



Negotiating Cultural Identity under Colonial Shadows: A Postcolonial Analysis of Angrej

Mughees Khan¹

Article History

Received
05-11-2025

Accepted
29-11-2025

Published
30-12-2025

Abstract & Indexing

 **WORLD of JOURNALS**

 **Crossref doi**



ACADEMIA



Abstract

This study investigates the Punjabi movie Angrej (2015) while using the postcolonial lens and it explores how an articulation of cultural identity and colonial presence simultaneously functions as constraining and liberating in the lands and lives that are captured. Taking place in pre-partition rural Punjab, this film has an overwhelmingly positive representation of indigenous life during British colonial imperialism, with special emphasis on glossing over the factual portrayal of external sovereignty. This paper argues that Angrej articulates an ideal view of Punjabi identity, negotiating colonial influence through subtle narrative strategies by doing so it draws on postcolonial theory perspectives (hybridity, representation and the subaltern). The analysis highlights how the film foregrounds local traditions, language and social structures to assert itself as a demonstration of cultural continuity and authenticity. Simultaneously, the more relative absence of direct colonial acts embodies a type of narrative displacement that reconstitutes actual histories. The results indicate that the film fits into a wider trend of romanticizing pre-Partition Punjab through cinema, consequently influencing collective memory and cultural identity in postcolonial situations. This study puts forth the intersection of nostalgia, identity-making and postcolonial discourse within regional cinema.

Keywords:

Angrej, male-centered Punjabi cinema, nostalgia, postcolonialism, cultural identity and hybridity, colonial representation and discourse

¹ Lecturer, Department of English, Govt. Graduate College, Jhang.



REVIEWER CREDITS

ROAD

RESEARCH

OPEN ACCESS

OPEN ACCESS

Introduction

The medium of cinema, as artistic and ideological mode, is at the center of cultural production and culture-based narrative construction. As it also reflects social realities, and engages in the construction of discourses of history, identity and belonging. Representation – as Stuart Hall (1997) states – is not only passive; it constitutes meaning. This is also the sense in which films operate as discursive sites where identities are produced, resisted and reconfigured. Cinema takes on even greater importance within postcolonial contexts because it is a space in which colonies negotiate their histories, and their relationships with power and cultural memory.

Despite being among the most prolific film industries in the world, South Asian cinema has often been a space that revolves around movement-based mainstream narratives with a critical distaste for those bent on challenging this commercial sensibility. But within the larger world of South Asian cinema, regional films provide a different viewpoint anchored in local culture, language and history. Of these, the study of Punjabi cinema is a particularly rich but under-explored area. Rooted in agrarian traditions, communitarian ethos and far more linguistic resonance, Punjabi films offer critical glimpses into the cultural psyche of the region. However, very few scholarly works on Punjabi cinema have been produced, especially via the lens of postcolonialism.

Such an inquiry is all the more important in view of the historical trajectory of Punjab. The area has undergone significant socio-political changes, particularly during British rule and the Partition of India. As Loomba (2007) tracks the history of colonialism and observes that the rise of colonialism began to displace indigenous practices because of the administration, economic and cultural governance that it brought up. In turn, the Partition triggered communal violence and massive displacements that remapped identity in national and religious terms. These are the historical events that still echo within cultural production in how collective memory exists and has an affect on practice.

Angrej stands out in this cluttered historical and cultural landscape, revisiting pre-Partition Punjab as an equally important cinematic text. The movie provides an authentic depiction of rural life based on customs and bonds. Night-offs, petty revenge and at first glance *Angrej* looks quite the simple love story within the social constructs. But on further analysis it is a more nuanced form of cultural reconstruction, both telling some history and leaving some out.

The most unusual component when it comes to *Angrej* is its representation of colonial presence. Set within a colonial period, the film avoids direct depictions of British power. Not a colonial official or institution or even administrative structure in sight to signal the actual presence of empire. The film builds instead a closed cultural universe, within which the localized practices and values hold court over the visiting narrative discourse. The resulting absence poses important questions about the politics of representation: does a construction without colonial power represent resistance or an effacement of history?

That is why it is necessary to tap into the insights of postcolonial scholars. Edward Said (1978), in his seminal book *Orientalism*, states that representation is inseparable from power. Cinemas, like other cultural texts, are fundamental in reflecting how societies understand themselves and others. Through hegemony over representation, people in power are able to shape history and identity. With *Angrej*, the lack of colonial imagery can be seen as a kind of restructuring of representational power in which the focus is no longer on the colonizer but on the colonized.

Likewise, Homi K. Bhabha (1994) specifically utilizes hybridity to articulate in various ways the uneven intermingling of colonizers and the empirical cultures of colonized. As

Bhabha held, colonial encounters create a “third space” where identities are negotiated and made. But *Angrej* tries to persist on this hybridity in a relativistic manner, depicting an idyllic culture and civil society. Which in turn leads to further questions over the extent to which the film interacts with postcolonial ambivalence and tension.

This analysis is extended by the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988), whose contribution focuses on representation of those who has been displaced. While discussing the concept of subalternity, Spivak points out the exclusion that some groups can naturally have from hegemonic discourse. This viewpoint is especially applicable to *Angrej* as the film offers an overwhelmingly uncritical presentation of traditional structures, which are particularly identifiable when analysing gender roles and social hierarchies.

Apart from this theoretical aspect, it is necessary to study the film’s narrative from the perspective of nostalgia. Nostalgia, the cultural phenomenon that is prone to represent an idealized past, making it somehow a place of authenticity and stability. It can serve as a device to preserve traditions, but it can also hide complications in history. To draw upon the words of Kaplan (2013): nostalgic depictions frequently compress or romanticize history into a symbolic resource for contemporary identity work in which historical locations become imported material. *Angrej* uses nostalgia as its dominant and functional aesthetic and ideological device that informs the narrative and spectacles of Punjab.

This paper contends that *Angrej* establishes an ambrosial and nostalgic imagination of Punjabi identity, foregrounding cultural continuity while sidelining the disruptive force of colonial governance. This selective representation goes beyond being a stylistic choice and becomes an act of ideology that shapes the viewers experience towards matters regarding history and identity. In privileging aspects of tradition, language and group cohesion, the film contributes to a collective memory that can often serve positive or restrictive functions.

In addition, this study argues that the lack of direct colonial representation in *Angrej* cannot be read as a disconnect from colonial past. It is not an objective narrative approach but a strategic one that recasts colonial presence into subtle and indirect interactions. It is a mode of resistance that matches with trends in the production of postcolonial cultures more generally by being cultural and affirmatory rather than direct. It seeks to show that regional films do not simply reflect or represent cultural identity but engage in the politics of its construction. By engaging in this, the research articulates an important trend in postcolonial studies attentive to how film bears on historical consciousness and cultural memory.

This research situates *Angrej* as an ideologically troubled yet culturally resonant text which negotiates identity through a process of selective representation. It prompts a reimagining of how history is engaged with in regional cinema, not as an objective truth but rather as a subjectively constructed and contested space of meaning.

Literature Review

Postcolonial cinema has evolved into a substantial discipline within scholarship, critically engaging with issues regarding identity, representation, power and historical memory. In postcolonial contexts, cinema is not only a storytelling medium but also an inscriptive site of social meanings. Academics like Ponzanesi (2012) and Shohat & Stam (1994) have highlighted that in this regard films (in a broad sense) are implicated in the very processes through which societies remember their colonial pasts and reconstruct their postcolonial presents. This section summarizes the significant theoretical and critical perspectives related to the analysis of *Angrej*, situating the study in larger academic discussions.

On a foundational level, Edward Said (1978) offers essential groundwork for representation understood primarily as power. Said tells us in his book *Orientalism* published over three decades ago, that Western renditions of East compel records not as passive observations but actively ideological to justify and vouchsafe imperial hegemony. Said’s work is rooted in literature and history, but it has been applied to cinema, where images and stories

also create cultural knowledge. This perspective illuminates how cinematic representations of colonized societies can either reproduce or challenge dominant narratives in postcolonial film studies

Developing Said's work, Homi K. Bhabha (1994) introduces the notions of hybridity, mimicry and the "third space," which have become foundational for postcolonial theory. According to Bhabha, colonial encounters create ambivalent cultural identities that occupy an in-between space and challenge stable notions of culture and identity. It has had a notable impact on film studies, which engages with the ways that cinematic texts represent or tap into processes of negotiation and transformation in culture. Yet not every moment of production foregrounds hybridisation; as Bhabha himself notes, something may be seen to posit itself towards a more knowable narrative at the expense of self-consciousness. This is especially noticeable in the interpretations of films that lean towards a glorified view of history.

These issues are further complicated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988), who pushes against the very idea that people in marginal groups can ever be truly represented accurately. Spivak raises important questions about agency in cultural texts, notably because she asserts that it is only an '*other*' that can speak, and not those who are regarded as subalterns. That view has been mobilised to interrogate representations of women and lower classes (and others) in films, identifying how the freedom or sense offered by their cinema can be mediated or even constrained.

Alongside these key theorists, other cultural studies scholars like Hall (1997) have underscored the importance of representation in making meaning. Representation, according to Hall, is the process where a meaning is produced and exchanged within a culture comprising of both language and imagery. This approach to film, where visual and narrative elements combine to generate meaning, is particularly suited. In this respect, cinema is also embedded in the ideological structures that shape how audiences experience cultural and historical realities (Shohat and Stam 1994). This challenge to Eurocentric representations in the media draws attention to non-Western cinemas as spaces of resistance and alternative representation.

Even in the case of postcolonial cinema, there are scholars who seek to find how film engages with history, memory and identity. Postcolonial cinema, according to Ponzanesi (2012), refers specifically to a field that explores how films reinterpret colonial histories and produce new cultural narratives. These represent direct depictions of colonialism to more indirect and nuanced expressions, such as through nostalgic readings or remakes of cultural traditions, etc. Even more aligned is what Naficy (2001) labels as "*accented cinema*", those films that reflect the struggles of in-betweenness and hybridity. While he is writing specifically about diasporic filmmakers, his observations apply to any cinematic milieu which finds identity as being shaped almost exclusively by histories and cultural shifts.

More recently, scholarship has continued to enlarge the remit of postcolonial film studies. Cultural translation is a pivotal theme within cinema, where film leaders within these industries re-adapt and re-transmit cultural narratives for modern interest. This process often entails selective representation, in which certain aspects of culture are prioritized and others downplayed. Majumdar (2021), builds on this research to show how cinema engages with historical memory, arguing that films tend to reconstruct the past in ways that resonate with contemporary concerns and identities.

Much has been made of nostalgia in postcolonial cinema as Kaplan (2013) describes nostalgia as a strong cultural force that influences the way in which societies remember history. One of the things that can happen in cinema is nostalgia for historical periods tend idealizing them, investing them with a sense of authenticity/ permanence. This is not only a way of preserving culture, but it also masks the complications and paradoxes of the past. Such tension is particularly palpable in films which attempt to reconstruct the past of the pre-colonial or colonial periods through a romanticised lens.

Scholars have emphasised not only thematic analysis, but also cinematic techniques in shaping meaning. When viewed through Film Studies, the components of mise-en-scène, cinematography, and narrative form the foundation for something called cultural representation. These methods affect an audience's understanding of the themes and message in a film creating additional ideology comprised by its extracts. This, for instance, is about how landscape imagery reinforces ideas of cultural rootedness, about narrative pacing and the emotional timbre of a film.

Even language has an important role in postcolonial cinema. Language is not just an instrument of communication but place of power and identity construction (Fairclough, 1995) from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis. Language choice in postcolonial contexts can be seen to reflect broader cultural and political dynamics, even resistance to colonial power. In this sense, using indigenous languages in cinema is an act of cultural assertion reaffirming both identity and authenticity.

Yet a plethora of scholarship in postcolonial film studies has not entered Punjabi cinema as such. Previous scholarship on South Asian cinema has focused primarily on the dominant industries (i.e. Bollywood) while remaining relatively silent about regional cinemas. This is an important gap, because regional films are generally more grounded in local and cultural perspectives of identity and history. This study fills this gap through an analysis of *Angrej* and thus reveals how Punjabi cinema intervenes in the discourse of postcolonialism.

In addition, the scholarship indicates how postcolonial cinema works through a representation / omission tension. Some of these films directly surface colonial oppression and resistance, whereas others are more indirect in their dealing with those ideas — it's in cultural practices, language and narrative structure. As this approach is indirect, it can be useful to illustrate the persistence and durability of indigenous cultures even in less overtly politically critical contexts.

As such, *Angrej* can be located in a larger tradition of films that reconstruct cultural identity through nostalgia and selective representation. By putting indigenous traditions to the forefront and suppressing colonialist elements, this film can fit under what scholars have called a kind of cultural reclamation. However, this has also generated concerns relating to the limitations of representational politics in terms of historical fidelity and critique.

Theoretical Framework

This research is theoretically underpinned by Postcolonialism as an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the cultural, political and ideological effects of colonisation, which continues to provide repercussions over formerly colonised peoples. Being primarily focused on issues of representation, identity, power and resistance, postcolonial theory presents itself as an appropriate analytical framework to examine cinematographic texts about historical and cultural memory. When it comes to postcolonial theory, *Angrej* can be used as a lens to expose the marks of absence that shape our understanding of cultural identity in any narrative.

The center of this framework is the representation as stated by Edward Said (1978). Said's theory of Orientalism asserts that representation is not neutral, it cannot ever be neutral — rather it has a disciplining function: it designs ways in which cultures or identities can ultimately be represented. While Said asserts that Western discourses have always framed the entire east-as "*the Orient*," as an object of knowledge and represented it through a prism to establish colonial dominance over the territorialities. While Said mostly analysed western depictions of the East, his insights also hold true in postcolonial cultural production, where aspects of representation define how societies think about their own pasts. Here, Said's framework is employed to examine *Angrej* in the manner in which it awakens a form of Punjabi identity by showcasing select and prevalent notions of culture while disregarding others. The lack of obvious colonial motifs, for example, may be viewed as a reorganization of

representative authority where the story goes from being told through a lens that expresses colonial control to one alive with an emphasis on indigenous cultural life.

Following Said, a central figure in postcolonial theory emerged with the concepts of hybridity, mimicry and the “*third space*” (Bhabha 1994). According to Bhabha, due to colonial encounters the identities of those who come into contact and collide are ambivalently located in the in-between space, implying that culture and identity cannot be dissolved into a fixed position. This transformed and negotiating space is a “*third space*” in which new cultural meanings arise through interactivity. Hybridity in the cinematic context is often manifested through a combining of different cultural elements, linguistic code or narrative form. *Angrej*, however, presents a different case as it seems to dismiss hybridity in favor of cultural coherence and continuity. This, however, does not mean the film is devoid of hybridity; instead, it indicates how the film operates in a subtle or latent way of what hybridity to talk about. In foregrounding a fundamentally homogenous cultural identity, the film might be trying to reestablish something authentic even when it operates in such an unmistakably hybrid historical instance. Hence, Bhabha’s theoretical exposure opens a way to discuss the extent of hybridity incorporated in the film and vice-versa.

Spivak (1988) on the subaltern provides another important dimension to the theoretical framework by extending understanding into issues of voice, agency and representation. As Spivak argues, the agencies of the marginalized classes, specifically those who are radically excluded from hegemonic discourses, cannot be represented. Rather they are vocalized by others, destroying a type of epistemic violence. This interpretation, in terms of film can also be significant regarding whose narrative or voices that are represented and prioritized. This framework is then used to analyse the representation of genders and social classes in *Angrej*. Female characters have powerful roles within the story, but their agency is often tempered through patriarchal forces, prompting inquiry of the authenticity of their own voice. This is what makes Spivak’s theory relevant for dismantling the ways in which representation fails within the film.

Building from these foundational postcolonial theorists, this research also considers the work of Stuart Hall (1997), whose theory of representation centers the part that cultural practices play in producing meaning. Hall contends that meaning is constructed through systems of representation (through objects, texts – image and language). Audience is specifically trained on, to film analysis where visual and narrative elements interplay in creating meaning. As in *Angrej*, language, costume and setting are essential tools for the construction of a cultural identity that audiences will interpret through specific cultural lens. By describing the mechanisms through which meaning is created and disseminated, Hall’s theory complements post-colonial perspectives.

In addition, Film Studies offers more insights into what audiovisual techniques make representation happen. This brings film studies scholars to argue that aspects like mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, and narrative are not just aesthetic choices but meaning-making components. These techniques shape audiences understanding of theme and impact the ideology of the film. The film *Angrej* represents cultural authenticity through nostalgia aesthetics, which is created by a coalescing combination of natural landscapes, traditional costumes and slow narrative pacing. The study uses these elements to highlight the way in which cinematic form and content contribute to the construction of meaning.

Another theoretical tenet of the framework is language, which was examined using Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) sees language as a social practice that both reflects and shapes power relations. Language is a site of contestation, an intersection where colonial and indigenous influences meet in postcolonial contexts. The acting of indigenous languages in cinema can be a resistance, defence of their identity confronting the violence of colonial language. This singular usage of the vernacular in

Angrej sustains a hyper authenticity, thereby reinforcing a sense of cultural continuity while operating simultaneously as an understated resistance response to linguistic imperialism. CDA thus offers a means of approaching the film to find ways we see language contributing to identity and power.

However, and more importantly, this theoretical framework is not applied outside of an integrated scope but rather as a tool used for a multi-dimensional analysis of the film. This holistic perspective allows this study to go beyond mere first-order interpretation and provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies behind culture, history, and ideology.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative interpretive research design to examine *Angrej* as a postcolonial cultural text. The interpretivist approach is an appropriate choice, for it looks into the depth of meaning, representation and greater ideologies inherent in cinematic narratives as opposed to measuring observable data. Drawing on Hall's (1997) theory of how representation is done, the film is treated here as a cultural text which constructs identity and meaning through narrative structure, dialogue and visual representation.

The main data source is the film *Angrej* (2015), analysed through scene based textual analysis. Certain sequences with particular relevance to rural life, family structures, marriage arrangements, gender dynamics and culture are identified for close reading. Rather, these moments are studied in the context of the wider narrative and ideological architecture of the film itself. This analysis employs both a theory-driven thematic frame with insight from Postcolonialism, Film Studies and discourse-oriented interpretation.

Analytically, themes and discourse analysis identify areas of recurring patterns in cultural identity, colonial absence, language, and social hierarchy. Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995) specifically analyses language as Punjabi linguistic usage reflects identity and resistance. Mise-en-scène, framing and narrative pacing are also features considered in understanding how visual aesthetics contribute to meaning-making. The study emphasizes situational depth and theoretical triangulation to maintain analytical rigor and academic integrity.

Results and Discussion

Angrej offers a rich text for close, theory-driven analysis that mixes cultural affirmation with aesthetic nostalgia and simply historical erasure. Instead of mounting a show-down against colonial authority, the film generates what can perhaps be imagined as an order of culturally saturated yet politically muted narrative - wherein feelings of Punjabi identity are unmade through quotidian modes and operations of speaking, aesthetics practices and selective compositions. This section takes to the next level some of the earlier lessons by player critical text sequences, dialogue structures, visual strategies and impact techniques in precolonial representational issues and discounts on memory, ideology and cultural production.

According to Said (1978) representation is never neutral, it is always present in power structures that define what things are shown, omitted and normalised. In *Angrej*, this logic is not illustrated by the legacy of colonial control but rather through its deliberate invisibility, reconfiguring the visual and narrative economy of the film.

Colonial Absence as Narrative Strategy

One of the most defining elements of *Angrej* is its compositional lack of colonial presence even in a blatantly colonial historic-spatial context. British officers, colonial administrative buildings, legal institutions and the visual markers of imperial governance are absent from the diegesis. Such a lack is not incidental; it serves as a temporal and ideological device that recalibrates indigenous life to be the single focus of feature film framing.

Devoid of the spatial relations that we know exist in structures of colonial power, the camera avoids contact. Rather than colonial tribunals of cities or urban administrative centers, the visual field for the film is confined to rural villages and domestic courtyards as well as

agricultural landscapes. This spatial limit creates a complete cultural sphere in which history seems self-generated rather than externally interposed.

Absence which, from a postcolonial perspective, reverses the colonial gaze. Rather than being relegated to objects of imperial observation, thus literally existing within a celluloid space where colonial power no longer bears witness to their struggle. Absence, Said (1978) argues, can be ideologically efficacious through the erasure of material histories of domination like systems of taxation, dispossession and bureaucratic control.

One of the most striking factors here is how the film structures time. The cycle of seasons—the harvest, festivities, marriages and work in the fields—begin to take over from linear time as a historical timeline. Long takes of harvest scenes and establishing shots of fields bathed in natural light stitch together an agrarian temporality that harkens back to life cycles and self-sustaining order. It is what Carrere and Hastings create: an illusion of historic independence, a common move in postcolonial critiques of nostalgic historicism, in which continuity is privileged over rupture.

Affect, Nostalgia and the Making of “Authentic” Punjab

Nostalgia manifests itself in *Angej*—in fundamental terms, both as aesthetic and ideology—and lends its affective structure to the film. The film constantly remakes Punjab as a locus of emotional innocence, cultural continuity and social cohesion. Done through thoughtful, intentional cinematographic elements full of rich warm colour grading, soft lighting, and long lingering wide shots in which you can really immerse yourself emotionally in the place.

Town festivals, marriage negotiations and communal gatherings often swap places. The camera is frequently medium-wide, and the characters exist within group spaces more than individual ones. The community over individuality concept relies on the strength of this visual strategy, which reminds everyone who views their media that identity is socially embedded, not individually constructed.

This structure is also strengthened by the patterns of dialogue. Elders tend to be very proverbial and metaphorical about honour, lineage, and the communal obligation. In contrast, younger characters navigate desire and individuality within these constraints but do so infrequently. Emotional conflict is thus not erased; it is simply enclosed within social propriety.

To use Bhabha's (1994) words, culture is produced through the repetition and performative stability. But neither in repetition is ambivalence found, but rather idealized coherence in *Angej*. It diffuses the contradictions of colonial modernity, class tension or gender inequality through emotional framing.

This creates something we can refer to as “curated authenticity”, where Punjab is not represented but presented in systematic staging as an object of desire. Ideologically, the past thus becomes a kind of symbolic reservoir of purity that implicitly renders more troublesome modernity.

Language, Voice, and Discursive Sovereignty

Angej uses language as one of the most significant symbols of cultural identity. Communicating only in Punjabi, within which idiomatic expressions and folk metaphors or patterns taken from oral storytelling serve to give the language a self-contained universe of its own.

Language is not just about communication, but fundamentally ideological (Fairclough, 1995), from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective. This is especially important regarding the lack of English or colonial administrative vocabulary. It is a strategy of linguistic disinheritance that builds discursive sovereignty through the generation of meaning from within indigenous culture. So much of social advice is serving through agricultural metaphor (harvest, soil, seed) strengthening the intimate bond of language, land and identity. It builds

knowledge in local contexts that replicate this knowledge system to prevent imposing one language on the other.

But this purity of language also evokes nostalgia. Colonial Punjab was historically an arena of competing linguistic practices and ideologies where speakers of varying status — English, Urdu and Punjabi formed a complex hierarchy. By failing to dramatize this hybridity, the film generates a tidy and ideologically coherent linguistic past that moves on from imprecisions of time.

Gender, Agency, and Structured Silencing

Angrej, even as it foregrounds communal harmony, does not escape the gendered representation spaces of dominantly patriarchal structures. They may be visually at the center but narratively they exist within patriarchal constraints. Women are often treated as aesthetic objects in soft-focus medium shots, depriving them of narrative agency.

In marriage negotiation character composition, women are almost always set aside to the side of their husbands, inviting the audience to take part in visualizing their mediatory position in decision-making. Even in its most straightforward expression of preference, the communication happens via indirect gesture, silence or mediated discourse and not direct assertion. This enhances Spivak's (1988) argument, that 'an autonomous voice of the subaltern subject' is to an extent represented through dominant interpretive structures. Neither this mean that female subjectivity is denied in *Angrej*, but it is enshrined under culture.

But crucially, the film does not cast this limitation in terms of conflict. Instead, patriarchal order is belied as something jokingly normal, infused with warmth and emotion, infecting the sense of naturalness rather than a hierarchy, suffused by imposition. It produces a kind of soft patriarchal theory where power is aestheticized rather than opposed.

Space, Landscape, and Cinematic Rootedness

Angrej builds Punjab spatially as rooted in land and tradition. The visual components consist of wide-angle shots of fields, rivers, and village roads, creating a spatial continuity or cultural rooting. The camera frequently uses slow pans over agricultural landscapes that underline the continuity between human life and natural rhythms. The way the light shines gives this a documentary vibe, though it is very stylized and much of that comes from lighting.

Within Film Studies, it is *mise-en-scène* that acts as a vehicle of ideology. Earthy textures, the architecture of the prevailing forms at each stage during settlement, and open spaces in a village render Punjab as homogenous, fertile and immutable. Nonetheless, this stability is a film construct in itself that deletes the very rupture of colonial infrastructural incursion and upheaval.

Hybridity without Conflict

Although *Angrej* is set in a colonial temporal setting, it does little with cultural hybridity. Yet there is no apparent engagement with colonial modernity, no institutional hybrid or cultural friction between indigenous and imperial orders. Colonial spaces are cast in ambivalence and hybridity (Bhabha, 1994). The film suppresses this aspect, creating a homogenized cultural identity. Filled with history, hybridity is not something experienced contradiction. The non-existence of this tension almost reduces the colonial condition to a cultural narrative space that is coherent and fails to engage with much of the transitional thinking involved in understanding the complexities associated with historical transformation.

Humor, Emotion, and Ideological Softening

Humor acts as an important ideological tool in the movie. Comic situations, and specifically matching comic pairs, help alleviate possible social strain. Conflict is not resolved through confrontation, it is resolved through laughter, irony or emotional reconciliation. By delivering an emotional structure, this one moves critical distance and makes social patterns deliver affective experience. Hence, ideology is not something imposed, it is emotionally absorbed.

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, *Angrej* shows that historical silence is not simply an accident of forgetting or too many heads below water but a material ideological choice of structure that determines what past gets remembered and how. Nostalgia functions as a primary device of theatrical organization, propelling narrative and emotional investment; and language becomes indispensable in performing discursive sovereignty and establishing cultural power. Also, gender norms serve as a weak form of patriarchal containment between who should stay safe at home and where. Landscape imagery is also effective for reproducing stability as it contributes to the naturalization of tradition and continuity. Crucially, hybridity in the film is not fully articulated as a concept or completely repressed; it occupies an ambivalent middle ground. Humour is a form of ideological mediation, allowing the viewer to digest deeper tensions. At the very least, the film suggests that selection is inevitable in constructing historiography, and memory itself emerges from a reflexivity between inclusion and exclusion.

Angrej is perceived as a cultural and historically selective film text through the lens of postcolonial theory. In doing so it pushes back against colonial gaze and at the same time remakes Punjab in boisterous, conservative grandiosity claiming as a peaceful, emotionally balanced and culturally national unity ground. The dual movement of cultural recuperation and historical over-simplification thus retains the central ambivalence of postcolonial representation.

The film does not shake its head and look quietly away from Punjab; it creates an imagined Punjab, one that generates collective memory at the level of aesthetic pleasure, of emotional familiarity. In this way it shows how cinema operates not only as representation, but as an effective tool in the project of cultural consciousness and historical imagination.

Conclusion

Employing postcolonial theoretical perspectives, this paper critically interrogated Punjabi cinema (*Angrej*) to understand the much-debated issue of cultural identity and historical memory that underscores representation in this genre. Employing the frameworks of Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the analysis shows how the film produces a nostalgic idealization of pre-Partition Punjab. This vision is characterized by cultural cohesion, linguistic authenticity, and emotional harmony, while simultaneously minimizing the visible presence of colonial authority and historical disruption.

These findings instead demonstrate that *Angrej* remains active through a selective discourse, one where colonial structure is rendered nearly invisible in favour of an emphasis on the indigenous social life and the traditions of affect. At the same time, it also leads to a reduction of historical complexity, in this case—and most notably—the experiences of colonial administration, socio-political inequality and internal power hierarchies. In this respect, the film embodies the larger postcolonial dialectical tension of cultural reclamation and anthropological integrity—an eagerness to assert identity existing alongside a more palatable representation.

Conclusively, this study claims that *Angrej* should not just be read as a love story but rather a postcolonial memory text with which an emergent collective imagination is constructed. It assembles, in other words, Punjab as an authentic site of emotion and cultural continuity at the same time that this assembly is made possible through aestheticized nostalgia and selective historiography. That is to say film shows how cinema, as a cultural apparatus, not only mirrors history but reorganises it. Future research suggests comparison between Punjabi films or audience reception studies that could illuminate how such cinematic representations inform contemporary discourses about identity and history.

References

- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2002). *The empire writes back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*. Routledge.
- Bazin, A. (2005). *What is cinema?* University of California Press.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Designing research: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage/Open University.
- Kaplan, E. A. (2013). *Trauma culture: Terror and loss in the media and literature*. Rutgers University Press.
- Loomba, A. (2007). *Colonialism/postcolonialism* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Naficy, H. (2001). *An accented cinema: Exilic and diasporic filmmaking*. Princeton University Press.
- Ponzanesi, S. (2012). The cinema turn in postcolonial studies. In *The Routledge companion to postcolonial studies* (pp. 57–68). Routledge.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.
- Shohat, E., & Stam, R. (1994). *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the media*. Routledge.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.