

Gaze, Subjectivity and Spectatorship in Punjabi Film *Godday Godday Cha*

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Abstract

In Indian cinema, gaze is not purely male or objectifying, it is shaped by cultural, social and narrative structures. Mulvey's formulation was focussed on psychoanalytic film theory and aesthetic structures like camera angles, narrative control, scopophilia whereas the contemporary applications of the gaze have moved beyond aesthetic analysis as they dwell on questions of identity politics, representation and intersectionality. Patriarchal control in Punjabi culture is often about visibility, not sexuality where traditionally a woman's dignity lies in her modesty and invisibility in public rituals. Men do not like to gaze at women, therefore looking relations here does not involve scopophilia, the voyeuristic pleasure in looking. Therefore, an oppositional gaze and critical female spectatorship emerges which resists the dominant ways of looking and feeling. The paper analyses the film *Godday Godday Cha* to examine the female gaze which can be envisioned as a tool for social justice and empathy in storytelling. The paper studies these negotiations of gender, visibility and control and its repercussions on how female subjectivity is represented, contained or resisted in contemporary Punjabi Cinema. Women in this film express a desire to look back at the disciplinary gaze of men as the film prioritises to display the emotional experience of female characters and through their plotting to become part of the wedding party, reimagining folk songs, and subversive humour to carve out spaces of solidarity within an oppressive structure. In opposition to the totalising nature of the existing narratives where women do not own the space on screen, do not have the right to gaze and be gazed at, here women emerge not as powerless objects but as powerful subjects having the power to run the filmic narrative. The paper finally argues that gaze is less about formalist aesthetics and more about power, identity and social relations.

Keywords

Gaze, cinema, subjectivity, women, patriarchy.