L'évolution du cinéma népalais : Analyse de l'influence de Bollywood et de l'émergence de films népalais non traditionnels.

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Année académique : 2022-2023
URI/URL : http://hdl.handle.net/2268.2/19020

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**THE EVOLUTION OF NEPALI CINEMA:
ANALYSING THE INFLUENCE OF BOLLYWOOD AND
THE EMERGENCE OF NON-MAINSTREAM NEPALI FILMS**

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Mémoire présenté par KARKI Sudipta
en vue de l'obtention du grade de
Master en arts du spectacle à finalité spécialisée en cinéma
et arts de la scène (histoire, esthétique et production)

Année académique 2022 /2023

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Introduction

In its present condition, there are very limited books written on Nepali Cinema that provide information on the history, development, and cultural significance of Nepali cinema. There are several academic articles, journals, and research papers written on different aspects of Nepali cinema, such as the representation of gender, culture, and social issues in Nepali films. However, there remains a distinct need for a more thorough and scientifically rigorous investigation to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intricate evolution of Nepali cinema.

Regrettably, non-mainstream Nepali films remain unexplored territorially, with only a handful of online articles providing minimal coverage. Despite commendable media efforts, notable research and a significant research and study gap persist in this crucial facet of the Nepali film landscape. Therefore, this research paper will help to understand the importance of making and evolving non-mainstream films.

> Nepal only began making films about 65 years after the Lumière brothers screened their first films in Paris on 28 December 1895. Though the first Nepali language film *Satya Harischandra* directed by D.B Pariyar was released and produced in Kolkata, in 1951, and not until 1964 Nepal made its first film under Nepal's production called *Aama* (*Mother*) directed by Hira Singh Khatri and the first Nepali film produced by a private Nepali company in Nepal called *Maitighar* (*Maternal Home*) in 1966 directed by B.S. Thapa. From the beginning, the influence of Hindi films produced in Bombay was seen in Nepali films. In a sense, where the first three directors who made early films in Nepal, were associated with and trained in Bombay cinema. They naturally brought the storytelling style and approach to Nepali films.[1] Due to the absence of laboratories and other technical facilities in the country in the early times, Nepali filmmakers had to travel to Bombay and Calcutta for thirty-three years which has been fully compensated and there has been much progress, but Nepali films based on the formulas of Hindi films for commercial success remain the same until today.[2]

The influence of Bollywood is evident, but a precise comprehension of the defining Bollywood elements within Nepali films holds paramount importance. Thus, this research paper embarks on a comprehensive analysis and understanding of the integration of Bollywood components into Nepali cinema. This exploration encompasses a historical overview of Nepal, a succinct portrayal of Indian cinematic history, and a thorough journey through the evolution of Nepali cinema, from its inception to the contemporary landscape.

The primary objective of this paper is to differentiate and distinguish the Bollywood influence within mainstream Nepali films from its absence in non-mainstream counterparts. The ultimate objective is to facilitate an authentic portrayal of Nepal's ethos on celluloid while nurturing a distinctive cinematic identity for Nepali cinema.

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[1] Laxmi Nath Sharma, *History of Nepali Cinema*, Kathmandu, 2016, pp.65-75
[2] *Ibid*, pp.599-601

This paper is thoughtfully divided into two meticulously crafted sections, each bearing distinct significance. Both parts have an in-depth analysis of films, [1] Bollywood-influenced Nepali films, and Non-mainstream Nepali films within the frame of the evolution of Nepali cinema.

Part One: It delves into the influence of Bollywood: Where it began and Where are we today. It is based on the books written by Laxmi Nath Sharma to understand the history of Nepali cinema along with numerous Indian researchers and writers on the evolution of Indian cinema, specifically Bollywood to understand the components present in Nepali films. It also provides a chronological overview of the development of Nepal's film industry, from its early beginnings to the present day. This timeline can help to better understand the social, political, and cultural context of each period and how Nepali Cinema has evolved.

Chapter One: The Beginning (1950-1970): The chapter is about a focused study of the Nepali film *Matitighar* (1966), dissecting its Bollywood influences and using it as a lens to identify enduring elements shaping contemporary films.

Chapter 2: The Rise of Commercialization: Kollywood (1980-1990): The chapter is about the romantic era that witnesses a lot of commercial success in Nepali films, and the emergence of Nepali stars and their popularity. The influence of Bollywood masala prompted a surge in violence and a shift toward prioritizing masala elements over artistic cinematic endeavors.

Chapter 3: Nepal Television's Impact (1985-1990): The chapter explores the establishment of Nepali Television empowered education transformed filmmaking, and skillfully showcased Nepal's essence through powerful televised imagery potentially shaping the emergence of non-mainstream Nepali films by the late 1990s.

Chapter 4: The Rise of the Megastar (1990-2000): The chapter explores the epoch of Nepali Bollywood-Masala films, spotlighting the ascent of Nepali cinema's Angry Young Man. Delving into the 1970s Bollywood history, it traces the rise of the Angry Young Man archetype, the Bollywood Masala genre, and the Middle Cinema.

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[1] Analysis of films are based on the courses at ULG particularly; *Histoire du Cinèma* and *Analyse de film* (Monsieur Marc-Emmanuel Melon), *Cinéma et études de genre* (Madame Geneviève Van Cauwenberge), *Méthodes et théories de l'analyse de films* and *Jeu de l'acteur et construction du personage* (Monsieur Dick Tomasovic) and *Analyse des spectacles vivants* (Madame Nancy Delhalle)

Chapter 5: Beginning of Digital Cinema (2000-2010): The chapter explores Nepal's tragedy and political shifts, coinciding with the emergence of digital cinema. While New Bollywood embraced novel concepts, Nepali mainstream films favored familiarity, revisiting old themes and traditional storylines reminiscent of Bollywood films.

Chapter 6: New Kollywood Ascendance (2010-Present): The chapter delves into the pivotal film *Loot* (2012), a transformative moment infusing new energy into Nepali Cinema and sparking an experimentation wave across genres for commercial success.

Part Two: It delves into the emergence of Non-mainstream Nepali films and their importance in the realm of Nepali cinema. Non-mainstream Nepali cinema stands as a crucible of creativity, housing diverse styles, themes, and voices that collectively paint a rich tapestry of Nepali filmmaking. Beyond aesthetics, it amplifies marginalized voices, sparks industry innovation, allows for a genuine portrayal of Nepal's spirit, and fosters a distinct identity for Nepali cinema.

Chapter 7: The Non-mainstream Films: The chapter focuses on the films that are non-mainstream Nepali films based on the exclusion of Bollywood components and encompass a deeper integration of storytelling, innovative filmmaking techniques, local talent, and a conscious departure from Bollywood influence. The analysis of these films independently, focuses on the nuanced aspects of Story and Setting, Sound and Image, and Characters development and cinematic portrayal, revealing their distinctive authentic narrative approaches and unique cinematic expressions.

PART ONE: THE INFLUENCE OF BOLLYWOOD ON NEPALI CINEMA: WHERE IT ALL BEGAN AND WHERE ARE WE TODAY.

CHAPTER ONE: THE BEGINNING (1951-1970)

Nepali Cinema, known as "Nepali Chalachitra" (*Chala* as *moving*) (*Chitra* as *picture*), Nepal couldn't make films as it was an autocratic country ruled by Ranas (1846-1951). The country was very poor in every sector and there was no education for the people.[1]

In 1950, Nepal experienced a significant turning point in its history when the people revolted against the autocratic Rana regime, which had ruled the country for over a century. This marked the first time Nepal witnessed democracy, as the people's protest and perseverance paid off. [2] As a result, in 1951, the Rana dynasty's autocratic rule came to an end, and Nepal transitioned to a democratic system of governance, marking a pivotal moment in the country's political landscape. In addition to the significant political changes taking place, *Satya Harishchandra*[3] (*Satya* as *truthfulness*) directed by D.B. Pariyar holds a special place in the history of Nepali cinema. Produced and released in Calcutta, India on 15th September 1951, it is recognized as the first-ever Nepali-language film. He originally adapted the mythological story of Harishchandra, directed and partially invested in the film's production.[4]

Raja Harishchandra (*Raja* as *King*), the first Indian feature film, made its debut in Bombay's Coronation Cinematograph Theatre in 1913 directed by one of the early pioneers in Indian cinema, Dhundiraj Govind Phalke (1870–1944) who is known as "Father of Indian cinema".[5]

> Bollywood first began in 1913, when the silent film Raja Harishchandra came out. It came as a response to America's booming film industry Hollywood. India was still colonized by England at the time, so American and British films were present there. People in India saw the popularity and success of English films and decided to create their versions. The name Bollywood is a blend of the film industry's central city, Bombay, and Hollywood.[6]

Nepali cinema, also commonly referred to as "Kollywood" similar to Bollywood, had its roots in the capital city of Kathmandu. Filmmakers such as Tulsi Ghimire played a pivotal role in spearheading the Kollywood trend in Nepal during the mid-1980s. [7]

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[1] Laxmi Nath Sharma, *History of Nepali Cinema*, Kathmandu, 2016, p. 53 (Title translated from Nepali)

[2] Binod Ghimire, '*Nepal's democracy revolutions, and achievements and failures*' The Kathmandu post (2022) https://kathmandupost.com/national/2022/02/19/nepal-s-democracy-revolutions-and-achievements-and-failures

[3] According to Hindu scriptures, Harishchandra was a righteous king who was renowned for his honesty and adherence to truth, even in the face of extreme adversity. MythGyan'*King Harishchandra Story – The King who is an Epitome of Truth and Virtue'* (2023) retrieved from https://mythgyaan.com/harishchandrastory/#:~:text=Harishchandra%20Story%20%E2%80%93%20King%20Harishchandra%20is,his%20wife%20and%20his%20son.

[4] Laxmi Nath Sharma, op. cit*.,* p.62

[5] Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema,* Routledge Francis and Taylor Group, 2004, p.20

[6] Bela Sharma, 'Analysis of Bollywood Films as a Cultural Expression' Sutori (2023) retrieved from https://www.sutori.com/en/story/analysis-of-bollywood-films-as-a-cultural--LFLfUiPe9vAGcaDypxgsp9eF

[7] Anya Kordecki, 'Kollywood: The Essential Films of Nepal' (2021) https://theculturetrip.com/asia/nepal/articles/kollywood-the-films-of-nepal

Nepal did not produce any silent films, as the country's film industry only started in the mid-1960s. The first color film, *Kumari*, directed by Bijaya Bahadur Malla, was released in 1977.[1] However, Nepal has not produced any black-and-white films in its cinematic history since then.

In 1950, a high-frequency AM radio station was introduced privately. Following year, in April 1951, the government-owned Radio Nepal was also established.[2]

The First Nepali feature film made in Nepal: *Aama* (*Mother*,1965)

In 1955, King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah ascended to the throne of Nepal, and in 1960, he introduced the *Panchayat System*.[3] In 1963, on the occasion of King Mahendra's 42nd birth anniversary, the *Information Department of the Government of Nepal* made the country's first documentary newsreel, marking the beginning of filmmaking in Nepal with government support. Since no one in Nepal had prior filmmaking experience, King Mahendra asked director Hira Singh Khatri, who had worked in Hindi films in India, to direct Nepal's first feature film titled *Aama* (*Mother*), released in 1965.[4] Film production in Nepal started for several reasons. Firstly, the screening of Hindi and English films in Kathmandu drew large crowds, making it a popular form of entertainment from the beginning. Secondly, politics played a role as films were seen as an effective means of communication that could impact people of all backgrounds, from the rich to the poor. The country's leaders recognized the power of movies as a communication tool, and this was another driving force behind the start of film production in Nepal.[5]

According to Laxmi Nath Sharma, the film *Aama* (1965) intended to explain the *Panchayat System*. It also carried a lot of sentiments regarding the love for the country.[6] He writes, "Although the film may contain certain elements that seem unnatural, being directed by someone heavily influenced by and experienced in the world of Hindi cinema, it's understandable for the Nepali audience to be drawn to it." At that time, people in Nepal had

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[1] Film Development Board 'Historical Timeline of Nepali Cinema' (2023) https://film.gov.np/

[2] Radio Nepal was first named and established as "Radio Prajatantra" (Prajatantra translates as Democracy). With this, the local people got access to news, and it changed how they consumed information; people everywhere who had a radio would tune into the news broadcast throughout the country and it became one of the most important achievements in Nepali telecommunication history. *Development of telecommunications in Nepal: 10 key events of the 108-year-old history* (2021) https://english.onlinekhabar.com/development-of-telecommunications-in-nepal.html

[3] 'Mahendra aborted the democratic experiment and took full control of the state into his own hands. Royal dominance, clothed in the rhetoric of 'partyless Panchayat democracy.' John Whelpton, *History of Nepal*, 2005,p.86

[4] Laxmi Nath Sharma, *Filmmaking: Principal, Style, and Elements,* Lalitpur, 1981, p.237   (Title translated from Nepali)

[5] Laxmi Nath Sharma, *History of Nepali Cinema,* Kathmandu,2016*,* p.67

[6] *Aama* which means mother also refers to the motherland Nepal as *Nepal Aama*

seen few foreign films which were in English and Hindi language so to watch a film in the Nepali language, Nepali artists, and Nepali music in the setting of Nepal, people were very excited, and overall, the film was a success in the country.[1]

According to the National Newspaper 'Gorkhapatra', established in 1901, there was an announcement of the first public projection in the open theatre in Tudhikhel, Kathmandu. Also, one of the businessmen in Kathmandu requested the Ranas to open a Nepali Cinema Theatre and when his demand was accepted on 12th December 1949 the first movie was shown in the first Cinema Theatre made. It was an Indian film called *Rambibah* (1949)". [2]

> The first film shown at a Kathmandu cinema had been Ramabibaha (Lord Ram's Wedding) and the audience had thrown petals and other offerings at the screen as if the god Ram were really present in the hall. [3]

Hira Singh Khatri directed two other films with the same government production *Hijo Aaja Bholi* (*Yesterday Today Tomorrow*, 1967) and *Pariwartan* (*Change*, 1970). And again, the films were based on the Panchayat System, the political and social situation of Nepal encouraging the people of Nepal to be active in the development of the country. Laxmi Nath Sharma writes that the films were neither interesting nor entertaining but rather were like lectures given by trained actors. Both films didn't do well in the country. The post-production and indoor shooting were done in Calcutta, India. In the early times, due to the absence of laboratories, studios for indoor shooting, sound recording, and other technical facilities in the country. Nepali filmmakers had to travel to Bombay and Calcutta. [4]

The Nepalese recording industry began when the government-supported Ratna Recording Corporation was established in Nepal's capital, which made a big difference in Nepalese music. [5] Hari Prasad Rimal, renowned as the "father" of Nepali Radio drama, rose to fame at the age of 25 when his song '*Mero Mann Tukra Bhayera*' became the first song recorded and broadcast by Radio Nepal. His noteworthy contributions are the films *Aama* (1964), *Manko Baandh* (1974), *Ke Ghar Ke Dera* (1985), *Pariwartan* (1970), *Sindoor* (1979) and *Santaan* (1989).[6]

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[1] Laxmi Nath Sharma, *History of Nepali Cinema,* Kathmandu,2016*,* p.68

[2] *Idem*., p.47

[3] John Whelpton, *History of Nepal*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.175

[4] Laxmi Nath Sharma, *Filmmaking: Principal, Style, and Elements,* Lalitpur, 1981, pp.238-239

[5] The first Nepali song was recorded in Calcutta, India in 1908 by Seturam Shrestha, who was a Nepali musician. He started the trend of music recording, and other artists followed him. Before 1971, Nepali artists used to go to India to record their songs. Subash Giri , 'Digital Technologies and Music Digitisation: Challenges and Opportunities for the NepaleseMusic Industry' Sciendo,Volume 10 (2021): Issue 2 (October 2021) https://sciendo.com/article/10.2478/ijmbr-2021-0005

[6] As well as the dramas Bhimsen Ko Antya and Mukunda Indira. Along with his illustrious radio career, he directed numerous dramas, including celebrated works by Nepali literary figures like Muna Madan.
The Kathmandu Post, 'First Radio Nepal singer leaves artistic legacy' (2018) Retrieved from
https://kathmandupost.com/national/2018/09/01/first-radio-nepal-singer-leaves-artistic-legacy

The First Nepali film by a private company: *Maitighar* **(Maternal Home,1966)**

In 1966, the film called *Maitighar* was the first film produced by a private company called Sumononjali Films made in Nepal. The film was made by hiring Bhim Singh Thapa, who was working in Bombay's Indian film industry as a film director. The film's lyrics were written by Nepali lyricists M.B.B. Shah and Kiran Kharel, and the music was composed by Indian composer Jayadev. The songs were sung by renowned *Indian playback singer[1]* as well as Nepali playback singers.[2]

> The emotional impact on music, particularly Bollywood music, is closely linked to its use of songs and background music, which can evoke cultural memories, associations, and connotations through their musical style. While lyrics can add to the meaning of a song, the implicitness of music often creates mood and sentiment. Musical meaning is created through various musical systems such as tempo, rhythm, pitch, and volume, while specific musical instruments can be associated with emotions within certain cultural contexts.[3]

Aama (1965), music was composed by V. Balsara, an Indian music composer.[4] Similarly, the popular Indian music director Jaidev[5] composed the music for the Nepali film *Maitighar* (1966). Both films showcase a pervasive influence of Bollywood music in their background scores and songs. The music serves to evoke the emotions of the protagonists and contextualize the situations they encounter throughout the films. It can be argued that the films are imbued with the background music, using it to advance the narrative and provide an understanding of the characters and their experiences. This becomes a concrete format of filmmaking for mainstream Nepali films till the present.

> Bollywood music was born in 1931 with the advent of India's first sound motion film, Alam Ara by Ardeshir Irani, which featured 7 songs. It was during this time that the seeds of the new musical genre were sown. Bollywood music is derived from song-and-dance routines in Hindi films. Due to their enduring popular appeal and cultural value, Bollywood songs and dances are a characteristic motif of Hindi cinema. [6]

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[1] "Actor–Singer as the primary model of playback singing continued to be dominant till the early 1940s. It was after this point, however, that the voice of the singer and the actor was split into two different bodies, and singers who were not actors started gaining popularity among music directors. These ghost singers inaugurated a new profession in the Indian film industry: that of the playback singer. By 1950, after the upheavals of Indian independence and partition, this body of new professionals had established themselves within the industry; prominent among them would be singers such as Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhonsle, Mohammad Rafi, and Kishore Kumar, among others." Vebhuti Duggal, '*Bollywood*', The SAGE International Encyclopaedia of Music and Culture, (2019) https://sk.sagepub.com/Reference/the-sage-international-encyclopedia-of-music-and-culture/i4798.xml

[2] Prem Dhwaj Pradhan, C.P Mohani (who was also the leading actor in the film), and Aruna Lama.
Laxmi Nath Sharma, *Filmmaking: Principal, Style, and Elements,* Lalitpur, 1981, p.241

[3] Rachel Dwyer, *Bollywood India Hindi Cinema as a Guide to Contemporary India,*London , Reaktion Books, 2014, p.153

[4] He had a remarkable career, having composed music for 32 Bengali and 12 Hindi films, and over 200 albums.
BollywooDirect, 'Respectful Tribute to the Memory of V.Balsara' (2018) https://bollywoodirect.medium.com/respectful-tribute-to-the-memory-of-v-balsara-55ff303a7658

[5] He assisted the veteran music director S.D. Burman in the 1950s. Manohar Bhatia 'Outstanding Music Director Jaidev'(2020) https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/manufocus/outstanding-music-director-jaidev-a-mine-of-talent-that-remained-underexploited-10855/

[6] Arundhati Swaminathan, 'The History and Evolution of Bollywood Music', Spice Blog (2022) https://splice.com/blog/history-bollywood-music/

Maitighar (1966) features a total of 15 Nepali Original Sound tracks.[1] It includes patriotic and devotional songs[2], traditional Nepali dance songs like '*Kalakurtai Le'* (*With a Black Suit*) composed with traditional Nepali musical instruments and sung by both Nepali artists (Aruna Lama and C.P Mainali), and the title song '*Basanta Nai Basna Khojcha Yaha'* (*Spring Wants to Stay*). Additionally, the song '*Ma Pyaar Bechidinchu*' (*I will sell love)* can be discussed as to be an *item song[3]* of the film. This will be elaborated more in the chapter later. Despite the popularity of the film *Maitighar*'s music and dance sequences among Nepali audiences, the film itself did not do well commercially. Laxmi Nath Sharma notes that the film was *melodramatic* for Nepali audiences and had a storyline that was simply a copy of an unsuccessful Hindi film.[4]

> Hindi films fulfill all the requirements of melodrama as they foreground emotions over all other issues, as characters are placed in situations where extreme emotions are called for, facing issues of desire and romance, the family, suffering, and implausible plot twists of coincidence, chance, and fate. [5]

According to the author Jenefer Hardy, Bollywood represents a variation of the well-known style of melodrama. While some experts may use the term melodrama to refer to a particular category of films, the author argues that it more accurately describes a way of presenting stories. *The Melodramatic Imagination* by Peter Brooks, which examines the literature of the 19th century, shares many similarities with the style of Bollywood cinema. Peter Brooks' work focuses on melodrama as a method of creating and expressing ideas, as a fictional system that helps us make sense of our experiences. Similarly, Bollywood attempts to make sense of human experiences by creating an exaggerated or melodramatic reality.[6]

Maitighar (*Maiti* means maternal and *ghar* means home) is a film about a woman named Maya. The film portrays her in three phases of life; an old lady in jail telling her story in a flashback to the psychologist, a young girl who falls in love and gets married, and motherhood. Sentenced to 12 years in prison, she chooses to stay despite being given the opportunity to leave. A psychologist is brought in to uncover the reason behind her decision, and Maya begins to share her story.

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[1] Maitighar Original Motion Picture Soundtrack https://open.spotify.com/album/0wR6EbiRYWo8dfiRb0XTrJ

[2] The use of patriotic and devotional soundtrack fades by the early of 1980s.

[3] In 1958, Helen Jairag Richardson, a renowned Bollywood actress known as "Helen," introduced the concept of "item songs." These songs, characterized by highly choreographed and provocative performances set to catchy tunes, are not directly related to the film's storyline. Instead, they serve as a marketing tool to captivate audiences. Since Helen's debut, thousands of "item songs" have been produced and utilized in Bollywood films. Jaskiran Mankoo 'Bolly 'item numbers' are worth making a song and dance about' The National News (2012) https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts/bolly-item-numbers-are-worth-making-a-song-and-dance-about-1.607553

[4] Laxmi Nath Sharma, *Filmmaking: Principal, Style, and Elements,* Lalitpur, 1981, p.241

[5] Rachel Dwyer, *Bollywood India Hindi Cinema as a Guide to Contemporary India*, London, Reaktion Books,2014, p.153

[6] Jennifer Hardy, *Bollywood Style: The Melodramatic Lens*, Brigham Young University, 2014, p.12

The opening scene (0:20-4:10) The film begins with a short clip of a map of Nepal, and with the sunrise the opening song called *Jun Mato Ma* (*Blessed to be born…*) sung by Indian playback singer Lata Mangeshkar, begins followed by glimpses of beautiful scenarios of Kathmandu Valley and Pokhara, prominent places like Durbar Squares (Former Royal Palaces), biggest and famous Hindu temple Pashupatinath, Swayambhunath (Boudha Stupa). After the title of the film appears, the first credit is 'Mala Sinha, the main actress' followed by the other credits. Mala Sinha[1] plays the main character called Maya.

Melodramatic Elements: The film has a narrative structure of melodramatic elements, including exaggerated plotlines, heightened emotions, dramatic musical sequences, and acting styles. There are three different scenes from the film that has been extracted to analyze the acting styles and its background music and songs as melodramatic elements.
Scene 1: '*Look at the earth trembling' (43:44-44:59). The second extract is a song sequence of Maya deciding to leave her in-law's house, sad and melancholic background music plays as she stands lingering in front of the door (fig.1). As she exits, the music slowly fades in, and suddenly dramatic piece, in the form of the song '*Hera Dharti*' (*Look at the earth trembling*), starts playing.

Lyrics say,
" *Look at the earth trembling, While a flame gets smothered in the heart. The moon quivers and burns. Fearing the stars, It's not a victory, But defeat that actually greets life, She walks not with flowers on her side But spreading pearls in her tears*"

In subsequent shots, in (fig. 2-3), the camera is already tilted down at the ground with Maya stepping out of the house, the song begins '*Look at the earth trembling*' and eventually tilts up to show Maya looking determined (*While a flame gets smothered in the heart*), having closed the door behind her. The moment is heightened by Maya's hesitance to leave (*The moon quivers and burns*), as she touches the frame of the door in (fig.4) then in (fig.5), she takes some time before she leaves by standing and looking up at the house (*Fearing the stars*). In (fig.6), the camera sitting on the roof of the house captures her before finally departing (*It's not victory, but defeat that actually greets life*). Then, she finally leaves. The song continues (*She walks not with flowers on the side*), and the camera stays parallel to her, following her rhythm as she walks forward with the shadows[2] of leaves falling on and off her (fig. 7-9) and the song continues (*But spreading pearls in her tears*). The song, sung by Prabodh Chandra Dey

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[1] Mala Sinha was one of the most popular and highest-paid Bollywood actresses during the mid of 1950s and the early 1970s. Mala Sinha 'Biblography' Retrieved from https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0802366/
[2] Visual metaphor: Shadows of leaves on and off interpretated as uncertainty of what falls ahead, dark or bright future.

(Manna), adds to the scene's significance, given his success in producing hit Bollywood songs over several decades.[1]

fig.1   fig.2   fig. 3

fig. 4   fig.5   fig. 6

fig. 7   fig.8   fig.9
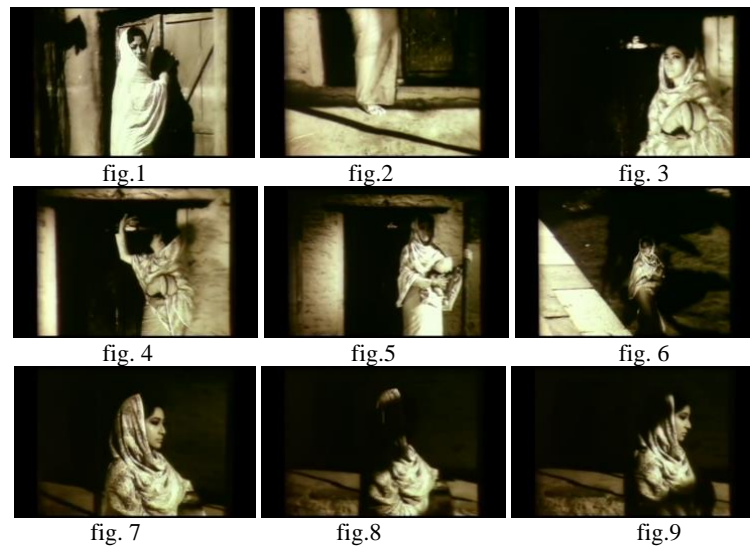
Melodramas emphasize expressive gestures and visual iconography, rather than dialogues or naturalism. In many cases, these movies have tragic outcomes. And they make liberal use of music and background score, in a very telling manner. The music will make sure the audience knows when it's a happy scene, or when it's a sad scene. Melodramas force these characters to struggle through some difficult situations and persevere with endurance and dignity and then it might just end with a sacrifice or death. [2]

In the entire film, Mala Sinha the actress, employs a range of acting techniques[3] with facial expressions, particularly with voice techniques like vocal pitch (high-pitched voices to convey heightened emotions, such as fear, panic, or hysteria), volume, pause (silence between words or phrases to create a sense of drama, tension, or anticipation, pronunciation (emphasize certain words or syllables to convey emotion), and tempo (speed up or slow down their speech to create a sense of urgency or tension, or to convey a character's state of mind).

Scene 2. (1:06:01-1:08:00) When Gofle, the man who works for Phoolmaya, proposes to her to dance and sing and earns money if she is not willing to prostitute. Maya responds with a scream, "*No!!! It's not possible!!!*" There is the use of volume and tempo to convey her dilemma and her vulnerability and vocal pitch to convey heightened emotions, her fear. Her facial expression and her body position change to the extreme from (fig.10 to fig.11) expressing her disapproval. Then (fig.12) she tries to escape through the door then Gofle pulls her back

[1] BBC News, 'Manna Dey: Legendary Indian singer dies' (2013) Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-24649143

[2] Vandana Devil 'Let's Talk About – Melodrama' The Red Sparrow (2020) Retrieved from https://theredsparrow.in/features/lets-talk-about-melodrama/

[3] Constantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character,* Routledge Taylor and Francis Group; Reprint edition,1989.

and she takes the support to the wall and expresses her helplessness, bitting finger suggesting her extreme fear (fig.13). The camera stays immobile with a long mid-shot till (fig.12) then cuts to the mid shot (fig.13) and then to a close-up of Maya (fig.14) showing her tears rolling from her eyes.

| fig.10 | fig.11 | fig.12 |

| fig.13 | fig.14 |

Scene 3. (1:49:09-1:50:21) When Maya invites Sauji, her rich customer, to dinner. After eating for a while, Sauji realizes that he has been poisoned and the music in the background becomes tense (fig.15). Then, Sauji walks to the chair and sits. Maya follows him. He screams at Maya and asks what she put in the food. The camera stays at the center, Sauji on the very right of the frame whereas Maya on the left standing against the wooden pillar (fig.16). Maya laughs (fig.17), and points at him, revealing that she poisoned him to stop him from hurting her daughter (fig.18). She tries to stop Sauji from going out (fig.19) but he pushes the door open, screaming for help(fig.20). The door breaks down and he falls to the ground outside the house (fig.21), and other people come in close to Sauji. Maya's expression changes from hysterical laughter to fear and guilt (fig.22).

| fig.15 | fig.16 | fig.17 | fig.18 |

| fig.19 | fig.20 | fig.21 | fig.22 |
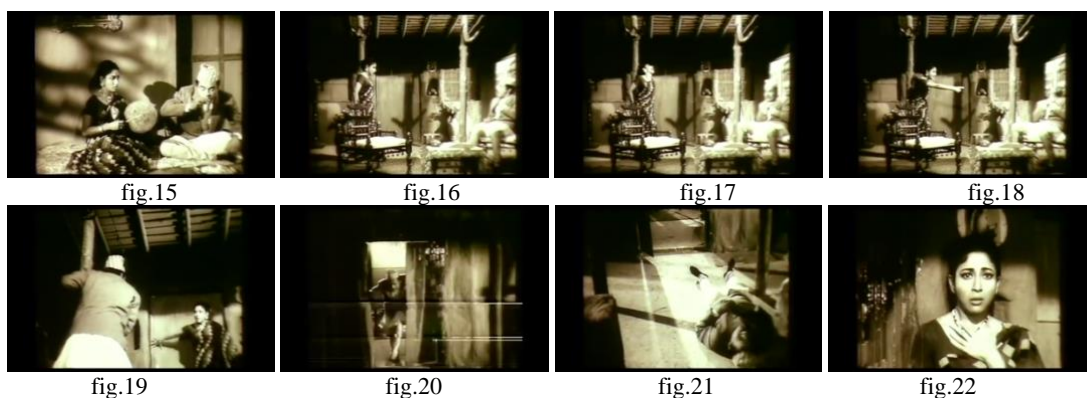
> Emotions are expressed externally and without restraint. The acting style of the Bollywood film embodies this idea – if the character is feeling an emotion, the acting style must manifest that emotion physically and in grandiose gestures.[1]

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[1] Jennifer Hardy, *Bollywood Style: The Melodramatic Lens*, Brigham Young University, 2014, p.24

Exploring Gender, Sacrifice, and Social Issues in Maitighar (1966)

In the films from the Golden Era the 1950s and 1960s in Hindi Cinema, important social issues faced by women were depicted. However, female characters were often limited to portraying a woman as *abla naari*, either playing the villainous vamps or portraying the perfect, flawless, greatest woman to walk this earth.[1] That being the case, the woman represented in the film as Maya the protagonist in *Matighar* (1966) is a helpless and sympathetic woman who saves her honor, makes sacrifices, and is considered as a great woman.

> "Victimhood is celebrated a lot when it comes to the roles of women in films in India. We have grown up seeing that it always has to be the *abla naari* or the other extreme of being the vamp." [2]

Almost a decade earlier *Aama* (Mother, 1965) and *Maitighar* (1966), a great mother/woman were portrayed in the Hindi Cinema in 1957 in a film called *Mother India* (1957) directed by Mehboob Khan. Sampada Sharma highlights how *Mother India* associates womanhood with sacrifices, and the film's enduring significance in Indian cinema.[3] The film is a three-hour melodrama that tells the story of a peasant woman named *Radha*, played by Nargis (Bollywood actress). Through Radha's struggles and triumphs, the film explores themes of family, sacrifice, and the changing face of rural India in the **wake of Independence*[4]. Mother India also refers to the motherland India (*Bharat Mata)

> "The locus classicus in modern Indian films for "woman" as fierce goddess is the iconic Mother India (1957, dir. Mehboob Khan), in which the character Rādhā, overcoming the adversity of flood, poverty, abandonment by her injured husband, and constant financial and attempted sexual exploitation by the village moneylender, symbolizes India as an emerging nation. The film opens with her being honored as the "mother of the village" and asked to bless the new irrigation system. Her life story unfolds as a flashback, culminating in her killing her favorite son, Birju, as he is about to dishonor the moneylender's daughter. This sacrifice, terrible as it is, is necessary to uphold dharma and requires Rādhā to assume the form of the goddess Durgā."[5]

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[1] *abla naari* which translates *abla* as helpless and *naari* as a woman in both Hindi and Nepali language.

[2] 'Meghna Das Chowdhury, 'The journey of Bollywood heroines from 'Abla' to 'Sabla Nari' Marverick Times (2019) https://mavericktimes.in/news/entertainment-news/the-journey-of-bollywood-heroines-from-abla-to-sabla-nari/6365/

[3] Sampada Sharma, 'Mother India: Where being a woman is equated with sacrifices' The Indian Express (2021) https://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/bollywood-rewind-mother-india-nargis-mehboob-khan-7462932/

*Wake of independence: In August 1947, when, after three hundred years in India, the British finally left, the subcontinent was partitioned into two independent nation-states: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. William Dalrymple 'The Great Divide: The violent legacy of Indian Partition' The New Yorker (2015) https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple

*Bharat Mata translates as Bharat means India and Mata means Mother in Hindi language.

[4] Dave Kehr, Film in Review: 'Mother India, The New York Times (2002) Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/23/movies/film-in-review-mother-india.html

[5] Ellen Goldberg, Aditi Sen, Brian Collins, *Bollywood Horrors Religion, Violence and Cinematic Fears in India*, Bloomsbury Academic,2020, p.74

The stereotypical portrayal of women in Bollywood movies is a result of historical and socio-cultural factors that have influenced the growth of women's roles in Indian cinema. Women have been portrayed as secondary characters in most commercial films even today. In the past, women were stigmatized from acting in films, so when they started acting, the directors had to comply with social norms in the portrayal of women. Women mostly played the roles of a daughter, a great wife, and a great mother, which were inspired by the ancient Hindu code of conduct called "Manusmriti."[1]

A. Mohan: Maya's husband, 'Romantic Hero'

The flashback begins with the title song '*Basanta nai basna*' (*Spring Wants to Stay*) where Maya sings and dances with her friends and Mohan plays the flute. As soon as the song is over, Mohan who has a romantic and charming personality comes to talk to Maya. They fall in love and get married.

During the 1950s and 1960s, love stories in Hindi cinema were often secondary to the main plots, which primarily revolved around drama and encompassed significant social commentary. Films like *Awaara* (1951), *Bandini* (1963), *Sujata* (1959), *Shree 420* (1955), *Pyaasa* (1957), *Daag* (1952), *Baazi* (1951), *Taxi Driver* (1954), *Kala Bazaar* (1960), *Kala Pani* (1958), and *Guide* (1965) were prominent examples that delved into social themes while incorporating love stories as a backdrop. [2] Numerous romantic couples captivated audiences during this period.[3] Romance in the choreography of romantic songs in Bollywood films added grace, emotions, and visual appeal, elevating the romantic narratives with elegant dance steps, tender gestures, and captivating settings.

In *Maitighar* (1966), the romantic song '*Na maana laaja*' (*Don't feel shy*) transitions from their wedding night demonstrating their romantic relationship and their love for each other. This song is filmed and choreographed in the mids of nature; mountains, hills, and lakes.

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[1] Women were expected to be subordinate to their fathers before marriage, their husband after marriage, and their son after becoming a widow. The core focus in many mainstream Bollywood films revolved around the concepts of family, marriage, and the expectations placed on individuals to embody the ideal roles of a wife, mother, and daughter while adhering to traditional family values. This theme greatly resonated with the prevailing patriarchal social system. Srijita Sarkar, An Analysis of Hindi Women-centric Films in India, University of Louisville, 2012, pp.10-11.

[2] Rajesh Naidu, 'How the concept of love stories has evolved over the years.' Times of India (2017) http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/56184412.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

[3] Such as Raj Kapoor and Nargis, Dilip Kumar and Vaijayantimala, Rajender Kumar and Sadhna, and Guru Dutt, and Wahida Rehman, among others. Entertainment, 'Romantic Bollywood Pairs of 1950s and 1960s' (2023) https://entertainment.expertscolumn.com/romantic-bollywood-pairs-of-1950s-and-1960s#:~:text=In%20the%201950s%20and%201960s,Rehman%20to%20mention%20a%20few

Since the early 1980s, Nepali cinema has seen a tremendous portrayal of true love, exemplified by couples like Maya and Mohan. Romantic stories and couples symbolizing *true love* have garnered immense popularity and mostly, the portrayal of the *hero* as a romantic, flawless, charming young man like Mohan. Mohan belongs to a high-class family.

B. Incorporating Traditional Nepali Song: Mohan leaves for further studies in England for two years after being married for a year and having a son named Rate. Upon his return, a celebration is held, inviting all the villagers. The gathering and occasion are enriched by the enchanting melodies of the traditional Nepali song '*Kalakurtai ma'* ('*In a black suit'*), performed by renowned Nepali artists Aruna Lama and C.P Lohani (also the actor in the film). This folk song has deep roots in the western hilly region of Nepal, capturing the essence of typical Nepali folk lyrics and melodies.

According to Jayson Beaster-Jones, that Indian music directors adopt a syncretic approach, skillfully blending melodies, styles, instruments, rhythms, and textures to create songs. These songs are not only tailored to suit the narratives of films but also gain popularity beyond the movie context. They draw inspiration from a wide range of Indian and non-Indian musical traditions, resulting in a cosmopolitan genre deeply rooted in the **filmi* aesthetic. Within these songs, there is an overlap of popular, classical, folk, and devotional music styles. Indian songs reflect the prevailing values of their time, serving as both nostalgic memories of the past and representations that future generations can connect with.[1]

Early Nepali cinema followed suit, collaborating with Indian musicians and composers to produce filmi songs that encompassed a diverse musical landscape. Similarly, Nepali songs also hold cultural significance, mirroring the values of the time and serving as nostalgic reminders of the past, carrying the essence of tradition for future generations to embrace. This practice of incorporating traditional *filmi* songs endures in modern Nepali cinema.

C. Maya's mother-in-law: Maya shares with psychologist her mother-in-law's discontent with her marriage. After Mohan's death, her mother-in-law mourns, blaming Maya for bringing misfortune. Maya's treatment worsens, labeled as an ill-omen and a witch[2] by

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[1] Jayson Beaster-Jones, *Bollywood Sounds: The Cosmopolitan Mediations of Hindi Film Song,* Oxford University Press, 2011, pp.8-9 *According to the Collins Dictionary, this word was first recorded in the period 1985–90. "Filmi" in British English (adj) means relating to the Indian film industry or Indian films or containing the high drama typical of Indian films. 'Filmi'in American English (Noun) means a style of Indian popular vocal music accompanied by sitar and tabla and used in Indian films. https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/filmi

[2] This sometimes is extreme in villages, as a result of their disadvantaged position, widows are exceptionally susceptible to exploitation and manipulation by society, which may manifest in various forms, including accusations of witchcraft which

villagers, especially women. Derogatory remarks persist during daily tasks like water-fetching and even within her room, as disrespectful conversations circulate. The relentless verbal abuse leaves Maya feeling trapped, helpless, and drained, prompting her to leave both the house and the village.

Bollywood's on-screen mothers-in-law, popular since the mid-1930s, are typically portrayed as treacherous and wicked, roles known as "vamps," outsmart the family, especially the good daughters-in-law.[1] However, in Nepali cinema, this trend began much later, specifically in the late 1980s, and few compared to Bollywood.

D. The Chase: Highlighting Sexual Harassment (49:56-50:35)

The psychologist confirms with Maya that she had arrived somewhere in Nepalgunj (Far-Western, Nepal) after she left her house and the village. Maya continues her story and explains that after a long walk, she rests under a tree. Two men appear, one of them asks her whereabouts and she doesn't say anything. They understand that she is alone so one of them tries to hold her hand and pull her close (fig.37) then Maya slaps him and he falls over. While he tries to stand up, Maya runs away from there and both men chase her (fig.38).

The portrayal of sexual harassment is choreographed in a light action with a little bit of slapstick of the men falling, jumping, and chasing Maya through the hill to the house. This type of harassment is further intensified in Nepali films in the 1980s, as aggressive choreography depicts a villain or group of men attacking women, specifically the heroine characters who are left helpless to be saved by their heroes. Further exploration of this topic will be covered in the chapter on Nepali Cinema in the 1980s.

E. Portrayal of Prostitution and Social Issues in Nepal: Maya's feeling of helplessness and anxiety subsides when she seeks refuge in a house and encounters a woman named Phoolmaya. Maya addresses her as "*aama*" (mother) as she not only saves her life from the men but also provides her with shelter and for treating her well. A few days later, Phoolmaya explains that she wants Maya to work as a prostitute, which Maya strongly opposes so she starves herself for several days. Phoolmaya threatens Maya to lock her up with a thug named Kale Sarki if Maya doesn't agree to work for her. Then she locks the door and leaves with the

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are practiced till today. Diana Fernandez, Kirti Thapa 'Legislating Against Witchcraft Accusations in Nepal' The Asia Foundation (2012) https://asiafoundation.org/2012/08/08/legislating-against-witchcraft-accusations-in-nepal/

[1] 'Bollywood Mints 12 Most Wicked Mothers-In-Law Of Bollywood' (2022) https://www.bollymints.com/articles/12-most-wicked-mothers-in-law-of-bollywood-whom-we-loved-to-hate

men. The film takes an 'Interval[1],' leaving the audience in anticipation of Maya's decision and eager to see where the story will unfold next.

> Prostitution on celluloid, mainly in Indian popular cinema, occupies one point of continuum of representations of women, a continuum along which are also situated some commonly available and highly socially visible representations such as in advertisements. All films with prostitutes as principal or important characters are mainly motivated by prospects of raising the film's commercial viability.[2]

It is set in the mid-1960s and provides a glimpse into the issue of prostitution in Nepal, albeit in a light manner. It touches upon the socio-political and socio-economic aspects of that period. The story revolves around Maya, who leaves her home and arrives in Nepalgunj. The film addresses the theme of prostitution and highlights Maya's identity as a Badi[3] woman, as mentioned by Sauji, Maya's rich customer.

Shiva Hari Gyawali, campaigner for social justice and Human Rights, especially for the rights of Dalits and marginalized communities, writes that during the 1960s, numerous Badi families migrated from rural districts in Mid- and Far-West Nepal, specifically to Nepalgunj.[4]

The film *Maitighar* (Maternal Home, 1966), explores the bitter truth of patriarchal society. The title refers to the secondary home of a married woman, while her in-laws' or husband's home becomes her primary residence. Maya, the educated protagonist, faces a challenging situation as her parents are deceased. The pursuit of two men symbolizes the societal judgment and objectification faced by women like Maya once they lose the protection of the husband or father. The film highlights the dangers and limited options women encounter, sometimes leading them to be exploited.

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[1] Similar to Hindi films, Nepali films follow the same structure where interval takes place and continues to this day. The theory behind the interval in Indian movies: Firstly, it allows the audience to take a breather due to the longer duration of these films compared to Hollywood films. It also presents a business opportunity for vendors selling expensive snacks and drinks. While the need for an interval was originally due to changing film reels, it still exists today, even though most films are screened digitally. This is because Hindi films follow a unique structure where the interval acts as a cliffhanger, keeping the audience engaged. In contrast, Hollywood films adhere to a three-act structure without a mid-point break. Sampada Sharma, 'Intervals in Indian Movies Are Not Just for Eating Popcorn. There's A Theory Behind It' ScoopWhoop, (2016) https://www.scoopwhoop.com/entertainment/why-do-indian-movies-have-intervals-theory/

[2] Shoma A. Chatterji, *Subject Cinema, Object Woman A Study of the Portrayal of Women in Indian Cinema*, Parumita Publications, 1998, p.162

[3] 'The historical roots of prostitution in Nepal are deeply connected to the prevailing Hindu value system, which reinforces traditional patriarchal norms. Prostitution primarily involves the Badi and Deuki castes, who occupy the lowest positions in the caste hierarchy (untouchables). Children from the Badi caste are compelled by their parents to engage in prostitution from a young age to generate income. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Badi women and girls were recruited as entertainers and providers of sexual services to the ruling Rana dynasty, religious leaders, and landlords. The decline in demand for entertainment led to an increase in the Badi prostitution market after the downfall of the Rana dynasty in the 1950s. Dr Shovita Dhakal Adhikari 'Beyond dichotomies: Exploring responses to tackling the sex industry in Nepal' ,2019, p.5

[4] By 1983, about 40 Badi families had settled down and acquired land for permanent residences. However, tensions emerged between the local high-caste non-Dalit community and the Badi community due to the Badi community's Dalit status and the involvement of certain Badi women in forced prostitution. Shiva Hari Gyawali 'An Unknown Nonviolent Resistance of the Badi People', Center for Social Change (2021) https://socialchange.org.np/an-unknown-nonviolent-resistance-of-the-badi-people/

F. The Nightmare, Attempted rape (1:03:18- 1:04:44)

Maya is tormented by a nightmare induced by Phoolmaya's threat, in which she imagines Kale Sarki, a formidable and dominant figure, depicted as a terrifying presence with the potential to harm her. Maya sits against the wall and falls asleep (fig. 23), transitions with a fade to black, leading to the next shot (fig.24), Kale Sarki standing in the room with a startling sound effect of a gong that continues to a scary piece of music as Kale Sarki menacingly advances with evil laughter, the shadow cast by the blinds upon his face intensifies, creating a haunting ambiance. In (fig.25) he stands next to Maya with his hand on his waist, Maya jolts in fear and slowly stands up. He continues to laugh and walks towards her as she steps back slowly. Then, he reaches out to grab her, but she manages to evade his grasp screaming '*No!*' (fig.26). Throughout this sequence, the camera tracks Kale Sarki since his initial appearance in the room in mid-shot in parallel, synchronizing with his movements as he approaches Maya. As Maya moves to the opposite side of the room, the camera tracks backward, maintaining a low-angle perspective alongside her mid-shot (fig. 27). It continues tracking her backward, low-angle camera pointing at Kale Sarki in mid-close-up, he once again attempts to grab her (fig.28). Maya tries to escape again (fig.29). She turns around towards the camera covering the screen black (fig.30) to Kale Sarki standing smiling maliciously (fig.31). Then again when she finds another side of the room, Kale Sarki corners her (fig.32) and this time, he rapidly approaches her, and she cannot escape (fig.32). The camera again stays in a low angle but not fixed. He holds her by her arms and Maya keeps screaming ''*No!No!No!*' struggling to fight against Kale Sarke (fig. 33 and fig.34) . She then screams very loudly (fig. 35) that the scream cuts to the shot of Maya screaming and waking up from her nightmare (fig. 36).

fig. 23	fig.24	fig. 25	fig.26
fig. 27	fig.28	fig. 29	fig.30
fig. 31	fig.32	fig.33	fig.34

| fig. 35 | fig. 36 | fig.37 | fig.38 |

According to Laura Mulvey, mainstream cinema often operates under a *male gaze*, which assumes a male viewer and positions women as objects of visual pleasure for male spectators. This is reinforced through filming techniques such as camera angles, framing, and cinematography. Mulvey argues that the male gaze contributes to the normalization of sexual violence, including rape, in film. To challenge this, she calls for diverse representations of women and the conscious use of filming techniques that empower and avoid objectification, promoting narratives that depict women as complex and empowered individuals. [1]

Maya's portrayal as a vulnerable and fearful character contrasted with Kale Sarki's dominant presence. The high camera angles and framing emphasize Maya's vulnerability and subordinate position, while Kale Sarki is presented with power and control. The inclusion of suspense and fear in the scene aims to intensify viewer engagement and, regrettably, reinforces the male gaze.

In the mid of 1980s, Nepali Cinema witnessed a notable increase in the depiction of attempted rape, rape, harassment, and sexual violence. This rise can be attributed to the film industry's growing commercialization and its aim to appeal to a larger audience through visual representations of women and it continues till the present.

> With the growing commercialization of the film industry, there is a growing trend toward the visual representation of women to enhance the mass appeal of films. The body of a woman is constructed on the screen from the eyes of the male "gaze" that objectifies her as a commodity. On the one hand, the depiction of violence against women has moved away from psychological and subtle forms manifest in denial and negation of women's individuality and identity in the earlier Hindi films to the use of direct physical force. Illustrating female victimization through rape or attempted rape scenes has become a new form of exploitation of the female body. [2]

G. *'I will sell love'* an *item* song

In the film, Maya reaches a decision to work as an entertainer, singing and dancing for wealthy clients of Phoolmaya. '*Ma Pyaar Bechidinchu*' (*I will sell love)* is considered an item song due to its characteristics[3] like the inclusion of glamour and sensuality on the screen. The

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[1] Laura Mulvey 'Visual Pleasure Theory', *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP,1999 pp.802-816

[2] Nelly P. Stromquist, *Women in the third world an encyclopedia of contemporary issues,Routledge,* New York, 2013 p.128

[3] The main characteristics of an item number: often have an audience within the film – the nightclub audience, the men in a brothel, the audience in an auditorium, a wedding party; is framed on some sort of stage; sets up the characters and relationships between various protagonists; uses several set and costume changes; is made up of various styles and genres,

song features catchy beats, lively choreography, and provocative lyrics, performed by Indian playback singer Asha Bhonsle, who also sings the film's title song, '*Basanta nai Basna khojcha*' (*Spring wants to stay*).

> Within the realm of Indian Cinema, the term "item song" colloquially refers to a composition performed by a captivating and vivacious woman, accompanied by infectious melodies and captivating refrains. Adorned in scant attire, she captivates a multitude of admirers while teasingly reveling in their attention. Unfortunately, these songs frequently bear no relevance to the narrative and serve primarily as a means to draw large crowds to cinema halls. The term "item" in this context reduces women to the status of mere objects.[1]

The lyrics[2] of the song '*Ma Pyaar Bechidinchu*' (*I will sell love*)
I will sell love, sell the springtide. Who dare purchase.
I will sell you the tune of my heart, *I will sell love, sell the springtide.*
My chest is ablaze and it ignites me
By clanging in the temple, clanging in the temple

The lyrics of the song express the commodification of love and sensuality, as the protagonist presents herself as a product to be purchased, catering to the male gaze. The reference to sin and the temple adds complexity by intertwining spirituality with objectification. The dance choreography further enhances the portrayal of sensuality and objectification through visual techniques. The framing often focuses on the female body as an object of desire, utilizing techniques like low angles and tight compositions. These visual elements, along with the lyrics, reinforce the commodification of love and cater to the male gaze. The song is choreographed in an open space surrounded by a group of men playing instruments, while spectators smoke and enjoy the music as they watch Maya dance (fig.39, fig.40, fig.41). There are close-up shots that highlight Maya's hand gesture, her leg, and her face (fig.42, fig.43, fig.44). The camera tracks back and forth to accentuate Maya's body movements, also when she rolls and crawls on the floor near the male audience (fig.45, fig.46). In (fig.47), the camera stands in a corner from where it captures Maya's entire body as she dances, stretching her arm in the air and caressing her waist, surrounded by her male spectators.

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which can be classical Indian dance, bhangra, folk dances, salsa, belly dancing, hip-hop and more; has hook steps that are repeated in social dance situations like clubs and weddings; is the highlight of the film, and played in television countdowns several times a day before and after the film release; and conveys the relationship of the main dancing woman with her own sexuality, and that of the male protagonist, the audience in the film, and the film-going audience. Vikrant K., Amit S., Parichay P., *Salaam Bollywood: Representations and Interpretations,* Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2016, *p.221*

[1] Mirza Shaina Beg, 'Beyond Glamour: Unveiling The Objectification Of Women In Item Songs' YKA (2023) https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2023/05/beyond-glamour-unveiling-the-objectification-of-women-in-item-songs/

[2] The Nepali song creatively incorporates a few Hindi words into its lyrics, such as '*Bahar*' (Spring-tide), '*Jhankar*' (Chime), '*Dil*' (Heart), and '*Pyaar*' (Love). This intentional usage highlights the close proximity and cultural interconnectedness between India and Nepal, especially in the context of the Maya seeking shelter in Phoolmaya's establishment in Nepalgunj (located in the Far-Western region of Nepal). The inclusion of these Hindi words serves a commercial purpose, as they create catchy phrases that resonate with the music and add to the appeal of the song. The similarities in grammar structures, vocabulary, and pronunciation between Nepali and Hindi also contribute to the ease with which speakers of one language can understand and communicate in the other. This deliberate incorporation of Hindi words in Nepali film songs has had a significant impact over the years.

The camera also adopts a high-angle perspective, looking down on Maya as she throws herself onto the floor (fig.48, fig.49 and fig.50).

| fig. 39 | fig. 40 | fig. 41 | fig. 42 |

| fig. 43 | fig. 44 | fig. 45 | fig. 46 |

| fig. 47 | fig. 48 | fig. 49 | fig. 50 |

This song, '*Ma Pyaar Bechidinchu*' (*I will sell love*) is the first item song featured in Nepali cinema in 1966, it wasn't until the mid-1980s that the trend truly emerged opening possibilities for more songs of this nature in the coming years, while drawing inspiration from Bollywood's item song culture. The popularity of item songs, which exude glamour and possess the ability to captivate audiences, has played a crucial role. As a result, Nepali item songs have gradually incorporated a multitude of similarities in terms of choreography, cinematography, lyrics, costumes, and even the choice of singers. With the rise of commercialization in the Bollywood industry, the trend of item songs in Nepali cinema has experienced substantial growth in each passing decade.

H. Maya: A Portrait of Sacrifice and Motherhood

Soon after the dance sequence; '*Ma Pyaar Bechidinchhu*' (*I will sell love*) which features for 3 minutes 56 seconds, the next scene is where Maya reads the Hindu religious book (Bhagavad Gita) with Gofle and Phoolmaya (fig.51 and fig.52). She recites a verse in Sanskrit from the book and explains in Nepali "*Do your duty without any results or expectations*". With the money earned from dancing and singing, she is able to pay for her son's further studies and also send her daughter to school and later to college in Kathmandu.

| fig.51. | fig.52 | fig.53 | fig.54 |

Maya is shown as an educated woman. She sends her children to school. Years later, Maya's daughter, who studies in college, extends an invitation for Maya to come to Kathmandu and watch a program in which she is participating. The program is graced by a special guest, the renowned Bollywood actor Sunil Dutt (fig.53), who makes a cameo appearance. He wears a *Dhaka topi* (Nepali hat) and addresses the audience in Hindi, congratulating the performers and expressing gratitude towards *[1]Tribhuvan College and the organizers. In a heartwarming gesture, he also speaks a sentence in Nepali, saying, "*Malai Nepal Bahut Manparyo*," which translates to "*I like Nepal very much*." The audience responds with enthusiastic applause (fig.54). This moment highlights the deep affection and admiration the Nepali audience has for Bollywood stars, which has been evident since the late 1970s when Bollywood actors and actresses would visit Kathmandu for film shoots. The presence of these stars brought immense excitement and captivated the hearts of the Nepali people. Along with the admiration, instances have arisen where films featuring certain Bollywood actors have been prohibited due to comments that have caused offense to the Nepali sentiments. This will be later discussed in the chapter on the 2000s.

In *Mother India* (1957), Rādhā sacrifices her favorite son, Birju, to protect the moneylender's daughter's honor, embodying the fierce goddess Durgā.[2] Similarly, In Maitighar (1966) Maya poisons Sauji as a sacrifice to safeguard her daughter's honor.

As the story ends (flashback), Maya passes away in prison. Her children, Raate and Rekha, visit her in jail after her death. Raate asks the psychologist about the circumstances of her death and is told that she had a heart attack while recounting her tragic life story. The psychologist offers some words of comfort, saying, "*You are fortunate to have had a great mother like her.*"

I. **The Beginning of Stereotypical Portrayal of Women in Nepali Cinema: The Evolution and Limitations of Women's Roles**

Maitighar (1966) primarily focuses on the portrayal of a helpless and self-sacrificing/great female protagonist. This does evolve in the coming years but 'helpless' and 'great' self-sacrificing women are still portrayed in Nepali cinema. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the women in Nepali Cinema are often stereotypically portrayed, reflecting the prevailing societal norms and patriarchal values. Unfortunately, these portrayals limited the scope of women's

characters to being submissive, and dependent, and primarily focused on their roles as wives, mothers, or love interests. Despite its reliance on melodramatic elements that may have hindered the nuanced exploration of social issues, holds undeniable significance in the context of Nepali cinema. It offers a valuable window into the socio-political and socio-economic landscape of Nepal during that period. Although initially met with mixed reception and criticism for its resemblances to Bollywood films, *Maitighar* played a pivotal role as a catalyst for the subsequent growth and evolution of Nepali cinema.

The film showcases Bollywood-inspired elements that persist in contemporary Nepali cinema. These include melodramatic acting with exaggerated expressions, impactful sound effects, and background scores to enhance emotions. Background songs to support the plot's sentiments including "item songs". Symbolism and metaphors deepen themes, while portrayals of women as "helpless," "sacrificing," and instances of violence endure. Notable star cameos and commercial intermissions remain, reflecting a consistent influence from Bollywood in present-day Nepali films.

Nepal's First Film Production Society begins in the 1970s.

The Film Act passed in Nepal in 1964 provided guidelines for film production, established a board of censors, and required filmmakers to obtain a license to produce films. It was amended in 1969 to include more detailed regulations, such as registration requirements for film companies, rules for film distribution and exhibition.[1]

In 1971, Nepal established its first film production society, the Royal Nepal Film Corporation. This was an essential milestone for Nepali cinema, with Yadav Kharel as the first organizer. However, it wasn't until the end of 1992 that the board completed the construction of shooting studios, recording studios, editing suites, projection rooms, film archives, and administrative departments.[2]

In 1972, Nepal experienced a significant change in its political leadership when King Mahendra, who had been ruling the country since 1955, passed away. He was succeeded by his son, King Birendra, who became the tenth monarch of the Shah dynasty.[3]

In 1973, Prakash Thapa made his directorial debut with the film *Mann Ko Bandh* (*Dilemma of Heart*), which was produced by the Royal Nepal Film Corporation. Baikuntha Man Maskey became the first Nepali cinematographer, while Manju Kumar Shrestha became

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[1] Film Development Board, *Historical Timeline of Nepali Cinema* (2023) https://www.film.gov.np/
[2] Laxmi Nath Sharma, *Filmmaking: Principal, Style, and Elements,* Lalitpur, 1981, p.241
[3] John Whelpton, '*Key events*', *History of Nepal*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.xiii

the first still photographer in Nepali films. Uttam Nepal played a crucial role as the first art director, constructing a set for indoor shooting. [1]

Prakash Thapa's second film was *Sindoor* (*Vermillion*, 1979) and Nepal's second color film. It was a huge success which made lots of profit for the Film Production Society. It was also a great success for early Nepali Cinema production establishing Prakash Thapa as a successful filmmaker. The film was about a widow's marriage. Even today, society still has not entirely accepted widow marriage. It was very courageous back then that the film spoke for the marriage of a widow and attacked the conservative traditional ideas of the society.[2]

In 1977, *Paral ko Aag* (*Fire in the Hay*) was directed by Pratap Subba and shot in Darjeeling, India's hills. It is the first film adaptation of the Nepali story with the same title written by a Nepali writer Gopal Prasad Rimal with the screenplay written by the director. The film is about a poor couple named Gounthali and Chame in a simple and compatible style with the Nepalese social environment. It is considered a classic for its originality and authenticity. The film was produced by Devkota Films (Darleejing private company) and the music was composed by Shanti Thatal, who became the first female composer for Nepali movies.[3]

[1] Film Development Board, op. cit.
[2] Laxmi Nath Sharma, *Idem.,* pp.245-246
[3] *Idem.,* pp.94-99

CHAPTER TWO: THE RISE OF COMMERCIALIZATION: KOLLYWOOD (1980-1990)

In the 1980s, Nepal witnessed a constitutional referendum in which a small majority favored retaining the panchayat system. However, King Birendra allowed non-party direct elections to the national assembly. The Nepali Congress Party initiated a civil disobedience campaign in 1985, advocating for a multi-party system. In 1986, the party boycotted new elections. In 1989, a trade and transit dispute with India led to a border blockade, worsening Nepal's economic situation.[1]

During the early 1980s, the Film Production Society (now known as the Film Development Board) played a crucial role in establishing the film production infrastructure in Nepal, as noted by Laxminath Sharma. The industry witnessed a substantial increase in skilled workers and talented artists entering the field. Private film companies began investing in Nepali films, inspired by the success of the Film Production Society. However, it took around 15 years for them to regain confidence after suffering losses from the release of the film *Maitighar* in 1966. The prevailing societal stigma associated with cinema started to fade, attracting private investors who saw potential in the business. This period marked a significant shift in Nepali society's perception of cinema, leading to its commercialization. Additionally, there was an increase in the production of Nepali films by individuals from Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Sikkim in India. Co-productions with producers from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Japan, Australia, and other countries also contributed to the growth of the Nepali film industry. Notably, film tourism in Nepal made significant progress during this time.[2]

In 1966, Nepali audiences connected with Hindi cinema through the film *Maitighar*, featuring Bollywood actress Mala Sinha. Her marriage to Nepali actor C.P. Lohani strengthened the link. During the 1971 shooting of the Bollywood film *Hare Ram Hare Krishna* in Kathmandu, locals were captivated by actors Dev Anand and Zeenat Aman.[3] Hindi films had already captivated the imagination of Kathmandu residents since the establishment of Janasewa Cinema Hall in 1949, followed by Ranjana Cinema Hall in 1956. Dev Anand's fame, smile, and gestures were well-known. Interviews reveal the locals' familiarity with Dev Anand. Following many other Bollywood films like *Mahaan* (1983) and *Khuda Gawah* (1993) also generated excitement, when Amitabh Bachchan came to Kathmandu for the shooting.[4]

[1] BBC News, '*Nepal Timeline profile*' (2018) retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12499391
[2] Laxmi Nath Sharma, *History of Nepali Cinema*, Kathmandu, 2016, p. 113
[3] BBC News Nepali 'When the whole of Kathmandu came to see Zeenat Aman's 'Dum Maro Dum'' (2022) https://www.bbc.com/nepali/articles/c4ne5d320kyo (Original in Nepali and translated in English)
[4] Prawash Gautam 'A celebration called Hare Rama Hare Krishna' The Kathmandu Post (2019) retrieved from https://tkpo.st/2Y8Pvi7

In the 1980s, Nepal's film industry witnessed the rise of several notable film stars who garnered recognition and popularity. This phenomenon was largely attributed to the success of specific films released during that period.

After the commercial success of the film produced by the Royal Nepal Film Corporation, *Sindoor* (1979) directed by Prakash Thapa with the leading actress Minakshi Anand, he again worked with the actress and made the film *Jeewan Rekha* (*Life and Fate*,1980) with Shiva Shrestha as a debut male lead actor. The film did well and it was the first film to get 50% of the entertainment tax back. In the next film, *Santaan* (*Children*, 1989), two debut actresses Gauri Malla and Karishma Manandhar later become established actresses in Nepali Cinema. Both films were produced by Private companies.[1] Laxmi Nath Sharma writes that Prakash Thapa's achievement encouraged private companies to invest in the film industry, and he is also credited as the first director to bring professionalism to Nepali films. However, it should be noted that he often relied on the same old Hindi film formulas, which influenced subsequent directors to follow suit. [2]

In the film, *Juni* (1982), directed by Sarad Palekar, Bhuwan K.C made his debut as a male lead actor alongside actress Minakshi Anand. The film was a success, establishing Bhuwan K.C as an actor. In his second film *Samjhana* (*Memories*, 1983), directed by Sambhu Pradhan, he was paired with a debut female lead actress, Tripti Nadakar. In 1985, Bhuwan K.C and Tripti Nadakar collaborated with Udit Narayan Jha, who made his debut as a male lead actor in the film *Kusume Rumal* (*Souvenir of Love, a silk handkerchief*, 1985), written and directed by Tulsi Ghimire. Bhuwan K.C and Tripti Nadakar were a popular pair and they appeared together again in the film *Saino* (*Familial Relationships*, 1987), directed by Ugyen Chopel.[3]

Kusume Rumal (1985) tells a romantic love story that resonated deeply with the Nepali audience. The film's songs, especially the title song '*Kusume Rumal',* and '*Suna Bhanana*' (*Listen... Tell Me*), both romantic melodies[4], gained immense popularity among the people.[5]

> Filmi git, songs from the soundtracks, were an important element of popular culture in their own right and were played regularly on cassettes at weddings and other social functions in Nepal as in India, despite purists' objections to the displacement of Nepal's traditional forms of live music-making. While Radio Nepal continued to broadcast a modernized form of Nepalese folk music, it was Hindi songs that were usually requested by listeners to British Forces Broadcasting Service programs for Nepalese soldiers in Britain's Brigade of Gurkhas. The attraction of both

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[1] Film Development Board, 'Historical Timeline of Nepali Cinema' (2023) retrieved from https://film.gov.np/

[2] Prakash Thapa, a Nepali director, and actor gained twenty years of experience in Mumbai's film industry before returning to Kathmandu in 1972.Laxmi Nath Sharma, *History of Nepali Cinema*, Kathmandu, 2016, p. 95

[3] Film Development Board, op. cit.

[4] The incorporation of romantic songs continues to this date.

[5] Laxmi Nath Sharma, op. cit., p. 139

the music and the films themselves were also boosted as Nepalese actresses began to make their mark in the Indian industry. At the end of the 1980s *B. P. Koirala's granddaughter, Manisha Koirala was emerging as a major star on the Bollywood screen. [1]

Kusume Rumal (1985), the music was composed by Ranjit Gazmer who is renowned for his compositions in Nepali films from 1980 to 2000 like *Basuri* (1981), *Samjhana* (1983), *Saino* (1987), *Lahure* (1989), *Chino* (1991), *Darpan Chhaya* (2001), and many others were also highly popular and greatly appreciated by Nepali audiences.[2]

Between the early 1950s and 1990, only a small number of Nepali films, including those made outside Nepal, were produced, amounting to approximately forty-eight films. Towards the end of this period, the annual release of full-length films was limited to around a dozen. This was a significantly small figure compared to the vast number of films being produced by Bollywood, the Hindi film industry based in Mumbai.[3]

> A common term used by the film industry, the Indian media, and audiences to describe many popular Hindi films is "masala." A Hindi word meaning a blend of spices, masala, is part of the quotidian vocabulary of food and cooking; it is what imbues a dish with its flavor, potency, and taste. When applied to films, it refers to those (and not all Hindi films are regarded as such) that contain a blend of elements – music, romance, action, comedy, and drama – designed to impart the most pleasurable viewing experience. The masala film has become the global stereotype of Hindi cinema, what most commentators, including Ratner above, have in mind when asserting that Hindi films contain a mix of genres. However, not all Hindi films would be classified by filmmakers or audiences as masala films. [4]

The most popular genre "masala," with its origins traced back to Bollywood (Hindi) films in the 1970s. These films skillfully incorporate elements of action, comedy, romance, and drama or melodrama, captivating audiences with their diverse and entertaining narratives. Additionally, masala films often include captivating musical sequences, beautifully filmed in picturesque locations, further enhancing the overall viewing experience. With their dynamic storytelling and diverse elements, masala films have become a beloved and defining characteristic of Indian cinema.[5]

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[1] John Whelpton, *A History of Nepal*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.172.

* Bishweshwar Prasad (B.P.) Koirala (1915-1982) is widely regarded as a prominent political visionary in twentieth-century Nepal. As a leader of the Nepali Congress Party, he played a crucial role in leading the country's democratic struggle for socio-economic transformation by overthrowing the ruling Ranas. In 1959, he became Nepal's first democratically elected prime minister. Additionally, Koirala holds a significant position in modern Nepali literature. Early in his life, he gained recognition for his literary works, introducing a fresh aspect of psychological realism that added a new dimension to contemporary Nepali literature. V. Sharma, B. P. Koirala: A major figure in modern Nepali Literature, 1992, p.209 retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/40874126

[2] He introduced Northeast folk music to Hindi films and introduced the "Maadal," an instrument synonymous with the landscapes of places like Darjeeling and Sikkim. Originating from Nepal, the Maadal, a percussion instrument, added a unique charm to Hindi film songs of the 1970s and 1980s. Shankar Iyer 'God's Own Musician – Ranjit Gazmer (Kancha)' Swar Aalap (2023) https://www.swaraalap.com/flashback/gods-own-musician-ranjit-gazmer-kancha/

[3] John Whelpton, op. cit., p. 173

[4] Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: a Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema,* Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2004, p.131

[5] Eguaogie Eghosa, 'Why is the Masala Film Genre so popular with Audiences of Indian Films?' Film District (2021) https://www.filmdistrictindia.com/blogs/why-is-the-masala-film-genre-so-popular-with-audiences-of-indian-films

In the early 1980s, Nepali filmmakers embarked on a journey of creating captivating films by blending various genres, including comedy and action. This was a notable departure from earlier films like *Maitighar* (1966), which did not incorporate these genres. *Kusume Rumal* (1985) became the first in Nepali cinema to celebrate the Silver Jubilee, running for 25 weeks in theaters.[1] It is a love triangle story.

Love triangle stories have long captivated Bollywood audiences, with films like *Sangam* (*Confluence*, 1964), directed by Raj Kapoor. This landmark Hindi film achieved a remarkable feat by beautifully showcasing the mesmerizing landscapes of Europe for the first time in the industry.[2] Furthermore, love triangle narratives often incorporate poignant songs that depict heartbreak (fig.1), such as '*Dost dost na raha*' ('*Friend is not a friend anymore*') from *Sangam* (1964), along with the tragic demise (suicide) of one of the characters at the end of the film (fig.2).[3]

The story of *Kusume Rumal* (1985) sets in a city and in a village. Bhuwan K.C. plays Arjun, an innocent poor Nepali village boy, who wears his heart on his sleeve. He works in the field for a retired Army and landlord played by Nir Shah, who is the father of Suniti. Whereas, Udit Narayan plays Amar, a city boy from a rich family and an active student at a college with high moral values. Tripti Nadakar as Suniti an educated village girl who goes to the same college as Amar in the city, falls in love with Amar. When Suniti returns to her village her several encounters with Arjun (who teaches her how to sing) make him believe that Suniti is in love with him too but only later at a home party (Suniti's house), he finds out Suniti is getting engaged to Amar. Arjun is asked to sing a song on the occasion of this arrangement and he sings a tragic sad song (fig.3) called '*Timi na bhaye*' (*If you don't exist*). Rakesh, the villain of the film who always troubled girls at college had a dispute with Amar while troubling Suniti. Rakesh and his boys attack the couple, Amar and Suniti intending to kill Amar and marry Suniti. Arjun comes to save them with his childhood friend called Jite[4]. Rakesh stabs Arjun to death and Arjun stabs him back with the same weapon and kills him too. The story ends with a melodramatic scene with Arjun's *death speech*[5] begging his friend to save him and that he doesn't want to die while the couple and his friend hold him till his last breath (fig.4).

[1] Film Development Board, 'Historical Timeline of Nepali Cinema' (2023) retrieved from https://film.gov.np/
[2] Ritu Nanda, *Raj Kapoor, The one and only Showman*, HarperCollins, 2017, p.131
[3] Madhavi Pothukuchia, 'An IAF pilot, a love triangle & Raj Kapoor' The Print (2019) https://theprint.in/feature/reel-take/an-iaf-pilot-a-love-triangle-raj-kapoor-why-sangam-is-a-bollywood-hit-even-after-50-yrs/247544/
[4] Jite is a character played by Biswa Hingmang who is a comedic character in the film.
[5] Torben Grodal 'Sadness, Melodrama, and Rituals of Loss and Death, *Embodied Visions: Evolution, Emotion, Culture and Film*, Oxford University Press, 2009, p.122–142

Sangam (1964)   *Kusume Rumal* (1985

| fig.1 | fig.2 | fig.3 | fig.4 |

Romantic Heroes and Village Love: Nepali Cinema in the 1980s

Amar is an ideal *hero* character that is mostly seen in the early 1980s to the early 1990s in Nepali Cinema. The character of a young man with high moral values, well-mannered and educated who fights the villain or hooligans, and has a charming romantic personality like Mohan from *Maitighar* (1966) who makes promises about *great love.* Romanticizing love and heroes in the film was very common in Nepali cinema during this period.

These men usually come from cities to the village and fall in love with a village girl. Here are the example of the popular films of this period: In *Samjhana* (1983), Bhuwan K.C. a factory manager falls in love with a village girl, Tripti Nadakar. In *Kanchi* (1984), Shiva Shrestha an educated man from Bombay (now Mumbai), India comes to visit a village in Nepal and falls in love with a village girl, Sharmila Malla. *Behuli* (Bride, 1989) Prakash Adhikari works in the city and falls in love with a village girl Sunita Khadka after his marriage is arranged by his mother. *Bhagyarekha* (1989) Rabindra Khadka comes from the city after quitting his college and falls in love with a village girl, Mausami Malla. *Lahure* (1989, Shrawan Ghimire is a soldier who falls in love with a village girl, Tripti Nadakar.

Portraying College Life in Nepali Cinema in the mid of 1980s

College scenarios are rarely represented in films and when they appeared, their focus was typically on two aspects: firstly, the depiction of girls or women facing troubles, teasing, or harassment, eve-teasing from unruly college students, and secondly the hero's role in rescuing or protecting them. Colleges serve as dynamic social spaces that reflect the complexities of gender dynamics and power structures. However, films often portray these spaces as settings where instances of staring, eve-teasing, and sexual harassment occur, such as classrooms, libraries, and outdoor areas. For instance, in *Kusume Rumal* (1985) Rakesh and his friends harass girls in the college (fig.11) in *Basudev* (1985) a boy who is known as a hooligan in the college played by Haribansha Acharya proposes to a college girl, played by Surya Mala Sharma (fig.12). Surya Mala makes it clear that she never made any such promises or that she loves him. Despite her rejection, he insists on his feelings and says, "*I didn't tell everyone that you love me, but I told them that I love you. Please consider this proposal;*

otherwise, I'll be ashamed in front of everyone." Another example is seen in the film *Santaan* (1987), where a group of boys harasses and troubles girls in the college cafeteria(fig.13-14), leading to a lengthy fight sequence where Arjun Jung Shahi single-handedly confronts them.

fig.11 *Kusume Rumal* (1985) fig.12 *Basudev* (1985)   fig.13 *Santaan* (1987)   fig.14 *Santaan* (1987)

These instances of college harassment depicted in the mid of 1980s Nepali cinema still endure today and are frequently portrayed in films spanning various decades.

Darpan Chhaya (2001)[1] is also a triangular love story based on the college life of two best friends played by Dilip Raymajhi and Uttam Pradhan, and a new student played by Niruta Singh, their love interest. In the early scene of the film, Dilip Rayamajhi sits with a group of friends (fig.15) and watches the girls coming through the college gate (fig.16) waiting for '*his kind of girl*' when Niruta Singh appears as one of the friends asks Dilip Rayamajhi, '*What do you think about this one*?' (fig.17) as Niruta Singh stands at the gate, they converse '*She looks ok, but not my type of girl*', says Dilip Rayamajhi (fig.18). He adds, '*I wonder what she sounds like.*' The camera scans from her feet to her head. She looks uncomfortable.

Darpan Chhaya (2001

      fig.15   fig.16   fig.17.   fig.18
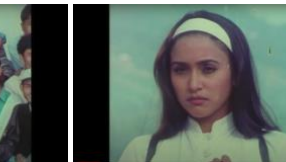
Dilip Rayamajhi plays the character who resembles the character played by Shahrukh Khan in *Kuch Kuch Hota Hain* (1998). During the early 1990s, Bollywood heroes were often portrayed as aggressive, arrogant, and disrespectful towards their love interest, which became a popular *hero* archetype in films like *Dil* (1990) starring Aamir Khan, which achieved immense success. *Dil* (1990) also depicts college life, where Aamir Khan's character troubles a college girl played by Madhuri Dixit but eventually falls in love with her. This was not limited to college-based films alone they were observable across various genres of movies in Bollywood and as well in Nepali films of the 1990s in popular films.

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[1] Darpan Chhaya (2001) directed by Tulsi Ghimire was the first film to run successfully for 51 days in 9 different cinema halls in Kathmandu at the same time. Laxmi Nath Sharma, *History of Nepali Cinema, Kathmandu*, 2016, p.139
Darpan Chhaya (2001) is inspired by the Bollywood film Kuch Kuch Hota Hain (1998) directed by Karan Johar which is a triangular love story of two best friends played by Shahrukh Khan and Kajol along with a new student played by Rani Mukherji (London-born) who all go to the same college.

According to a research paper, *Portrayals of Sexual Violence in Popular Hindi Films, 1997–99*, the analysis revealed that these films depicted moderate sexual violence as enjoyable, fun, and a normalized expression of romantic love. Women were frequently portrayed as victims of sexual violence, while the heroes or main characters were commonly shown as the perpetrators. Specifically, the films often showcased moderate forms of violence, such as harassing women who would later become their romantic partners.[1] One of the films analyzed in the paper is *Kuch Kuch Hota Hain* (1998).

Exploring City Life in Nepali Films in the 1980s

Priya Singh writes that the advent of commercial films, intended to provide both enlightenment and entertainment, presented a promising opportunity to delve into the intricate and universally relevant aspects of urban issues and their potential solutions. Regrettably, it seems that movies have missed the mark in fully embracing this opportunity. Instead, the representation of the city in films remains confined to showcasing scenes set in homes, restaurants, and dance clubs, failing to capture the diverse array of experiences and dimensions that the urban environment encompasses.[2]

In the context of Nepali films, *Kusume Rumal* (1985), the contrasting lives of the village and the city come alive through the vivid depiction of their respective environments. The city is limited in the space portrayed with an air of opulence and luxury, exemplified by the presence of a grand piano in Amar's father's living room and the extravagant decor that surrounds it. On the other hand, the village exudes a simpler and more traditional lifestyle, as seen through Suniti's father listening to a transistor in the front yard, along with Bhuwan K.C. and other villagers farming, handicrafts, and working in the field. The city serves as a backdrop in the film and effectively captures the essence of village life emphasizing the distinct characteristics of its inhabitants, who are portrayed with a sense of innocence and naivety.

In *Kanchi* (1984) directed by B.S Thapa depicts the city life of Mumbai with a short sequence that is the point of view of protagonist Kanchi of the city; the Mumbai Central Station, the vibrant and bustling city, Sea and beach, and the skyscrapers. The film also highlights and features the dance sequences in a hotel and a dance club in Mumbai.

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[1] Srividya Ramasubramanian and Mary Beth Oliver, 'Portrayals of Sexual Violence in Popular Hindi Films, 1997–99', Sex Roles, Vol. 48, Nos. 7/8, April 2003 Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/257142/Portrayals_of_sexual_violence_in_popular_hindi_films_1997_99

[2] Priya Singh 'The Evolution of Cities in Hindi Cinema' Film Companion (2021) retrieved from https://www.filmcompanion.in/readers-articles/the-evolution-of-cities-in-hindi-cinema-wake-up-sid-masaan-delhi-6

Commercial films create new portrayals of modern Indian women by drawing inspiration from progressive films and the women's movement. These films depict the new woman as strong, educated, independent, and capable of taking initiative in relationships. However, this representation of modern women in popular Indian films is merely surface-level. In order to engage the audience, commercial cinema relies on gender stereotypes that are ambiguous. Behind the apparent concern for women's oppression, these films perpetuate deeply ingrained ideals of femininity disguised as images of liberated women.[1]

During this period in Nepali films, modern city girls were often depicted in fashionable attire, frequenting clubs as seen in characters played by Karishma Manandhar. On the other hand, the characters played by Gauri Malla in *Santaan* (1989) and Kristi Mainali in *Yug Dekhi Yug Samma* (*From Era to Era*, 1991), are deeply in love with their romantic partners and solely focused on marriages. In *Santaan* (1989), there's a scene where Karishma Manandhar challenges traditional gender roles by refusing to cook for her husband. This defiance is portrayed negatively, reflecting the character's disregard for traditional values.

The portrayal of strong-willed women who assert themselves is often limited and linked to the role of stepmothers, as seen in characters like Surya Mala Khanal in *Bhagya Rekha* (1989) and Shanti Maskey in *Santaan* (1989). These women are depicted in negative roles, displaying unkindness towards their step-sons portraying them as vamps of Bollywood. Conversely, strong independent men depicted in urban settings are often portrayed as the antagonists. These characters, lacking moral values, are shown engaging in vices such as smoking and drinking alcohol, as well as scheming to harm others, with a particular focus on women. Tika Pahari in *Yug Dekhi Yug Samma* (1991) serves as an example of such a character.

Another theme in modern city life explored during this period was infidelity. Bhuwan K.C. played an unfaithful husband in *Saino* (1987), followed by Karishma Manandhar's character engaging in an extramarital relationship and also reflects her modern outlook and indifference toward traditional values in *Santaan* (1989).

Village Girls in 1980s Nepali Films: Representation and Rise of Violence

Kanchi (1984) is a love story of a village girl *Kanchi* played by Sharmila Malla and a city boy Bijay played by Shiva Shresth directed by B.S. Thapa which is his second Nepali film after the release of *Maitighar* (1966). Sharmila Malla made her debut in the film (fig.19). The title *Kanchi* refers to the term used for the youngest girl in a family in the Hilly region of Nepal. The commercial success of *Kanchi* led to the launch of Kamana Entertainment Magazine, the

[1] Nelly P. Stromquist, *Women in the third world an encyclopedia of contemporary issues, , Routledge,* New York, 2013, p.128

first cine magazine in Nepal, in 1984. The magazine's inaugural edition prominently featured Sharmila Malla on its front page (fig. 20).[1]

The music from the film was very popular and very much appreciated. It was composed by Gopal Yonjan, a renowned musician, poet, songwriter, and visionary artist from Nepal, known for his ability to infuse depth and meaning into his lyrics, his songs captured the historical, political, and societal contexts of Nepal. [2]

The title song '*Kanchi*' gained immense popularity and in the film, it was featured as a traditional Nepal dance performed by Kanchi and other group dancers during a cultural show in Patna, India. The film tells the story of Kanchi, who embarks on a journey from her village to Bombay in search of her husband, Bijay. Along the way, she faces various challenges and dangers, including theft and attempted rape. She is rescued after attempting suicide by a woman who turns out to be Bijay's fiancée. It is revealed that Bijay suffered from amnesia and forgot about Kanchi. Unable to return home, Kanchi loses hope and is found dead in a temple in Mumbai. The dead body of Kanchi carried by men along with the priest of the temple for the cremation comes across the crowd of people walking for the wedding of Bijaya and his finacée. The old man who narrates the story expresses hope that they may be together in future lives. In a surprising twist, the couple listening to the story turns out to be Sharmila Malla and Shiva Shrestha, suggesting to be the re-born Kanchi and Bijay.

Sharmila Malla's portrayal of the village girl Kanchi deeply resonated with the Nepali audience, who embraced her character wholeheartedly for embodying qualities of resilient, patience, composure, naivety, and innocence, which not only represented the *culture and values of Nepal[3] but also elicited a strong connection with viewers enabling to sympathize with Kanchi effortlessly. In the film *Kanchi*, the deliberate omission of dramatic acting techniques and the restraint in the use of background music and sound effects allowed the audience to forge a more intimate bond with the protagonist. Over the span of two decades, the character of Kanchi may have evolved into a relatable archetype of a typical Nepali girl, while the

[1] 'Kamana Entertainment Magazine' Facebook (2023) Retrieved from
https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1402887606469812.1073741839.178476705577581&type=3
[2] Gopal Yonja's work has been archived at Cornell University, making him the first artist from Nepal and South Asia, to have his work preserved there. His compositions, known for their originality and influence on the Tamang community, have shaped Nepali music and hold historical, political, and societal significance. Gopal's songs reflect the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Nepal, and his work serves as a testament to the country's literary and musical history. Anshrica Dewan, 'Remembering the Maestro Gopal Yonjan', The Kathmandu Post, (2022) retrieved from https://tkpo.st/3ApQkWM.
[3]Nepalis are renowned for their dependability, resilience, and ability to withstand difficult conditions. They exhibit patience, calmness, and a lack of drama, fostering a harmonious coexistence among different faiths and ethnicities in Nepal. Nina Evason, 'Nepalese Culture', Cultural Atlas (2017) Retrieved from https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/nepalese-culture/nepalese-culture-core-concepts#nepalese-culture-core-concepts

representation of women in the film remains consistent. Both protagonists commence on their journeys with love stories at the core, but the absence of their husbands, one due to death and the other to amnesia, leads them into unfortunate circumstances, rendering them helpless and compelled to make profound sacrifices. Maya sacrifices her life for the sake of her children, while Kanchi, driven by selflessness, relinquishes her own love for her husband Bijay, who has fallen for another woman. Ultimately, both protagonists meet a tragic end, their sacrifices elevating them to the status of great women. Their bodies are accorded utmost respect as they are prepared for cremation (fig.21 and fig.22).

fig.19.*Kanchi* (1984)   fig.20. Kamana Magazine   fig.21. *Kanchi* (1984)   fig.22.*Maitighar* (1966)

The film *Kanchi* (1984) also incorporated comedic elements (which were not in *Maitighar*), including sequences involving a character named Bhagbhaggay, named by a group of village girls. One such comical moment was a dance sequence featuring Bhagbhaggay and his love interest. Later, Bhagbhaggay appears in a scene where the village girls discuss Kanchi while bathing in the river (fig.23). In a humorous manner (fig.24), he covered his eyes and exclaims, "*I see nothing!*" This unexpected remark caused a slight panic among the girls, who demanded he leave immediately (fig.25). Bhagbhaggay explains that he wants to know if the girl he likes also likes him back. The girl replies, "*Oh, I had totally forgotten about it. For now, stand far at the edge with your eyes closed.*" As he agreed, he clumsily stumbled and ended up falling into the river.

Kanchi (1984)

fig.23   fig.24   fig.25

Sangam (1964)

fig.26   fig.27   fig.28
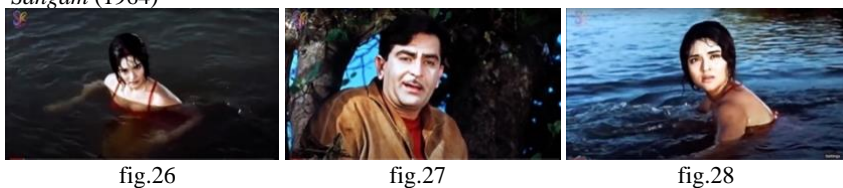
Twenty years before *Kanchi* (1984), the image of women in the river was already popular and seen in Bollywood the first color film *Sangam* (1964) produced by R.K Films (Raj Kapoor Films) and directed by Raj Kapoor. In this Hindi film, *Sangam* (1964) Raj Kapoor portrays Sunder, Sunder's infatuation with Radha from their childhood continues into adulthood. Despite Radha firmly rejecting him when he asks about a future together in the song '*Bol Radha Bol*,' Sunder persists. His actions include stealing her clothes while she bathes in the lake.[1]

Vikrant Kishore writes that in Hindi films, due to censorship and cultural norms, explicit sexual content or nudity is avoided. Instead, sensuality is conveyed through song and dance sequences set in nightclubs, waterfalls, bathtubs, and rain. Rain sequences, in particular, emphasize the wet imagery and accentuate the contours of leading women's bodies for voyeuristic pleasure. Indian filmmakers like Raj Kapoor have sensually portrayed heroines drenched in water in movies such as *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* (1978) (fig.29-30) and *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* (1985) (fig.31).[2]

Satyam Shivam Sundaram (1978)   *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* (1985)
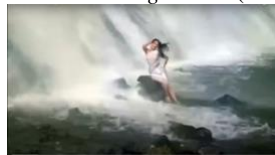
fig.29   fig.30   fig.31

Sampati (1991)

fig.32   fig.33   fig.34

Bhagyarekha (1989)

fig.35   fig.36   fig.37

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[1] Raj Kapoor, a trailblazer, established RK Films at a young age. In the 1950s, their films entertained and addressed social issues, sometimes becoming preachy. In the 1950s, their films entertained and addressed social issues, sometimes becoming preachy. However, in the 1960s, RK Films took a different direction under Raj Kapoor's direction. Sampada Sharma, *If Raj Kapoor's Sangam was made in 2022, he would be the villain and not the hero. Here's why*' The Indian Express (2022) retrieved from https://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/raj-kapoor-sangam-lesson-in-how-to-bully-a-woman-into-marrying-a-stalker-7745788/

[2] Vikrant Kishore 'Depictions of Eroticism and Sexuality in the 'Rain' Song and Dance Sequences of Bollywood Cinema' The London Film and Media Reader 2, 2013, p.146

In the wake of the success of *Kanchi* (1984), the portrayal of women bathing in water has been featured in a few Nepali films such as *Bhagyarekha* (1989) and *Sampati* (1991). In *Sampati* (1991), both films feature the actress Mausami Malla. A rape attempt occurs when Ratan Subedi plays the villain, takes Mausami Malla's clothes and assaults her, only to be rescued by Arjun Shrestha in *Sampati* (1991). In *Bhagyarekha* (1989) Rabindra Khadka plays the hero who *stares*[1] at Mausami Malla bathing.

During this period[2], Nepali films often depicted uneducated village girls falling for city boys, possibly leading real girls to romanticize such lives. This portrayal, along with romanticizing love, may have increased vulnerability to sex trafficking risks.[3]

Nepali films portrayed village girls in diverse roles during this period. Some characters like Sharmila Malla in *Kanchi* (1984) were quiet, while others like Tripti Nadakar in *Samjhana* (1983) and *Lahure* (1989), Sunita Khadka in *Behuli* (1989), and Mausami Malla in *Bhagyarekha* (1989) were mischievous and outspoken. These characters often revolved around romantic interests and sometimes depicted women needing rescuing or marriage to their heroes. In films like *Behuli* and *Lahure*, heroines underwent character transformations.

In *Behuli* (1989) Sunita Khadka's character is a woman full of mischievousness and childlike behaviors till she gets married. Then, her husband portrayed by Prakash Adhikari leaves for work in the city. A transformation occurs in her because of the distance from her husband which changes her into a *woman.* The film presents a narrow and confining representation of womanhood, relegating women to traditional gender roles of cooking, serving their mother-in-law, performing household chores, and being emotionally dependent on their husbands. These expectations define them as a good wife and daughter-in-law in the narrative.

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[1] Rabindra Khadka's character exemplifies the controlling male gaze described by Laura Mulvey. Through covert observation during Mausami Malla's bath and prolonged, intrusive staring afterward, the character establishes dominance, objectifying her and creating an uncomfortable atmosphere that compels her to retreat, highlighting the subtle but powerful ways the male gaze can assert control. Laura Mulvey 'Visual Pleasure Theory', Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings, Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP,1999 pp.802-816

[2] The 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty between Nepal and India, initially aimed at fostering friendly relations, inadvertently resulted in a severe human rights crisis. Since the 1980s, ABC Nepal has been raising awareness about the extensive trafficking of women and girls across the Nepal-India border. This border is now considered one of the busiest human trafficking gateways globally, with approximately 30,000 victims trafficked annually. Weak border security, limited resources, and socio-economic challenges in Nepal contribute to this issue. Local organizations have taken the lead in addressing the problem due to insufficient government action. Retrieved from http://www.the-generation.net/human-trafficking-in-nepal-the-push-factors-and-pushback/#:~:text=As%20such%2C%20the%20most%20common,which%20to%20base%20its%20economy.

[3] Sex trafficking in Nepal is commonly linked to factors such as poverty, lack of education, and gender bias. Traffickers use both direct and indirect methods. Direct methods involve tricking girls into fake marriages or abducting them for brothels. Indirect methods included luring women to cities for work, where they ended up exploited and trapped in sex trafficking. Bhavana Mahat 'Trafficking of Women in Nepal: An Intersectional Analysis of Organizational Narratives', University of Arkansas, Fayetteville,2011, p.14 Retrieved from https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/72841077.pdf

Whereas in *Lahure* (1989), Tripti Nadakar who also plays similar characteristics as Sunita Khadka, falls in love and gets married to a soldier, played by Shrawan Ghimire. He goes back to his duty in the city leaving her pregnant. Then, Tripti Nadakar transitions into a quiet and sad woman waiting for Shrawan Ghimire to return. She works at a tea farm where the manager attempts to rape her.

> In the case of poor women, work is represented as an economic necessity, and their work lives are either romanticized or sensationalized: they are depicted as victims of poverty and sexual harassment. Sexual molestation is presented as a dominating reality of poor working women. While catering to the voyeuristic impulse of the audience, the molestation episodes obscure harsh working conditions and injustices and mask hostilities toward her for not conforming to the ideal of house-bound domesticated women. [1]

During this period, a limited number of Nepali films were produced, and instances of attempted rape or rape have been portrayed relatively frequently. For example, in the film *Kanchi* (1984), the protagonist is rescued from an attempted rape by a brotherly figure. In *Saino* (1987), a rape attempt of a supporting character and rescue by Danny Denzongpa and sexual harassment on the character played by Tripti Nadakar. Similarly, in *Santaan* (1989), there are two sequences depicting attempted rape, both of which are intervened by the character played by Arjun Jung Shahi. Additionally, *Bhagyarekha* (1989) includes a scene depicting rape.

In Hindi cinema, Firoze Rangonwala, a film scholar, describes the period from 1981 to 1991 as "the age of violence".[2] In Nepali films like *Lahure* (1989), the scene depicting an attempted rape where Tripti Nadakar's character undergoes a transformation from being defenseless to attacking the manager, asserting her identity as a soldier's wife and ultimately killing the manager (fig.38). Another film, *Chino* (1991) which can be identified as Nepali Bollywood-Masala film.[3] *Chino* (1991) portrays a revenge drama where Subhadra Adhikari's character seeks retribution after witnessing the murder of her husband and facing an attempted rape by a villain named Rate, played by Sunil Thapa. Subhadra Adhikari's character transforms from victim to avenging woman, seeking revenge against Sunil Thapa's character, Rate, and killing him (fig.39) with the help of her sons played by Bhuwan K.C. and Shiva Shrestha.

fig.38.*Lahure* (1989)   fig.39. *Chino* (1991)

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[1] Nelly P. Stromquist, *Women in the third world an encyclopedia of contemporary issues,Routledge,* New York, 2013 p.128

[2] Ananya Biswal, 'Why are rape-revenge so popular in Hindi cinema?' Film Companion, (2023) Retrieved from https://www.filmcompanion.in/readers-articles/why-are-rape-revenge-films-so-popular-in-hindi-cinema-khoon-bhari-maang-pratighaat-zakhmi-aurat

[3] It will be explored more later in the 1990s.

The women portrayed in these films are depicted as embodying the divine figures of Goddess *Durga* or *Kali*. However, Ananya Biswal in the article '*Why are rape-revenge so popular in Hindi cinema?*' argues that the rationale behind women seeking revenge after being wronged, raped, or harmed is problematic. It is rooted in the belief that strength is a response to intrusion, which in turn relies on the actions of men. The portrayal of courageous, assertive, and audacious women is a construct of the patriarchal system. The female vigilante represents the consequences of masculine oppression, and this distorted form of feminism glorifies victimhood disguised as heroism. Furthermore, at a deeper level, this female heroism is indebted to male violence. If it were not for the prevailing heteronormative patriarchal structure, the personal growth or transformation of women would not have been possible.[1]

Prioritizing Bollywood-Masala: The Impact on Artistic Filmmaking in Nepal

According to Ananya Biswal, Rangoonwala notes that during the 1980s and early 1990s, there was a rise in revenge dramas in Indian cinema, both in mainstream and alternative genres. These vigilante films faced criticism for inadvertently sticking to established cinematic conventions found in "masala films" despite their intention to deviate from conventional popular Hindi cinema.[2]

Masoom (*The Innocent*, 1983)[3], the film stands out from ongoing Bollywood productions in several notable ways. It features eminent actors of parallel cinema, Naseeruddin Shah and Shabana Azmi, who bring depth and authenticity to their roles. What sets this film apart is its subtle and nuanced storytelling approach, which diverges from the style seen in mainstream Bollywood films. *Saino* (1987), draws inspiration from *Masoom* (1983) but incorporates elements from mainstream Bollywood cinema to ensure its commercial viability.

A comparative analysis of the portrayal of death in both films, Bollywood film *Masoom* (1983) and Nepali film *Saino* (1987) examines the prioritization of Bollywood-style commercial elements over artistic cinematic approaches in Nepali filmmaking.

In *Masoom* (1983), opening scene (0:50-5:25), a close-up of a pair of old hands (fig.40) trembling reaches out for a handkerchief to cough (fig.41), the camera follows the hand to the

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[1] *Idem*
[2] *Idem*
[3] The film is a rare example of a coming-of-age film within the Bollywood industry directed by Shekhar Kapur, who marked his directorial debut and was an adaptation of Erich Segal's novel "Man, Woman and Child" from 1980. It was released on October 22, 1983, seven months after the Hollywood version featuring Martin Sheen and Blythe Danner. The screenplay, dialogues, and lyrics were skillfully written by Gulzar, while the music was composed by R.D. Burman. The film received widespread acclaim and garnered awards. The Indian Saga, 'Masoom (1983) : The Ultimate Heart-Strings Tug!' (2018) Retrieved from https://theindiasaga.com/business/masoom-1983-the-ultimate-heart-strings-tug

old man's face looking down worried (close-up- fig.42), a nurse walks in and whispers in his ears, '*She is calling you, there is not enough time*' (fig.43). The next scene is of a little boy running on a hilly road (long shot-fig.44). He runs into the hospital looking for the room (fig.45- a pov of the boy achieved with the hand-held camera with the height of the boy) when the boy/camera finds the room and stands in front of the curtain (fig.46). As he approaches the curtain, the screen fades to black (fig.47) to the room (fig.48) where a body is covered with a white sheet and the old man is sitting at the end of the bed (fig.49). The boy walks towards the bed next to the old man who puts his hand on his head while the camera stays at the door (fig.50). The next scene is a conversation between the old man and the lawyer about the boy's father and the boy stands next to the window (fig.51). The cremation is depicted from a distance with the characters in silhouette contrast to the fire, providing a wider perspective, while the credits roll (fig.52). The film then opens with a close-up of a happy family photo (fig.53) as the camera tracks backward a dog comes in and pushes the photo frame off the shelf (fig.54) and breaks it (fig.55) but there is no image of the broken photo frame only the sound. There is minimal dialogue and an absence of any background music till the credits roll, the music that plays during the cremation (credits roll) is the theme music of the film. This scene foreshadows the division of the film into two parts: before and after the boy enters the family.

The film uses cinematic visual techniques such as close-ups, camera movement, and many long takes to explore the gravity of their familial situation in the scenes and the depth of the characters. The film has a cinematic rhythm in editing. The paper, *Rhythmic Trajectories - Visualizing Cinematic Rhythm in Film Sequences* written by Szilvia Ruszev explores cinematic rhythm in film editing, drawing from Karen Pearlman's concepts of timing, pacing, and trajectory phrasing. It investigates how spectators perceive and categorize different manifestations of rhythm in film sequences, including physical, emotional, and event rhythms. The study aims to understand the role of energy in movement and its impact on the spectator's experience and knowledge formation.[1]

Masoom (1983)

| fig.40 | fig.41 | fig.42 | fig.43 |

[1]Szilvia Ruszev, Rhythmic Trajectories - Visualizing Cinematic Rhythm in Film Sequences, No. 7 (2018): Women Cutting Movies: Editors from East and Central Europe. Retrieved from
https://www.apparatusjournal.net/index.php/apparatus/article/view/146/383

fig.44   fig.45   fig.46   fig.47

fig.48   fig.49   fig.50   fig.51

fig.52   fig.53   fig.54   fig.55

Saino (1987), the death of the Bhuwan K.C's character (1:00:06-1:03:12), the scene begins with the rain drops in a small pond, as the camera tilts up, there is the sound of a big thunderstorm and wife of Bhuwan K.C. played by Tripti Nadakar comes out of the house. A low-angle shot of Tripiti looking up in the sky and then running to collect the clothes hanging in the rope. The thunderstorm continues with the sound of the wind whirling strongly, the clothes are fluttering, and as she pulls the clothes she notices an ambulance entering the front yard of the house. The van stops, and three people get off including a policeman, and stand still. Tripti walks into the frame and asks what the matter was with a panicking voice. The policeman says that her husband's jeep fell off the cliff. They couldn't find the jeep but found the dead body. As the body is taken out of the van (fig.56), the face is revealed to Tripti Nadakar (fig.57-58). She screams (fig.59), back to the body (fig.60). She continues screaming (fig.61) and the dramatic music intensifies with more sound of thunderstorms and wind whirling. A piece of cloth flies onto her face (fig.62) and when she removes the cloth, it rubs out her *sindoor* (fig.63). A dramatic intake because *sindoor* symbolizes marital status, and its absence typically signifies widowhood in Hindu communities. She runs to the body (fig.64-66) cries loudly holding on to the dead body and says '*Who should I live for now*?' (fig.67-69). The lady consoles her saying, '*For your son*' then, the little boy comes out asking what happened to his mother (fig.70). The lady persists in comforting Tripti, advising her to bid a proper farewell to the departed (fig.71).

The scene lingers, accentuating melodramatic elements, including the dramatic ambiance that intensifies the melancholic atmosphere, the fluttering cloth and symbolic erasure of sindoor, the accompanying musical backdrop, and the heightened acting. This visual approach remained prevalent in Nepali cinema until the mid-2000s. Conversely, in *Masoom* (1983), a

multitude of narrative threads are skillfully interwoven in a succinct timeframe, showcasing an artistic progression of storytelling.

Saino (1987)

fig.56

fig.57

fig.58

fig.59

fig.60

fig.61

fig.62

fig.63

fig.64

fig.65

fig.66

fig.67

fig.68

fig.69

fig.70

fig.71

> Hindi films fulfill all the requirements of melodrama as they foreground emotions over all other issues, as characters are placed in situations where extreme emotions are called for, facing issues of desire and romance, the family, suffering, and implausible plot twists of coincidence, chance, and fate. A melodrama needs a wide range of emotions, and Hindi films include combinations in their masala or spicy mix, as even a dark melodrama contains comedy and a war film will usually center on family drama. [1]

In Nepali films, there is a longstanding tendency to captivate the audience's emotions by incorporating plots involving sudden death or suicide. Firstly, it enhances the dramatic tension and emotional intensity of the narrative, engaging the audience and evoking powerful emotions. Secondly, it allows for the exploration of complex existential and moral themes, providing deeper insights into the characters' motivations and moral struggles. By incorporating these themes, melodramas aim to provoke thoughtful reflections on the human condition and the intricate nature of our emotions and moral choices. This approach has been observed since the film *Maitighar* (1966) and has continued to be a prevalent element in Nepali cinema, *Samjhana* (1983) Tripti Nadakar dies due to cancer, in *Kanchi* (1984) Kanchi played by Sharmila Malla commits suicide/ dies at the end, in *Kusume Rumal* (1985) Bhuwan K.C. is killed in the end, in *Bhagyarekha* (1989) Mausami Malla's father is murdered, in *Santaan* (1989) Arjun Jung Shahi and Bhuwan K.C,'s father commit suicide, in *Lahure* (1989) Shrawan

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[1] Rachel Dwyer, *Bollywood India Hindi Cinema as a Guide to Contemporary India,* London, Reaktion Books, 2014, p.15

Ghimire's character gets killed in the war and in *Saino* (1987) Bhuwan K.C is killed in a car accident.

In both *Maitighar* (1966) and *Saino* (1987), the portrayal of widows reflects a traditional and regressive perspective, indicating a lack of progress over the two-decade gap between the films. The female characters in these films face societal harassment and devaluation due to their status as widows. Both films introduce a male figure to counterbalance this harassment. In *Maitighar* (1966) and *Kanchi* (1984), it is a brother figure, while in *Saino*, a new hero portrayed by Danny Denzongpa is introduced to support and protect Tripti Nadakar's character.

The leading male characters who portray husbands are shielded and sympathized with, even when they are at fault, by utilizing elements like death or disease. In *Saino* (1987), Bhuwan K.C. plays an unfaithful husband who dies before any confrontation can take place with his wife instead, shifting the focus to the wife's helplessness. Similarly, in *Kanchi* (1984), the hero played by Shiva Shrestha falls in love with another woman and never returns to bring Kanchi back to Bombay. This is justified by a plane crash causing amnesia, enabling the hero to forget about Kanchi. These narrative choices protect male characters, avoid accountability, and emphasize women's vulnerability, reinforcing patriarchal norms that elevate husbands and portray women as dependent and powerless.

Both films *Masoom* (1983) and *Saino* (1987) explore the theme of infidelity, but they differ in their approach to portraying the sexual intimacy associated with marital affairs. In *Masoom* (1983), Naseeruddin Shah's character confesses to his best friend about his encounters with another woman (fig.72) These encounters are depicted through flashbacks, specifically recalling their last meeting on a boat (fig.73). *Masoom* (1983) focuses more on revealing the emotional aspects of the affair, choosing not to show explicit scenes of sexual intimacy.

On the other hand, in *Saino* (1987), the climax of the film involves the police arriving at Danny Denzongpa's house to arrest him for murdering his wife and her lover, played by Bhuwan K.C. This scene is shown as a flashback from Danny Denzongpa's perspective, where he witnesses his wife and her lover in bed (fig.79). The camera captures close-up shots of their intimate gestures, such as holding hands, rubbing feet together, and kissing (fig.75-77) with sensual music playing in the background. Danny Denzongpa's anger escalates (fig.78), leading him to strangle his wife (fig.80), while Bhuwan K.C., attempting to escape, dies in a jeep accident while being chased by Danny Denzongpa. Conversely, *Saino* (1987) incorporates *bed*

scene[1] and portrays the intimate moments through close-up shots, highlighting the intensity and consequences of the affair.

Masoom (1983)

fig.72

fig.73

Saino (1987)

fig.74

fig.75

fig.76

fig.77

fig.78

fig.79

fig.80

Santaan(1989)

fig.81

fig.82

fig.83

fig.84

In *Narration in the Fiction Film*, David Bordwell discusses two different theories of narration. According to dietetic theories, narration is understood as a form of verbal communication, either through oral or written means. On the other hand, mimetic theories view narration as a visual presentation or spectacle, focusing on showing rather than telling.[2]

The differing approaches of "showing" and "telling" the affair in the two films, *Masoom* (1983) and *Saino* (1987) contribute to their distinct storytelling styles. *Saino* (1987) clearly aims at creating a masala film experience. These styles involve the incorporation of elements such as harassment, violence, sexual intimacy, sexual violence, fight sequences, rape attempts, or rape.

Another example of such incorporation can be observed in the Nepali film *Santaan* (1989), where the character played by Karishma Manandar is found in bed with her partner (fig.82). As Bhuwan K.C., portraying the husband, enters the room (fig.81). The scene

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[1] In the late 1980s, a noticeable trend in Nepali films emerged where sensual bed scenes were frequently integrated as pivotal plot components, strategically chosen for their commercial appeal. Subsequently, in the mid-2010s, the prevalence of bed scenes intensified, influenced by the rise in popularity of Bollywood's production of *erotic thriller films* in the early 2000s. *'The best erotic thrillers of Bollywood' Times of India (2023) Retrieved from https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/bollywood/news/jism-aitraaz-and-more-the-best-erotic-thrillers-of-bollywood/photostory/97035152.cms

[2] David Bordwell*, Narration in the Fiction Film*, Routledge,1985 (Reprinted 1997), p.3

intensifies with fast cuts and a dramatic musical score in the background. To depict his rage, the room is illuminated with flashes of red and blue lights (fig.83). The combination of these visual and auditory elements enhances the impact of the scene. Then, he shoots them both to death (fig.84) and then he is arrested by the police.

Portrayal of Alcohol in Nepali Cinema

In *Masoom* (1983), the song '*Huzur ki Kadar'* [1] features Naseeruddin Shah, and Shabana Azmi at a friend's party. Naseeruddin Shah can be seen singing and dancing with a drink in hand, engaging in flirtatious behavior with Shabana Azmi throughout the song (fig.85). In *Saino* (1987), Bhuwan K.C. performs a song called '*Aaamai le bhanthin*,' which highlights the theme of alcohol and its role in bringing people together. Bhuwan K.C. dances holding the glass on his head with one hand and another on his hip (fig.86).
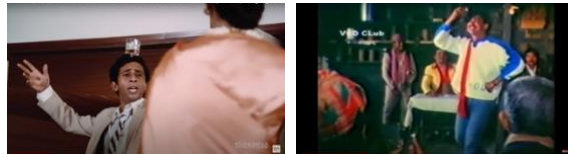
fig.85. *Masoom* (1983)   fig.86. *Saino* (1987)

In 2020, a research study published '*Portrayal of alcohol in Bollywood movies: A mixed methods studying'* in the Indian Journal of Psychiatry and on the National Library of Medicine website examined 150 Hindi films to evaluate the portrayal of alcohol in Bollywood movies. The study aimed to analyze the extent, pattern, and trends in depicting alcohol over three decades: 1961-1970, 1981-1990, and 2001-2010.[2] This trend, rooted in the Golden Era of Bollywood cinema, highlights the glorification of alcohol on India's silver screen, particularly through *sharaab* (alcohol) songs in films.[3]

> In the combination of alcohol and Bollywood, it is often perceived as a portrayal of drunkards, criminals, villains, manipulative vamps, heartbreak, tragedy, or slapstick comedy. The depiction of alcohol as a substance and drinking as a motif in Hindi films, as well as in most Indian films across languages, has largely adhered to a moral standpoint derived from the India of the 1950s and 1960s, labeling it as a "social evil." The association of alcohol with alcoholism has been a longstanding trope in Indian cinema, with films like Devdas serving as prime examples of the interwoven themes of alcohol, heartbreak, and a protagonist lacking direction.[4]

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[1] Amir Ulla Khan, in the chapter 'Golden Lyrics of the Era (1960-2001)', states that the film Masoom (The Innocent, 1983) features a children's song and a flirtatious song titled 'Huzur ki Kadar', both penned by the renowned Gulzar, which continue to enjoy enduring popularity. Amir Ulla Khan, 'Golden Lyrics of the Era (1960-2001)', *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema*, New Delhi : Encyclopaedia Britannica (India) Pvt. Ltd., 2003, p.295

[2] Ravindra Rao, Udit Panda, Swati Kedia Gupta, Atul Ambekar, Snehil Gupta, and Alok Agrawal, Portrayal of alcohol in Bollywood movies: A mixed methods study, Indian J Psychiatry. 2020 Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7197829/

[3] 'The Glorification of Alcohol in Hindi Cinema', Mr&Mrs.55-Classic Bollywood Revisited! (2012) Retrieved from https://mrandmrs55.com/2012/06/21/the-glorification-of-alcohol-in-hindi-cinema/

[4] 'From Bollywood To The Bar: How Indian Cinema Boosted Whiskey Consumption' Slurrp (2023) https://www.slurrp.com/article/how-indian-cinema-boosted-whiskey-consumption-1673344549749

Nepali films have depicted alcohol consumption since the early 1980s in films like *Samjhana* (1983), *Kanchi* (1984), *Saino* (1987), *Santaan* (1989), *Laure* (1989), *Bhagyarekha* (1989), *Sapana* (1989), have portrayed alcohol and this theme remains prevalent in contemporary films as well.

In the film *Samjhana* (1983), Bhuwan K.C.'s character turns to excessive drinking after being threatened by Tripti Nadakar's character's brother, who is portrayed as a villain due to his drinking and gambling habits in the village (fig.87-88). As a consequence, Bhuwan K.C. becomes aggressive towards his colleagues and starts ignoring Tripti Nadakar. Feeling hurt and neglected, Tripti Nadakar visits Bhuwan K.C.'s house, where he is sitting and drinking alcohol. She expresses her anguish, saying, "*I can't bear being ignored by you anymore. What did I do wrong?*" Despite her pleas, Bhuwan K.C. continues to drink,(fig.89) and (fig.90) she adds, "*You are educated and well-off, while I am from a poor family. Perhaps, my only fault is being poor. How can you treat a helpless woman like me? What happened to all the promises you made*?" Then, he stands up, smiles and both hug and cuts to a romantic song.

In *Kanchi* at a hotel, people drink and enjoy Kanchi's dance (fig.100-101). In both *Saino* (fig.102) and *Santaan* (fig.104), there are scenes of a local bar where everyone meets and drinks. There are scenes of Bhuwan K.C. socially drinking with his friend in *Saino* (fig.103), and in *Santaan* (fig.105). Whereas, in both *Santaan* and *Bhagyarekha*, multiple scenes depict the consumption of alcohol by the villains or negative characters. In *Santaan* there is a scene set in a dance bar where men drink and watch women dancing, which escalates into them abusing the women (fig.108-109). Additionally, another scene involves the landlord drinking alcohol and offering it to a woman working for him, leading to an attempted rape (fig.106-107). In *Bhagyarekha*, the villain frequently visits a local bar with his friend (fig.110), and in one of these scenes (fig.111), he discusses a girl he saw, eventually leading to him raping her. These instances portray the negative and harmful consequences associated with the consumption of alcohol within the context of the film narratives.

In *Sapana* (1993), with the rise of making Bollywood-Masala films, an item song popularly known as '*Sundari ko manma*' (*Who Stays in the Heart of a beautiful girl*) features the song with alcohol and dancing (fig.112-113). This item song is influenced by the 1970s Bollywood item song performed by Helen '*Monica My Darling'* (fig.114-115) from the film *Caravan* (1971).

Samjhana (1983): fig.87-90

| fig.87 | fig.88 | fig.89 | fig.90 |

Kanchi (1983): fig.100-101   *Saino* (1987): fig.102-103

| fig.100 | fig.101 | fig.102 | fig.103 |

Santaan (1989): fig.104-105   *Bhagyarekha* (1989): fig.106-107

| fig.104 | fig.105 | fig.106 | fig.107 |

Santaan (1989): fig. 108-109   *Bhagyarekha* (1989): fig.110-111

| fig.108 | fig.109 | fig.110 | fig.111 |

Sapana (1993): fig:112-113   *Caravan* (1971): fig.114-115

| fig.112 | fig.113 | fig.114 | fig.115 |

The overwhelming reception of films like *Kusume Rumal* (1985) and *Lahure* (1989), *Kanchi* (1983) followed by *Saino* (1987) solidified the dominance of the Bollywood-style narrative in Nepali cinema throughout the 1980s and 1990s. This commercial triumph became a driving force for filmmakers to adhere to the established formula and commercial elements such as action, romance, song and dance sequences, and melodrama, prioritizing its proven appeal to audiences over the exploration of alternative styles, meaningful storytelling, and artistic filmmaking, fearing the risk of deviating from the proven formula that was gaining so much commercial success.

CHAPTER THREE: NEPAL TELEVISION'S IMPACT (1985-1990)

In the early 1980s, Nepali cinema experienced significant growth, with improved production values and emerging talent. This laid the foundation for a pivotal development in the entertainment landscape. Nepal Television (NTV) was established in January 1985 as the first television channel in Nepal. It operates as a public broadcasting house under the regulation of the state. NTV has played a significant role in disseminating information, education, and entertainment to the people of Nepal, especially in remote areas where other forms of media have limited access.[1]

According to Raju Silwal, Nepal Television was established for the people by the people to the people and to become the voice of the voiceless. The article discusses how the introduction of television caused a major shift in Kathmandu's media scene nationwide. Previously, people searched for movies on Indra Chowk's streets, paying Rs 5 for Hindi films but as television became common, this changed dramatically.[2]

> Before the end of the Rana autocracy, the literacy rate in Nepal was less than 5%. After the fall of the Rana regime and the establishment of democracy in Nepal in 1951, education became formally available to the general public. The government implemented policies that focused on improving the education system, in 1975, the government made primary school education free and took on the responsibility of providing schools, teachers, and materials. Although attempts were made to improve formal education in Nepal, it faced challenges due to economic and cultural factors. Furthermore, formal education was seen as a luxury than a basic right. Children had to work in the fields and educating females was deemed unnecessary.[3]

Empowering Education: Nepal Television's Collaborative Initiatives and Government Support for Societal Progress

In the early 1990s, Nepal Television partnered with Unicef Nepal and the HMG Ministry of Education and Culture Nepal (fig.1) to broadcast Public Service Announcements (PSAs)[4] and campaigns focusing on 'Education for girls'. These efforts aimed to encourage parents to educate their children by enrolling them in school. Three PSAs, each around three minutes long, were featured on the Unicef Nepal page. Titled '*Jhattai Aaunus, Jhattai!*' (*Hurry, come quick!*) (fig.2) , '*Chhori lai Shiksha* (*Education for daughter*) (fig.3) , and '*Money lender - 500 or 5000!*' (fig.4), these PSAs were filmed in a hilly village setting, featuring three

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[1] Nepal Television Official Site, About,(2023) Retrieved from https://ntv.org.np/about-us/

[2] Raju Silwal 'Nepal Television: Looking Back at First Television Program' Nepal News (2022) Retrieved from https://nepalnews.com/s/entertainment-and-lifestyle/nepal-television-looking-back-at-nepal-s-first-television-program

[3]Abhishek Bhandari, 'History of Education in Nepal: Ancient to Modern' EduSanjal (2022) Retrieved from https://edusanjal.com/blog/history-education-nepal-ancient-modern/

[4] Unicef Nepal 'Public service announcements' (2019) Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/nepal/stories/classic-public-service-announcements

different girls from different age groups about 6 to 14, all attending school and proficient in reading and writing. These videos have a simple storyline about daughters who, due to their education, save their parents from being cheated by a shopkeeper and a moneylender shows the ability of these daughters to protect their uneducated families' finances highlighting the importance of education and its potential to empower individuals in rural communities.

These videos utilized static shots without camera movement, portraying the rural Nepali environment with natural sounds. They lacked background music or sound effects, focusing on simple yet impactful scripts that showcased the empowerment of the girls and their proud parents, particularly the fathers.
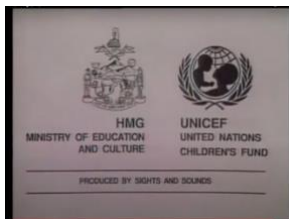
| fig.1 | fig.2 | fig.3 | fig.4 |

There have been produced short films regarding social issues like child marriage, and caste discrimination. An hour-short film, *Ujeli: A child bride in Nepal* written and directed by Deependra Gauchan, in 1992 and produced by Unicef Nepal was filmed in the Rasuwa district, Nepal with the villagers as the non-actors, broadcast on Nepal Television. The film mostly uses the ambient soundscape of the village and a very little piece of background music is discreetly used in a few scenes.

In the opening sequence of the film, the scene concludes (fig.5) with Ujeli holding her baby brother on her lap as her little brother goes off to play. Meanwhile, her parents return to the field to continue working. Although Ujeli is seated in what seems to be a spacious area, the presence of surrounding trees in the hilly landscape creates a sense of enclosure or being cornered. The film continues with Ujeli, age ten, who is married off to a boy. Her life begins as a 'daughter-in-law' who is deprived of education while her husband (the boy) goes to school. The story leads from child marriage, and discrimination in food and education, particularly speaking about the high maternal mortality rate among young girls in Nepal due to the risks associated with childbirth. In the closing sequence of the film (fig.6), Ujeli's husband's brother's wife, sister-in-law (who was also young in age) dies during her delivery. Ujeli now

takes care of the baby. The scene is set between the two rigid pillars, *sur cadre* (frame on frame), with nowhere to escape. A piece of information that appears in the end on the screen.[1]

fig.5   fig.6

Benefiting from substantial government support and collaborative endeavors between Nepal Television and various organizations, Nepali filmmakers embarked on a remarkable journey of transformation. They adeptly captured the very essence of Nepal, skillfully presenting vivid images that resonated powerfully through the medium of television broadcasts. Intriguingly, this creative pursuit remained notably distinct primarily centered within the realm of Nepali television, and could have potentially influenced the subsequent shift in Nepali cinema during the late 1990s, marked by a new trajectory of non-influenced Bollywood Nepali films.

The First Film Animation Workshop was held in Nepal in 1987

> The communication formats were now clear in terms of their strengths. We were informed that moves were underway to begin a National TV station to broadcast throughout Nepal. We had the local talent to produce soap operas, but there was no one doing animation to the standard we required.[2]

George McBean, a film animator, and illustrator, writes on his personal website about his work in Nepal for 7 years from 1982 to 1989 as Communication Officer at Unicef Nepal. In 1982, only 12 % of Nepali women could read and one of the important urgent tasks was the need for visual information to help reduce the unacceptably high Infant Mortality rate. Certain areas in Nepal were considered the most hazardous places for mothers to deliver babies. He initiated teaching aids called 'Illustrations for Development' and adapted them into 'Animation for Development' in 1986 in Nepal.[3]

He and the team (Nepali artists and researchers working at UNICEF Nepal) conducted a unique visual literacy research project using skilled artists to create drawings that were tested on non-literate mothers over three months. The study was highlighted in various publications

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[1] "It is estimated that 40 % of all women in Nepal are married before the age of 14. Nepal's mortality rate of 850 per 100,00 births is among the highest in the world." Ujheli (1992) *Idem*

[2] George McBean 'Work stories from Nepal' Official Site Retrieved from https://www.georgemcbean.com/memories-on-the-timeline-1

[3] George McBean, *Idem*

and featured in the documentary "Changing Visions"[1] in 1987, written and directed by George McBean.[2]

The images below are the screenshots from the documentary during the narration quoted below. Bollywood film '*Aakhir Kyon*?' showing in the cinema hall, in Kathmandu (fig.7-8) and (fig.9-10) in   a village, people gathered to watch the Nepal Television

> " Despite the ancient traditions, Kathmandu has been greatly influenced by media such as cinema. With crowds gathering each day to see celluloid life in the subcontinent and now through video the world beyond. The attraction of electronic media such as video and Television has been so great that the plans are now prepared to try and reach more than half of Nepal's population with Television by the early 1990s. " [3]

| fig.7 | fig.8 | fig.9 | fig.10 |

In 1987, for the first time, the Film Animation Workshop was held for artists in Nepal in corporation with Worldview International Foundation and Unicef Nepal. Along with George McBean, two animators from Prague came to teach for the ten-day introductory course. They were impressed by the Nepali artists that Kratki Films arranged a six-month training program for six talented Nepali artists on character animation in Prague. These artists were chosen based on their exceptional skills demonstrated during the course. On their return to Nepal, they produced a series of short films on social issues, which led to the growth of the animation industry in Nepal. At the end of the workshop, the artists produced a short animation to demonstrate how to use 'salt, sugar, water ' to rehydrate during diarrhea famously used as '*nun, chini, paani*' which translates to salt, sugar, water.[4] The screenshots are taken from the short documentary on the first animation workshop produced by George McBean. The banner of the workshop (fig.11), Nepali artists during the workshop (fig.12), Shyam is a character created to demonstrate how to make '*nun, chini, paani*' (fig.13-14) and the first-ever locally produced animation shown on Nepal Television. [5]

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[1] 'Changing Visions' (extract from 14:38- Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzx0fz4l5xw. (Mentioned on the George Mcbean official site on 'About George McBean' https://www.georgemcbean.com/about-george-1

[2] George McBean, op. cit.

[3] 'Changing Visions' op. cit.

[4] George Mcbean, op. cit. In the early 1980s, diarrhea-related dehydration was the largest cause of death for children in Nepal, with around 45,000 children dying each year. However, by the late 1990s, despite an increase in population to 23 million, deaths related to diarrhea had decreased to 30,000 each year, with 96% of the population being aware of oral rehydration solution (ORS).

[5] 'Animation Development 1987' Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jsuy134nwFs&t=1s (Mentioned on the George Mcbean official site https://www.georgemcbean.com/about-george-1)

| fig.11 | fig.12 | fig.13. | fig.14 |

The legendary duo of Nepal '*Maha Jodi*' on Nepal Television.

George Mcbean fondly recalls his favorite and most cherished moments, which were spent alongside two renowned comedians, Madan Krishna, and Hari Bansha. Together, they lent their voices to puppet shows and embarked on extensive field trips to remote hill areas. Their objective was to both entertain and educate communities regarding the country's primary health concerns. During that time, Madan and Hari had gained significant popularity through their radio programs, yet their faces remained unfamiliar to many. He writes, "*We would walk into villages unrecognized, but as soon as people heard it was Madan and Hari, schools were closed, villagers assemble, and the district chiefs all came along to meet the famous duo. Everyone wanted to come and see what these two men who made them laugh on the radio looked like.*" [1]

'MaHa Jodi'[2] is an iconic name in Nepal's entertainment industry, derived from the combination of '*Ma*' from *Ma*dan Krishna Shrestha and '*Ha*' from *Ha*ribansha Acharya. In Nepali, '*Maha*' means great, and '*Jodi*' translates to pair. Since the collaboration began in 1980, they have earned a stellar reputation for their impeccable comedic timing, becoming synonymous with Nepali comedy. However, their influence extends beyond entertainment, as they are highly regarded public figures actively engaged in welfare activities and raising public awareness for the betterment of the Nepali people. [3]

In 2019, the renowned Maha duo make their mark by producing the first Nepali feature film *Dal Bhat Tarkari*, starring both duos. The film stands out as one of the most notable instances of Bollywood influence on Nepali cinema. This intriguing dynamic will be further examined in the upcoming chapter focusing on the period from the 2010s to the present day.

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[1] George McBean, op. cit.

[2] In 1982, Nepal established Music Nepal (a Nepalese Record label company), which expanded its business by distributing songs owned by Radio Nepal and Ratna Recording Institute (1961). Additionally, Music Nepal began selling albums, starting with the comedy album by the Maha duo. Prior to Music Nepal's establishment, Nepali artists were compelled to go to India for recording, despite the existence of two recording studios. Music Nepal changed this by providing local recording options. Film Development Board 'Historical Timeline of Nepali Cinema' https://film.gov.np/

[3] 'The MaHa Pair, the best Nepali comedians' The Boss Nepal. Retrieved from http://bossnepal.com/the-maha-pair-the-best-nepali-comedians/

CHAPTER FOUR: THE RISE OF THE MEGASTAR (1990-2000)

During the 1980s in Nepal, a constitutional referendum favored retaining the panchayat system, yet a civil disobedience campaign by the Nepali Congress Party sought a multi-party system. Economic turmoil due to a trade dispute with India in 1989 intensified demands for change. In 1990, a pro-democracy movement led by the Nepali Congress Party compelled King Birendra to adopt a new democratic constitution. Subsequent years saw shifts in leadership, including the Nepali Congress Party's victory in the 1991 elections and [1] the emergence of a Maoist insurgency "People's War" in 1996 essentially aimed to replace Nepal's constitutional monarchy with a communist republic [2], both contributing to a tumultuous political landscape.

In the late 1980s, Nepali films fully adopted the narrative style and visual elements of Bollywood Masala films, drawing inspiration from the dominant trends of the 1970s and 1980s. This shift becomes even more pronounced with the success of films like *Chino* (1991) and *Deuta* (God, 1991), which solidified Rajesh Hamal's status as a Megastar and Sunil Thapa's role as Rate, the villain in *Chino* (1991).

> Most popular Hindi films are melodramas – a narrative form characterized by the sharp delineation of good and evil, the use of coincidence, an excess of emotion, and the privileging of moral conflicts over psychological ones. The leading characters in a film, as well as the actors who play them, are popularly referred to as the **"hero," "heroine,"** and **"villain."** Hindi films present a moral universe and the narrative is initiated once this universe experiences a disruption. The disruption could have taken place in a previous generation or be very subtle and communicated briefly, but restoring order or resolving the disruption is usually the goal of the narrative.[3]

During the 1970s, significant socio-economic changes such as increased unemployment, poverty, and the imposition of emergency led to a shift in the focus of Hindi cinema. According to Jyotika Virdi, an associate professor at the University of Windsor in Canada, Hindi cinema veered towards narratives centered around individual revenge against social injustice, often portrayed through complex family melodramas.[4]

Deewar (1978)   *Chupke Chupke* (1975)   *Anand* (1971)

fig.1.   fig.2   fig.3

[1] BBC News, '*Nepal Timeline profile*' (2018) retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12499391
[2] Fahmida Ashraf 'Maoist Uprising in Nepal, Strategic Studies', Summer 2002, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Summer 2002), pp. 62-80. Published by: Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/45242608
[3] Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: a Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema,* Routledge Francis and Taylor Group, 2004, p.103
[4] Rajesh Naidu 'How the concept of love stories has evolved over the years' India Times (2017) Retrieved from http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/56184412.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.

According to Rauf Ahmend, during the "Angry Young Man" era, exemplified by films like *Zanjeer*, (1975) (fig.1), and *Deewaar* (1978), Amitabh Bachchan portrayed a rebellious archetype that resonated with the Indian public. He challenged the system, fought against social inequality, and unmasked institutional hypocrisy through acts of violence. Bachchan's characters prioritized justice over virtue, overshadowing romantic relationships. A series of blockbuster films in which Bachchan voiced the grievances of the common man, coupled with extensive media coverage, helped transform him into a cult figure. [1] Rauf Ahmed writes that Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, commonly known as K.A. Abbas gave Amitabh Bachchan a small role in the film *Saat Hindustani* (1969), which marked Amitabh Bachchan's debut in the film industry. He also writes that the director Hrishikesh Mukherjee recognized Amitabh Bachchan's potential and cast him as the character *Babu Moshai* (fig.3) in the film *Anand* (1971).[2]

The rise of Amitabh Bachchan's popularity overshadowed women's roles, resulting in a reduction of romantic subplots and limited space for female characters. As a result, women became peripheral figures in narratives that revolved around the exploration of newfound masculinity and were eagerly embraced by audiences throughout the 1970s and 1980s, eventually becoming an integral part of Hindi cinema.[3]

In the era dominated by masala films and the emergence of the "Angry Young Man" in the 70s, Amitabh Bachchan and Dharmendra, known for their roles in the blockbuster *Sholay* (1975) demonstrated their versatility (fig.2) in *Chupke Chupke* (1975) directed by Hrishikesh Mukherjee. This film provided a subtle counterbalance to the prevailing trend, bringing a refreshing equilibrium.[4] Hrishikesh Mukherjee[5] was greatly impressed by Amitabh Bachchan's commanding voice, courteous demeanor, and deep understanding of the craft of acting.[6]

> A subject of some of Hrishi-da's best films is how men and women move tentatively towards achieving parity in a relationship. And, importantly, how this happens not in a utopian world but within the assumptions of an often orthodox society, where gender roles[7] tend to be defined,

[1] Rauf Ahmed ' Le Phenomene Amitabh' *Les Stars du Cinema Indien*, Edition du Centre Pompidou/Centre National de la Cinématographie, Paris, 1985, p.56. (Personally, translated the text from French to English)

[2] *Idem.*

[3] Rajesh Naidu, op. cit.

[4] Sampada Sharma 'Hrishikesh Mukherjee's Chupke Chupke was the subtle antidote to the 'angry young man' era; a balance we have forgotten today', India Express (2022) Retrieved from https://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/hrishikesh-mukherjee-chupke-chupke-subtle-antidote-to-angry-young-man-era-7915586/

[5] Amitabh Bachchan and Hrishikesh Mukherjee formed a successful collaboration in numerous films such as Anand (1971), Abhiman (1973), Namak Haram (1973), Chupke Chupke (1975), Bemisal (1973), Mili (1975), Alaap (1977), and Jurmana(1979). Additionally, Bachchan served as the narrator in Bawarchi (1972) and made cameo appearances in Guddi (1971) and Gol Maal (1979). Rauf Ahmed, opt. cit., p.58

[6] Anitaa Padhya, *Ten Classic,* Mumbai, Manjul Publishing House, 2020, p. 237

[7] Hrishikesh Mukherjee's films challenged gender inequality and portrayed women differently from mainstream cinema. In *Anuradha* (1960), a husband's insensitivity towards his wife's talent was criticized. *Abhimaan* (1973) explored wounded

and 'progressiveness' doesn't mean completely shaking up the status quo; it can mean something subtler, such as a man gradually becoming more sensitive to his wife's inner life and learning new things about himself—his emotional dependence, his capacity for love, his own feminine side—in the process.[1]

Middle Cinema bridged the gap between extravagant Bollywood and serious art-house films of the 1970s and 80s. It depicted everyday characters and settings, resonating with middle-class sentiments. Led by filmmakers like Basu Chatterjee and Hrishikesh Mukherjee[2], it evoked urban nostalgia and feel-good stories. However, Middle Cinema often overlooked significant socio-political events of the time.[3]

> Honey Irani was writing in the wake of the powerful parallel cinema movement that had reached its peak in the late 1970s and had provided, among others, two enormously talented parallel cinema female stars, Shabana Azmi and Smita Patil, who had portrayed complex female characters in films such as Ankur/Seeding Bengal, 1974), Bhumika/Role (Bengal 1974), and Mirch Masala/Hot Spice (Mehta 1987). Their particular brand of realism is obviously different from the realism of Irani's scripts. Similarly, the middle-of-the-road cinema of Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Basu Chatterjee, Sai Paranjpye, and Gulzar that targeted the more urban, educated middle-class audience also offered alternative "realistic" portraits of women in rural or urban settings in Guddi (Mukherjee 1971), Rajnigandha/Tuberose (Chatterjee 1974), Aandhi/Strom (Gulzar 1975a, 1982) that was distinct from the world of commercial Hindi cinema.[4]

Throughout the 1990s, Nepali cinema was largely untouched by the Middle Cinema and Parallel Cinema movements. Instead, it carved its own path with the emergence of its own "Angry Young Man," Rajesh Hamal who made his debut in the film *Yug Dekhi Yug Samma* in 1991, directed by Deepak Raymajhi, gained immense fame for his portrayal of Shankar in the film *Deuta* (1991), directed by Tulsi Ghimire (fig.4), "*Hey!!! Human, I'm human but for someone evil like you, I'm Shankar, Shankar !!*" became popular among Nepali audiences and lead to his delivering notable performances in films like *Chatyang* (1992), *Paribhasha* (1994), *Prithvi* (1994), *Seemana* (1996), *Shankar* (1997).

A notable aspect of Amitabh Bachchan's portrayal as the angry young man was his exceptional command over dialogue delivery, often written by the renowned duo Salim-Javed for films like *Sholay* (1975), *Zanjeer* (1973), *Deewar* (1975), *Kala Patthar* (1979), *Dostana*

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male pride when a wife outshines her husband professionally. Mukherjee's female characters avoided typical "vamp" roles. *Anupama* (1966) depicted a woman's journey toward independence and self-discovery. Juhi Saklani,' Hrishikesh Mukherjee: Stories, songs, and Socialism' Frontline (2022) Retrieved from https://frontline.thehindu.com/arts-and-culture/cinema/tribute-hrishikesh-mukherjee-stories-songs-and-socialism/article65926306.ece

[1] Jai Arjun Singh, *The World of Hrishikesh Mukherjee*, Penguin Portfolio, 2015, p.203

[2] *Ibid,* p.387*.* Interview with Gulzar, discussing "Style, Beauty and Economy", one aspect that deeply influenced Gulzar was Mukherjee's efficient shooting style. Mukherjee had a firm belief in avoiding unnecessary shots or additional angles and prioritizing concise editing.

[3] In Middle Cinema, protagonists were obedient and polite, embodying middle-class values. Despite their differences, both hero types shaped the unique male identity of the 1970s. Rituparna Sengupta, 'Middle Cinema Of The 70s Bridged Commercial And Arthouse', Outlook (2022) Retrieved from https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/art-entertainment/middle-cinema-of-the-70s-bridged-commercial-and-arthouse-magazine-197534

[4] Aysha Iqbal Viswamohan, *Women Filmmakers in Contemporary Hindi Cinema: Looking through their Gaze,* Springer Nature, 2023,p.62

(1980). The dialogues in these films were characterized by their simplicity, directness, and factual nature. When spoken, the words seemed to erupt passionately from the characters, adding to their impact and intensity. [1]

In the realm of Bollywood films, stars take center stage and hold greater significance compared to directors, producers, and other elements involved in the filmmaking process. They occupy a pivotal position, commanding attention and influence. The prominence of stars surpasses that of any other aspect, making them the focal point and driving force behind the success of Bollywood films. [2]

By the year 2000, Rajesh Hamal had been recognized as the Best Actor of the Decade, having already appeared in over 100 films. His success continued as he earned the titles of Star of the Year and Entertainer of the Year for consecutive years from 2003 to 2005. With numerous awards and nominations, Rajesh Hamal had become a beloved figure among audiences. In response to popular demand, "Rajesh Hamal Day" was established in 2006 and is now celebrated annually on October 10 in Nepal. This recognition and celebration are a testament to his remarkable achievements, extending beyond his acting career. The impact of Rajesh Hamal is so significant that he is hailed as the *Maha Nayak* (*Maha* as *great*, *Nayak* as *actor*), the Megastar of Nepal. [3]

Shahenshah (1988)   *Prithvi* (1993)

    fig.4   fig.5   fig.6   fig.7

A notable similarity can be observed in the scenes between two successful films *Shahenshah* (1988) featuring Amitabh Bachchan and *Prithvi* (1993) starring Rajesh Hamal. In both films, the protagonist walks toward the villains in the darkness (fig.4 and fig.6), with their identity concealed until they approach closely. When asked the same question "*Who are you?*" Amitabh Bachchan's character in Shahenshah responds, "*In relationships, I appear as your father, my name is Shahenshah (Emperor), Shahenshah*" (fig.5). Similarly, Rajesh Hamal's character in *Prithvi* (1993) replies, "*Prithvi is my name. For friends, this hand is a salute, but for enemies, it is a weapon*" (fig.7). Then, both scenes are followed by the fight sequence with

[1] Kush Varia, *Bollywood Gods, Glamour, and Gossip*, Columbia University Press, 2013, p. 101
[2] *Idem.,* p.119
[3] Rajesh Hamal, 'Biography', Official Site (2023) Retrieved from https://rajeshhamal.com.np/biography/

'Dishoom! Dhishoom!' sound effect.[1] Both actors deliver their dialogues with subtlety and depth in their voices. Rajesh Hamal's dialogue delivery undergoes a notable shift, as his acting style becomes increasingly exaggerated, and his voice grows louder in his later works. While Rajesh Hamal raises his fist[2] (fig.7), popularly used by the Bollywood actor Sunny Deol who revolutionized the hero concept with his debut film *Betaab* (1983) followed by *Arjun* (1985). These films introduced a new breed of angry young man and became synonymous with depicting unemployed youth.[3] In 1993, Sunny Deol's portrayal in the film *Damini* (1993), captivates audiences with his impactful dialogue, "*And when this 5-pound arm falls on somebody … a man doesn't wake up. He goes up there!*" In *Gadar* (2000) which ranks third in all-time blockbuster[4], Sunny Deol delivers a loud and intense performance, defining his acting style, and portraying the patriotic character of Tara Singh.

> Indian Heroes of the past did not have the physique like Salman Khan. Actors like Dilip Kumar, Shammi Kapoor, or Rajesh Khanna, never displayed biceps. Even the angry young man persona of Amitabh Bachan was not premised on a muscular physique. Only a real washout, like the wrestler-turned-out Dara Singh, survived showing off his muscles. This is not the case anymore. If actors Jackie Shroff and Sunny Deol, compensated for their limited acting talent with macho looks in the 1980s, Sanjay Dutt discarded drugs and his actress mother Nargis's delicate looks to reinvent himself as a hunk in the early 1990s.[5]

Ghayal (1990)   *Damini* (1993)   *Jeet* (1996)   *Gadar* (2001)

fig.8   fig.9   fig.10   fig.11

Simana (1996)   *Mato Bolcha* (1999)   *Hami Teen Bhai* (2001)   *Karma Yodha* (2005)

fig.12   fig.13   fig.14   fig.15

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[1] The term "Dishoom" represents the exaggerated sound effects used in Bollywood fight scenes, while "Dishkiyaoon" specifically refers to the artificial sound of a bullet (akin to the English expression "Kapow!"). By using these titles, it implies that the exaggerated and hyperbolic elements of Bollywood cinema have been embraced and celebrated within the realm of Bollywood films themselves. It suggests that the unrealistic and larger-than-life aspects of Bollywood have become an integral part of its cinephile culture. Ulka Anjaria, *Understanding Bollywood The Grammar of Hindi Cinema,* Routledge, 2021, p.22

[2] James Stout 'The history of the raised fist, a global symbol of fighting oppression.' *History and Culture*, National Geographic (2020). Retrieved from https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/history-of-raised-fist-global-symbol-fighting-oppression

[3] Under Rajkumar Santoshi's direction and Deol's production banner, Vijayta Films, Sunny transformed into India's own Rambo—an action hero guaranteeing strong film bookings. His popularity endured in the 2000s, notably with Gadar (2000), where he embodied an innocent, justice-seeking hero. *Ghayal* (1990) brought Sunny critical acclaim, earning numerous awards. Rachel Dwyer, *100 Bollywood Films (Screen Guides)*, British Film Institute, 2006.

[4] Gadar (2001) Box Office India. Retrieved from https://boxofficeindia.com/movie.php?movieid=657

[5] Aysha Iqbal Viswamohan, op. cit*.,* p.196

The influence of Amitabh Bachchan, the iconic angry young man of the 1970s, and Sunny Deol (fig.8-11), who ignited a fresh wave of anger in the 1980s, reverberated across the expanse of Indian cinema. The representative angry young man of Nepali cinema, Rajesh Hamal, stepped into this established archetype, employing loud and exaggerated acting styles, particularly in films influenced by the Masala genre (fig.12-15). Rajesh Hamal sustained this persona, reigning as the dominant angry young man of Nepali cinema until the late 2010s.

Rate, the villain of the 1990s

The 1990s witnessed a significant Bollywood influence on Nepali cinema, notably, the rise of characters such as Rate, portrayed by Suni Thapa, garnered immense popularity among audiences, reminiscent of the iconic villain Gabbar from the Bollywood Masala *Sholay* (1975)[1]. The character Gabbar Singh played by Amjit Khan (fig.16-18), despite his ruthless villainy, remarkably gained widespread audience favor. His dialogues and performance captivated moviegoers, creating a paradox where the main antagonist, known for brutality, became the most popular figure. This isn't indicative of a lack of moral judgment in the audience but rather underscores a shift from traditional Indian melodramas, where spectacle often outweighs narrative, presenting a fascinating aspect of the film's audience response. This dynamic unveils the film's constructed nature, dismantling representation norms and questioning cinematic storytelling's assumed naturalness. [2] One of the most popular Gabbar dialogues was "He who fears, dies!" (*Jo dar gaya, wo mar gaya*).

The film *Chino* (1991), is a Nepali Masala film, for its *lost and found*[3] and *revenge* action drama theme with two heroes who help their mother to take revenge and kill the Villain, played by Sunil Thapa. He delivers a chilling performance as Rate, an unrelenting villain. He commits a series of atrocious acts, including the murder of a husband in front of his wife, an attempted rape on her, and the theft of their money, resulting in significant family upheaval and the separation of a son from his mother. As the story progresses, Rate, who later adopts the name, Jes Babu, evolves into an even more sinister character, causing ongoing chaos in the village. Sunil Thapa's portrayal of Rate leaves a lasting impact on the audience, solidifying his

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[1] *Sholay* exemplifies a masala film, characterized by its episodic structure, song sequences, and a blend of drama, comedy, action, and tragedy. The movie resembles a thoughtfully curated assortment, akin to Lutgendorf's comparison of a well-designed banquet. Beyond Thakur's revenge plot against Gabbar, the film embodies the quintessential features of the masala genre. Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2004, pp.133-134

[2] Malti Sahai, Wimal Dissanayake, *Sholay, a Cultural Reading,* Wiley Eastern ,1992, p.59

[3] The *lost and found* can be regarded as a sub-genre of the masala film, a range of emotional moods and incorporate elements of comedy, drama, action, romance, and tragedy. Tejaswini Ganti, op.cit., p.139

status as a memorable and captivating figure. Thapa's versatility as an actor is evident as he adeptly depicts the character's journey from a young antagonist to an enduring villain throughout the film (fig.19-21). Notably, one of his dialogues, such as "*Rate doesn't like what he hears*" (*Rate lai yo kura manparena* !!!) further enhances his popularity and infamy.

Sholay (1975)

fig. 16

fig. 17

fig.18

Chino (1991)

fig. 19

fig. 20

fig. 21

Superstar of the 1980s and the 1990s

Bhuwan K.C. who had already achieved immense popularity and dominated the 1980s, continued to ascend to even greater heights with notable films such as *Chino* (1991), *Lobi Paapi* (1991), and *Sapana* (1993). And it was with the release of *Nepali Babu* (1999) that Bhuwan K.C. solidified his stature as a Superstar who plays a tempo driver (three-wheeler vehicle).[1] The character of Bhuwan K.C and the film is inspired by the Bollywood film *Raja Hindustani* (1996)[2] which was the third most commercially successful film in the 1990s.

In the Nepali film industry of the 1990s, a male-dominated narrative prevailed, relegating women to limited gender roles or mere love interests of powerful male protagonists. However, in the film *Nepali Babu* (1999) directed by Ugyen Chopel, there are two different portrayals of women. Jal Shah's character, initially a rural wife and mother, undergoes a transformation influenced by negative forces, aspiring to become a city 'actress/heroine' and eventually leaving her family, including her child. This departure challenges norms but is depicted negatively, showcasing an unconventional career-focused female protagonist, a rarity in Nepali cinema where such portrayals often carry unfavorable connotations.

Sushmita K.C.'s character, a London-born woman visiting Kathmandu, faces criticism and judgment due to her background[3]. Tragically, she becomes a victim of sexual assault by

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[1] Laxmi Nath Sharma, *History of Nepali Cinema, Kathmandu*, 2016, p.235

[2] *Raja Hindustani* (1996) Box Office India. Retrieved from https://boxofficeindia.com/movie.php?movieid=2737

[3] This character draws inspiration from the Bollywood film *Kuch Kuch Hota Hain* (1998), where Shahrukh Khan's college character judges a new girl from London based on her modern clothes.

the son of her father's friend, who was supposed to accompany her home (fig.22). However, Bhuwan K.C., portraying a tempo driver, steps in and confronts the villain, emerging as the hero. Before this pivotal moment, the film depicts the sexual assault in a light-hearted manner, with Bhuwan K.C. making remarks like, "*This is not London, this is Nepal. You can't behave like that*" (fig.23). This approach aims to portray the hero as someone who handles situations differently from the stereotypical angry young man persona. However, it inadvertently portrays the independent heroine, Sushmita K.C., as helpless and dependent on the hero for assistance (fig.24).

This scene also serves to highlight the villain's character and underscores the hero's role as the woman's rescuer (fig.25). However, it is worth noting that the hero's primary focus is on saving the woman, which tends to overshadow other aspects of his character. This aspect of the film draws parallels to the characteristics often observed in male protagonists of 1990s Bollywood films. In those films, male leads frequently engaged in name-calling, displayed disrespect towards female protagonists, and were portrayed in a humorous manner. Bhuwan K.C.'s character in this film exemplifies such a portrayal. It is important to acknowledge that despite the judgment, misbehaviors, and name-calling, the heroine falls in love with the hero. Typically, such behaviors are directed towards women who are depicted as modern, with short hair and contemporary attire as seen in the case of Sushmita K.C.

Nepali Babu (1999)

| fig.22 | fig.23 | fig.24 | fig.25 |

The Portrayal of Husband and Wife in Nepali Films

Dakshina (Offering, 1993) one of the most successful films is written and directed by Tulsi Ghimire. [1] The film revolves around a character, played by Tulsi Ghimire himself, who is highly revered and idolized as an ideal professor of philosophy in both the college and the village. He is shown as someone who goes beyond his duties, even volunteering to clean the

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[1] The tenth directorial venture, the title itself, "Dakshina," holds deep meaning, representing Ghimire's profound gratitude and reverence towards his mentor and teacher, Kamlakar Karkhanis. Karkhanis, a renowned Hindi film editor known for his contributions to films like *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977), played a pivotal role in Ghimire's early career. Prior to undertaking his own projects, Ghimire had the privilege of assisting Kamlakar Karkhanis on more than thirty films in India and also had already worked on various technical aspects of filmmaking where he worked as a light boy, spot boy, camera caretaker, and even stuntman. The Annapurna Express 'Tulsi Ghimire: A disciple who more than paid his guru Dakshina (2022) Retrieved from https://theannapurnaexpress.com/news/tulsi-ghimire-a-disciple-who-more-than-paid-his-guru-dakshina-29763/

college when students make a mess, and his actions inspire the students to follow his lead. The film focuses on the loving relationship between the professor and his wife. It portrays their journey from young parenthood to old age, offering a rare depiction of a strong and caring husband-wife relationship in Nepali cinema. However, a significant aspect that stands out is the absence of actions that challenge or redefine traditional gender roles. Despite the character's words, there is no depiction of sharing the load or challenging gender norms in the film.

In the opening scene of the film (2:37-3:37) , *Dakshina* (1993), the camera pans left (fig. 26) from the picture of 'Mahabharata' (The Bhagavad Gita) to the photo frame of the husband and wife (fig.27 with the voice-over of the husband. " *Karmanye Vadhikaraste Ma Phaleshu Kadhachana. - This is just like a parrot mindlessly repeating a mantra. The philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita and the philosophy of the modern world, there have been vast differences*." The camera continues moving downwards from the photo frame of the husband and wife to the shelf filled with many books and a name titled '*Professor. Hari Kumar. Masters in Philosophy* (fig.28). As he takes his watch and turns around (fig.29), his wife brings him polished shoes (fig.30). Husband says, " *This is the mistake that you women often make. I could have polished my own shoes*". The wife replies, "*What's wrong if I did it? Serving my husband is also a part of my duty*" to which the husband replies, " *That is true*". The wife places the shoes next to her husband's feet and tries to help him put them on - attempts to touch the feet (fig.31). Husband instantly says, "*Do you want to do that too? Now, go and bring my file.*" The wife goes and brings him the file. Then, the husband continues, "*You all advocate for women's liberation, but at the same time, you act like slaves.*" The wife replies, " *This is not slavery. This is adoration, this is love.*" The wife brings the file and the baby. The husband kisses his son (fig.32) and kisses his wife on her cheeks as he leaves for work(fig.33).

Dakshina (1993)

| fig.26 | fig.27 | fig.28 | fig.29 |

| fig.30 | fig.31 | fig.32 | fig.33 |

'*Karmanye Vadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadhachana*' which translates as '*Do your duty without any results or expectations*' is the same verse used in *Maitighar* (1966) by Maya when

she reads from the Bhagavad Gita book. In the film, Maya also uses the word '*Swami*' which is used to address Hindu husbands by their wives as lords. Though in the film, *Dakshina* (1993), the wife doesn't address her husband as such but the action, almost touching the feet, (fig.31) and the dialogue exchange highlight the subtle underlying gender dynamics and the wife's perspective on fulfilling her role as a devoted spouse. The husband's assertion that women make a mistake by serving their husbands aligns with traditional gender roles and expectations. The wife's response challenges this notion, emphasizing that her actions stem from a sense of duty rather than slavery. This interaction sheds light on the subtle power imbalances and societal expectations inherent in relationships and traditional gender norms. The film reinforces traditional gender roles by presenting the male protagonist as an ideal and respectable professor, a loving husband, and a father. Meanwhile, the female character's role is limited to that of a good wife and good mother.

> A wife, for instance, has always occupied a lower pedestal in Indian society. Films fuel the differences further. (...) While there are dialogues that demean a woman as a wife, there are dialogues that elevate the status of the husband, equating him to God and even superior to the immortal, thereby emphasizing the concept of *Pati Parmeshwar* (The Hindu belief of the husband being the wife's lord) in Indian culture. [1]

Towards the end of the film, the professor's wife is bestowed with the title of a great woman at the cremation (fig.34). A shocking revelation awaits her as she learns that her son has been jailed. The weight of regret engulfs her (fig.35) as she reflects (Flashback) on her decision to have expelled him from the house for disrespecting his father for being a teacher.

The magnitude of this revelation is so overwhelming that it ultimately leads to her untimely demise (fig.36-39). The scene utilizes Bollywood-style melodrama through the use of background music, intense crying, shocking moments, fast cuts, and close-ups capturing tears and emotional reactions, the scene aims to evoke sympathy from the audience by employing elements of death, loss, and grief to intensify the emotional impact.

It is important to acknowledge that the act of a husband kissing his wife on the cheek represents a relatively new expression of love and sentiment in contemporary Nepali society in the 1990s which was not commonly portrayed or depicted in the past. This gesture symbolized a shift in social dynamics, reflecting changing attitudes towards affection and the cultivation of a loving bond between spouses.

The film *Muna Madan* (2003) directed by Gyanendra Deuja, the film portrays the thoughtfulness of the husband by showcasing his participation in household chores and

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[1] Sana Fatima and K. M. Baharul Islam 'Negotiating Gender Spaces in Mainstream Bollywood Narratives A Thematic Discourse Analysis of Female Representation', *Misogyny across Global Media*, Lexington Books, 2021, p.207

accompanying his wife (fig.40-41), highlighting a progressive and supportive husband-wife relationship even if they were in two scenes. The portrayal of a loving husband and wife is found along with the depiction of the activities (fig.42-43) that portray the support of the husband towards his wife.

Dakshina (1993)

| fig.34 | fig.35 | fig.36 |

| fig.37 | fig.38 | fig.39 |

Muna Madan (2004)

| fig.40 | fig.41 | fig.42 | fig.43 |

Kamla Bhasin, an activist, poet, and writer who was an early leader of the women's movement in India, a First-Wave South Asian Feminist[1], writes *Understanding Gender* which delves into the multifaceted concept of gender. [2] In 1996, "Women Studies" was introduced for the first time in Nepal. It addresses gender issues and aims to produce graduates equipped to work with development agencies promoting women's empowerment and gender equality.[3]

Original Nepali Stories

> During the two decades since the inception of Nepali Cinema, the focus shifted towards commercial success, with producers and directors prioritizing the Hindi Cinema formula over telling original Nepali stories.[4]

According to Laxmi Nath Sharma, Nepali films have the potential to cultivate a unique cinematic identity by embracing original Nepali narratives and distancing themselves from

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[1] The New Yorth Times, 'Kamla Bhasin, a First-Wave South Asian Feminist, Dies at 75', (2021). Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/04/world/asia/kamla-bhasin-dead.html

[2] It is about the importance of gender equality and challenges patriarchal systems that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and violence. It also provides an insightful exploration of the social construction of gender, shedding light on the power dynamics, norms, and stereotypes that shape our understanding of masculinity and femininity. It offers a comprehensive analysis of gender issues, including sexuality, reproductive rights, and the role of language and media in reinforcing gender norms. Kamala Bhasin, *Understanding Gender*, Women Unlimited, New Delhi, 2000

[3] Central Department of Home Science, 'One-year post-graduate diploma in Women' Tribhuvan University (2023) Retrieved from https://cdhsc.edu.np/women-studies/

[4] Laxmi Nath Sharma, *Filmmaking: Principal, Style, and Elements,* Lalitpur, 1981, p.253

the pervasive influence of Bollywood. However, the impact of Bollywood on Nepali cinema goes beyond the mere incorporation of masala elements. It permeates the very fabric of storytelling, encompassing techniques, narrative structure, character development, and visual aesthetics that often reflect the conventions popularized by Bollywood. Consequently, Nepali films, despite showcasing original Nepali stories, often adhere to the familiar Bollywood style. This observation is evident in the analysis of two films: *Balidan* (Sacrifice, 1997) directed by Tulsi Ghimire, which portrays the democratic movement against the Panchayat regime, and *Muna Madan* (2003) directed by Gyanendra Deuja, an adaptation of the widely celebrated Nepali narrative poem by the same name.

Balidan (1997) features Hari Bansha Acharya as Arjun, one of the protagonists, and Madan Krishna Shrestha as a retired captain. Laxmi Nath Sharma writes that the film *Balidan* (1997) had a profound impact on the Nepali audience, highlighting the potential of cinema to raise awareness and transform collective perspectives. The film's songs, though simple, carried powerful messages of awakening. He also notes that the storyline of *Balidan* (1997) was simple yet portrayed a formidable resistance against injustice and exploitation. **27** One of the songs featured in the film was '*Gaun Gaun Bata Utha*' (*Rise from every village, rise from the community, We can reshape our nation, let us rise together*) written and composed by Shyam Tamot.[1] The song carries timeless emotions that connect with people from all walks of life, regardless of their age, ethnicity, or nationality. This widespread resonance is evident in its translation into 17 languages, including Chinese, Hindi, and English.[2]

Balidan (1997), the climactic sequence (2:21:01- 2:26:53), Arjun, the protagonist is severely injured, and the police officer played by Nir Shah takes him in his arms while Arjun pleads with him for death (fig.44). The police officer refers to him as a great patriot and he must live. Then it cuts to the next scene which features a long action sequence (fig.45) with a '*Dishoom! Dishoom!*' effect, among Arjun's friends, the retired captain, and the villains. The police officer decides to free Arjun from his pain, he prepares to shoot him just then the retired captain arrives with a gun pointing at the police officer to save Arjun (fig.46). The scene takes

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[1] The song, a response to the restrictive political climate under Nepal's party-less Panchayat regime, aiming to unite people and overthrow the autocratic system. Released during the year of student protests triggered by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's execution, the song became an anthem for the protesting students. Since then, the song, sung during major protests such as the 1979 student protests (*Chhattis Saal ko Andolan*), the 1990 Jana Andolan (People's Movement), the 2006 People's Movement, and the 2019 Guthi Bill protests. Even after four decades, the song maintains its emotional impact and relevance. Ankit Khadgi 'The birth and life of Nepal's most iconic revolutionary song' The Kathmandu Post (2021) Retrieved from https://tkpo.st/2XDfbXh

[2] Kumudini Pant, The man behind Nepal's most popular protest song' The Annapurna Express (2021) https://theannapurnaexpress.com/news/profile-the-man-behind-nepals-most-popular-protest-song-3350/

a dramatic turn, the police officer shoots Arjun (fig.47) and the retired captain shoots the police officer. Arjun falls to his death and takes his last breath, portrayed in slow motion (fig.48). Simultaneously, his wife gives birth in the jungle, accompanied by her mother-in-law. The police officer salutes Arjun before his own demise (fig.49). Arjun's wife arrives with her baby and mother in-law. There is an absence of music that enhances the impact, emphasizing the whistling wind and swirling leaves with the echo sound of a baby crying in the background. Upon discovering Arjun's dead body, the wife reacts with anguish and urgency (fig.50), depicted in slow motion (fig.51). She screams his name, "*Arjun!!*" (fig.51) and Arjun's mother screams his name too (fig.52). Then ambient sound transition to the title song, '*Balidan*' with the voice-over of Arjun referring to the retired captain, "*Die for your country, fight for your country. Listen to this pleading, it's the voice of your country.*" Then, the retired captain salutes as well (fig.53). The wife stops crying and then she looks determined (fig.54). As the music transitions to a drum march, the wife's resolute declaration echoes, "*Arjun is not dead, he is an immortal. Long live revolution*"(fig.55) with the baby crying in the background (fig.56) and the wife repeats, "*Long live revolution*"(fig,57) and then with everyone raising their fists and the title *the end* appears and together say, " *Love live revolution*" (fig.58).

Balidan (1997)

fig.44	fig.45	fig.46	fig.47
fig.48	fig.49	fig.50	fig.51
fig.51	fig.52	fig.53	fig.54
fig.55	fig.56	fig.57	fig.58

The portrayal of death already seen a decade ago in the masala-inspired Nepali film *Saino* (1987), is applied in the sequence and overall, the film *Balidan* (1997), demonstrates a strong influence from Bollywood's narrative style prevalent during that time, despite being inspired by the political climate in Nepal during the end of the Panchayat system.

Muna Madan (2003)

It is adapted from the book, a narrative poem, written by Laxmi Prasad Devkota, a celebrated Nepali poet, playwright, scholar, and novelist, who holds the esteemed title of *Mahakavi* (*Maha as Great, Kavi as Poet*), the great poet of Nepal.[1] He is a proficient writer and master of several genres, touched the lives of millions of Nepali readers, through his unique ability to write for people of all ages, from school-going children to the elderly, which is exemplified in the cherished work "Muna Madan." This literary masterpiece resonates with the Nepali people, and its popular couplets have become ingrained deeply in the hearts of people. It is a tragic tale based on the *Jhaurey*[2] folk tune. It eloquently portrays the theme of migration for economic opportunities through Madan's arduous journey to Lhasa. It depicts the profound love and affection shared between a husband and wife, as well as the intricate bond between a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law. Madan's illness on his journey home, being abandoned by friends, and being saved by a man from a lower caste emphasize the significance of humanity. As Madan returns home, he discovers the deaths of his loved ones, realizing the emptiness of wealth without them.

The film adaptation of *Muna Madan* draws from its poetic origins, offering the filmmaker a wide range of creative possibilities.[3] However, the focus is on exploring narrative parallels and drawing inspiration from renowned Bollywood films like *Mother India* (1957) and incorporating elements of Bollywood masala.

Mother India (1957), (56:32-57:06), the landowner takes away a bull from Radha. There is an absence of any background music or sound effects, only at the very end of the

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[1] He is also known for his golden heart and his notable works include Muna Madan, Sulochana, Kunjini, and Sakuntala. It is worth mentioning that he accomplished impressive feats within short timelines, writing the epic *Shakuntala* in three months, *Sulochana* in just 10 days, and completing the extensive narrative poem *Kunjini* in a single day. 'Devkota's 114th birth anniversary being marked' Republica (2022) Retrieved from https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/devkota-s-114th-birth-anniversary-being-marked/

[2] *Jhyaure* A Nepali fold meter with a caesura at the end of the fifth and the tenth letter of each sixteen-letter line. Padma Devkota, *Muna Madan* (The first complete translation), Adarsh Books, New Delhi, 2018, p.144

[3] Adaptation studies involve the examination of authorial relationships when works are transformed from one medium to another. However, different disciplines hold varying views on authorship. Literary criticism traditionally regards the author as a central figure, while film studies often assign primary creative responsibility to the director, aligning with the auteur theory. In contrast, media and communication studies prioritize the actions of cultural institutions and reception processes. When these perspectives converge in adaptation studies, there is an opportunity to reassess notions of creativity and authorship. While directors are typically regarded as accountable for the overall vision of film adaptations, it is essential to acknowledge screenwriters as significant creative contributors. Deborah Cartmell, *A companion to literature, film, and adaptation*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, p.393

scene, a piece of music is played very lightly in the background. The youngest son, Birju, expresses his affection for the bull by stroking its head (fig.59) and pleading for it to stay (fig.60), shedding tears when it is taken away. Radha consoles him (fig.61) and holds him in her arms as her elder son leads the bull out of the house (fig.62).

Mother India (1957)

| fig.59 | fig.60 | fig.61 | fig.62 |

Muna Madan (2003)[1], Scene 1 (42:12-48:38), the landowner of the village comes to collect money with his sidekick at Madan's house where the mother and muna are only home and they do not have money to return. The moment landowner appears on the screen with villainous music playing, the sidekick suggests taking away the cow instead (fig. 63). The landowner, happy with the suggestion demands his sidekick to get the cow. At that very instance, Madan appears and says, '*No*!' (in an echo effect and silence) (fig. 64) The tension rises as the camera zooms in on the angry landowner (fig. 65) accompanied by suspenseful music. Madan approaches the landowner who was sitting and then the landowner stands (in slow motion) the music continues as before. The landowner starts insulting Madan and Madan folding his hands (fig.66), explains that the cow was a gift from Muna's father and that it means a lot more than just a cow. The music dynamically shifts between melancholy and suspenseful evil. When the landowner disagrees, the music turns suspenseful, but as Madan pleads, it transitions back to melancholy (fig.67). However, instead of relenting, the landowner viciously kicks Madan on his chest (fig.68-69) and continues to strike him with his walking stick. The music alternates between melancholy and villainous, reflecting the characters' emotions. Muna runs toward Madan and the mother follows (fig.70-71) and they implore the landowner to spare Madan (fig.72) and take the cow away. The sidekick obeys his master's command and takes the calf as well, enabling the cow to leave the house effortlessly (fig.73). The scene concludes with all three on the ground, the mother crying alongside Muna who consoles Madan in pain (fig.74).

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[1] The film set in the 1930s, aims to depict an authentic portrayal of village life through rural settings, traditional utensils, and agricultural activities like farming and cultivating, plowing. Through these elements, the film provides a glimpse into the everyday life of villagers, capturing the essence of their livelihood and the cultural context of the time period.

Muna Madan (2003)

fig.63

fig.64.

fig.65

fig.66

fig.67

fig.68

fig.69

fig.70

fig.71

fig.72

fig.73

fig.74

The scene employs masala elements to create a heightened emotional experience for the audience. The introduction of the landowner with villainous music immediately establishes his negative and antagonistic role. The use of slow-motion, camera zooms, echo sound effects, and silence during Madan's interjection heightens the drama. The dynamic shifts between melancholy and suspenseful, villainous tones enhance the emotional impact. The acts of physical aggression contribute to Madan's victimhood and the mercy and sacrifices from Muna, and the mother intensify the sympathy the audience feels toward him.

Starting from the 1980s, there has been a noticeable deterioration in the filmmaking style of Nepali cinema. This decline in quality ran parallel to a transformative phase in Bollywood, which exerted a significant influence on the Nepali film industry. Furthermore, from around 2000 onwards, the impact of *Indian Television Serials[1]* may have become evident, aiming to evoke a wide array of emotions from the audience. As a result, the overall quality of these films has declined. These films often employ techniques to prolong scenes, including repetitive shots, echo sound effects, and amplified background scores. Visual effects like slow motion, zooms, and camera movements are also extensively used to further extend the duration of scenes. According to Dambar Bhatta, during the period of 2000, Indian television serials gained immense popularity in Nepal and had a significant influence on the lifestyle and culture of urban Nepali people. Shows like '*Kahani Ghar Ghar Kii*' (2000), '*Kyuki Saas Bhi Kavi*

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[1] India took a turn backward in terms of content. Almost as a reverse impact of Globalisation: Indian viewers and certain classes of Hindus felt that they were losing touch with the 'Indian values' that families had by showing all these 'Western shows' and went back to the ideal woman 'aadarsh nari' and families run by clueless women who are solely guided by 'god' and are capable of holding the family together through tears and prayers.Nayonika Sen, 'The Evolution Of Hindi Television And Their Portrayal Of 'Indian Values' (2019) Retrieved from https://feminisminindia.com/2019/04/17/indian-television-shows-values/

Bahu Thi' (2000), and '*Kasauti Zindagi Kay*' (2001) greatly impacted urban women in Nepal, creating strong emotional connections with the characters.[1]

Muna Madan (1936), the book cover

In the book, the poem begins with Madan's departure for Lhasa, and the corresponding book cover captures a poignant moment between Muna and Madan (fig.75). The explicit interpretation of the image reveals a heartfelt scene without requiring in-depth analysis. Muna and Madan are dressed in traditional Nepali attire, with Madan's bag placed nearby. In the image, Madan tenderly holds Muna in his arms, his head bowed down towards hers, while Muna rests her head on his chest, tightly embracing him around the waist. This intimate depiction portrays a profound sense of closeness and affection between the two characters as they share a poignant moment just before Madan embarks on his journey. The image also captures the essence of a balanced relationship between Muna and Madan, highlighting their companionship, which is consistent with the portrayal in the poem.
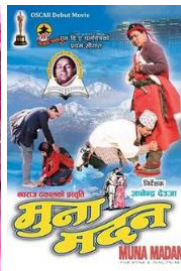

fig.75   fig.76

However, the in the film, Scene 2. (1:03:34 - 1:07:16) doesn't portray the same warmth seen on the cover photo of the book. Madan comes out of the house, dressed and with a packed bag. The priest approaches to put a tika (a red vermillion mark) on Madan's forehead for good luck on his journey. Madan bows down and touches the priest's feet as a sign of respect and then his mother's feet with his head. These instances of touching the feet are portrayed in a short span. In the background, light flute music is playing, transitioning into a higher melody as a descant. Muna comes out sobbing, carrying a plate and a tiny cup made of copper (fig.77). Then, she washes the tips of Madan's toes (fig.78), drinks water from the washed feet (fig.79), places the remaining water on her head (fig.80), and bows down to touch Madan's feet with her head (fig.81). With tears in her eyes, she stands up and looks at Madan. The camera swings from behind Muna's head (fig.82) towards Madan's face (fig.83), and then this action

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[1] This influence extended to various aspects of Nepali culture, including the adoption of 'Sherwani' attire for grooms and changes in urban women's fashion choices. Urban mothers-in-law began desiring daughters-in-law resembling TV characters, and festivals like Deepawali and *Karva Chauth* started mirroring on-screen depictions. Furthermore, ornament designs and *Henna* traditions during marriage ceremonies were also influenced by these television serials. Dambar Bhatta, Soft Power of Indian Television Shows in Nepal, Retrieved from
https://www.academia.edu/5089112/Soft_Power_of_Indian_Television_Shows_in_Nepal_Submitted_By_Submitted_To

is repeated once more simultaneously for another three times. The descant in the music stops, and only the flute continues playing in the background. Madan hesitates and cannot utter a word. Then the camera zooms in on Muna's face. Then, it cuts to a single shot of Madan, and the camera zooms in on his face. Madan's friend comes to join him for the departure (fig.84), and Madan's mother realizes his presence (fig.85). Madan wipes Muna's right eye and then her left eye. As he continues to wipe her tears, the camera tracks forward to Madan's friend, standing between Madan and Muna, who mentions that it's time to leave (fig.86). Madan bids his final goodbye to Muna and mother (fig.87). As Madan leaves, Muna starts crying loudly, causing him to turn around (fig.88). Muna throws her head on her mother-in-law and cries even louder, and her mother also cries (fig.89). Muna kneels on the ground, where Madan had stood when she washed his feet, in a low angle shot (fig.90). The camera zooms in on Madan's footprint (fig.91), as Muna slowly puts her hands on the ground, bows down, and touches the footprint with her head while crying (fig.92).

Muna Madan (2003)

fig.77	fig.78	fig.79	fig.80
fig.81	fig.82	fig.83	fig.84
fig.85	fig.86	fig.87	fig.88
fig.89	fig.90	fig.91	fig.92

The scene focuses on melodrama, with excessive crying and constant back-and-forth shots, zoom-in, and swing shots, along with the forceful, hyper background music, which seems to be aiming to only prolong the scene to evoke emotions from the audience. However, this approach ends up feeling contrived, as the actors' exaggerated acting and actions become overly apparent. Rather than allowing genuine emotions to arise naturally, the scene relies. The scene also depends on the portrayal of traditional values. While this element adds cultural depth

to the story, it seems to take precedence over the characters' true emotions and thoughts, failing to strike a balance between the two portraying that the connection and relationship between Muna and Madan is based on traditions.

The portrayal of women in the film reinforces stereotypical gender roles, presenting a limited definition of a "good woman" as one who conforms to traditional expectations. This is evident through Muna's character, who is depicted as a dutiful wife focused on upholding traditional values. The film emphasizes this portrayal by showcasing scenes of Muna touching her husband's feet, bowing her head in a Hindu tradition, and massaging his feet after work. The inclusion of the *Teej* festival, not present in the book, a celebration by married women for the long life of their husbands, further highlights the wife's devotion to her marital relationship. The film's poster (fig.76) also depicts Muna touching Madan's feet, emphasizing the traditional gender dynamics. The film briefly challenges gender role stereotypes and showcases a more egalitarian dynamic between them with two scenes of Madan participating in household chores and accompanying her (fig. 40-43). However, it ultimately falls short of fully challenging the traditional portrayal of Nepali women in Nepali films. Despite emphasizing traditional values, the film chooses to perpetuate the same stereotypes that have long been prevalent.

Muna Madan (2003) sheds light on a significant problem prevalent in Nepali cinema - the lack of emphasis on character building and development, which is not limited to Muna's character in the film. This issue extends beyond the confines of the film and reflects a broader trend within the Nepali film industry. Muna's character in the film is portrayed as a helpless woman who spends most of her time crying, which relies heavily on melodramatic techniques (fig.93-96). This one-dimensional depiction limits the depth and development of the character and hinders the actor's ability to showcase their skills.

| fig.93 | fig.94 | fig.95 | fig.96 |

Despite the portrayal of *traditional customs*[1] and gender roles in the film and despite being a melodrama film *Mother India* (1957), the character of Radha, played by Nargis, stands

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[1] Traditional customs in Indian society prescribe certain expectations for women, such as touching their husband's feet, eating after male members, fasting for their husband's well-being, and massaging the feet of their mother-in-law and elderly women. These customs, not applicable to men, are discriminatory and indicate the inferior position of women. The study aimed to determine if women have been able to change the practice of observing these customs. Non-observance of these customs suggests a higher status for women, as it signifies equal treatment with male members. G.D Bhatt, *Empowerment and Status of Rural Women A Central Himalayan Perspective,* M D Publications, 1998, p.37

out as an example. Unlike the limited portrayal of Muna in the film *Muna Madan* (2003), Radha's character is multi-dimensional and captivating in *Mother India* (1957). She communicates her strength and determination without any exaggerated expressions or body language. Even without relying on excessive music or dialogue, Radha's presence on the screen is commanding. For instance, in a scene where she *sits to eat after serving the entire family* (gendered practice), there is not much food left (fig.112) and the children come to eat again (fig.113) leaving her a little portion. Radha watches her children with a content smile and eats the last portion (fig.114) and drinks water (fig.115). There is soft music of sitar playing in the background during this scene. The camera stays with her portraying her satisfaction and contentment as a mother.
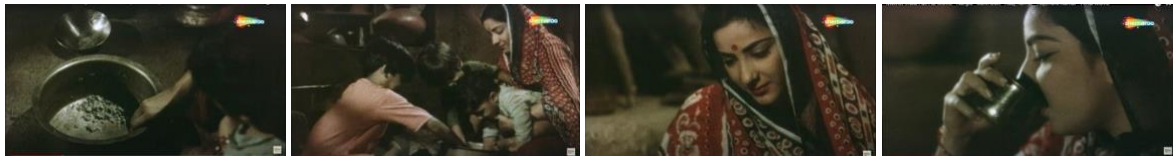
Mother India (1957)

| fig.112 | fig.113 | fig.114 | fig.115 |

The interpretation of the protagonists Muna and Madan can vary, but the overall portrayal leans towards depicting them as vulnerable and emotionally expressive takes precedence over highlighting their explicit qualities of courage, bravery, and wisdom. Furthermore, there is a noticeable trend in Nepali filmmaking style to prioritize external factors and plot devices to drive the characters' actions, rather than allowing the characters themselves to take the lead in shaping the story. This reliance on external factors diminishes the agency and development of the characters, resulting in a narrative where they are largely reactive rather than proactive.

Nepali filmmakers actively continued to incorporate successful elements from the 1970s in terms of encompassing a range of emotional tones and incorporating elements of comedy, drama, action, romance, and tragedy. This influence continued until the advent of digital cinema in the mid-2000s. One notable example which was one of the most successful films in Nepali cinema is *Hami Teen Bhai* (*Us, Three Brothers*, 2003), directed by Shiva Regmi, which drew inspiration from the acclaimed Bollywood film *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977) directed by Manmohan Desai a highly successful sub-genre of masala cinema for its *lost and found*[1] theme featuring Amitab Bachhan, Binod Khanna, and Rishi Kapoor as brothers. *Hami Teen Bhai* (2003) features renowned actor Rajesh Hamal and emerging stars

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[1] Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2004, pp.139

Shreekrishna Shrestha and Nikhil Upreti. Actresses Jharna Thapa, Nandita K.C., and Rekha Thapa also play significant roles in the film.

The screenshots of donating blood at the hospital of three brothers in both films, *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977) and *Hami Teen Bhai* (2003).

Amar Akbar Anthony (1977)   *Hami Teen Bhai* (2003)

fig.116   fig.117

By the mid-2000s, Rekha Thapa emerges as a prominent figure, embodying a new archetype for heroines, the angry young woman in Nepali cinema. This will be further explored in subsequent chapters.

Meanwhile, on Nepal Television during the year 1990, young audiences were introduced to an extraordinary heroine named *Meena*. It was during the period from 1990 to 2000, recognized as the "Decade of the Girl Child," that a notable emphasis was placed on empowering and supporting girls.[1] The character Meena is depicted as a little village girl who does not rebel or disobey her elders, instead, she uses her intelligence to find ways to do what she loves to do, for instance, go to school.

One of the team members of Meena Cartoon Nepal, Sharad Ranjit* recalls an incident in 2004 where an adolescent girl spoke about the impact of the Meena Cartoon that she was initially prevented from attending the same school as her brothers. After watching the Meena Cartoon series, her family had a change of heart and sent her to school.[2]

Meena Cartoon   fig.118[3]

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[1]Taking advantage of this momentum, Unicef created an animated film series centered around the inspiring character of Meena. 'Meena and UNICEF' (2023) Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/meena-and-unicef

[2] Meena Cartoon first aired in Bangladesh in 1993 and later expanded its broadcast to other South Asian countries. The team conducted numerous screenings and gathered feedback from children and parents, engaging in focus group discussions to assess understanding and the series' impact. The feedback was largely positive, with instances where viewers expressed how the series could have influenced their lives positively if it had been available earlier.

*Sharad Ranjit participated in the first animation workshop held in 1987

Nasana Bajracharya, Best of 2021: The story behind Meena Cartoon in Nepal, OnlineKhabar (2022) Retrieved from https://english.onlinekhabar.com/story-of-meena-cartoon-unicef-nepal.html

[3] Hasan Al-Mahmud 'Lessons to still learn from the 'Meena' cartoon' (2019) fig.118: Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/society/news/lessons-still-learn-the-meena-cartoon-1827541

CHAPTER FIVE: THE BEGINNING OF DIGITAL CINEMA (2000-2010)

The Royal Massacre: Tragedy and Political Transformations in Nepal

On the evening of June 1, 2001, a tragic shooting took place during a family dinner at the royal palace in Nepal. The incident resulted in the deaths of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, and several other family members. Crown Prince Dipendra, who was critically injured, passed away two days later. The king's younger brother, Gyanendra, who was not present during the shooting, survived along with his wife and son. With the crown prince and other heirs deceased, Gyanendra ascended the throne.[1] The Shah dynasty ruled Nepal since 1769, following the successful conquest of the Kathmandu Valley in 1768-69 by Prithvi Narayan Shah, who was crowned the king of Gorkha in 1743.[2]

Between 2001 and 2009, Nepal underwent a significant political transformation. In November 2001, Maoists ended a truce and launched coordinated attacks, leading to a state of emergency declared by King Gyanendra. The following years witnessed dissolved parliaments, truces, ceasefires, street protests, and the restoration of an absolute monarchy in 2005. However, international pressure and domestic unrest compelled King Gyanendra to lift the state of emergency, reinstate parliament, and eventually approve the abolition of the monarchy in December 2007. Nepal became a republic in May 2008. Despite challenges, including resignations, clashes, and concerns for the peace process, Nepal made strides towards democracy, marked by the election of a president and the integration of former Maoist rebels into the military. In 2009, the Maoists left the government following a dispute over integrating former rebel fighters into the military, contributing to further political shifts and dynamics in the country.[3]

In 1999, *Himalaya* directed by Éric Valli[4] made history as the first Nepali film to receive an Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign Film.[5] The film based in the mountain region sparked Nepal's artistic venture in cinema, inspiring a shift towards distinctive narratives apart from mainstream Nepali cinema. This transition, despite the limited number of films compared to mainstream Nepali cinema, and the success of *Himalaya*, films like

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[1] Marie Lecomte-Tilouine 'The Royal Palace Massacre, Rumours and the Print Media in Nepal' *Political Change and Public Culture in Post-1990 Nepal*, 2017, pp. 15 – 38

[2] John Whelpton, *A History of Nepal*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.8

[3] BBC News, '*Nepal Timeline profile*' (2018) https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12499391

[4] Renowned French photographer and film director known for his specialization in capturing mountain scenery, particularly in the Himalayas, including Nepal, Tibet, and Afghanistan. Eric Valli, '*Himalaya*', Official Site http://www.ericvalli.org/himalaya-eric-valli-film/

[5] Laxmi Nath Sharma, History of Nepali Cinema, p.600

Aadi Kabi Bhanubhakta (1999)[1] directed by Yadav Kharel, *Mukundo* (*Mask of Desire*, 1999) directed by Tsering Rhitar Sherpa, and *Numafung* (*Beautiful Flower*, 2001) directed by Nabin Subba. Departing from commercial films influenced by Bollywood, this gradual change aimed to prioritize storytelling essence over superficial elements, marking a significant turning point in Nepali cinema.

The Film Development Board (FDB) was established by the Government of Nepal on June 30, 2000, by the Government of Nepal in accordance with the Motion Picture (Production, Exhibition, and Distribution) Act, which was amended on November 20, 1991, to promote and support the motion picture sector.[2] Also, in 2004, there was the establishment of the first academic degree, bachelor's in film studies, in the country recognized by Tribhuvan University.[3]

Bollywood Stars' Impact on Nepal

Jayashree Kamble writes that how the opening up of India's economy in 1991 led to a significant shift in Hindi cinema, especially evident in the transformation of romance narratives, challenging conventional notions of the desirable hero. In 2000, director Rakesh Roshan achieved box-office success with his son Hrithik's debut film, *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai*.[4]

Hrithik Roshan became immensely popular in Nepal. However, protests erupted in Kathmandu on December 27, 2000, due to alleged anti-Nepal comments attributed to Hrithik Roshan.[5] The violence that ensued resulted in the loss of four lives, and numerous Indian shops and businesses were targeted in the attacks.[6]

Prior to the Hrithik Roshan riot in Nepal, various other Bollywood stars faced bans as a result of their remarks. In the 1970s, Dharmendra's statement stirred controversy and led to the ban of the film *Sholay* (1975) in the country. Similarly, in 1998, the film *Gharwali*

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[1] The first biographical movie on the poet, Bhanubhakta Acharya. Film Development Board, 'Historical Timeline of Nepali Cinema', Official Site (2023) https://film.gov.np/

[2] It serves as a liaison between filmmakers and the government, ensuring safety and fostering the interests of the public. The FDB facilitates the conceptualization, production, distribution, and exhibition of films in Nepal. Ibid 'Introduction' Official Site (2023) https://film.gov.np/pages/1/

[3] Oscar College Int. Official site (2023) Retrieved from https://oscar.edu.np/

[4] This masala film combined diverse elements like a cross-class love story, parental opposition, villains, choreographed dances, action scenes, and a memorable soundtrack.However, the film's triumph was not solely based on its familiar masala formula. It also introduced an innovative cinematic technique called the "double role" or "dual role," which revitalized the archetype of the romantic hero.Jayashree Kamble *The Globalized Avatar of the Hindi Cinema Hero: Hrithik Roshan's 'double role' in Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai* (2000), Oct, 2012 pp. 92-100 | film international issue 58-59

[5] ABC News, 'Indian Film Star Sparks Riots in Nepal' (2000) https://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=81838&page=1

[6] Jamim Shah, the chairman of Space Time Network, was fatally shot by two masked men on motorbikes near the French embassy in Kathmandu. This incident occurred ten years after Shah's Channel Nepal TV station was temporarily banned for falsely attributing anti-Nepal sentiments to Bollywood star Hrithik Roshan, resulting in riots. The false report claimed that Roshan had expressed hatred towards Nepal and its people in December 2000. BBC News, 'Nepal media chief shot dead in Kathmandu' (2010) http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8503067.stm

Baharwali depicted erroneous and unfounded representations of Nepalese cultures and traditions, resulting in its prohibition. During the same year, Madhuri Dixit, a prominent emerging Bollywood star, made a remark implying Nepal was a part of India, subsequently offering an apology for her statement.[1]

Evolution of Bollywood college portrayal since 1990 and the New Bollywood in 2001

As discussed earlier in the chapter on Nepali films of 1980 that in the early 1990s Bollywood heroes often exhibited aggressive, arrogant, and disrespectful behavior towards their love interests, which became a popular archetype in films such as *Dil* (1990) starring Aamir Khan. Later years, Aamir Khan revolutionized Bollywood with his innovative and socially-conscious approach to filmmaking. His commitment to pushing boundaries and addressing relevant social issues has made him a trailblazer in the industry. He fearlessly embraces risks and rejects the confines of traditional notions of filmmaking success. *Rang De Basanti* (2006), is a social drama that delves into the themes of patriotism and social activism, depicting a group of young individuals (college students) who take a stand against corruption and injustice. [2] In 2001, Aamir Khan established his own production company called Aamir Khan Productions. The company's inaugural film was *Lagaan, which was released the same year with Khan in the lead role.[3]

A decade after the film *Dil* (1990), he portrays a college student in a film called *Dil Chahata Hai* (2001) written and directed by Farhan Akhtar. The film depicts the journey of three college friends as they explore their individual roles in the world after completing their studies. The success of *Dil Chahta Hai* was significant because it marked the emergence of a new phenomenon in Bollywood known as the "new" Bollywood. Previously, films catered to a diverse audience that included both rural and urban viewers. [4]

"Farhan Akhtar, an actor-director–producer-writer displayed a range and style, played with aesthetics of narrative, and even experimented with stylistic devices such as color

[1] Neostuffs, 'Bollywood Controversies in Nepal (2014)https://neostuffs.com/2014/10/07/bollywood-controversies-in-nepal/

[2] The Economic Times, 'Aamir Khan celebrates 35 years in cinema' (2023) https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/new-updates/aamir-khan-celebrates-35-years-in-cinema-take-a-look-at-his-top-performances-best-films/articleshow/99869396.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

*Nomination for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film category at the 74th Academy Awards. https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/2002

[3] Emily Smith, *The Aamir Khan Handbook*, Tebbo, 2011, pp.2-3

[4] Asha Kasbekar Richards, *Pop Culture India Media, Arts, and Lifestyle*, ABC-CLIO, 2006, p.203

grading."[1] According to film scholar Rachel Dwyer who writes in *100 Bollywood films*, *Dil Chahta Hai* (2001) breaks new ground in several aspects, particularly in its profound exploration of character relationships.[2]

Edward Blaxell writes that popular films in the early 2000s saw more fluidity and experimentation compared to the star-dominated films of the 1990s. Filmmakers explored new concepts and moved away from traditional social and masala films, opening new opportunities for creativity and innovation in Bollywood. [3]

This pivotal era significantly redefined the art of storytelling within the realm of Bollywood and also witnessed Bollywood actors taking their stands in reshaping societies. In 2013, Farhan Akhtar founded, MARD a Hindi word for man and also an acronym for Men Against Rape and Discrimination organization, and in 2015 he became the first inaugural male ambassador for U.N. Women, promoting gender equality.[4]

In 2012, Aamir Khan took on the role of producer and host for the television show "Satyamev Jayate," directed by Satyajit Bhatkal. This show delved into important discussions and presented potential solutions to address various social issues prevalent in India. One notable episode titled "*When Masculinity Harms Men*," released in 2014, shed light on the negative aspects of masculinity. The episode was divided into six parts, with one segment titled "Reel vs Real." In this segment, a short video showcased extracts from Bollywood films until 2014, highlighting problematic representations of males towards females on screen.

These representations included themes such as Portraying that girls are attracted to disrespectful behavior, Endorsing lewd comments and degradation of women, Promoting violence towards wives or girls, Glorifying persistence despite refusal, Objectifying women as mere objects, and using item songs under the guise of entertainment. Despite these problematic portrayals, the episode acknowledged the prevailing trend in which *the hero always ends up with the heroine* in the film. [5]

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[1] Aysha Iqbal Viswamohan, Vimal Mohan John, *Behind the Scenes Contemporary Bollywood Directors and Their Cinema,*Sage, 2017, p.49

[2] Neelam Sidhar Wright , *Bollywood and Postmodernism Popular Indian Cinema in the 21st Century*, Edinburgh University Press, 2015, p.169

[3] Edward Blaxell, *Voyeurism, Intrusion and Aggression The Courtship Narratives of Modern Masala,* 2014, p.8

[4] MARD, an organization that focuses on engaging young male students in India to challenge traditional notions of masculinity in a country where almost half of the girls are married before they reach 18 years old. Lucy Westcott, '*Bollywood Star Farhan Akhtar on Being U.N. Women's First Male Ambassador*' Newsweek(2015) https://www.newsweek.com/bollywood-star-farhan-akhtar-being-un-womens-first-male-ambassador-313846

[5] Satyamev Jayate,'When Masculinity Harms Men' (2014) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuo4wbREE4U&t=3606s

Kamala Bhasin, an advocate for women's rights and respected social scientist[1] appeared in the same episode, she articulated the understanding that patriarchy is detrimental not only to women but also to men.[2]

Kamla Bhasin firmly emphasizes that the struggle was not directed toward men but against the patriarchal system and its detrimental manifestations such as violence, discrimination, and oppression. And that feminism is based on the radical idea that women deserve to be recognized as fully human, without seeking dominance over men or striving to become identical to them.[3]

The Rise of the Angry Young Woman

The emergence of the 'angry young woman' archetype in Nepali cinema is a response to the absence of well-rounded female characters who embody intelligence, resilience, empathy, and patience in their normal lives. Despite showcasing diverse portrayals of women since the early cinema there is a tendency to predominantly confine them to traditional roles as devoted mothers and wives. In the 1980s, portrayals often stereotyped women as uneducated village love interests, while modern women were depicted negatively. Although there have been instances of avenging women, products of patriarchal defiance and entwined with male violence. In the 1990s, women were often relegated to the role of dependent love interests, serving as a catalyst for the hero's actions.

Rekha Thapa found her popularity from her successful film *Himmat* (Courage, 2008) directed by Deepak Shrestha, which is inspired by the Bollywood film *Seeta Aur Gita* (1972), a comedic love story that revolves around a set of twin sisters who share an identical appearance[4] directed by Ramesh Sippy who later directs *Sholay* in 1975.

> It is unfortunate that such creative, lively, satiric, and comedic representations of women of the kind seen in Seeta aur Geeta did not ultimately seem profitable to the Bombay film industry. Seduced by the rise of superstar Amitabh Bachchan, whose success promoted a distinctive, Bachchan-style "angry young man" persona, heterosexual romance in film underwent significant attrition, leading to a steady eclipse of women's roles. [5]

Himmat (2008) disappoints in capturing the essence of the original film *Seeta aur Geeta* (1972), despite drawing inspiration from its main theme. The film lacks a cohesive narrative

[1] "A prominent feminist, accomplished poet, acclaimed author."Haris Zargar 'South Asian feminists mourn death of Kamla Bhasin' New Frame (2021) Retrieved from https://www.newframe.com/south-asian-feminists-mourn-death-of-kamla-bhasin/

[2] Satyamev Jayate, op.cit.

[3] Beena Sarwar, 'Kamla Bhasin, the Spirit of South Asia and the Power of the 4-Letter Word 'Love' The Wire (2021) https://thewire.in/women/kamla-bhasin-south-asia-love

[4] Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*, Routledge, 2012, p.207

[5] Jyotika Virdi, *The Cinematic Imagination Indian Popular Films as Social History*, Rutgers University, 2003, p.178

and instead overwhelms the audience with excessive masala elements, exaggerating the portrayal of the copied characters from the Bollywood film. While attempting to introduce a new type of "strong" heroine in Nepali cinema, the portrayal of *Himmat* (2008) is negative, emphasizing aggression and violence. The trend of incorporating excessive masala elements and exaggerating themes, as seen in *Himmat* is not a new occurrence. Nepali cinema has previously followed a similar path with films like *Saino* (1987), which drew inspiration from Bollywood film *Masoom* (1983).

> Characterization of women in women-centered commercial films is ambivalent. In imitating the role of a macho hero, she appears neither credible nor powerful as the "strong" woman character. She continues to be depicted as submissive in her romantic relationships with men.[1]

Rekha Thapa, inspired by the angry young man archetype and incorporates similar traits in her films (fig.1 and fig.3) like Rajesh Hamal, who established his persona in 1990, Rekha Thapa maintains a consistent portrayal since the film *Himmat* (2008), spanning a decade of films like *Kali* (2018). Her characters often exhibit impolite behavior, aggression, and bitterness, readily resorting to violence, while also being portrayed engaging in consuming alcohol, smoking, and taking tobacco behaviors (fig.2, fig.4, fig.5, and fig.6).

Himmat (2008) (fig.1-2) and *Kali* (2018) (fig.3-6)

fig.1.   fig.2   fig.3.

fig.4.   fig.5   fig.6

In the context of patriarchal norms and gender inequality, it is crucial to acknowledge that portraying a woman who embodies traditionally masculine traits like physical aggression, drinking, smoking, and impolite behavior does not necessarily challenge patriarchal structures.[2] While it may appear empowering within certain narratives, the broader implications of such representations must be considered. Stereotypical portrayals that mimic male behavior

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[1] Nelly P. Stromquist, *Women in the third world an Encyclopedia of contemporary issues*, Routledge, 2013, p.129

[2] Beena Sarwar, 'Kamla Bhasin, the Spirit of South Asia and the Power of the 4-Letter Word 'Love' The Wire (2021) https://thewire.in/women/kamla-bhasin-south-asia-love

reinforce the notion that power and strength are inherently masculine, perpetuating gender hierarchies. By equating strength solely with aggression and adopting traditionally masculine behaviors, these representations undermine the diversity and complexity of women's experiences, reinforcing limited gender stereotypes.

Interestingly, during this period, Rakhi Sawant, known as the item queen of Bollywood[1] debuted as an item girl in an item song called '*Mohabbat hai Mirchi*' in 2003 in *Chura Liyaa Hai Tumne* (2003), a Bollywood film (fig.6-11). An undeniable impact on Rekha Thapa's portrayal, shaping her approach to on-screen characters can be seen.

The romantic song '*Aankhama Gajal*', featured in the film *Himmat* (2008), incorporates elements from two different Bollywood films' songs. Firstly, it copies the concept and dance steps of the romantic song '*O Bhavre*' from the film *Daud* (1997), featuring Sanjay Dutt and Urmila Matondkar (fig.20 and fig.21). Secondly, it borrows a few dance steps and the use of camera movements, shot sizes, and editing techniques from the item song '*Mohabbat hain Mirchi*' from the film *Chura Liyaa Hai Tumne* (2003) featuring Rakhi Sawant.

In '*O Bhavre*,' the camera remains mostly still and maintains a distance from the dancing actress (fig.12-15), never coming closer than a mid shot (fig.16-17). On the other hand, in '*Mohabbat hai Mirchi*,' an item song known for its 'bold' dance performance (refers to a style of dance typically characterized by provocative and sensual movements) of Rakhi Shawant, the camera employs close-ups, low-angle shots, zooms, fast-paced shots, and body-scanning movements.

> The internalized sexual objectification that occurs as a result of hypersexualized portrayals of femininity in the media has been linked to various mental health issues. These harmful gender stereotypes not only affect women on a global scale but also have negative impacts on their mental, emotional, and physical well-being. The consequences of this hypersexualization include anxiety related to appearance, feelings of shame, the development of eating disorders, lower self-esteem, and more. It is clear that hypersexualization turns our bodies into a battleground. Society has conditioned us to believe that a girl's success lies in being desirable, without fully understanding the implications of this message. However, this so-called empowerment is nothing more than a false notion that neither liberates nor empowers us. Instead, it perpetuates the same traditional roles and expectations. [2]

It is crucial to acknowledge and address the issue of objectifying oneself, particularly in dance numbers or behaviors associated with the item girl dancers. These depictions often reduce women to mere objects of male desire, contributing to the commodification and sexualization of women's bodies (fig.18-23) in the film *Himmat* (2008) and Rekha Thapa

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[1] The Times of India, 'Rakhi Item Queen'(2009) https://photogallery.indiatimes.com/yearendershow/3885892.cms

[2] Sonia Suarez, 'Objectification and Women Empowerment: The social media scene' (2021) Retrieved from https://engagewithscience.org/objectification-and-women-empowerment-the-social-media-scene/

performs as an item dancer (fig. 24-26) in the film *Mero Auta Sathi Chha* (*I have a friend*, 2009). These influences, reflected in the camera movements and shot styles, highlight the objectification and sexualization of women and the impact of the male gaze on their portrayal.

Furthermore, the portrayal of the new heroine also fails to challenge these stereotypes despite attempting to present a "strong" character, the reliance on aggressive and objectifying behaviors only reinforces the existing gender dynamics and limited perceptions of women's empowerment, emphasizing objectification over empowerment.

'Mohabbat hain Mirchi' (2006) - (fig.6-11)

fig.6   fig.7   fig.8

fig.9   fig.10   fig.11

'*O Bhavre*' (1997) (fig.12-17)

fig.12   fig.13   fig.14

fig.15   fig.16   fig.17

'*Aankhama Gajal'* (2008) (fig.18-22)

fig.18   fig.19   fig.20

fig.21   fig.22   fig.23
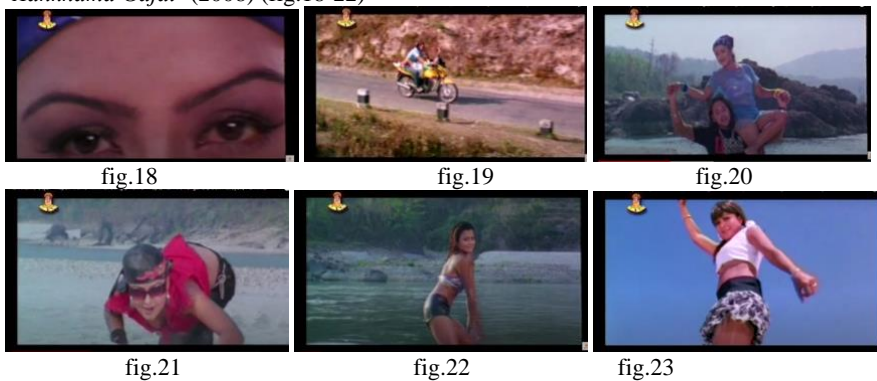
Mero Auta Sathi Chha (2009) (fig.24-26)

fig.24   fig.25   fig.2

Digital Cinema in Nepal

During the 2000-2010 period, Nepali mainstream films, despite the emergence of new ideas in Bollywood, opted to revisit old themes. While Bollywood was exploring new narratives and concepts, Nepali cinema chose to stick to familiar territory, relying on traditional themes and storylines. This conservative approach, coupled with the introduction of digital cinema techniques in 2008, resulted in visually appealing films that lacked substantial content innovation. The films may have appeared extravagant, but the core content remained largely unchanged, failing to push the boundaries of storytelling and artistic expression.

Kagbeni, the first digital film, was released in 2008 and directed by Bhusan Dahal.[1] By the mid-2010s, digital cinema had already gained popularity in the country. During the same year, *Sano Sansar*, directed by Alok Nemang, introduced a new style of filmmaking inspired by the 'New Bollywood' that emerged from the film *Dil Chahta Hai* (2001) directed by Farhan Akhtar. The film showcased new and young actors, introducing Karma Shakya, Namrata Shrestha, and Vinay Shrestha, who instantly became the faces of the youth in Nepali mainstream cinema. *Sano Sansar* (2008) garnered immense popularity in Nepal, paving the way for the introduction of other new talents like Ritcha Sharma, as well as establishing actors such as Nisha Adhikari, Jeewan Luitel, and Aryan Sigdel.

Sano Sansar (2008) took inspiration not only from various Bollywood films such as *Dil Hai Ke Manta Nahin* (1991), *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (*DDLJ*,1995), and *Barsat* (1995) but also incorporated the theme of the Hollywood comedy-drama film *You've Got Mail* (1998), directed by Nora Ephron. The decision to reference *You've Got Mail* was driven by the growing popularity of the Internet in Nepal since 1997. During the 2000s, internet culture thrived in Nepal, facilitated by the widespread establishment of internet cafes across the country.[2]

In *Sano Sansar* (2008), the film showcases a remarkable shift in acting skills by moving away from melodramatic techniques commonly seen in Nepali cinema. The actors deliver performances that reflect a more natural and realistic style, capturing the essence of people living in the urban city of Kathmandu. This departure from exaggerated expressions and dialogue adds authenticity to the film, which resonated with the audience and contributed to its popularity.

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[1] Film Development Board, 'Historical Timeline of Nepali Cinema' (2023) https://film.gov.np/

[2] However, as the internet became more affordable and accessible, coupled with the availability of mobile devices and computers, this trend faded relatively quickly. Veda Digital Media, 'History of the Internet in Nepal', (2020) Retrieved from https://www.vedadigitalmedia.com/history-of-internet-in-nepal/#:~:text=The%20history%20of%20the%20internet,through%20a%20project%20called%20ERNET

The other notable aspect is the introduction of a new kind of hero, an urban boy portrayed by Karma, who defies common stereotypes. This character embodies qualities such as sensitivity, moral integrity, and good habits, representing the emergence of a new ideal man in Bollywood referred to as "Not So Angry Men." This shift in portrayal is reminiscent of Imran Khan's character in *Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na* (2008). In the film, Imran Khan portrays a self-reliant individual who rejects the necessity of aggression to validate his masculinity. He willingly undertakes domestic responsibilities, emphasizing that they are shared duties transcending gender, thereby challenging established gender norms.[1]

In the year 2008, Nepali cinema experienced the emergence of a new archetype represented by Rekha Thapa, while films like *Sano Sansar* (2008) introduced Namrata Shrestha as a new urban girl character. However, the portrayal of women in Nepali cinema during this period remains stagnant, lacking significant progress. The depiction of an urban girl who deviates from the conventional heroine's features is a step in the right direction. However, in order to support the "good boy" character, the female character is portrayed as messy, confused, and aimless, potentially diluting her impact. This may be a deliberate juxtaposition inspired by Bollywood films like *Dil Hai Ki Manta Nahi* (1991), which itself is a remake of the screwball comedy[2] *It Happened One Night (1934)* directed by Frank Capra

In *Sano Sansar* (2008) sequence (3:23-14:01), Karma Shakya and Namrata Shrestha have their initial encounter. Namrata boards a bus and sits beside Karma, though they don't interact. Unnoticed by Karma, Namrata discreetly drinks alcohol from a bottle. Karma senses the alcohol scent but doesn't link it to Namrata, revealing his naivety. The bus unexpectedly halts at night due to a blockade, prompting the driver to suggest finding a nearby hotel. Concerned for Namrata's safety, Karma carries her to the local hotel while she sleeps. He places her on a table as a newlywed couple queries the hotel manager about a room. Karma then gently moves Namrata to a room and lays her on the bed. Namrata briefly wakes, vomits on her pants,

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[1] Meghna Mehra, 'The Many Masculinities In Bollywood: 1960s To The Present' Feminism In India (2019) https://feminisminindia.com/2019/10/16/many-masculinities-bollywood-60s-present/#:~:text=Masculinity%20in%20Bollywood%20Since%20The%20Beginning&text=During%20this%20era%2C%20actors%20like,defined%20gender%20roles%20in%20Bollywood.&text=Dharmendra%20also%20became%20famous%20for,screen%20with%20his%20famous%20dialogue

[2] Screwball comedies, popularised in the mid-1930s, were a distinctive genre within Hollywood's romantic comedy landscape. Known for their social satire and zany, fast-paced events, these films often depicted battles of the sexes and targeted the upper class. The disruption of a hero's life by a heroine was a common theme, with juxtapositions of various social, economic, and intellectual differences. Despite their conflicts, the protagonists ultimately found love and resolution through reconciliation or marriage. 'Screwball comedy films' Chandler Unified School District, (2017) pp.2-3 https://az01001175.schoolwires.net/cms/lib/AZ01001175/Centricity/Domain/8131/Screwball%20Comedy.pdf

and faints again. In response, Karma, with good intentions, removes her pants to address their condition.

This instance of 'removing clothes' is drawn inspiration from two popular Bollywood films: *Barsat* (1995), starring Bobby Deol and Twinkle Khanna, and *DDLJ* (1995), featuring Shahrukh Khan and Kajol. In *DDLJ* (1995), in the scene where Kajol wakes up confused about wearing Shahrukh Khan's shirt. The night before she had jumped into the pool after drinking alcohol (fig.27). There is no visual reference to the story of what happened with the clothes the night before. On the other hand, in *Barsat* (1995), Bobby Deol's character becomes unconscious after being attacked by dacoits in the middle of the jungle, and Twinkle Khanna's character drags him to a nearby house to seek shelter. Both get drenched in the rain. The old man in the house, who is blind, suggests that Twinkle should remove Bobby Deol's wet clothes to prevent him from catching a cold. A piece of comical background music plays as Twinkle hesitates and struggles to take off the clothes, while the camera remains focused on the head side of the bed where Bobby Deol lies unconscious (fig.28) and focuses on the reaction of Twinkle's hesitance towards the act.

In *Sano Sansar* (2008), as Karma decides to take off Namrata's pants, comical music starts playing in the background. The camera sits next to the bed and then very slowly pans from her face to her waist (fig.29-30) followed by the voiceover of Karma saying "*I can't take it off! But the stink will kill me if I don't. Man up! Take them off! Close your eyes.*" (fig. 31). He tries to open the pants button and then quickly takes aways his hands showing his hesitations, he finally opens the pants and pulls them down a little (fig.32). He says, "*I'm taking it off... close your eyes ... whatever happens*" Cuts to the close-up of Karma peeking (fig.33) and then back to the pants that he is still taking them off (fig.34) and then the camera slowly tilts up as Karma pulls the pants and raises to his face (fig.35). He makes a disgusted face because of the smell and just then someone knocks on the door (fig.36).

DDLJ(1995)   *Barsat* (1995)

fig.27.   fig.28
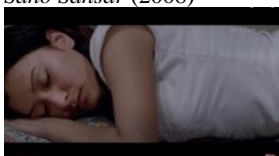
Sano Sansar (2008)

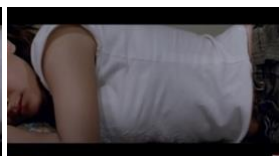fig.29   fig.30   fig.31   fig.32
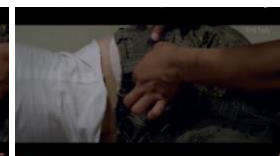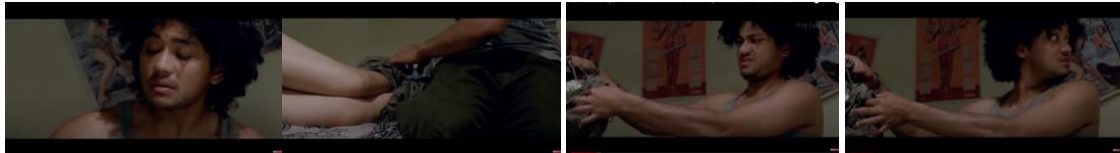
| fig.33 | fig.34 | fig.35 | fig.36 |

In *DDLJ* (1995), the scene focuses on dialogue without visually depicting the act of undressing. The emphasis is on the narrative aspect of the scene. In contrast, *Barsat* (1995) takes a comical approach, portraying Twinkle Khanna's character struggling humorously to remove Bobby Deol's wet clothes under the suggestion of an old blind man. The camera focuses on Twinkle's reactions, emphasizing the comedic elements. Whereas, in the scene of *Sano Sansar* (2008), the male gaze is evident in the portrayal of Karma's actions towards Namrata. The camera's proximity and deliberate focus on her body, particularly as it pans from her face to her waist to her legs during the act of undressing, aligns with the male gaze theory. The act of undressing in the scene can be viewed as a manifestation of the objectification inherent in the male gaze. The prolonged process, Karma's internal struggles, and the voyeuristic nature of the scene contribute to a sense of titillation and anticipation for the viewer. The comical music accompanying the undressing may serve to lighten the potentially uncomfortable nature of the act, but it does not negate the underlying objectification. It's important to note that the male gaze theory does not suggest that all depictions of the male gaze are inherently negative or that all filmmakers adhere to this approach. However, it provides a critical framework for understanding how the visual representation of women in media can reinforce unequal power dynamics and perpetuate objectification.

LGBTIQ Representation in Nepali Films

The representation of transgender individuals in Nepali films has been problematic. They are often portrayed in troubling ways. In the film *Sano Sansar* (2008), for example, a transgender character is depicted in a comical manner, chasing the protagonist and becoming a source of humor. This aligns with the common trend in Bollywood where transgender characters are either portrayed as terrifying villains or subjected to offensive transphobic humor, becoming caricatures and stereotypes being shown as sexually predatory.[1]

Nepali media often relies on stereotypes when portraying the LGBTIQ community, depicting gay men as flashy predators pursuing straight men, and presenting lesbians in masculine roles. Mainstream media in Nepal continues to stigmatize homosexuality and

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[1]Richa Nigam*, 'Trans representation in Indian cinema'* MIG (2021) https://mediaindia.eu/cinema/trans-representation-in-indian-cinema/

reinforce toxic masculinity. This harmful portrayal isn't confined to its impact on women; it also extends to how gay men are depicted. They are frequently shown as predatory and focused on straight men, perpetuating damaging stereotypes. This trend persists, as seen in films like *Ae Mero Hajur 2* (2017), where Ajashra Dhungana's character, Sameer, is presented as a gay man dressed in pink. Despite potential efforts at empathy, this representation remains problematic and reinforces harmful ideas.[1] A similar instance is found in, *Ae Mero Hajur 4* (2022), where the portrayal of queer characters copies the depiction found in the 1990s Bollywood film *Raja Hindustani*. However, unlike the intended comedic approach in the latter, these portrayals lack humor and sensitivity. Later in the mid-2010s, Rajesh Hamal portrays a transgender woman, a social worker in the film called *Shankuntala* (2016) directed by Dinesh Shrestha. This representation of a transgender character as a positive figure signifies progress in LGBTIQ[2] representation in Nepali cinema. However, it is worth noting that Rajesh Hamal's performance in *Shankuntala* retains elements of his well-known "angry young man" persona.

In *Bato Muniko Phool* (Flower of the Roadside, 2010), directed by Suraj Subba, Rajesh Hamal plays a guest role as a police officer, embodying his well-known *angry young man* persona, despite limited screen time. Yash Kumar, a popular Nepali singer known for his 2004 song "*Maile Chhoyeko Paani Chaldaina*" ('*Water I touch, cannot be used*'), specifically highlights the issue of untouchability and discrimination related to water and unaccepted castes. The song is prominently featured in the film, contributing to its central theme of untouchability and caste discrimination unfortunately following a traditional Bollywood style with elements of action, romance, and societal issues reminiscent of the 1980s and 1990s which addresses themes like rape, intense fight sequences, and female characters primarily confined to love interests, all set within the backdrop of urban life in the 2000s. Yash Kumar takes on the role of the film's protagonist, alongside Rekha Thapa, who portrays the romantic counterpart.

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[1] Ankit Manandhar Khadgi, '*Representation of LGBTIQ in Nepali Media*' The Himalayan (2019) https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/representation-of-lgbtiq-in-nepali-media

[2] Nepal's progress in LGBTQI+ rights have surpassed its on-screen portrayal in mainstream cinema. 'Sunil Babu Pant's establishment of the Blue Diamond Society in 2001 was a pioneering force in Asian advocacy. Nepal's landmark 2007 Supreme Court ruling against discriminatory laws and the introduction of a third gender marker positioned it as a leader in the Asian LGBTQI+ rights movement.' *Blue Diamond Society* (2023) https://bds.org.np/ 'In a recent milestone, Nepal became the first South Asian nation to permit the registration of same-sex marriages, representing a significant stride towards equality'. *Nepal's top court orders marriage registration of same-sex couples,* EFE (2023) https://efe.com/en/latest-news/2023-06-28/nepals-top-court-orders-marriage-registration-of-same-sex-couples/

Portraying College Life and Youth in Nepali Cinema in the 2010s

The depiction of college life in films has remained relatively unchanged over the years, with recurring themes and aspects that were prevalent in the 1980s, 2001, and 2010. The main protagonists focus on girls' physical appearance and reduce them to objects of desire, which was depicted in mid-1980s Nepali cinema and continues to be a recurring theme in films across different decades of *Darpan Chhaya* (2001). This suggests a persistent and enduring issue that has not been adequately addressed or evolved in the representation of college life on screen. Here are a few films made in the 2010s that portray college life and college students.

First Love (2010), directed by Simosh Sunuwar, depicted the college life of a new generation of actors including Ritcha Sharma, Karma Shrestha, Vinaya Shrestha, Nisha Adhikari, and Aaryan Sigdel. Another film, *Hostel* (2013), directed by Hem Raj B.C., introduced yet another newer generation of young actors such as Gaurav Pahadi, Salon Basnet, Prakriti Shrestha, and Anmol K.C., the son of Bhuwan K.C. Anmol K.C. gained popularity and developed a rebellious image, which he continued in his subsequent film, *Jerry* (2014), also directed by Hem Raj B.C.

In *Jerry* (2014) there is only one college scene where the young boys, including Anmol K.C., appear (fig. 42). During this scene, Anmol K.C.'s character remarks to his friends, "*What's this, guys? This year, the freshers seem quite dry*" (there are hardly any girls). One of his friends points out and says, "*Look, she is hot!*" (fig. 43) to which Anmol replies, "*Great, let's go.*" A similar instance is seen in his previous film *Hostel* (2013), where he sits with his friends and stares at a girl (fig.44). One of his friends calls the girl cute to which he argues and says "*Girls should be hot, even puppies are cute*" (fig.45).

Aryan Sigdel who is already popularly known for playboy character in his previous commercially successful film *Mero Euta Sathi Chha* (*I have a friend*, 2009) with Namrata Shrestha. In *First Love* (2010), in a scene where he engages in a conversation with his friend Vinaya Shrestha to talk about the two girls (Richa Sharma and Nisha Adhikari) who pass by them. The camera stays on Aryan Sigdel and Vinaya Shrestha at a low angle. Aryan Sigdel expresses to Vinaya Shrestha that he finds the girl wearing black attire (Richa Sharma) very attractive (fig.46). He emphasizes this by making a two-handed fist gesture and biting his lower lip (fig.47 and fig.48). Vinaya Shrestha agrees and responds, "*You mean, that one! Yes, 'that' is hot!*" (fig.49). The scenes described reflect a concerning trend that has persisted in Nepali cinema from the 1980s continues to be prevalent today. Characters in movies like *Jerry* (2014) and *Hostel* (2013) objectify and demean female characters, focusing on their physical

attractiveness. Similarly, in *First Love* (2010), Aryan Sigdel's character engages in objectifying conversation about passing girls. These scenes highlight the normalization of harmful gender dynamics and the reduction of women to objects of desire.

Jerry (2014)

fig. 42

fig.43

Hostel (2013)

fig.44

fig.45

First Love (2010)

fig. 46

fig.47

fig.48

fig.49

In the following scene in *First love*, the male protagonists portrayed by Aryan Sigdel and Vinay Shrestha come to the rescue of the heroines played by Ritcha Sharma and Nisha Adhikari. The heroines were being harassed by hooligans. Following the confrontation, the male protagonists fight off the harassers, displaying their bravery. What is noteworthy is that despite their prior questionable behavior, the male protagonists are instantly portrayed as heroes after defending the heroines. This highlights an interesting contrast where the comments and gestures made by the male heroes behind the heroines are somehow seen as acceptable or justified, while similar actions by the villains are deemed deserving of a physical confrontation. There are several fight sequences in the film and this can be attributed to the rise of modern *masala[1]* in Bollywood that commenced with the Bollywood actor Salman Khan's film *Wanted* (2009 directed by Prabhu Deva. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

Portrayal of female protagonists in *First Love* (2010)

The film centers around female college students, with Nisha Adhikari playing one of the main characters. She becomes pregnant after a night of drinking with Aryan Sigdel, who portrays a playboy character. The film draws inspiration from the Bollywood movie *Kya Kehna* (2000) directed by Kundan Shah, although it does not depict alcohol consumption by the female protagonist. The story follows a high school girl, portrayed by Preity Zinta in *Kya Kehna*

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[1] Edward Blaxell '*Modern Masala*' Voyeurism, Intrusion and Aggression The Courtship Narratives of Modern Masala, 2014, p.10 retrieved from https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/156703143.pdf

(2000)[1] who later falls in love with a playboy in college and faces an unplanned pregnancy. The film aims to highlight the importance of recognizing and supporting women's reproductive rights in the context of premarital pregnancy.[2] In contrast, in *First Love* (2010), Nisha Adhikari's character undergoes an abortion with the help of the character played by Karma, a supportive friend who has feelings for her. However, in the end, Nisha Adhikari's character chooses to be with Aryan Sigdel's character, implying a romantic conclusion between them stating '*hero gets the girl'*.

The portrayal of Bar Dance Girl: First Love (2010), in the sequence (1:44:54-1:49:45), the character of Vinaya Shrestha who is in love with Richa Sharma's character becomes deeply upset when he discovers that she works in a bar. In the scene, he goes to a bar and gets drunk. He engages in self-talk and refers to her as a derogatory term, questioning her naivety and assuming her involvement in prostitution due to her profession. Later, Vinay arrives at Richa's house during the night, forcefully banging on the door. An altercation ensues, where he slaps her, pulls her hair, and chases her into the kitchen. She falls, and as she grasps the water tap, it opens, spilling water. Vinay drags her, causing glasses to shatter. Amid her cries, he silences her and commits rape (fig.50-51). Richa reveals her HIV-positive status, explaining that she worked in a bar out of economic necessity but never engaged in prostitution. Vinay's demeanor shifts to guilt as she recounts a flashback, detailing her rape after a bar performance (fig.52-53) and subsequent contraction of HIV.
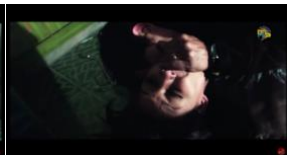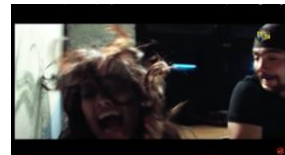

| fig.50 | fig.51 | fig.52 | fig.53 |

The 'hero' character embodies the patriarchal system, where he exerts control and dominance over the female protagonist. Despite his violent and disrespectful actions towards her, the film portrays him as the hero and ultimately rewards him by allowing him to end up with the girl. This blurs the line between hero and villain, this instance was seen in the Nepali film *Bhagyarekha (*1989) where the villain frequently visits a local bar and consumes alcohol with his friend, and in one of these scenes, he discusses a girl he saw, eventually leading to him raping her.

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[1] Preity Zinta plays a courageous woman, and, in the end, she chooses her supportive friend over the father of her unborn child (who abandons and later wants to be with her). This is a change seen in the narrative in Bollywood than before.

[2] Zinia Mitra , The concept of motherhood in India myths, theories and realities, Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2020, p.5

This showcases a problematic portrayal of masculinity. The patriarchal system is evident as the male protagonist believes he has the right to dictate the female protagonist's life and choices. His anger and violence reflect a patriarchal belief that men are entitled to assert control over women. This perpetuates gender inequality and reinforces harmful gender norms within society. The male gaze is apparent in the scene, as the camera objectifies the female protagonist's body. The focus on her physical appearance caters to the voyeuristic desires of the audience, reducing her to a mere object of desire.

Richa Sharma's character experiences a horrifying ordeal where she is raped as a punishment by her love interest, who wrongly assumes she works as a prostitute. Even if she were engaged in sex work, such a brutal action which is a crime cannot be justified. This static representation of women not only perpetuates gender inequality but also endangers the safety and security of women and girls working in bars, as well as those involved in sex work. [1]

In the period from 2000 to 2010, Nepal witnessed the Royal Massacre in 2001, and the Maoist insurgency that persisted throughout the decade till 2006, caused significant social and political changes, ultimately leading to the abolition of the monarchy. The conflict in Nepal had widespread and lasting effects on politics, society, and the economy. It caused deaths, disabilities, displacement, and disruptions to education, especially affecting women and children.[2]

> Following Mumbai's ban on bar dancers, over the past year, approximately 2000 dance bars have sprouted in the capital city of Nepal, Kathmandu has emerged as South Asia's new entertainment hub for scantily clad dancers. Ranjan Sharma, owner of a downtown dance bar, the competition among bar owners has become increasingly fierce, leading them to incorporate explicit content into their performances, surpassing the initial practice of merely imitating popular Bollywood dance numbers. [3]

The emergence of dance bars in Kathmandu has sparked concerns regarding the portrayal of women in Nepali cinema, particularly as the industry adjusts to changing trends. Moreover, the trend of popular item songs from Bollywood since 2010 gained even more prominence in the following decade in Nepali cinema, further accentuating this pattern. [4]

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[1] Efforts to protect the rights and safety of women and girls in the sex industry have been insufficient in Nepal. Programs should move beyond simplistic approaches and consider the complex factors that contribute to vulnerability. However, Nepal faces challenges in regulating the industry and addressing issues of violence, health, and labor. Dr Shovita Dhakal Adhikari, *Beyond dichotomies- Exploring responses to tackling the sex industry in Nepal*, Routledge International Handbook of Sex Industry Research, 2019, p.15

[2] Business Bliss Consultants FZE, *Impact of the Maoist Insurgency on the Nepalese Society,* November,2018. Retrieved from https://ukdiss.com/examples/impact-of-the-maoist-insurgency.php?vref=1

[3] Anirab Roy 'Kathmandu new dance bar capital' The Hindustani Times (2008) Retrieved from https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/kathmandu-new-dance-bar-capital/story-qaEkS4iKoLSgAjEq9sTtMJ.html

[4] This concern stems from the influence of earlier films like *Kanchi* (1984) which depicted dance bars in Mumbai (then known as Bombay) then *Bhagyarekha* (1989), and *Sapana* (1993) in Kathmandu, leading to the incorporation of similar themes in Nepali films. The subsequent proliferation of item songs in the 1990s intensified the portrayal of women dancing in bars in Nepali films.

CHAPTER SIX: RISE OF NEW KOLLYWOOD (2010-PRESENT)

Nepal witnessed significant events and political developments in the past years. Notably, the Constituent Assembly faced challenges in drafting the constitution, leading to its dissolution in 2012. A landmark constitution was eventually passed in 2015, defining Nepal as a secular nation amid protests and casualties. Bidhya Devi Bhandari became the country's first female president in 2015. In 2016, fuel rationing ended after Madhesi community protests. The Nepal Communist Party (NCP) was formed in 2018, but internal conflicts led to a split within the party.[1] In 2021, the supreme court ruled against the dissolution of parliament, appointing Sher Bahadur Deuba as prime minister. Political dynamics continued with shifts in coalitions and leadership until March 2023.[2]

Nepal film industry suffered a significant blow due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting challenges. Government regulations and restrictions led to the closure of cinema halls across the country for six months, resulting in losses of over NPR 1 billion in investments. Approximately 60 Nepali films had been severely impacted by the pandemic, leading to around 300,000 people losing their jobs in the industry.[3]

In 2023, the domestic film industry experienced notable progress despite encountering significant challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Surprisingly, the industry achieved a remarkable recovery and returned to normalcy earlier than anticipated. Although film production reduced by approximately half compared to the pre-pandemic period, the Nepali film industry still managed to conduct satisfactory business during this time.[4]

Edward Blaxell writes that, in Bollywood, a notable resurgence was witnessed in the era of modern masala films, with Salman Khan leading the way after the remarkable success of *Dabangg* in 2010. She writes that embracing modern updates to the traditional masala style, Khan's films appealed to the contemporary audience with a clever amalgamation of various genres and elements of Indian popular culture, delivering captivating spectacles filled with

[1] BBC News '*Nepal profile*' 2018 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12499391
[2] CIA '*The World Factbook*: *NEPAL*' https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nepal/
[3] The release of 22 Nepali movies was postponed. More than 15 films had to halt their shooting, and 20 others faced obstacles in preparing for shooting due to the pandemic's disruptions. 'Nepali Film Industry Faces NPR 1 billion Loss Amid COVID-19!' Nepali Sansar (2020) Retrieved from
 https://www.nepalisansar.com/entertainment/nepali-film-industry-faces-npr-1-billion-loss-amid-covid-19/
[4] Renuka Dhakal '*Despite challenges, the Nepali film industry records some progress*' The Rising Nepal, 2023 https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/25326

melodrama and impact. Throughout these movies, the central figure of the hero played a pivotal role, celebrated for their abilities and influence in different aspects of life, reflecting specific notions of masculinity, morality, and Indian nationalism. [1]

During the early 2000s, Nepali Cinema faced significant challenges, with only a few films achieving commercial success. Despite the struggle, some films managed to shine amidst the competition. *Darpan Chhaya* (2001) reached a remarkable silver jubilee milestone, while *Hami Teen Bhai* (2004), also garnered considerable attention. However, with the advent of digital cinema, the industry witnessed a scarcity of successful films, although *Sano Sansar* (2008) and a few others gained modest traction. In comparison to the prosperous decades of the 1980s, which were characterized by a romantic theme, and the 1990s, marked by the rise of the "Angry Young Man" persona and the influence of Masala Bollywood in Nepali films, the 2000s struggled to captivate the Nepali audience. The increasing dominance of foreign films, especially from Hollywood and Bollywood, claimed the spotlight in cinema halls, overshadowing the preference for Nepali films. Amidst these challenges, a pivotal moment arrived with the release of *Loot* (2012), which marked the directorial debut of Nichal Basnyat. This film marked a significant shift in Nepali Cinema, introducing a new perspective and inspiring optimism for the industry's rejuvenation.

Loot (2012) is a riveting gangster heist film that stands as an achievement that reshaped the landscape of Nepali filmmaking, leaving an indelible mark on its viewers. The film's strength lies in its masterful characterization and casting choices, with talented actors such as Saugat Malla, Karma, Prateek Raj Neupane, Dayahang Rai, and Sushil Raj Pandey bringing the characters to life. The city of Kathmandu itself becomes a character enhancing the narrative rather than merely serving as a backdrop[2].

Loot (2012) may have been inspired by the Bollywood film Satya (1998)[3] directed by Ram Gopal Verma for the Mumbai noir film genre.

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[1] Salman Khan's already well-established two-decade-long career but also ushered in three years of box office supremacy for him. Subsequently, other films like Ready (2011) and Bodyguard (2011), Ek Tha Tiger, and Dabangg 2 in 2012, continued to contribute to his box office success. After a brief hiatus in 2013, Khan made a strong comeback with Jai Ho in 2014. Edward Blaxelle, Voyeurism, Intrusion, and Aggression: The Courtship Narratives of Modern Masala, 2014, p.10

[2] The film takes great care in showcasing the city's essence, capturing its unique energy, and incorporating it seamlessly into the narrative through its cinematography, dialogue, and storytelling. It paints a vivid picture of Kathmandu's streets, landmarks, and urban culture and it explores unseen and lesser-known places, giving viewers an authentic glimpse into the hidden corners of the city. The city becomes an integral part of the story, shaping the experiences and actions of the characters. This deliberate portrayal of Kathmandu as a character adds depth and authenticity to the film.

[3] *Satya* (1998) marked a turning point in Indian cinema over the last ten years, with a surge of urban-based crime films captivating audiences. Among them, "Satya" stands out as a haunting and gripping study of the Mumbai underworld, playing a key role in catalyzing the emergence of the Mumbai noir film genre. Notably, this influential film has left its mark on the style and tone of many recent productions, including Danny Boyle's acclaimed "Slumdog Millionaire." Omar Ahmed, *Studying Indian Cinema,* 2015, p.9

The film's success proved to be a significant milestone, contributing to the rise of multiplex popularity. Notably, "Loot" achieved unprecedented success in foreign markets, particularly in Australia, Europe, and America, setting a new record as the highest-grossing Nepali film internationally. Its triumph in the international market remains unparalleled in the history of Nepali cinema, reflecting the growing demand for Nepali films globally. [1]

The film embodies the essence of impeccable filmmaking, skillfully weaving together various elements that create an unforgettable cinematic experience. The meticulous cinematography and editing, coupled with thrilling heist sequences, further accentuate its brilliance. Furthermore, the screenplay and dialogues present an innovative and refreshing approach, utilizing naturally spoken language, a departure from mainstream Nepali cinema until *Sano Sansar* in 2008. In every aspect, the film exemplifies the art of filmmaking, setting a new standard for Nepali cinema and inspiring a new generation of filmmakers.

However, the film's lack of originality becomes evident as it heavily borrowed elements from Bollywood films, incorporating comedy, action, romance, songs, and an item song called '*Udreko Choli*' translates as '*Torn blouse*' the lyrics are inspired by the item song called '*Choli Ke Peeche Kya Hai*' translates as in Hindi '*Underneath my blouse*' from the film *Khalnayak* (1993),[2] and inspired by the emerging modern *masala* item songs like '*Sheila ki Jawani*' translates as '*Sheila's Youthful Charm*' from the *Tees Maar Khan* (2010) [3]. The film delivers punchy and simple dialogues reminiscent of *Masala* Bollywood films, popularized by iconic figures like Amitabh Bachan and Amjad Khan in the 1970s. For instance, "*Bal haina pasa dimag laga dimag!*" translates as "*Use your brain, not just your physical strength*".

In the film *Loot* (2012), male characters are portrayed as unemployed, gambler, drug dealer, and owner of local bars known as *Bhatti*. The protagonist assumes the role of a criminal, serving as both the central character and the apparent antagonist. The film features natural spoken language with swearing and the use of bad words, as well as action, violence, drug and alcohol consumption, and scenes set in dance bars and local bars. On the other hand, female characters are portrayed as a complaining aggressive wife (fig.1), a crying girlfriend (fig.2), and a dancing item girl (fig.3).

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[1] Bishnu Sharma, '*10 years of Loot The trendsetter is still on trend, but it failed to teach other makers a lesson*' OnlineKhabar, 2022 https://english.onlinekhabar.com/loot-nepali-film-milestone-10-years.html

[2] Celebrated for its bold lyrics, sensuous choreography, infectious music, and the captivating dance performance by Madhuri Dixit. This song stands surpassing any other item song of its time. Rachel Dwyer, *100 Bollywood Films*, p. 142

[3] *Shiela ki Jawani*, one of the most popular item songs of 2010, became the most viewed and downloaded Bollywood dance video on YouTube that year, second only to '*Munni Badnaam Hui*' translates as '*Munni was defamed*' from the film *Dabangg* (2010). Vikrant Kishore, Amit Sarwal, Parichay Patra, *Salaam Bollywood: Representations and interpretations*' 2016 p.149

fig. 1   fig.2   fig.3

The characters and story may have been justified for the genre of the film in *Loot* (2012), however following its success, films like *Chadke* (2013) directed by Nigam Shrestha, *Junge* (2014) directed by Utkal Thapa, and *Karkash* (2013) directed by Asif Shah were released with similar themes and characters. However, these films did not achieve significant success. Desperately experimented with elements to make the films successful, *Chapali Height* (2013) directed by Dipenddra Khanal, was the first erotic thriller in Nepali Cinema.[1] However, in the context of Nepali cinema, where the responsible portrayal of women is not always prioritized, this film cannot be considered a significant step forward. The film's approach to portraying women does not align with responsible and empowering representations.

In 2017, *Loot 2*, directed by Nichal Basnyat, did not achieve the same commercial success as its predecessor, *Loot* (2012). However, it did manage to create another item song titled '*Thamel Bazar*,' which proved to be a resounding hit, akin to the popularity of the previous track '*Udreko Choli'* (*Torn Blouse*). The song's visual presentation and choreography are taken to a new level, embracing a heightened sense of sensuality and allure. Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge the concerns raised regarding the potential objectification and commercialization of the song's content.

In 2014, the romantic comedy *Kabadi*, directed by Ram Babu Gurung, achieved significant success following the footsteps of *Loot* (2012). Dayahang Rai, who gained popularity from *Loot* (2012) as Gopal, delivers an outstanding performance as the protagonist, Kaji. The film's success can be attributed to its well-crafted characters, remarkable performances, and the setting in a village and in the city, which adds to its charm. Once again, *Kabadi* exemplifies the art of filmmaking and pushes the boundaries of storytelling, setting a new standard for Nepali cinema, much like *Loot* (2012) did. Despite its success, upon closer observation, *Kabadi* follows a storyline that has been previously seen in Bollywood films. The film features a triangular love story, two male protagonists and one female love interest, with the story revolving around their efforts to rescue the girl later in the city. It portrays the female protagonist with a limited purpose, solely to be rescued by the male characters. While the film excels in other aspects, the lack of originality in the storyline. The success of *Kabaddi* led to

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[1] The film was controversial, hence was commercially successful.

the creation of a film franchise, with sequels released in 2015, and 2019, and the final chapter in 2022. Unfortunately, the theme of the story remains the same.

In 2016, *Chakka Panja*, directed by Deepa Shree Niraula is a comedy-drama. The film features Deepak Raj Giri as the male protagonist, Raja, whose character is reminiscent of Raja Babu portrayed by Govinda in the Superhit Bollywood masala film *Raja Babu* (1994)[1] directed by David Dhawan. Both Raja and Raja Babu have sidekicks, and their mothers share a strong attachment to their sons.

In *Stereotypical Representation of Women in Deepa Shree Niraula's Chhakka Panja*, Bhim Prasad Bhattarai analyzes the film using feminist film theory, drawing from Laura Mulvey and Anneke Smelik's work. Stereotypes are employed to belittle female characters, reinforcing gender inequalities and patriarchal norms. The film depicts women as easily controlled through physical violence and untrustworthy cheaters. Additionally, women are objectified and presented for male desire, with camera angles and shots emphasizing their sexual appeal. [2] The persistent portrayal of women in a demeaning and oblivious manner in Nepali cinema can be attributed to the focus on commercialization and the use of humor to downplay issues like sexual remarks, harassment, and even violence. For instance, in the film *Chakka Panja* (2016), where the character Buddhi the sidekick of Raja, and his friends are in a local bar. He returns home drunk and beats his wife as suggested by his friend if she complained. The scene is presented humorously with comical sound effects, making light of domestic violence. The film has a successful franchise released in 2017, 2018, and 2022.

Similar instance, in the film *Loot* (2012), during an argument the main character Haku Kale makes a threatening remark to his wife if she eloped that he would make a jacket from her skin and boots from the skin of the person she elopes with and that he would wear them for the rest of his life. His wife pulls his hair (fig.1) and Haku Kale laughs turning the serious threat into a lighthearted moment[3].

In the film *Dal Bhat Tarkari* (2019), a comedy-drama, production featuring the renowned comedic duo '*MaHa Jodi*' of Nepal, Haribansha Acharya and Madan Krishna Shrestha, a specific scene stands out for its lack of philosophical depth and sensitivity. In the scene, the character Urmila, portrayed by Niruta Singh, witnesses the presence of Yama (the God of Death) while her husband and father in the same room remain oblivious to his presence.

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[1] Box-office, *Raja Babu* (1994) https://boxofficeindia.com/movie.php?movieid=3183

[2] Bhim Prasad Bhattarai '*Stereotypical Representation of Women in Deepa Shree Niraula's Chhakka Panja*' 2019

[3] This scene may have been inspired by the scene from the film *Satya* (1998) between the husband and the wife, both characters (husbands have returned from jail) and in the scene of *Satya* (42:06) the wife hits her husband and husband played by Manoj Bajpai laughs. In the scene, there is an absence of abusive language during the conversation.

The two men representing the God of Death inform Urmila that she must prepare to depart as she had arrived in this world - unclothed. They demand, "*Urmila, take off your clothes because you came naked, and you have to go back naked.*" Urmila, feeling shy, covers her body with her hands, explaining that she may have been small at birth, but now she cannot comply. The scene comprises a comical sound effect in the background with exaggerated acting. Urmila's response to the demand by covering her body and expressing shyness further emphasizes her objectification and vulnerability. This dialogue exchange lacks depth, humor, and sensibility. Regrettably, this is just one instance among many in the film. In *Loot* (2017), there is a troubling instance during an argument between the characters Haku Kale and his wife. Haku Kale threatens her by saying he will pull her tongue out, and when she reacts with defiance, he casually suggests that he would then kiss her, referring to it as a 'French kiss.' This dialogue turns a potentially abusive situation into a romanticized moment.

The rise of successful Bollywood Sex Comedy films in the early 2000s[1] may have had an impact on similar instances in Nepali films. However, in Nepali cinema, the incorporation of content from Bollywood sex comedy films is a concerning issue. The Nepali films seem to struggle in distinguishing different genres and driven by the desire for commercial success, they often include irresponsible content that is forcibly made funny through loud acting and comical sound effects in the background.

Dal Bhat Tarkari (2019) also incorporates an item song featuring Priyanka Karki, a prominent Nepali actress who aligns with the objectification of women in the film. The inclusion of such masala elements in the film appears to be a commercial tactic to boost its Success In the same year, a Nepali film called *Password* was released directed by Samrat Basnet. The film features the most expensive ever produced item song in Nepali cinema, *'Sunny Ho Naam Mero'* (*Sunny Is My Name*), shot in London with a budget of Rs. 5 *crores*.[2] It stars Sunny Leone[3]. Despite the effort, the film did not achieve commercial success. Nevertheless, subsequent films continued to adopt the commercial formula of incorporating item songs.

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[1] *Masti* (2004), *Grand Masti* (2013), *Kya Kool Hai Hum* (2005), *No Entry* (2007), *Kuch Kuch Locha Hai* (2015), *Guddu Ki Gun* (2015), and others have gained familiarity over the years. The films have been turned into successful franchises. However, they have faced severe criticism from critics for being crude, excessively misogynistic, homophobic, and sexist. Disturbingly, even ghosts are sexualized in some of these movies. Eshita '*Bollywood Sex Comedies Are A Reflection Of Crass Misogyny*' (2022) https://www.scoopwhoop.com/entertainment/how-bollywood-sex-comedies-reflect-misogyny/

[2] Ananda Nepal '*Sunny Leone Dance – 3 Crore for one item dance in Nepali film Password*' (2018) https://xnepali.net/sunny-leone-dance-3-crore-for-one-item-dance-in-nepali-film-password/ 1 *crore* = 10 million

[3] Sunny Leone, a former porn actress, has made a successful transition in Bollywood, taking on various roles, including being featured as an "item girl" in hit songs like "Baby Doll." Megha Anwer and Anupama Arora 'Bollywood's New Woman: Liberalization, Liberation, and Contested Bodies' New Jersey, 2021, p.12

In 2013, Hem Raj B.C. directed *Hostel*, introducing a new generation of young actors, including Gaurav Pahadi, Salon Basnet, Prakriti Shrestha, and Anmol K.C., who gained popularity with a rebellious and playboy image, inspired by Ranbir Kapoor's character "Bunny" in the Bollywood film *Yeh Jawani Hai Deewani* (2013). The films featuring Anmol K.C. continue to portray the hero archetype prevalent in 1990s Bollywood films, romanticizing eve- teasing, sexual harassment, and misbehavior in their interactions with love interests. This portrayal is evident in his subsequent films like *Jerry* (2014), *Dreams* (2016), *Kri* (2018), *Captain* (2018), *Ae Mero Hajur 3* (2019), and *Ae Mero Hajur 4* (2022). Anmol K.C. is one of the most popular and highest-paid actors in Nepal.[1] These instances may have been easily overlooked and made oblivious by incorporating the romantic songs and deaths of the protagonists, like the hero's death in *Jerry* (2014) and *Dreams* (2016), and then the heroine's death in *Kri* (2018), *Ae Mero Hajur 3* (2019), and *Ae Mero Hajur 4* (2022). Such incorporation of deaths easily demands audience sympathy and detracts from addressing the problematic aspects of the hero's behavior portrayed in the films.

The Nepali film industry has witnessed a troubling trend among the newer generation of actors, such as Anmol K.C. and Samragyee RL Shah, Anna Sharma, Upasana Singh Thakuri, Suhana Thapa, who often adopt fake accents in their performances. These characters are usually rich and spoilt.[2] Also, this new phenomenon may also address the evolving language patterns of the younger generation in Nepal. Adopting a fake accent[3] is a misguided attempt at social elevation as there is a concerning misconception that speaking in English or incorporating English words in Nepali sentences signifies a higher social status. This influence is evident in the 1980s films *Kusume Rumal* (1985) and *Samjhana* (1983) where English words were integrated into the dialogues to portray an urban lifestyle inspired by Bollywood films. Notably, this influence even extended to the way parents were addressed, with characters using 'Daddy' and 'Mummy' instead of the traditional Nepali terms '*Buwa*' or '*Baba*' for father and '*Aama*" for mother.

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[1] Rasesh Koirala, *Top 7 Highest Paid Nepali Actors* (2023) https://thatnepaliblog.com.au/top-highest-paid-nepali-actor/

[2] Kareena Kapoor's character, Pooja (Poo) in Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham (2002) directed by Karan Johar speaks with a posh and stylish accent, reflecting her pridileged upbringing. The speech is expressive, modern, and sprinkled with trendy slang, making her a relatable and iconic character in Indian cinema. 'Kareena Kapoor Khan opens up on her iconic character Poo' The Times of India (2022) https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/bollywood/news/kareena-kapoor-khan-opens-up-on-her-iconic-character-poo-and-having-her-own-movie/articleshow/93539397.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

[3] The newer generation with fake Nepali accents promoted in young Nepali films is a regressive approach and the struggle to speak the native language with correct accents and pronunciations affects the performance of actors which unable to speak other languages or speak in accents correctly.

In every decade, Nepali films have incorporated themes of violence and rape attempts, perpetuating harmful stereotypes, and used them for commercial success. Since the 1966 film *Maitighar*, Nepali cinema has been incorporating sexual assaults and rape attempts, and by the late 1990s, there was a notable increase in violence and rape scenes. This trend continued with films like *First Love* in 2010, which included two rape scenes in one sequence. Nepali films persistently portray themes of women's helplessness, glorifying the hero's actions, and using such scenes to appeal to the audience for commercial success. Unfortunately, even today, these themes are not approached responsibly and are still used for the sole purpose of commercial gain. Nepali filmmakers often defend this portrayal by claiming it reflects the realities of society. For instance, *Katha Kathmandu* (*Story of Kathmandu*, 2018) directed by Sangita Shrestha, among three the first story is inspired by the Bollywood film *Fashion* (2008).[1] This segment follows Nora, played by Priyanka Karki, a model caught in an abusive relationship with her boyfriend. The film portrays sexual violence and physical assaults, taking it to a more intense level. Diwakar Pyakurel[2] writes that most of the scenes shown in the movie's trailer are from the first segment, apparently because these scenes spark controversy and generate public attention.

In another Nepali film *Kri* (Revenge, 2018), directed by Surendra Poudel, there are intense action sequences and graphic depictions of violence, inspired by the Bollywood film *Ghajini* (2008). The film revolves around the protagonist seeking revenge against the antagonist for killing his love interest. However, *Kri* (2018) goes further and includes a problematic climax scene where the love interest is strangled to death and subjected to rape by the villain and his accomplices. The revenge drama with the rape of the female protagonist has been inspired by another Bollywood film *Kaabil* (2017).[3] The portrayal of rape in the film *Kri* (2018) is deeply distressing, as it primarily serves the purpose of provoking the hero and the audience to support him. The flashback scene, where the villain narrates the incident explicitly the entire sequence leading to the rape where the heroine is perused and assaulted by men chasing her in an empty warehouse after the villain and his men are depicted on their private

[1] In an era of globalization, images of consumer, culture are increasingly used to negotiate between modernity and tradition. Glamour is commoditized and sold as a dream to aspiring youths. In Madhur Bhandarkar's Fashion (2008), Magna Mathur (Priyanka Chopra) is new to the world of modelling. The phenomenal success of a small-town girl perpetuates the notion that such dreams of glamour are within the consumer's grasp. The film reiterates the idea the photography and electronic and print media surrounding the fashion/film industry continue to perpetuate the voyeuristic gaze of consumer culture. Pradipta Mukherjee, *The Fluid Frame in Cinema Collected Essays*,Newcastle, 2021, pp.93
[2] Diwakar Pyakurel, *Katha Kathmandu movie review: This controversial flick is not about sex* (2018)
[3]Kaabil (2017) as a compelling revenge drama that adeptly tackles the sensitive subject of rape with the appropriate sensitivity, setting a high standard for other films to follow. Gajra Kottary and Ridhi Sarda, *Healing at the Movies: How Indian Films Can Educate and Sensitize Us.* New Delhi, 2021

bus when they randomly decide to pick up a girl (who happens to be the heroine) standing at a bus stop. The use of cinematic techniques, such as high-angle shots of the victim and low-angle shots of the men undressing, intensifies the impact, portraying the disturbing act and its aftermath. The inclusion of such explicit violence raises ethical concerns and highlights the need for responsible portrayal of sensitive topics in the film. While the film may aim to add intensity to the revenge plot, it risks normalizing and sensationalizing the serious issue of sexual assault[1]. There are a few cut-away shots of men in the shadows during the act (fig.4) which may have been inspired by the opening scene of the Bollywood film *Insaaf Ka Tarazu* (1980) directed by B.R Chopra (fig.5).

fig.4   fig.5

According to the research paper, *Performativity of Rape Culture through Fact and Fiction: An Exploration of India's Daughter and Anatomy of Violence,* the 'Nirbhaya' case, involving the gang rape and murder in Delhi in 2012, has had a profound impact on Indian cinema. A new wave of independent non-Bollywood films, dedicated to addressing the pervasive gendered violence faced by women, particularly in the city where the crime took place these films strive to confront and challenge social issues related to sexual violence against women in contrast to the past.[2] Since 2010, there has been a noticeable increase in women-centric films in India. These films feature women in prominent and meaningful roles inspiring and empowering women with their powerful portrayals, apart from their entertainment value, these films also carry special messages for the Indian audience, contributing to positive social changes in society. [3]

Regrettably, the impact of evolving depictions of women in Bollywood films hasn't extended to Nepali cinema. This absence of varied representation has resulted in the continued objectification of women, exploiting them solely for financial gains. As a result, harmful stereotypes have become normalized, causing audiences to become desensitized to these portrayals. This perpetuation of damaging stereotypes has escalated over the decades,

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[1] Nurul Humairah Binti Jamal Mohamed, *Delhi Crime a study of power and gender,* 2020, p. 13

[2] In the 1970s and 1980s, when Bollywood often depicted rape and sexual violence in reductionist and sensationalized ways. Ranjani Mazumdar's analysis of films like Ankush (1986), Raakh (1989), Insaaf Ka Tarazu (1980), and Zakhmi Aurat (1986) highlighted their focus on the flaws in India's criminal justice system, using cinematic vigilantism as a response. Ashvin Immanuel Devasundaram and Ravinder Barn, *Performativity of Rape Culture through Fact and Fiction: An Exploration of India's Daughter and Anatomy of Violence,* Vol. 23, Issue 6, 2020, p. 880

[3] Sahel Zaidi, *Changing Portrayal of a woman in Bollywood Cinema*, 2021, p. (ii)

inadvertently overlooking the significance of empowering female roles within the cinematic domain.

The 2020 Nepali film *Aama* (*Mother*), directed by Dipendra K. Khanal, aspires to present women in a fresh light; however, it ultimately falls within the melodrama genre. The movie revolves around the theme of women's transformation from helpless, sacrificing individuals to 'great women,' a theme reminiscent of the 1966 film *Maitighar*. Notably, the film notably excels in its cinematography and effectively portrays the present socio-economic situation in Nepal.

The film diligently seeks to cast a shadow over men, casting them in an unfavorable light, with the explicit aim of illuminating the 'greatness of women.' For instance, it depicts a dedicated wife tending to her hospitalized husband, while the son's efforts to support his father are met with criticism due to his inability to return home. This strained father-son dynamic emphasizes the film's focus on women's strength and autonomy. (Aligned with patriarchal principles, this theme mirrors male dominance over females and elder males' control over juniors.)[1] The portrayal of Surakhsya Panta's character as a wife alongside her husband presents an intricate dynamic, deftly highlighting Panta's 'strength and independence.' However, the disbalance in their relationship ultimately tilts sympathies toward the wife, while implicating the husband as the flawed counterpart. [2] In the film's climax, Surakhsya Panta's character defies convention by shaving her head during her parents' death ritual, symbolically embracing a 'son's role' and seemingly challenging traditional norms. However, the emphasis on her sacrifice, designating her as a 'great woman,' inadvertently overshadows the attempt to challenge gender roles. The slow-motion depiction of the head-shaving scene becomes the film's final image (fig.6). The promotional materials, including film posters (fig.7-8), emphasize the actress's shaved head, indicating a commercial intent, shifting attention to the actress rather than the character she portrays.
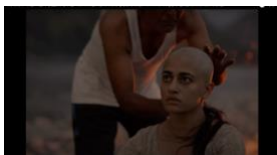

fig.6   fig.7   fig.8

[1] "The principles of patriarchy appear to be two-fold: male shall dominate female, elder male shall dominate younger." Kate Millet, Sexual Politics, New York, Doubleday, 1969, p.25

[2] This portrayal can be analyzed through the lens of Kate Millet's essay "Theory of Sexual Politics," where the term "politics" denotes power-structured relationships, involving one group being controlled by another. Millet cites Robert Stoller's work "Sex and Gender," which asserts that the distinction between men and women, as well as the dynamics of domination within society, often manifest within domestic settings. Ibid., p.23

PART TWO: THE EMERGENCE OF NON-MAINSTREAM NEPALI FILMS

CHAPTER SEVEN: NON-MAINSTREAM NEPALI FILMS

Since the early days of cinema, Nepali films were heavily influenced by Bollywood. However, towards the end of the 1990s, the emergence of non-traditional Nepali cinema began. The importance of making and evolving non-mainstream films in Nepal lies in their ability to bring about significant positive changes to the film industry and society at large.

1. Diversification and Experimentation: Non-mainstream Nepali films introduce new narratives, aesthetics, and socio-political themes, challenging the dominant Bollywood influence. This promotes diversification and experimentation in Nepali cinema, fostering creativity and artistic growth.

2. Amplifying Marginalized Voices: These films provide a platform for marginalized communities, including women, ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ+ individuals, to share their perspectives and experiences, creating space for their stories and challenging stereotypes in mainstream cinema.

3. Cultural Representation: Non-mainstream films explore culturally significant themes and stories that reflect the true social, political, and economic realities of Nepal. They showcase aspects of Nepali culture often overlooked in mainstream cinema.

4. Influence on the Industry: Non-mainstream Nepali cinema can influence the mainstream film industry by introducing new ideas and innovative techniques. Their impact can shape the future of Nepali cinema and inspire mainstream filmmakers to push creative boundaries.

5. Promotion of Nepali Cinema: Supporting non-mainstream films contributes to promoting Nepali cinema both domestically and internationally. It elevates awareness of the diversity and creativity within the industry, opening doors for Nepali filmmakers to showcase their work to a wider audience.

In the preceding chapter, the influence of Bollywood on Nepali Cinema traces its roots back to the beginning. To create a non-mainstream Nepali film, a careful amalgamation of complete elements is essential. This chapter explores these vital components that define a film as truly non-mainstream and noninfluence by Bollywood. It becomes strikingly apparent that while historical, cultural, traditional, and linguistic elements of Nepal form an important foundation, relying solely on them is insufficient to achieve the distinction of non-mainstream Nepali cinema and ensure a film's authenticity. To authentically distinguish itself, a film must encompass a deeper integration of storytelling, innovative filmmaking techniques, local talent, and a conscious departure from Bollywood influence. This comprehensive approach allows for a genuine portrayal of Nepal's spirit and fosters a distinct identity for Nepali cinema.

This chapter delves into the realm of non-mainstream cinema, untethered from Bollywood's influence. The analysis of these films independently, focusing on the nuanced aspects of Story and Setting, Sound and Image, and Characters development and cinematic portrayal, revealing their distinctive narrative approaches and unique cinematic expressions.

Story and Setting

In the realm of Nepali cinema, authentic films emerge, speaking earnestly about Nepal and its people representing diverse ethnic groups and addressing pertinent social issues within the unique settings of Nepal. These films delve into Nepal's cultural tapestry, celebrating its rich diversity of traditions and language.[1]

Set against the backdrop of unique social, political, and economic landscapes, these cinematic narratives offer a distinctiveness that captivates audiences. Free from commercial constraints, they paint vivid portraits of Nepali society, delving fearlessly into its complexities and triumphs. Through more authentic storytelling, the artistic integrity, these films preserve the essence of Nepal's heritage, providing valuable insights into the lived experiences and aspirations of its people.

Kalo Pothi (2015), directed by Min Bahadur Bham, unfolds the poignant tale of two young boys, Prakash and Kiran, hailing from different castes, on a quest to find their missing hen amid the turbulent Maoist insurgency in Nepal (1996-2006), particularly during the year 2001[2], in the rural village in Mugu District, located in the Northern Western region of Nepal. Notably, the film's distinctive artistic approach keeps the audience at a distance from the characters and storyline by employing constant long shots, long mid-shots, and mid-shots, while avoiding close-up shots altogether. This intentional artistic choice fosters a space for contemplation, understanding, and empathy without coercing the viewer into emotional immersion within the narrative. Further elaboration on this cinematographic technique will be explored in the following segment.

Numafung (*A beautiful flower*, 2001), directed by Nabin Subba, stands out for its portrayal of the Limbu[3] culture and community. What truly sets this film apart is its sensitive treatment of women's lives within patriarchal norms. Addressing a range of issues, from marriage to widowhood, the film portrays women as strong, determined individuals, who resist

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[1] Nepal's language count has seen fluctuations. The 1951-53 census identified 44 languages, but the numbers dropped to 36 (1962), 17 (1971), and later rose to 18 (1981). Since 1990, reported languages increased: 31 (1991), 92 (2001), and 123 (2011). A recent Language Commission report adds eight more, totaling 131.2 languages. *National Population and Housing Census (*2021) https://www.democracyresource.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Nepal-Population-and-Housing-Census-2021_28January2022-1.pdf

[2] The film begins with the announcement of King Gyanendra visiting the village (He was crowned in June 2001) then at the end of the film it mentions the declaration of state of emergency in Nepal which took place in November 2001.

[3] Limbu refers to an ethnic group in Nepal, particularly known as the original inhabitants of certain regions. They possess in-depth indigenous knowledge of the land, vegetation, and environment, which shapes their culture and identity. (p.117). The Limbu community has a unique identity encompassing language, literature, culture, traditions, religion, rituals, folklore, and folk treatment. (p. 42). Ramesh K.Limbu, *Limbu Indigenous Knowledge and Culture,* Nepal,2015.

societal constraints and assert their agency. The empowering portrayal of women makes it a captivating and impactful cinematic experience.[1]

Numafung (2001) offers an authentic experience for Nepali-speaking audiences by incorporating a few lines of the Limbu language alongside the predominant use of Nepali. Similarly, in the film *Kalo Pothi* (2015), when characters speak Nepali, it captivates Nepali-speaking viewers with its distinct accents and dialects for instance, when the villagers use phrases like "*Jharko Namana*", which translates to "Don't worry" and means "Don't get annoyed" in places like Kathmandu. Moreover, a simple word like "*Hola*" takes on a different meaning in the local context of the film, signifying a definitive yes, while it is understood as "Maybe" in Kathmandu. This linguistic diversity adds an intriguing layer of fascination, even for Nepali speakers, as they witness the rich variety of expressions within the languages across different regions.

Highway (2012), directed by Deepak Rauniyar, is a film that commences with a musical band of people, and it revolves around their journey alongside other diverse travelers on the same bus during road strikes triggered by a politically unstable post-conflict situation. Throughout the film, the band's story stands out, unfolding with minimal dialogue but leaving a significant impact. As the travelers face challenges due to the strikes, the band becomes crucial in helping the bus navigate through the disruptions. They devise a plan to pretend to be a wedding party, which convinces the protesters to allow the bus to pass without obstruction, ensuring their safe journey to the city. However, the film concludes on a poignant note as the band members find themselves stranded. Compelled to travel to the city with the entire bus to ensure everyone's safety, they are left without a way to return to their original destination. Their journey, which started with them, comes full circle, and their sacrifice during the tumultuous trip becomes a powerful and enduring element of the film. The film intriguingly starts and concludes with the musical band, leaving the band members' personal lives unexplored. The film intentionally makes it difficult for the audience to recognize individual members as they are often shown as a group for short periods. This deliberate approach fosters curiosity, prompting the audience to contemplate the significance of these individuals in society, often overlooked. This thought-provoking aspect of the film serves as an inspiration for other storytellers to explore narratives about people from diverse backgrounds, highlighting their

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[1] Seira Tamang, 'The Sweet Perfume of Numafung, Himal South Asian (2002) Retrieved from https://www.himalmag.com/the-sweet-perfume-of-numafung/

unique experiences and valuable contributions. In addition to its diverse portrayal of characters from different backgrounds, *Highway* (2012) delves into the representation of the LGBTIQ+ community. The film features two gay men in a long-distance relationship and prominently showcases a transgender woman portrayed by Bhumika Shrestha, a renowned transgender activist. Similarly, in the same year 2012, *Soongava: Dance of the Orchids*, directed by Subarna Thapa, takes a step as the first film to depict a love story in Kathmandu city between two women.

Mukundo (*Mask of Desire*,1999) directed by Tsering Rhitar Sherpa, the film sets in Kathmandu City with the backdrop of a festival and portrays that women's lives in Nepalese society are profoundly shaped by societal expectations, religious beliefs, and cultural norms. The narrative delves into the lives of two distinct women and the goddess: Saraswati, embodying the traditional wife and mother, bound by the pressure to bear a male child; Gita, the *jhankrini* (female spiritual healer), whose struggles as a spirit medium expose the oppressive reality of forced marriage and the loss of agency; and the goddess Tripura, representing divine intervention and hope, but also emphasizing the ambiguity and unpredictability of women's lives under patriarchal dominance. Throughout the film, the psychological landscape of the characters serves as a powerful lens through which the audience can reflect on the intricate interplay of desires, emotions, and societal influences in shaping human behavior and choices.

Jhola (A bag, 2013), directed by Yadav Kumar Bhattarai, portrays the story of the *Sati* custom[1] prevalent in Nepalese society until 1920. The film still holds relevance for the present situation of women in Nepal. It highlights the ongoing struggle against harmful cultural practices and the need for empowering women to make their own choices.

Butterfly on the Windowpane (2020) directed by Sujit Bidari, is a film set in a 1980s Hilly region village, centered around a determined and ambitious young girl, nurtured and encouraged by her mother. While living in her sister's shadow, her little brother's character undergoes significant development, ultimately becoming a strong support system for his sister. The film beautifully portrays the dynamics between the siblings and highlights the transformative power of support and encouragement within a family.

Kagbeni (2008), directed by Bhusan Dahal, is a drama horror film loosely based on W.W. Jacobs' The Monkey's Paw[2]. It successfully adapts the story portraying Nepali

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[1] The Sati custom was a practice in the Hindu community where a widow would willingly burn herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Basudevlal Das, *Sati Custome in Nepal,* Academic Voices. A Multidisciplinary Journal. Volume 7, No.1, 2017

[2] Mallika Aryal, 'Aiming high with Kagbeni' Nepali Times (2008) https://archive.nepalitimes.com/news.php?id=14342

characters and their relationships based in the village of Kagbeni in the Himalayas of Nepal offering an original story and culturally enriching cinematic experience.

Sound and Image

The traditional musical instruments in Nepal have a profound connection with the country's culture and religious traditions, playing a vital role in various life events from birth to death. Music holds a special place in the hearts of people, singing songs, humming tunes, and playing instruments during festivals, *jatra[1]*, marriages, cultural programs, and other significant ceremonies. The musical heritage of Nepal is cherished and embraced by all, creating a vibrant and integral part of the cultural identity.[2]

These films skillfully integrate traditional musical instruments into their artistic and creative expression, allowing the harmonious blend of sound and image to enrich the storytelling and setting. The evocative use of these instruments provides a genuine glimpse into the lifestyle and cultural richness of the people residing in the specific regions of the country. Through this thoughtful incorporation, the films beautifully capture the essence and spirit of the Nepali culture, creating an immersive cinematic experience for the audience. For instance, in *Numafung* (2001) in a scene where Ojahang, Numa's husband, builds a house with his father (fig.1) while his friend plays the *Murchunga* (fig.2). The combination of Murchunga's sound with the sound of the saw creates a captivating audiovisual experience, further enriching the film's portrayal of Nepali traditions and daily life (fig.3).

fig.1   fig.2   fig.3

In rural villages, where physical and strenuous tasks are common, people often find ways to make the work enjoyable by engaging in songs and communal activities. For instance,

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[1] *Jatras* are traditional Nepali religious festivals that involve processions and celebrations to honor and worship various deities. These festivals are marked by lively and colorful processions, where devotees carry the idols of gods and goddesses through the streets, accompanied by music, dances, and other forms of cultural performances. Jatras are an integral part of Nepali culture and are celebrated with great fervor and enthusiasm across different regions of the country. They provide a platform for communities to come together, celebrate their religious beliefs, and strengthen their cultural bonds. Mary M. Anderson, *The Festivals of Nepal*, Calcutta, India, 1977, p.26

[2] Extensive research has identified approximately 200 original musical instruments in Nepal, with 108 types still actively used across the nation. *Murchunga* is a musical instrument comprising a flexible metal or bamboo tongue or reed affixed to a frame. Aayush Sammohan, *'Traditional Nepali Musical Instruments'* (2020) https://www.wondersofnepal.com/traditional-nepali-musical-instruments/

during activities like transplanting rice and wheat or preparing for a wedding, groups of people come together, socialize, and sing while working. In the film *Kalo Pothi* (2015), a similar scene portrays a group of women grinding grains together during wedding preparations. As they work in harmony, their hand movements create a rhythmic sound and utter vocal sounds (fig.4) as they work complemented by the resonating impact of wooden logs hitting a wooden vessel (fig.5). In the background, another woman uses a *nanglo*, a handmade bamboo tray, to filter out unwanted debris from the grains (fig.6), contributing to the immersive soundscape of traditional tasks and enhancing the sense of community and enjoyment during the process.

fig.4   fig.5   fig.6

In the hills of Nepal, people often engage in singing while performing tasks like cutting grass or taking cattle to graze. Whether alone or in groups, they sing songs passed down through generations or create their own, expressing their emotions and reflections on life. This traditional vocalization practice is beautifully captured in the film *Kalo Pothi* (2015) at two distinct moments in the first and third halves of the film which lasts for not more than ten seconds, accompanied by two different images (fig.7 and fig.9) that resonate with the background vocal sound. For example, the first time, the echoing vocal sound coincides with an image of a woman with a baby (fig.7) and then transitions to the protagonist, Prakash (fig.8), standing in front of a wall photo (not shown in the film) that may signify his longing for his mother, as hinted by the previous image. The second time, a similar vocal sound echoes as Prakash stands alone after his sister leaves with the Maoist troops (fig.9), promising to return home during the Dashain festival. The use of the vocal sound from before and the subsequent image of a man alone in a similar background accentuates the feeling of being left alone once again, now by his sister. This artistic portrayal of vocalization and visuals enriches the emotional depth of the film, offering a poignant glimpse into the characters' lives and the cultural significance of singing in the Nepali hills.

fig.7   fig.8

fig.9   fig.10

The films take a different approach to incorporating songs compared to mainstream Nepali films. Instead of using songs as standalone elements, the thoughtful use of songs adds depth and emotional resonance to the storytelling, contributing to a more immersive cinematic journey for the audience. For instance, in *Numafung* (2001), a song is played at the end of the film, perfectly resonating with the overall narrative. On the other hand, in *Butterfly on the Windowpane* (2020), the film opens with the credit roll accompanied by the song "*May everyone be happy*" sung by the late Narayan Gopal, setting a nostalgic tone for the 1980s. As the credit roll progresses, the song smoothly transitions into the morning signature tune[1] of Radio Nepal. During this sequence, the scene shows the brother, Basanta, and sister, Bidhya sitting in front of a bottle, observing a cocoon that has now transformed into a butterfly (fig.11). Bidhya decides to release the butterfly into the open space, and her brother follows suit. As Bidhya raises the bottle in the air (fig.12), the background tune from the radio nears its conclusion, and at the same moment, the sound of a conch shell, *sankha*[2] blowing beautifully resonates with the scene.

fig. 11   fig.12

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[1] Morning signature tune of Radio Nepal by Govinda Bahadur

[2] Blowing *shankha*, the conch shell dispels negative energy and symbolizes the victory of good over evil, and in ancient times, it was also used as a war trumpet. 'Everything about the Conch Shell' (2015) https://theinnerworld.in/spirituality/science-of-sound/everything-about-the-conch-shell/

'*Gaun Gaun Bata Utha*' is a song written and composed by Shyam Tamot. In the movie *Balidaan* (Sacrifice, 1997), the characters perform the song by lip-syncing to it. In contrast, in the movie *Kalo Pothi* (2015), the song is used as part of a program presented by the Maoists to influence people. In this scene, the members dance to the song, and the audience can hear their feet moving and the overall ambiance of the scene. Similarly, there is a romantic relationship being portrayed between two characters. In the background, a romantic *filmy* song titled *'Teach me how to speak in English'* is playing. The song is coming from a projection room where a Nepali film called *Sathi* (*Friend*, 1998) is being screened.

Kalo Pothi (2015), the sound design is entirely diegetic[1]. There is a deliberate absence of background music or any non-diegetic sound effects throughout the movie except for two dream sequences and the closing scene. In the climactic forest scene, captured on a handheld camera, the absence of background music heightens the raw intensity of the gunfight as Prakash comes across the lifeless body of Kiran's brother-in-law. The sounds of the forest ambiance and gunfire immerse the audience in the authenticity of the moment. When Prakash and Kiran reunite, they hauntingly pat blood onto their faces from nearby corpses and lie down next to the lifeless bodies, pretending to be dead, symbolizing the profound impact of violence on their innocence. The sound of blood patting and then accompanied by the running footsteps of the gunmen nearby adds tension and makes the scene even more suspenseful and realistic. In the subsequent lake scene, both boys stand in the water, and the camera remains still with them. They start washing away the blood, with no other sound than the water splashing, reinforcing the symbolism of purification and renewal. This intentional focus on sound and the absence of background music provides a visceral and authentic experience, deepening the audience's connection with the character's journey.

Another instance of the absence of background music and sound effects occurs during a poignant interaction between the characters. In a night scene, the father prepares dinner and asks his son, Prakash, to hand him the plates. Only two plates are needed, but Prakash places three on the floor. The camera remains fixed near the wood stove, opposite Prakash, as the father looks at the plates and then at his son. In this moment of silence, the father serves food

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[1] All the audio elements in the film are sounds that the characters within the scenes can hear. Diegetic sound originates from within the film's world, like music playing from a radio or a character's hi-fi. Non-diegetic sound, on the other hand, is external to the film's world and is often in the form of a specially composed orchestral score. Nicholas Haeffner, *Alfred Hitchcock,* China, 2005, p.53

for Prakash but leaves without eating. The absence of dialogue, background music, and sound effects accentuates the emotional depth of the scene. The night before, the daughter Bijuli had left home to join the Maoists, and the father's worries and emotions are expressed silently, conveying the unspoken connection between father and son and the father's deep concern.

The absence of background music and sound effects both non-diegetic sounds do not categorize a film as non-mainstream. A film can still maintain authenticity and deliver an immersive cinematic experience by incorporating background music and sound effects that align with the story, theme, and setting. *Numafung* (2001) and *Jhola* (2013), the entire film has the traditional instruments utilized and designed in the background music, perfectly matching the film's setting. For example, in *Jhola* (2013), a flute accompanies the harmonious bells of cows and oxen, creating rhythmic background music while the character goes cattle grazing. In another scene, the old man, Kanchi's husband, awakens from a terrifying dream. He coughs and breathes deeply, with the ambiance of the night accompanied by the chorus of crickets, harmonizing with the rapid pounding of the old man's heart. Suddenly, the sound of a *khainjadi*[1] (tambourine) emerges, acting as a warning signal. Two more beats follow, and the rhythmic sound of a *sarangi*[2] blends in, intersecting with the tambourine beats transitions to the sound of the blowing a *dhungro*[3] leading to the next scene where Kanchi uses the *dhungro* in the kitchen. In *Numafung* (Beautiful Flower, 2001), the theme music revolves around a captivating musical instrument called Tunga[4]. The enchanting sound of this instrument becomes the leitmotif, symbolizing the protagonist, Numa. From the moment Numa is introduced, the melody of Tunga accompanies her character, echoing through the film even when Numa is not physically present on the screen, the lingering notes of the Tunga serve as a gentle reminder of her presence to the audience.

Exploring the Portrayal of Death in Non-Mainstream Cinema

The portrayal of death is a common and significant theme in human lives, and it is explored differently in these films like *Kalo Pothi* (2015), *Numafung* (2001), and *Jhola* (2013). They present distinct narratives surrounding death, offering distinct perspectives to the audiences who are exposed to diverse and thought-provoking insights into the complexities and emotions associated with mortality.

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[1] *Khainjadi*: Traditional Nepali-styled tambourine. Aayush Sammohan, *'Traditional Nepali Musical Instruments'* (2020) https://www.wondersofnepal.com/traditional-nepali-musical-instruments/
[2]*Sarangi* looks like the Western violin. *ibid*
[3]*Dhungro* : a small pipe, to fan the flames and ignite the fire for cooking.
[4] *Tunga* a resemblance to a sarangi and has four strings. Aayush Sammohona, op. cit.

In the film *Numafung* (2001), the narrative revolves around Numa's little sister, Lojina. After dreaming about her brother-in-law Ojahang falling off a tree, she awakens to the sound of people crying outside her house. Stepping out, the camera gradually reveals her mother in tears, remarking that Ojahang's fate was destined to be short-lived. The subsequent scene captures the somber preparations for the funeral ritual, as Ojahang's body is placed in a bamboo casket for transportation. Numa's appearance is accompanied by melancholic music, reflecting the heavy emotions of the moment. As she sits, her demeanor exhibits a sense of resignation, which her observant mother-in-law notices and attends to. This later depicts the evolving relationship, with the mother-in-law treating Numa as her daughter. Throughout the film, the village community is shown actively participating in both joyous occasions like marriage (fig.13) and solemn ones like death (fig.14), exemplifying their strong bond and support for one another. As the villagers arrive at the burial site, the priest speaks about Ojahang, and each person present reverently throws mud on the body before the burial. The presence of background music accompanies the mournful cries and mourning of the villagers. The camera remains fixed in one spot, and captures each person entering the frame, they reverently throw mud on Ojahang's body, paying their final respects. Even when Numa enters the frame, there are no close-ups, preserving the sense of collective grief. The scene seamlessly transitions to the body being covered with mud, symbolizing the final farewell. Then the wide shot, shows everyone else continuing to throw mud against the backdrop of the setting sun. The villagers appear in silhouette, evoking a profound sense of loss and unity (fig.15).

fig. 13   fig.14   fig.15

In the film, *Jhola* (Bag, 2013), Kanchi, a young wife, experiences the loss of her much older husband, with the death of the old man taking place against the backdrop of her impending *Sati*. The sister-in-law's significant and impactful role emerges as she empathizes with Kanchi's difficult situation and expresses concern over the *Sati* custom. Her emotional response involves tears as she tries to console Kanchi's son, going beyond mere mourning. She speaks out against the *Sati* practice and addresses the patriarchal nature of society, where women are expected to endure suffering and sacrifice. Her words resonate beyond the specific context of the *Sati* system, shedding light on the broader status of women in society, even in

contemporary times. The absence of background music intensifies the scene, leaving room for the traditional instruments, *Naumati Baja*[1] played during the funeral procession. The use of diegetic sound in this scene with constant and loud sounds of these instruments during the ritual portrays the harsh reality of the society making it a poignant and evocative moment in the narrative.

In *Kalo Pothi* (2015), Prakash, the young boy always wears a white set of clothes, including white *topi*[2]. Although the film doesn't explicitly explain or show the death of Prakash's mother, it is implied through the dream sequence. Throughout the film, Prakash experiences nightmares, depicted through dream sequences, which are always shown in slow-motion. These dream sequences are accompanied by a carefully designed background sound that captures the ambient noise of the surroundings. Additionally, the sound is integrated with the movements in the scenes, creating a sense of immersion. In one of the dream sequences, Prakash walks through a line of people standing still. In this scene, the ambient sound of women crying is prominent, and it blends seamlessly with the overall background sound, leaving no silence or pauses, effectively engulfing the entire scene. The use of slow-motion intensifies the feeling of being overwhelmed, intensifying the perception of having no control over the situation. As Prakash approaches the corpse in his dream, everyone remains motionless, and a priest hands him a set of white clothes, informing him that he must wear them for a year because his mother has passed away. The visual and auditory elements in the scene create a powerful depiction of Prakash's grief and the cultural significance attached to mourning the loss of his mother.

In the closing scene of the film *Kalo Pothi* (2015), death is portrayed symbolically through a powerful and poignant sequence. After a long search, the two boys decide to leave the hen with its chicks and head back home. Meanwhile, a radio announcement declares a state of emergency. The next scene begins with a distant gong sound that echoes for a while. The camera remains stationary, capturing a pole against the backdrop of the mountains. As the echo fades away, the ambient sound of a vast group of people migrating with their cattle and the sound of bells fills the background. The camera slowly inches forward toward the pole adorned with numerous prayer flags. Among these colorful flags, there is a piece of white cloth with a

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[1] Naumati Baja is a musical ensemble comprising nine instruments, which is an expanded version of the traditional *Panchayabaja* (five instruments) with the addition of four other instruments. With nine folk musicians playing both melody and rhythm simultaneously. '*Naumati Baja : The Combination of 9 Folk Instruments in Nepal*' https://notesnepal.com/archives/6689#:~:text=Naumati%20Baja%20is%20a%20group,and%20Damaha%20have%20two%20each.

[2] *Topi* a traditional hat worn in Nepal

black cloth pendant hanging from it. The camera approaches closer to the pole, and the wind flaps the white cloth, revealing the black pendant that Prakash had been wearing since his sister placed it around his neck. This black pendant now serves as a powerful symbol of the weight of war, representing the loss of innocence and the heavy burden borne by the young and vulnerable in times of conflict. The camera continues to move closer and closer to the black pendant. The background sound, which was previously associated with dream sequences in the film, is now used even without the slow-motion effect however the presentation of the soundscape reminds the audience of the nightmares that Prakash had experienced that have now become a reality. Although death is not explicitly shown, the scene doesn't provide the audience with the option of a joyful conclusion. The scene concludes with the praying monks in the background echoing with the voice of a female monk reciting prayers and fades into a text[1] and the credit rolls.

According to David Bordwell's concept of the invisible observer in *Narration in the Fiction Film*[2], the film *Kalo Pothi* (2015) uses long shots and mid-shots to engage the audience as external observers, a distinctive approach is employed. Despite the distance created between the audience and the spectators, the film actively involves the spectators, drawing them into the narrative. The closing shot adopts the spectator's point of view, reinforcing the idea of the invisible observer, resulting in a powerful emotional impact. The symbolic portrayal of death prompts reflection on the consequences of conflicts, deepening the audience's connection to the story and creating a thought-provoking cinematic experience, leaving a lasting impact on the spectators and urging reflection on the plight of those caught in the violence.

In *Mukundo* (1999) (1:32:08-1:38:11) The closing sequence portrays death in a distinct style[3] compared to the earlier-mentioned films. The film predominantly employs close-up shots and mid-shots to capture the characters. The camera frequently remains intimately close to them, often within confined spaces such as rooms with limited area. Whereas the utilization of wide-angle shots is mostly used when characters traverse open public spaces. An illustrative example includes when Saraswati's temple visit or children being taken to the school or Deepak's bicycle commute, wherein the film consistently employs such expansive shots, each

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[1] Text writes that over a ten-year period (1996-2006) during Nepal's Maoist insurgency, approximately 13,245 people were killed, including 30% civilians and 12% children. More than 140,000 migrated to India, and over 8,000 children left school to join Maoist militants.

[2] David Bordwell, "The Invisible Observer" *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Great Britain, 1997 (reprinted), pp.9-12

[3] Style encompasses not just tangible things and individuals, but it also conveys expressive characteristics. In music, a significant portion of style is dedicated to portraying emotional states like grandeur, liveliness, or threat. Abstract Expressionist artworks are often interpreted as reflecting turmoil or unease. In movies, expressive attributes can be conveyed through lighting, colors, actors' performances, music, and specific camera techniques. David Bordwell, Figures *Traced in Light on Cinematic Staging*, London, 2005, p.34

captured from different angles. This intentional decision contributes to a more comprehensive comprehension of the surroundings, encompassing the setting, streets, and spatial dynamics.

Saraswati and her husband, Deepak, visit the spiritual healer Gita once more in hopes of finding healing. The sequence intertwines two events: the healing ritual and the vibrant festival of *Rato Machindranath*[1] both unfolding simultaneously as Gita begins to treat Saraswati. The sequence employs the crossing-cutting[2] editing technique to effectively depict these parallel events occurring in two different spaces. This parallel unfolding of Gita's ritual and the festival contributes to a unique tension, skillfully enhanced by the festival's liveliness, which in turn amplifies the suspense within Gita's scene. The choice of shots in the sequence and the strategic composition plays a pivotal role in shaping the mood, advancing the storyline, establishing a rhythm, defining the film's temporal and spatial context, and guiding the viewer's focus.[3]

The scene commences with Gita's preparation for the ritual and her prayer concluding in the praying room which is not spacious and has iron bars on the other side. The scene then transitions to a festival setting, depicting people playing traditional instruments, dancing, and preparing for a chariot procession. As the scene shifts back, it gradually unfolds with the camera moving toward Gita who is lit with the gentle sunlight set against the twilight backdrop as she immerses herself in the ritual. Seated in contrast, Saraswati occupies a position next to her husband Deepak, accompanied by another priest. The background maintains a suspenseful musical atmosphere, while Gita's continuous ringing of a handbell punctuates the scene with its resonant sound. Throughout this sequence, close-up shots of each character are captured. As Gita proceeds with the ritual, her gaze occasionally turns towards Deepak. A sense of inner turmoil is portrayed through quick-paced shots, where the camera shifts between Deepak's face and a flashback image of Gita's deceased husband, before returning to Deepak. This is followed by a close-up shot of an idol's face in the room, a glimpse of her husband, and a swift transition to an image of the goddess Kali in the room then a fast cut of the setting sun that cuts to the

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[1] Nepal celebrates Rato Machhendra (Red Machhendra), a revered deity associated with both Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. The festival involves a grand procession where a massive chariot carries the idol of Lord Machhendra through the streets of Patan town. Legend has it that Machhendra was once a fish and later a saint who taught Lord Shiva. The festival includes various rituals, ceremonies, and offerings, attracting thousands of enthusiastic participants from different backgrounds. It is a significant and spectacular event in the Kathmandu Valley's cultural and religious heritage. Mary M. Anderson, *The Festivals of Nepal*, Calcutta, 1977, pp.53-61

[2] Cross-cutting involves placing two adjacent events happening simultaneously but in separate locations in parallel. Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies the Key Concepts 2nd Edition*, London, 2000, p.95

[3] The choice of shots in the sequence and the strategic composition plays a pivotal role in shaping the mood, advancing the storyline, establishing a rhythm, defining the film's temporal and spatial context, and guiding the viewer's focus. Roberta Nuslim, *Manipulating time and space*, 2001
https://www.oscars.org/sites/oscars/files/complet_film_editing_activities_guide.pdf

vibrant festival scene. Amidst the festival's vibrant chaos, a spirited crowd fervently pulls the chariot. The scene then shifts to Gita, ringing the bell and communicating with Saraswati's malevolent spirit. A close-up shot of Saraswati's intense gaze triggers a reaction from Gita. The camera, positioned in profile, swiftly approaches Gita as she unexpectedly slaps Saraswati. The focus now turns to Gita tying a white thread around Saraswati's toes and hand. Gita's slaps continue, further inciting Saraswati's anger. In response, Gita instructs the men, Deepak, and the priest to exit the room. Another forceful slap ensues before the scene transitions back to the festival. A bird's-eye view captures the chaotic multitude of festivalgoers beneath newly lit streetlamps as dusk approaches. The fervent playing of instruments by men is depicted, followed by a shot of the moon against a suspenseful backdrop that has persisted since the beginning. The focus shifts to Saraswati, lying on the floor and pleading for water. The camera slowly pans from her face to her bound hands struggling to break free. Amidst the dimly lit room, illuminated solely by a central hanging lamp, Gita continues to ring the handbell. In an unexpected turn, Saraswati attacks Gita, prompting Deepak and the priest to intervene.

Gita firmly instructs them to leave her alone with Saraswati. The confrontation escalates, heightened by the swaying center-hung lamplight, intensifying the drama. Fueled by rage, both women violently grasp and pull at each other's hair, their movements synchronized with the oscillating light. Shadows of their struggle dance over posters of deities in the backdrop, juxtaposing their conflict against the divine. The shifting light briefly illuminates an idol before plunging into shadow, revealing an oil lamp in the room. The women's anguished cries echo as the festival's boisterous instrument playing becomes a silent visual spectacle, the background music taking prominence. Swiftly, the focus returns to the idol, then to the instrument playing, and alternates between close-ups of Gita and Saraswati. The interplay of light and shadow dances across their faces.

A wide shot from outside through iron bars captures the intensity of their struggle. The climactic moment arrives as the lamp shatters, leaving darkness. Amidst the blackness, a single oil lamp endures, casting eerie glows as the fight rages on. Deepak's suggestion prompts the priest to bring another lamp, its light illuminating Gita's face adorned with smeared red makeup – a haunting visage juxtaposed against the pillar's glow. Then, the next shot is the camera tilting down from the oil lamp to reveal the feet below, tied by a white thread. The scene concludes, leaving a lingering sense of tension and uncertainty.

The sequence employs cinematic elements to depict death. Through cross-cutting editing, it juxtaposes a spiritual ritual with the vibrant energy of a festival, creating a dynamic interplay that amplifies emotional depth. The use of light and shadow enhances the scene's

atmosphere, representing the complex relationship between life and death. The camera movements effectively convey the characters' urgency and emotions. Close-up shots provide insight into their inner turmoil, while artfully woven flashbacks illuminate the weight of their past experiences. Together, these elements converge to create a poignant portrayal of death, inviting viewers to contemplate the profound intricacies of the human experience.

Character Development and Cinematic Portrayal: Exploring Social, Cultural, Psychological, Philosophical, and Emotional Dimensions Through Visual Metaphor and Motifs.

In the realm of non-mainstream Nepali films, acting is a captivating journey of cultural immersion and emotional embodiment. As actors inhabit characters from diverse ethnic groups, castes, and cultures, they embark on a profound exploration of humanity. Delving into their roles, they unveil intricate motivations, beliefs, and experiences shaping each character's unique identity. Beyond scripts and lines, actors immerse themselves in the very essence of the locales depicted, adopting local dialects, mastering colloquialisms, and engaging with communities to capture the nuanced rhythms of daily life. This commitment to authenticity fosters a profound connection between the audience and the characters on screen, offering a window into the rich tapestry of Nepal's societal and cultural landscape.

The characters (actors and non-actors/locals) will be analyzed through the lens of Constantin Stanislavski's foundational work, "Building a Character," delving into their social, cultural, psychological, philosophical, and emotional dimensions to illuminate their intricate cinematic portrayals. There are four scenes taken from non-mainstream films: Scenes 1, and 2 from *Kalo Pothi* (2015), Scene 3 from *Jhola* (2013), and Scene 4 from *Mukundo* (1999).

Scene 1. Prakash attends to the phone call from his sister in the shop (20:09-20:57)

As the phone rings, the camera subtly withdraws, capturing Prakash's reach for the telephone and the start of a conversation. His raised volume and proximity reflect his struggle to hear. During the exchange, he eagerly shares news of their hen, Karishma, laying eggs, accompanied by gestures as if showing her. This portrayal accentuates his innocence. Meanwhile, Prakash's uncle remains seated in the corner, eating and observing. His limited yet significant actions hint at his character. Seated with understated yet distinct movements, he occasionally scratches his beard and glances at Prakash, particularly during the conversation revolving around the hen's egg-laying. Intermittent glances, beard-scratching, and eating enhance his astute attentiveness. Prakash reassures his sister about their father, just as their

father rushes in, dropping his load and anxiously reaching for the phone, his mounting concern further elevates the scene's intensity. He holds the telephone, urgently asking why she left home and her brother. Despite Bijuli hanging up, the father repeatedly utters "hello," his worry escalating and constantly looks at the phone and taps the phone. The father doesn't understand that Bijuli hung up, leading him to inquire with the shop lady, imitating the beeping tone, "Why does it make a beep-beep sound?". The shop lady, in turn, repeatedly says "hello," unaware that the line has also been cut.

The scene unfolds in a single continuous shot, commencing with a mid-shot of the phone and gradually pulling back to a long mid-shot. The orchestrated interplay of camera movements, character actions, dialogues, and subtle glances is meticulously choreographed, underscoring the characters' expressive body language, physicality, rhythm in movement, voice, and tone. Prakash's urgency to answer the ringing phone generates a captivating contrast in volumes - his heightened tone sharply differing from his innocent enthusiasm about the hen. In the corner of the frame, the uncle's presence contributes a layer of depth. As the father makes his entrance, his concern further elevates the scene's intensity. The father's delicate physical demeanor becomes evident as he handles tasks with a light touch, reflecting a sense of sensibility rather than force. Even as he lets the phone slip through his fingers while investigating the beeping tone, his emotions come through in his subtle gestures. While his vocal tone remains unwavering with repeated "hello," his physical presence gracefully steps back, indicating his contemplative stance within the unfolding scenario. The entrance of the shop lady brings a dynamic presence as she leans toward the phone, repeatedly uttering "hello" while assisting the father. Prakash's watchful gaze at his father and the shop lady and the placement of the phone in between introduce a gently comical yet innocent element into the scene making the prop telephone a narrative tool.

Scene 2. Prakash at the public water tap queue and at the bench (50:52-52:11)

The scene opens with a man bathing, and the camera then slowly pans along a row of taps. As the camera shifts away from the man, Prakash enters the scene, holding a container to fill with water. The camera remains stationary throughout the scene. Just as Prakash approaches, a boy from another line of water taps shouts, "Here comes the hen thief!" Prakash looks annoyed at the boy's remark. The boy continues, addressing his aunt beside him, warning her to keep her chickens safe due to a new thief in town. Prakash confronts the boy but accidentally touches the aunt in front of him, causing her to pour water on him and accuse him of being untouchable and contaminating her water. A deaf and mute woman, who had been

standing in front of Prakash in another queue, notices the situation and tries to defend him by grunting and using hand gestures. However, the aunt persists in her belief that Prakash tainted the water. Prakash eventually returns to his queue and continues filling his container with water.

In the following scene, captured through a sweeping long shot, Prakash emerges, his head bowed as he carries a water container on his journey home. Animals pass by in the backdrop, while the camera remains steady, tracing his every step until he settles into a mid-shot and takes a seat. This moment marks a departure from the prevailing film style, where characters are typically depicted at a distance in long-mid shots and long shots. Here, Prakash's face becomes the focal point, clear and prominent. However, before he fully sits down, his face is damped by a blend of water and tears. As he remains seated, his tears flow freely, signifying a pivotal instant where vulnerability takes hold. This wordless yet deeply resonant depiction of sorrow encapsulates several layers of his experience: the loss of his treasured hen, a gift from his sister, now sold due to financial hardship; the desperation that led him to conspire in the theft of the hen with his closest friend; the searing humiliation of being labeled a "thief"; and, most profoundly, the weight of untouchability and discrimination that shatters his composure. Against a backdrop of ambient sounds, like the ringing bells of animals, this silent portrayal speaks volumes. Prakash's teary release forges a poignant connection with the audience, conveying his emotions directly to the spectators without the need for words.

Scene 3: At the water stream (21:41-22:20)

While Kanchi carries water homeward, a group of women by the stream engage in a conversation about her (fig.16). The dialogue serves as a backdrop, audible to Kanchi. However, the film refrains from showcasing her immediate reaction or employing a close-up shot. Instead, a single shot captures the scene, with Kanchi's reflection seen in the water on the ground (fig.17). As the woman comment, "*Life is brutal to her... such a tragedy awaits... her husband is on his deathbed*," the clear image of Kanchi's reflection becomes completely distorted as ripples form at the conclusion of their words (fig.18). This visual metaphor symbolizes the impact of societal norms and customs on her, alluding to the weight of traditional practices like *Sati*. The ripple disrupting the pristine water image signifies an impending disruption, echoing the challenges Kanchi faces due to her circumstances.

| fig. 16 | fig.17 | fig.18 |

Scene 4: Saraswati sits at her dressing table in front of the mirror. (1:06:42-1:0729)

The camera stays still with a photo frame, capturing Saraswati and her husband at her dressing table, and then as Saraswati lifts a lipstick, the camera tilts up to her reflection in the mirror revealing a moment's hesitation before she applies it. Meanwhile, her husband's image emerges in the mirror's background, praising her as Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, and complimenting her beauty. Saraswati's response carries a touch of bitterness. She continues her makeup, the shot shifts from mid to close-up, and Deepak exits the mirror's frame. Saraswati smiles at her reflection, yet the smile swiftly fades, giving way to contemplation as she continues to regard herself.

The depicted scene illustrates the emotional distance between Saraswati and her husband, despite their physical proximity. The mirror's optical illusion intensifies the perceived gap, reflecting Saraswati's internal sense of detachment from her husband. In the face of Deepak's genuine efforts to bridge this emotional divide, Saraswati's inner uncertainties distort her perception, exacerbating the emotional separation. This transformation of the mirror into a metaphor highlights its role in shaping Saraswati's psychological landscape and accentuating the distance she perceives within her relationship.

In *Mukundo* (1999), the recurring motif of the mirror finds its resonance in Gita's character. Throughout the narrative, Gita frequently engages in a reflective ritual before the mirror, wherein she assumes the role of a spiritual healer. As she sits before the mirror, Gita's actions take on a profound duality. While applying makeup with meticulous attention, she is outwardly embodying her spiritual persona as a healer, crafting an appearance that exudes serenity and guidance. However, beneath the surface, the mirror captures her subtle inner conflict: the disparity between her public image as a spiritual guide and the unfulfilled personal desires that remain hidden within. This contrast underscores the complexity of her character and highlights the interplay between her external role and the intimate struggles that persist beneath the surface. In contrast, Saraswati's interaction with the mirror for the first time offers insight into her own psychological state and emotional journey.

In the film, *Numafung* (2001), the recurring motif of the white flower carries profound symbolic significance. The narrative begins with a scene where Lojina, Numa's younger sister, plucks a white flower and offers it to Numa, signifying the initial stage of Numa's impending marriage to Ojahang. As the story progresses, the white flower resurfaces in a pivotal moment after Numa's husband's passing. Here, Lojina's gesture of placing the flower in Numa's hair, an attempt to console her, is met with rejection as Numa discards the flower, encapsulating her inner turmoil. However, the film's conclusion poignantly sees Lojina adorning the white flower herself. This poignant act can be interpreted as a metaphor, symbolizing a succession of women, including Lojina, who are bound by societal norms and confined within the institution of marriage, mirroring Numa's journey.

In *Butterfly on Windowpane* (2020), there's a similar depiction of the situation of young women in villages. The film opens with a scene where siblings, Basanta (brother) and Bidhya (sister), release a butterfly into the sky. This butterfly serves as a metaphor throughout the film. In the beginning, Basanta is amazed by the butterfly's transformation (fig.16), symbolizing a sense of wonder. The film progresses with Basanta's character developing with the realization of his sister's talent and potential to achieve academic success. However, at the end of the film when Basanta sees his sister, Bidhya in her wedding attire (fig.17), the scene mirrors the earlier butterfly moment reminiscent of Basanta observing the butterfly in the bottle. Despite being a talented and dedicated student, Bidhya's potential had been confined, like the butterfly being trapped in a bottle. The film uses the butterfly metaphor to highlight how Bidhya, like the butterfly, had been held back from her true potential, and her ultimate expression of that potential at her wedding drew parallels to the butterfly's initial release.
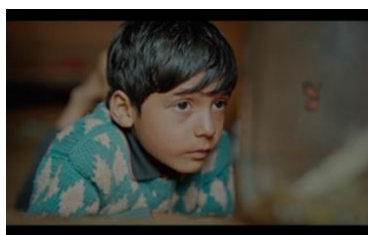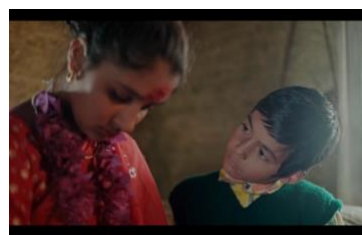

fig.16   fig. 17

In *Kalo Pothi* (2015), a significant motif is the hen. The film's title implies a black hen, yet the hen that Prakash cares for is white. This choice of color holds a deeper meaning: both the protagonist and the hen are white, symbolizing purity and innocence. Interestingly, the color black serves as a symbol of the potential consequences of war. As the story unfolds, the search for the hen takes Prakash and his closest friend Kiran on a journey that exposes them to

the harsh realities of war, ultimately leading to instances of death. This stark contrast highlights how the quest for a seemingly simple object can serve as a metaphor for the profound impact of conflict, illustrating the transformation of innocence into somber realities. Finally, as the story culminates, the children's decisive moment arrives when they locate the hen. In this pivotal scene, Prakash expresses with a light heart that he cannot separate the chicks from their mother, a sentiment Kiran readily agrees with. This heartfelt choice shines a spotlight on their recently acquired sensitivity and personal development. Despite the profound emotional attachment, they feel for the hen, they willingly release her for the well-being of the chicks. Their actions paint a portrait of their evolving emotional landscape. Witnessing the hen settle into a happy place, as they prepare to say their goodbyes, Prakash carefully plucks a feather from his cherished companion, the hen, holding it as a heartfelt keepsake of their time together. This choice to let go holds deep significance. By releasing the hen and showcasing such a humane gesture, the children exemplify a level of wisdom and maturity that transcends their years. This selfless act becomes a tangible representation of a philosophical and compassionate stance, beautifully illustrating their profound transformation throughout the narrative amidst the tumultuous backdrop of war.

In these films, characters' physicality excels, emotions are conveyed through subtle gestures, and attire adds authenticity. Notably, the line between non-actors/locals and professionals blurs, as their performances are equally compelling. Diverse roles mirror varied character types, wordless expressions convey feelings, and dialogue gains depth through precision, tone, and pauses. Embracing characters enhances authenticity, while rhythmic movements and speech convey emotions, overall crafting an immersive cinematic experience that resonates deeply with spectators.

Conclusion

Nepali cinema has undergone impressive growth and success, even though it was established relatively late. The influence of Bollywood on Nepali cinema is clear with a profound impact evident. There are two key dimensions to the evolution of Nepali cinema and its connection to Bollywood: Firstly, the shared cultural traits allowed Nepali cinema to flourish by adopting Bollywood's trajectory. Secondly, during the 1970s, the emergence of the Masala genre and the "age of violence" in the 1980s in Bollywood brought about significant changes that deeply influenced Nepali cinema.

Upon a comprehensive analysis, it becomes apparent that the influence of Bollywood on Nepali cinema has predominantly been geared towards achieving commercial success for its films, rather than giving prominence to artistic elements. This is noteworthy, despite the diverse creative aspects that Bollywood has demonstrated within the cinematic domain. The deliberate preference for Bollywood's Masala genre over embracing the Golden Era late 1940s-1960s, Middle Cinema 1970s, or even elements of New Bollywood in the 2000s, underscore a certain oversight within Nepali cinema, a failure to recognize cinema as an art.

During the mid-1980s, an intriguing contrast emerges: Nepal Television crafted powerful and evocative visuals, while Nepali Cinema was preoccupied with its commercial achievements, focusing on integrating masala elements into its fabric, often disregarding the pertinent social, economic, and cultural surroundings. Notably, in 2019 the influential Nepali comedic duo, *Maha* Jodi, contributed to this trend by creating a Nepali feature film abundant in Bollywood masala components, which, unfortunately, lacked depth, sensitivity, and most crucially, humor.

Unfortunately, the troubling portrayal of women in Nepali cinema is a cause for concern, and this issue is not limited solely to women but also encompasses men.[1] This trend can be attributed to a narrow emphasis on commercial aspects, which often overshadows a holistic comprehension of individuals and their backgrounds. Nepal's rich diversity in cultural heritage further highlights the significant gap in adequately grasping and representing people's nuances on screen, which ultimately affects character development and perspective.

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[1] This connection is evident in the realm of cinema, where gender is portrayed as a reflection of society. By identifying with film characters, we gain insight into the complexities of individuals, gender traits, and the overall nature of communities and societies. This process deepens our understanding of masculinity and femininity and broadens our perspective on humanity as a whole. Isabel Moranta Alorda, Masculinity and Violence in 21st-Century U.S. Film: 'A History of Violence and 'Drive' Universitat de les Illes Balears, 2013, pp.4-5

Consequently, this contributes to a deficiency in remarkable performances by Nepali actors, as the roles they play on-screen hinder their potential for excellence. For instance, Rajesh Hamal takes a bold step by portraying a transgender woman in 2018, showcasing dedication from his hair fixing to body language. However, despite his commendable effort, the film fails to capture his skills effectively. It resorts to familiar Bollywood elements, including evolved fight sequences. It's disheartening to witness an actor like Hamal, striving for diversity, constrained by the commercial mindset prevalent in mainstream cinema. Conversely, Anmol K.C., a youth icon in Nepali cinema and one of the highest-paid actors, receives acclaim even for underperforming due to the commercial perspective.

Mainstream Nepali films fall short of tapping into the true potential of the people, highlighting the need for a shift. By embracing the fundamental concept of, the Kuleshov effect (Image per Image)[1]. Nepali mainstream films can craft narratives that resonate with the local audience and can facilitate sensible Nepali films.It is imperative to break away from emulating Bollywood and recognize that while it produces films like *Kabir Singh* (2019), it also creates films like *Thappad* (2020). Notably, within Nepali mainstream films, there persists a struggle to clearly define the essential role of a protagonist. This challenge is particularly significant, as the analysis of mainstream films reveals a subtle boundary between heroism and villainy.

Non-mainstream Nepali films are making significant advancements, actively shaping the trajectory of Nepali cinema. They hold the power to catalyze positive, far-reaching changes both within the film industry and throughout society. This influence, which is akin to the impact of prominent Indian filmmakers like Satyajit Ray, serves as a beacon of inspiration for these non-mainstream Nepali films. Works such as *Pather Panchali* (1955), *Devi* (1960), and *Nayak* (1966) by Ray may have indelibly left their mark, showcasing how this form of influence, which fosters originality within others' work, is an exceptionally positive force.

Nepali cinema stands at a crossroads, where a conscious shift from commercial emulation to thoughtful originality can lead to a more vibrant, diverse, and culturally resonant cinematic landscape. By embracing the multifaceted dimensions of storytelling, from character development to societal insights, Nepali cinema has the potential to not only entertain but also inspire, educate, and connect with audiences on a deeper level, contributing to the rich tapestry of global cinematic expression.

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[1] *Kri* (2018), in the film, throughout the analysis of mainstream Nepali films, one of the most distressing images was of a *bus* with three men and an image of a girl standing at the bus stop.

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Asif Shah, *Karkash*, 2013

Ayan Mukerji, *Yeh Jawani Hai Deewani*, 2013

Bhim Singh Thapa, *Maitighar*, 1966

Bhuwan K.C., *Dreams,* 2016

Dayaram Pandey,*Karma Yodha*, 2005

Deepa Shree Niraula, *Chakka Panja*, 2016

Deepak Rayamajhi, *Bhagya Rekha,* 1989

Deepak Rayamajhi, *Yug Dekhi Yug Samma*, 1991

Deepak Shrestha, *Himmat,* 2008

Dipendra K.Khanal, *Chapali Height*, 2013

Dipendra K. Khanal, *Aama*, 2020

Diwakar Bhattarai,*Captain*, 2018

D.P. Pariyar, *Satya Harishchandra*, 1951

Hem Raj BC, *Hostel,* 2013

Hem Raj BC, *Jerry*, 2014

Hira Singh Khatri, *Aama*, 1965

Jharna Thapa, *Ae Mero Hajur 3*, 2019

Jharna Thapa, *Ae Mero Hajur 4,* 2022

Nigam Shrestha, *Chadke,*2013

Nischal Basnyat , *Loot*, 2012

Nischal Basnyat, *Loot*, 2017

Prakash Rayamajhi, *Prithvi*, 1993

Prakash Sayami, *Simana*, 1996

Prakash Thapa, *Santaan*, 1987

Ram Babu Gurung, *Kabadi*, 2014

Reshraj Acharya, *Mato Bolcha*, 1999

Samrat Basnet, *Password,* 2018

Sangita Shrestha, *Katha Kathmandu,* 2018

Shambhu Pradhan, *Samajhana*, 1983

Shambhu Pradhan, *Behuli*, 1989

Shambhu Pradhan, *Sapana,* 1989

Shiva Regmi, *Hami Teen Bhai*, 2003

Simosh Sunuwar, *First Love*, 2010

Sudan K.C., *Dal Bhat Tarkari*, 2019

Suraj Subba, *Bato Muniko Phool,* 2010

Surendra Poudel, *Kri,* 2018

Tulsi Ghimire, *Kusume Rumal*, 1985

Tulsi Ghimire, *Lahure*, 1989

Tulsi Ghimire, *Chino,* 1991

Tulsi Ghimire, *Deuta*, 1991

Tulsi Ghimire, *Dakshina*, 1994

Tulsi Ghimire, *Darpan Chhaya*, 2001

Tulsi Ghimire, *Balidan*, 1997

Ugyen Chopel, *Saino*, 1987

Ugyen Chopel, *Nepali Babu*, 1999

Utkal Thapa, *Junge,* 2014

Non-Mainstream Nepali Films

Bhusan Dahal, *Kagbeni*, 2008

Deepak Rauniyar, *Highway*, 2012

Éric Valli, *Himalaya,* 1999

Min Bham, *Kalo Pothi*, 2015

Nabin Subba, Numafung, 2001

Subarna Thapa, *Soongava: Dance of the Orchids*, 2012

Sujit Bidari, *Butterfly on the Windowpane*, 2020

Tsering Rhitar Sherpa, Mukundo, 1999

Yadav Kumar Bhattarai, *Jhola*, 2013

Bollywood Films

Abbas Tyrewala, *Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na*, 2008

Abhinav Kashyap, *Dabang*, 2010

Aditya Chopra, *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, 1995

Anil Sharma, *Gadar*, 2001

B.R. Chopra, *Insaaf Ka Tarazu*, 1980

Hrishikesh Mukherjee, *Anand,* 1971

Hrishikesh Mukherjee, *Chupke Chupke*, 1975

Mahesh Bhatta*, Dil Hai Ki Manta Nahi,* 1991

Manmohan Desai*, Amar Akbar Anthony*, 1977

Mehboob Khan, *Mother India,* 1957

Prabhu Deva, *Wanted,* 2009

Prakash Mehra, *Zanjeer,* 1973

Raj Kanwar, *Jeet*, 1996

Raj Kapoor, *Sangam,* 1964

Raj Kapoor, *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, 1978

Raj Kapoor, *Ram Teri Ganga Maili,* 1985

Rajkumar Santoshi, *Ghayal*, 1990

Rajkumar Santoshi, *Damini*, 1993

Rajkumar Santoshi, *Barsat*, 1995

Ram Gopel Verma *Daud,* 1997

Ramesh Sippy, *Seeta Aur Geeta*, 1972

Ramesh Sippy, *Sholay*, 1975

Sangeeth Sivan, *Chura Liyaa Hai Tumne*, 2003

Shekhar Kapur, *Massom,* 1983

Tinnu Anand*, Shahenshah,* 1988

Yash Chopra, *Deewar*, 1978

Hollywood Films

Frank Capra, *It Happened One Night, 1934*

Nora Ephron, *You've Got Mail,* 1997