



Deconstructing the Discourse of Emigration: A Critical Study of Yaar Chale Bahar

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Abstract:

In the Punjabi setting, emigration to Canada and other foreign countries is portrayed as a common debate. The present paper tries to show how social media platforms like YouTube have been effective in fostering liminal spaces that attempt to capture internal aesthetics, contradictions, and problems that lie behind any dominant discourse, through a web series, Yaar Chale Bahar, based on emigrating aspirants for Canada and their IELTS journey. It deconstructs the IELTS metanarrative popular in Punjab and how it is presented to non-Punjabis. Instead, it tries to tell mini-stories including the social and economic factors that underlie the discourse of emigration and the new issues emerging with it. This paper will demonstrate how individuals in Punjab view emigration as a means of transitioning from worse to better conditions. For them, IELTS is the only key that will let future generations live in a different world. It portrays emigration as a compulsion instead of a choice. One of the five components in Paul du Gay et al.'s "Circuit of Culture" (1997), which has five components, is the representation issue. Yaar Chale Bahar targets young people who are moving abroad for the betterment of their future. The paper highlights how the web series, as an element of popular culture, represents the grave subject lightheartedly. It uses the model of a "circuit of culture," including production, consumption, identity, representation, and regulation, to analyse the series deeply.

Keywords: Emigration, Liminal Spaces, Discourse, Transition, The Circuit of Culture

Nowadays, Punjabis are notorious for emigrating from their country and living overseas. Even today, there are claims that the growing Punjabi population in Canada is turning the country into another Punjab. People from other states or areas thought Punjabis were nuts for Canada and other foreign nations. They view emigration as a pastime or a decision to leave their nations in search of a better way of life. However, this movement is caused by a variety of circumstances. In this paper, I will reveal how the web series deconstructs the discourse of going abroad as a pastime and presents their need to leave their home as a compulsion rather than a choice. To find work, better career possibilities, a better lifestyle, and a brighter future for their families, they have to move. They have a desire to make their circumstances better. Despite the significant hazards, they continue because of the hope of getting better. The issue of emigration is not restricted to Punjab alone but also spreads to other states like Haryana, Gujrat, and Kerala. Geetanjali Gayatri mentions in a newspaper article titled "Migration Bug" that migration has become the buzzword among the youth of rural Haryana, even women. With more and more youth prodding their families to sell off land to fund their travel, the state is gradually going the Punjab way. Professor Khazan Singh Sangwan, a retired professor of sociology at Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, attributes the spurt in migration to better job opportunities, attractive earnings, a crime-free atmosphere, and the quality of life." Moreover, one member of the family getting settled abroad opens the door for other members, he says. The way it happens in Punjab. He maintains that skewed job opportunities, merit being overlooked in government jobs, rising crime, rampant corruption, and the deteriorating quality of life in Haryana are turning the youth to foreign shores. These are the major causes that became responsible for emigration on a larger scale in rural settings, be it Punjab or Haryana.

Yaar Chale Bahar, a YouTube video series that debuted on April 1, 2023, is based on the IELTS process and aspiring students who want to immigrate to Canada. Jass Dhillon, Biney Jaura, Butta Badbar, and Gavy Dska play the main roles in this Punjabi film directed by Rabby Tiwana. The entire cast of the programme uses acting to introduce new characters. Punjab is where the story takes place. Despite this, the issue of emigration is not limited to one region alone; it is also a worry for other Indian states as well. The online series is essentially a feature-length comic movie. But it's not quite a comedy; it makes several satirical points and has fundamental concerns about Punjab's current system, which encourages emigration. Each character has a unique background or motivation for leaving their nation and moving abroad. These individuals attempt to investigate the subject of emigration from various perspectives. It disproves the naive notion held by non-Punjabis that it is a pastime of Punjabis to reside in any foreign nation. The majority of rural adolescents “leave the comforts of their homes to go to foreign shores,” according to research.

The model of the circuit of culture, first presented by Stuart Hall in 1997 and later developed by various writers, is used in the current study. According to the idea, you must consider five factors while examining a cultural text or artefact: its representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation. According to Paul Du Gay et al., when considered collectively, these elements “form a sort of circuit...through which any examination of a cultural text must pass to be sufficiently explored. The analysis of the web series that addresses the issue of emigration will be made easier with the help of the framework. It questions the way the Jat community is portrayed in mainstream music and media as showy, elegant, and ostentatious. It reveals the truth concealed behind metanarratives through social media platforms, especially YouTube. Perhaps the most extensive analysis of any cultural artefact is found in the Circuit of Culture. It covers a wide range of topics, including the issue of media portrayal and the development of identities within a society. The revelation of unspoken and unexhibited elements of young people's attraction to foreign cultures will bring them to light. Analysing societal processes like representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation is crucial to understanding and learning about any cultural artefact or cultural practice, as in the process of emigration in Punjab. According to Stuart Hall (1997), language serves as a vehicle for the meaning that culture produces. The series Yaar Chale Bahar will be examined in this paper using the framework of a “Circuit of Culture” and its themes, storylines, and cultural representations related to culture.

The series addresses the topic of emigration on a surface level while delving deeper into its causes, such as how young people were forced to take this route rather than continue their education in their home country. The series demonstrates how students view IELTS as a deciding factor for their future. Not all students relocate for economic reasons. The show, however, portrays emigration as forced emigration, where students are forced to leave their nation due to circumstances. The characters that appear in the particular series will be closely examined in the current paper to assess the real factors behind it.

Middle-class Ramneek, a member of the Jat family, must decide between IELTS after completing an MA, a B.Ed., and other prerequisite tests like the PSTET. She speaks for all students who have earned college degrees but are still looking for suitable employment. Such students experience awful circumstances, first because of their dire financial problems, and then because their dreams cannot be realised as a result of bad government policies. For instance, Ramneek, the girl, tried her hardest to get a job teaching in her native nation but was unsuccessful. Given that she was responsible for her two younger sisters and her sick father, she was unable to wait for very long. Her father wasn't a wealthy farmer. Her father was a farmer who lacked the resources to send Ramneek alone abroad or marry his daughters off to well-off families. She eventually passed the IELTS test and married a man who would finance her immigration. She and her father had no other choice because of their predicament; they were helpless.

The other character is Yaadi, the son of a subsistence farmer who experiences hail and rain damage to his crops. He wanted to improve his family's situation and pay off some debt that had been accumulating

for a while. He arrived in Chandigarh to begin his IELTS coaching lessons in the hopes of realising this dream. Yaadi is a representation of Punjabi pupils who attended the Punjab School Education Board and initially showed little interest in the study of English. Now, the situation is starting to get better. These students' English proficiency falls short of what is needed to pass the language exam. The outcome was that Yaadi's language exam failed. He made every attempt to get to that higher level but was unable to, so he returned to his village. All of the money his father had earned by working in the fields was invested. Finally, he decided to take his own life after growing tired of the constant barrage of moneylenders. Yaadi lost the ability to save his father's life. It demonstrates how he and his father envisioned happy times after passing the IELTS and that after he left the country, he would be able to support his father financially. He had a terrific voice; therefore, he also aspired to be a singer. However, because of his financial situation, he was unable to realise this dream.

It is also true that the majority of middle-class students favour IELTS to change the course of their families' lives. Parents also support them in this choice because they do not want to crush their children's ambitions and aspirations to ensure that they do not live the same life as they did in the past. Due to the convoluted and compromised system, obtaining a government position is not that simple in Punjab or India either. Many students take risks and work very hard to accomplish these services, but even after putting forth that much effort, there is no guarantee that they will find employment. Due to natural disasters including floods, earthquakes, and extreme weather, Punjab's economy is in decline. Numerous applicants are persistently waiting in employment lines, numbering in the hundreds of thousands.

Preet has a major role throughout the entire series. He is a member of the Dalit caste. Preet served as a symbol for everyone who wished to free themselves from the caste and class bonds to which they had been enslaved for so long. She works as a maid in Zamindar's home because her family's financial situation is so dire that she needs to pay her tuition. Saman, a friend of his, frequently assisted her by covering the cost of her class fees. Preet's only chance of recovering from such a serious condition was the test and travelling abroad. Because of the unequal distribution of wealth among people, lower caste individuals spent decades working for zamindars yet were still unable to support themselves. Caste is not a barrier to the desire to travel overseas, according to an essay in the newspaper by Darshan Singh, a former sarpanch of Khanoda village. While following in the footsteps of friends is a major theme, it also touches on the frustration of being untrained and jobless. The wealthy are sending their children abroad, and the Jat and Ror communities are leading the way in this. Selling the land will help finance international aspirations. Some scheduled caste families in the village have occasionally taken out loans to send their children overseas. He adds that migration also produces successful matches for males because no one wants to miss out on the opportunity for a better life. It reveals that members of lower castes face a great deal of vulnerability. They enjoy equal possibilities in both their employment and way of life.

The character of Lovedeep discloses another story emerging due to the emigration. He is a middle-class Jat boy who marries an English-speaking girl to support her application for a visa, and she will then contact him in Canada by applying for a spouse visa. Punjab also sees a lot of cases like these. The girl stops responding to Lovedeep and his family after travelling overseas, giving reasons for her hectic schedule with work and school. She gradually eludes him, which causes Lovedeep and his family to disintegrate and perish. Boys commit suicide in several instances like this as a result of social pressure.

As previously indicated, the series portrayed emigration as a compulsive action rather than a decision. Numerous factors, including economic factors, individual desires, and social influences, influence it. Depending on the caste and status of the individuals, all these variables change. Failure might result in fatalities in the quest for fair working conditions and in the rush to pass the exam. The students experienced an existential crisis while studying for and taking the exam, leaving them unsure of what to do next. It results in the students' identities becoming dispersed. An individual's identity, agency, and actions are determined by discourses and representations. Discourses are power frameworks that produce

certain identities and meanings. Without understanding the complexity of reality, the emigration rhetoric operates for non-Punjabis differently. According to them, leaving Punjab is a choice made by Punjabi people, which is not always the case. They view the foreign way of life as attractive.

Even so, some people travel abroad in search of a secure environment and a better way of life. The students featured in this specific series, however, are driven to leave their homes and countries in pursuit of better chances, to alter the course of their families' lives, and to free themselves from the hell of poverty, compulsion, and privation. People create images of everything through the use of well-known songs and films. The level to which Punjab and its people are exalted prevents non-Punjabis from seeing the mini-stories or realities hiding behind the discourses of Jat and Sardari. Social media platforms like YouTube have the authority to publish unpleasant stories that are a regular part of people's lives. By addressing the common experiences of IELTS aspirants, it attempts to dissect the discourse generated by the mass media.

The pupils' journey from preparation to outcome is the only subject of the series. Instead of Canada or other distant nations, the series only depicts their lives in Punjab. Even though Inder, Ramneek, and Saman achieved success after obtaining visas and moving to Canada, the series ignores the circumstances outside of Punjab. Through the accounts of these students, the producer criticises the political and economic practices of the government that force people to leave their own countries, homes, and families to live and work in foreign nations. The series not only raises issues with the government but also reveals other ideals such as love, friendship, and brotherhood.

The series' development highlights the psychological effects of emigration and how students view IELTS as a means of changing their destiny. In the Punjabi province of Doaba, every single house has relatives who live abroad. Following Majha and Malwa, this was the first region from which people emigrated to neighbouring nations. Young people have a long history of migrating abroad in pursuit of employment, but following COVID, there has been a virtual exodus in recent years. There aren't many people who have an arbitrary desire to leave their country. Most frequently, they were forced to relocate due to conditions in places like Majha and Malwa. Lack of employment, unequal wealth distribution between the upper and lower classes, political and religious tensions, and most significantly, a surge in drug abuse and crime rates were driving forces behind emigration abroad. Most parents take their kids abroad to escape the unfavourable atmosphere that prevails in the country. In this way, emigration may also be seen as something that offers a secure and sheltered environment, lowering the risk of their future.

In the newspaper article, a village elder, Nirmal Kaur, chips in, "Nobody wants to send their children so far away, but our situation leaves us with little choice. There is no income from any source; there are no jobs, and the earnings from agriculture are just not enough. If we do not send our sons abroad, our livelihood is in peril. The government has no solution for this growing tribe of unemployed youth. Illegal entry to foreign shores becomes the only hope for some, even if land has to be sold. It has become a compulsion," she says of the soft-spoken word. Her husband and co-villagers nod in unison. She was also satisfied to share that it took my son one month to reach the US. We were so worried that we hardly ate. The anxiety until he reached his destination was almost killing him. Now that he is there, he is doing well. It has been five years. We have rebuilt our house with the money he sends. Our daughter-in-law is with us, and our world is perfect, she says.

Yaar Challe Bahar depicts this element of emigration wonderfully, showing how students seek optimism for the future by making the most of each day and repaying the debt incurred by family as a result of their departure from home and nation. The series addresses the objectives of parents and elders, in addition to those of children. The spectator feels sympathy for these students, who work very hard to support themselves and their families through employment. People are made aware of the deception and blind confidence in partners that one does not know before marriage by characters like Lovedeep. They thoroughly scrutinise each component, and people share their appreciation for it. By showing a character

who pays an agent all of his fees but declines to receive the visa in the end, Tiwana also touches on the issue of phoney agents. Finally, after investing all of his savings in a visa, he was unable to find a way and took his own life. According to expert Vinay Kumar from Kurukshetra, “post-COVID, there has been a surge in the number of immigration agents as well as applications. Traveller interest in visiting foreign countries is growing, but so are the recorded instances of travel agent fraud.” There have been 180 arrests and around 286 incidents of agents and middlemen defrauding in the past two to three months. These days, emigration is a cause for concern, especially in Punjab, where many students depart for foreign lands each year. Under the stress of work and shifts, people are unable to adequately utilize all of their energy and creative ideas. After leaving parents behind who missed their children until their return, the house mostly became empty. The emigration process should be slowed down by the government. Instead of supporting IELTS institutes, more facilities for other civil service preparations should be opened. More job opportunities should be made available to students so that they can focus solely on their future and careers in their home countries. I appreciate the fact that the government is providing such opportunities in the present to create jobs in the native country.

Conclusion

Yaar Challe Bahar portrays emigration as a compulsive action rather than a decision, according to a thorough investigation of representation, identification, consumption, and production. (Though we cannot generalise the fact because many people still leave their country after attracting a better lifestyle by their choice.) Its characters, concepts, and tales are examined in detail, and this helps us see how IELTS gained popularity in the state. Although it has also spread similarly in other states, the specific study specifically places the concept in Punjab, following the web series' premise. It demonstrates emigration's impact on culture, identity, and society. Circuit of Culture's methodology assisted in revealing the series' deeper layers of significance and its link to the experience of emigrants. The series creator was successful in undermining the flamboyant perception of Punjabis in popular songs and films and made an effort to identify mini-narratives that could serve as the driving forces behind the idea of emigration in Punjab. As a research paper, it has certain limitations in that it cannot cover the whole concept of emigration since it has multiple trends, opinions, and factors. The present research opens the gate to exploring several more questions in the context of emigration, such as how emigration has also emerged as one of the most important career options for Punjabi youth, irrespective of gender. How it transformed the overall social-cultural milieu of Punjabi society by influencing the choice of marriage, the architecture of the house, career choices, academic streams, and the overall conception of a successful life. One can also examine the concept of a 'culture of migration' that is perhaps provoked by social media. In addition to the economic factors alone, the research could evolve into an understanding of the role of social factors that are responsible for shaping the aspirations of emigrants.

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