

# Mahaul Theek Hai - An Exemplary Movie that Lead to Amelioration of Punjabi Cinema

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**Abstract:** *The compendium of hilarious companionship is not new to Punjabi Cinema. The benefaction of true comic carriage had made its mark since late 90s. The solid footing of this comic genre was rooted by "King of Comedy"-late Jaspal Bhattiji. His courageous and challenging determination drives the revival of Punjabi Cinema. He thought to take risk when conditions in Punjab were enveloped under militancy terror. Even Cinematic portrayal was mocked up with loud characters and double meaning dialogues. Bestowing Cinema at that rhythm when Punjabi Cinema was not unsustainable. Jaspal Bhattiji being a triumphant in comedy and was famous for his satirical take on the problems of common man took an intrepid initiative towards crafting a relevant content with his effortless vision. As a result, "Mahaul Theek Hai" was released in 18 December, 1998 and this movie had actually corrected the Mahaul (environment) of Punjabi Cinema and kicked to restart the Punjabi film industry. Jaspal Ji's comprehensible vision lead to the revival of Punjabi Cinema. This iconic movie opens the doors of acceptance by audience and paved the way for other film-makers. "Mahaul Theek Hai" film had shown a high-yielding seed on the barren land of Punjabi film industry.*

**Keywords:** Punjabi, Comedy, unsustainable, Revival

## 1. Introduction

As Conditions in Punjab since early 1980s were volatile. The terror of militants, operation blue star and black thunder wrapped the whole Punjab with its effects. Such terror conditions were continued till mid 90s. Such moves would have grave repercussions for the entire region. Such effect can be observed in Cinema industry too. In late 90s, some movies were produced, marking the continuity of this industry. But the Portrayal of such movies were not the illustration of the true sense of cinema as loud characters, double meaning dialogues delivered under the hat of comedy. Such produced Cinema could not delineate the true connotation of motion picture. That even Punjabi's had conscience-stricken attitude. Public had antagonistic belief towards visiting Cinema halls. So, the urge to break this notion. Valorous challenge was gripped by Late "Jaspal Bhatti" ji to furnish true meaning of Cinema to audience and set the new benchmark of situational and sensible comedy in **Punjabi cinema**.

Late Jaspal Bhatti ji worked for many Hindi Serials and tote the stamp of "**king of Comedy**"-"**King of Satire**". He amused the audience by inducing laughter. Jaspal ji sense of humor was decidedly quirky that culminated everyday issues. His idiosyncratic talent was conveyed with comic content that led to awakening for masses. Jaspal ji initiated his career from Jalandhar, further head his way to Delhi and Mumbai. But his desire to return his debt to his roots made Jaspal ji took effortless step to make "**Mahaul Theek Hai**." He took this courageous decision when Punjab was enveloped with socially, politically, environmental challenges. This clean comical satire was very challenging effort as the conditions prevailing that time were not in favor of acceptance; audience had different vision towards Punjabi Cinema. Above all the content chosen was very unique and relevant. Mahaul Theek Hai was released during the time when Cinema was at saturation. The year 1998 had many releases almost 12-14 releases, but this movie had made its mark on box-office. This movie had actually aroused interest among

audience towards Punjabi Cinema. This movie was of comic genre and it had marked its popularity on the platform of clean comic satire as other releases, were majorly constituted double meaning dialogues. Mahaul Theek Hai, was a satire on Punjab Police and politics Officials.

Being Punjabi he felt to dedicate his endeavor towards this regional Cinema. Jaspal ji felt to craft "Mahaul Theek Hai", where his soul motive was to bestow true meaning of Cinema with the essence of clean content. In fact the title of the movie spread the fragrance of Positivity that Punjabi film industry's scenario had been corrected by Mahaul Theek Hai.

## 2. Inspiration behind

Jaspal ji was very well known in Hindi Cinema but he started his career with Punjabi program-"Rang Vich Bhang". Ulta Pulta, Flop Show, etc were in Hindi. Even his other film projects were in Hindi. So, Jaspal ji felt he should come back to his roots. It was his conscious efforts to come back to his roots. He chose the most difficult path to get back to his roots during tough time, when there was no acceptance.

### A Ride to Movie

#### a) Cast

Mahaul Thik hai had an ensemble cast of Raj Babbar, Daljeet Kaur, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Jaspal Bhatti, Savita Bhatti, Smeep Kang, Vivek Shauq, Chandni Toor, Rana Jaung Bahadur, Jaswinder Bhalla, Bal Mukand Sharma, Asha Sharma, Arti Puri, Pummy Sidhu, Gopi Bhalla and B.N Sharma besides Yograj Singh, Harbhajan Jabbal, Jatinder Kaur, Sardool Sikandar, and Navin Nishchal in cameos. The film was written by (story) Jaspal Bhatti (screen play) Jaspal Bhatti and Bakhshinder Singh. Film was directed by Jaspal Bhattiji. It was

produced by Savita Bhatti, Diwakar Sahoonia, P S Bright and Jasvir Gill.

### Some interesting fact about Cast

Casting is a key to produce good film. Cast selection has a lion's share in any pre-production. Jaspal Bhatti ji had a vision in his work to cast fresh talent, so that freshness becomes major ingredient in his projects. He always works on content before, then select characters accordingly.

Bhatti ji was very sure about his role but had a cherry-pick vision towards other's role. He was sure that he will going to play the role of SSP and Savita Bhatti ji's role was also very cleared that she will going to play the role of Principal. The track of Savita Bhatti ji and Jaspal Bhatti ji was inspired from true incident of DGP-KPS Gill, who misbehaved with senior IAS Officer Rupan Deol Bajaj. It requires so much of courage. Vivek Shauq role was also clear before. Billu Bakra's role was played by B.N Sharma. He was unconvinced with his role, that his role is too small. He was convinced by Jaspal ji that don't worry you will be a star of this film. As a result People appreciated three things about movie to Bhatti ji-Film kya kamaal hai, your role, and who is Billu Bakra? Because for the first time it was portrayed that villain is not getting recognition for his work. So, that was much unexpected package. A lot of struggle faced to cast female protagonists. Audition and interviews were lined up to get appropriate lead. Even they look girls from Hindi Cinema but had language problem. Somehow from someone they came to know about Chandni Toor. For selecting male protagonists, in Chadigarh Shivalik view hotel's room was booked for audition. Team had scheduled timings for audition. It took place in two parts. First team sitting downstairs to check the participants and then appropriate candidate was sent upstairs. It was quite filter process. They were about to finish, but Jaspal ji got a call from downstairs that one boy from Patiala, who missed the bus but seems to be appropriate for this role. He was Smeep Kang, who was selected for male lead. He is now a big name in Punjabi Industry (Well Known Punjabi film Director now). It is off context, but Jaspal ji always welcome fresh talent. Chandani's friend Aarti was selected, as team had worked before with her. Rana Jung bahadur was known to Jaspal Ji. He was selected on that basis. Raj Babbar did his act free of cost as a Smeep Kang's Elder brother. Daljit kaur ji, the doyen of Punjabi cinema played a role of Raj Babbar's wife. Jaswinder Bhalla, "Mai te pawa dunga parrhne" (Catch phrase) created different essence in movie. Bal mukund Sharma also did great work. Sardool Sikandar, Hans Raj Hans sang songs for this iconic movie. Cinematographer was Harmeet Singh from Yash Chopra banner. Many of Jaspal Ji's friends were from engineering college who became friend of SSP.

### b) About Plot

Mahaul Theek Hai (means environment is fine) had a record breaking performance. The movie begins with very positive poetic version "jeena hai toe haskar Jeele, kahe

phire udaas, Phir peeche pachtayega, jab bhais khaa gayi ghaas.". It was presented by JASPAL BHATTI FILMS. Mahaul Theek Hai's Story Written by Jaspal Bhatti ji himself. Screenplay was written by Jaspal Bhattiji and Bakhshinder Singh.

It was much appreciated effort. It was a comedy satire based on the working style of police force in India and how this dministration has corrupt officer and disciplined officer too. It's a story where boy (Smeep kang) accidentally meet girl (Chandni Toor). Jaspal Bhatti ji played the role of Corrupt SSP, who was companied by Vivek Shauq they work as a team to threaten people. Jaspal Bhatti ji had a crush on his real life wife Savita ji, who played the role of College Principal.

Raj Babbar, who played the role of Smeep's elder brother. He was into illegal business. Kulbhushan Kharbanda, who Played the role of father of female lead. He has been cheated of land by his elder brother. He used to drink a lot. He was made to take blame on his head by police of killing political person in return for money. As police was given deadline to shut the case within 24 hours. While the real Murderer, B.N Sharma was roaring in anger as he took effort to kill that Politian but he arrived to take blame of murder. But nobody was ready to believe him and was portrayed as a madman. The story used a simple plot but was delivered in a very humorous way with some relevant message to awaken people. The story begins with beautiful sarcastic comment. It ends with song "jind maahi je tu chaliya thane, kathe kar le enne danne, picho rullanh na tere niyane" and hard hitting message-"**film ends but not corruption**". Shooting was scheduled in the northern part of Chandigarh.

### c) Credits that were uncredited - A very distinctive way of giving credits by Jaspal Bhatti ji

This unique way of writing credits was followed by Jaspal Ji since his show Flop Show. Such initiative was done to amuse laughter among audience. It was Stamped as Overacting, Photokhraby. Sound pollution, editing jumps, fighting spirit, music driver, Underground singers, production out of control, Sets and Upsets, background noise, Costume and Rags designer, team of idiot producers, cheap assistant directors, misdirection in the introduction of names category. Even it was concluded that-It was a film misconceived by Jaspal Bhatti.

### d) Dialogues

Dialogues are the important constituent to create depth in any scene. It can elevate movie to convincing level. List below are some dialogues:

"Jeena hai toe haskar Jeele, kahe phire udaas. Phir peeche pachhtayega, jab bhains khaa gayi ghaas."

"Je sari badmashi khatam ho jaye, te sadi izzat kaun karega"

"Saadi izzat te badmasha ch hai, public vich te hai nai."

“Sir, eh hte actually tuhada apna character inna changga si, kie chhatte hoye badmash vi tuhade naal pyaar karde si.”

“Imandaar hai te usdi iizat karo, baiman haite usnu kharid layo”

“hoya ki hai gwachi gwachi phir rahi hain.”

“teewiyani di gal te kade mukni ni, pehla mainu telephone kar len diyo.”

“tusi sanu hukam karo, jeb kinni dhille karni hai”

“Jo puchan ch mazaa hai, ohh parrhan ch kithe hai.”

“Alakh nirnjan agee gaddi piche injan”

“Lagda hai lokan nu padne paunde paunde. Ajj aap hi padne pai gaye.”

“Oye Bajaj hoye ya jhaajh.”

“Murder kar ta sare mahaul da”

#### e) Challenges: (pre and post)

“MAHAUL THEEK HAI” was a conscious effort by Late Jaspal Ji to come back to his Punjabiness and his roots. The scale of challenges was high on creative, political and social parameters. Some of them are listed below:

- 1) He was thinking to make film in Punjabi Language when people stopped coming to watch Punjabi movies.
- 2) Content was very thought provoking. As Punjab had just recovered from militancy. Police got a bad name as many young people killed in that militancy stage. Although the content was relevant and was not only in context of Punjab but his motive to show whole India So, main Challenge was on content, how you will attract audience to visit Cinema Halls.
- 3) Hindi actors were not ready to work in Punjabi Cinema. As Raj Babbar's opening sentence in a conference was-“aey aadmi pagal hai, Jaspal bharti pagal hai.” he said who in this time thinking about making a movie in Punjabi that too on police.
- 4) Late Jaspal Ji got back injury during his initial schedules only. So, they use to carry folding bed. After directing some shots, he lied down. It was the reflection of dedication towards his creative skills.
- 5) It was released in December, so it was very unaccepted to have audience at Cinema. So after 2-3 days of release, Savita ji and Jaspal Ji, use to sit in car silently to observe how many audiences arrived to watch their film at the time of Fog and post militancy condition. They felt so thankful

#### How Police contributed and how they reacted:

- SS Saini, high ranked officer from police helped in police set-up, security car etc
- The governor of Punjab came to see their film
- Police department was so cooperative

- Jaspal Ji organized one cartoon competition before release of film-competition was based that participants need to draft any cartoon on police, whatever they feel like. Surprising element was that judge panel includes-DGP Punjab, DGP Haryana, IG Chandigarh. Police themselves had to judge cartoons based on them only.

#### Direct from Savita Bhatti ji

Savita Bhatti ji, wife of Late Jaspal Bhatti ji had a experienced a very beautiful journey with this movie. Some of her memories with “Mahaul Theek Hai” has been mentioned:

Savita Bhatti, on 18th December 2018, shared a heartfelt note on her social media page, about this film. She quoted "15 years back, this day, Mahaul Theek Hai was released at Batra Cinema, Chandigarh.

The fog was just in the weather. Otherwise, the vision of Mr. Jaspal Bhatti crystal clear.

Times of militancy, yet this man have the courage to make a film on the atrocities of the police.

Till today, no film maker has the courage to even think of doing something like this.

He premiered it at Tihar Jail, where the inmates watched the film. It was hilarious seeing the prisoners laugh at the police in the film with the Delhi Police Commissioner and his team sitting next to them.

The film ran silver jubilee. In spite of big Hindi films alongside.

I had a dream role with him in it. Our track was inspired by KPS Gill and Rupan Deol Bajaj's controversial incident.

On this day, as i walk down memory lane, I salute this brave heart!"

Savita Bhatti says, "Jaspal Ji's style of comedy was never based on demeaning anyone, it was always a mirror of social reality. A Jalandhar Police Association felt that the film presented Punjab Police in a bad light, but when some senior Police officers watched it, they liked the film."

Talking about the cast, Raj Babbar's role had negative shades, so initially, they had other Bollywood villains in the mind for this role. They had approached Gulshan Grover, Kiran Kumar & Mukesh Rishi for that role but for some reasons, they all refused the film. Raj Babbar, who always played positive roles in Punjabi films, accepted the negative shaded role and did the film for free!

Savita Bhatti fondly shares, "It was always great to work with Jaspal Ji and Vivek (Shauq). Smeep Kang, now a major name in the film industry, made his debut with the film. We also had Daljit Kaur ji, the doyen of Punjabi Cinema."

According to Mrs. Bhatti, "Mahaul Theek Hai paved the way for all future successes. It showed that with the right content, people can be brought back to cinemas. But Jaspal Ji's contribution is always minimized and never stressed upon by anyone."

### Idiosyncratic features of film:

- 1) It is the first cinemascope film in Punjabi.
- 2) Released in 1998, it ran to packed houses and ran for 11 weeks in Chandigarh, an unprecedented first for a Punjabi film.
- 3) Completed its silver jubilee run in Rialto Cinema, Amritsar. It was dubbed in Hindi for Star TV premiere.
- 4) It was made at a time when Punjabi Cinema had died. No hero working in Hindi Cinema wanted to work in a Punjabi film. Gulshan Grover, Kiran Kumar, Mukesh Rishi had all declined to enact the role that was so well portrayed by Raj Babbar who was also gracious to do this cameo role free of cost.
- 5) The film was envisioned by Jaspal Bhatti at such a time when people had stopped coming to theatres to watch a Punjabi film. To get people to the theatres was one of the biggest challenges for him. And he succeeded.
- 6) Jaspal Bhatti ji was down with a severe frozen shoulder during one of the schedules. And he was advised complete bed rest. But he continued being on location, directing the film despite the pain.
- 7) The female lead of the film Chandni Toor is now married to Seemanto Roy, one of the sons of Subrata Roy the scion of the Sahara Parivaar group of companies.
- 8) Jaspal Bhatti's closest co-actor and friend Vivek Shauq who features prominently in this film has died few years back.
- 9) The film, a satire on police working was watched by a large number of police officers in casual clothes.
- 10) It was released in Delhi
- 11) Delhi commissioner was so kind. The film was officially premiered at Tihar Jail, Delhi. It entered into the book of records by being the only film premiered in a jail. As narrated by Savita ji "it was scary, but experience was out of the world that you are sitting in jail, you are watching film on police and prisoners are laughing out loudly. It was totally weird and funny situation. It was very unique and unusual, out of the world experience." It entered into the book of records by being the only film premiered in a jail.
- 12) The film was officially premiered at Tihar Jail, Delhi. It entered into the book of records by being the only film premiered in a jail.
- 13) At Tihar, the film was viewed by the inmates of the jail. As a BBC correspondent put it, the film had a 'captive' audience. The inmates later made a scrumptious lunch for the cast and crew of the film.
- 14) For the promotion of the film a cartoon competition was organized to depict the working of the police. The winners were awarded cash prizes by the DGP, Punjab Shri Dogra.

- 15) Even though the film took a funny and satirical look at the working of the Police, all the three DGP's of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh were present at the opening day of the film. None of them said that Jaspal Ji had portrayed wrong, except there was protest in Jalandhar. One organization in police-that you are showing police in a very bad light. But otherwise it was appreciated.
- 16) The negative cutting of the film, considered to be very auspicious and often done by the mother or wife of the producer, was done by a butcher especially brought in by Jaspal Bhatti. His name was Shah Nawaz.. Since the film is a spoof on the police and bureaucracy, a butcher was ideal to show how hapless like a lamb or a chicken the common man feels at their hands. Jaspal Bhatti ji had a unique vision.
- 17) The name of the villain of the film Billu Bakra, became the Gabbar of Punjabi Cinema. Actor BN Sharma, who played this role, has essayed many roles till now. But on all his stage and screen presences he is greeted with, 'Oye, Billu Bakre'
- 18) Though the film exposed the loopholes in police working, it got its biggest help, support and guidance from the police under the supervision of Mr. Sumedh Singh Saini, a very very senior ranked police officer of Punjab
- 19) Jaspal Bhatti ji was very keen on Sonu Nigam. Even Sonu Nigam sais-"Bhatti sahib aap btaye kahan ana hai gana gane."-He refused to take money. In spite of this, he was given a token amount of money. He was so gracious.
- 20) Jaspal Ji had a very valid point in a movie that was delivered to depict life of every normal person. Famous dialogue from movie-"**Aam bande di zindagi vi ki zindagi hai, dukh, takleefan, dhakke**". But whenever he convey his feeling, he was alarmed by Vivek Shaq that -"sahb bahadur tusi SSP ho zyada jazbati honn di lodd nahi."So, this dialogue was given a core message that even if individual wants to think ethically, but system not allows doing so. This dialogue had a depth of emotion.
- 21) Jaspal Bhatti ji had a unique vision towards title of credits like executive producers as executive reducers. This was also much appreciated by audience as this also delivered humor.
- 22) Movie ends with message-"all the character in this film are fictional because character in real life are far more corrupt."

### 3. Conclusion

Punjabi Cinema had been through many hard waters to prove its survival. Bloody partition of 1947 and then terror of militancy and fake terrorism had poorly affected the industry. But in late 1998, with release of "Mahaul Theek Hai", Punjabi Cinema got its true revival. The courageous attempt of Jaspal Bhatti ji, had created a wave of appreciation among audience. This iconic movie had changed the vision with the mission to prove the true meaning of Punjabi Cinema. With Approx 12-14 releases, only "Mahaul Theek Hai" made its stand and won the battle at box-office. With this movie, comic genre was

explored. This clean comic satire on Punjab Police Officials was executed when Punjab police was already under scanner for lot of controversies. It was the heroic decision of late actor, director and producer to craft Mahaul Theek Hai, with ease. Releasing was a tough job during that era, as Cinema owners mostly avoids screening Punjabi Films in their theatres due to their bad response at box office. But a few screenings helped the film further towards a good release. It was after a long time a Punjabi film saw a release in New Delhi. It also managed to release a few prints overseas. The film broke the 15 year old box office record of “Mamla Gadbad Hai” in Chandigarh and went on to celebrate Silver Jubilee in Amritsar. It ran over 100 days in most districts of Punjab districts. In spite of many obstacles “Mahaul Theek Hai” turned out to be a milestone to open doors of acceptance for other cinematic presentations. It is totally justified that late Jaspal Bhatti ji in spite of various obstacles took a lion-hearted decision to act, produce and direct a right content during challenging time, so that people can be brought back to Cinemas. As a result, his effortless product “Mahaul Theek Hai” broke a 33 year old record and blazed its way to silver Jubilee run. His much appreciated efforts led to true revival of Cinema. It was a reality check film, where content was relevant. Touched everybody’s life as somebody was not talking what happened 100years ago but talked what is happening. Jaspal Bhatti ji’s vision was true, that led to amelioration of Punjabi Cinema. “Mahaul Theek Hai” revived the Punjabi cinema.

Though currently many singer, actor, film makers along with their set followers, are keen to take the entire credit for the revival of the Punjabi cinema. but real credit for the revival of the Punjabi film industry goes only to **Jaspal Bhatti Ji**. Who showed courage and charted into untested waters at the time when no one was even willing to think about making a movie let alone risk his “tann mann dhann” . jaspal bhatti remains the uncrowned king for showing the seed which today has blossomed into a full grown tree who’s shade and fruits everyone reaping today.

#### Guided by:

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