

# Representation of Sikh Character from Real to Reel: Analysis of Film 'Sajjan Singh Rangroot'

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## ABSTRACT

*Most popular and powerful medium of communication is Cinema. It is a medium of Art, which depicts the reality in the reel. Films are the reflection of society and present it in such a manner that creates impact among the people. The unsung Hero to whom many people might not remember but cinema made us remember is 'Sajjan Singh Rangroot'. It is very rare in that has portrayed a film dedicated to one of the Sikh real Character who made history which got revised by the cinema. The purpose of Research paper is to find out the representation of Sikh character by the cinema and how people responded to the film.*

**Keywords:** Sikh identity, Sikh character, Cinema, films, Bollywood, Hindi cinema

## Introduction, rationale and statement of the concept

The contribution of Sikh's in World is everywhere from the History, they have made their place and identity despite being Minority. While rewinding their contribution as Sikh soldiers, Sikh Regiment has fought various battles and wars across continents from the west to Europe. The bravery of Sikhs is known all over the globe. The courageous regiment has won over 1650 gallantry awards. It all started on 1 August 1846, when British Empire realized the determination of Sikhs after Anglo Sikh war. Though raised by British people but were recognized on 12 September 1897 as the Regimental Day which is one of the greatest days in the History of Battle of Saragarhi.

The greatest battles in the Sikh history is considered as Battle of Saragarhi in which 21 soldiers Sikh Soldiers of British Army battled against Pashtun Orakzai Tribesmen who choose to fight to the death against 10,000 men and never thought to surrender. It actually begins during war when people from British were impressed by Sikh Fighters as the most courageous. The Battle of Saragarhi in which, Sikh soldiers who proved their bravery were later acknowledged by the British parliament and were awarded the Indian Order of merit which is equivalent to the Victoria Cross. The day of battle i.e. 12 September is now celebrated as the Regimental Battle Honor Day.

The First World War gave the Sikh Soldiers the title of 'Black Lions'. Another Battle of World War I, the battle of La Basse in which Sikh Regiment coordinated attack on German fortifications. Though later the attack was cancelled but with no knowledge Sikh regiment lost 221 of its soldiers from 289 soldiers but showed German's their fighting skills.

One of the most interesting fact which UNESCO records it as rarest act of Bravery in the world history was between 1837 and 1907 in which the highest order of Gallantry at Saragarhi received four awards of the 36<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

During Second World War, the representation of Sikh soldiers was 60 percent from that of Indian soldiers in the Battle of Malaya. The contribution remains endless as even during Kargil war 1999, the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Sikh Regiment was given 'unit citation' for the Gallantry.

The participation of Sikh Regiment was there since 1846 consisting of two major world war out of which they won 28 battles in World War I and 21 in World War II. Sikh Regiment is the most decorative consists of brave legends has won over 73 Battle honors and 38 honors besides five COAS unit citations and two 'bravest of the brave' citation.

So much contribution in the field of Battles is done by Sikh Soldiers but very few are portrayed on the larger screen. Being the minority community they contributed more to the world. The History remains till the books but legends need to be portrayed majorly on the screen.

It is very necessary to portray landmark History so that masses should remember the Great Heroes.

## Methodology

The methodology of the research is qualitative approach that aims to understand the perceptions of the selective audiences, film critics through in-depth interviews and also analyses of films as cultural texts.

The first concern of the researcher is to obtain and select the texts to be analyzed. This involves applying forms of textual analysis to a series of printed, visual or audio texts. In analyzing texts researchers seek to highlight the common codes, terms, ideologies, discourses and individuals that communicate; Musical lyrics, clothing, political speeches, posters, popular magazines and geographical layouts have all been recorded and analyzed as texts.

For intensive interview, the sample size for intensive interviews consists of 15 respondents that will focus on opinions, experiences, feelings and recollection of thoughts while watching film.

Interview is conducted on only those 15 respondents who watched the film to get the clarity that how people responded watching the *Unsung Hero* on larger screen which will give this research a relevance.

## Analysis

### Textual Analysis

The film *Sajjan Singh Rangroot* which is dwelled by Pankaj Batra on the real story of Sikh Regiment during World War I at western front against Germany .One of the lately released film ‘ *Sajjan Singh Rangroot*’ (2018) depicted about the real Hero who lost his life during war but never lose his identity. *Sajjan Singh Rangroot* is the first Sikh World war drama that has presented the power of Sikh Regiment before independence. The identity of Sikhism which *Sajan Singh Rangroot* follows lasts till the end of his life. It is not only *Sajan Singh* who truly sacrificed their lives but there were lot of Sikh Soldiers in the same battle. *Unsung Hero Sajan Singh Rangroot* being portrayed well by *Diljit Singh Dosanjh*. The Sikh Soldiers were depicted as very brave and patriotic.. The old fashioned appeal carried by *Diljit Dosanjh* as free thinkers who believe in independence and believe in self.

The intensity of role played by *Diljit Singh Dosanjh* blown out the minds by representing *Sajan Singh Rangroot* as the Soldier who fought from the Indian British Sikh regiment in World war.

Being *Diljit* played a role of protagonist but the major supporting role of *Yograj Singh* as the Sikh’s commander uplifted the character of braved Sikh Soldiers.

The film contains the patriotism and sacrifices that Sikhs did during British Regime either the father of *Sajjan Singh Rangroot* who worked under British and his son fought for British. The film not only talked about the bravery but also the racism which they faced. They were harassed and mocked by the British regime but they still fought for them because it is in their blood and this is what Guru’s taught which can easily be seen.

Sikh Identity in the whole film was very well depicted. The portrayal of Sikh is positively represented. The proper attire keeping turban and beard with values inherited of Guru’s can be sense. Sikh slogans were also used in the film. The preaching’s of Guru’s were followed in the whole film that depicted the base of Sikh Philosophy.

Sikh Festival that is widely celebrated allover ‘*Baisakhi*’ and eagerness to celebrate it with full enthusiasm was very well represented.

The respect of Turban as a pride was presented though British people found them removing them off but they safeguarded it and proved themselves with valor.

The fierceness, bravery of Sikhs was seen throughout the film with dialogues, actions, attire and presentation. The film traces upon the indifferences, racism and loss while celebrating the bravery based upon the Sikh regiment that was on front lines of the war for their colonizers.

This film clearly reflected the feeling of patriotism and sense of bravery and loyalty in Sikh blood.

### Intensive Interviews

“ I was shocked to see the sacrifices done by Sikhs and that too from World War I, I always thought that Sikhs in films are just for comic reliefs but I salute to their bravery. This movie completely changed my perception for Sikhs and I really wanted to see such kind of films on them”

- Mr.Anubhav Pandit (student)

“ I am feeling so proud that *Unsung Hero* can now be seen by everyone across the globe. Being a Sikh, I always feel that why films on Sikhs are not presented as they did so much for society but I wanted to Thank *Pankaj Batra* for presenting such a Master Piece”

- Mr. Gurtaj Singh (Working)

“ Eye-opener for me, I heard about the sacrifices done by Sikhs as I have studied in the books but never felt it that way. This movie made me realize that what a Sikh is? I mean I loved their dedication and value of information provided in the film”

- Ms. Sheweta ( Working)

“ This film is very Historic. The dialogue, costume, music, acting and everything on the screen looks real. I cannot take my eyes off throughout the film. I am feeling so proud that this is for the second time I am watching this film and this time I bring my kids along so that they should know the sacrifices, bravery our Sikh soldiers had.”

- Mr. Harpreet Singh( Businessman)

### Conclusion

Cinema is the mirror of the society; it re-creates the reality to depict the situation of the society. The impact of larger screen is more than of any other medium. A film that talks about forgotten Heroes and present it in the form of Art becomes the Masterpiece. Film is a strongest medium in representing the situation, environment, things, and people in a story. The Film “ Sajjan Singh Rangroot”, which touched the minds of the people by its story line and acting skills of Diljit Singh Dosanjh and Yograj Singh. As Sikh being the minority community in the world but still has made its place in all the fields. Cinema which reflects the reality, it is very important for the people to remind about the past which is not meant to be forgotten ever. The film created an impact all over, in fact most of the people were unaware about the fact that Sikh’s contribution from British regime. The representation of Sikh identity is very well depicted in the film with morals, values, principle and identical signs. The depiction of loyalty and courageousness were there in the whole plot. Cinema in many past years used Sikh characters just for comic relief but representing real life character in reel life is very rare. Such kinds of films change the mindset of the people as now people know about Sajjan Singh Rangroot .There is the need to have such kind of films, Bollywood is also now coming with the film Kesari played by Akshay Kumar. Such kind of films will help in depicting real Sikh identity in front of the people. It is always cinema who can create as well as spoil the identity because they will project what they wanted society to see it. Earlier the depiction was not so favorable but slowly steadily such kind of films where the Sikh is presented in Proper Turban and Beard keeping in mind Sikh principles need to projected all over the globe.

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