar Mittal, Surinder Shinda & Mohd. Siddiq. It was the super duper hit film of 1983. It can safely be regarded as the most popular and super-hit film amongst the Jatt-centric movies till date. Though there had been films on the life styles of Jatts yet this film presented them as a community that can do any thing to keep its reputation and self-esteem in tact.

A highly romantic film *Mamla Garbar Hai* of Daljit Kaur, Gurdas Mann, Mehar Mittal, Ram Mohan & Yash Sharma, *Batwara* of Veerendra, Diljit Kaur & Yograj Singh, *Aasra Pyaar Da* of Raj Babbar, Preeti Sapru, Kiron Kher & Navin Nischol, *Vohti Hath Soti* of Satish Kaul & Rama Vij and *Jatt Soormey* of Veerendra, Preeti Sapru & Mehar Mittal also regaled the audience. *Mamla Garbar Hai* again was a romantic movie. It established Gurdas Maan as a romantic hero in Punjabi films. The songs of the film were especially loved by the audience. 'Ki Banu Dunia Da, Rabba Sanu Maaf Kari' and 'Dil Da Mamla Hai' were some of the super hit songs of the film. *Sassi Punnu* of Satish Kaul, Bhavna Bhatt, Manmohan Krishan, Sudha Chopra, Nazir Hussain, V. Suri, Kanchan Mattu, Rajinder Nath & Mehar Mittal was hit more for its songs than anything else. In 1984 Veerendra produced another hit film in the form of *Yaari Jatt Di*. Some parts of the film were shot in the U.K. It was out and out a romantic film. Its well-knit plot and enthralling songs regaled the cine-goers. It proved to be a super hit film by Punjabi standards. Apart from Veerendra it had Preeti Sapru, Sukhjinder Singh, Gurcharan Pohli & Mehar Mittal. It was again a film with sumptuous songs. The songs like 'Gur Nalo Ishq Mitha', 'Sajjna De Meil Krade Oye' and 'Ik Vari Bol Tainu Sonh Mere Pyar Di' entertained the audience in a big way.

*Ranjhan Mera Yaar* of Dharmendra, Veerendra, Meena Rai, Arpana Chaudhry & Mehar Mittal, *Maanwaan Thandian Chhanwan* of Satish Kaul, Surinder Kaur, Kalbhoshan Kharbanda & Anita Sarin, *Nimmo* of Veerendra, Preeti Sapru, Shammi, Mehar Mittal, Yash Sharma and *Takraar* of Raza Murad, Shashi Puri & Rama Vij were not so lucky in achieving success. Even then their songs were liked by the audience of all stratas of society. The year 1985 witnessed the release of two major films. One of these films *Guddo* (Rama Vij, Mohd. Sadiq, Sudha Chopra, Yash Sharma & Kanchan Mattu) was produced by Mohammad Sadiq while *Vairi* (Daljit Kaur, Benjamin Gilani, Shabnam Kapoor & Yash Sharma) was produced and directed by Veerendra.<sup>18</sup> Both proved to be average films. Comedies like *Jeeja Sali* of Satish Kaul, Mehar Mittal, Arpana Chaudhry, & Bhavana Bhatt and *Kunwara Jeeja* of Satish Kaul, Bhavana Bhatt, Mehar Mittal, Kanchan Mattu & Aruna Irani were well received by the audience.

The maiden Punjabi film of Mithun Chakravarti *Maujaan Dubai Diyaan* flopped like anything.<sup>19</sup> It had Bhavana Bhatt, Coca Cola, Aruna Irani, Madhu Malini, Vinod Mehra, Mehar Mittal & Madan Puri as co-stars. There was only one big hit film in 1986 in the form of *Long Da Lishkara*. The film had stars of the caliber of Raj Babbar, Gurdas Mann, Om Puri and Nina Tiwana. It also went down in the pages of history as a hit film.

*Bhulekha* (Dara Singh, Satish Kaul, Bhawna Bhatt & Mehar Mittal), *Ki Banoo Duniya Da* (Diljeet Kaur, Gurdas Mann, Manjit Mann & Surinder Shinda) and *Yaar Gareeban Da* (Diljit Kaur, Satish Kaul, Yograj Singh, Geeta Behl, Jatinder Jeetu & Mehar Mittal) increased the list of not-too-impressive films. In 1987 Veerendra came out with *Patola*. *Patola* with Veerendra, Diljeet Kaur, Satish Kaul, Shobhini Singh, Amar Singh Chamkila, Amarjot Kaur, Mehar Mittal, Mohammad Saddiq & Surinder Shinda achieved moderate success. All the six movies released in 1988 flopped. They include *Peengan Pyar Deeyan* (Satish Kaul, Yogesh Chhabra ), *Jatt Soormey* (Veerendra, Preeti Sapru ), *Maula Jatt* (Dara Singh, Satish Kaul, Arpana Chaudhry, Raza Murad ), *Aaj Di Heer* (Satish Kaul, Tina Ghai, Yogesh Chhabra), *Dhee Rani* (Satish Kaul, Rama Vij) and *Suhag Chooda* (Satish Kaul, Preeti Sapru ).

Those were turbulent times when militancy was on its peak in Punjab in the mid 80's. It also cast its evil shadow on the Punjabi cinema. Punjab was terribly shaken with the sudden assassination of Veerendra during the shooting of the film *Jatt Tey Zameen*. With the demise of Veerendra, Punjabi cinema lost its chief protagonist. In those times Veerendra was the lone real superstar in Punjabi cinema. The death of Veerendra gave an opportunity to others like Guggu Gill & Yograj Singh to catch public attention. While Guggu Gill established himself as a hero in Punjabi films, Yograj Singh won accolades as a villain. Two notable films of this year were *Jatt Tey Zameen* and *Gabhroo Punjab Da*. While people went to watch *Jatt Tey Zameen* as it was the swan song of Veerendra, the other *Gabhroo Punjab Da* had vibrant music. *Marhi Da Diva* (1989) by Surinder Singh of FTII, Pune was meant for serious viewers. Though its non-commercial treatment did not attract cine goers yet it won National Award for the best Punjabi film in Regional Cinema.<sup>20</sup> It was the dramatic adoption of Gurdial Singh's novel bearing the same title. Its star cast had Raj Babbar, Deepti Naval, Kanwaljeet, Pankaj Kapoor, Parikshit Sahni & Asha Sharma.

### **The Decline in the 90s:**

Militancy again rose its ugly head in early 90's. Therefore film producers didn't dare to make films. As a result no major film was released in 1990. The only notable release of the year was *Qurbani Jatt Di* which was directed by Preeti Sapru. It had stars like Guggu Gill, Yograj Singh, Gurdas Mann, Dharmendra, Raj Babbar & Preeti Sapru herself. The film turned out to be hit at the box office. The second release of the year was *Dushmani Di Agg* starring Veerendra, Gurdas Mann and Preeti Sapru. It was the last

released film of Veerendra. It also did well at the box office. The flops included *Hukumat Jatt Di* (Daljit Kaur, Deep Dhillon), *Sheran De Putt Sher* (Dara Singh), *Bhabho* (Preeti Sapru) and *Deeva Bale Sari Raat* (Preeti Sapru, Girja Shankar). In 1991 *Anakh Jattan Di* starring Diljit Kaur and Gugu Gill was released. It was the first movie where the public really accepted ex-villain Guggu Gill as a hero. It gave a new fillip to the element of Jattism in Punjabi movies. The film was followed by films like *Jor Jatt Da* (Guggu Gill, Yograj Singh) and *Taakre Jattan De* (Pankaj Dheer, Arjun, Deep Dhillon). Both flopped. But it was *Badla Jatti Da* which turned out to be a major success of the year. It starred Guggu Gill, Yograj Singh (in a villain role) Sunita Dheer, Aman Noorie, Upasna Singh & Surinder Sharma. It exhibited the bloody Jatt-animosity at its zenith. It is better known for its idiomatic dialogues and depiction of blood shed. *Udeekan Saun Diyan* got critical acclaim, but commercial success eluded it. *Sounh Menoo Punjab Di* starring Satish Kaul, Rama Vij and Mehar Mittal was also one of the releases of the year. The film was directed by Sukhdev Ahluwalia while Surinder Kohli composed its music.

In 1992 Harjeet Singh produced highly acclaimed film *Vaisakhi*. It had stars like Deep Dhillon & Sunita Dheer. Though it failed at the box office yet it got critical acclaim. *Jatt Jeona Morh* turned out to be major hit of the year and established Guggu Gill as a superstar in Punjwood. It got resounding success. It may well be regarded as the super duper hit film of the decade. This year also witnessed the release of Yograj Singh's *Jagga Daku*. But it failed to make any significant mark in Punjabi cinema. Gurdas Maan's *Dil Da Mamla* and *Subedaar* also flopped at the box office. *Lalkara Jatti Da* (Guggu Gill and Sunita Dheer) *Jatt Sucha Singh Soorma* (Yograj Singh and Neena Sidhu), *Mirza Sahiban* (Guggu Gill), *Ankheela Soorma* (Dara Singh), *Saali Adhi Gharwali* (Diljit Kaur), *Insaaf Punjab Da* (Yograj Singh, Neena Sandhu), *Zid Jattan Di* (Yograj Singh, Pankaj Dheer, Arjun,) etc. were released in the corresponding year. These films did manage to recover their cost of production but could not attain success. Malkit Singh and Hansraj Hans made their debut in Preeti Sapru's *Mehndi Shagnan Di*. It also had Preeti Sapru and Yograj Singh in it. But it proved to be a big failure. *Kudi Canada Di* of Yograj Singh also flopped in the same year.

In 1994 Gurdas Mann and Yograj Singh joined together in *Kachehri* which not only got critical acclaim but also commercial success. Later it went on to win the National Award.<sup>21</sup> Vishal Singh made his debut in *Tabahi* which was based on the atrocities of Punjab Police on innocent youth in its attempt of weeding out terrorism from the state. It was another hit film of the year. Guggu Gill's *Vairi* also did well at the box office. But

Yograj Singh starring *Jigra Jatt Da* flopped at box office. Model turned actress Kimmi Verma started her career with *Naseebo*. It got critical acclaim but not commercial success. However somehow it managed to recover its cost. *Mirza Sahiban* (Guggu Gill, Manjit Kular and Gurkirtan) was a vivid description of the love-legend. In 1995 Pratigya starring Dara Singh, Gurdas Mann, Preeti Sapru, Guggu Gill did well at the box office. The same *Year Zaildaar* (Yograj Singh, Guggu Gill), *Nain Preeto De* (Yograj Singh), *Sir Dhad Di Baazi* (Preeti Sapru & Sukhjinder Shera), *Qahar* (Kimi Verma, Pankaj Dheer) and *Dhee Jatt Di* (Upasana Singh, Shivendra Mahal) were also released and all these films got moderate success. But Gurdas Mann's *Baghawat* could not do well.

1996 saw the pinnacle of the decline of Punjabi cinema. Only Vishal Singh's film *Sukha* did well at the box office. Rest of the films like *Deson Pardeson* (Shivendra Mahal, Manjeet Kullar), *Gawahi Jatt Di* (Shivendra Mahal, Satnaam Kaur), *Jorawar* (Sharandeep, Upasana Singh), etc. all miserably flopped at the box office. Dara Singh, Vindoo & Farha's *Rabb Diyan Rakhan* was a huge failure. 1997 saw the release of films like *Mela* (Amar Noori, Girija Shankar), *Truck Driver* (Preeti Sapru, Guggu Gill), *Sardari* (Dara Singh, Guggu Gill and Pankaj Dhir) and *Preetan De Pehredaar* etc. Their unique similarity lies in the fact that they all flopped at the box office. Even Guggu Gill's films were flopping like anything. Originally, *Train to Pakistan* (Nirmal Pandey, Rajat Kapoor) was a mixture of Hindi & Punjabi but it was later dubbed into Punjabi. It was meant more for Film Festivals rather than for cinema houses.<sup>22</sup> Based on the novel by Khushwant Singh, it flopped where ever it was released.

The year 1998 witnessed Guggu Gill's *Purja Purja Kat Mare*, Vishal Singh's *Laali*, and Tanuja's *Dildaara*, *Suche Moti* etc. They all flopped with a bang. *Purja Purja Kat Mare* had stars like Guggu Gill, Upasana Singh and Deep Dhillon. But the weak story let it down. Even big budget film like, *Laali* having actors of the caliber of Dara Singh & Ravinder Maan flopped. A religious film *Sarbans Daani Guru Gobind Singh* with a star cast of Dara Singh, Pankaj Dheer, Sonu Walia, Kalbhooshan Kharbanda, Upasana Singh, Girija Shankar also flopped. *Main Maa Punjab Di* (Dara Singh, Shivendra Mahal, Manjit Kullar), too, was a commercial failure though it later got the coveted National award. *Dildaara* of Tanuja & Kalbhooshan Kharbanda even did not ask for water. *Dulla Bhatti* (Randeep Varinder, Boskey Kapoor) failed because of flaws in story and weak direction.

Jaspal Bhatti made his debut in Punjabi cinema with *Mahaul Theek Hai* in 1998. Based on various modes of corruption in Punjab Police, it became an instant hit. It was the first big hit after films like *Jatt Jeona Morh* (1992) & *Badla Jatti Da* (1991). *Badla Jatti*

*Da* was a big success on Box Office and celebrated Silver Jubilee. The film is remembered till date for its fire-emitting dialogues. *Mahaul Theek Hai* paved the way for the success of Gurdas Mann & Divya Dutta's *Shaheed e Mohabbat-Boota Singh* in 1999. It was based on the plight of people who became victims of the partition in 1947. It got both critical and commercial success. It had great resemblance with Hindi film *Ghadar* based on the same theme. *Teriyan Mohabbatan, Muqqadar, Tera Mera Pyar, Nadiyon Vichde Neer, Door Nahin Nankana* etc. all flopped at the box office. Even the presence of Guggu Gill, Pankaj Dheer, Preeti Sapru, Manjit Kular and Upasana Singh could not ensure the success of *Muqqadar. Rajniti*, which was also made in Hindi, flopped too. 1999 ended with a positive note with the success of Raj Babbar's *Shaheed Udham Singh*. This film was widely acclaimed and did good business. It had established actors like Shatrughan Sinha, Gurdas Mann, Amrish Puri & Ranjeet. Its success lies in its direction and splendid camera work. It was way ahead of any other Punjabi movie of 20<sup>th</sup> century in cinematography. It was the first ever film made on the life and deeds of the great martyr in any language in India.

### **The Revival of Punjabi Cinema in 21<sup>st</sup> Century:**

Raj Babbar's *Shaheed Udham Singh* was the last release of 1999. It was released in the last week of the year. After that in the year 2000 very few films were released. *Dard Pardesan De* (Avinash Wadhawan, Upasana Singh, Paramveer and Deep Shikha), *Yaar Maar* (Yograj Singh, Neena Sandhu ) and *Ishq Na Puche Jaat* (Vishal Singh & Sheetal Bedi) all fared miserably. Though *Dard Pardesan De* flopped badly in Punjab yet it did very well in overseas. Just two Punjabi films were released in 2001. *Jagira* (Sukhjinder Shera, Gugu Gill) and *Sikandera* (Guggu Gill, Preeti Sapru, Yograj Singh) both flopped badly. Just when Punjabi films were not doing well in Punjab, Avinash Wadhawan and Ayesha Jhulka starrer *Khalsa Mero Roop Hai Khaas* (2001) was released in overseas market. While it was a hit in overseas market, it failed in Punjab.<sup>23</sup> No significant movie was released in 2002.

### **The Era of Diasporic Films:**

The year 2003 witnessed the release of *Jee Ayan Nu* which gave a new lease of life to the ailing Punjabi cinema.<sup>24</sup> It addressed at length the problems and life style of Indians settled abroad. It was the debut film of singer-turned actor Harbhajan Mann and it was directed by cinematographer-turned director Manmohan Singh. It may appropriately be called the first diasporic film made in Punjabi language. The movie was

made on a big budget (90 lakhs) as normal flicks just cost around 20-25 lakhs. Its star cast consisted of Harbhajan Maan, Priya Gill, Diljeet Kaur, Kanwaljeet, Kimi Verma, Deep Dhillon, Satinder Satti, Navneet Nishan & Vivek Shauq. The cinematography, crisp dialogues, well-knit plot and music of the film ensured its success. Another release of the year *Badla* featuring Guggu Gill, Ravinder Mann, Gurkirtan was an exemplary failure. Its utter failure does not leave any doubt that the era of Jatt-animosity based movies was as good as over. Then in 2004, again, singer-turned actor Harbhajan Mann acted in *Asa Nu Maan Watna Da* and it was directed by director Manmohan Singh of *Jee Aaya Nu* fame. It was another diasporic film and was a huge hit. Apart from Harbhajan Maan it boasted of actors like Kimi Verma, Neeru Bajwa, Kanwaljeet Singh, Deep Dhillon, Navneet Nishan, Gurpreet Ghuggi, Vivek Shauq & Sukhwinder Sukhi. Quite noticeably Manmohan Singh worked with a unique group of actors. It was he who made a novice like Harbhajan Maan act emphatically. As comedian the crown of Mehar Mittal was usurped by Surinder Sharma. But by the turn of the century even Surinder Sharma and young Bhangwant Maan became out-dated as the chapter of crude comedy was as good as over. A new brand of sarcastic satirists like Jaspal Bhatti, Gurpreet Ghuggi and Vivek Shauq came forward to fill the void. Similarly the concept of villain in Punjabi films didn't exist any more. Films like *Pind Di Kudi* (Sarbjot Cheema, Rima), *Mittar Pyare Nu Haal Mureedan Da Kehna* (Rama Vij, Vindoo, Sheeba) and *Khamosh Pani* of Kirron Kher could not do much business. *Khamosh Pani* broke the ground with a serious type of artistic theme.<sup>25</sup> It got critical acclamation.

In 2005 films like *Jija Ji*, *Des Hoyaa Pardes*, *Main Tu Assi Tussi*, *Yaaran Naal Baharan*, *Nalaik* etc. were released. Gurdas Mann sprang a surprise with his *Des Hoya Pardes*. It gave vivid description of terrorism and the reasons of its spread in Punjab. It was a big hit. *Yaaran Naal Baharan* (Raj Babbar, Jimmy Shergill, Juhi Babbar, Anupam Kher, Sunita Dhir & Gurpreet Ghuggi) and *Nalayak* (Bobby Deol, Guggu Gill, Vivek Shauq, Jaspal Bhatti & Gurpreet Ghuggi) stand nowhere near the resounding success of *Des Hoya Pardes*. The year 2006 saw movies like *Dil Apna Punjabi* (Harbhajan-Manmohan pair), *Ek Jind Ek Jaan* and *Waris Shah- Ishq Daa Warris*. *Waris Shah* (Gurdas Mann, Juhi Chawla, Divya Dutta & Gurkirtan) was so appreciated that it made its way to the Oscars in the best film category.<sup>26</sup> *Waris Shah* must figure among all time top five Punjabi films. *Mannat* (Jimmy Shergill, Kulraj Randhawa) and *Ek Jind Ek Jaan* (Raj Babbar & Nagma) did well while *Mehndi Wale Hath*, *Baghi* & the comedy *Main Tu*

*Assi Tussi* failed to leave any significant impression. The lyrics and acting in *Mannat* were remarkable.

In 2007, movies like *Rustam-e-Hind* and *Mitti Wajan Mardi* (Harbhajan-Manmohan pair) were released. *Mitti Wajan Mardi* got moderate success. Other films of this year became ignominious. As many as fourteen films were released in 2008. Notable among them were *Heaven On Earth* (Preity Zinta, Vansh Bhardwaj), *Hashar* (Babbu Mann, Gurleen Chopra), *Mera Pind* (Harbhajan Mann, Kimi Verma, Navjot Singh Sidhu), *Lakh Pardesi Hoiye* (Gracy Singh, Rajat Bedi, Kulbhooshan Kharbanda), *Majaajan* (Gavie Chahal & Sunny Cheema), *Babal Da Vehra* (Malkiat Singh, Yograj Singh), *Kaun Kise Da Beli* (Preet Brar) and *Punjab* (Bunty Singh, Gavie Chahal). *Mera Pind-My Home* impressed upon youth not to shirk work and do what they love to do abroad. It underlined the fact that labour has got a dignity of its own. *Lakh Pardesi Hoiye* rued over the lost moral values amongst the foreign based Punjabi youth. It discussed at length the repercussions of New Media. While there was forgetful acting in *Hashar- a Love Story*, its lyrics and music won accolades. The moderate success of *Mera Pind* of Manmohan Singh and the unnoticed *Lakh Pardesi Hoiye* doubtlessly revealed that people were fed up with the NRI based string of movies. This year saw two Punjabi singers Babbu Maan and Preet Brar trying their luck albeit unsuccessfully. In 2009 sixteen films entered the market. Sixteen in one year, really seemed to promise great future of Punjabi cinema. With the exception of Manmohan Singh's *Jag Jeondeyan De Mele* (Harbhajan Mann, Tulip Joshi) and *Tera Mera Ki Rishta* (Jimmy Shergill, Kulraj Randhawa, Anupam Kher) no other movie could make any tangible impression. *Mini Punjab* (Gurdas Maan), *Jawaani Zindabad* (Raj Brar, Pooja Kamal, Guggu Gill), *Apni Boli Apna Des* (Sarabjeet Cheema, Raj Babbar), *Virsa* (Arya Babbar, Gulshan Grover), *Heer Ranja* (Harbhajan Mann, Neeru Bajwa) and *Lagda Ishq Hogaya* (Roshan Prince, Nachhatar Gill & Rana Ranbir) all licked the dust. Manmohan Singh's *Munde U.K. De* (Jimmy Shergill, Neeru Bajwa and Amrinder Gill) was the biggest earner of all the Punjabi films released in the year.<sup>27</sup> The not-too-impressive performance of these movies made the film makers made to think as to what went wrong with these movies. Perhaps the unbridled entry of Punjabi singers was unnecessary. In the absence of any school of acting, these singers tried to thrive on the popularity of their music albums. But cinema is an art form needs expertise. A number of Punjabi singers namely Raj Brar, Sarabjeet Cheema, Lakhwinder Wadali, Amrinder Gill, Nachhatar Gill, Babbu Maan, Gippy Grewal, Miss Pooja, Surjeet Khan and Roshan Prince tried their luck but success eluded all. The singers in Punjab enjoy the



status of celebrities but the public out rightly rejected them as actors because the performing art like cinemas requires expertise in acting skills. In 2010 films like *Mitti, Sukhmani – Hope for Life, Jawani Zindabaad, Lad Gaya Pecha, Ekam – Son of Soil, Virsa, Panjaban, Mel Karade Rabba, Channa Sachi Muchi, Chak Jawana, Ik Kudi Punjab Di, Tere Ishq Nachaya, Rabba Mainu Pyaar Ho Gaya, Kabaddi Ik Mohabbat, Mar Jawan Gur Khake* and *Simran* were released.<sup>28</sup> Out of these *Mel Karade Rabba* of Jimmy Shergill, Gippy Grewal, Neeru Bajwa, Sunita Dheer & Jaswinder Bhalla and *Chak Jawana* of Gurdas Mann and Rana Ranbir could achieve moderate success. *Chak Jawana* was based on the theme of intoxication among Punjabi youth. With many directors taking keen interest and some Punjwood films doing better than big budget Bollywood films at UK box office, it seems there is some hope left for Punjwood for revival. Three films namely *Ek Noor, The Lion of Punjab* and *Dharti* have been released in 2011 till date. While *The Lion of Punjab* has flopped to provide wholesome entertainment or even convey any message, the shine *Ek Noor* proved to be short lived. Film critics have great hopes from Jimmi Shergill and Raj Babbar's *Dharti*. The film makers are in search of new themes. Punjabi cinema is in its transition period where the established themes are exhausted and the new ones are yet to emerge. Only the time will tell whither goes the Punjabi cinema.

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