

## Stereotypical Representaion of Women in Deepa Shree Niraula's *Chhakka Panja*

### *Abstract*

*The objective of this paper is to investigate how female characters are subordinated in Chhakka Panja through different stereotypes, constructed images, and camera movements. Even after the different sorts of feminist movements and emergence of female filmmakers and directors in Nepali film industry, female subordinate in movies has not been stopped that motivates the researcher to make an extensive reading of Chhakka Panja. To accomplish the task, as a methodology, the researcher has used Anneke Smelik's concept of Feminist Film Theory from And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory. In her theory, Smelik argues that women are subordinated in cinema through different stereotypes and constructed images. In patriarchal society, cinema never presents real women. By making a study of Chhakka Panja, the researcher finds that cinema has been developed as a new place to dominate females. The cinema does not present real women rather it presents them with different stereotypes and constructed images to subordinate them where the director of the movie Deepa Shree Niraula serves as an agent of patriarchy system. In the cinema, female characters are treated as objects of desire to feed the carnal appetite of males because our society considers males as power holders and owners of resources where females are considered as tools to fulfill males' needs. Hence, Chhakka Panja, a cultural production of Nepali society projects the problematic representation of female characters through different stereotypes, constructed images and camera movements.*

**Keywords:** Camera movements, constructed images, stereotypes, subordination

This research paper aims to examine the problematic representation of female characters in *Chhakka Panja* on the basis of Smelik's concept of Feminist Film

Theory from *And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory*. After the Maoist Insurgence and Civil Rights Movement in Nepal, the level of consciousness of people was uplifted and women also did not remain as they used to be. Women also started to take participation in different walks of life. Women's involvements in mainstream politics and different high level jobs in the leading positions get started. These days, women are also capable of selling their merits, however, female domination has not been stopped. The sight to look at women has not been changed. The parochial patriarchy mindset does not celebrate the transformation of females in our society rather they want to rule and subordinate them because our society has considered males as power holders and owners of resources. Still, women are perceived as objects of desire to males who are supposed to fulfill males' necessities. Our society lacks female agency to advocate the interests of women. Those women who are in power also serve as agents of patriarchal system. Due to the change, numerous female filmmakers and directors were emerged in Nepali film industry, however, none of them became the agency to females rather they served as agents of the patriarchal norms and values. Still, such practices are found in Nepali movies. Not only that, even technology is also used to subordinate females in cinemas. These days, female characters are subordinated in films through different cinematic techniques and camera movements. Keeping this thing in mind, through the analysis of *Chhakka Panja*, this paper illustrates the condition of women who are subordinated through different stereotypes, constructed images and camera movements.

This research paper explores how *Chhakka Panja* has subordinated female characters with different stereotypes and constructed images to subordinate them and belittle their significance in the cinema. Furthermore, this paper projects the smashed subjectivity of women in the film industry where Deepa Shree Niraula seems an agent

of patriarchy system. Similarly, analyzing how women are presented as an object of desire to feed males' carnal appetite is another objective of this paper. This paper also examines that how camera movement and its technology have been used to portray females as vulnerable subjects in the cinema. This research is based on feminist film theory that studies how women are misrepresented in cinema. In order to justify the claims, the researcher has used Smelik's concept from *And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory*. In her theory, Smelik argues that cinema presents female characters with different stereotypes and constructed images to subordinate them. She adds, real women are always absent in cinema. Smelik outlines, films ". . . do not show 'real' women but only stereotypical images" (8). She notes, ". . . film (re)presents the constructed images of women" (9) and subordinate them. Furthermore, Smelik argues that filmmakers do not assign subject position to female characters. They are always underestimated and given roles in relation to their male counterparts. Smelik outlines, ". . . the position of the female subject is an impossible one" (16). They are always judged and valued on the basis of their relation to their male counterparts.

The researcher believes that this paper will be helpful to understand how women are presented and stereotyped in cinema. This paper tells that no matter how advance our society is, the exploitation of women has not been stopped. Women have been dehumanized in our society in different forms where cinema is one of the examples. After reading this paper, the audience will be able to identify that how women are misrepresented in cinema and how technology and cinematography are used as a supportive element. As a result, the readers of this paper will be aware regarding the problematic representation of female characters in cinema and they will not be misguided.

The movie starts in a village which can be taken as the representative village of Nepal. The entire story of the movie revolves around the life of four friends: Raja, Magne, Saraswoti, and Buddhi. Primarily, the movie pictures women as weak, docile, finicky, object of desire and erotic being. The movie has subordinated female characters in cinema using different sorts of stereotypes. Women are presented as an object of desire to their male counterparts in the cinema. The movie explicitly exhibits that no matter how modern we are, the sight to look women at in our society is still biased.

The real story of the movie begins when Atit leaves for the United States promising his newly married wife, Brinda, that he will get back soon to take her together. After Atit's departure to America, Raja and Brinda secretly maintain extra marital affairs. Brinda becomes Raja's object of desire. In the movie, Raja functions as a leader of his team where Magne, Saraswoti and Buddhi are three active members. Raja does not let his team members work and get married. He wants to be surrounded by his team members all day. But, Buddhi, only married member of the team, is tortured by his wife for not earning and wandering all day without any purpose. To get rid of from this torture, Buddhi is advised to beat his wife, Devi. According to the plan, after having alcohol, Buddhi badly beats his wife. As a result, Devi leaves for her brother's house. But after some days, Buddhi manages to bring back his wife.

Magne belongs to a two-membered poor family. He lives with his mother in a small hut. Magne is compelled to look for job opportunities overseas due to his poor financial condition. Saraswoti is in love with Bishnu. When Bishnu's father denies to marry his daughter to him, he also goes for the foreign employment to prove himself. One day, due to the excessive pressure of his mother, Raja is compelled to get married to Champa. The very decision by Raja is not welcomed by his friends: Buddhi and

Saraswoti. But later on, they are convinced and take part in the marriage ceremony. After Raja's marriage, for few days there is a tussle between Raja and Champa but everything becomes normal as the time goes on. Slowly Raja also starts to love Champa. Raja, who used to keep extra marital affairs with newly married women whose husbands fly for the foreign employment, starts correcting his course of living. He stops keeping extra marital affairs with married women. Suddenly, the story enters into a serious mode when Champa elopes with someone else. Raja experiences many ups and downs in his life. Raja wanders here and there to find Champa. But, his efforts are in vain. When the story reaches to the climax, audience come to know that Champa's marriage to Raja was not the real one rather Champa has been used as a tool to take Atit's revenge over Raja. When Atit knew that Raja's child is growing up in his wife Brinda's womb, Atit wanted to give the same pain to Raja what he experienced.

In this revenge story, female characters are degraded and exploited badly. Time and again, they are projected as an object of desire to feed males' carnal appetite. The presentation of the female characters in the movie shows as if they are presented just for visual pleasure. They have been perceived negatively through different stereotypes and constructed images. The movie has not given respected and good roles to women rather they have been presented as a tool for revenge and portrayed as an object of desire.

In order to strengthen the idea, the researcher has gone through some reviews on this movie. In "Chhakka Panja: The Movie Review" by Bishnu Sharma, published on *Moviemandu*, the reviewer has analyzed the movie and marked it as 'big changes in screenplay of Nepali movie. In the review, Sharma points out:

We always attempts to taste male dominated narrative and consequently we produce analogous psychology. In storytelling, we can feel feminist thought in Chhakka Panja . . . . Main theme of story revolves around the real burden of outskirts such as (marriage relation, poverty and dream). It creates a high emotional transfer, while connecting the remittance with sorrow, happiness and demolish. If you came from village to town and want to go abroad then you will get attached with character's feeling. It represents truth and describes anthropology by directing how market and value of money guide relation.

(n.pag)

Here, in this review, Sharma just sees the strong part of female character like Champa, but he fails to study the cinematic techniques, different sort of stereotypes, and constructed images by which women are badly subordinated. In this review, Sharma congratulates the debutant director for a good screenplay and a movie with 'feminist thought'. The review shows that the reviewer fails to study the overall presentation of Champa in the movie. No doubt, Champa's presentation in the first half of the movie is remarkable. She presents herself as a bold and courageous female character who dares to challenge existing norms and values. But, as the story moves on and the secrecy of the movie is disclosed, the audiences come to know that Champa is a planted character. There is someone behind her courage and daring. In this review, Sharma has not been able to draw this face of the story where Champa has been used as a tool for Atit's revenge to Raja. Additionally, this review is also more focused on social phenomena of the story that the movie has focused on. The review has primarily talked on 'value of money'.

Likewise, in "Chhakka Panja: A Real Picture of Nepali Society" by Sabin Khanal published on *Frontier Fortnight English Newspaper*, the reviewer talks about

the excessive material obsession of the characters in the movie. This review only focuses on how the movie has pictured the materialistic attitude of characters. The review has overlooked the feminine issues in the movie. The review reads:

The movie has succeeded to show the present condition of your society where people are restlessly chasing money and material prosperity. The characters in the movie resemble us, because the way characters think and behave in the movie is not different than our way of living in the present time. People get respect according to their financial status and they are judged on the basis of what they eat and what they wear. The movie has beautifully portrayed the growing money minded attitude of our society. As the movie has based on our local context, while watching the cinema we can feel as if the movie is showing our own story. (12)

In this review, the reviewer has only picked the issue of materialism. According to this review, the movie promotes the consumer culture and materialism. It shows that almost all characters in the movie are wondering for money and monetary gains. There is a kind of race in the society to show the social position and status through material prosperity. The movie, for the reviewer, has beautifully pictured the tendency of our society where we people are judged on the basis of what we eat and what we wear. In this way, the reviewer has discussed the movie based on the idea of consumer culture and materialism. The reviewer just focuses on the material obsession of characters in the movie but fails to point out the women's subordination through cinematic techniques and constructed images. However, the issue of materialism is also worth raising, the issue of female subordination should not be overlooked.

Similarly, the review "On the laughter ride with Chhakka Panja" run by *The*

*Himalayan Times* also has not been able to see the hidden issues of women in the movie. Like the reviews by Sharma and Khanal, it has too overlooked the issues of women. The review has not studied how women are exploited in the cinema. The review reads:

*Chhakka Panja* is a total comedy and social drama, a story of friendship, love and revenge. It is hilarious from start to finish. With comedy and satire on society, it 'is' funny and takes you to Raja's land. . . The first-half of the film moves with Giri and his friends' mischievous acts and social problems of society — leaving one's wife to work in a foreign country, unemployment, society's culture to show off, poverty, domestic violence and so on. In the middle of the second-half, the story takes a turn surprising the audience with its terrific ending. (n.pag)

This review has perceived the cinema as a comedy and social drama. It has just seen the issue of 'friendship', 'love' and 'revenge'. Similarly, the review has described the 'show off' culture of Nepali society, 'poverty' and 'domestic violence'. Through the study of 'domestic violence' the review has tried to describe the movie from the feminist perspective, however, it is not sufficient. This review fails to make a study on cinematography and its techniques which have been used to dominate female characters. The review is just focused on the social problems of our society.

In short, in the all aforementioned reviews on *Chhakka Panja*, the reviewers have not studied the issue of women thoroughly. They have just focused on social issues like 'poverty', 'show off culture', 'friendship', 'love', 'revenge', 'materialism', 'money guide relation' and so on. But, none of them has talked about how women are stereotyped and presented with constructed images. No reviews have talked about the role of cinematography which has been used to dominate and degrade female



characters in the cinema. In these reviews, the researcher does not find the discussion on how women are objectified and how they are presented for the visual pleasure and enjoyment of men. In this regard, the researcher believes that this research is worth doing because the researcher is working on an unheeded subject matter.

Due to the different sorts of feminist movements after the 1960s, the level of women consciousness went high. Then cinema became the new approach to subordinate women. Through cinema, men, especially those who are in power, started to produce and reproduce different sort of myths on sexual differences. In the response to this tendency, numerous feminist film theories were emerged and started to advocate for stopping misrepresentation of women in cinema. Feminist film theory criticizes the stereotypical representation of female characters and studies the position of women in the film industry.

In *And The Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory*, Smelik argues that cinema always produces false consciousness about women, however, the expectation of audience is to perceive cinema as the mirror of society. Instead of presenting female characters as they are, the filmmakers present female characters on the basis of their stored perception what they have been taught by the patriarchy society where they have grown up. Smelik notes:

Cinema is assumed to be reflecting reality . . . it produces false consciousness, that the films do not show 'real' women but only stereotypical images of an ideologically laden 'femininity'. This offers a female audience no opportunities for authentic recognition, but ample room for escape into fantasy via the identification with stereotypes. (8)

Due to the imaginary expression of female characters by their male counterparts, it is very difficult to get the authentic picture of females in the movie. The filmmakers,

either male or agents of male psyche, describe the female characters the way patriarchy society wants to see. In the cinema, only those women are presented with good qualities who obey the patriarchy ideology without questioning and those who try to go against and challenge the norms and values set by this ideology are dehumanized with different stereotypes.

More to add, Smelik argues that women in cinema are always presented in relation to their male counterparts. As the cinema is a byproduct of male dominated psyche, it tends to say that without the association of female characters with their male counterparts, they are nothing. The value and existence of female is only possible when they are connected with male characters. Once they disconnect themselves with their male counterparts, they are evaluated negatively. Smelik outlines, ". . . the sign 'women' represents the ideological meaning that she has for men; in relation to herself she means nothing; women as negatively presented as 'not-man'; the 'woman-as-woman' is absent from the text of the movie" (9). The very ideology of patriarchy believes that women are just the means that men can use for their comfort. It assumes that the creation of women are just for the service and sacrifice for their male counterparts. The ideology gives more value to those women who provide good service and sacrifice, and the judgment is also made on the basis of the level of their contribution that they have given for men. We can see the influence of this philosophy in movies because after all our society is the content provider for movies. Smelik claims that often cinema fails to portray women as women. Either women are presented in relation to their male counterparts or presented as a vulnerable one.

Likewise, cinema presents the constructed images of women. The filmmakers generalize all women of our society and put them all under the same category. Even

after the massive development of science and technology, the subordination of women has not been stopped, only the form has been changed. Unlike their expectation, their male counterparts use this technology as a tool to misrepresent them in cinema.

Smelik notes that ". . . film (re)presents the constructed images of women as natural, realistic and attractive. No wonder, then, that such images often turn into box office hits" (9). We can feel that these days cinema takes female characters in the movie just for the commercial interest. Filmmakers use constructed and manipulated images of female characters to hook the audiences to theatres. While preparing the cinema, the filmmakers just think about the box office collection and to heighten the collection they do what makes them success in their goal. While doing so, filmmakers usually portray women characters with negative images.

More to add, finding female characters in the subject position in cinema is hardly possible. Women are presented in cinema as if they are nothing in the absence of their male counterparts. Filmmakers do not show their trust in women and think that assigning role of a subject position to women is an unusual practice. Smelik argues that "the position of the female subject is an impossible one; 'women' find herself in a meaningless nowhere where women cannot represent themselves , caught between masculine representation and the specular image of femininity it produces" (16). Even coming to this modern time, filmmakers do not let women play the role in a subject position thinking that they cannot represent themselves in a proper way. Women are always underestimated in cinema. Filmmakers raise question over their ability without giving them an opportunity to prove themselves. Women are always limited in minor roles and compelled them to believe that they are meaningless. While talking about the female subjectivity in cinema, Smelik argues that even if the director is a female, she cannot land her subjectivity in cinema rather she serves as an agent of

patriarchy and advocates for the patriarchy system. Female filmmakers cannot sustain their ideas in the cinema as male filmmakers can do. Male directors seem more authoritative than female directors. When a male serves as a director in cinema, he can focus on his ideas and give new insights freely, but in case of female director we cannot get such practices. Yet, having said that, we cannot overlook the nature of the production of cinema where number of crews work at a time. Unlike other creative works, cinema is an outcome of collective effort where ideas of all crews should be entertained. However, we can feel the difference between male and female directors in terms of claiming of their subjectivity in cinema. Female directors in cinema seem weaker than male directors.

In order to dominate female characters, *Chhakka Panja* uses different sorts of stereotypes throughout the cinema. Female stereotypes are used as a tool to belittle female characters in the movie. Through such stereotypical representation of female characters, audiences are compelled to develop negative mentality about women what Anneki Smelik calls "false consciousness" (08). Cinema does not let us understand the real-women "but only stereotypical images of an ideologically laden femininity" (08). This very idea by Smelik shows that real picture of women are not found in cinema. They are always misrepresented and dehumanized through different stereotypes. Filmmakers intentionally use different stereotypes to defame females and belittle their significance because our society gives more power to males. It follows patriarchal hierarchy where males are considered superior to females. And those who are in power and considered as superior beings want to subordinate marginalized people through different stereotypes. In *Cultural Representation and Signifying Practice*, Stuart Hall outlines, ". . . stereotyping tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power. Power is usually directed against the subordinate or excluded

group" (259). As Hall argues, there is unequal distribution of power in our society. In comparison to males, only few females exercise power in our country and ultimately they also start serving as an agent of patriarchal system. Our society recognizes males as power holders who also have control over all sorts of resources. So, these power holders subordinate females with different stereotypes.



Figure 1. Buddhi's friends congratulating him for beating his wife

(Source: Author's still shot; (00:35:02/ 02:16:04)

*Chhakka Panja* extensively pictures the stereotype that 'women can be laid down by beating'. The nature of stereotyping is to reduce and fix people with particular images. Hall argues, "Stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes differences" (258). Through this stereotype, the movie wants to reduce the female image that they can be controlled only by beating. The filmmaker tends to make this image natural and want to fix it to subordinate females. Raja, Saraswoti and Magne provoke their friend Buddhi to beat his wife, Devi. Devi does not like Buddhi's company where Raja is a person whom she hates most. It is Raja who does not let his friends work and get married. So that, Devi wants her husband to quit the company and get the job for the betterment of present and future. This very teaching

becomes a disturbing factor for the team to enjoy their carefree life. Hence, to settle the problem, Raja offers drink to boost up his courage and provokes him to beat Devi. As per the instruction, Buddhi beats his wife badly as a result she leaves for her brother's house. Buddhi receives huge congratulations with garlands for beating his wife. During the conversation Magne says, "Raja! give him an award for beating his wife" (00:35:08-12). Here, Raja and his team are the representative of our patriarchy society that wants to control wives by scolding and beating. If women try to cross the limit created by the patriarchy system, their male counterparts start beating them in order to pull them back in their previous limited position. Similar to the aforementioned incident, after getting married to Champa, Raja gives five thousand rupees to his neighbor to beat his wife so that seeing this incident his wife Champa will not dare to cross her limits. When a policeman forcefully asks Raja's neighbor to tell the reason behind beating his wife, he says, "forgive me sir, yesterday Raja offered me five thousand rupees to beat my wife so that Raja's wife will not dare to cross her limits" (01:19:35-43). From these two scenes of the movie, we can see that the movie valorizes the stereotype that if we want to control women they should be beaten. Those males who can control their wives by beating them consider as a brave person.

More to add, *Chhakka Panja* compels its audience to perceive the idea that 'women should not be trusted easily'. This is another stereotype that the filmmaker uses in order to develop false consciousness about women. To prove this stereotype, the movie creates numerous scenes. The movie begins with the narration, "after marriage, a man flies to a foreign land to bear his responsibility. He earns and sends huge amount of money to his wife from there. But, when he returns, he gets neither his money nor his dream" (00:02:32-45). The very narration tells that wives of foreign

employers do not only capture the money but also flee away with other person. The movie overlooks the sacrifices and contributions made by women. Women are blamed that they are the real reason of societal downfall. Likewise, the movie represents both Brinda and Champa as the cheaters who cheat their husbands. When Atit leaves for



Figure 2. Raja and Brinda maintaining extra marital affair

(Source: Author's still shot; (00:23:36/ 02:16:04)

the United States, Brinda, a newly married wife of Atit, keeps extra marital affair with Raja before Atit reaches the airport. Brinda says, "Raja! I do not want to go America, Please keep me with you" (00:36:22-29). The cinema pictures Brinda as a woman who cannot control her desire even for a day. She sleeps with Raja in the same day, Atit leaves for the United States. Similarly, Champa maintains a fake marital life just to solve her monetary crisis. Champa says, "I do have debt of 10 lakhs that I cannot pay through working" (02:06:55-07:03). Then, Atit offers Champa 10 lakhs to deceive Raja and marry him. She deceives her husband and marries to Atit just to come out of her crisis. She serves as a tool of Atit's revenge to Raja. From this story, the

filmmaker argues that if we do mistake by believing women, we have to be ready for a great loss.



Figure 3. Young male villagers are being made Devi's 'religious brother'

(Source: Author's still shot; (02:10:53/ 02:16:04)

Even at the last of the movie, it ends with again giving a wrong impression about women. Before flying for foreign employment, Buddhi collects adults of his village and make them all his wife's religious brothers. After doing that, he takes a long breath and says "listen! now ahead you all are siblings . . . after doing this, I do not think there will be any problems" (02:10:45-55). This very sentence by Buddhi explains more about women character. Through this 'brother making ceremony', the filmmaker is saying that women in our society cannot be easily trusted. Looking lightly, the scene seems very humorous but if we excavate the meaning going deep down, the single scene is enough to ruin women's image. It shows how women in our society are really perceived.

Needless to say, women are stereotyped as finicky in our society. Our patriarchy system assumes that women are fond of making baseless arguments. They do not think before they speak. *Chhakka Panja* fails to picture this stereotypical image



of women too. In the cinema, there is a funny scene where Magne asks his mother for meat while having lunch together. In response, Magne's mother suggests him to get married so that he will get an opportunity to eat meat at his in-laws house. But, Magne denies his mother's proposal saying that "in-laws house offers meat to me just a day in a year, but instead, their daughter will torture me rest of the 364 days" (00:17: 21-27). From this dialogue, the filmmaker tries to show that how irritating women are. It is assumed that women do not need any reasons to dispute with their husband. The movie tries to picture women as an owner of nasty attitudes who loves to make baseless arguments without any reasons.

The movie generalizes all women of our society and tagged them with 'the real cause of social problems'. Hence, female stereotypes have been used to dominate, and subordinate female characters in the cinema. These stereotypes help to develop 'false consciousness' about women.

*Chhakka Panja* supplies constructed images of women in numerous places. Women are not shown as they are in the movie. The 'real-women' are always absent in the movie where patriarchy norms and values are followed. As Smelik argues, "film (re)presents the constructed images of women" (09), we can see this practice in this movie. Cinema is supposed to represent our society and social phenomena as a mirror, however, in this movie, the filmmaker projects female characters with constructed images to defame females. In the cinema, Buddhi's wife Devi is presented more horrified than an ordinary woman in our society. In the few scenes of the first half, when she speaks, tiger's roaring is heard in the background. She is shown as a very rude and frightening figure to her husband and her husband's friends. In the movie, when she spots Buddhi along with other three friends, she badly scolds them. "Do not you people have any work to do? You people just wander here and there all day,

rascals. (00:22:06-12). But, one day when Buddhi beats Devi, she leaves for her brother's house. A woman who is figured as a tigress becomes a cat in the very next scene. Devi's journey from a tigress to a cat does not take a long time to happen. That is why, the researcher can say that both image of 'tigress' and 'cat' are constructed. In the male dominated society, women are given such images as per the wish of their male counterparts. If they properly follow patriarchy norms and values they are awarded with good images but if they go against the system and try to challenge it, they are penalized with bad images.

Likewise, Saraswoti's beloved Bishnu is presented as an erotic woman. It is no doubt that every adult has sexual desire and they get attracted to opposite sex. But, here in the movie, the way Bishnu is presented is very unusual. Bishnu's salaciousness in the movie is very uncommon. Like in the figure 4, whenever she meets her beloved, Saraswoti, she starts to seduce him. By analyzing this exaggerated scene, the researcher can say that this is just the constructed image of women in the cinema to hook large number of audience for the box office purpose.



Figure 4. Bishnu seducing Saraswoti

(Source: Author's still shot; (00:26:37/ 02:17:04).

In our society there is a tendency of not believing women whatever position they hold. Because of this tendency, women cannot work freely as per their own wish, they are always interrupted by men in every stuffs. As argued by Smelik, ". . . in case of male directors all the emphasis is focused on the individual filmmakers, in case of women they all get lumped together" (37) . If there was a male director instead of Deepa Shree Niraula, he would definitely work the way he liked. But, here, Deepa Shree Niraula seems very weak because on the one hand, she has to listen other crews also while making the movie, as movie is the outcome of teamwork unlike other literary works, and on the other hand, she herself is the byproduct of the same society where patriarchy norms and values are followed without questioning. On this ground, we can say that a director who had been brought up with this philosophy always serves as an agent of patriarchy system no matter what gender the director belongs to.

In "the politics of conflict and difference or the difference of conflict in politics: the women's movement in Nepal", Seira Tamang argues that due to the lack of female agency, women in our society are always subordinated in different forms. In Nepal, after 1990, different sorts of feminist movements took place for women's empowerment and bringing them in mainstream positions. However, women in power could not serve as an agency to other marginalized women rather they served as an agent of patriarchy system. Quoting the lines of Dr. Meena Acharya in her essay, Tamang outlines "The women in various political parties are still guided first and foremostly by the party interest, rather than women's interest" (68). It shows that even women in top positions also do not advocate for women's interest rather they go on following the male dominated patriarchal psyche because they believe on the hierarchy where males are positioned on the top. Here in the movie too, Deepa Shree Niraula gives continuity to the already set trend that is fond of subordinating female

characters in the movie. However, she serves as the director, still there is the domination of patriarchy psyche in the movie. We see that Deepa Shree works as an agent of patriarchy system. In the movie, female characters like Champa, Brinda and Devi are exploited in numerous places however Deepa Shree Niraula remains silent. When a female serves as a director in cinema, it is not injustice to expect something revolutionary where women are supposed to be a bad morsel for their male counterparts. In contrary, like other movies by male directors, the condition of female characters in *Chhakka Panja* is pathetic. However, Champa seems a very bold and courageous character in the first half of the movie, we get shattered when we come to know that she was just a puppet of Atit, a male character.



Figure 5. Atit staring at Brinda and her friends' buttocks

(Source: Author's still shot; (00:04:38/ 02:17:04))

*Chhakka Panja* treats female characters just as objects. They are used to satisfy male characters within the story and male spectators in theaters. Women characters in *Chhakka Panja* are mainly presented for visual pleasure and erotic effects. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Laura Mulvey argues that women are typically given passive roles and presented them for visual pleasure in cinema through scopophilia, the obtaining of sexual pleasure by looking at nude bodies.

Mulvey adds, female characters' presence in cinema is just for sexual objectification. Women are "displayed for gaze and enjoyment for men" (21). She points that filmmakers have been using cinema as a place to feed males' carnal appetite. Unclothing female characters and showing their sexual body parts, cinema satisfies a primordial wish of men. In the movie, while crossing Brinda along with her other two friends, Atit observes them thoroughly which can be seen in figure 5 too. Meanwhile, Brinda whispers with her friends "look, this old man is staring at us" (00:04:33-36). This very scene explicitly shows that while crossing Brinda and her friends, Atit happens to look back and satisfy his carnal appetite staring at their buttocks. Here, Brinda and her friends are used to satisfy Atit's sexual desire through scopophilia.

In *Chhakka Panja*, the filmmaker converts women into an object of desire to males. Picturing females as an object of desire, the filmmaker limits the horizon of art and film in the female body. Mulvey notes that "women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (19). As Mulvey argues, the appearance of female characters in cinema is coded for strong visual and erotic impact. They are presented as an object to be looked. In the cinema, Sadhu's wife is shown just in two scenes. In the first scene, Sadhu and his wife are spotted while making love. When Sadhu's wife becomes the tool to feed carnal appetite of her husband, Sadhu declares that their all previous misunderstandings are settled down. Sadhu says, "She is my wife. Due to some misunderstandings I went for in search of peace. Now, our misunderstandings are settled down. She forgave and came here to meet me. I too forgave her just now" (00:56:21-40). And, in the next scene she is presented in a sexually appealing posture. From the both scenes, the audiences happen

to develop erotic impulses. In this regard, women are sexually objectified in cinema. They are considered as an object of desire to males.

Women's beautiful body is eroticized in cinema to hook male spectators. They are presented to feed carnal appetite of males and assist them in the cinema. As Laura Mulvey argues "men act and women appear"(10), this movie does not give good space and role to its female characters. In the first half of the movie, Champa is projected as a bold character. She challenges the patriarchy norms and values and presents herself as a strong female. While interrupting the slap of Raja to Buddhi's brother in law, Champa say, "What type of people are you? Do not you feel shame to beat one by four? You look like human but the only different between you people and monkey is a tail" (00:47:44-55). Such a bold character Champa becomes the puppet of a male character in the second half of the movie. At last, we come to know that Champa is used as a tool of Atit's revenge to Raja. Once again a female character is used to satisfy a male character. In this regard, the researcher argues that female characters are always used to satisfy their male characters. Sometimes, they are used to satisfy their carnal appetite and sometimes they are used to satisfy their ego. Champa's role in the first half of the movie is quite good. But, as the story moves on the reality comes on the ground. Champa, whom the audiences consider as an independent and courageous character turns into a planted one whose remote is operated by a male character. Also, in several places the cinema tries to exhibit her appealing figure. The movie has not left any chance to objectify her as a sexual object.

Through the use of different camera movements and its technology, female characters are subordinated in *Chhakka Panja*. Camera movements have been used as a tool in the cinema to belittle female characters. In *on Cinematography* Robert

Bresson outlines, "The field of cinematography is incommensurable. It gives you an unlimited power of creating" (29). It is cinematography that is used, on the one hand, to wow the audience and on the other hand to deliver the desired meaning without spending words. Cinematography, as a craft, combines lighting, sounds, camera movements and composition. Camera movements are taken as a new weapon to dehumanize female characters in the cinema. Camera positions and its angels play vital in the production of meanings. In *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, Timothy Corrigan argues "the camera frame controls what you see and how you see it . . . the angle at which it is placed or its distance from a person adds considerably to what the filmmaker is trying to say" (37). On this basis, we can say that for the production of meanings in cinema, camera movements are worth to be analyzed.



Figure 6. Brinda is captured through 'high angle shot'

(Source: Author's still shot; (01:01:39/ 02:17:04)

Now-a-days, there is a tendency of examining the mechanisms and devices of the movie for possible meanings of the cinema. "Feminist film theory shifted its focus from the critique of the ideological content of films to the analysis of the mechanisms and devices for the production of meaning in films" (Smelik, 9). As argued by Smelik, we can see the shift of trend which focuses more on the mechanisms and devices for

the production of meanings than ideological contents. Because cinema is a purely production of technology, it emphasizes more on its technical aspects and its making for the production of meanings. But the tragedy is filmmakers manipulate this mechanism and devices to subordinate female characters to belittle females' significance and defame them. To belittle female characters, *Chhakka Panja* uses 'high angle shots' while portraying them. It is 'high angle shot', also known as 'boom shot' that is used to show the subject vulnerable and weak where camera is positioned higher than subjects. In the figure 6, Brinda is captured through this shot while waiting Raja after knowing that Raja's child is growing in her womb. Through this shot, Brinda is presented as a helpless and alienated character. In this scene, Brinda could be presented through normal shots as well but the filmmaker intentionally uses this shot to puncture her existence.



Figure 7. Champa's 'head shot' through mirror

(Source: Author's still shot; (00:09:08/ 02:17:04))

More to add, filmmakers do not present female characters as they are found in the society rather through the use of technology in the movie females are presented as per the wish of filmmakers. Laura Mulvey argues that "the function of film is to



produce as accurately as possible the so-called natural conditions of human perception. Camera technology and camera movements combined with invisible editing, all tend to blur the limits of screen space" (20). On the basis of Mulvey's argument, we can say that filmmakers have found cinema as a new place to subordinate females. In the beginning, they use different camera angles and movements to defame female characters and again after the shooting they make unusual editing to blur the female identity and dignity. Our expectation to see the gender statues of our society never gets addressed because of the intervention of male psyche in the movie through technology. In the figure 7, to mark Champa's entry in the movie, the director of photography uses 'headshot' with deep focus where Champa's face is displayed via mirror. Through this creative and sensational entry of Champa, Raja, inside the story, and audiences, outside the screen, both become sexually attracted. From this shot, the intention of the director of photography is not to show the beautiful face of Champa rather he wants to present Champa's sexually appealing figure where her lips and cheeks are highlighted than other things. In this regard, females are always presented as an object of desire through the use of technology. They are never presented as who they are.



Figure 8. Champa dancing in a song

(Source: Author's still shot; (00:43:04/ 02:17:04))

Filmmakers are fond of playing with shots while making the cinema. Among the shots 'high angle shot' and 'low angle shot' are frequently used shots. In high angle shots, camera is positioned higher than the subjects to show the subjects vulnerable. But when filmmakers want to show their male characters they use low angle shots to make them powerful. "Low camera angles produce the objects that dominate the audience physically and psychologically" (Silverman 1460). Needless to say, low angle shots are used for males and high angle shots are used for females where patriarchy system is practiced. But the tragedy is, the same low angle shot which is used to show the male characters as a powerful being is chosen to show the female characters' sexual organs like breasts and buttocks. Along with 'low angle shots', 'focus', 'deep focus' and 'head shots' are also other basic shots which are often used for the fetishistic purpose while showing the female characters. In some places where 'close up' shots are enough to take, the director of photography knowingly uses 'extreme close up' shots and project the postures of female characters. Champa is in the focal point of the camera throughout the cinema. In figure 8, using the low angle close up shot, Champa's sexually appealing figure is pictured. Through this shot, she is presented as an object of desire to males. Her body posture is considered as a tool for the box office collection. Throughout the movie, while presenting Champa, the camera happens to slip to her sexual organs like breasts buttock, and naval. In this way, camera technology and camera movements are used to display female characters as an object of desire. Female characters are dehumanized in cinema through camera movements which are used as a tool by male dominated patriarchy system.

To recapitulate, after the in depth study of *Chhakka Panja*, the researcher concludes that the sight to look at women has not been improved rather cinema has been picked up as a new place to subordinate them. *Chhakka Panja* presents women

with different stereotypes and constructed images to degrade female characters and belittle their significance so that males' domination over females will last long. The filmmaker does not display female characters as they are, rather females like Devi and Brinda are misrepresented with manipulated images. In the cinema, women are given passive roles where they have to assist male characters. Furthermore, the film treats female characters as an object of desire. Female characters like Champa and Brinda are used for the pleasure and erotic impact where camera movements play a significant role to subordinate them. Through camera technology and its movements, women are eroticized and presented for the enjoyment of men. The movie uses female body as a tool for box office collection. Hence, the researcher claims that even coming to this modern time, the subordination of women has not been stopped rather a new place has been emerged in the form of cinema for the problematic representation of females. This analysis of *Chhakka Panja* proves that in cinema female characters are stereotyped and presented with constructed images where camera movements are used as a tool to defame them.

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