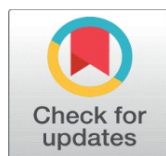
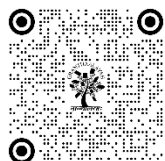


THE EFFECT OF DIASPORA ON PUNJABI CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

The Punjabi diaspora, spanning across continents such as North America, Europe, Australia, and the Middle East, has significantly shaped and transformed Punjabi culture. This article explores the multifaceted impact of the diaspora on Punjabi traditions, language, music, cuisine, and identity. It examines how migration has led to the global dissemination of Punjabi culture, the emergence of hybrid identities, and the preservation of traditions, while also addressing challenges such as cultural dilution and generational disconnect. Drawing on historical migration patterns, sociological perspectives, and contemporary examples, this article highlights the dynamic interplay between the diaspora and the homeland in shaping modern Punjabi culture.

Keywords: Diaspora, Punjabi Culture, Globalisation, Folk, Hybridisation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Punjabi culture is celebrated for its lively spirit, with the Punjab region being the birthplace of Bhangra and Giddha. It's also home to the largest Khalsa Sikh community, with Amritsar and Lahore—Lahore being the capital of Punjab in Pakistan—playing significant roles. Thanks to emigration, the Punjabi diaspora has spread its rich culture across the globe, especially in places like the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, and Australia. In this article I will explore how the diaspora has impacted upon Punjabi culture through preservation, adaptation and globalisation of cultural tropes. It contends that while the diaspora has preserved traditional practices, it has also yielded hybrid forms and a globalised Punjabi identity.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PUNJABI DIASPORA

The Punjabi diaspora originated during the colonial period, with Sikhs and other Punjabis emigrating in large numbers as soldiers, labourers, and farmers from British India. Two major waves followed: the late 19th century wave

of Southeast Asians and East Africans moving to the Middle East, driven by a lack of employment opportunities and the 1947 partition of India, which could be described as post-World War II migration to the UK and North America as they moved to fill job openings or to escape poverty. In the 1980, many people migrated in response to political disturbance in Punjab which increase considerably after the Sikh militancy. Today, 2-3 million Punjabis live in the world, major Punjabi communities of size are in Canada, and the United Kingdom, of 700,000, and 500,000. These were motivated by economic, political and educational opportunities. The diaspora set up cultural centers such as gurdwaras, community centres and Punjabi schools, that served as cultural bastions. But in multicultural societies, living amongst there too were the pioneers of globalization, and they became some of them.

3. CULTURAL PRESERVATION IN THE DIASPORA

The Punjabis and their diaspora still are the custodian of fundamental elements of their culture in community institutions and festivals.

3.1. LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Punjabi, which is mainly written in Gurmukhi in India and Shahmukhi in Pakistan, has been preserved through the diaspora. In cities such as Vancouver, London or California, Punjabi schools also promote the teaching of Gurmukhi to second generation Punjabis, thus ensuring linguistic continuity. Punjabi literature is also supported by governmental and non-governmental organisations such as the Punjabi Sahit Akademi in UK, which have been working towards the preservation and growth of the Punjabi language, culture and heritage. Writers of Punjabi literature have also won the Nobel Prize, including the two laureates in 1913 and 1975 whose writing was in Punjabi. The Punjabi language is also regularly found in the Bollywood and Lollywood film industries. Yet obstacles persists, like the fact that the younger generations often focus on English or the languages of the host country which erode the language's integrity.

3.2. RELIGION AND GURUDWARAS

Sikhism stands as a cornerstone of Punjabi identity and has flourished among the diaspora. Gurdwaras act as a centre for cultural and religious meetings and festivals such Vaisakhi and Gurpurab. For example, the Golden Temple has a replica in Brampton, Canada attracts every year thousands. These community centres promote the Sikh values of seva (selfless service) and langar (free community kitchen) and have also introduced the Punjabi culture to non-Punjabis. However, certain step adaptations have been made by some diaspora Sikhs, for example, simplification of the rituals and customs to reduce the time taken for these rituals.

3.3. FESTIVALS AND TRADITIONS

Festivals such as Vaisakhi, Lohri and Diwali is celebrated with the same enthusiasm in diaspora as in Punjab, sometimes in even more enthusiastic manner than in Punjab. Take for example the Vaisakhi parade in Surrey, Canada: Over 500,000 attendees also enjoy traditional processions alongside food trucks and fusion music. And they celebrate cultural pride and are also responsive to the local context, with such inclusions as multicultural performances.

4. CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION AND HYBRIDISATION CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION AND HYBRIDISATION

The expatriate community has saved the wealth of Punjabi culture, while infusing it with other world cultures.

4.1. MUSIC AND DANCE

Bhangra, a folk tradition from the Punjab region of India, has been transculturated in the diaspora. In the 1980s, British bands like Alaap and Heera led the way in "Bhangra pop," incorporating traditional rhythms with hip-hop, reggae and electronic sounds. Artists such as Diljit Dosanjh and Canada-based AP Dhillon have globalised Punjabi music, with the likes of Patiala Peg and Brown Munde, songs, topping the charts internationally. This hybridisation has helped take

Punjabi music global – but has also diluted its folk elements, according to some who say that it's more concerned with catering for a mass audience than maintaining realness.

4.2. CUISINE

Through diaspora restaurants, Punjabi cuisine, recognised for dishes like butter chicken and sarson da saag, has become a global success. Chains including Guru Lukshmi in Canada and Dishoom in London have brought Punjabi flavors to new audiences; they have adapted recipes to local palates (read: less spicy curries). The food festivals in the diaspora, Punjabi food fairs in Toronto for example, present traditional and fusion foods (tandoori pizza is a favourite) as aspects of culinary innovation.

4.3. FASHION AND MEDIA

Punjabi fashion such as the various forms of ghagra are especially popular among Punjabis in western countries. Traditional attire Punjabi suits has been adopted and remains a popular cultural tradition in many other parts of the world. Pioneered by designers such as Manish Malhotra, Indo-western styles, combining Punjabi aesthetics with international fashion, have become popular over the years. The influence of Bollywood and Punjabi cinema has significantly boosted the visibility of Punjabi culture worldwide, particularly through the diaspora. Movies like *Uda Punjab*, and *Chal Mera Putt* tackle diaspora concerns, offer both a reenforcement of cultural identity and a touch on hybrid experiences.

5. CHALLENGES AND TENSIONS

The Impact of Disapora on Punjabi Culture The impact of the diaspora on Punjabi society appears fraught with contradictions. Even the younger generations experiencing language attrition and language shift, as only 30% of second generation Punjabis in Canada are fluent in Punjabi. Cultural confominity also results in the weakening of traditions, e.g., reduced formality in marriage ceremonies in the west due to time constraints. The political activism of the diaspora, particularly in relation to Sikh identity and Khalistan, has also occasionally strained relations with the homeland, shaping cultural narratives.

6. GLOBAL IMPACT AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE

The Punjabi diaspora plays a crucial role in enabling two-way communication of Punjabi culture. As a host culture, Punjabi culture has diversified the culture of host countries–through the addition of Bhangra in school curriculums in UK and Punjabi food in worldwide food festivals. On the other hand, the homeland has taken on the influences of the diaspora, such as Western-style Punjabi music videos and modernised wedding customs. This reciprocity has made for a Punjabi identity which is global in reach.

7. CONCLUSION

Preservation, transformation, and globalisation The Punjabi diaspora has created a Punjabi culture which the people have brought to other parts of the world. Gurdwaras and festivals retain symbolic forms of traditional music, cuisine and clothing, such cultural influence can be found on the street, throughout the continent. Despite facing issues like language dilution and assimilation, the diaspora has been instrumental in strengthening Punjabi identity, nurturing cultural pride, and earning recognition on a global scale. The duality of tradition and modernity is guaranteed to keep Punjabi culture alive and kicking, in the host land as well as in the countries of exile.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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