

**Deconstructing Development: Postmodern Analysis of Socializing National Cinema
in Nepal --- By Dahal D. R. & Shrestha P.**

Authors	Dinesh Raj Dahal ¹ Prashant Shrestha ²
Affiliation	¹ Executive Chairperson, Film Development Board, Nepal ² Videographer, Editor and Independent Researcher
Email	dinesdc@gmail.com , prashant1shrestha11@gmail.com

Abstract

Deconstructing the development of national cinema begins with blending diverse socio-cultural aspects in cinema. This study discusses socializing Nepali national cinema from postmodern viewpoint. The study is grounded in phenomenological understanding of film as a situated experience and the critical discourse that shapes cinematic principles. In doing so, the study used library based research method and reviewed 36 papers related to film ethnography, film studies curricula, and legal side of film industry as well as representation of gender and subaltern voices. During the analysis, the theoretical insights are brought from postmodern and socialization theories. The study found that back in the early days, Nepali Cinema built strong national identity through centralized state control mechanism. After 1990s, Nepali Cinema becomes diverse with parallel cinema and focused on socio-cultural aspects and ethnographic themes. After the Maoist insurgency, it started showing indigenous cultures and groups that were marginalized. National Film Development Board (FDB) also seems responsible with function of Censorship. It is becoming major state tool for maintaining social harmony. The study concludes that Nepali cinema has been shifting from centralized nationalism into more scattered ethnic pluralism that comes up in postmodern ways. National cinema breaks down ideas about development and gets people thinking critically about society. For the betterment, FDB must introduce a grading system

for content with ethical guidelines. They could fund stories from marginalized groups and attract educated skillful newcomers in film industry. Provincial government and local government must provide technical and financial support to the film industry. They can formed community forums to establish interactive theatre setups and to perform their unique socio-cultural aspects. The film industry must socializing diverse ethnographic stories from a postmodern viewpoint.

Keywords: Ethnic representation, National identity, Nepali cinema, postmodern deconstruction, Socialization,

Background

Nepali cinema has been deconstructing development practices of national cinema. Blending socio-cultural aspects in national cinema started with postmodern idea. Postmodernism breaking away from strict life stories and letting in more different values and ways to develop cinema. Postmodern practice disclosed up in moving from government controlled plots to something called parallel cinema and ethnographic stories. Independent film director *Nabin Subba* in the 1990s started doing their own unique practices. He started saving stories of local fights and keeping Nepali traditions alive which was important. Cinema watching in Kathmandu went through changes from mass media times to online archives. People started pull in global ideas to make sense of their own socio-cultural values. Themes in films started talk about freedom and pushing against gender roles.

After released *Aama* in mid-1960, government established institutional setup to develop national cinema. The censor board keep control, cutting out parts from films that might upset the political balance or social order, under this 1991 act for motion pictures. However, political and institutional evolution of Nepalese cinema, framing it within global (Hollywood/capitalism) and regional (Bollywood/middle-class nationalism) contexts. From neo-Marxist political economy and institutionalism perspectives, Nepali cinema has been shaped by politics, political economy, global industries, and modernization (Dahal, 2026). Nepali cinema acts like this heterotopia, a mix of actual space and made up one, where the film world tries but often misses the real details of life. The socialization of cinema is a sociological process that help to development Nepali cinema from postmodern viewpoint. Using the conceptual tools of sociology (Haralambos & Holborn, 2021) and the sociological imagination (Macionis, 2018). The socialization part involves pushing back

against state rules and this dominant male power structure, while wanting something more real and varied for indigenous ways.

In this context, this study explored Nepali national Cinema through a postmodern philosophical viewpoint. It helps to understand national Cinema as symbolic cultural reproduction shared in this modern society. It mixes ideas from postmodernism and diversified ethnic cultural aspects while re/making movies. Nepali filmmakers are not only following basic rules of cinematography (Mascelli, 1965) but also focusing on cross-cultural narratives (McKee, 1997). They adapt cultural narratives to accept local limits which are linking with Nepalese customs and tradition (Baumer & Brandon, 1981). In a post-conflict era, Nepali national Cinema get produced and watched in post-modern way. Cinema ends up reflecting identity but also shaping it, in a postmodern setup which is progressing towards a shared identity.

Objective and Methodology

The objective of the study was to discuss interface between pushing a unifying national story in national Cinema and covering narrative stories of ethnic, linguistic and regional differences for deconstructing development. In doing so, the study used critical paradigm to understand how canons in cinema get formed (Leo & Cohen in 2016) and for seeing movies as something that happens in a specific place and time (Andrew, 1984).

More so, the study used library based qualitative review method for over/viewing different literatures related to postmodern angle on Nepali cinema. The study reviewed 36 papers related to film ethnography (Brown et al., 2023; Joshi & Bhattarai, 2025), film studies curricula (TU, 2019), legal side of film industry (Maharjan, 2010) as well as representation of gender and subaltern voices (Bista, 2022; Shrestha et al., 2021). During the analysis, the theoretical insights are brought from postmodern and socialization theories. Film becomes a place for debate, full of unsteadiness and anxiety as the world changes (Wolff, 1990).

Imagined Psychology helps spot metaphorical structures in how reality shows up on screen (Beshara, 2014). Freirean critical consciousness comes in, where participatory film ethnography turns into community action for change (Brown et al., 2023). The findings of the study are presented in seven themes: transition from State monopoly to parallel Cinema, subaltern consciousness and the post-insurgency disagreement, changing gender roles, postmodern aesthetics and the representation of reality, technical and financial constraints on socialization,

social issues and theatre as a "Rehearsal for Life". This synthesis shows Nepali cinema as multi-dimensional for national socialization.

Discussions: Transition from State Monopoly to Parallel Cinema

Nepali cinema started out appealing tied to what the government wanted for a national story. First real pushes came from the state, with films such as *Aama* being made under their watch. It got labeled as this cheap copy of Bollywood stuff, which did not help. But then in the 1990s, state mechanism shifted a bit with what they call parallel cinema. Filmmakers such as *Nabin Subba* and *Tulsi Ghimire* started focusing on unique Nepali stories and ethnic parts, instead of just chasing commercial hits. That movement feels important because it pushed back against mainstream thought.

Ethnographic cinematography approach mixes socio cultural things on screen. Films start out following this indigenous person and how their traditional skills just fade away once that Gaun Aayeko Bato road comes in. It brings all this modern stuff that changes everything. The whole setup feels like its searching for identity in some postmodern sense. The road itself stands for progress in a way. But it also messes up the heritage side of things. On the other hand the Nepal Film Censor Board has always been this major state tool for control. Censorship went beyond just morals into politics too. They would cut out scenes what Maharjan (2010) calls scissoring if it seemed to threaten national security or blending up social issues. That kind of thing really held back what filmmakers could express. Now there is discussion about switching to a content grading system. Something that feels more up to date and shares the power over what counts as moral or political. It seems like it could mean less control from the center. And maybe help build up this parallel cinema scene.

Subaltern Consciousness and the Post-Insurgency Disagreement

Maoist insurgency from 1996 to 2006, which was kind of a big shift for how cinema got more social. It opened effects up in ways that early films just did not. After all, films stories started focusing on subaltern identities forming on their own identity, culture and untouchability (Shrestha et al., 2021). Voices from Dalits, ethnic groups, and women, they finally got some space on screen, who had been ignored from generation to generation. It feels like the insurgency broke the old elite hold and letting these marginalized people, based on class, caste and gender push back against those dominant stories. That transition away from elitist narratives toward something more

inclusive for subaltern consciousness. However, not everything resolved neatly, but it shook up the whole scene. Some groups still struggle to get heard fully, it seems.

Gender Roles: Confinement, Transgression, and Liberation

Gender in Nepali media, gets handled in these messy ways that pull from society around it. Films sort of trace that out through different phases, starting with all these stuck old traditions, then characters start fighting back a little, and now they are reaching for some kind of freedom (Bista, 2022). The hegemonic masculinity thing, it sneaks in improvements quietly (Sherma, 2025). In the reference of Saino movie, male actor is just take over everything, and it feels so normal, like that is just how culture works. What makes it worse is how platforms like TikTok and YouTube keep spreading those ideas further, same source as before. Numbers from some film stories by Docskool and Plan International really highlight the problem, girls almost never get to be leaders on screen, and instead they end up as objects most of the time, way more than boys do (Adhiraj & Dixit, 2020). Then there is this Promise Paper initiative, which tries to get story makers to represent activities more fairly. It notes how out of seventy five films, only three had women directing, and that probably messes with how girls view themselves in media or whatever. From Plan International Nepal, 2021. It ends up reinforcing those old patterns even more, making them harder to shake.

Postmodern Aesthetics and the Representation of Reality

Postmodernism in cinema really stems from this whole breakdown in modernism, where the usual ways of telling stories or showing reality just fall apart somehow (Easmin, 2014). It is not always clear cut, but films started leaning into all this over the top stylization to dig into psychological stuff that feels more real than just watching everyday life unfold (Beshara, 2014). That same kind of mixing shows up in South Asian diasporic cinema and literature too, with ideas like metamorphosis and hybridity popping in to capture these transcultural identities that do not fit neatly anywhere. It gets kind of messy, everything blending together in ways that are disorganized on purpose (Palla, n. d.). There is this change happening in Kathmandu as mass media takes over. People there begin viewing their own lives through these global lenses from movies and videos, turning cinema into something more social, like a way to make sense of the world on a bigger scale (Liechty, n.d.). It seems like that shift makes everything feel connected yet scattered at the same time.

Technical and Financial Constraints on Socialization

Nepali cinema has problematic history that is full of issues, mostly around money and investments that keep messing things up. Back then, without proper technical labs or anything advanced, it was hard to even get films made and shown, especially with all the mountains making distribution a nightmare. Geography and lack of modern technologies held the industry back for many years. The whole process breaks down into stages like planning costs, development, pre-production, actual shooting, and then editing afterward. But higher investments are a problem, and without good funding, people just cut corners on quality (Shahi, 2025). It still seems informal learning, where folks pick up skills just by watching others, has been the norm for generation to generation. Now there is this push from the government with a Bachelor's Degree in film studies to make it more professional (TU, 2019). No doubt, it could change professionalism of national Cinema. The graduates might turning it into a real career path instead of something casual. For Nepali national cinema, it might help build it up properly. The technical side still feels like it needs more advance and modern.

Social Issues: Suicide and "Vulgarism"

Cinema has way of shaping how people think, but it comes with some ethical problems too. In one hand, movies are supposed to reflect what is happening in society, show the real stuff that goes on. But then there is the push to make money, so they throw in a lot of sex and glamour just to draw crowds in. It seems like that balance is off sometimes. This study reviewed films from 1990 to 2020, which is over thirty years' worth. Singh et al. (2023) found that how suicide shows up in movies often breaks the WHO guidelines for media portrayals. The guidelines make everyone wonder if the industry is paying enough attention. Some people in the film world have spoken out about it. Cine artists are concerned that things are turning too vulgar, or just going after quick thrills without thinking deeper (Media Advocacy Group, 2012). This whole thing ties back to the bigger argument. Cinema mirrors society, sure. But chasing profits changes everything, and it might not always be for the better.

Theatre as a "Rehearsal for Life"

Forum Theatre in Kathmandu catches eyes of all because it pushes for real social change in a hands on way. It is based on Augusto Boals ideas, where folks in the audience or actors try out ways to fight oppression by actually moving and testing solutions on stage (Mottin, 2010). The physical side of it really drives the point home. Oppression does not just sit in your head, it gets stuck in

the body, and so talking alone feels kind of weak compared to doing something with your movements. That is what makes these performances hit harder, turning the stage into this testing ground for actual shifts in how things could be. If it always plays out exactly the same in every place, but the embodied part seems solid. Actors probably feel the weight of it more when they are acting it out physically, sort of internalizing the change. It is an interesting setup overall.

Discussions of Findings

The Shreemadbhagavadgeeta, a seminal-influential philosophical scripture of the Sanatan Vedic tradition, presents a timeless dialogue on human ethics, duty, and liberation that resonates deeply with the contemporary global vision of sustainable development (Badal 2024). Gautama Buddha, the emblem of peace and love, pioneer of Buddhism, was born in Kapilabastu, Lumbini, Nepal. The peace and love. Compassion in Buddhism is the basic element of Sustainable development. Thus Buddha is the pioneer of sustainable development. Buddha's text Dhammapada in the present sustainable era is more relevant than past (Badal, 2021). Thus Nepali Cinema must be guided by Geeta and Buddha.

Nepali Cinema has been shifting from centralized nationalism into diversified postmodern thought. Though, it used to imitate Bollywood culture and style before. Early Cinema *Aama* to recent Cinema *Gaun Aayeko Bato* have successfully proved the journey of building critical awareness. This kind of awareness can actually help change people in individuals and communities (Brown et al. 2023; Joshi & Bhattarai, 2025). Such postmodern Cinematic impact on society also helped to transform individual thought guided by elite centric modern culture. Postmodern stories often aim for liberation of community people including women empowerment in Newari films (Bista 2022). It is similar with Dixit 2020 and that Plan International report from 2021 highlights women getting pushed aside in the film industry itself. They must practice what they deliver for addressing freedom of women. There is a strong hegemonic masculinity shows up in *Saino* film.

The industry tries to mirror society but it ends up shining a light more on the patriarchal side. State control mechanism also makes hegemonic masculinity more ironic. Censor Board was meant for social harmony but it just cut out sex and politics scenes which blocked subaltern voices that might have helped the whole thing grow (Maharjan, 2010; Shrestha, 2021). However, at present with content grading instead of chopping everything it is getting a bit more mature. Still production costs and lack of infrastructure create anxiety that holds back progress (Shahi, 2025). In the case of Kathmandu valley, cinema as a social activity has been changed significantly. From everyone

going to theaters together to this digital chaos where people watch in bits and pieces. That opens up space for identities mixing around indigenous things hybrid cultures and even dominance. It feels almost like a heterotopia in a way. Cinema creates this space where identities mix in all sorts of ways. Indigenous elements come in, hybrid cultures too, even some dominance plays out. Forum Theatre could turn it into actual change, by rehearsing life scenarios. Forum Theatre also might help turn that fragmentation into actual change by rehearsing life (Mottin, 2010).

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The study comes to the conclusion that Nepali Cinema possesses pulling in different directions. On one side, there is centralized, unified and official push for nationalism. In other side, there is a growing trends of scattered ethnic pluralism. Overall, national Cinema is being deconstructing development and promoting postmodern culture and values. Shifting from heavy state control development to deconstructing Cinematic development seems important It has deconstructing it thoughtfully through socialization process. National Cinema has also building critical awareness among the producers and mass people. It started changing how people see themselves as individuals, and socialized community people belonging to certain ethnic sentiments. Censor Board is meant to maintain social harmony in this regard. However, Censor Board still blocks voices from subaltern groups, and it reinforces this hegemony around masculinity. It could lead to openness of national Cinema which is responsible to society and diverse ethnic groups. Instead of censoring everything, Film Development Board must introduce a grading system for content with ethical guidelines. It could offer fund for showing stories from marginalized groups. And it could archive ethnographic materials, to preserve cultural realities. The industry needs to become more professional by attracting educated skillful newcomers. Provincial governments could take on more production, starting local film funds. Integrating cinema into school curricula could get people engaged in their early life. At local levels, community forums must formed to establish interactive theatre setups and to perform their unique socio—cultural aspects. The film industry must socializing diverse ethnographic stories from a postmodern viewpoint.

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