Film as Mass Communication and its Responsibility to Social Change

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Abstract

This paper considers movies as means of mass communication and attempts to highlight the challenges faced by Nepali movies while communicating with people. It believes that the movies are key artistic presentations by which movie-mediatization is possible and a significant positive change can be brought. Movies are made as effectively to socialize people as to provide entertain to them. It means that the movies are highly responsible for bringing positive vibes in society. In order look at the manner in which films are giving a message to the audience, this paper makes a review of key literature on movie, mass communication, mediatization, and impact of movie on mediatization, analyzes the impact of movies on society, and forwards some key conclusions on epitomizing women as heroes. It also takes into consideration the significant impact made by some Indian movies to the Nepali movie industry, which is not growing well because of the premiere of recent Indian movies that are superior to Nepali movies both in quality and quantity. To conclude, the paper encapsulates the notion of film as an art, which has easily entered into people's mind and heart, and is changing people's preoccupied mindset on women and gender roles.

Keywords: film, gender role, mass communication, social change, social responsibility, mediatization.

Introduction

Nepali film has been facing multiple challenges from the very beginning. Movies are claimed as providing entertainment to people but have social responsibilities as well. If movies go far away from social responsibility, it can mediatize society in a very negative way. Mediatization is affected by so many factors like disaster, pandemic, because cinema halls or industries collapse. Besides, gender inequality also prevails in film industry. Sometimes, established social norms, codes and conducts influence mediatization, while political disorder and disturbances may negate the way movies mediatize people. Any social or political imbalance can hinder the premier show at the starting, and minimizes the chance of people being mediatized.

Film industry started producing movies in Nepal without adequate knowledge of cine art; it however crossed so many decades till now. A minimum education is needed to make a common type of movie, but a specialized education is necessary to make movies of a particular category. Quality film is possible from the educated cinema workers. Film is the most effective genre of entertainment that has a potentiality to take society into right direction. The stereotypical notion of society can be change by showing movies, because movies have capacity to make people aware romantically.

Nepali films from the very beginning to till present are made not by study but by experience. Satya Harischandra, the first film in Nepali language was made in India by D. B. Pariyar, without having any formal knowledge. Nor was Aama, the first Nepal-made movie, was made without cinema workers being film-literate. Study of film was also too less throughout the history of Nepal (Giri A. , 2067, p. 26).

Movie reviewers are often dissatisfied with the film workers as they make film without proper knowledge of the content that leads to the failure of mediatization effect on the one hand and the lack of feeling of social responsibility on the other hand. It is simply that a person without education cannot educate others, and the same statement can be applied to the movie for not heavily influencing the society. A film without an insight cannot give people an insight to social life as well. Knowledge and life frequently come here because there was once film was taken as the means only of entertainment, but later, the entire film sector came to be known as communication sector. Since Nepali film industry is still lacking that required level of knowledge on film studies, their possibility of mediatizing people is very slim. Thus, this paper is significant in exploring the role of Nepali film in promoting the level of audience in a way that the traditionally practiced unequal gender roles would be changed. In other words, this article believes that social change is possible by the way gendered roles are turned upside down by the film industry by giving actresses the heroic role to perform and exposing them as heroes.

Review of Literature

Gender inclusion

Gender has been a highly sensitive part of society be it in politics or in education or in entertainment industry or communication sectors. Nepali film industry also needs some promising female film makers to capture their original story in the best way of presentation. "Although our industry is progressing, the time is tough even for male filmmakers; we can put a question- is the industry ready to accept or believe female as a maker, who will make a different and good film! If yes- how?" (Shrestha P. , 2070, p. 74).

Film too displays the social disposition of female figures. In Nepali film, we can see women playing the role as they play in family or community, particularly of secondary importance, which shows that they are highly responsible to society. In case women are shown as otherwise, their social role is supposed to be unfulfilled. Analysts review women's role after watching the movie as the female character is suppressed, silent, dedicated. Also, they find the males playing a dominant role in a prolific way, which verifies the established social norms as male as superior and female as inferior, thereby not making significant impact in the role change. Equally important is to note the female experience narrated by male script-writers in a masculine way, which is less likely to represent the women's truth. Hence, there is a need of strong female figures in the film industry starting to perform the role from the

very ground to directors and actors to transcend the notion of dominating, suppressing and controlling female members in media. It can influence the society in a way that the women start feeling liberated from male chauvinism.

Whatever the situation exists in the Nepali film industry, the belief of female film makers is guided by the patriarchal eye, which expects female as exploited and objectified in male dominated society. Even in the recent blockbuster films like Loot, female character is defined as a glamour performing as an item girl, who can better provide entertainment to the audience. The blockbuster film Loot changed the shape of Nepali cinema and the size of Nepali film market by selling the song "Udhreko choli", which has shown women as a source of glamour. That item song was also supportive to make this film very popular and for its commercial success.

Films reflecting social norms

Nepal being a patriarchal nation offers power to the male members in the society leaving females defenseless. Though being a female is a biological factor the social construction to be a woman is as if compulsory action in the society. Such condition is depicted through Nepali films where females need to present themselves as a woman and grow under the domination of male members of the society. Such as females are emotional creatures and they can weep, but males are not meant to cry, male need to carry the burden of the house while females need to perform household works. But, at the present we find that feminist historical research has been amplifying this critique by drawing attention to the uneven effects of male oppression with accounts of specific moments when the hegemonic imbalance between oppression, resistance, and complicity was especially complex. Also crucial to the breakup of the notion of patriarchy as a monolithic force and of women as universally oppressed was the psychoanalytic claim that men do not possess the phallus any more than women do (Penley, 1989, p. xvii).

Contrary to the placement of women in a subordinated position some changes have occurred that the women started revolting against the harshness of male domination, started claiming their rights, ascended to power, broke the mainstream notion of society. This has brought some transformation in the society and brings females forth to the power of the society. They have attempted to break the notion that is nonsensical and stereotypical hampering the overall development of the society. So, such disparity of case could rise women through mediatization effect in the society and bring a new notion in relation to women in the society that women are not weak creatures instead can stand parallel along with male members of the society. Nepali films till the date victimize female for the popularity of film and so is the perspective of female in the society. Film represents society and the society is the reflection of film.

Nepali films and changing gender roles

Nepali female figures are always objectified and exploited in film. Showing women nudity in order to make commercial success of film denotes male chauvinism, control over females, which can be the true copy of patriarchal practice in society. In a sense, similar roles played by female characters in the movies justify the socially responsible role of women as they have been playing in Nepali society. But contrary to this the exposing of female glamour by the item-song Udhreko Choli, whatever the commercial purpose the song or the film has, mediatizes the society in a way that women can borrow this practice and the wearing of torn clothes by women can be digested gradually by the society.

In Nepali society, the demand of female workers made by the restaurant, clubs, and bar is the demand for publicity of such business, but that means the objectification of females for the benefit of that place or business. Women are taking some benefit from their role in the commercially-inspired entertainment industries, but more benefit is received by the males and the masculine society. Based on my experience of watching Nepali movies, most of the Nepali movies in the past have significantly smaller number of female characters compared to that of the male characters and the female characters are presented mostly in the roles of a mothers, housewives and caretakers of the family. Male characters have been dominant in the movies in the past and are presented in professional roles, while women are supposed to please their husbands physically and support their in-laws by cooking and taking care of the cleanliness of the house and their children (Mishra, 2013).

If film shows female only as involving in household activities and taking care of the family members and home, it would not give an extra impact to the audience and a significant change in society. Women are bearing a huge responsibility to the family and society by the role they have performed as housewife in home, but it does not mean that depicting them as housewife enables them to break the family role they have played, but only validates the status-quo about gender roles in a traditional patriarchal society. If films are just to show what is happening in society, they just validate the established social norms, but if female characters are given the heroic role of a profound figure of society to play, then they would be considered as role models by society, and a significant change occur may occur in society. Therefore, the film must have strength of assigning the role for women as change agents.

Often, women are defined as objects, which can satisfy men's desire. They are ranked as second sex or a weak gender in the social space. In the ancient time, the myths or holy books presented women as object that the male members were supposed to use for fulfillment of their desire and satisfaction. Women are considered as second sex in the society and made victims of male chauvinism. Following the recent global trend, the Nepali cinema needs to take female role into account with serious consideration so that the perspective on females can be changed. The picturing of females in film helps to refine the culture in a way that a balanced type of gender relationship could be made. Since a literature bears the capacity of shaping or reshaping the society, a film has high chances of restructuring the society by virtue of its mediatization effect. In order to make this, both film makers and viewers need to be responsible being acquaint for a positive transformation. Nevertheless, changing the paradigm in society is not that easy task, and it might take an era but change is necessary for the betterment of any society. Film bears high potential of bringing so many changes for its strength of making people aware of and sensitizing them provide that the best way to mediatize people is via artistic performances. Feminism would also have to relinquish a theory of sexuality that demonstrates the difficulty of taking up a sexual position and the instability of that position (what a girl must go through to become a woman, if indeed she ever does so (Penley, 1989, p. xvi).

Socialization, gender and mediatization

The general process of social formation of the young under the influence of the so-called agencies of socialization-traditionally the family, neighborhood, school and religion, and now mass media." (Mcquail, 2013, p. 571) Socialization of people with the relatives, friends, schooling, also is determined by the influence of the media and film in the society. According to the lines, people

generally learn from various influences; they learn from their own family first, they learn from their neighborhood, they learn from the school, the religion they follow, and also from mass media. Nowadays, in the era of science and technology, people are learning much from the social media. The learning of various matters from various circumstances determines the social formation of the society. At the present, people get various notices from different social media platforms. This regulates the whole society at once and directs the society either to the development or to downfall.

Socialization refers to a process whereby naïve individuals are taught the skills, behavior patterns, values, and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up" (J E Grusec and P D Hastings, 2015, p. 3). It includes the teaching of children in the society with various skills, behavior and values in the society. A child is meant to compete in the society with the social behavior they learn through socialization and be practical in the same society. Socialization motivates them to perform certain activities in the society as per the society. Media also supports for socialization of individuals, like, when people see something in the film, they learn that thing and apply the same in their life, we can call it an imitation by other people in the society.

Also, the use of media depends upon the socialization of person with whom they spend their time with. In this way, mediatization and socialization move with hand in hand to build the society and make people live and work responsibly in the society. "While a deep and lasting socialization is often assumed to occur primarily in childhood, socialization does, of course, go on throughout the life span, as individuals enter new social settings where new patterns of social behavior may be needed" (Joan E. Grusec ,Paul D. Hastings, 2015, p. 4). Similarly, a child learns to socialize from a particular area of society, as they grow up, they may need to learn a new pattern of social behaviors as per the society they go to live. For instance, when in Nepal children may learn Nepali culture and tradition, and later on when they grow up, they may go to abroad for further study or career-making. So, in this case they need to adjust themselves with new culture in abroad. They are bound to follow the completely new culture in order to accommodate with that society. The responsibility of a person towards the society is determined in such a way.

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A child learns to socialize from a particular area of society, as children need to learn a new pattern of social behaviors as per the society they go to live. For instance, when in Nepal children may learn Nepali culture and tradition, and later on when they grow up, they may go to abroad for further study or career-making. So, in this case they need to adjust themselves in the new culture as per the demand of the society. They are bound to follow the new culture there as per the society in order to get fit in the society.

It is widely that people after their birth keep travelling from one place to another. From the birthplace home to the working place office, they need to adjust themselves as per the environment. As, they move from one place to another in order to maintain the balance and bring progression in life, they learn various norms and behavior and apply accordingly.

Hence, socialization and mediatization both affect in the social behavior of people in the society that determines the development and progress of society in order to transform the society with some social responsibility of both the media person and the audience in the society.

Nepali film industry records the film of over 50 years of time span where the films with the original value can be counted in the fingers. This denotes the lack of social responsibility in the society. Films are generally not made for the social responsibility instead for the film itself that bears no value and responsibility towards the society. Film actually is meant to develop and teach the society a lesson while most of the films in Nepal seem irresponsible and are unable to use the potentiality that the film possesses.

Furthermore, music is an indispensable part of movie in especially Nepali films. As songs in Nepali film have been included since the beginning that is from the film 'Aama' the inclusion of music has always added a flavor in film. Actually, music is a form of art that reflects culture, prevents the tradition and also the nationalism of the country. So, the music teachers carry the responsibility to preserve the state's nationality. Similar is expected in a film, as music director have an immense role in attracting the audience towards film hall. As music is an indispensable part of film in eastern films as well as western films, it on one hand deliver the entertainment to the people while on the other hand takes responsibility of reflecting culture, promoting language, and providing unique identity to the nation that could be preserved in the society. So, music more than a film attracts human mind and mediatize them by establishing culture in the society through cultural dress, expression, ornaments and so on.

Research Methodology

This paper applies qualitative data collection and data analysis technique. It relies both on the secondary and primary sources of data. Qualitative data is received from media-specific contents from different journals, books, and reports. Theoretical literature is reviewed from elsewhere, but conceptual and empirical literature is received from Nepal-specific writings. This study is also data-selective in finding the movie content that has focused on the challenges faced by Nepali films and their performance on socializing the audience. It has taken some specific case study of Nepali hit films like Loot, and analyzes the dance of a chorus song, where a female character is set free to choose the dress she wants to wear, to sing a song and dance. Since film is considered as a cardinal part of mass communication, it is assumed that the audience while watching movies are parallelly involved in social learning process.

Discussion and Analysis

Social learning

Social learning of people at the present context is mostly determined by the use of media through its mediatization effect. There are two aspects of life positive and negative that people acquire through mediatization knowingly or unknowingly. Mediatization is not in the control of people as they get mediatized automatically, moreover, film is the most effective means of mediatizing people through which people learn multiples of things in their life mostly children. So, acquisition of positive message is necessary through multimedia like film that needs to be responsible in social learning and mediatizing people in the society.

Film is that entity that plays the model role in the society; people copy the behavior of the film stars in their daily lives and develop that as culture. As film is the audio-visual media that is so easy to capture in the mind of people, people get mediatized soon with the audio-visual effect of film. It is film that teaches the behavior to the people, teaches about the fashion, about cuisine and beverages, language, and many other things that people notice, grab and utilize them in their daily life in order to maintain culture that is so called the mediatization art of film, indeed leaning or acquiring mediatization is not a meaningful thing instead social responsibility for the progress of the society too counts a lot. So, people in the society are supposed to learn through mediatization art of film while need to realize their responsibility towards film and the society.

There has been challenge in the learning behavior of people in the society due to the choice of the things or perspective they make according to their match that may not serve the society. The learning behavior of people might probably reproduce the specific pattern of behavior as it is obvious that mediatization effect of media like film is automatic and people without their desire or will happen to obtain the behavior.

Hence, people in the society get mediatized through social learning theory that changes the behavior of people in order to implant culture upon them. Social learning theory helps them learn every aspect of society through various means and measures in order to develop themselves, family, society and the whole nation.

Social learning in the society through mass media has always stoke the mind of people and so people always tend to behave in the same way they learn through such media. The mass media like television, radio, computers, internet, videos and films has always brought changes in the life of people through social learning that is the mediatization effect of mass media. Film being a part of mass media brings the same consequence in the life of people that might bring positive or negative transformation that depends upon the social responsibility that media person and the society realize in their life.

Hence, social learning theory is one of the challenges in Nepali society in relation to film people watch or multimedia they use where the effect might be positive or negative with the perception of social responsibility by both the social media users and developer in the nation. So, in particular, film makers need to be responsible in order to eradicate the challenges of wrong message in the society and on the other hand people or the audience need to be responsible towards own film and take it in a positive way grabbing positive message for positive transformation in the society.

Political Upheaval

Shiva Dhakal the senior cinematographer states that the film industry encountered more trouble after the Maoist revolution as the night show in the film hall started closing in the cinema hall. The political upheaval made a lot of difference in the arena of movie. This very event prevented the film industry and the film makers to bring forth the cinema in the country and bear responsibility towards the society. As the film makers could not go ahead and invest for the film due to the political instability in the country, there was a great loss to the film industry as well as to the nation, indeed, one of the most essential sources of national revenue that government depends upon is film.

Amaraj Giri mentions in Chalachitra Manch, the film development board was established as per the will and wish of the film makers in the industry in the year 2057 B.S. Nevertheless, and then there were not strong rules and regulations for the smooth development of the film. All the power was under the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology; only certain tasks were handed to the film development board. All the power of filmmaking was under the policy of government. In the year 1971 A.D. only, the government established 'Royal Nepal Film Institute'.

According to political situation, it was the period of Panchayat rule and king Mahendra was the leader with the aim of further progress in Nepali film industry the institute was formed (Giri A. , 2067, p. 3).

After the development of the film in Nepal for the progression and smooth development of the films in Nepal, the institute 'Royal Nepal Film Institute' was established in Nepal. The head of the industry was King Mahendra then. So, the film industry was totally under the control of the Nepal government or the King, the ruler of Nepal then in the year 1971 A.D. The rule was possible after the end of the autocratic Rana rulers in Nepal; Panchayat system of King Mahendra was established and there was a bit freedom in the production, distribution and demonstration of film. As government itself is responsible in control of film making process in Nepal, the state does not let the vulgarity in the film and controls the film to maintain the certain discipline and rule of the society is mentioned in the book "Chalachitra Manch" that this study takes as the reference.

Conclusion

Nepali films revolve around multiple challenges, which prevents to mediatize people in a way it is deemed. As a result, films have not been able to meet the social responsibility. On the contrary, a handful of films have navigated the role of women looking around the world and given chances to them to perform as heroes. Such a chance given to female actors worked well that the society started acknowledging them as someone very special. Initially, they became the target of so many blames for violating the existing social norms and values, but the impact they have given to the audience gradually came to instill particularly the girls and daughters a confidence while working in the outside world. Then, many female actors, once became popular after performing a masculine role, started seeking their stake in the leading sectors of the film industry. We can see many of them are working in the film industry as investors, directors, producers, etc. which has been possible due to the mediatization effect of film as mass communication. This means that the film does not only reflect the particular society it belongs to but also attempts a lot to refine and transform it.

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