

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Female Resistance in Newari Cinemas *Rajamati*, *Silu* and *Patachara*

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Tribhuvan University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English

By

Rubee Maharjan

Roll No : 14/2020

TU Regd. No : 6-2-262-12-2008

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

February 2023

Letter of Recommendation

Rubee Maharjan has completed her thesis entitled "Female Resistance in Newari Cinemas *Silu*, *Rajamati* and *Patachara*" under my supervision. She conducted her research work from January 2022 to February 2023 and completed successfully. I hereby recommend her thesis submitted for the final viva voce.

Internal Supervisor

.....

Prof. Dr. Dhruba Karki

Date:.....

Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Central Department of English
Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Female Resistance in Newari Cinemas *Silu, Rajamati* and *Patachara*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Rubee Maharjan has been approved by the undersigned member of Research Committee.

Members of Research Committee

Internal Examiner

External Supervisor

Head

Declaration

I hereby affirm that this dissertation entitled "Female Resistance in Newari Cinemas *Silu, Rajamati* and *Patachara*" submitted to the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu is an original work written under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Dhruva Karki, Central Department of English, Kirtipur. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English. No part of this research work has ever been published in any form before, and has not been presented anywhere else for the award of any degree or by any other reason. I shall be exclusively liable if any indications found contrary to my declaration.

.....

Rubee Maharjan

Tribhuvan University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Acknowledgements

I have evaluated this opportunity of writing thesis as an extremely rewarding and fascinating experience in my academic career. Though it is an ample prospect for me, it would not come in this solid form if there were not some encouraging hearts and helping hands behind it. I would like to offer my gratitude to all who have supported me in completing this research work.

Most notably, I would like to express my heartfelt thankfulness to Prof. Dr. Dhruva Karki, my supervisor, for his continuous encouragement and persistent guidance. His critical supervision and insightful suggestions have furnished my writing skill further. His friendly nature and tireless academic guidance have inspired me to equip my research skill.

Likewise, I would you like to appreciate Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota, the Head, Central Department of English, for his valuable suggestions and encouragement.

I would like to express my deep respect to Prof. Dr. Anirudra Thapa, Former Head, Central Department of English, for his intuitive advice and encouragement.

Similarly, my words are inadequate to thank all my teachers including Prof. Dr. Amar Raj Joshi, Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi, Prof. Dr. Beerendra Pandey, Dr. Shiva Rijal, Dr. Komal Phuyal and Dr. Tara Lal Shrestha for their encouragement, guidance and valuable ideas.

I would like to extend my thanks to all staff of Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur for their help and administrative support.

I would like to extend my thanks to all my M. Phil. classmates for their constructive suggestions for the research work.

The support, encouragement and guidance of my parents cannot be overlooked at this moment. Alongside, my younger sister's inspiration that stimulated me in acquiring my academic career is also an inevitable part of acknowledgement for which I am credited to.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my supportive husband Rajan Maharjan for continuous encouragement and all the incredible support during my course. Lastly, my thanks also go to the college administration of Shahid Smarak College, Kirtipur for providing the privileges that enhanced my thesis writing.

Thank you all!

Rubee Maharjan

February 2023

Abstract

This research examines the unconventional endeavors of female protagonists in the selected Newari cinemas *Rajamati* (1989), *Silu* (1995) and *Patachara* (2009). All of the three selected primary texts narrate discretely different stories that revolve around major female characters. *Rajamati* stages the prodigal life of a beautiful though luckless girl. The plot of *Silu* presents the female character's decision to venture for a holy pilgrimage. Diversely, *Patachara* is a movie that portrays the journey towards redemption of one of the adherent disciples of Gautama Buddha. All of the three protagonists are at prone to a certain degree of physical or mental violation from the individual or community to whom they belong. For this, they are fully aware about the vulnerability of their personal rights and choice. Thus, they mark milestones in their lives to show resistance against the established cultural gender stereotypes by retreating to live in accordance to the cultural prejudices in the community. This study explores the possible corners of my primary texts to establish the fact that the females in the selected cinemas deny to act in accordance with the cultural conventions of the society. They show their instinctive denial towards the preordained cultural gender roles in one way or the other to establish their existence and identity and to live a contented autonomous life. I claim that the female resistance shown in the movies is the microscopic version of cultural resistance of Newars in the state level. Hence, in this research, I argue that resistance is not only a way to 'defy' something but also a way to 'define' something else. In analyzing and interpreting my assumption, I will consider the conceptualization of resistance by Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner and the insight of popular culture- resistance relationship of Kasper Maase as theoretical parameters. Besides, Stuart Hall's theory of cultural studies will also be under close consideration for my study.

Keywords: autonomy, cinemas, femininity, culture, resistance, identity, Nepal Bhasa

Table of Contents

Declaration	ii
Letter of Recommendation	iii
Letter of Approval	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	vii
List of figures	viii
Chapter One: Resistant Females in <i>Rajamati</i> , <i>Silu</i> and <i>Patachara</i>	1
Chapter Two: Multiple Modes and Context of Resistance	20
2.1 Resistance in Cultural Practices	25
2.2 Cinemas as a Genre in Popular Representation	29
2.3 Kollywood's Female Resisters	31
2.4 <i>Silu</i> , <i>Rajamati</i> and <i>Patachara</i> as Cultural Resistance	34
2.5 Contemporary Position of Newari Females	46
Chapter Three: Living Through and Beyond Gender Stereotyping	50
3.1 Tuyumai, Rajamati and Hisilani as Resisting Agents	55
3.2 Resisting Females and Newar Ethnic Consciousness in <i>Silu</i> , <i>Rajamati</i> and <i>Patachara</i>	61
Conclusion: From Women in Resistance to Cultural Identity	65
Works Cited	

List of Figures

Fig. 1: Release of movie *Silu* in Bishwojyoti Cinema Hall, Jamal, Kathmandu in Nov. 1987

Fig. 2: Rajamati with *Bijakani* (an ornament worn along with her ears and head)

Fig. 3: Lady Patachara seeking succor with Buddha

Fig. 4: Tuyumai arguing with her husband and friends to let her come to the pilgrimage

Fig. 5: Ratna pleading Rajamati to accept his marriage proposal; Rajamati rejecting him

Fig. 6: Hisilani setting out for the journey to her parents' home during her pregnancy

Fig. 7: Protests held at Kathmandu Durbar Square after the Supreme Court's verdict
against Nepal Bhasa in June 1999

Chapter One

Resistant Females in *Rajamati*, *Silu* and *Patachara*

Anne Frank, a German diarist, reflects upon the existence of a burning candle and states "Look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness." Indeed, a burning candle in one hand shows its opposition against the darkness through its light, whereas, in another hand, the darkness would not have gained its definition if there was no light. In the similar sense, this research analyses the assimilation of modes of resistance in the selected cinemas in Nepal Bhasa- *Rajamati*, *Silu* and *Patachara* to assert that the body that acts as a resisting agent to one part may act as an agent in defining something else. In doing so, I have fundamentally implemented insights of 'resistance' developed by Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L., along with the theory of Stuart Hall.

'Nepal Bhasa', commonly recognized as 'Newari language' refers to the language spoken by the indigenous habitants called Newars or Newa: of Kathmandu valley and its surrounding regions. It can be traced to have its origin during twelfth century though its written use in literature implies in the second half of fourteenth century (Shrestha and Hoek 74). In this context, Newari language and literature has an apparent historical origin in Nepal. Specifically considering art and literature, Prem Shanti Tuladhar points out that Nepal Mandala (Kathmandu) was regarded to be living "golden age" of cultural art and architectural development with prolific Nepal Bhasa during the classical period (1505- 1847 AD) (37). Consequently, literary intellectuals have explored literature in various forms of written documents such as chronicles, dramas, poetry, stories, epics, ballads, scientific manuals etc. for centuries. However, a distinct genre called 'film' where "the images are generally accompanied by sound, and more rarely, other sensory stimulations" (Severny, 2013) became a popular culture in Newari communities only in the 1990s. Contemporary Nepal Bhasa cinemas, one of the eminent genres of Nepali literature, have not only

entertained the audience, but also kept alive aesthetics of Newari culture and tradition. Simultaneously, they have addressed the contemporary social problems of Newari community too along with some possible resolutions. Hence, among various dimensions that are touched upon by Nepal Bhasa Movies, I have tried to scrutinize the issue of female resistance in three of the most popular movies, namely *Rajamati*, *Silu* and *Patachara* through this dissertation.

In Nepali Film industry, *Silu*, released on 26 October 1987 AD, has become the first ever Nepal Bhasa cinema. This motion picture is based on the myth of pilgrimage to a sacred lake called 'Gosainkunda'. Gosainkunda is a freshwater lake in Langtang National Park situated in Rasuwa district of Nepal in the height of 4380 meter. Demographically, Tamang reside as the original and dominant population of Gosainkunda. Here, locals celebrate 'Sonam Lhosar' as their main festival in Magh or Falgun according to lunar calendar. In the same way, 'Janai Purnima' or the full moon day in the Nepali month of Bhadra is marked as an annual fair in Gosainkunda when a thousands of folks asll over Nepal prefer participating. Additionally, owing to its natural beauty, thousands of domestic and international tourists choose Gosainkunda as one of the trekking destinations throughout the year. Hence, the lake is famous for its religious, cultural and touristic importance for both the natives, and the domestic and international visitors since the ancient time.

As the title signifies, *Silu* narrates the protagonist's adventurous pilgrimage to Gosainkunda. However, the movie starts with the portrayal of Hira, the central male character of the story. He passionately loves Tuyumai, the central female character but she rebukes. Seeing the disapproval of the girl, his uncle and friends convince him to leave that girl and see for some other girls for his marriage, but he totally denies and utters, "...apart from Tuyumai, even if you show me the nymph of the heaven, I would reject..." (*Silu*, 28:47, translated). However, the climax of the movie made Tuyumai and Hira share a great

affinity. They marry, and live with sharing immense love. Meanwhile, an elderly man in his community lures Hira along with his pals with the glorification of Silu pilgrimage. The gentlemen are encouraged to travel to Silu at least once in their life with an affirmation that having a bath in the sacred lake Gosaikunda would purify all the undeliberate sins of a person. At the same time, they are also warned about the myth, which says that a husband and wife going together in this pilgrimage is considered as a bad omen. For this reason, Hira initially denies going to the pilgrimage since he is newly married and does not want to leave his bride, but his friends blame him of being a hen-pecked which makes him ultimately agree to travel to the pilgrimage on foot. When Hira shares his intention of setting off his journey to Silu, Tuyumai shows her dissatisfaction on the sole decision of Hira. Instead, she implores him to let her come along his way but he refuses straight away in the form of song that says:

...for you and me travelling together to Silu Tirtha,
 I had to show your and my horoscope to the priest.
 And, when I showed it to him, he prophesized that,
 We both are destined to get separated
 If travelled together... (*Silu*, 1:01:41, translated)

Hira warns his wife about prophesy of the priest that alarms on the unfortunate destiny they would need to suffer if they decide to go together in the sacred journey.

However, ignoring these mythical beliefs, Tuyumai decides secretly to follow her husband to the pilgrimage. After travelling certain distance, Hira finds out that his wife has been following him. He, along with his mates, consoles her to return reminding the fact that she is a 'woman' so she would feel many difficulties during the trip. However, she disagrees with them again. None of their thoughts convinces her to return home. The group had no any option left besides letting her come with them. They eventually reach the destination 'Silu

Tirtha' and cleanse themselves in the holy water of Gosaikunda. Unfortunately, while returning from the lake, the aborigines of Gosaikunda kidnap her. In fact, the leader of the aboriginal group is obsessed with having a numerous wives. For the same reason, his people kidnap her owing to her alluring beauty. Tuyumai is imprisoned among the woods in between the strangers. Tuyumai attempts several times to escape from the captivation but fails. Even her husband Hira could not figure out where her wife is captivated. In the meantime, he meets an amazing person with glorified soul in the middle of the forest, as if an angel who reveals where Tuyumai is abducted. Then Hira disguises himself as a sage and goes to meet his wife. Finally, with many struggling fights with the aboriginals, he succeeds to rescue his wife and they return to their homeland safely.

As Sifwat Moini reflects that there is always the need of a muscular and brave hero to save a woman even if the woman is portrayed as a brave character (1455), Hira seems powerful in comparison to Tuyumai. However, the heroism shown by Tuyumai to follow her husband fearlessly to the pilgrimage via wilderness is no less than her husband's. Unsimilar to this, the movie also portrays female characters who "are shown in the subordinate roles upholding traditional values they represent the community and are seen as the repositories of community values" (Moini 1455). For instance, Tuyumai's mother, who always abides by her husband, is one of the representatives of females of the community who serve their husbands and has no significant role in participating in public affairs and making decisions for her offsprings. Moreover, the females among aboriginals (multiple wives of the antagonist) who are pushed into polygamy are also the conformists in patriarchal society. Hence, I consider this crucial part of resistance, of the female protagonist and other relevant sections of the movie where the protagonists resist against the stereotypical gender roles, as the major analytical area in this research.



Fig. 1: Release of movie *Silu* in Bishwojyoti Cinema Hall, Jamal, Kathmandu in Nov. 1987
(Source: Author's screenshot)

In the same manner, my second selected movie, *Rajamati*, also smears the basic essence of female resistance. Directed by the prominent Nepali actor and director Nir Vikram Shah, this movie was released in 1995 AD. It is the second big picture in Nepal Bhasa in Nepali film industry. The film is based upon 200 year old ballad '*Rajamati kumati jike wosa pirati hayabyu Rajamati cha...*' which is very popular in Newar society. The mellifluous song narrates the story about a magnificently beautiful and the most popular girl Rajamati who lives in a place called Tahanani, a place in Kathmandu.

In *Rajamati*, Hishila Maharjan stars the title character. The movie portrays Rajamati as an only daughter in a Shakya family (one of the upper caste categories in Newar caste system). Initially she belongs to a well-to-do family, as her father is a goldsmith. She lives a joyful life spending most of her time assisting her parents in the household chores and spending time with two of her friends Tarithakun and Chirithakun. Her life seems more gleeful when she falls in love with a florist named Twisee despite the discrepancy in their caste status. Twisee sells flowers vending door to door in his community. Also, he barter his beautiful flowers to grains or other household stuffs with his customers. He sells all the

beautiful flowers he has but a special find of flower called 'Gunkera Swan:' (one of the beautiful flowers belonging to the family Orchidaceae that represents love and beauty). Everyday he offers the special flower to his beloved Rajamati. Rajamati becomes delighted when she gets to embellish her head with the flower given by her beloved.

Among other significant characters of the movie is Ratna, casted by the talented late Nepali actor Shree Krishna Shrestha. The plot of the movie advances with triangular love story between Rajamati, Twisee (the florist) and Ratna. Ratna first encounters Rajamati in 'Maruhiti' (one of the stone waterspouts in Kathmandu) when he saves her from tripping while she runs down the stairs to fetch water. Then onwards, Ratna falls in profound one-sided love with Rajamati. While expressing his love through song, he evokes:

San: dhaasa kuli kuli

Mikha dhaasa baala baala

Sakwomiya mhyae machala?

Khwa: dhaasa tuyu khwaa

Khwale niga tee du

Tahananiya Rajamati cha: (*Rajamati*, 1: 00: 22)

Here, Rajamati's one sided- lover praises her curly hair and her elegant and sparkling eyes. The girl who lives in the alley of Tahanani has a beautiful face with two distinct moles in it.

Fascinated by her appealing beauty, Ratna approaches several times to get connected with Rajamati and possess her but fails. Ratna does not have any negative intention towards Rajamati. However, Rajamati is in love with Twisee, so he could not find his love within Rajamati and thus gets neglected everytime.



Fig. 2: Rajamati with *Bijakani*(an ornament worn along with her ears and head) in the movie
(Source: Author's screenshot)

Although Rajamati is blessed with divine beauty, she is luckless and has to face many misfortunes in her life. At the climax of the movie, she and her family have to go through with the economic decline. One of his cunning neighbours tricks his father to blame as an agent of black marketing of gold and put into prison. Her family is dissociated. Her mother grieves because she assumes that her home will have no more stability in absence of her husband. She dies of agony. Rajamati now undergoes the scarcity of economy, social status and security. However, she has a handful of the well-wishers to empathize her including her beloved Tweesi. He offers hearty regards to Rajamati for overcoming her miseries soon.

Accordingly, she manages to uplift her life anyhow by making alcoholic beverages and selling them. In doing so, she has to cope with a lot of criticisms and prejudices regarding her profession regarding her gender and caste. Some villagers disapprove her for selling alcoholic beverage for she belongs to one of the upper classes whereas, some envy her for outracing males in wealth and social status. However, she keeps progressing regardless of how the society perceives. Nevertheless, her fate once again beguiles her when

the antagonist Chikacha murders her beloved because Chikacha, who is obsessed with 'women' and had abducted Sinara dai's (Haribansha Acharya) daughter before, has an evil eye upon the beauty of Rajamati who happens to be the lover of Twisee. At this moment of her emotional breakdown, Ratna sympathizes Rajamati. He proposes to hold her hands for the rest of her life but Rajamati denies the proposal. She autonomously determines to spend the rest of her lonely life in the memory of her beloved without getting married ever. This way Rajamati resists to living a conjugal life and prefers her autonomy, which hints towards the fact that she is a strong resisting hero. Her representation in the movie is different from other female characters such as her mother and Sinara dai's daughter.

Similarly, *Patachara*, directed by Ram Krishna Khadgi, is one of another primary source in my research. This movie is based upon Buddhist Jataka stories (stories found in Buddhist literature). The plot of the movie is framed under third person narrative, which depicts the story of the central character Hisilani (star casted by Melina Manandhar). She is the only daughter of Daandas Sahu, a rich merchant of a place called Shrawasti. She looks very pretty and delicate. Her parents offer her an extraordinary nurturance. Consuming hygienic food, getting proper care, wearing beautiful dresses, expensive ornaments, spending quality time with friends integrate her daily routine. She is brought all the luxuries of the world to home right from her childhood in order to protect her from the corruptive influence of the outside world. Despite having everything she desires, she has no freedom to step out of the four walls of her house. She is obliged with maintaining the prestige of her family regarding her role as a female child.

However, when she gets into her adulthood, love finds a way into Hisilani's world in a good- hearted but poor young servant, Manaraja. He is an orphan without his caste identification. Upon the insistence of Hisilani, Manaraja consents to take Hisilani into the outer world. The aesthetic beauty of nature such as soil, water, air, cloud, plants and animals,

overwhelms her. She celebrates singing and dancing with Manraja. In addition, a girl with only having a certain number of other girls as her companion starts falling in love with Manraja. Without thinking about any future consequences, she sneaks off with Manraja. Reaction upon her parents and their prestige does not really matter to her. The married couple settles in an isolated village where they get lucky enough to reside in a childless couples' small cottage. Though they could not have their life as lavishing as Hisilani had in her parents' home, they could manage to meet their ends. Most of all, they have enough love to offer for each other after marriage. They beget two kids and share love among themselves

Unfortunately, the protagonist has to go through her bad times as soon as her husband is bitten to death by a snake while collecting firewood. Hisilani is immensely grieved when she sees the condition of her husband. On the way back home, her two kids are also collapsed: a huge hawk carries the infant away and the elder one is washed away by the flood. Out of desperation, Hisilani loses her consciousness and goes insane. She abandons everything and seeks the refuge of Gautama Buddha for her mental stability and peace where Gautam Buddha renames her as 'Patachara'. Before this renunciation, she was confined within the materialistic world: name, fame, possession were her complements. Her name 'Hisilani' itself specifies beauty and charm that a lady is supposed to endow. In the same way, though her mother seems authoritative towards her servants, she is submissive towards her husband's decision. She is also occupied with the ideology that a woman needs protection from a man. She believes that a woman should always be naïve and supportive towards her husband. Similarly, two mates of Hisilani are happy spending time inside the four walls accompanying Hisilani. They do not bother exploring newness of the outer space. In this sense, the well-defined characterization of the protagonist in the movie has been examined in this research from 'resistance' approach.



Fig. 3: Lady Patachara seeking succor with Buddha
 (Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Ven.dr.kmedhankarathero/photos/story-of-patachara>)

To sum up, these three Nepal Bhasa cinemas center on the female characters and the female protagonists' attempts to act autonomously to show courage of resistance against the traditionally established cultural gender stereotypes that challenge their existence and free will. The characters have tried to break through their confinements to occupy a larger space. The movies on one hand depict meek, subordinated and pre-ordained female characters who play the role of merely foil characters and display the protagonists as strong, atypical and courageous resisting characters on the other hand.

Many scholars have comprehended the transformation of females' representations in cinematic art from 'stereotypically naïve gender to rather bold and self-dependant' as decades' notable achievement. As religion and history has painted the submissive feminine picture of Sita of *Ramayana* and Draupadi of *Mahabharata* in eastern philosophies and ideology such as 'punishment of wives was called chasetism' in Roman philosophies, similar psyche in people was reflected through the cameras in motion pictures. Thus, much of the global film analysts believe that women's desires, emotions and qualities were under recognition in the global celluloid history in the past, but with the growth in economic,

educational and self-conscious level among people in general (including male and female), there has been transformation in the women's powerful representations in the movies. Also, "reviewers have preferred films which see women as active and strategizing and which emphasize subtle feelings and new adaptation, rather than falling back on stereotyped notions of women are like, or easy solutions to the problems women face" (Lamphere 192). Though Louise Lamphere agrees on the fact that there are still many gaps to be filled regarding films on women, she presents films such as *I Am Somebody* and *Clorae and Albie* as the samples to fill up the gap (193).

In this vein, upon examining three Hindi movies that were released in the interval of approximately forty years – *Shahab Bibi Aur Gulam* (1962), *Silsila* (1981) and *Kabhi Albida Na Kehena* (2006), researcher Sifwat Moini showcases the progressive changes that the celluloid has presented in the depiction of 'wives' in Hindi cinemas. She asserts that the role of wife portrayed in *Kabhi Albida Na Kehena* has bridged the space between a strong woman in real life and her portrayal in celluloid. Finally, she deduces "Despite the history of Indian cinema presents a woeful picture of discrimination and marginalization of women, whether it is film of the 50s or 90s there has been little difference in the image of the celluloid women" (1459).

However, countering the transformative beliefs of such film analysts, researchers Femi Okiremuette Shaka and Ola Nnennaya Uchendu debunk that glamorizing centrality such as male authority and derogating marginal such as females still exists in Nollywood (Nigerian film industry). Putting forward the necessity of proper orientation in Nollywood, they conclude:

This reorientation ought to begin from the Nollywood video film culture, so as to correct the (mis)conceptions of several millennia about gender roles and gender identity. Humankind in general would be the better for it. Until directors and screen

writers of Nollywood cultivate alternative modes of representing women, their desires, emotions and qualities, until men/women relationship move into the realm of equal recognition of each other's values, strengths and weaknesses, until the Nigerian populace is purged of gender prejudice at the psychic and mental level, until men learn to recognise and respect the dignity and humanity of women as much as that of men, Nollywood video film culture will continue to be constrained by patriarchal ideology. (2012)

Similarly, in her dissertation, researcher Nirmala Adhikari displays the portrayal of women in three Nepali movies - *Kusume Rupal* (1985), *Darpan Chhaya* (2001) and *Bir Bikram* (2016) by comparing the characters of these films with those of Nordic films. Here she sums up that, even with the progress of several decades, there is no visible change in female portrayal in Nepali movies. She substantiates her argument as:

... Nepali movies as; Women as object of desire, Women as the Second Sex; and Women belong to private space. However, some changes have been made in Nordic cinema over the years in terms of this representation as some of the movies present women as subjects who are independent, and this portrayal challenges the traditional stereotypes on gender. (105)

She maintains that the women characters in Nordic movies are independent and move fearlessly through spaces whereas, in Nepali movies women are still represented as objects of desire and subjects of the male gaze.

Coming to the representation of females in my visual texts, I stand to the point that my primary texts convey dual nature women's representations. Women characters, other than protagonists, strictly embody the stereotypically gendered attitude towards different compositions of society such as adherence to caste hierarchy, importance of marital life, differentiation in gender-based private and public spaces etc. but the case is different with

the protagonists. The protagonists not totally reject their roles as females in their society; they are ready to share marital relationship with their beloved ones, dress up, embellish themselves with makeovers and ornaments. But at the same time, they debunk socio-cultural stereotypes that question their existence and freewill. Accordingly, they strive for their autonomy and value their existence.

However, all the three movies consist of both contrasting and comparing variables. When it comes to similarity, *Silu* and *Rajamati* are based upon ancient ballads. Additionally, in both *Rajamati* and *Patachara*, there are the female characters who choose their autonomy and spiritual salvation apart from the materialistic lives. All the three visual texts render the nuances of Newari art and culture. Social structures, lifestyles, social hierarchy, occupation, traditional tools, art and architectures, religious beliefs, myths, rituals, songs, dresses, feasts, festivals are the notable exhibitions in these cinemas. Moreover, the systematization of caste system and social hierarchy is one of the displays in *Rajamati* and *Patachara*. Hence, there exists a deep inter-connection in between the movies I have selected as my primary texts. Nonetheless, there are certain dissimilarities among the selected cinemas. The main difference is that all the three movies are released in three different decades. Unlike *Rajamati* and *Silu*, *Patachara* is based upon Buddhist Jataka stories. Contrastive to *Patachara* and *Rajamati*, the female protagonist in *Silu* is not defiant towards social institution such as marital relationship. Despite all these similarities and differences, I perceive the influence of a common theme of 'female resistance' in particular in all three of these Nepal Bhasa cinemas. There is a pattern of common visual fascination of feminism in the cinemas.

Generally, cultural aesthetics, gender biasness, contemporary political issues, relation compilations are some of the common issues that are explored through Newari cinematography but in my selected primary texts, I have witnessed various modes and

manifestations of 'rejection'. Thus, I seek to explore the issue of 'resistance' keeping the following research questions in my mind:

- a. The female in all three cinemas go through the adverse situations in their lives and all of them fight back. But, what is their individual level of resistance and what might be the similarities and differences between their modes of resistance?
- b. Though there are many technological and ideological changes during the course of time in Newari film industry, why it seems as if the idea of resistance persistence embodiment in these three cinemas?
- c. As the protagonists deny becoming conformists, they are the ultimate resisters but how do they represent themselves as the resisting heroes in the community level and in their personal lives?
- d. Does this kind of resistance add any value in the cultural aesthetics in Newari culture?

Investigating the most possible findings to answer the aforementioned research questions are the major goals of my study. Further, the following are the major objectives, which would help, address my research questions-

- a. To explore Newari culture and practices as executed in the cinemas
- b. To trace the contextual background of all the three selected cinemas
- c. To examine the rights, power and position of women in Newari communities
- d. To examine the elements of female resistance and its various expositions and manifestations in the selected cinemas

For my study, opting for the selected movies has a numerous significant motives. Firstly, *Rajamati*, *Silu* and *Patachara* are the most popular Nepal Bhasa cinemas. These censored cinemas are popular not among the Newari communities but also among the non-Newars especially due to the popular songs such as 'Rajamati kumati...', 'Silu dhoon...' and

'holi ya mela...'. These movies also gained the popularity due to the beautiful execution of cultural aesthetics of Newari community on screen. Secondly, the selected movies were released during the period of one of the most significant political histories of Nepal. *Silu* was released in 1889 and *Rajamati* was released in 1995. Relatively, 1990s is significant in the political history of Nepal because the issues of minorities including Newars were suppressed during the thirty years of Panchayat rule (absolute monarchy) from 1961- 1990 but, soon after the re-introduction of multi- party system in Nepal, the voice of minorities became clearer (Shrestha 94). Additionally, *Patachara* was released in 2009 rightly after the 'Second People's Movement' of 2006 against the direct and undemocratic rule of king Gyanendra Shah in Nepal.

Thus, all the three cinemas are the motion pictures that were released around the peoples' democratic movement. Finally, and more importantly, all the three primary texts center on the female protagonists who seem to be the bodies resisting against the cultural stereotypes in terms of rituals, beliefs, norms and practices in reference to their gender. These cinemas portray the female protagonists preferring to establish their individual identity as per their own wish, taking no notice of what the society will react. In other words, all the three cinemas constitute common variables such as Newars, cultural practices, females, resistance, autonomy and so on upon which I have carried on my research. For the fulfillment of the aforementioned objectives, I have delimited my research within the conceptual framework of the theory of 'resistance' to fulfill the inclusive study of the three Nepal Bhasa cinemas that share a numerous prominent commonalities.

The culture we inherent determines our identity, and since language is one of the inevitable components of one's culture, language needs preservation for the survival of one's identity. Linguist Mark Janse considers that the study of language is of utmost importance for our general understanding of the sum total of the possibilities of the formal and semantic

expression of human thought patterns (2). Advocating the importance of mother tongue education, so that half of the languages among 6,809 languages in the world, which are listed as endangered, do not get extinct, Janse further claims, "Ethnic identity is often accompanied by an increased interest in language maintenance" (2). As Roshni Chakravorty in "Language and Identity in South Asia" assures that the tongue has proven more powerful than the flag (3), language has greater hierarchy than a nation. In the similar sense, one of the four pillars of Nepal Bhasa literature, Siddhidas Mahaju asserts that culture can survive with the existence of language and nation can survive with the existence of culture (*Bhasa mwa:sa jati mwai, jati mwa:sa deh mwai*). Further, shedding light upon the importance of culture and language, Basav Juju Rajopadhyaya who is representing Nepali priesthood in Victoria, USA contemplates, "... if we don't do something now, our culture like dinosaurs will only be found in museums and will have the same problems the native Americans have faced" (2021). Hence, the major significance of this research is to make an endeavor to represent Nepal Bhasa movies through literature with an attempt to preserve Newari language, culture and identity.

In general, scholars and ordinary spectators appreciate Newari performances in terms of dance, melody tune, instrumental music, festivals, feasts, offerings, celebrations and other cultural performances from the perspective of Newari communities' aestheticism, traditional cultures, values and beliefs. For instance, Richard Widdess appreciates the beauty of 'Dapha' (a devotional singing practice in Newar community) stating, "the history of this phenomenon as a whole has yet to be written, but it is clearly bound up with the spread of the *bhakti* movement of devotional Hinduism that spread across the subcontinent from the seventh century onwards" (18). Similarly, connecting performative act of rounding *Maane* (a colourful big rounding instrument, valued by Buddhists) with spirituality, researcher Mani Bhadra Gautam writes, "It is believed that people will get freed from pain after rounding

Maane" (181). In his research, Hukkum Thapa relates *Bode Jatra* with performance of body to claim that *Bode Jatra* has unfolded cultural aspect and religious phenomenon of Newars (68). However, I consider that Newari performances can also be analyzed through other theoretical perspectives besides cultural aesthetics. Thus, my study implements the theory of 'resistance' and examines different modes of resistance in the selected cinematic performances that I have selected as the primary texts for my study.

This way, my research work would hopefully be a potential aid in the academic studies of Newari literature for the future prospects. Most of the Newar ethnic performances, mainly the visual depictions, still remain to be explored which tickled me to serve my academic contribution in Newar community. I believe, this dissertation shall open up some insightful avenues for the prospective researchers who wish to reveal multiple aspects of Newari art and literature along with the richness of Newari culture explore the essence of Newari identity and connect this unique community with the socio-cultural dimensions of our nation. In addition, this study examines such cinemas as literary texts that are released in the interval of three different decades and that are starred by versatile bi-cultural actors and directed by bi-linguistic directors. Therefore, the study covers a large area of historical and contemporary data and information of Newari art and literature and it unravels the decent concern of individualism apart from societal concern in Newari community. The variation in the execution of ideas based upon the temporal factors can also be seen in this research. Hence, future prospective researchers can see this dissertation as a referential enhancer.

For the appraisal of my claims and substantiation of my assumptions that I affirm in my dissertation, I have collected all the required data and related resources merely through qualitative research method that includes non-numerical data analysis. The primary texts I have undertaken i. e. Nepal Bhasa cinemas *Silu*, *Rajamati* and *Patachara* are collected from Youtube uploads. Both primary and secondary data that substantiate my claims are

collected as per requirement in this study. As per citing the referential dialogues from the primary texts, I have encoded it by translating the source language Nepal Bhasa and Nepali language into target language English by myself. Almost all of the substantiations are subjective and descriptive in nature. Initially, I have exhibited critical summary of the primary texts along with the portrayal of females in the cinemas under my study. After that, I have presented data of literature reviews that incorporate scruntinization of the variables for my research. Then I have analysed the female representation in the cinemas through the perspective of 'Female Resistance' and have come up with findings that the unusual characterization of females as resisting heroes paradoxically lead to the immanent strength of Newar ethnicity, culture, identity and existence. Thus, I started my thesis with an assumption that the representation of females is atypical as per audience's general expectation of seeing the roles of female in cinemas and finalized with the conclusion that this female resistance reflects the aversion of Newars towards the contemporary government of Nepal to establish their ethnic existence. For this, none of the evidence is substantiated with quantitative data. Rather, my thesis statement is substantiated with the help of theories and hypotheses propounded by multiple scholars. Data from published and unpublished journals, articles, authentic newspapers, books and blogs, online materials and internet sources such as databases and websites are revised as per necessity and then interpreted thoroughly with ethical strategies. I have taken my stand also through my personal observation regarding the culture and identity of Newars. Maintaining an essential connection between my individual intellectuality and cultural identity has always been an ethical priority to me as a researcher. Thus, I regulate this study through the perspective of 'resistance' in the selected primary texts paralleling the concept of the theory of resistance with the theory of cultural studies. For the insights of the related theories, I have specifically

referred Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner collectively as well as Stuart Hall and other related theorists.

Literature and film have a deep connection. As Edward S. Small relates, "Though the mechanisms by which both bring about are different, both films and literature can codify characters and settings, speech and stories (296), literature and cinemas have a lot more in common. Thus, cinemas are the significant genres that can bring change in a society, and the researches done in the cinematographed genres can help explore the problems as well as search the solutions for a lot of stubborn problems of a community. Regarding the Nepal Bhasa films that I have selected for my study, only a handful of objective research have been done till date. The research works done, though in small projects, mostly incorporate the cultural dimensions of these movies explicitly. Under this consideration, the researchers have explored about the dress, dance, body languages, songs, expression, language, ritual practices, feasts and celebrations, myths, beliefs, norms and values etc. Subsequently, social dimensions are also touched upon by some of the researches. For instance, female representations are also highlighted in some of the reviews whereas, the connection of Nepal Bhasa movies with that of ethnical representation, inclusion of Newar community in the mainstream scenario of the country and rejection of the mainstream ideologies are also figured out by some scholars and researchers. However, the connection of cultural dimension to the attempts of resistance seems to be a void. Thus, in my research work I have tried exploring the issue of female characters' resistance in the selected films.

Chapter Two

Multiple Modes and Context of Female Resistance

'Resistance' is most often a fashionable term people generally use almost in every sector, faculty and domain. Despite the single denotative meaning of the term that implies to the refusal to accept something, its connotation and interpretation varies depending upon the implication of the term.

Physics defines resistance as 'the opposition that a substance offers to flow of the electric current'. In terms of management and organizational behavior, resistance is closely related to change. Susan M. Heathfield remarks resistance as 'the unwillingness to adapt to the altered circumstances' (2021). In psychological term, resistance means any action in opposition to, defying or withstanding something or someone. Likewise, a multiple definitions of 'resistance' can be employed differently depending upon the area of study. Nevertheless, the concept of 'resistance' has the reputation of being a larger concern and, often, the province of political discussion (Tamen 208). At the same time, Tamen attempts to interpret 'resistance' in general and comprehensible manner by stating-

Resistance may be a general term for "Stop talking nonsense" and "I don't get it" and "Somehow that seems quite right "and" That never occurred to me at all" and "Tell me more". The word may describe some of the faces you make at certain noises or things people do, as well as some of the faces other people may make at what you do. (212)

The word 'resistance' was originated from Latin verb 'resistere' which means 'hold back'. So, the basic essence of resistance is 'to deny'. From the aforementioned interpretations, it can be comprehended that the taints of resistance can be found from all possible disciplines from psychoanalysis to quantum physics. The idea of being pervasive too implies that the scope of 'resistance' is a fashionable topic.

The concept of resistance has been spreaded to larger areas in the scopes of intellectuality and academics in the recent times. In the article "Conceptualizing Resistance" too, Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner opine that resistance has become a fashionable topic that has received increasing attention in multiple disciplines such as anthropology, cultural studies, geography, political science and women's studies (533). Anthropologist James C. Scott's primary research regarding resistance is centered on peasants of South Asia and their strategies of resistance to various forms of domination. His best known works include *State, Hegemony, Revolution, Anarchism and Resistance* (2014). In the mid-1970s, a markedly different ideological approach led by cultural studies pioneers such as Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall guided the study of cultural resistance by studying music based youth cultures like Rastafarians, Rockers, Mods, Teddy Boys, Skinheads and Hippies (Hall and Jefferson, 1976 qtd in Duncombe 492). In her prominent essay "Can Subaltern Speak?", Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak relates resistance with women by questioning their representation indicating women as the subalterns (294). In other words, the concept of resistance stands as a topic of study in the contemporary disciplines such as politics, science, culture, anthropology and so on.

Indeed, the scope and implementation of the ideology of 'resistance' appears quite vague and unclear as it captures almost all the academic disciplines. However, for a clearer comprehension, Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner, in their article "Conceptualizing Resistance" have reviewed and synthesized the diverse literatures that invoke the concept of literature. By inquiring on whether resistance must be recognized by others and whether it must be intentional, they have finely developed a broad and inclusive typology of resistance. Simultaneously, they have clarified both the meaning and sociological utility of the concept of resistance. They quote that, indeed everything from revolution to hairstyles has been described as resistance. Active effort to fight, oppose,

refuse to cooperate, questioning, objecting are included within the definition of 'resistance'.

"The term resistance remains loosely defined, allowing some scholars to see it almost everywhere and others almost nowhere", writes Weitz (qtd.in Hollander and Einwohner 534). However, Hollander and Einwohner claim that the scholars fail to define the term 'resistance' or use it in systematic way. Analyzing the contradictory, imprecise and diverse nature of 'resistance', these scholars have identified two significant issues of resistance: recognition and intent.

Moreover, according to Hollander and Einwohner, 'action' and 'opposition' are the two core elements that complement each other in the constitution of resistance. Resistance must involve action or act because "resistance is not a quality of an actor or state of being, but involves some active behavior, whether verbal, cognitive, or physical (538). Similarly, the sense of opposition which might appear manifested in the use of any word such as contradict, social change, reject, challenge, subversive, disrupt etc. is palpable in resistance. Resistance, thus, is composed by these two elements.

However, clarifying the issues of recognition and intention, Hollander and Einwohner argue that the oppositional act might not be apparently visible to others. It may just be the everyday acts of defiance that makes no headlines. They state, "Visibility, of course, is a necessary prerequisite for the recognition of resistance. Yet, resisters may manipulate their behavior in order to encourage or discourage recognition" (540). Through different resisting acts, it is found that some resistance is intended to be recognized, while other resistance is purposefully concealed. Regarding the issue of 'intent', some scholars view that intent is a better indicator of resistance. Other group of scholar argues that assessing intent is difficult or almost impossible, while some other scholars suggest that the actor may not even be conscious of his or her action as resistance (543). These syntheses hint

to the fact that there must be the inclusion of intent behind the act of resistance that the resisters might or might not wish to reveal.

Thus, the issues such as action, recognition, intent, target and direction are some of the major concerns that are considered by Hollander and Einhowner to classify resistance into seven different categories- overt resistance, covert resistance, unwitting resistance, target defined resistance, externally defined resistance, missed resistance and attempted resistance. For these scholars, collective acts such as social movements and revolutions are overt resistance because these behaviors are visible and readily recognized by both targets and observers. Similarly, the acts that are intentional, but go unnoticed by the targets, though they are recognized by other observers who are aware about those acts are called covert resistance. In the same way, unwitting resistance is another type of resistance recognized by Hollander and Einhowner where the act is not intended as resistance by the actor or does not intend to provoke a reaction, but is recognized as threatening by the target group and observer. "Tom boy" behavior by girls is such an action. Moreover, target defined resistance and externally defined resistance also belong to the typology of resistance in which only the self defined targets may recognize a particular act as resistance and in which neither the actor intends to resist nor the target feel the action as refusal but the third party views it as resistance, respectively. Further, Hollander and Einhowner define the final two categories of resistance as:

Two final types of resistance refer to intentional acts that escape the notice of others. If recognized by their target but unrecognized by third party observers, we refer to these as *missed resistance*. Such acts may be "missed" if, for example, they take place in settings that are known and accessible to the actor and target but are accessible to others (eg., secret societies). Finally, if an actor's intentional act goes

unnoticed by both targets and observers alike, it may be classified as *attempted resistance*. (546)

In this way, these scholars have summarized the typology of resistance into seven different types based on the presence of actor, target and observers that would help conceptualize it more concretely and clarify fuzziness that surrounds the term 'resistance'.

Regardless of the broad spectrum of definition and typology, resistance is ultimately an act intends to bring change in the society. It takes place when there exists clash between the interests of people and power bloc' (Masse 45) because, as Moll views, power never goes unchallenged; it always produces friction, resistance and contestation (126). For instance, the clash of interest between the people and power block may refer to the establishment of one's personal identities depending upon his desired identity and the identity determined by the culture and society. Thus, identity becomes contested and may demand either conformity or resistance. In that sense, Kuisel explicates the dual representation of the notion of identity:

Most historians assume that national identity is dynamic, in flux, a result of continuous process of construction and reconstruction. It is not a given or an essence. Historians also assume national identity also requires both inclusion and exclusion. It has an 'us' and a 'them' dimension....We assume it is a site for contestation and debate; it is rarely consensual. In short, historians assume that, national identity instead of being fixed and consensual, is constructed, contested, exclusionary and evolutionary. (46)

The change brought through resistance in establishing one's identity in the most appropriate way may be distinctly or indistinctly visible within an individual of the community or the entire community itself. Taking this fact into consideration, my discussion throughout this paper revolves around the relationship between culture, especially that of Newar community, and resistance.

2.1 Resistance in Cultural Practices

'Culture' collectively attributes to the set of ideas, beliefs, knowledge, arts, customs, laws, social behaviors and other lifestyles followed by an identified community or society. For Cristina De Rossie, an anthropologist at Barnet Southgate College, London, "Culture encompasses religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones and a million other things" (qtd in Pappas 2021). Similarly, anthropologist James Spradley links culture with the practice of handing over from one generation to another. He defines culture as "...all the ways of life including arts, beliefs and institution of a population that are passed down from generation to generation" (2016). In the same way, UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) establishes 'culture' as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs". Additionally, UNESCO elucidates the cyclic model of culture in five major stages- creation, production, dissemination, exhibition or transmission and consumption or participation (Pessoa and Deloumeaux, 19). For UNESCO, culture is a matter of production and consumption within a certain population belonging to a community that moves in a cyclic process. "It is the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (The 2009 UNESCO FSC 2009). Since, culture connects with the production and consumption in a society, it reflects much more than just art and literature; it a way of living, communism and togetherness.

Joseph R. Gusfield excavates the origin of word 'culture' where he claims that the concept of culture has the connection of the concept of mid nineteenth century concept of

'Western Civilization'. He states, "We still use this developmental meaning, referring to people as civilized and uncivilized" (43). However, he too agrees that culture is a word, which is most probably used to refer to the practices and patterns that distinguish one group of people or society from another. Another prominent American anthropologist Clifford Geertz identifies that the whole discipline of anthropology arose because of the concept of 'culture'. Thus, he theorized more powerful concept of culture in *Interpretation of Culture* to replace T.S. Eliot's assumption of culture as "the most complex whole". In providing semiotic meaning of culture, Geertz explicates:

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical. But this pronouncement, a doctrine in a clause, demands itself some explication. (5)

As an analyst of culture, Geertz suggests that while interpreting culture one can unite or contrast between the forms of culture because he believes that societies are like lives. As lives contain their own interpretations, so do the societies. Thus, human beings, culture and society are inter-connected to each other like a web.

Where Geertz's attention focused on the problem of meaning and symbols of culture, Dominik LaCapra, an American born historian of European intellectual history, comprehends the relationship between culture and ideology. So he challenges:

The culture concept to which I adhere has neither multiple referents nor, so far as I can see, any unusual ambiguity; it denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in

symbolic forms by means life of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life. (377)

In short, culture is a pattern of gained and generationally transformed concepts regarding the attitude towards lives and lifestyles and having an inter- connectionbetween individuals and their communities.

Additionally, culture cannot be comfortably said to be symbolic behaviors that has created humans as humans and also, the heritage people in particular society shares (Keesing 73). Keesing has further recognized the challenge of narrowing down the concept of 'culture' so that it includes less and reveals more. So, he has identified certain major features of culture such as culture as adaptive systems, culture as cognitive systems, and culture as structural and symbolic systems.

La Capra has categorized culture on the basis of a number of aspects. According to him, the culture which is actively shaped or at least influenced by the state is known as official culture. For instance constitutional rule, government consent, civil liberties etc. come under official culture (379). Similarly, high or elite culture refers to the culture of political, socioeconomic, bureaucratic and academic institutions. This culture depends upon the degree of integration among elites. In the same way, mass culture indicates the rise of middle class where a large number of people participate in any event by widening circles of population. And finally, popular culture – an equivocal term represents a group of people who at least know each other and popular culture is employed with respect to various traditional forms.

In essence, culture is more appropriately an anthropological concept; concerned with human living, lifestyles, humanities and society. A particular set of belief or practice followed by only a single generation within a short periodis not generally counted as culture. Though it is dynamic and adapts certain modifications while implementation and execution

from one generation to another, culture is the practice that holds similar traits as the preceding generations. Among the recognized types of culture, the cinemas I am examining come under popular culture.

Similarly, 'cultural studies', just like various connotation of culture, is not one thing; it has never been one thing (Hall 11). Having emerged during 1970s in Birmingham University of Britain, cultural studies makes intellectuals themselves take responsibilities for how the knowledge they produced is then transmitted to society (18). The concept of cultural studies was propounded by the leading black intellectual Stuart Hall along with professors Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart. 'Identity' is an incomplete process and is constituted within, not outside representation of culture. Thus, he links the very idea of culture and identity by bringing his own reference behind opening the dialogue between cultural identity and cultural studies. In his prominent article "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation", Hall asserts:

I was born into and spent my childhood and adolescence in a lower-middle class family in Jamaica. I have lived all my adult life in England, in shadow of the black diaspora - "in the belly of the beast". I write against the back- ground of a lifetime's work in cultural studies. If the paper seems preoccupied with the diaspora experience and its narratives of dis-placement, it is worth remembering that all discourse is 'placed', and the heart has its reasons. (69)

The vocation of cultural studies has been to enable people to understand what is going on, and especially to provide ways of thinking, strategies for survival, and resources for resistance to all those who are now -in economic, political, and cultural terms - excluded from anything that could be called access to the national culture of the national community (Hall 22). Cultural studies drives towards the idea to stop being part of great tradition and begins to be part of something else.

In this dissertation, I argue that the female protagonists in the selected primary texts are the resisting heroes who endeavored to act autonomously to bring change in their lives directly and in the entire community indirectly through their resistance against the cultural stereotypes. Applying this assumption, the entire research for my study is based on three Nepal Bhasa movies- *Rajamati*, *Silu* and *Patachara*. My assumption is substantiated through the character analysis of the major female characters in the selected films. Undeniably, film is an inextricable appendage of literature. Although film and literature depend upon separate semiotic system, both can codify characters and setting (Small 296). Thus, films and literature are intersected to each other both of which, largely, help examine the characters and their way of representing the society they live in.

2.2 Cinema as a Genre in Popular Representation

Historically, the experimental film has its beginnings in the European Avant- garde of the 1920s and is today an international genre of stunning proportion. Further, literary narrative is usually a private experience: even if millions read a novel, nearly all of them read it alone. Film is usually experienced as a public phenomenon (except, perhaps, by film critics, who usually have the same sort of private, controlled access to film as they have to literary texts) (Macdonald 61). However, the trend of film genre today is so well known today that there seems no need to cite contributive works (Small 291). In this fashion, cinemas stand as one of the most popular genres to experience together. This is one of the reasons that I have chosen film genre as my research project.

'Film' and 'movie' are most often used interchangeably used terminologies because they both refer to moving pictures projected into a screen in such a way that viewers see an illusion of motion in front of them (Brown 2020). It is an art of expression that includes various elements such as in fiction – plot, characters, setting, point of view, diction and themes. Although it has certain correspondences and affinities with other forms of literature

such as poetry, fiction, drama and essay, films combine in complex ways a great many characteristics which other forms can exhibit in particular ways. In the book *Elements of Literature*, the authors have managed to prove films as one of the significant genres of literature by stating, 'when paintings represent through theatrical performances, films manage to do it simultaneously ' (1451). Films have the ability to make the audience use all their sensory implications that includes seeing, hearing, feeling and savoring to understand the theme it conveys. Films can provoke intellectuality; it is a medium of intellectual, creative and aesthetic expression (Aryal 2020). Though the audience knows that films are screened imaginary and fictitious presentations, they get the impression of reality in films.

'Film' is one of the inseparable sub- divisions of literature. As Robert T. Self notes, "films as literature articulates a material spectrum between the idea of realism at one end and the issue of subjectivism in creation and reflexivity in media on the other" (17), films indeed have immense capacity to represent a particular category of people in a certain context. However, some scholars have also viewed films and literature having essential difference. To be clearer, regardless of historical changes in print and paper, no novel or essay or poem need ever fail to be reprinted, maintained for posterity. In contrast, no film (or video) record at the time of this writing has any real chance for preservation (Small 296). Thus, more of the similarities and less of the differences exist in between other parts of literaturesuch as fiction or verse and the cinemas.

The history of films, in a technologically developed manner, can be traced back in late nineteenth century. Elaborating the origin and development of cinema, Deac Rossell in 1995 article asserts, "One hundred years ago the first projected moving pictures appeared in laboratories and scientific demonstrations...A century later plans are more advanced in many countries" (115). Cinemas are evident to have its systematic and technological origin in Paris, France but, within the hundred years of its origin the film genre became a popular

culture all over the world. Following the ends of World War Second in 1940s, the following decade, the 1950s marked a 'golden age' for non- English world cinema, especially for Asian cinema (Kevin 2002). In the South East Asia, cinemas came on screen as "a mapping of varied cultural influences, inextricably intermeshed, extensively hybridized and intensely interconnected with the networks of global power", argues Rachel Harrison (140).Cinemas in South East Asia refers to especially Indian, Japanese, Thai, Pakistani cinemas in the beginning days of cinematographic presentations.

2.3 Kollywood's Female Resisters

Nepali cinemas are also one of the important parts of South East Asian cinemas. Even though Nepali film industry flourished far later, in comparison to that of other Asian countries, the industry also has a distinct feature and importance of its own in terms of economic, social, cultural and entertaining and recreational dimensions since its' establishment. The making of Nepali films is said to have begun with D. B. Pariyar's *Satya Harishchandra*, which was the first Nepali language film to be shot. It was produced from Kolkata, India, and was released on September 14, 1951. In recounting some interesting memories during the initial stages of the introduction of cinema hall in Nepal, history and culture analyst Sudarshan Aryal indicates:

Film expert Basanta Thapa recalls the halls as being dire during 1960s.... People didn't stand in a queue. Whoever could push people would get tickets.... Getting a ticket did not warrant a seat. People rushed in and sat in the congested seats that had nails popping out....The state of the cinema halls started to change around the mid-1970s.... Post-70s, the picture quality of the show got better along with the sound....

Following that, advertisements for movies started to come on Gorkhapatra. (2022)

UNESCO has it that India, Nigeria, the United States, Japan, China, France, Russia, Germany, Spain, Italy, Korea, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, Bangladesh and

Switzerland were among the top-notch film producing countries for the years 2005 to 2009. However, if the 2009 figures are assumed to maintain the same pace and progress today, Nepal would be listed as the top 15 film producing nations in the world (Kharel 2020). Year 2009 became a milestone in Nepali Film Industry that Nepali critics anticipate Nepali cinemas to compete the world cinema market.

Under the same shade, particularizing Nepali Film Industry commonly known as 'Kollywood', critic Kharel too shows the data of the gradual progress in the Nepali Film Industry since history. He displays:

Although Nepal's first movie hit the silver screen in the mid- 1960s, the first 25 years didn't even produce 25 feature films. The later 25 years have recorded some 1000 movies. It has been a decade or so since the industry churned out more than 70 productions annually. In the year just gone by, however, as many as 100 films were registered. (2020)

His aspiring and hopeful analysis hints Nepali cinemas being prospective competitor in the arena of world cinemas with the use of new technologies, facilitated cinema halls, contemporary themes, spectacular execution and talented actors.

Nevertheless, some critics in Kollywood points out the inability of Nepali films to compete with other films in the spectrum of South Asian film industry. Critically analyzing the position of Nepali film industry in the world scenario, critic Smriti Dhungana disregards that,

Still Nepali film industry is struggling to get its position among the local audience. Large number of people is still beyond the frame of Nepali movie. 'Repetitive theme of story, lack of creativity and distributor oriented filmmaking would not survive for long time. But people from industry are seem unaware from this fact and repetitively

using cliché formula oriented movie that had already retired in Bollywood film industry. (2017)

Her views regarding the status of Nepali cinemas are to be perceived by all the concerned bodies connected to Nepali film industry as suggestive words to bring intuitive execution in upcoming Nepali films so that cinemas could indeed act as one of the valuable platforms for Nepali people to build their careers.

Nepali movies are commonly presumed to be the movies that are in only in the official language of Nepal, i.e. Nepali language but, it is notably necessary to comprehend that Nepali movies do not *only* comprise the movies in Nepali language. It refers to all the movies that are cinematographed inside or outside the state comprising any of the languages and cultures inherent in Nepal portraying Nepali essence. With respect to the kingship history of Nepal, when king Mahendra was handed over the throne in 1961, to the detriment of all other languages, religion and ethnicity, he strongly imposed a "one nation, one language and one religion" policy in Nepal, in favor of the Nepali language, the Brahmins and Chhetri (Khas) community, and the Hindu religion (Nepali 91). Thus, Nepali language (Khas bhasa) became the official language of Nepal till date. Probably due to the supremacy of Nepali language being 'official language' of Nepal, Nepali literary world seems to be governed by official Nepali language. The impact is accordingly spotted in Nepali film industry as well.

Nepali language films have always dominated the country's celluloid history, but Nepali cinema has a lot more to offer (Khadgi 2020). In other words, many significant Nepali movies have been successfully produced in Nepal's film industry having the language besides official Nepali language. In his article, Khadgi showcases the diversity in Nepali film industry by presenting five of the most awesome Nepali films cinematographed in ethnical background – *Silu* (Newar community), *Numafung* (Limbu community),

Caravan (Dolpo community), *Rajamati* (Newar community) and *Takasera* (Magar community). In all these beautiful movies, ethnic aestheticism of each of the related culture and ethnicity is delightfully presented. Being specific to the ethnicity of Newari community, critic Shyam Smrit observes that the contribution of Newar actors in the entire seventy- two years history of Nepali film industry remained incredible. He highlights:

...the major role in the first ever made Nepali movie *Aama* (2022 B.S) is played by Chaitya Devi Singh who is a Newar. Also, the role of hero in the movie was played by Shiva Shankar Manandhar. In addition to this, Chaitya Devi Singh also played the main role in the first ever made colourful Nepali movie *Kumari*. Commercially hit movie during the beginning days of Nepali film industry *Jeevan- Rekha* has the lead role of Shiva Shrestha. (translated, 2017)

My research work thus takes this unique charm of ethnical incorporation of Nepali Film Industry into consideration and attempts to investigate the cinematic approach of selected Nepal Bhasa movies within the specific framework of the theory of resistance in detail.

2.4 *Silu, Rajamati and Patacharaas a Form of Cultural Resistance*

Nepal, being recognized as a culturally and ethnically diverse country in the entire world, can be divided into two distinct groups of people: Indo-Aryans and Tibeto - Burmans, on the basis of their racial and linguistic affinities. Indo- Aryan groups live mostly live in Terai and narrowly in hilly region. Similarly, Tibeto- Burmans, in large part, live in Himalayan region and narrowly in hilly region (Women in Nepal 3).

Newars are one of the mutually exclusive dialect groups among Tibeto- Burman group with their own respective cultural traditions who stand out quite distinctly with a high level of cultural achievement, as represented by a complex civilization with an urban bias, which they have evolved in the Valley of Kathmandu (Nepali 3). The Nevars are both ethnically and linguistically very much Indianized. Their modes of life, their technical skill,

and taste for the fine arts have for centuries molded the Kathmandu Valley and endowed the central part of the country with clearly marked features which foreign visitors frequently conceive as Nepalese par excellence (Lienhard 1). It is said that the greatest civilization in the whole of the Himalayas, with the exception of Kashmir, was the valley of Nepal that is Kathmandu valley and to the question of who had created this civilization, Regmi believes that it is Newars (qtd. in Pradhan 9). Clearly, Newars are the original inhabitants of Kathmandu valley. The most evidently, according to The National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities Act 2002 (Adiwasi Janajati Utthan Pratisthan Ain 2058), Newars are one of the 59 distinct groups enlisted as the group of 'indigenous nationalities' living in the ecological zone of hilly region (Tumbahang 70).

According to the Census of Nepal 2011, Newars occupy 5% (1,321,933) of the total population of Nepal. Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur (conjointly named as Nepal Mandala) is the original home of Newars (Shrestha 29) and the Newar people had been settled in the Nepal valley since the pre- historic time (Shrestha 84). Elucidating the religion of Newars living in Nepal Mandala, Anil M Shakya reveals,

In her study of the spatial symbolism of Kathmandu, Slusser (1982: 103) finds that it sits in the middle of the religious divide, with a 'mixed' population of Hindus and Buddhists. Elsewhere, she states that Kathmandu leans more towards being 'Buddhistic' than Hindu (1982: 102). Using secondary data collected by Rosser (1966) and Greenwold (1974), Pradhan (1986: 7) finds that 'Kathmandu has roughly the same proportion of Hindus and Buddhists, unlike the other two former capital cities, Patan and Bhaktapur, which have predominantly Buddhist and Hindu population respectively. (33)

Newars, therefore, can actually be found in most of the parts of the nation but, basically these communities are righteously found in Kathmandu valley.

Every indigenous group of Nepal has their own original mother tongue and language. Language that belongs to Newar community is officially known as 'Nepal Bhasa'. As the name directs, the language is paradoxically not the language same as Devnagari (Nepal's official language). Nepal Bhasa has Sino- Tibetan dialect. According to Gellner (1995:5), 'The Nepal Bhasa seems to have been spoken by the inhabitants of Kathmandu Valley as far back as records go' (qtd in Shrestha 84). Anthropologist Bal Gopal Shrestha claims, "In Nepal, after Maithili, Nepal Bhasa is a language with a long tradition in literature" (105). He further elaborates the origin and ancient use of Nepal Bhasa:

So far the earliest evidence of the use of Nepal Bhasa is found on the palm leaf of Uku Bahal dated AD 1114. The earliest dated epigraph on stone was found at Vajrayogini Sankhu and dated AD 1117. Later during the Malla period (1200-1768), the Nepal Bhasa flourished both in inscriptions and manuscript.... The first use of word Newar was found in an inscription dated AD 1654 of Pratap Malla at Hanuman Dhoka. The Newar people to this day call their language Nepal Bhasa; in Western philology it is now more commonly known by the name 'Nevari'. (84, 85)

The history of the language of Newars originated since very long. Hence Newars' language is as authentic and primordial as their origin and existence.

Nepal Bhasa, also known as 'Newa: Bhayae' in its colloquial term, has a historical, cultural and national identity in Nepal. The selected visual texts for my research- *Rajamati*, *Silu* and *Patachara* are thus in this ancient and historical language called Nepal Bhasa.

The first movie in Nepal Bhasa, *Silu* was released in 2044 B.S. In fact *Silu* is a popular and remarkable film not only among the Newar community, but in the non- Newar community as well (translated, Chayachabi 2020). The short informative Nepali documentary by Chayachabi explicates the importance of indigenous films such as *Siluso* as to exhibit the theme of 'unity in diversity' in Nepal. Since Nepal is a living library, it is

essential to convert this diversity into the source of our property (translated 2020, 1:26).

Indigenous films illustrate mother tongue, uncountable rituals from birth to death, cultures, ethnic skills and knowledge, communal lifestyles and management skills. Thus, production of indigenous films is essential. This very notion might be one of the inseparable reasons behind the production of the movie *Silu* (translated 2020, 2:05). *Silu* has played a notable role in the overall development of Nepali film industry (translated 2020, 3:29).

In the beginning years of the establishment of Nepali film industry usually films in Nepali language were made. However, *Silu*, in one hand, became the first film in Nepal which is made in non- Nepali language whereas it was also the first film in Nepal to be belonging to an indigenous community. Depicting the position of *Silu* in the entire Nepali film industry, eminent Nepali journalist Bijay Ratna Tuladhar identifies:

If quantity is considered, until the release of *Silu*, there were only seventeen movies released altogether in Nepal including "*Satya Harischandra*" in 2008 B.S, "*Aama*" in 2022 followed by *Maitighar*, *Parivartan*, *Hijo Aaja Bholi*, *Maan Ko Baandh*, *Kumari*, *Sindoor*, *Jeevan Rekha*, *Badalindo Aakash*, *Juni*, *Aadarsha Naari*, *Kaanchi*, *Basudev*, *K Ghar K Deraa*, *Kusume Rumal* and *Biswas*. Thus, *Silu* is the eighteenth film released in Nepal. (2077)

Silu, one of the top twenty movies in the big screen in Nepali film industry, is thus one of the historical and remarkable films that helped establish Nepali film industry in a recognizable position.

The release of the film *Silu* in 1987 was supposed to be a game changer. The Nepal Bhasa feature film, which traces the story of a couple from Kathmandu after the wife is kidnapped on a pilgrimage in the Himalayas, did not stand out because of its content but because it became one of the first indigenous feature films to be screened at various cinemas halls in the Capital (*The Kathmandu Post* 2017). In this commercially successful movie, one

can see culture and lifestyle of Kathmandu in those days. It is not only a movie; today it is like a history book where you will find a song related to festival Holi which is popular still today (2019).

Silu is in fact a musical film based on a ballad in Nepal Bhasa written in the early nineteenth century, which describes an adventurous voyage to a sacred river in the Himalayas, named Silu (ordinarily called as Gosainkunda). The source mentions that:

The song "Silu" is one of the Newar seasonal songs and is played during August, when pilgrims usually visit Silu to take part in the ritual bathing festival that climaxes on the full moon. According to the song, when the husband and wife reach Silu, the king sends soldiers to take her away and makes her his queen. The depressed husband leaves home and becomes an ascetic. One day, the queen asks that all the ascetics be assembled to give them alms. She spots her husband among them, and slips away with him disguised as a nun. ([wikiz.com/wiki/silu_\(film\)](http://wikiz.com/wiki/silu_(film)))

The description verifies that Silu is a sacred pilgrimage where pilgrims (not the married couple) go mostly during August. When when a valiant woman goes there neglecting the threat of miseries, she is captivated but finally gets rescued by her husband.

Excavating deeply into Newari folklore, hymns and ballads, the professor of Indology at Stockholm University, Sweden and a scholar of Sanskrit and Newar language Siegfried Lienhard collects a number of Newari songs in his book *Songs of Nepal- an Anthology of Nevar Folksongs and Hymns*. In this reference, in the category of 'Epic Poetry', under the heading of 'Ballads and Rice Plantation Songs', he acknowledges the ballad that describes the pilgrimage to Gosainkunda or Silutirtha. "Although, according to the superstitious belief, this pilgrimage is to be made without the company of one's wife, the woman figuring in this poem insists on accompanying his husband to Silu" (Lienhard, 80). The translated version of the ballad given by Lienhard follows long description.

This single ballad is the complete illustration of the thorny journey of the woman who secretly follows to the pilgrimage despite the fact that a married couple going together for the journey is believed to be a bad omen.

Silu Wanegu, the pilgrimage to Silu for the holy dip in the lake Gosainkunda, is a long-standing tradition in the ethnic Newar community in Nepal (Maharjan 2). Gosainkunda Lake is one of the notable water resources of Nepal, located in Rasuwa district that is situated at the altitude of 4380m from the sea level at the top of the Himalayas and it has the origin from river Trishuli. The distance from Kathmandu to Gosainkunda is about 67.5 kilometers. The lake has a very deep and pious religious belief among both Hindus and Buddhists. Gosainkunda is regarded as the abode of Hindu god Shiva and Parwati, according to the Hindu myth. Every year, in the occasion of 'Janai Purnima' (Kwati Punhi: in Newari dialect), the fourth full moon day of a year according to lunar calendar, thousands of Nepali devotees go to the lake to take bath there and get salvation. It is believed that getting salvation in this lake, one will be free from all his pains, sorrows and sins. Beside religious importance, this place has also got natural importance because Gosainkunda lake trek is incredibly beautiful to see Ganesh Himal, Manaslu Himal and Langtang Himalayan range. Nevertheless, Newari tradition holds an accepted mythology that a married couple should not make the trip together as it could result to the misfortune of their separation, as in the movie itself the title song in the movie depicts:

Female: ...please don't go to seek your friends' company for the journey of Silu...Couple going together will have a lot of blessing.

Male: ... for us going together for the journey, I needed to consult the prophet...

And he said that we are meant to get separated if we go together.(translated)

Thus, there is a strong belief in the mythology in Newari community that if a husband and wife ventures for the journey of Goisainkunda Lake together, they are destined to get separated.

Movie *Silu*, based upon the celebrated ancient Newari ballad, is therefore an absolute representation of culture of Newar in Kathmandu. The portrayal of tradition, lifestyles, festivals, food, feasts, celebrations, religion, beliefs, folklore, attires, occupations, language and dialects, art and architecture, connection, relationships, harmony etc. are the major and peculiar features of the movie. However, the movie is a *mélange* of both Newari and non-Newari identities. It is broadly accepted that directors are integral to any film project because a director contributes to all the creative elements of a production and is responsible for shaping them into a cohesive film (AGCAS 2021). In this context, director of *Silu*, Pradeep Rimal, played a pivotal role in the entire making of the film who belongs to a non-Newar community. Besides *Silu*, Rimal (born in 1994 BS) has directed other popular Nepali films such as '*Maya*' and '*K Ghar K Dera*'. He had also acted in the film '*Hijo Aaja Bholi*', composed a number of Nepali Lok Geet (folk songs) and written a book named *Karnali Lok Sanskriti* and won 'Madan Puraskar' in 2028 BS (Nepal 2015). Not only Rimal but other numerous non-Newar celebrities have given a significant contributions in this Nepal Bhasa movie such as Prem Baniya as a producer with an investment of Rs 1,361,000 and as a contributor in story, lyrics and dialogue. Similarly, Rachana GC has contributed as a singer and Haribansha Acharya, Barkha Subba as artists.

Rajamati is another majestic representation of Newari culture executed through cinematic representation. *Rajamati* unravels the story of an appealing lady named Rajamati who is believed to live in Itumbaha (one of the eight great Buddhist monasteries of Kathmandu city). Like *Silu*, the major plot of the movie is based on the traditional ballad in the ethnic Newar community. This traditional ballad can be retraced back to the nineteenth

century story. This song became popular after it was performed in Nepal Bhasa in London during then Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana's state visit to England in 1850 (Maharjan 2).

On the verge of searching the hidden cultural treasures in the courtyards of old Kathmandu, researcher Vishal Rai finds out the real house of Rajamati who was an actual person, a legend but has been forgotten by the history but has been immortalized in the song. In his informative article "Where Rajamati Lived" published in the 147th issue of ESC Nepal, he claims:

Rajamati's song is a traditional Newari ballad; it isn't just one of the most well-known tunes in Newa culture but also one that those on the outside associate most with the community. The lyrics are from the point of view of a man smitten with a local beauty, Rajamati. Composed some 200 years ago, its writer unknown, the song has seen its fair share of renditions. (2014)

Here, the researcher elaborates about the remains of the legendary beauty Rajamati through the centuries old song '*Rajamati kumati...*' claiming the song as a performance.

Rajamati's song is indeed one of the most popular folk songs in Newar community that is composed in 'lok laya'. According to the narrative of this song, an infatuated young man is intensely in love with the beautiful girl Rajamati who was born in Tahanani in Itumbaha (a historical neighbourhood in central Kathmandu). So, he pleads his father to get her for him, otherwise he would prefer going to Banaras (Kashi) and become an aesthetic if he doesn't get to marry her. The passionate lover describes her curly hair, long eyes, fair complexion and moles on the cheek through this ballad. It mentions three sunken waterspouts in Kathmandu: Thanhiti (uptown water spout), Kwahiti (downtown water spout), and Maruhiti in the center (near Kathmandu Durbar Square) and how Rajamati slips on a large stone and falls flat (Maharjan 2). He praises the curly hair, big sparkling eyes, fair

complexion and two distinct moles on the face of Rajamati. He also compares Rajamati with two of her other friends- Trithakun and Chirithakun. Tarithakun wears *Tayo* (a long narrow hollow piece of ornament with tapering ends and decorated with five raised snake heads: worn by girls and bride during their coming- of- age ceremony and during festivals) around her neck. Chirithakun wears *Payo* (a large oval bracelet like ornament worn around the ankle) whereas, Rajamati wears *Bijakani* (a special kind of ear ornament shown in fig.2). She is incomparable to two of her best friends. So he just wants her not others.

The popular traditional Nepalese ballad was written by an unnamed composer and believed to be dated from the early nineteenth century. According to a source, the song was recorded on gramophone disc by maestro Seturam Shrestha in Kolkata in 1908 (wikimili.com 2022). The source also mentions that a movie on the same name and the same story was directed by the famous veteran Nepali director Neer Shah and released in 1995 and became the second big screen film to be made in Nepal Bhasa. For the movie, "Prem Dhoj pradhan composed and sang Rajamati song in his style, and sang in various stages and functions for many years made it very popular. He recorded Rajamati song in 1962 in Calcutta, India, on 78 rmp gramophone disc. Since then, this song has been recorded by many artists" (2022). Thus, the popular ballad '*Rajamati Kumati jike wosa pirati...*' is more than half a decade ancient literature.

Though dubbed in Newar dialect, the movie is casted by multiple talented Nepali actors belonging to both Newar and non- Newar community. Charming actress Hisila Maharjan has played the lead role as Rajamati. Till date Hishila Maharjan has casted a numerous big screen movies including a historical movie *Kirtipur (The Legend of Kirti laxmi)* as well as a multiple music videos. Having had the hobby of dancing, singing and acting right from her childhood, the polite, talented and beautiful actress got an opportunity to cast in *Rajamati* during her college days (you tube 2014). Similarly, the roles of lead male

actors are played by Srikrishna Shrestha as Ratna, presented as the one-sided lover of Rajamati and Maniraj Lawat as Twisee, presented as the beloved of Rajamati respectively. Notable actor late Srikrishna Shrestha had established himself as a successful actor in Nepali film industry with more than 100 movies. In the same way the movie is gracefully casted by Madan Krishna Shrestha as Taremam Shakya (Rajamati's father) and Hari Bansha Acharya as a senior friend of Twisee. Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bansha Acharya are together recognized as 'Maha' Jodi (pair) in Nepali film and entertainment industry. Besides being great actors they both are remarkable writers, singers and musicians. Along with entertaining the audience, they appear on screen to bring some significant changes targeting the corrupted leaders and system of Nepali society through satire and humor. While praising these versatile actors, researcher Usha Gautam Wagle writes, "In many of their social satires, they appear in plain uniforms praising the heavens for having blessed Nepal with pleasant hills, magnificent mountains and bountiful plains. But then they subvert these thoughts by lamenting the lack of a good leader, someone who could lead Nepal well" (2015). Another veteran actress Subhadra Adhikari's role as Ratna's mother in the film is also praiseworthy. Her contribution to Nepali cinema and art has been immense (THT 2019). Fundamentally, a multiple notable Nepali actors star the movie.

After 1990, people's movement and ten years of Maoists movement helped them to bring awareness to indigenous ethnic group individuals through their politics... and mass media (Thapa Magar 4). Similarly, contextualizing the movie from the point of view of the cultural movement, critic Aashis Mishra adjudges *Rajamati* as a tool that has boosted Nepal Bhasa movement of 1980s. During the contemporary period, Newa communities' people were striving to revive their language following a long period of decline brought by the hostile attitude of the state. Thus, for him, the movie has become an effective conservative tool that helped promote a community's language and lifestyles. He further elaborates:

After the success of the people's movement and the constitutional restriction on indigenous languages lifted in 1990, films became viewed as an ideal medium for this. *Rajamati* reflects this perfectly with its adoption of an ancient ballad of the same as the source material, use of traditional folk music and songs and its efforts in trying to portray images of the "regular" Newa society. *Silu* also did this but because it came out during the Panchayat years, its efforts were undermined by the larger repression going around it. While the efforts were commendable and it most certainly deserves credit as the initiator of Nepal Bhasa movies, *Silu* felt like a bucket of water being poured on the forest fire. *Rajamati*, because of the changed socio-political environment, was at least a fire hose. (2021)

Hence, *Rajamati*, with its cinematic execution, is visibly a significant milestone that helped establish and revive Newari people's identity, ethnicity and cultural value to a greater extent after the establishment of democracy in Nepal in 2046 B.S.

One of the greatest talents of indigenous people is their understanding of social roles and the mastery of procedures, rituals and therapies, regards Fiann Paul (2021). In his article "How Do We Understand Indigenous Peoples?", he also notes that indigenous people are the primal beings who represent an important part of both ourselves and our planet and its history and that the primal self has many answers on how to find happiness in life. One of another noteworthy indigenous Nepal Bhasa movie *Patachara*, released in 2010, shows how to dispel human grief with the help of Buddha's teachings. As per the indigenous films in Nepal, a number of Nepal Bhasa movies are produced since the release of the first Nepal Bhasa movie *Silu* in 1987, however most of them do not go through the Censor Board because the cost is too costly. In his article "Nepal Bhasa Movies Under Shadow", critic Sangit Shrestha contemplates:

It's a challenge for indigenous cinema like Nepal Bhasa to get through the Censor Board even if they wanted to. The reason being, some rituals and customs of indigenous people shown in the films are described as offensive by the Censor Board of Nepal. (2017)

Despite these unavoidable circumstances he also quotes the fact evoked by the General Secretary of Newa Film Society Biraj Rajopadhyaya as "It has been 30 years of Nepal Bhasa movies, but less than 10 such films have gone through the Censor Board of Nepal. The few films that went through the Censor Board are *Silu*, *Rajamati*, *Patachara* ..." (2017).

Ramkrishna Khadgi directed *Patachara* (2010) recounts the journey of one of the women disciples of Gautam Buddha named Patachara during Buddha era. *Therigatha* (the collection of seventy- three poems in the Pali Buddhist canon of the earliest wise women's Buddhist literature) remarks the glory of Patachara along with other *Bhukhunis* (nuns) during that time (Murcott 15). Regarding this, Susam Murcutt forwards her findings:

Patachara was an extraordinary woman, one of the most powerful personalities in the early Buddhist community. Pieces of her history have been lost or confused with those of at least two or other nuns, Patacara, Pancasta and Kisagotami. We know for a fact that Patacara had a tremendous influence on other nuns, as the poets of the *Therigatha* refers to her more often than to any other women.... Patacara was a skillful, revered and charismatic teacher.... Woman such as she could exercise a degree of authority, gather and train their own disciples and also preach to laypeople. (43)

Poems that are included in the *Theragatha* which adored Patachara vindicate the fact that she is an utterly enlightened woman having the qualities of leadership and inspiring others, specially the females. The impact of her teachings is so intense that the followers of

Patachara were all born in good families but in different places. Each heard Patachara preach when they were young adults and this motivated each of them to ordain (Hallisey 129).

The real existence of disciple Patachara is also mentioned in Srilankan magazine *the Sunday Times*. In the article "Advent of Sangamitta Theri and our Pioneering Bhikkhunis", there is the inclusion of the fact that some of the famed Bhikkhunis mentioned in Buddhist text Therigatha in *Tripitaka* are Amrapali, Patachara and Kisa Gotami (2013). Again in another article "The Life of a Forgotten Buddhist Heroine Unfolds", researcher Randima Attygalle argues that Yashodhara (wife of Siddhartha Gautam) should be more glorified, but she is underpinned in all forms of literature, art and cinema. The researcher presents the objection of prof. Ariyaratne who states that characters of Patachara, Ambapali, Magandhi and Kundalakesi for instance had been more glorified than Yashodhara (2018). Moreover, the abandonment of Patachara is also mentioned in one of the major online source of Buddhism, BuddhaNet. The source explains how she transformed her life from a charming ordinary lady to a sufferer and ultimately to an enlightened nun during the lifetime of Gautam Buddha (2008).

2.5 Contemporary Position of Newari Women

All the three research texts under my study comprise a visibly common variant-female character. Thus, another important dimension that is touched upon by my research is the issue of female power, position and representation in Newari communities. The gender role of women and the prominent issues related to women's sexual identities are, as in the world literature, one of the most discussed issues in Nepali literature and pop culture. In this shade, Balsamo explains:

Given that they share a critical focus on the relation between literature and the culture within which it is produced or consumed, feminist literary studies and feminist cultural studies are equally preoccupied with the discursive construction of

identity and subjectivity, and what might be called the politics of representation.

The point where they diverge, however, concerns the attention given to the circuit of production, exchange, and consumption of cultural products. This leads to certain questions, not only about the cultural conditions of the production of given texts or other cultural forms, i.e., music, body practices, geography, but also about the specific conditions of reading or consumption, which often requires the investigation of the everyday situations of lived cultures. (56)

Literary works in Nepal Bhasa, one of the historically significant national languages of Nepal, also encompasses the issues of women's position and identity in the society in the last quarter of twentieth century.

One of the reasons behind the incorporation of women's issues during the contemporary period in Nepal Bhasa as well as Nepali cannon as a whole might be because of a lot of significant changes in the social indicator in Nepal such as-

-) Female literacy rate (6 years and above) increased to 27 percent in 1996, compared with a meager 4 percent in 1971.
-) Mean age of marriage for girls increased by more than 2.5 years between 1961 and 1991.
-) Fertility decline has accelerated during the 1990s, with the total fertility rate falling to 4.2 in 1996 from 6.3 in 1976.
-) Maternal mortality has gone down to 539 per 100,000 live births compared with more than 800 in the 1970s.
-) Universal immunization has been achieved against certain diseases.
-) No gender discrimination is observed in nutritional status, immunization against measles, and in the breast feeding of infants and young children. (XIII, XIV)
-) Both male and female infant and child mortality rates have fallen significantly.

J Life expectancy of women increased by more than 11 years between 1975 and 1993, though still shorter than that of men, which is against the biological characteristic.

Despite these remarkable achievements to empower, enhance and encourage women for the upliftment of their status, women could not show their full potentiality, intellectuality and participation in terms of culture, economy, education, political and administration systems and many more during the contemporary period in Nepal. During that time, among the total population of Nepal of about 21 million, more than half of the population was female population (Women in Nepal 1). Nevertheless, there seemed a large variation in the population percentage in terms of literacy (male-54.0, female- 19.4), mean age of marriage (male- 21.4, female- 18.1), profession (non- agriculture; male- 9.2, female 2.9)

If the world population from 1950 to 2022 is analyzed, the sex ratio of male and female is almost 1:1(Population.net 2019). Thus, the world equally belongs to the females as does to the males. But, how many of us have realized the significance of women's participation and representation in politics, literature, information technology, sports, in the entire society of most of the countries, in the whole world? An article published on the occasion of the 'World Women's Day' illustrates a discouraging visualization of the position of females in the world scenario in terms of politics, work, culture and sciences, journalism, entertainment and culinary arts. Though 'sports' sector is admired to have power to inspire change and break gender stereotypes and women have been doing just that decade after decade, showing that they are just as capable and strong as men physically, but also strategically, as leaders and game changers. Based on different authentic resources such as Inter Parliamentary Union, The Noble Foundation, The Global Media Monitoring Project, The International Olympic Committee etc., the article argues:

Women's full and equal participation in all facets of society is a fundamental human right. Yet, around the world, from politics to entertainment to the workplace, women

and girls are largely underrepresented.... Rooted in patriarchal norms and traditions, the consequences are far-reaching with detrimental, negative consequences on the personal, economic and future well-being of women and girls, their families and the community at large. (2020)

This article displays societal structures and systems such as patriarchy, norms, politics, traditions and beliefs that obstruct individuality and progress of females as the main reasons for them to be underrepresented.

However, if we conceive the constructive side of Nepali women's position during 1990s from the above data, we can place women in progressing lane. There is no debate that there are anatomical and physiological differences between male and female, but if given same opportunities and inhibition, a woman can succeed in most activities as well as men. By developing plots of the cinemas under the similar circumstances, *Silu*, *Rajamati* and *Patachara* reflect self-conscious, brave and bold side of women from Newar ethnicity during the contemporary time when the position of women were elevating. And this awareness in Newar women echoes the awareness of Newar ethnicity as a whole during the people's political movement during 1990s.

Chapter Three

Living Through and Beyond Stereotyping

Humans are the creatures who do not prefer living isolated. They live among their favourable groups called societies. There, they observe, learn and adapt ways and patterns of living their lives more appropriately than the earlier generations. This adaptation gradually becomes cultural practices which are imitated by the upcoming generations in rotation. In this sense, cultural practices mean to ease our lives. But, some practices become so persistent to our societies for several generations that the culture becomes stereotypes.

In the movie *Silu*, during the rising action, the entire setting seems to stroke the painting of culturally gender- stereotyped community. The central female characters in the movies seem to be under gender- violence. Violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (Bhattacharya 142). To exemplify, Tuyumai is already in love with Hira, but her father prohibits meeting her with her beloved by confining her inside the house. This adds psychological suffering in Tuyumai with anxiety and sadness. In other words, patriarchal ideology is the major persistent force that has categorized females as the sub-ordinated group of population in the movie.

Patriarchy, in the most understandable sense, "is a form of society where men's need, concerns and interests are central... the authority of husband over wife and children is revered... they materially control women's bodies and lives ... male political leaders are to be unquestionably obeyed" (Ruby 38). In the movie, the women of the community are engaged in the household private chores such as going to temple, worshipping, offering the prayers and seeking blessing for the family members. People in the community accept stereotypical gender roles because 'from a very young age, boys and girls are encouraged to

take on different roles. Girls are typically taught to do housework, while boys are expected to be active outside the home. As adults, women often assume responsibility for looking after the home, while men are seen as the breadwinners' (Babugura 9). Accordingly, participation of females in the domestic chores are eminent in the movie when the members of the families such as daughters, mothers, aunts are shown to be engaged in the activities like fetching water from the taps, manually crushing roasted paddy for making beaten rice whereas, male members of the community are shown to be engaged in the public spheres taking initiation in relation-building, participating in dialogues, playing musical instrument in public places etc.. Public places such as *Phalcha* (a traditional resting place that serve as a venue for meetings and decision making), *Dabali* (an open public stage to perform plays, dances), jungle area are dedicated to males. Males are also displayed as the bread- earners such as the characters like Hira's (protagonist) maternal is a potter; he crafts clay pots and sells them for his economical sustenance. Moreover, Tuyumai's father along with other male members of her family are engaged in bundling the leafy vegetables, carry them in the traditional baskets (khamoo) to earn money. In the same way, Aasha Narayan (Hira's maternal uncle) is shown to consume alcohol time and again which is a traditional masculine image. Most importantly, decision making power is solely upon the hands of male. For example, when Hira and Tuyumai started liking each other, it is her father who insists not to accept the relationship of these two. Instead, he prohibits his daughter to come out of her room. Here, persuasion of Tuyumai's mother for her liberation remains vestigial. However, they remain fortunate enough that they get married with each other's consent. But even after their marriage the patriarchal dominion remains unchanged. One day Hira arrives home late. Tuyumati keeps waiting for him without having dinner. When he reaches home she evokes, "Why are you so late today? I have been waiting for you without having dinner?" (*Silu* 56:10). Generally, in a traditional Newar community, a wife does not have meals before her

husband. More importantly, Tuyumai is not allowed to set off for the Silu pilgrimage only because she is a 'woman'. In this way, patriarchal assumptions which subordinate women can be traced in the movie *Silu*.

Similarly, in the movie *Rajamati* as well patriarchal conventions have governed women's existence. A numerous scenes in the movie illustrate that females are underestimated for their stereotypical gender roles. For example, as Bhattacharya mentions, "The legitimacy given by society to the act of violence committed by males, results in an increasing number of attacks on women" (144), in one of the scenes of the movie, Sinaram dai's (Hari Bamsha's) daughter is abducted by the antagonist, Chikacha and his gang. Her condition there is miserable. She feels helpless and desperate. But at last, her father comes there to rescue her by handling a golden bangle to brutal Chikacha. Likewise, Rajamati's father (Tareman Guruju) is the main member who handles the financial issues in her family. He is a professional goldsmith. He models a variety of gold ornaments to serve his community people and earns his livelihood accordingly along with his veteran wife and daughter Rajamati. In the meantime, he is conspired for dealing with an issue of illegal jewelry which gets him imprisoned. The lack of Rajamati's father in her family makes the overall sustenance of her family degraded. Rajamati's mother gets ill, and ultimately she passes away. This depicts the crucial importance of a male member in a family without whom the entire family members get unsecured, which is a vital patriarchal ideology because patriarchy is 'a system of government in which men ruled societies through their positions as households' (Walby 214). Now poor Rajamati is suggested by her well-wishers, that too the male members of the society to run the business of alcoholic beverages for making her life financially stable. She rises out of all the storms, cyclones, tides and earthquakes of her life and determines to stand strong among all these adversities. She works very hard in her business, satisfies her customers and becomes an affluent restaurant owner.

She becomes more gracious and an admirable figure in her community. Wherever she travels, she travels in 'Damnani' (a kind of traditional means of transport in Newari community for one passenger, consisting of a large box carried on two horizontal poles by four or six bearers). However, as Silvia Walby notes that patriarchy is not the derivative of capitalism (214), even after becoming a figure of financially stable idol in her community, she is tried to be dominated by the authority to let her down. She is prohibited to move away from her neighborhood. If she had to cross her territory, she was obliged to pay tax for that. She is addressed with a written order document through a courtier which announces:

You, miss Rajamati of Tahanani! If you need to leave your locality, from now onwards you must seek permission of the court. Moreover you are not allowed to travel in 'Damnani'. If this restriction is overstepped, you are obliged to pay rupees five as a penalty. Did you hear? Let's see how you will travel in your 'damnani'!

(*Rajamati*, 1: 40: 30)

Rajamati, despite being a stereotypically feeble gender, has become independent and financially stable, but the male dominated society could not tolerate her progress. Thus, she is prohibited to exercise her freedom so as to limit her from progressing.

Apart from this, though culturally comprehensible, the showing of performativity acts such as 'lakhe' dance (paradoxically, 'lakhe' is a kind devil and the preserver of human kind) and 'dyo pyakhan' (different incarnations of gods) only by the male members of the society whereas females presented as *only* audience is a questionable culture. In fact, both the gods and devils are considered as the representation of power which is handed over in the hand of males, not females. This is one of another substantial area that indicates the tenacity of patriarchy in Newar community. Here, we can observe 'private patriarchy' (Walby 228) where women are excluded from the arenas of social life apart from the household.

In the third movie *Patachara*, not only patriarchy but social hierarchy regarding caste and class also seems to be the major reason behind the cause of miseries in protagonist's life. The protagonist Hisilani is possessed inside the periphery of her house only. She has all the materialistic happiness including expensive jewelry, dresses, nutritious meals etc. Moreover, two of her best friends Laxmi and Chyanti always come to visit her, play with her and amuse her according to her wish. However she is not let step outside world since her childhood. The main reason behind this prohibition to her is her father's fear of Hisilani's possible elopement when she gets in her youth. Since, Hisilani's father belongs to one of the elites in the community he has a great fear that his daughter would spoil his prestige if she elopes with any man. Hence, preventing her from confronting the outer world, Dandas (Hisilani's father) made the restriction which is his sole decision. Apart from this, there is a clear class conflict between the characters in the film such as, Dandas Sahu along with his wife and daughter is elite. They own a numerous servants who serve them. Since, Dandas Sahu belongs to the higher strata in the society, their lifestyle is of high standard- they dress well, wear gold ornaments, their accommodation is too comfortable, they are able to help needy people with loans. In contrast working class characters such as Sintali Kaaki, Manraja, Shyam, Taridai are the working class characters. Some among them are hired for gardening, some for harvesting, some for the reckoning of crops whereas some workers for taking special care of the merchant's daughter. Their appearance is too naive. They always bow down their heads while speaking to their owners. Hisilani is addressed by all the servants by a reverent word 'mayju'. The servants do not dare to take any step without asking for the permission from their owner till they are on their duty. For an example, Hisilani wanted to learn music from Manraja. So he went to tutor her but one of the senior-most servants Taridai inquired, "Go Maan, teach her, but be careful. After all, we are servants here. Did you ask Sahu baa?...It's better if you ask once" (*Patachara* 44:18). This indicates the class

consciousness in the characters such as Taridai and Manraja regarding their position as lower class in the society.

However, even inside this class stratification, there is the stint of gender biasness. In the lower class strata, a female servant such as Sintali Kaaki is meant to handle the taking care and other male servants are appointed for other physical works whereas, in the higher class strata, characters such as Hisilani and her mother are living their lives as instructed by her husband.

3.1 Tuyumai, Rajamati and Hisilani as Resisting Heroes in the Cinemas

In many of the cases women resist against these cases, but there are less places where their resistances are shown. According to Hollander, victimization towards women is shown but their attempts of resistance against the victimization is overlooked since feminine gender is assumed to be stereotypically weak (476). And as De Hereda views that the everyday framework of resistance does not offer a measuring tape to ascertain ambiguously which acts constitute resistance and which ones do not and it offers framework to understand patterns of action in a particular relationship" (52), a regular pattern of resistance, though some are explicit when some are implicit, is displayed by the female protagonists in the selected movies. The female protagonists in the movies are underprivileged for their equal gender accessibilities. Their potentialities, identities, freedom and desires are shadowed by the cultural stereotypes. Nevertheless, in these characters have tried overcoming such gender stereotypes to exercise their desirable freedom and establish their identity.

The hero is archetypal, a paradigm who bears the possibilities of life, courage, love- the common place, the indefinable which define our human lives (Fishwick 173). The female protagonist Tuyumai in the film *Silu* is thus a hero. Beauty and grace that she possesses are her precious ornaments. It is true that she is not physically brave to fight for herself against the wild creature such as bear in the story, but she is courageous enough to resist the major

events in her life that creates a pattern of resistance in the movie. In the movie, after Tuyumai and Hira started liking each other, her father stands as a barrier in their love and does not let her go out of her house. Tuyumai resists against this restriction and dares to signalize Hira to come and meet her in isolation. For this, she appears in the window, reflects the mirror to him, tears the back part of her 'cholo' (a Newari worn on the top part of ladies' body having laces to tie in four of the corners) and a friend of her pretends pulling her hair. This symbolically signalizes her beloved to come and meet her during night time from the back door of her house. The major attempt of resistance that Tuyumai shows in the movie is when she resists against the command of her husband not to follow him during the pilgrimage to 'Silu Tirtha'. Actually Hira dreads for the mythology that exists in Newar community which says that a husband and a wife going together in the pilgrimage are bound to get separated. Despite this fact, Tuyumai insists to come along with her husband. Her husband strictly prohibits her for the stay back at home. But, without his notice, she follows him. Hira once again chides her for following them secretly. Even his friends try to console her that the journey is more likely to be dangerous for she is a lady. So she pretends to go back home but in fact she still keeps following him.



Fig.4 :Tuyumai arguing with her husband and friends to let her come to the pilgrimage
(Source: Author's screenshot)

Finally, he could not resist her insistence and allow her to join her. They happily reach the destination, but as predicted, Tuyumai is kidnapped by a group of aboriginals. The leader of the aboriginals who already have more than two wives actually fell in love with Tuyumai, so his group kidnap and captive her. During her captivity she resists with the aboriginals as much as she can. She tries to escape from there a numerous times which shows her cognitive attempts of resistance and once she also bites one of the maids during her captivity which vividly shows her physical resistance.

While tracing female resistance in another movie *Rajamati*, the traces are even clearer. Rajamati, the protagonist of the movie stands as a resisting character right from the beginning of the movie. Her initial attempt of resistance is when she, being a daughter in Shakya family falls in love with a Gathu (one of the lower castes in Newari caste hierarchy, allotted for gardening works). Caste is the principal basis of social hierarchy among the Newars (Nepali 146). Among the six caste hierarchies in the Newar community, Guvaju (Shakya or Bajracharya) is considered in the top rank whereas Gathu or Mali is considered as lower caste (Nepali 50). By her caste recognition as a Shakya caste, she is not allowed to sell alcoholic beverages in the society but during the time of her economic downfall she does the business. Being a woman, she is under prejudice to remain silent and submissive but she fights back with the power block, pays her tax and gets her desired freedom. But her resistance towards every kind of dominion that challenges her free will is more distinct in the later part of the movie. To illustrate, Ratna, who immensely loves her, tries to approach her with his proposal by touching her hands, but outraged Rajamati upbraids Ratna for his intentions. Similarly, even until the end of the movie, Rajamati shows disapproval towards Ratna's proposal. Thus, the aforementioned are the remarkable actions of Rajamati with proper recognition, intention, target and opposition for resisting against socio-cultural stereotypes in her community.



Fig.5 : Ratna pleading Rajamati to accept his marriage proposal; Rajamati rejecting him
(Source: Author's screenshot)

She prefers staying alone for her entire lifetime even after the untimely death of her beloved. This strongly shows her power of resistance.

In the same way, resisting attempts of Hisilani in *Patachara* is also measurable. She is not allowed to step outside of the periphery of her house, but in the mean time she breaks the barrier and goes outside her house with her beloved. Her falling in love with the beloved is also rebellious. 'Caste' is the key to define social hierarchy, ritual role, marriage and kinship in Newar society (Shakya 39). However, despite comprising a huge discrepancy in her and her beloved's social and economic status, she falls in love with and becomes ready to flee with him. Again, when she becomes pregnant, she desires to visit her parents' home for her comfort, but her husband tells her not to go. The conversation between her husband and her follows:

Hisi: I am nine months pregnant. Should we go home to Shrawasti?

Maan: Hisi, of course you'll miss your parents. But, how can we forget what we did to them? How can we go back to them? Tell me... Let's no longer talk of returning to Shrawasti (*Patachara*, 53: 19).

Despite this disputable conversation, however Hisilani goes to her parents' home. She wants a safe delivery in her first pregnancy.



Fig.6 : Hisilani setting out for the journey to her parents' home during her pregnancy
(Source: Author's screenshot)

The final part of the movie shows that, after salvation she needs nothing. She rejects everything that life lures her.

While scrutinizing sequence of plots in all the selected movies, a numerous acts of the female protagonists appear to be in the visible pattern of rejections and protests. Most often they discard institutional bodies of a traditional society such as patriarchy, caste system, marriage, mythical beliefs and norms. On the basis of the reviews recognized by Hollander and Einwohner, resistance is either 'material or physical, involving the resisters' use of their bodies or other materials (535). In my primary texts, resisters- Tuyumai, Rajamati and Hisilani show their resistance mostly with the help of their bodies either by moving on the track they wanted or not moving on the track they do not wanted. And, as these scholars have also agreed, resistance is not a quality of an actor or a state of being, but involves some active behavior, whether verbal, cognitive or physical, in most of the attempts of the actors' verbal resistance is also seen. Thus two consensual elements- action and opposition are doubtlessly present in the movies.

Resistance is most frequently understood to be aimed at achieving some sort of change (Hollander and Einwohner, 536). All of the discussed resisters actually sought some

sort of change in them, mostly spiritual ones. Tuyumai from *Silu* going to Silu pilgrimage, Rajamati from *Rajamati* spending the rest of her life unmarried and Hisilani from *Patachara* abandoning her materialistic life are all the attempts of seeking change from their normal lives to spiritual salvation. According to the scholars, visibility is a necessary prerequisite for the recognition (540). Thus, the visible changes in the resisters in the movies help us recognize resistance in the movies.

Coming to the typology of resistance put forward by Hollander and Einwoner, the female resistance that is seen in the present movies most evidently fall under the category 'covert resistance'. This type of resistance is when acts are intentional 'yet go unnoticed by the targets, although they are recognized as resistance by other, culturally aware observers' (454). In the movies, there is obviously the intention behind the resistance of the female protagonists. Their intention is to act according to their will standing against the stereotypical cultural female roles. However, target seems to be uncertain because besides seeking their personal autonomy their resistance does not seem to be a clear and strict indication as a full protest against socio- cultural assumptions as a whole. Their resistance is merely intended to establish their identity as rightful individuals who can autonomously live along with the culture but according to their will. Their designation to reject cultural affairs does not mean that they wanted to stay isolated from their entire culture but just to deny such stereotypes which would restrict them from living their lives according to their wish.

Since the literary genre that I have selected is 'film' and the variables that I examine come under sociological themes, Hollander and Einwoner's theory of the concept of resistance is the best applicable for the substantiation of my argument that the female protagonists in the selected movies are the resisting heroes who resist against cultural stereotypes. This is an explicit resistance shown by the female protagonists in the movies.

However, there might be an implicit resistance in the state level if the contextual settings of the movies in the contemporary periods are analyzed.

3.2 Resistant Females and Newar Ethnic Consciousness in *Silu*, *Rajamati* and *Patachara*

'Identity' generally refers to one's individuality and the state of being. As humans, we can not generate our identity solely within ourselves. Our personality traits are imbedded in relation to groups, which is formally called 'society'. Among the defining features of one's identity, culture is one of the crucial dimensions. And, culture to be in its complete form, language is inevitable. Language and people has a deep relation because language carries history, culture, tradition, the very life of people, their flesh; we cannot conceive people without language and language without people (qtd. in Rovira 64). Among more than 6500 languages around the globe, Nepal Bhasa is an aboriginal language which is spoken by Newar community in Nepal. "The present-day Kathmandu valley which was once known as Nepal itself, was the place where Nepalbhasa, that is, the Newari language, originated ... but Newari, once the state language of Nepal had been suppressed since Rana reign (1847-1951)" (Shrestha and Hoek 73). Clearly, the ethno-cultural identity of Newars was under threat during contemporary time.

In fact, as soon as Gorkha's king Prithvi Narayan Shah's unified Nepal declaring Kathmandu as the capital city of the country, the identity of native inhabitants of the valley- Newars started fading away. To certain extent the Gorkha rulers continued to support the culture and traditions of Newars, but under the hands of new rulers Newar language and culture had to suffer in a great deal (Shrestha 85,86). Despite being the root culture of the valley, Nepal Bhasa was totally banned for official, business and literary purposes. The suppression of Nepalbhasa and Newar intellectuals intensified during the reign of Chandra Shumser (1901-1928) banning Newar language from court of justice and administration in

1906 (Shrestha 87). However the period from 1909-1941 proved as the Renaissance era in Nepal Bhasa literature with brave writers Nisthananda Bajracharya, Siddhidas Mahaju, Jagat Sundar Malla and Yogbir Singh Kansakar (four pillars in Nepal Bhasa) writing, translating, educating and reconstructing Nepal Bhasa to help Newar identity from getting extinct.

In February 1951, autocratic Rana regime was overthrown and a multi-party democracy was introduced, but this could not help Nepal Bhasa gain its status. A language which was a center of power, a cultural center and served as lingua franca (90) did not receive any recognition from the state. In 1961, king Mahendra brought end to the multi-party democracy introducing party-less Panchayat system. With his strong imposition of "one nation, one language, one religion", Nepalbhasa again suffered a great setback.



Fig. 7: Protests held at Kathmandu Durbar Square after the Supreme Court's verdict against Nepal Bhasa in June 1999

Considering all these cultural suppressions in Newar communities, to maintain their identity status, many literary activities spread in late 1960s and 1970s motivating many youngsters to work for the promotion of Nepal Bhasa. After the fall of Ranas, state-owned Radio Nepal began broadcasting the news in Nepal Bhasa once in a day, but again in 1965 the language was banned from being broadcast in Radio Nepal. This sparked protest among Newars and for this, the Buddhist monk Sudarshan Mahasthavir was jailed for six months (Shrestha 12). However, soon after the restoration of multi-party democracy in Nepal in 1993, voices of minorities were heard including Newars. Consequently, a forum called Nepal Janajati Mahasangha was established in 1990. The federation came out boldly in favor of minorities (94). On 24 July 1997 the board of Kathmandu municipality declared Nepal Bhasa as a language of municipality along with Nepali. In order to enhance Newar nationality and language, Nepal Bhasa Parishad held a two-day conference in February 1991 to discuss government statistics on Newars. Similarly, Newar intellectuals founded their own academy, The Nepalbhasa Academy in 1992. Again in September 1995 Newa Dey Dabu, a politically neutral national forum of Newars, was established. As Gellner pin points, "states and resistance go together. Wherever there has been some state organization, there has also been resistance to it" (3), in the process of state formation in the history of Nepal, there has always been various forms of resistance from Newars, showing the intense form of resistance during 1990s. Not only this, but after 2006 People's Democracy Movement, in December 16, 2009, the capital was declared a Newa autonomous state. This is again another attempt of resistance of Newars against the state power.

In a nutshell, there have been conflicts between Newars and state government since Rana regime until the declaration of Nepal as a Federal Democratic Republic State of Nepal in 2008 and more specifically the declaration of Newa Autonomous State for Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur collectively in 2009. Newars' histories of revolution demonstrate that

they have always valued their identity and have always rebelled to establish their cultural existence. Most of the resistances are overt where there is a clear agent, target and audience, whereas some resistance is hidden. However both the kinds are intended to bring change in the society and in both the kinds of resistance women's participation does not seem to be reluctant. Thus, I argue that the female resistance seen in the movies made during 1990s (*Silu* and *Rajamati*) and 2010 (*Patachara*) have a lot to do with the establishment of one's identity depicting language, culture, traditions, lifestyles, myths, folklores and more importantly the potentiality of females in the state level. Highlighting the contribution of women during the significant revolutions in Nepal, Bal Gopal Shrestha explores:

When we talk about Newar national movement it is necessary to take into account the position of women in Newar society. Newar women are considered one of the most educated and most forward groups in Nepal. However, the conservative Newar society does not permit them to participate in social activities. The place of women in Newar society is being extremely subordinated to men.... Whether the Newar nationalists will succeed in receiving active support from Newar women or not is an important question because without an active support from women their movement may hardly achieve a success. (104)

Shrestha argues to verify that, even if Newari women hold an inferior rank on the basis of their stereotypical gender roles in the society, they do have an incredible importance in establishing the identity and culture in the canonical sphere of the state.

In this contextual background, the resistance shown through the Nepal Bhasa movies becomes most appropriately 'missed resistance' (Hollander and Einhowner 554). The fine cultural illustration is a method of documenting Newar aestheticism and richness and the ways female protagonists are portrayed confidently demonstrate how the women in Newar communities are courageous and brave but still maintain their decorum. Here, the Newar

people are the actors having a solid intention of recognition of their cultural identity. The target for these resisters is the government power and the state. But the perceptive observers are lacking here; they might just view these movies as the execution of their cultural aestheticism, but might not perceive this attempt as a resistance.

Conclusion

From Women in Resistance to Cultural Identity

In essence, when I watched three of the most popular Nepal Bhasa movies *Rajamati*, *Silu* and *Patachara* the final scenes of all the movies provoked me the most. Female protagonists Rajamati, Tuyumai and Hisilani chose their autonomous decisions to live their lives in opposition to the social restrictions that the society generally impose upon females. Moreover, the titles in all the selected movies designate the female characters in the movies. This also drew me forth to investigate on the obvious issues of women in the movies. Thus, I initiated my dissertation with an assumption that the decisions the female protagonists take are their atypical efforts that leads them away from the established socio-cultural expectations in a typical Newar community.

Accordingly, I have attempted to analyze three of the Newari visual texts in my research paper through the perspective of resistance. As Femi Okiremuette Shaka and Ola Nnennaya Uchendu appreciate films as "a very powerful medium for the dissemination of information and the engendering of the particular ideology in the psyche of people" (2012), I too comprehend that it can either enslave or liberate the way of thinking of people and help in the emergence of strategies in foregrounding social realities accordingly. In this reference, while analysing the female characters in the movies, on the surface, I found that almost all other female characters but the protagonists are naïve. Throughout women's lives, the self is defined through social relationships; issues of fusion and merger of the self with others are significant, and ego and body boundaries remain flexible (Gardiner 352). This is the reality

in general. They accept the cultural practices as if in a form of hegemony but the protagonists in the movies are the resisters. The pattern of their living in which the female protagonists exist in the respective movies embody macroscopic and fundamental to even the subtle elements of resistance. Whenever they perceive a sense of devalue in their personal dignity, the female bodies have resisted either physically, intellectually or through other symbolic behaviors against their domination that have arisen due to stereotypical cultural attitudes. They have displayed such resistances predominantly for the sake of their self-formation, autonomy and spiritual salvation. In fact, a handful of research works have already been done regarding *Silu*, *Rajamati* and *Patachara*. Most of the analyses till date have scrutinized the movies either through the domain of cultural performances or religious affinity. But, to affirm about the persistence of female resistance and examine its various forms and manifestations in the selected movies have remained the primary goal of my research. In the cultural context, it is unavoidable that females are the subordinated gender and their identities are generally shaped by their counterparts since history. However, to act autonomously in opposition to the established gender stereotypes is a significant mode of resistance to establish one's identity and bring change in a larger cultural sphere. Here, when I refer larger sphere, I mean contribution of these iconic movies in the re-establishment and sharpening of Nepal Bhasa and Newar identity. All in all, the resistance shown by the female protagonists in the movies not only indicate their denial towards cultural stereotypes but also help in define Newar identity and existence in depth. And, to argue upon the fact I sought the basic theoretical framework of the concept of resistance.

Moreover, I expect this research to be one of the attempts to help recognize language and cultural dimensions of Newari communities. Many of the indigenous language have turned into minority language in the course of time. Nepal Bhasa, the language used by the Newars, was once a state language, but now it is at the verge of extinction (Maharjan

3). Obviously, Nepalbhasa- the language carrying one of the richest vocabularies and Newar- the ethnicity carrying one of the most beautiful and unique cultures of Nepal genuinely deserve a recognition and preservation. Most importantly, the seriousness that I assimilated throughout the course of my research is that despite being one of the unique identities of Nepal, many of the intangible representations in Newar culture has remained unrecognised: lack of indepth study upon popular culture such as Nepal Bhasa cinemas is one of the reasons for these understudied entities. Only a handful of scholars have merely reviewed on the visual texts (indicating cinemas). However, as Louise Lampher points out, only superficial discussions in films would result in narrowly conceived and inappropriate discussion because audiovisual reviews emphasizes the use of films in teaching whereas the presentation of topical and controversial material generate interest and discussion (192). My apprehensions towards three popular movies in Nepal Bhasa demonstrate that there exists a clear diffiency of Nepal Bhasa movies which would cover a variety of cultural contexts among Newars. It still left muchto be done. Particularizing cinema, we require cinemas that provide a point of view and that translate some of the insights of recent literature not only on women's role and status but also on contemporary issues into visual perspective. And I finally believe, the insights rendered through this research would be aspirations for the prospective researchers, especially in the field of Newar ethnicity and language.

Works Cited

- Adhikari, Nirmla. *Portryal of Women in Nepali Movies- An Analysis of Three Popular Nepali Movies*. Master's Thesis, University of Oslo, Autumn 2018, DUO (uio.no).
- Aryal, Sudarshan. "The Good Old Days of Cinema Halls in Nepal: Walking Down Memory Lane." *Online Khabar*, 15 April, 2022, english.onlinekhabar.com/cinema-hall-history-nepal.html.
- Aryal, Timothy. "The Nepali Film Industry Has Lights, Camera, Action but No Substance." *The Kathmandu Post*, February 7, 2020.
- Attygale, Randima. "The Life of a Forgotten Buddhist Heroine Unfolds." *The Sunday Times*, April 29, 2018.
- Avent of Sanghamitta Theri and Our Pioneer Bhikkunis." *The Sunday Times*, 15 Dec. 2013, www.sundaytimes.lk/131215/plus/advent-of-sanghamitta-theri-and-our-pioneering-bhikkunis-76488.html.
- Babugura, Agnes. "Gender Equality: A Cornerstone for Green Economy." *SouthAfrican Institute for International Affairs*, 2017.
- Balsamo, Anne. "Feminism and Cultural Studies." *The Journal of Midwest Modern Language Association*, vol. 24, no.1, Spring 1991, pp. 50- 73.
- Bhattacharya, Shanchita. "Violence on Women." *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, vol.24, no. 2, Summer 2020, pp. 142- 158.
- Brown, Gene. "Difference between Film and Movie." *Difference Between Similar Terms and Objects*, 6 Jan. 2020.
- Chayachabi. "Newari Movie *Silu*." *You Tube*, 25 Dec. 2020
www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBPVnYvjHxc.

- De Hereda, Marta Iniguez. "Patterns and Practices of Everyday Resistance: a View from Below." *Everyday Resistance, Peace Building and Statemaking: Insights from 'Africa's World War'*, 2017, pp. 50- 74.
- Dhungana, Smriti. "Year 2073: Year of Large Collection in Nepali Movie." *My Republica*, 15 April, 2017.
- Duncombe, Stephen. "Cultural Resistance to Community Development." *Community Development Journal*, vol. 42, no.4, pp. 490-500.
- Fishwick, Marshall. "Heroes." *Seven Pillars of Popular Culture*. Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 1985.
- Gardiner, Judith Kegan. "On Female Identity and Writing by Women." *The University of Chigo Press*, Winter 1981, vol.8, no. 2, pp. 347- 361.
- Gautam, Usha Wagle. "Up Close with Nepal's Legendary Comedy Duo." *Gulf Times*, 2 Oct. 2015, www.gulf-times.com/story/457442/Up-close-with-Nepal-s-legendary-comedy-duo.
- Geertz, Clifford. "Thick Description Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." *The Interpretation of Culture*, Basic Books Inc., 1973.
- Gusfield, Joseph R. "Cultture." SAGE, vol. 5, no. 1, winter 2006, pp. 43-44.
- Hall, Stuart. "The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis of Humanities." *The Humanities as Social Technology*, vol. 53, summer, 1990, pp. 11-23.
- ... "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation." *The Journal of Cinema and Media*, no. 36, 1989, pp. 68-81.
- Harrison, Rachel. "Introduction: Cinema as an Emerging Field in South East Asian Studies." *South East Asia Research*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 113-146.
- Heathfield, Susan M. "What Is Resistance to Change?" *The Balance Careers*, uploaded on 01 March, 2021.

- Hoek, Bert van den, and Bal Gopal Shrestha. "Education in the Mother Tongue." *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 22, no. 1, Jan. 1995, pp. 73-86.
- Hollander Jocelyn A., and Rachel L. Einwohner. "Conceptualizing Resistance." *Sociological Forum*, vol. 19, no.4, Dec. 2004.
- Hollander, Jocelyn A. "Resisting Vulnerability: The Social Reconstruction of Gender in Interaction." *Social Problems*, vo. 49, no.4, Nov. 2002, pp. 474-496.
- Hughes, Sarah. "On Resistance in Human Geography." *SAGE*, 2019.
- Indigenous Films Continue to Struggle for Screentime." *The Kathmandu Post*, 5 July, 2017, kathmandupost.com/art-entertainment/2017/07/05/indigenous-films-continue-to-struggle-for-screentime.
- Keesing, Roger M. "Theories of Culture." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 3, 1974, pp. 73-97.
- Khadgi, Ankit. "Going Back to Roots: Some Nepal's Best Indigenous Films." *The Kathmandu Post*, 19 May, 2020.
- Khadgi, Ram Krishna. Dir. *Patachara* perf. Melina Manandhar, Karma Shakya. Nepal Filmcraft, 2009.
- Kharel, P. "Screen Space of Nepali Cinema." *The Rising Nepal*, 20 Feb. 2020.
- Kuisel, Richard. "Modernization and Identity." *French Politics and Society*, vol. 14, no. 1, winter 1996, pp. 45- 50.
- LaCapra, Dominik. "Culture and Ideology: From Geertz to Marx." *Poetics Today*, 1998, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 377- 394.
- Lamphere, Louise. "Women in Film: An Introduction." *American Anthropologist*, vol. 79, no. 1, 1977, pp. 192–93. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/673997>. Accessed 17 May 2023.

- Lee, Kevin. "A Slanted Canon." *Asian American Film Commentary*, archived on 18 Feb. 2012.
- Lienhard, Siegfried. *Songs of Nepal: An Anthology of Nevar Folksongs and Hymns*, University of Hawaii Press, 1984.
- Macdonald, Scott. "Film and Literature." *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. 39, no. 3, summer, 1957, pp. 56-66.
- Maharjan, Ganga. "The Dancing Body in *Silu* and *Rajamati*: The Newari Culture on Screen." Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur Kathmandu, 2018.
- Maharjan, Resha. "The Journey of Nepal Bhasa; From Decline to Revitalization." Dissertation, The Arctic University of Norway, May 2018.
- Masse, Kaspar. "Popular Culture, 'Resistance,' 'Cultural Radicalism,' and 'Self-Formation'." *Resistance; Subjects, Representations, Contexts*, edited by Martin Butler, Paul Mecheril, Lea Brenning meyer, Transcript Verlag, 2017, pp. 45-70.
- Moini, Sifwat. "Changing Portrayal of Wives in Hindi Cinema: Case Study of Three Hindi Films." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 72, 2011, pp. 1453-59. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44145756>. Accessed 17 May 2023.
- Moll, Luis C. "Rethinking Resistance." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 126-131.
- Murcott, Susan. "Patachara and Her Disciples." *First Buddhist Women Poems and Stories of Awakening*, Parallax Press, 2006.
- "Nepal Profile." *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, <https://mofa.gov.np/about-nepal/nepal-profile/>.
- Nepal, Anand. "RIP Pradeep Rimal, Silu Director Dies at 78." *X Nepali*, 8 Feb. 2015, xnepali.net/rip-pradeep-rimal-silu-director-dies-at-77/.
- Nepali, Gopal Singh. *The Newars: An Ethno-Sociological Study of a Himalayan Community*. Bombay: United Asia Publications, 1965.
- Pappas, Stephanie. "What is Culture?" *Live Science*, Dec. 15, 2021.

- Paul, Fiann. "How Do We Understand Indigenous People?" *Explorers Web*, 9 Dec. 2021, explorersweb.com/great-movies-about-indigenous-peoples/.
- Pessoa, Jose and Lydia Deloumeaux. *UNESCO Framework for Cultural Studies*, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009.
- Pradhan.Bina."The Newar Women of Bulu." *The Status of Women in Nepal*, vol.2, part 6, 1981.
- Putra, Inyoman Darma. "The Female Identity: From Repression to Resistance." *A Literary Mirror*, Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctt1w8h3kd.10>
- Rimal, Pradeep, dir. *Silu* perf. Jay Shrestha and Naveena Shrestha. Nepal: Filmcraft, 1985
- Rossel, Deac. "A Chronology of Cinema, 1889-1896." *Film History*, vol.7, no.2, Summer, 1995, pp. 115-236.
- Ruby, Jennie. "Resistances to Patriarchy." *Off Our Books*, vol. 33, no. ¾, March- April 2003, pp. 38- 40.
- Self, Robert T. "Film and Literature: Parameters of a Discipline." *Literature/ Film Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1987, pp. 15-21.
- Severny, Andrei. "The Movie Theatre of the Future Will Be in Your Mind." 7 Sept. 2013.
- Shah, Neer.Dir. *Rajamati* perf.Hisila Maharjan, Shree Krishna Shrestha and Maniraj Lawat.Nepal: Filmcraft, 1955.
- Shaka, Femi Okiremuette and Uchendu, Ola Nnennaya. "Gender Representation in Nollywood Video Film Culture." *The Crab: Journal of Theatre and Media Arts* (Number 7/June 2012, 1-30).
- Shakya, Anil Man. "Newar Marriage and Kinship in Kathmandu, Nepal." Dissertation, Brunel University, Uxbridge, June 2000.
- Shrestha, Bal Gopal. "The Newars: The Indigenous Population of Kathmandu Valley in the Modern State of Nepal." *CNAS Journal*, vol. 26, no.1, Jan. 1999.

- Shrestha, Sangit. "Nepal Bhasa Movies Under Shadow." *My Republica*, 10 Dec. 2017, myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/mycity/news/nepal-bhasa-movies-under-shadow.
- Shrestha, Uma. "Nepal Bhasa- Nepali Diglossia: A Case Study of Udas Newars' Language." *A Journal of Newar Studies*, vol.1, no. 1, 1997.
- Small, Edward S. "Literary and Film Genre: Toward a Taxonomy of Film." *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol.7, no.4, 1979, pp. 290-299.
- Smrit, Shyam. "Incredible Contributions of Nepal Bhasa Actors in Nepali Films." 27 Oct. 2017, www.visionsansar.com/20571/news/entertainment-news/.
- Spivak, GC. "Can Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary N and Grossberg, Mackmillan, 1988, pp. 271- 313.
- Tamen, Miguel. "Interpretation and Resistance." *Common Knowledge*, Duke University Press, 2012.
- Thapa Magar, Shyamu. *Ethnic Politics in Nepal*, National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities, 2015.
- Tuladhar, Bijay Ratna. "Silu as the First movie in Indigenous Language in Nepal." *Lens Nepal*, 26 Shrawan, 2077. www.lensnepal.com/movie/silu/news/nepal-bhasa-movie.html.
- Tuladhar, Prem Shanti. *Nepal Bhasa Sahitya Itihas: History of Nepalbhasa Literature*. Nepal Bhasa Academy, 2000.
- Tumbahang, Govinda Bahadur. "Marginalization of Indigenous Languages of Nepal." *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 37, no.1, Jan. 2010, pp. 69-93.
- Visualizing the Data: Women's Representation in Society." *UN Women*, 25 Feb. 2020, www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2020/2/infographic-visualizing-the-data-womens-representation.
- Walby, Sylvia. "Theorising Patriarchy." *Sociology*, May 1989, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 213-234.

West, Harry G., and Celia Plender. "An Interview with James Scott." *Gastronomica*, vol. 15, no. 3, Fall, 2015, pp. 1-8.

Widdess, Richard. *Dapha; Sacred Singing in South Asian City: Music, Performance and Meaning in Bhaktapur, Nepal*. SOAS, University of London, 2013.