

ANGREJ: A Triumph Cinematic Presentation of Punjabi Cinema that Lead Excursion to Bygone Era

Amandeep Kaur Arneja

P.H.D Scholar, Renaissance University, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India

Abstract: *Cinema a very epochal source of communication that plays a ceaseless role of storytelling on celluloid. It takes audience to the introduction of various attitudes, beliefs, culture, traditions; customs. Cinema has a pivotal role in unwrapping various stories, fact, incidences, historical events. It quenched the thirst of varying inquisitiveness. This elemental role grounds other regional Cinema too to play landmark role in creating influential contents. In this precede, Punjabi Cinema too employing contemporary endeavor to set new tones for accomplishing admiration. The amelioration of Punjabi Cinema brings the wind of great diversity in production pipeline. The mandatory fun-loving spice is customarily slipped into various genre of this regional Cinema and portrayed well on the silver screen. It scaled the standards of this regional Cinema to new heights. Many such uninterrupted efforts can be witnessed to gain acknowledgement with its staggering cinematic presentations. One of such strong move was grasped by Rhythm Boyz Entertainment, Aman Khatkar Productions, J Studio and Dara Productions with their movie ANGREJ that triggered the popularity of Punjabi Cinema to new wings. Released on 31 July, 2015, historical romantic based drama of 1940s by Director Simerjit Singh who created a landmark with excellent unmatched veracity on Silver screen. This is undoubted fact that bloody partition of 1947 had created many tales and many of us grew up listening to the legends of "Des". So, this movie ANGREJ with its magnificent presentation was a perfect paradigm to answer inquisitiveness regarding non-independent era. ANGREJ took spectators to the ride of 1940s, dipping into the memories of non-independent India with the wave of romance that navigate the whole content. This movie also marked as a leading light to produce period based contents. An attempt made in this research article to find its idiosyncratic features that made its unprecedented popularity worldwide among Cinema lovers.*

Keywords: Punjabi Cinema, historical, non-independent India, content, popularity, features

1. Introduction

The Post revival of Punjabi Cinema witnessed the gingerly efforts by film clan involved to illuminate the silver screen with magnificent differing contents. Undoubtedly, trying to prove this regional cinema as an epitome that fabricate cultural cognizance through Cinematic presentations. Consecutive endeavor to deliver rich culture is gaining more acceptances worldwide. In this wave, a very majestic attempt was confiscated by Rhythm Boyz Entertainment, Aman Khatkar Productions, J studio and Dara Production with their production **ANGREJ**, released on 31 July, 2015. A movie that bore the stamp of setting a trend of period cinema. It poised Punjabi Cinema to scale new highs of popularity. The historical romance drama was set in pre-partition Punjab. It had raised a wave of curiosity among the audience to experience the phase that was always heard in stories. Interestingly, it was made when Punjabi Cinema was producing contemporary content. But the divergent content of **ANGREJ**, took audience to quirky experience. Such an excellence of veracious culture, traditions, beliefs of pre-partition Punjab were portrayed that extended beyond the screen. Usually, Romance is always a much liked content and when it was amalgamated with pre-partition Punjab scenario, it was not less than a thunderbolt to Punjabi Cinema lovers. Director Simerjit's creative proficiency explains the beauty and depth of the content in a pleasing way. The leads-Amrinder Gill, Sargun Mehta, Aditi Sharma, Binnu Dhillon persuaded the audience with their acting adroitness. Cinema halls were flooded. It was one of the highest grossing Punjabi films. It proved as a string to bring all generation together to watch this movie. It won many awards. This movie unwrapped many curiosities relating to culture, tradition and beliefs and withstand with the fact that true love has its own definition irrespective of any period.

1.1 Movies Mirror Culture

The relationship between movies and culture is Vigorous. This is uncontested fact that movies reflect the culture. It takes audience to the tour of the juncture that is portrayed on celluloid. It reflects the anxieties, beliefs, and values of the cultures. They also help to shape and solidify a culture's beliefs.

ANGREJ manifested as a platform to commingle three generations to experience its majestic cinematic presentation:

Silver screen of this regional Cinema is not only getting the big blow of acceptance on the wings of hilarity but also on reflecting culture. Punjabi Cinema get its major collection from overseas market. So, it's a much appreciated fact that Punjabi Cinema helps in blossoming the cultural values. Movies are the best platform to explore the past, present and future. Angrej, one of the best attempts that had given ride to the phase of pre-independence. It was the answer to all imaginations of the stories of "During our times of pre-partition" on screen. It involved a lot of research to produce this collaborated event. As it was very challenging to take audience to the period which was often discussed by elders as the tales of pre-independence always touch the hearts of many.

The tales of pre-independence always touch the hearts of all generations. Those who had experienced that tough time, who grown up by listening the stories of "Desh", and would be introduction to the present generation about culture, tradition, beliefs. Various notable culture reflecting efforts were appended to take spectators to the zone of pre-independence:

- 1) **Content**-Content is the foremost part that holds the audience throughout. Must say-“**the essence of true love**” was delivered in a very innocent way. Here the simplicity to the era connectivity was delivered through dialogues, costumes, sets etc. It drive love story to the era where a boy can't even hold girl's hand and if caught red-handed will be punished. Fair (Mela), deserted areas were the meeting point.
- 2) **Mud Houses**-Mud houses were portrayed throughout the movie with dry grasses and somewhere paintings of peacock. The house entrance was also set in a unique way with carving and painting overhead somewhere. Open short raised heights walls. Even the main entrances were open, with no iron gates.
- 3) Lot of old traditional based utensils were used that too of different metals other than steel like big pots, big glasses, unique styled water jugs.
- 4) Mostly costumes were not ironed
- 5) A unique style of tying turban
- 6) Variant types of Phulkari dupattas
- 7) Use of lanterns, diyas, etc were used instead of light/electricity
- 8) A very unique wedding traditions that were heard in stories and was emerged as a surprising element on screen-
 - Groom was not even introduce to bride and had a curiosity to know about her appearance and looks
 - When the guest arrived a lot of folk wedding songs
 - No suitcase were used, instead “Gathri”/cloth used to bind all clothes together as a single hand luggage
 - Lot of homemade sweets
 - No light decoration were done, instead paper decoration
 - A very simple costume, with no bright colors, no heavy work.
 - The welcome of Barat (groom arrival) was different, it was powered by lok geet (traditional songs)
 - Bride face was completely covered with long cloth or Veil. Even when she was going for her wedding rituals (Anand Karaj), was surrounded by group of people and was covered with the intention to hide her face
 - Even the post marriage, food offering ritual was very different. The guests were offered food by sitting on ground and that too not on plate but on leaf plate.
 - Doli cart was amazingly unique that was headed by very decorative cycle.
- 9) Radio used in movie was very traditional
- 10) Fair (Mela)-arrangement of (Mela) was so authentic. The way bangle seller, swings etc were arranged was uniquely traditional
- 11) Folk songs that were sung also in a desired tone

1.2 From the hat of filmmakers:

Karaj Gill: Executive Producer and one of the Founder of Rhythm Boyz entertainment (**Angrej was the first production by Rhythm Boyz Entertainment**)

- **His vision, experience:** A lot of challenges were there. First of all to it was risky to produce film when

Punjabi cinema was producing modern era movies involving shoot of foreign countries etc. And during that phase to plan such movie of the phase where even clothes were not ironed. Writer Amberdeep had a vision to make such period film and Amrinder Gill had an idea why not to make film on the life of pre-partition. It involved a lot of pre-production work. Challenges were many-right from the sets to costumes. To make available typical traditional utilities. But he was confident that they are making such product that was unexpected how it will cooperate financially but sure that audience would keep it in their library. A lot of team work was involved that can be observed while watching movie. He said, “Everybody was so much in this movie. May be it was God's will, that it was our first production house and the aura was that some big film will going to take place. In industry a lot of crew involved like-caters, make-up, lights etc related people are common in industry so they had created an environment of something big. So, must say the positive vibes started coming”. He also believes if you will work with honesty, then you will get success. If your intentions are true, you are able to take risk. Regarding movie cast his vision was not to make typical film but to give convincing vision. They selected Ammy Virk, Sargun Mehta, Aditi Sharma, Sardar Sohi, Nirmal Rishi etc. selection was done so to give new feel to the audience not that the film is old. Shooting was done majorly in Rajasthan. Dyer was there on set. DOP and Art Director were on set to keep continue eye on the costumes. Filter was used.

- **About post-release Feedback:** People started writing about it. He also shared experience that one of the writers had written that after watching movie he took his mother and daughter to watch movie. It was the achievement that much old generation had stepped for the first time in Cinema hall to watch this movie. Grandparents (Dadi/Nani) generation went to see. In fact, he saw people were coming on wheelchairs to watch this movie. Young generation was asking elders to watch movie of your era in today's era. It was the biggest achievement that this movie had drawn every generation interest to watch it.

Simerjit Singh (Director-ANGREJ)

- **His vision, experience:** Angrej was an initiative to arrange comedy characters on old back drop with the spice of Romance. His interest towards knowing about old culture, tradition made him easy to execute this project. He was very keen since his early days to know how old people spend their life during old era. When the romance was woven innocently in pre -independence era, gave audience new experience. His love for pind (village), old tradition made him easy to make this film. He enjoyed this movie and worked minutely on every detail. Right from costumes to sets. Whatever memories, experiences he had, he implied. Very closely he attempted old wedding, so he applied all his experience into this. He said he was very confident that we are making a good film and it was very secondary to think about its financial success.

About Feedback: Movie got a too much worldwide response. Some people communicated that for the first time their elders are visiting to Cinema hall. It was a refreshing dose to all memories. It impacted youth to know about the era, impacted the middle age how innocently romance is

portrayed with no vulgarity. It impacted old generation to refresh their memories. Even got feedback that after Chann Pardesi, Long Da Lishkara, Angrej was experienced as beautiful classical movie after 30-40 years. He felt disheartened that Angrej was ignored on the lines of getting appreciation by government. This movie really deserves a national award.

Ride to movie Angrej:

Released date: 31 July, 2015

Director-Simerjit Singh

Production-Dara Productions, J Studio, Aman Khatkar Production, Rhythm Boyz Entertainment

Story/Screenplay and Dialogue-Amberdeep Singh

Cinematography –Navneet Misser

Storyline: “Angrej”, its English translation is Englishman. It was set on the backdrop of 1940s. Historical romantic drama enriched with the true essence of pre- independence era. Conceived as romantic comedy was written by Amberdeep Singh, who always want to work on movie based on Punjabi culture. Directed by Simerjit Singh who executed it beautifully. Lead role played by Amrinder Gill as Angrej ‘Geja’, whose innocence and desire for love will hold the story. He was accompanied by his true friend-Binnu Dhillon as Aslam, who was always there for his friend. Aditi Sharma as Maado and Sargun Mehta as Dhann Kaur the blossom the silver screen with their proficient acting skills. Ammy Virk as Haakam add a spice of flirtiness.

1.3 About Cast:

- Angrej 'Geja'
- Sargun Mehta as Dhann Kaur
- Aditi Sharma as Maado
- Ammy Virk as Haakam
- Binnu Dhillon as Aslam
- Sardar Sohi as Baghel Singh, Maado's grandfather
- Nirmal Rishi as Maado's grandmother
- Anita Devgan as Geja's Mother
- Nisha Bano as Maado's friend
- Hobby Dhariwal as Gajjan Singh
- Gurmeet Saajan as Angrej's fuffad

1.4 Plot:

Angrej movie begins with the introduction of character ‘Angrej’, a guest from India who was welcomed warmly in Pakistan at his friend’s place. While sitting with young generation, a discussion on love navigate the story to the flash back where Angrej shares his love story. With this, the era of 1940s took the hold of the content with mud houses, simple attires where Angrej himself introduce his love at first sight for Maado (Aditi Sharma). Angrej with his friend Aslam (Binnu Dhillon) visits Fair (Mela). They started meeting secretly where they were guided by his friend Aslam. Aslam used to keep eye that if someone is coming around their meeting place. As it was very risky. Angrej (Geja) had a true love for Maado but somewhere Maado had the reflection of time pass. At same time, the entry of Haakam turns their love angle. Haakam started flirting Maado and she started believing him. Maado started

ignoring Angrej. With this reaction, Angrej asked for justice to almighty. Suddenly he saw Maado with Haakam who was holding her hand. Haakam in fact gifted her radio. Angrej caught her red-handed. but this broke Angrej’s heart.

Seeing Angrej in this condition worried his friend Aslam, as Angrej was badly hurt. Angrej was lost not even reacting. Aslam worried made him do all efforts to make his friend happy. And he steals Maado radio that was gifted by Haakam. He break that radio in front of Angrej to console him. He did this to make his friend happy.

Angrej family was invited at his cousin’s wedding. Whole family visited their place. There Angrej met Dhann Kaur (Sargun Mehta). Their meeting gradually turned into friendship. Suddenly Maado family also arrived at wedding. Her arrival disturbs Angrej and Dhann Kaur helped Angrej to cope with the situation. Suddenly, Haakam also arrived with Barat. Haakam was not leaving any chance to flirt with Maado. To make them jealous, Angrej and Dhann Kaur pretends to be very close friends. This trick actually worked. Maado was getting disturbed. Haakam flirt nature was exposed in front of Maado when Haakam tried doing to flirt with Dhann Kaur. After this incidence Maado got attracted towards Angrej. At the same time, Dhann Kaur started feeling for Angrej. By the time, wedding was about to over. Everyone left for their places. Later, when Angrej got the opportunity to impress and to gift Madoo, he realized that he don’t love Madoo anymore. He realized that he actually love Dhann Kaur for whom Angrej’s simplicity matters not any materialistic impression.

When Angrej went to propose Dhann Kaur, he came to know she got engaged. This take story to the present time where the new generation console Angrej that it was so sad that he lost both the love of his life. This open up with the surprising angle that when one is blessed with the true friend like Aslam, anything can possible. Story again take a turn to flashback where Angrej went to convince Dhann Kaur father that he had chosen a wrong guy Haakam for Dhann kaur and anyhow he was supported by Maado’s father, who reached to at Dhann Kaur place. Eventually things happened on positive note. Dhann Kaur and Angrej got married. Story again takes present day hold where Angrej was scattering Dhann Kaur’s ashes. As it was Dhann Kaur’s last wish to take her ashes in a place in Pakistan where she was entered as a bride for the first time. It was concluded on note of power of true love.

Music, Song: Jatinder Shah composed the film's soundtrack, which features vocals from Amrinder Gill, Ammy Virk and Sunidhi Chauhan. The movie had approximately seven songs that are still popular on DJS and wedding occasions.

Shooting and Production: **ANGREJ** took place in the rural and Rajasthan very limited portion in Punjab. Navneet Misser served as the film's cinematographer. The scenes of the village locale were shot at Suratgarh, a remote town close to the border of the two states as the production team wanted to "depict life sans electric poles, mobile towers and modern-day lifestyle". Production designer Raashid Rangrez said that the producers chose Rajasthan over Punjab as the semi-arid terrain of the region was better representative of

Punjab prior to the green revolution; he added that for an "authentic 1945 setup, we had to be connected with earthy look". He paid particular attention to landscaping, with the production team constructing their own sets on the various shooting locations. The cast and crew had also collected such property as period utensils prior to commencement of filming.

Costumes, which included Punjabi wedding attire, were made of khadi handloom fabric. The cloth was brought Banaras, Bikaner, and Jalandhar. Rangrez and his team of designers, which included Manmeet Bindra used white cloth for creating the costumes and dyed them later: "emotions matter more and emotions are connected deeply with colors. So [we] wanted to create colors on our own" Filming for the production was done in a single schedule that lasted for around 40 days. *Angrej* was edited by Omkarnath Bhakri and its final cut ran for a total of 136 minutes. The film was produced by Aman Khatkar Productions and Arsara Films in collaboration with Dara Productions, J Studios, and Rhythm Boyz Entertainment. The international distribution rights for the project were acquired by the London-based production-based production and distribution house, Filmonix.

1.5 Some interesting fact about movie-ANGREJ:

- Very uniquely title was designed. Its reflecting the modernity but was placed on the yellow tone poster that included the artists pose in an old traditional attire. So, with this it was a reflection that old era content in modern era.
- Title of movie appears on screen on Map background
- Begins with the common issue of love
- It's the movie that introduce main lead in his elder version, who take story to backdrop
- A genuine craze was reflected among the people of Pakistan when they welcome Angrej (foreigner) from India
- Hero introduced himself via Voice over, take a halt and then turn back towards camera
- A beautiful family customs were well portrayed
- Innocence of love can be judged that how during that era lovers take permission to touch hand. Infact it was like a tough to hold hand. Infact Groom was not allowed to see his wife face. This was very convincing to connect to that era.
- Culture rich songs-folk traditional, tappe
- The nephew-uncle (chacha bhatija) fight, where they were portrayed as of same age as we heard in stories
- Reaction of mother when she came to know about her son's liking. It was against their pride so she ignored her son. Infact hide her face.
- True friendship between Angrej and Aslam
- When Haakam enter the movie with horse, the camel was portrayed on screen going in other direction. Camel was connected to Angrej. So, Haakam entry was reflecting Angrej's direction change.
- A Barter system was portrayed in a song. When Amrinder took a stitched kurta from tailor and in return was given fruit.
- A lot of work on costume was done. Simple attires were worn by artists and Haakam Attire was different as he was a landlord from Lahore.
- When Son-in-law arrives (uncle of Angrej) to invite for wedding. His desire to treat him with special with chicken, a true custom that is followed in today's era too, Son-In-Law is always given special attention.
- People rush to toilet at open areas in early morning
- No electricity. Only lamps, diyas were used
- Big sticks were used by certain characters to showcase their status.
- Morning was marked by the sound of cock (KUKDOO) as a morning alarm
- Old ornaments wore by Haakam

1.6 Movie proved as a Milestone:

- A string that connected all generations to experience the ride of pre-partition Punjab
- Its uncontaminated entertainment product
- Worthy watch for every age
- It was so engrossing to watch love story of your elder's era
- It was a reminder of old Punjabi culture
- Took audience to the pre-independence era
- Given new direction to Punjabi Cinema
- It did justice to that era
- Give the true picture of Sanjha Punjab (Pre-partition), like things execute during those times. Its a good presentation for today generation who grown up by listening the stories-During our times, we used to do this etc" (saade vale iss tarh hunde se, sade vale ess tarah hunde se) it was just imagination in stories but this movie gives the whole picture on celluloid. Old culture, traditional song, very unique. It help us to let us know from where we had been through.it was like a ride to different era.

2. Conclusion

"Best dosage to answer all inquisitiveness to the percipient of the tales of -During our time"

Punjabi Cinema was growing gradually since last three decades and spreading the wings of popularity beyond its Zonal parameters. Creatives involved in industry are putting their groundbreaking potentials to hold their audience interest towards this regional Cinema. As during past, Punjabi Cinema already travelled through many hard waters due to bloody partition of 1947 and later due to effects of militancy. Post 2000 a lot of entertainment package were produced that tried to hold its audience and had given hope to other Production houses to take risk further. Such initiative was taken by the producers of **Angrej movie**. This movie undoubtedly raised the standards of Punjabi Cinema. It left no stone unturned to impress audience. Cinema halls were flooded to experience this majestic Cinematic journey. It had given a idiosyncratic recognition to Punjabi Cinema. The Historical based romantic drama navigated the audience to pre-independence. Full justice was done by artists to convince the audience. Comic flavour amalgamated with historical romance that holds the public interest. It was one

of the best initiatives to teach old culture, tradition, beliefs to present generation that what our elders had been through. It was a picture of our elder's journey era-how they lived, how they believed, what they do, their customs, traditions etc., and above all their innocence rich romance etc. It also refreshes the memory of our grandparents. It soothed middle-age audience by seeing so innocent execution of romance. Content was so simple but still hold the interest of audience due to the portrayal profoundness of rich culture. Comprehensible work can be observed in this movie. This movie truly deserve the recognition by government as it was very challenging to present such Cinema during the time when Punjabi Cinema had already touched the scales of modern contemporary times. It was much appreciated endeavor and proved as a lodestar to further productions on this line. This movie is not less than any novel that makes audience to read the bygone days. It helped audience to travelled to the era of our old generation and also proved as a string that hold the interest of all generation together. Eponymous "pre-independence ride" of Punjabi Cinema.

References

- [1] Telephonic Conversation with Karaj Gill (Executive Producer of Angrej/Founder of Rhythm Boyz Entertainment)
- [2] Telephonic Conversation with Simerjit Singh (Director of movie-Angrej)
- [3] Wikipedia-Angrej Movie
- [4] You tube link of movie-Angrej