

# Real Story in Reel Life; Ethnographic Description of Contemporary Nepalese Films

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## Abstract

*The main purpose of this study is to investigate the ethnographic picture of the five different social films of Nepal. This study looks at the representation of social life in contemporary five social films directed by men and women till 2018. Based on background quantitative data as well as a qualitative content analysis, this paper found that portrayals of film life juxtapose to real life. The focus of the films, story of the films, message of the films were analyzed anthropologically as the life, character, story that are found in films are the part or the representation of our social life. The messages that are passes from the film are the product of that particular society. It is the representative expression of all social life, aspiration, problems that are found all over the country. Mainly, different contents in films were found though same territory, people, but different is the message, time, characters, story, etc. found the content. Their films of different genres were found. Five different films or reel contents were analyzed and found different stories, role, but represent the real life of different era or time presented differently. That's why films are also the means of study of the society, culture and anything else associated with human life anthropologically because films are the part and product of the particular society and culture.*

**Key words:** film, ethnography, visual anthropology, interpretative, films, social, comedy etc.

## Introduction

Central defining feature of ethnography is first the risk and the moments of the research process which cannot be planned and are situational, coincidental, and individual and so on. Second, the researcher's skilful activity in each situation becomes more important. Third, ethnography transforms into a strategy of research which includes as many options of collecting data as can be imagined and are justifiable (ibid). Contemporary ethnographic research is characterized by fragmentation and diversity. There is certainly a carnivalesque profusion of methods, perspectives, and theoretical justifications for ethnographic work. There are multiple methods of research, analysis, and representation. Ethnography as a research strategy has been imported from anthropology into different substantial areas in other disciplines. From a more methodological point of view, current ethnographic research is characterized by an extended participation in the field, which studies a flexible research strategy, employing all sorts of methods and focusing on writing and reporting experiences in that field.

Symbolic/Interpretive Anthropologists offer different views of culture asking about meanings of symbols and how these symbols shape people's way or patterns of life. So anthropologists, rather than describing the culture, must dig out the meaning of the symbols that constitute the cultural whole. Culture is an abstract concept or adaptive strategy. Symbols used in everyday life (in culture rituals, festivals and important social events etc.,) carry out the meanings for operation of the particular culture (Dahal, 2008). Thus, investigation and interpretation of meanings used in the context of action (i.e. social action) is the primary concern of Symbolic Anthropology.

Culture is not something locked inside people's head but rather is embodied in public symbols - symbols through which the members of a society communicate their own view. It is

value orientation ethos (characteristic features of any culture and community) to their further generations (by means of socialization). To anthropologists, they are social processes that pass from generation to generation. For example wearing white dress by a man symbolizes the death of his father or mother and the dress if worn by a woman symbolizes the death of her husband in Hindu culture.

The first anthropologists began using filming equipment as soon as it was invented since the technology was ideal for documenting life and culture. It is inevitable that producers measure their ideas depending on the television channel as well as its audience, schedule, and budget, thus setting certain limits to the film. Limits that affected TV movies were the ones to kick start the emergence of visual anthropology curriculums a couple of decades ago. Anthropologists got the opportunity to learn the language of documentary, to use cameras and edit their own films.

The ethnographic films that were mainly based on context of the particular society in particular time through the observation of these events through the story making based on particular characters of the socio-cultural setting. Ethnography stands for films without passion that should be viewed in order to learn about the particular context of that society, culture and socio-cultural practices and the life patterns and ways of life people of that particular cultural and social context. In reality, the ethnographic and anthropologic films have proven to be versatile and in-depth documentaries that are not afraid to experiment and carry a key role in the development of the documentary field.

Anthropological filmmakers began to find their way back to adopt the participatory approach perfect blending with the videography and collaborative filmmaking at the end of the 1960's. Even in the rapidly changing media landscape of the 21st century, movies have remained an integral part of Nepalese popular culture. While methods of consumption have changed, millions of Nepalese still flock to theaters every year to see stories played out on the silver screen, with the Kathmandu box office. Concurrently, the Academy Awards, the world's most prestigious cinematic awards, draws millions of viewers each year. The sustained prevalence of film in popular culture positions the medium as a key cog in American society and popular culture (Simonton, 2004). Yet, even in the year 2019, many Nepalese are not proportionally represented in film. These inadequacies in cinematic representation both on screen and off screen have prompted a number of social movements over the past few years.

### **Historical development of Visual Anthropology**

Visual anthropology spread more widely in 1940's when the well-known anthropologists Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead started using cameras in cultural studies, since the anthropological approach to the matter and the way of storytelling is very different from television production, ethnographic films have a certain role in the field of documentaries. The mid-1980s saw a boom in the production of ethnographic films; several ethnographic film festivals were launched, written publications on various aspects of visual culture(s) were on the rise, and an increasing number of anthropology institutes worldwide included courses on visual anthropology in their curricula. Despite this ongoing trend, Lucien Taylor (1996) detected a profound "iconophobia" in anthropology. Such reservations, based on the outdated equation of visual anthropology with material culture and folklore, illustrate that the research topics, intentions, and methodologies of visual anthropology are still largely underestimated or misunderstood within mainstream socio-cultural anthropology. To avoid such

misunderstandings, David MacDougall tried to explain the distinction between *anthropological films* and *films about anthropology* and distinguishes them by their attempts “to cover new grounds through an integral exploration of the data, or whether [they] merely report ... on existing knowledge” (MacDougall 1998). He further states that

*Films about anthropology, by and large, employ the conventions of teaching and journalism; anthropological films present a genuine process of inquiry. They develop their understandings progressively, and reveal an evolving relationship between the filmmaker, subject, and audience. They do not provide a “pictorial representation” of anthropological knowledge, but a form of knowledge that emerges through the very grain of filmmaking. (MacDougall 1998)*

MacDougall leaves no doubt that only anthropological films are able to make genuine and original contributions to the discipline. In sum, as an independent research method with its own modes of representation, visual anthropology maintains the full capacity to convey complex facts, theoretical reflections, and multisensory experience and reveals something different from what gets revealed in writing. Cinematic, photographic, drawn/animated, and digital images will also in the future be effectively used as field records, studied and employed as sites of cross-cultural social interaction (Edwards 2011), and, last but not least, appointed as means of evocation and knowledge production beyond the written word.

### **Historical development of film in Nepal**

The histories of Nepalese film development have begun with the film Satya Harishchandra assumed to be the first Nepali-language movie and was released on September 14, 1951 by D.B. Pariyar. On October 7, 1964, the film title Aama (mother) was released, which is the first film produced in Nepal. At that time the film was produced by the Information Department of Government of Nepal. Likewise, the first film produced under a private banner was Maitighar, which was released at the end of 1966. Although it was a Nepalese movie, it had many Indians contributing toward its making.

The Nepal government established the Royal Nepal Film Corporation in 1971. Mann Ko Bandh was the first film produced by the Corporation and was followed by Kumari (the first Eastman color Nepali film) and Paral ko Aago in 1978, Sindoor in 1980, Jeevan Rekha and “Badlindo Aakash” in 1984 in a series. Their success opened up the avenue for private sectors to enter into filmmaking as an industrial endeavor.

In the course of mid 80s to mid 90s, new trends were found on film sectors, relatively more creative films were made and they became successful, too. Thus, filmmaking started to appear as a more viable profession and the number of productions increased a bit. After the introduction of private sectors in the Nepali film industry, the time came when more films were being made and they were much more accepted by Nepalese audiences. Film like Badlindo Aakash, Samjhana, Kusume Rimal, Lahure, Kanchhi, Saino and Koseli, which were released between 1984 and 1993, were very popular..

After the political change, of 1990 in Nepal, the society started to become open and vibrant, which helps to develop the congenial environment for the fledgling film industry, near about 140 films were produced within three years. Such unprecedented growth in the number of productions helped to start the film distribution. Share in the existing market increased and the market itself expanded. Cinema halls increased to more than 300; despite these, Hindi language movies produced in India had always dominated the market.

In the mid-1990s, Maoist revolution had started and it triggered downfall of the domestic film industry. In the period of war and conflict, a very small number of films were made, and audience numbers fell sharply. It resulted in lower budgets and even lower performances, which resulted in even smaller audiences. In the later years of the conflict, the production and release of Nepali films had almost come to a standstill. Many actors and filmmakers left the country in search for work abroad.

It is found that, many movies including historic movies like Balidaan and Seema Rekha made during this period were appreciated by critics and audience. By 2006, as the situation in Nepal calmed down and with Maoists coming into mainstream politics, the Nepali film industry started to return to its previous state, and more films were being made and released. This period also marked the commencement of digital films in the industry. After many successful films were made and released, film industry is growing replacing the market of Indian films in Nepal. Some of the popular films are; Loot, Chapali Height, Nai Nabhannu la, series, Kohinoor, Kabaddi Kabaddi, Woda Number 6, Chakka Panja series, Kalo Pothi etc.

### **Theoretical model**

Ethnography has, of course, been primarily a written form, an adjunct discipline to anthropology, its humanistic or literary side, if you will. Nevertheless, ethnographers, like anthropologists, generally, aspired for scientific specificity and exactitude.

According to Geertz(1973) an ethnographer must present a thick description which is composed not only of facts but also of commentary, interpretation and interpretations of those comments and Geertz outlines four parameters for an adequate “thick description” and a study of culture: among them, the first is about the interpretative study about culture because anthropology is a semiotic endeavor. Cultural analysis should be an interpretative practice which traces the manner to which meaning is ascribed. To achieve a thick description of a culture, the raw observational material collected by an ethnographer is not sufficient. That’s why, culture should be described or interpreted. Secondly, the subject of interpretation is the flow of social discourse and according to Geertz, Interpretative ethnography produce the codes required for decoding social events. The third parameter which Geertz introduced has the interpretation with extrovert expressions in which data collection and interpretation are limited to what local informants can tell others. Therefore, the thickest of descriptions can only be based on extrovert expressions of culture. Fourth, one is ethnographic description with microscopic analysis, for Geertz ethnographic findings describe local behaviors and truths which serve as an ethnographical miniature. We always view specific and contextualized happenings, and these make up the thick description.

If ethnography of any sort was to be preserved, its practitioners would have to seriously grapple with the intellectual critiques of its methods, which came from post-colonial scholarship, especially, but also post-structuralism more generally, since the claims to objectivity clashed with the inner workings of what we now understood to be texts, not hard evidence. In light of the inevitably textual character of ethnographic writing, Geertz proposed “thick description,” an attempted ekphrasis of the cultural event at hand that avoided broad generalizations and really described what the researcher was seeing and hearing. Theories emerge from the concretion of these smaller events (Geertz, 1973;15).

Geertz in “thick description” argues the aim of anthropology is to interpret the meaning of behaviour to explain actions and attitudes that appear puzzling. According to him, culture

consists of “structures of significance”, “frame of interpretation” or “socially established structures of meaning”. For Geertz, culture is “context” and it is the object of the ethnography to describe it.

For Geertz, reading culture is like doing archaeology; culture is exposed and explained layer by layer until it gives the significant meaning (i.e. interpretation understanding). By the interpretative understanding of culture, Geertz also implies the context (situation, time, condition) of the symbols used. The interpretation of Balinese cockfight is a classical example of Symbolic Anthropology or interpretive approach (Dahal, 2008). For Geertz, ‘The Balinese Cockfight’ is a symbolic event, which offers a window to Balinese culture through which it is possible to see “What keeps Balinese society in order? There are two contradictory relationships within the Balinese society. He interprets the event as a cultural “text” through which one attempts to understand the inner nature of Balinese society. The cockfight symbolizes the social relation (kin/village, community), conflict, rivalries between different communities and the social solidarity within a single Balinese community. Betting as a cockfight expresses the villagers’ and kin’s “we-feeling” which also relates to the existing labour, economic and ritual cooperation between the members. It is not only the fight between two animals (cocks) but also between the two communities in the “game form” (Dahal, 2008).

Thick description of Nepalese social film through the thick description account of the context of the Nepalese film construction, story based on the socio-cultural and political context of the particular time, role and characters introduced in the films, representation of story on reality of the contemporary society and moral, messages passes to the audiences etc. thus provides a clear framework for conceptualizing the socio-cultural-symbolism through content of these different films. This frame provides the clear cut picture of interplay between the “idealistic” and “realistic” explanations of social and cultural life of people of Nepal because it reveals the conservative traditions which are the barrier of development and is against the social development of Nepalese society and culture.

The symbolic interpretation of social films of Nepal, persuasively demonstrates that explanation demands not simply describing symbolic meanings of what the story and content of the film deserves through particular events, roles, characters etc. but also accounting for how something is improbable for symbolic communication in time and context. The ethnographic studies of Nepalese films aim to understand the nature of Nepalese society through an analysis of the meanings of certain cultural and social contexts and it resembles Geertz’s “cockfight” for the Balinese world. It also resembles Pritchard’s structural analysis in “The Nuer”. The goal of this research is to “open” Nepalese culture to readers “unfolding it, revealing it, not only a sense of surface and rhythm, but also a sense of inner connections and interactions through the film story full of entertainment, joy, happiness and emotions, sentiments, by focusing on social, cultural and economic issues, because they are events that dramatize and make Nepalese social life intelligible for both participants and observer.

### **Methodology**

A qualitative content analysis was used to examine the content of film in relation to context of the society. The method was selected due to the complex nature of portrayals in film. While quantitative findings provide context for the study, a qualitative content analysis better lends itself toward the nuances found within the representations in each film. For the purpose of this study, the top-five social films which are milestones for the role model of

social movements were analyzed. These five films were chosen because of the influence that these films interpret the social, cultural, political and everyday life of people through the various characters have on the industry and its audiences. Because they are representatives of the social development, they satirize the social evils, social problems and barriers of social development, they earn the most money, they are often the most influential, given that they are exposed to the most people. The films analyzed in this study are Jhola, Chhakka Panja, Balidan, Pashupati Prasad, Woda Number 6. These films deal with a wide range of subject matter and genres and will give a sense of how people are portrayed in popular films. In this analysis, minor quantitative background data was also used to gauge how films with varying levels of budgets, gender representation behind the scenes, and other contexts may affect representations on screen. Quantitative analysis in this study is comprised of domestic and worldwide gross budget, the description of key roles behind the scenes (director, writer, producer, executive producer, editor, and cinematographer). This information was used to supplement the qualitative content analysis. Each film was viewed in its entirety and coded. The representations and roles of social, leading role, as well as their connotation, the agency and actions of artists, and notable quotes in each film were recorded. After viewing each film, these coded results were then analyzed and filtered into trends.

Purposively, five social films were selected- Jhola, Chhakka Panja, Balidan, Pashupati Prasad, Woda Number 6 so as to compare the film content, socio-cultural context, technology used, scripts, film story, dialogues, visuals, time of film operations, investment and returns, response of audience and film, themes, moral and messages etc. to juxtapose and critically analyses the content and the context of the sampled films through which we can understand the context of contemporary socio-cultural context of the society, political scenario, cultural pattern, social characters, peoples aspiration, emotions, sentiments in socio-national settings through symbolic interpretation. Content analysis in film survey is the methodology to generate the information about the overall film and their content and context. The producer, scripts writer, story maker, director, lyrists, music composer and singers as key informants were interviewed or discussed so as to generate information primarily.

### **Interviews and Key Informants' Interview**

Key informants were selected as those respondents who are directly involved in film making process such as the producer, scripts writer, story maker, director, lyrists, music composer and singers as key informants. There were 5- directors, 5- story makers or script writers as the key informants and 50 audiences were selected who have watched the movies as respondents randomly.

Table 1, *Distributions of Sample Films Directed by, Story by, Focus of the film, Genera of the film and Moral of the film*

S. N.	Name of the Film	Director	Story	Focus of the Film	Moral of the Film	Genera of the Film
1	Jhola	Yadav Kumar Bhattarai	Krishna Dhar-abasi	Sati Pratha that was prevalent in Nepal until the 1920s.	How women had to immolate herself upon her husband's death, typically on his funeral pyre. It was our social ill.	Social; Awareness
2	Chhakka Panja	Deepa Shree Niraula	Deepak raj Giri Kedar Ghimire Jitu Nepal	Story is well weaved on migration trends, Cheating one to another, selfishness and opportunistic characters	Donot cheat to others, you are also cheating by others. Do work honestly, otherwise you will punished	Comedy, Awareness
3	Baidan	Tulsi Ghimire	Modnath Prasit	people's movement for democracy	Can succeed to establish social justice in society	Social; Revolutionary
4	Pashupati Prasad	Deependra Khanal	Khagen-dra Lam-ichhane	Struggle of Orphans in Nepalese society that are happening in Pashupati aarya ghat in funeral ceremony	How people are facing micro problem in their modern life.	Social; Everyday Struggling Life
5	Woda Number 6	Ujawal Ghimire	Deepak-Deepa	Love story, politics,, impacts of Maoist movement, Kid-napped, crime etc.	Time is valuable, Just do work, You will get result	Social; Revolutionary and Comedy

Field Survey, 2019

### Findings and Discussion

The socio-cultural profiles of the respondents are on

Table 2, *Distribution of respondents by caste and ethnicity*

S.N.	Caste and Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
a	Brahman and Chhetri	15	30
b	Newar	5	10
c	Tamangs	5	10
d	Gurungs	5	10
e	Rais	10	20
f	Terai Caste and Ethnic	10	20
	Total	50	100

Field Survey, 2019

Above table, shows that caste and ethnicity based distribution of 15 respondents provided positive, social and understand the films as the means of to establish social issues of particular society and culture. Among them 37% respondents are Brahmin followed by Chhetri which comprises 30%. All respondents provided their opinion that films are the product of our society, whatever the issues in society and culture that we can see in the films. For all caste and ethnicity groups the message through film in the context of social development is to understand society and culture through films is one of the appropriate ethnographic understandings.

The age distribution of respondents was presented in table 3.

Table 3, *Distribution of respondents by age*

S.N.	Age group	Number	Percentage
1	14-19	5	10
2	20-25	5	10
3	26-30	10	20
4	31-35	20	40
5	36-407	10	20
	Total	200	100

Field Survey, 2019

Above table shows that the 40% of total respondents of age group between 31-35 were found highest among all film audience.



Table 4, *Distribution of respondents by gender*

S.N.	Gender	Number	Percentage
1	Male	25	100
2	Female	25	100

Field Survey, 2019

It shows that the respondents were equal on gender basis.

Table 5, *Distribution of Sample Film by Director and Story Writer*

S.N.	Name of the film	Name of the Director	Name of the Story Writer
1	Jhola	Yadav Kumar Bhattarai	Krishna Dharabasi
2	Chhakka Panja	Deepa Shree Niraula	Deepak Raj Giri Kedar Ghimire Jitu Nepal
3	Baidan	Tulsi Ghimire	Modnath Prasit
4	Pashupati Prasad	Deependra Khanal	Khagendra Lamichhane
5	Woda Number 6	Ujwal Ghimire	Deepak- Deepa

Field Survey, 2019

Above table shows that these five films were successful films in terms of people's love, likes, and watching. People liked all these five films because of different story, different presentation, different messages etc. but the story of same society and culture.

#### **About Films:**

The selected sample five films; Jhola, Chhakka Panja, Balidan, Pashupati Prasad and Ward Number 6 are directed by Yadav Kumar Bhattarai, Deepa Shree Niraula, Tulasi Ghimire, Deependra Khanal and Ujwal Ghimire respectively. The story of the films; Jhola, Chhakka Panja, Balidan, Pashupati Prasad and Ward Number 6 are based on different stories of the Nepalese society of different time and different context. The Jhola is about sati pratha (Sati System) that was prevalent in Nepal until the 1920s in which a wife had to immolate herself upon her husband's death, typically on his funeral pyre. The film Chhakka Panja became successful in setting alternative trends in the Nepali cinema industry in which the four friends are predictably pulled out from their cocoons and dragged into reality. Each of them either finds love, goes abroad for work or both. And while in most movies, this would have been the 'happy ending' that ties all loose ends together Chhakka Panja goes on to show viewers the lack of assurance any of this provides in a corrupt, chaotic state that cannot give jobs to its people, forcing them to leave the country. The film Balidan is one of the successful movies of all times. The movie is based on the people's revolutionary movement for democracy, and its lively presentation justified its success. The genus of the film is mainly focus on the story of democracy fighters made it different from most of the other Nepali movies. The film

Pashupati Prasad is focused on the struggle of people in Kathmandu for their everyday life and the film features the struggle of a poor guy who lost his parents in the earthquake. He comes to Kathmandu to earn his living and pay off the debt owned by his late father. The film was also nominated for the Nepali entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 89th Academy Awards. The film Ward Number 6 covers the story around the village of Nuwakot and five friend's story that gets connected with the Maoist revolution. The situation of people they faced in society during Maoist movement was clearly mentioned in the story.

The main artists who acted in the films were Garima Panta, Deepak Chhetri, Sujal Nepal, Laxmi Giri whereas in the film Chhakka Panja the artists were; Deepak Raj Giri, Kedar Ghimire, Jitu Nepal, Buddhi Tmanag, Priyanka Karki, Deepa Shree Niraula etc. The main artists who are involved in the film Balidan are; Nir Shah, Hari Bansha Acharya, Anjana Shrestha, Madan Krishna Shrestha, Shanti Maskey, Keshav Bhattarai, where as the film Pashupati Prasad is cast by Khagendra Lamichhane, Bipin Karki, Barsha Shivakoti, Prakash Ghimire, Rabindra Singh Baniya. In Ward Number 6, the actors, Deepak raj Giri, Jitu Nepal, Kedar Ghimire, Sitaram Kattel, Rajaram Poudel are from TV whereas Priyanka karki, Dayanhang Rai, Nir Shah are from the main stream movies.

The story of the films; Jhola, Chhakka Panja, Balidan, Pashupati Prasad and Ward Number 6 were written by Krishna Dharabashi, Chhakka Panja by joint effort of Deepak Raj Giri, Deepa Shree Niraula, Jitu Nepal, Kedar Ghimire and the film Balidan is written by Modnath Prasit, the popular film Pashupati Prasad was written by Khagendra Lamichhane. The film Ward Number 6 was written jointly by Deepak Raj Giri, Kedar Ghimire, Jitu Nepal, Sita Ram Kattel.

### **Focus of the Film;**

#### **Jhola**

The film Jhola presents the height of violence against women in ancient Nepal – Sati tradition. The story of a film 'Jhola' start with the scenes in which a young woman (Garima Pant) is married to a man 40 years senior to her. When her husband dies, Garima is kept to be burned alive with the dead body of her husband. She escaped the fire and hides in a cave. The scenes in the movie seem historical, uses long shot to present realistic views of the time. The movie depicts the environment of East Nepal at the time of 100 years ago. The young people could get a glimpse of our past and the old people can feel the time they have gone through in their childhood. So, both young and the old can enjoy the movie. In addition to Sati tradition, the movie also touches on slavery (Kamara Kamari) tradition.

"Sati Pratha" a heart breaking, bitter history of Nepal, is a traditional practice in which a Hindu widow had to cremate herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. 'Sati' is an ancient Sanskrit term, meaning a chaste woman who thinks of no other man than her own husband, which has no any co-relation with suicide or murder and has never been mentioned in any scriptures as Sati Pratha. The practice was just the cruel tradition established by those bloodthirsty and merciless male rulers. Sati is often described as voluntary, although in some cases it may have been forced as you can hear in this story.

Although the Sati system was abolished decades ago, Jhola is still relevant to today's Nepal where, unfortunately, cases of sexual harassment, violence against women, trafficking remain all too common. The film begins with the character of an old man called Ghanashyam (Sujal Nepal) leaves his bag for a night at the writer's home. Suspicious, the writer checks

the contents of the bag only to find an old manuscript which contains 11 short stories, and introduced to a young Ghanashyam who lives with his mother Kanchhi (Garima Panta) and his ailing father (Deepak Chhetri). After her husband passes away, Kanchhi's life becomes a nightmare. Expected to sacrifice herself on the funeral pyre, Kanchhi enters almost a daze like state and goes from being a strong-willed, loving mother to a helpless widow. As she prepares herself for the ceremony and Ghanashyam comes to terms with being orphaned, the anguish of both mother and son becomes palpable on screen. While expertly depicting the pain of the protagonists, explores the tender relationship between a mother and a son. In the film, it is shown that the male supremacy and patriarchy in which there are unanswered questions as; "why is it that only a woman has to sacrifice her life when a man dies, why not by man when her wife die? And why is it acceptable for a man to marry for the second time". The cinematography is one of the best aspects of the movie. The director has also taken care to present the ancient environment. Most of the lighting during the shooting was also made by traditional lights like ranko, diyalo and fire place light. The dresses used by the characters were also sewn by hand. Background music was also composed of leaf music and traditional tunes. The director says that none of the artists have done make up. To make the characters natural, they had carried cow dung, in fields, carried water and the natural dirt was used to make the characters real.

### **Chhakka Panja**

**Chhakka Panja** marks the collaboration between comedians all of whom share a common provenance of prime time comedy that shows thriving on what could be broadly called 'social satire'. The film *Chhakka Panja* revolves around four friends in a village — Raja (Deepak Raj Giri), Saraswoti (Jeetu Nepal), Magne (Kedar Ghimire) and Buddhi (Buddhi Tamang). Raja is rich but illiterate and enjoys life, and tells his friends to not get married or hold any job. However, he secretly has affairs with married women. Then one day Raja gets married to Champa (Priyanka Karki), and the story enters a serious mode when Champa elopes with someone else. The lives of Raja and his friends are turned upside down. *Chhakka Panja* is a total comedy and social drama, a story of friendship, love and revenge. With comedy and satire on society, it 'is' funny and takes you to Raja's land. The cunning nature, of Raja with a distinct style, get-up and perfect comedy timing steal audience's heart as Raja. Karki as Champa and Poudel as the mystery man do a decent job. Nepal and Ghimire tickle your funny bone with their gags and humor. Aryan Sigdel in a cameo as an NRN is treat to watch. The first-half of the film moves with Giri and his friends' mischievous acts and social problems of society - leaving one's wife to work in a foreign country, unemployment, society's culture to show off, poverty, domestic violence and so on. In the middle of the second-half, the story takes a turn surprising the audience with its terrific ending.

### **Balidan**

The film *Balidaan (Sacrifice)*, released in 1996, with its depiction of Nepal's Communist movement, was banned in 2005 when King Gyanendra, together with the army, imprisoned Nepal's most influential politicians and took over power. The *Balidan* was directed by one of the most successful Nepali movie director *Tulsi Ghimire*, the movie *Balidan* is one of the successful movies of its time. *Balidan* means 'sacrifice' and the story of the movie is also based on patriotic content. The originality of the story and it being based on the people's movement

for democracy was also one of the many reasons for its success. The story being related to the Nepali society and also a democratic storyline made it different than most of the other Nepali movies, especially of that time, so, the movie was loved by mass as well.

The story describes the Nepali society and its politics. It is about the people's democratic fight against the *Panchayat* System that prevailed in Nepal during the period of King *Mahendra*. It describes the struggle and problems that the people of Nepal had to go through to bring democracy in the country. The movie starred some of the well known and veteran actors like *Nir Shah*, *Haribansa Acharya*, *Madan Krishna Shrestha* and *Ram Krishna Bamjan* in the lead roles. The movie also gives message to the people to fight against injustice. It encourages people, especially the young generation, to understand and take up their roles and responsibilities towards their country.

### **Pashupati Prasad**

The film features struggle of a poor guy who lost his parents in earthquake, comes to Kathmandu to earn his living and pay off the debt owned by his late father. The young Pashupati Prasad (Khagendra Lamichhane) is irate about his name given by the Meet Uncle (Praksh Ghimire) and teased by his friends. Pashupati's parents give birth after visiting Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu. After the earthquake of April 2015 and his parents killed, the investor urges Pashupati to pay the loan taken and threatens to take the field. Pashupati, now a grownup and determined to pay back the debts, moves to Kathmandu. He meets Meet Uncle, a ghate in Pashupatinath and drunkard, who after several ignorance, takes Pashupati to his shelter. Pashupati needs a work to earn money and the Bhasme Don (Bipin Karki) doesn't want him to interfere in the daily tasks. Bhasme bullies the innocent Pashupati but is afraid of the Hanuman Ji (Rabindra Singh Baniya). Pashupati befriends Hanuman Ji, who earns money by taking photographs with the visitors. Similarly due to his helpful nature, he meets Aama, who is left by her children and lives in Briddhashram. He respects her like his mother and even gives his daily collection for saving. Pashupati sees Bunu (Barsha Siwakoti) during the photograph session with Hanuman Ji and falls in love. Pashupati is recruited by local dealer and sent again to collect wood with Bhasme Don. Bhasme tries to find a way out to kick out Pashupati and is able to convince while making Marijuana by the dealer. Pashupati is again recruited to sell the Sarees which gives him little more money than his previous assignments.

During the course, he meets a graduate who sells street food. Pashupati also wants to sell street food and asks if he can get the stall. He then goes to take money from his saving only to find that Meet Uncle has used it for liquor. He is frustrated and goes to the banks of Bagmati. He gets the golden ring of the deceased person thrown and goes to sell it. But the shopkeepers don't want to take it as he has no bill. Some try to give him mere cash but he refuses. The shopkeeper who he meets in the beginning of the cinema then accuses him of theft and the mob kills him.

In the climax of the scene, the Hanuman Ji is revealed to be the government officer who embezzled huge amount of money. Aama waits for the adopted son Pashupati to give her belongings instead of her own son. Bunu not knowing the unlikely death, wait desperately for the cheering and hardworking guy. Even Bhasme Don feels sorry for Pashupati. Meet Uncle pays the debt to the investor in the village.

**Word No 6**

Even though most of the actors are originally from comedy TV serials, director Ujjwal Ghimire has managed to make them sound not too loud. The comedy faces, run and chase in the field are not found to the extent as found in the TV serials and are not the primary comic stunts. Directors managed the producers (as most of the actors are also the producer of the movie) not to be loud in the movie and made the plots/sequences look lively rather than the “Joker” like comedy.

Woda No. 6 is a story of five friends in ward number 6 village of Nuwakot during the Maoists insurgency period and their consequences after the peace accord. The movie tells the story in a comedy manner showing how disparities, economic divide and discrimination fuel the rise of “Mausuli” (Maoists) in the village and it’s the impact on the society. Among the five, one is a son of tailor: shown as “lower caste”, second: the drunkard Daya, third: the juwade Magne, fourth: the bachelor having a problem with eye sight & marriage and the graduate Deep. The four illiterate have no other option to loiter other than playing cards or be drunk. All of them end up joining Maoists rebel group, either for taking revenge or due to Deeps clash with Kaji family (the elite in the Village). Movie even gets funnier in the Maoists camp and the training. The “Krantikari” love letter from Magne and Radio news broadcast in phone by Daya are more hilarious. Movie sounds a little vulgar in some parts whereas for a comedy with post graduate certificate, it is acceptable.

**Moral of the Film****Jhola**

‘Jhola’ is a historical movie to get a glimpse of the time of our forefathers. The movie is a mirror of violence against women in ancient time. Apart from the entertainment, the movie offers insights into history, culture and tradition. ‘Jhola’ has its share of shortcomings but, it is a good historical movie. This movie depicts a horrifying tale of a custom practiced a century back in Himalayan kingdom of Nepal. According to the culture a wife had to burn herself on the funeral pyre after death of husband to prove her loyalty and purity. Garima Pant as wife, Deepak Chhetri as Husband and Sujal Nepal as son have made this moving tale a must watch. It depicts the custom frame by frame on the solid foundation of reality. The movie deals with the consequences of this obnoxious custom known as “Sati Pratha”, depicting the story of a woman representing women of then (before 18th century when sati ritual was abolished) who were sacrificed on funeral pyre of husbands alive as Sati Ritual and women of now who have been attacked by social crime like sexual harassment, violence, trafficking.

The story how it is narrated, forces you to think about women’s oppression, gender inequality and unequal power relation. It is not any religion and culture which force Sathi System as compulsion. It’s indeed the follower, especially so called masculine men to suppress the sexuality of young women. Through this film as the beginning of new horizon to cinema in Nepal which surely was going to highlight the history, culture and real scenario of Nepal through movies to give new generation insight of Nepal.

**Chhaka Panja**

At the other end of the spectrum are the men, more specifically the flippant Bhagwaan alias Raja (Deepak Raj Giri) holding on to his feudal past, fully aware of the loosing effect

his standing has on the villagers. It is significant that a character like his finds place in contemporary Nepali cinema which, at least in its context, has evolved enough to embrace the change in social hierarchy.

All the characters in **Chhakka Panja** are given a moral leitmotiv, devised to further the social awareness the movie brings to the mix. The movie (about a curious group of villagers in post-conflict Nepal, where the remittance based economy is changing lives in striking ways) operates with the understanding of the episodic format of tv series. Like a shade of quirk clumsily given to a TV character to save them from broad strokes (a catchphrase, for one), all the characters in **Chhakka Panja** are given a moral leitmotiv, devised to further the social awareness the movie brings to the mix.

Chhakka Panja has the usual flaws: the transition between scenes is blotchy, characters and their trademark one-liners are unoriginal, the plot has loopholes, but what grates most is the trivialization of hard-hitting issues that plague our society and country. And while it has been categorized as social satire and you're probably expected to take it all in good humor, some in the audience are left feeling bitter and guilty about having laughed at the pun on KC after you see Magne and his colleagues - One kidney less, but with a visible scar to remind them of the poverty they've been born into and the sacrifices they've had to make to survive. We leave the hall wiping tears not of laughter, but of the tragic reality of a visionless state, corrupt politicians and the feeling of impending doom.

### **Balidan**

It also emphasizes on the power of unity among the people to change the world. This social and realistic movie is one of those that encourage the viewers to take a stand against injustice. The movie tries to mirror the social issues of the Nepali society and its purpose is not to merely entertain the viewers but to make them realize and understand their responsibilities towards the society, nation and the world. As the name suggests, the main theme of the movie is to sacrifice your selfishness for the sake of your country. It is a good movie to catch up if you are willing to get a glimpse of what surpassed among the people of Nepal during the democratic movement.

### **Pashupati Prasad**

Hence, in-between fact and philosophy Pashupati Prasad is strong but, visual language is weak. The narration style of Nepali audience is audio. Pashupati Prasad is continuing this style. The beauty of movie, consisting of heavy drama, does not improve the visual language. Nepali director needs to move far from the approach of radio drama. If movie was more focused on the factors of screenplay, visual language and conflict, in that case Pashupati Prasad will be excellent product of literature.

Since, in every era there will be the origin of character which has specific goal and struggle. Despite having same time and pace, Nepal is having two different civilizations. One civilization lives in Kathmandu, another one in Sindhupalchowk. So that, the film Pashupati Prasad, is more than philosophy and thought in this context.

Struggle of a common man in the city to repay his debts isn't a new storyline in films. A son trying to fulfill his parents' last wish too isn't a novel idea. But even after putting together these commonly used ideas, new movie Pashupati Prasad wins your heart, thanks to its strong storyline, actors' notable performances, witty dialogues and creditable cinematography.

With a gripping storyline, the movie keeps you glued to your seat. The portrayal of recent earthquake and its effects on a man's life have been done brilliantly. The movie is shot in the Pashupati area, except for one or two scenes, which is a proof that good movies can be made in the local areas too. With emphasis on minute details and dialogue delivery that is natural and witty, the movie makes the audience content. A straight and simple man 'Pashupati' with the dream of paying his debts arrives at the capital city of Nepal and gets to know the competition and real struggle of life. The film shows proficiency in the fields like love, betrayal, friendship, mankind and much more.

### **Woda Number 6**

Movie is successful in entertaining people even with the serious issue of Maoists insurgency, its impact on the society & innocent villagers, and the consequences after peace accord. Though the movie did not take any side for or against the war but there are some lines that express the discontent in the rebels like "Tauko Katera Kranti hudaina" (There won't be revolution with beheading a person). Movie gets emotional at times, asking people to think of the reason behind the social disparities. With the perfection of script and dialogues, the dialogues are either written for the actors in their mind or be improvised later to suit the actors. Abhimanyu Nirabi deserves big salute for the script.

Cinematography by Deepak Bajracharya boosts the overall viewing experience and the feeling for a nice movie. About the location: the glittering mountains and flora in the backdrop are really fascinating. It is definitely setting a record in terms of success. Word of mouth is trending high on social Medias and is providing more favor to the team for further success.

### **Anthropological discussion**

From all film analysis, it is found that all stories of the sampled films which were presented here somehow follow social genres. The storyline and setting is nothing new, but the way it has been presented is different, hence refreshing. On a theoretical note, while to film the abstract notion of 'culture' is beyond difficult one can film the material and visual world that can convey aspects of 'culture'. Filming events such as religious rites, celebrations and everyday life help to build a picture that conveys lived-in cultural experience. The idea of creating a totally unbiased and objective ethnographic film is problematic as it will always be framed by the filmmakers' prejudices, as with any ethnographic write-up. One cannot escape this fact; therefore the best way forward is to realize these limitations and to go forward to create the film.

The benefits of including ethnographic films can significantly add depth to social research. Anthropology can use film to showcase elements of culture that are sometimes overlooked, for example nuances in speech and movements that are not always written about in ethnographic monographs. Film can be utilized in a variety of ways: as reference material for write-ups, examples or illustrations of particular concepts, as well as bringing ethnographic data together in a tangible and understandable format that can be understood by a wider audience.

Anthropologists and social researchers wishing to make ethnographic films can look to Documentary Film as a model to answer some ethical and aesthetic problems that the film format raises.

It is found that the meanings are embodied in the films by identifying the problems, issues and situations of contemporary Nepalese social life. The basic problem of the Nepalese

life is the challenge to the social stability and social solidarity of communal life because of economic, religious, psychological, and physical with various socio-cultural problems and issues. The principles of modern Nepalese social life encourage tendencies towards isolation and atomization.

Wreaking the role of family, separation of family, sharing and fragmenting of Nepalese life, land fragmentation, migrations, freedom, individual independent life etc. ultimately impacts on the social cohesiveness and harmony among the people. That is magnified by the lack of devices for familial and social conflict resolution. The people have no formal mechanism of social control and the role of micro-social institutions is gradually decreasing and formal law could not enforce the people directly and immediately, ignorance of people on customary laws etc. helps to weaken the basis for social stability. So, with these fragile relationships within the community, nuclear families, and absence of formal institutions that deal with social control and identifies the problem “what keeps things in order in combination of such diverse elements or relations? And “how Nepalese society possible?” The study of films and with the help of visual anthropological perspectives it is very easy to know the social, economic , political and overall issues through the medium of films that always provide entertainments in one way and solutions and realities in another way.

From the key informants’ interview it has come to know that - the Nepalese social life depend on internalized constraints to prevent anti-social behaviors or disorder to maintain social order while studying the film. The film is the picture of society and component of the culture where, role, relationships, power, social life, people’s experiences, norms values, knowledge attitudes etc are **w**reaved artistically, that’s why, film is the representation of particular culture of particular time. In film, however, it is observed that “Inner constraints do not always have constraint”. Therefore, it is found elsewhere for the basis of Nepalese social order. In second part, when we try to understand Nepalese society through film, the socio-cultural factors associated with all spheres of human life that are incorporated in various ways in films that various socio-religious and political economic factors helps to resolve various forms of conflict of different characters within or between by offering solutions to the problems; the problems regarding the old vs new ideas, idealistic vs materialistic (realistic) traditional vs modern etc. These solutions function psychologically. In this sense, overall socio-cultural and economic lives of people of Nepal serve the same function that cockfights do among the Balinese. The films represent the particular form of social life of the people stands as models of and models for social reality. The analysis or interpretation follows Geertz’s paradigm “socio-cultural factors manipulate and shape consciousness and they create meanings... “

### **Conclusion**

It is found from the study that the focus of the films, story of the films, message of the films were analyzed anthropologically as the life, character, story that are found in films are the part or the representation of our social life. Story of social and political genera were disseminating different messages that are passed from the film which are the product of that context of the particular society. It is the representative expression of all social life, aspiration, problems that are found all over the country. Mainly, different contents in films were found though same territory, people, but different is the message, time, characters, story, etc. found the content of their films of different genera were found. Five different films or reel contents



were analyzed and found different stories, role, but represent the real life of different era or time presented differently. It also represents the small sample size; was limited in its lack of multiple coders and it is only the society which is based on only the case study of five films and the qualitative findings could contain unchecked biases. Including multiple watchers of each film could confirm findings and help to eliminate bias in future research. Due to time limitations, each film could also only be watched once. Watching each movie multiple times in future studies could shed light on more subtle, nuanced portrayals of people's real experiences in reel (life) world.

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