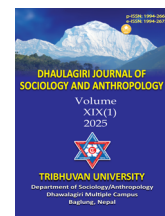


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Reinforcing Male Dominance and Power through Moving Canvas: A Content Analysis of Truck Literature

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Article Info

Received: April 3, 2025

Revised received: May 10, 2025

Accepted: June 5, 2025

Available online: June 30, 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v19i1.77288>

Abstract

Truck literature is calligraphy writing on the back, side, or front of trucks and public buses. They contain messages on social awareness, love, and political satire. While such inscriptions often serve to spread social awareness, many contain humorous, romantic, or gender-biased messages that implicitly reflect and reinforce the dominance of a single stratum of people, male. To understand how truck literature is reflecting and reinforcing masculinity and male dominance, 37 vehicles were selected on an opportunistic sampling basis. The truck literatures were collected at three different highway locations in Nepal. The collected truck literature were clustered into two themes: other (general truck literature such as awareness, love, and political satire-related messages) and gender biased messages. The study found that more than half of the sample vehicles had messages about the dominance of masculinity over femininity. These examples of truck literature often employ humor to normalize and perpetuate male dominance over women. Knowingly or unknowingly, the messages in those moving canvases were hilarious; notwithstanding, these works of literature are meant to reinforce traditional gender roles and sexuality and to stabilize the dominance of masculinity over femininity.

Keywords: gender roles, humor, male gaze, power, truck literature

Introduction

Truck literature refers to the linguistic expressions printed or painted on the bodies of public vehicles - most prominently on trucks and lorries that include poetic verses, serenades, *Muktaks*¹, *sayaries*² in printed or painted form (Baruwal, 2022). Although trucks bearing such printed poems and remarks serve as mobile billboards, disseminating humor, wisdom, or messages to a large audience, these messages frequently speak to common social experiences, such as inspirational sayings, religious lines, or proverbs. Written on various parts of a truck's body

in calligraphic form, these expressions are often meant for humor but also carry deeply philosophical messages about life, livelihood, and death (Kafle, 2021). On the other hand, these arts and statements displayed across trucks also create a sense of belonging and solidarity within the community of the profession.

Truck literature often reflects the cultural identities of drivers, painters, and their broader communities. In South Asia, trucks are decorated with elaborate patterns, religious images, and poetry. Truck art is not only a form of art but also a platform for depicting one's cultural heritage (Kazmi & Rahman, 2021). Additionally, trucks' artwork and inscriptions convey common cultural values and customs. For example, the vibrant colors and religious motifs reinforce communal identity while preserving

1. A short poem, usually a standalone stanza.

2. Poetry that expresses deep emotions like love and pain.



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traditional art forms amidst globalization (Geertz, 1973).

The literary and artistic customization of trucks contributes significantly to local economies, as skilled artisans and painters are employed to create these elaborate designs. Moreover, these vehicles function as mobile billboards, promoting products and services, thereby transforming graffiti into an instrument of economic utility (Khan, 2014). Drivers often use literature to express their individuality or personal philosophies, showcasing their unique worldview in a profession that can otherwise feel isolating.

Differential value of Inscription ‘Truck Literature’

The truck literature commonly features various slogans, proverbs, and political commentary. This truck literature provide critical insight into societal norms, values, lifestyles, and love life. With that sense, truck literature is a domain of expressing multiple thoughts and perspectives in society. Certain messages, for instance, question the gender roles or draw attention to sociopolitical concerns, transforming the medium into a forum for public discussion (Owen, 2012). In the context of globalization, truck literature fuses local traditions with broader cultural narratives. This dynamic reflects the drivers’ attempt to preserve their identity while navigating broader cultural shifts (González, 2016).

For many, truck literature generally serves as a mobile messaging tool, disseminating humor, moral teachings, and even political viewpoints to the broader population. Occasionally, truck literature serves as a subtle form of dissent, challenging prevailing social mores and power hierarchies. Truckers who come from underrepresented socioeconomic groups speak out against injustice and make their presence known. This aligns with the concept of ‘everyday resistance’ as defined by Scott (1985), which involves cultural behaviors incorporating subtle forms of dissent. Through succinct phrases and symbolic imagery, drivers articulate collective values and critique societal structures. For instance, messages like "Horn OK Please" in India or philosophical quotes in Pakistan often serve as a form of interaction with fellow road users (Ahmed, 2017).

Truck literature also serves as a medium for truck drivers to express their cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and individual identities. In South Asia, trucks are often adorned with religious imagery, regional symbols, or personal philosophies (Ali, 2015). These artistic expressions allow drivers to maintain a connection to their roots despite spending long periods on the road. Nevertheless, in most cases, truck literature highlights prevailing social values, such as gender norms or morality. The truck literature also sheds light on economic conditions. The quality and style of the artwork often indicate the owner's economic status, with wealthier owners opting for elaborate, expensive designs (Hussain & Khan, 2020). Truck literature often reflects the cultural, regional, and religious identity of

the truck owner or driver. For instance, quotes, symbols, or images might represent their community, beliefs, or hometown. Literature on trucks serves as a historical record of evolving artistic trends and societal concerns. Over time, the themes and styles change, capturing shifts in cultural norms and technological advancements (Sharma, 2018). Truck literature, therefore, serves as a rich, mobile canvas for cultural expression, societal critique, and personal storytelling, making it a valuable subject for sociological study.

Humor: A Tool for Fun or Dominance?

Humor is an essential aspect of human interaction, encompassing various functions such as fostering social bonds (Dunbar, 2017), alleviating stress (Martin, 2007), and serving as a subtle instrument of resistance against dominant power structures (Zijderveld, 1983). Humor can also be a tool to reinforce social hierarchy by subtly using it against those who are less powerful. In such, people use humor as a means to exert power over others by ridiculing those perceived as weaker. In superiority theory, laughter frequently arises from a feeling of dominance over the target of the joke and people often laugh at the ignorance or misfortune of others because they feel superior to them (Plato, 1997). Consequently, humor directed at socially marginalized groups often perpetuates inequality by portraying them as inferior or less competent (Billig, 2005).

Holmes & Marra (2002) argue that humor in male-dominated spaces tends to position women as passive or secondary figures, reinforcing patriarchal values. Kotthoff (2006) also writes that through humor, men reassert dominance while trivializing women’s emotions, a common pattern in male-centric subcultures. This pattern is observable across various cultural contexts, including Nepal, where a significant proportion of humor disproportionately targets women. This may be a manifestation of Nepali society’s strong patriarchal traditions that put males in positions of authority in their families and the public domain. In line to Kotthoff, Bennett (1983) also writes that humor, particularly jokes targeting women, serves as a means of legitimizing and perpetuating patriarchal power structures.

On the other hand, humor is also a tool of social control. Raheja & Gold (1994) argue that jokes are also a form of “soft power” employed to enforce gender norms and discourage women from challenging male authority. Women who step outside of conventional roles are mocked and joked to discourage them from challenging the status quo. This form of humor trivializes discrimination, perpetuating existing power structures. Similarly, different television shows and stand-up comedy also lubricate the male perception of women through jokes and mockery. The portrayal of women as objects of mockery further reinforces gender biases and gender discrimination. For

example, redheads are perceived as having fiery tempers, while blonde women are frequently stigmatized as being stupid or inept (Takeda et al., 2006). On the flip side, the rising participation and status of females in stand-up comedy (Cooper, 2018), is also a potential rhetorical weapon for political and cultural power against patriarchal society (Barreca, 1991; Case and Lippard, 2009; Gilbert, 2004). This study is centered to explore the pattern of truck literature and its relation with the patriarchal system and male dominance in the society.

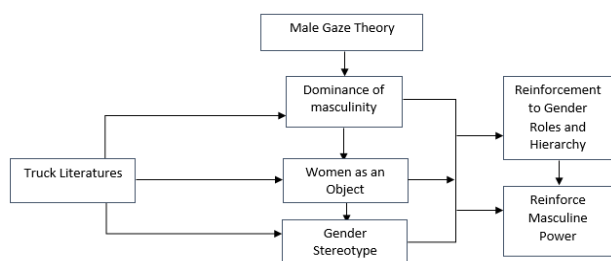
A Conceptual and Theoretical Approach

As per Walby (1990), patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. But Beechey (1979) notes that the definition of patriarchy varies across different feminist theories. As per her, patriarchy does not hold a singular or simple concept but is one that encompasses various forms of male domination and the power relationships by which men dominate women.

This conceptual framework explores how truck literature in Nepal reflects and reinforces patriarchal values through the lens of Male Gaze Theory, where women are objectified for male visual pleasure. Mulvey (1975) argues that women are depicted in visual arts and literature from a heterosexual male perspective, often reducing them to objects of male desire. In most societies, females are always objectified in terms of sex, uncomplaining workers, love, beauty, and the subject of infidelity. Such a patriarchal mindset not only objectifies females in particular roles and behaviors, but it also puts men in a specific role and responsibilities. Men often endure silent suffering due to societal expectation that demand emotional suppression and conformity to rigid masculine norms. For instance, hooks (2004) writes that patriarchy requires men to “engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill of the emotional parts of themselves” (p. 66).

Figure 1

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework of Truck Literature Stabilizing Masculine Power



Trucks and other public vehicles are evolving platforms where literature, poems, graffiti, and art are painted to showcase and objectify feminine characteristics and nature. Graffiti, art, and literature are painted in a

humorous way to lubricate gender stereotypical narratives. Nonetheless, such graffiti, art, and literature are meant to reinforce traditional gender roles and hierarchies, thereby reinforcing masculine dominance over women. The framework also highlights how truck literature contributes to the normalization of male dominance and the marginalization of female identities, thereby serving as a site where gender ideologies are reproduced and sustained. Truck literature is not merely artistic expression but a medium that perpetuates masculine dominance through the objectification of women and the reinforcement of gender stereotypes. Through such portrayals, traditional gender roles and hierarchies are upheld, ultimately reinforcing masculine power in both social and cultural spheres.

Methods

The truck literature (poems and messages) were collected from various locations in Kathmandu, the Prithivi highway, and the Araniko highway. A total of 37 truck literature were collected within three weeks of the period during the *Dashain-Tihar* festival of 2022 in Nepal. Thirteen vehicles were selected from the Kathmandu-Kalanki area, eleven from the Dhulikhel area (Araniko highway), and thirteen were selected in between Naubise and Mugling (Prithivi highway). These vehicles were selected using the opportunity sampling method, where the researcher selected these trucks based on the sample's (truck) availability during that time. After similar types of messages began to accumulate, the researcher considered it a data-saturated point and ceased gathering additional samples. The collected samples were categorized into two primary themes: (1) general messages, including expressions of parental love, political satire, and social awareness, and (2) gender-based discrimination messages, particularly those reflecting patriarchal ideologies that describe female characters, roles and responsibilities.

The study examined different trucking literature to identify the pattern of truck literature. The researcher analyzed the content of truck literature to identify recurring themes, patterns and values through content analysis methods. In this process, sample truck literature were coded and separated into general and gender-based discrimination themes. The truck literature were then analyzed to make meaning on prevalence of male dominance over female and the process of normalizing patriarchal dominance.

Results

A total of 37 samples were collected from 30 trucks and 7 buses. Out of 37 vehicles, six featured explicit political satire, four featured awareness-related literature, and six featured parental love and care. The remaining 21 vehicles were found with gender-based domination and discrimination messages.

While collecting truck literature, I wondered why more than half of the total truck literature are related to male dominance and discrimination against females, specifically in such open and public sphere. I remembered “Social Learning Theory” of Albert Bandura, where it is discussed that people learn behavior, norms, and values by observing others in their environment. I felt that the truck literature must have been painted by observing how others have painted on their vehicles. While reading that truck literature, I felt male dominance has stepped up publicly in such a way that everyone, specifically male counterparts, will feel and learn to behave towards women in that way. I relate this to how few co-drivers and drivers of local buses speak and flirt with young girls in a romantic and sexual way while travelling in and around the valley, demonstrating the continuation of patriarchy in a new form.

Truck Literature in General

Many trucks display religious icons, such as a picture of *Mahadeva* or different names of god and goddesses such as *Manakamana Mai*, *Bhairava*, *Dakchinkali Mai*, etc., emphasizing the significance of faith and ethical living in the trucker's life and the broader community. In addition to religious motifs, truck literature, both visual and textual, tells stories about the truckers' daily struggles, aspirations, and reflections on shifting societal values, often referencing contemporary platforms such as TikTok and Facebook. In some cases, truck literature carries subversive or political messages that critique societal norms or government policies. These trucks become platforms for grassroots expression, often giving a voice to underrepresented groups. One of its examples is “*some people's life is on biscuit and cake, driver's life hinges on steering and brake*” (कसैको जीवन बिस्किट र केकमा, ड्राइभरको जीवन स्टेरिन्ग र ब्रेकमा)

Similarly, various awareness-related messages were also found in truck literature. One of the most repeated messages is “*Speed Kills*” (तीव्र गति जीवन क्षति). The overall intent of this message is to increase awareness among drivers and riders to reduce road incidents. Similarly, another quote, “*One Miss Game Finish*” also says that our life is valuable and a single mistake on the road can end our life. Both kinds of literature suggest driving vehicles or riding motorbikes carefully to avoid any mistake that can end life. One of the common statements is “*the heart filled with envy will continue to burn, while the vehicle number... will keep rolling on*” (जलेको मन जलिरहन्छ...नं को गाडी चलिरहन्छ). This statement denotes competition among drivers.

Different political satire messages were also found in the sampled truck literature. One of them is “*Don't blow the horn, country is sleeping*” (हर्न नबजाउनु होला, देश सुतिरहेको छ). This statement carries a subtle satire, indicating a lazy and weak government that is irresponsible toward its citizens. Similarly, “*In a country where you can't find*

cetamol, don't expect for oxygen cylinder, so ensure safety yourself” (सिटामोल नभएको देशमा अक्सिजनको आश नगरौं, आफ्नो सुरक्षा आफै गरौं) and “*government is not to run, but to play dirty games*” (सरकार चलाउने हैन, चलखेल गर्ने हो) depict a poor governance system and corruption, to which [Durkheim \(1897\)](#) also noted anomie in sociological terms.

These general messages, ranging from awareness and political satire to religious beliefs and personal views, show unique ways of expression of drivers' feelings toward society, unpredictable social and political situations, dissatisfaction toward the government, and religious beliefs. Such practices of expressing personal emotions, feeling and dissatisfaction through moving canvas, publicly, are a growing tendency. This also showcases the freedom of expression among the people.

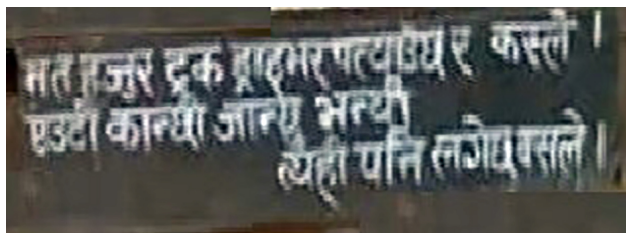
Gender and Power Dynamics Messages

Some literature reflects societal views on gender, often through images of women or slogans about masculinity. While this can reinforce stereotypes, it also offers a lens through which power dynamics can be critically examined. In several vehicles, literature with patriarchy-focused messages is found. One of the common messages written in several trucks is “*Do not cry crazy girl, I will return*” (रो मत पगली, वापस आउङ्गा). This portrays women as emotionally fragile and reliant on male presence, while simultaneously valorizing men as providers and adventurers. This also portrays that the male should be the provider and the female should be a receiver in the family and society. Moreover, such messages also showcase the dominance of males in both the public and private spheres. [Pateman \(1989\)](#) notes dichotomy of private and public spaces is a totally patriarchal construct which perpetuates the belief that women's proper space is in the private, domestic sphere, whereas men rule both spheres.

Similarly, “*local virus searching for new girlfriend*”, “*I care you because I like you otherwise your adolescence has no value*” (कान्छि तिम्रा चुरीफुरी कतिन्जेल पो टिक्छ, मन परेको छौ र पो वाल दिएको नत्र तिम्रा बैस कौडीको दाममा बिक्रि) and “*Fish from Malekhu, a Pieces in Kalani, Smile to driver and kiss to co-driver*” (मलेखुको माछा कलङ्कीमा पिस, ड्राइभरलाई मुस्कान खलासीलाई किस) sounds normal while reading such scripts with rhyme, yet they subtly endorse male promiscuity while reinforcing gender objectification. In the first literature, a virus denotes a mobile male, such as those in trucking culture. This line is trying to establish an understanding that males are free to look for new partners (a girlfriend). It is also trying to legitimize male's freedom in extra relationships. The second and third statements are clear messages to showcase male domination over the female's body. Both literatures demonstrate that the female body and their adolescence are just an object for the pleasure of males.

The gender discrimination-based truck literature presents masculinity at the center. One of the truck

literatures writes, “Even today, my heart burns in your memory, you gave me deep pain that’s why I keep driving” (आज पनि तिमी यादमा यो मुटु जलाइरहन्छु, कहिल्यै नमेटिने गहिरो चोट दियौ तिमिले त्यसैले त आज गाडी चलाइराख्छु). This reflects a stoic masculinity that suppresses emotions and focuses on perseverance. Similarly, in another truck it writes “I am just a truck driver, who would even trust me? One girl said she’d stay, but the bus took her away” (म त हजुर ट्रक ड्राइभर, पत्याउँछ र कस्ले, एउटी कान्छि जान्छु भन्थि, त्यही पनि लगेछ बसले)



Such representations imply that truck drivers are perceived as undesirable partners, reflecting societal biases tied to their mobile and labor-intensive profession. This also showcases that drivers themselves rate their profession low in comparison to others. In the meantime, a soft humor mixed with truck literature covers the vulnerability of drivers and their profession. In the previous literature, men are pictured as resilient, carefree, and strong individuals who endure hardship and keep moving forward, however, the latter literature portrays men as vulnerable in love despite strong emotions. Apart from these, other truck literature demonstrates the need for males to perform and work like men. One of its examples is “As a son, you must be a driver. Pilot can be a cigarette as well” (छोरा भए पछि त ड्राइभर हुनुपर्छ, पाइलट त चुरोट पनि हुन्छ). This text resonates that being a son, he must be hardworking, just like a truck driver. It also indirectly reinforces the concept of the male role as outdoors, hardworking, and providers. This demonstrates a clear picture of patriarchal dominance where male are also stigmatized to become bold and hardworking, despite their emotions and wants.

In contrast, women in truck literature are often depicted as objects of desire, sources of heartbreak, or subjects of humor. Their presence is limited to romantic and moral themes, reinforcing traditional gender roles. For instance, “The porter rest his load at Chautari, don’t just look at the driver; dear, his assistant will get jealous” (भरिया दाईले चौतारीमा भारी बिसाउँछ, ड्राइभरलाई मात्र नहेर कान्छि, खलासी रिसाउँछ) This shows competition among men for females’ attention, reinforcing the notion of women as passive prizes within a male-centric gaze. Nonetheless, it is not only about reinforcing gender roles, but the way how patriarchal society conceptualizes both men and women.

Whose ‘Freedom of Expression’ Counts?

One of the key but unnoticed aspects in truck literature is the freedom of expression. While freedom of expression has generally expanded across Nepalese society, this freedom

within the trucking industry appears disproportionately skewed in favor of men. For example, in one of the truck literature, it writes, “Whether the road climbs or dips, may there be an in-laws’ house on the tips; whether she’s dusky or light, may a sister-in-law be in sight.” (उकाली होस् या ओराली होस्, डाँडामा एउटा ससुराली होस्, काली होस् या गोरी होस्, ससुरालीमा एउटा साली होस्) This literature denotes that the patriarchal system led to freedom of expression, speech and writing for males, reinforcing male supremacy to provide more power to males. Similar domination of masculinity through open writing is also available in another text which writes “When a girl enters in our life and a mosquito enters the net, there’s no way to sleep” (जीवनमा केटी र भुल भित्र लामखुट्टे पसेपछि सुत्न नसकिने रहेछ) Such literature reflects a gendered asymmetry in expressive freedom, wherein men openly satirize and objectify women’s roles, behaviors, and appearances. This expressive openness may stem from gendered socialization processes that encourage men to be bold, assertive, and even dismissive toward women.

Furthermore, in another literature, “Well water, a cigarette butt, and a young women’s lips are never impure” (कुवाको पानी चुरोटको ठुटो, तरुनीको ओठ कहिल्यै हुँदैन जुठो). This literature categorized and compared young women’s lips with objects like water from a well, which can be used by any person passing by. In this analogy, women’s lip is also metaphorically equated with a cigarette butt, which is casually passed among the smokers, thus reinforcing the idea of female disposability in male-centric discourse. In other words, this is also a gendered interpretation of women’s sexuality, which reflects how society constructs and understands sexual behavior, desires, and identities differently based on gender. On the one hand, men’s sexuality is presented as dominant, uncontrollable, and expressive; on the other hand, women’s sexuality is showcased as passive, emotional, faithful, and controlled.

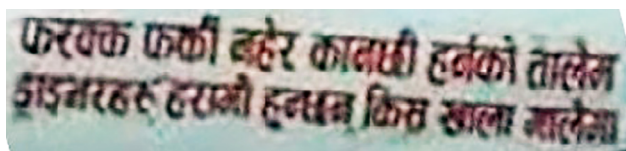
Similarly, another text, “Don’t laugh crazy girl, I will fall in love” (हस मत पगली, प्यार हो जाएगा), is used to evoke romance, admiration, or playful emotions. All the above truck literature showcases that male generally talks openly about females’ characters, bodies, and love relationships. This also reflects a message that male are free to express their views openly, maintaining a patriarchal domination over femininity through truck literature. Notably, no truck literature was identified that expressed a female perspective or critiqued male bodies or masculinity in a similarly objectifying manner. This also denotes that females’ emotions and feelings have minimal value or are discarded in society, including public spaces, and the media.

According to a conversation with one of the painters residing in Hetauda, “We normally search for good sayeri and paint on the back of the truck. In many cases drivers approach painters and ask to write a random sentence as per driver’s wishes” (Purna Tamang, personal communication, April 22, 2025). As the trucking industry is heavily pinned down by male chauvinism (Adhikari, 2024), the voices and freedom of speech are also in favor

of males.

Gender Hierarchy through Humor

Humor plays a major role in reinforcing gender expectations while making them socially acceptable. Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) noted that humor often serves as a mechanism for reinforcing traditional gender norms, particularly by framing women as objects of ridicule or desire. Truck literature has been found to employ jokes and wordplay that sustain male dominance and reinforce gender hierarchies where men are consistently in a position of power, whether in relationships, humor, or professional identity. Women are always pictured as passive figures and subjects of humor. In one of the truck literature, women are pictured as unfaithful, warning: “Don’t walk along the cliffside road, dear, you might trip and fall. Don’t love too many people, dear, or you might die of AIDS” (भिरको बाटो नहिड कान्छि ठेस लागेर लडौली, धेरैसँग लभ नगर कान्छि एड्स लागेर मरौली)

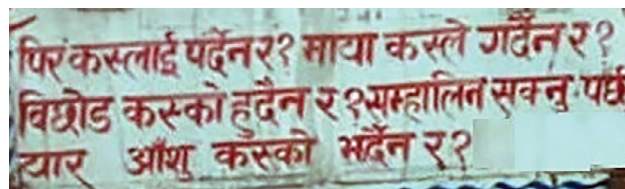


Although this literature sounds a bit hilarious, the core message is to reinforce male authority as a moral guide. It also depicts the prevalence of freedom among males, both in terms of speech and writing, against female and their sexuality. One of the examples of this is, “don’t look back on the horn, naughty driver may kiss you” (फरक्क फर्की नहेरु कान्छि हरनको लालेमा, डाइभरहरु हरामी हुन्छन् किन खाला गालेमा). These truck literatures criticize females, showcasing females as volatile and fluid in nature.

Pettigrew (2013) argued that many jokes in Nepal depict women as nagging wives, gold-diggers, or unfaithful lovers. One of the truck literature writes, “If the wind blew away your scarf, how is my truck’s speed to blame, dear?” (हावाले तिम्रो पछ्यौरी उडायो प्रिय, मेरो र फुत्तारको के दोष ?). In this literature, speed is a metaphor for men who hold that powerful entities can change the situation, while portraying women as fragile, directionless, and prone to complaint, thereby reinforcing gendered stereotypes of strength and vulnerability. This literature describes the devastating life of females after a break-up from a relationship, showcasing females as vulnerable, trying to avoid challenging the male or patriarchal system. Furthermore, the phrase “One turn one wife, a driver has a golden life” (वन टर्न वन बाईफ, डाइभरकै छ गोल्डेन लाईफ) glamorizes polygamy and reinforces a masculine ideal of autonomy and conquest, portraying male promiscuity as a symbol of success. It also portrays men as carefree and playful, reinforcing a masculine ideal of freedom, which also suggests that truckers embody a heroic and independent masculinity. In both literature, masculinity is

framed as strong and resilient, while femininity is framed as emotional, secondary, and complaining. Collectively, such humorous portrayals normalize and legitimize male dominance, reinforcing hierarchical gender structures through seemingly benign entertainment.

Finally, another literature hints at male emotional vulnerability, stating that despite heartbreak, men must remain resilient, a reflection of the cultural expectation for men to suppress emotion and embody stoicism (पिर कसलाई पर्दैन र ? माया कसले गर्दैन र ? बिछोड कसको हुँदैन र ? सम्हालिन सक्नुपर्छ यार, आंशु कसको भर्दैन र ?).



This line believes that everyone has worries and pain; they may be separated from their loved ones, but one needs to be strong, manage the situation, and move on. Although this statement slightly suggests that men are also weak, it aims to socialize the idea that, in the end, men should learn to be strong.

Discussion

Truck literature has emerged as a cultural trend within the transport industry, providing a platform for people to express their views on politics, societal expectations, suggestions, love life, and many other topics. However, much of these truck literature employs metaphor and humor to subtly reinforce dominant gender roles and norms. This study explored how gender roles and societal expectations are represented in truck literature, focusing on constructions of masculinity, femininity, relationships, and power dynamics. In one of the research studies conducted by Nurul Hidayah et al. (2024) in Indonesia, the researchers found the representation of women in the writings and images on the back of the truck, which highlights the complexity of the interaction between languages, culture and power.

In Jordan, Darwish and Rousan (2019) also explored truck literature where they found religion, philosophy, advertisement, tagging, futility & fun, patriotism, alliance, brands, romance, instructions, politics and greetings were the common themes. While this study identified a few overlapping themes, such as religious, patriotic, and instructional messages, it also revealed a significant prevalence of content reflecting patriarchy and domination of males over females. This illustrates that truck literature in Nepal is patriarchal in nature.

Adhikari (2024) explored that women are often portrayed as being weak, emotional, and unintelligent, leading to other social problems such as not taking them seriously in the workplace. However, this particular

research on truck literature highlights portraying women publicly as passive, nurturing, and emotional. Such truck literature are overwhelmingly male-centric, presented in a humorous and satirical way, serving to normalize and stabilize patriarchal structures in the Nepali society. This research indicates how jokes and hilarious literature are becoming a subtle tool in public spaces to normalize the male dominance in society.

Viewing the way men in society are in powerful positions by dominating women using humorous jokes and statements reminds Foucault (1978), who argues power comes from everywhere; power is not centralized but diffused throughout society, operating in everyday practices, relationships, and institutions. Reflecting Foucault's idea of power in this context, public spaces such as moving canvases are providing superiority and power to men, where women are dominated and discriminated through trivializing statements, jokes, and poems. Humor is used to reinforce traditional gender norms by portraying women as passive, emotionally dependent, and morally questionable. Such truck literature reflects and reinforces patriarchal values and gendered identities, positioning men as dominant and independent figures and women as passive and receiving human beings in society.

Remarkably, no single literature, poem, or statement was found against men that critically engaged with masculinity or satirized male identity comparably. There are poems and statements about males, but these literature portrays males as providers, patriots, strong, and breadwinners. Only a few poems about males are found with emotional feelings and heartbreak. Overall, the trend in truck literature suggests that it is largely crafted from a male perspective, positioning men as dominant providers and women as subordinate or objectified figures.

As truck literature increasingly became a medium for personal and public expression, the Nepal Government started taking action against truck art and literature in 2020. In the meantime, various Nepalese online portals reported news about the government's restriction on truck literature. For instance, Nepal Samaya (2020) writes, as the Nepal government found truck literatures distracting and leading to road accidents, all such truck literature will be removed and anyone writing such literature on their vehicle is punishable by law. Similarly, Annapurna (2020) writes that the Department of Transportation Management of Nepal government decided to erase all the truck literature from the vehicles, which was an insane decision. However, Subid Guragain, recognized as a pioneer of truck literature in Nepal, criticized the government's actions as excessively harsh and detrimental to cultural expression. Post government decision in 2020, no such news is heard about the restriction. Trucks and public vehicles are still moving around with a variety of truck literature.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the intersection of culture, gender, and humor in roadside poetry, particularly as embodied in Nepal's truck literature. Although truck literature is an evolving form of platform to express individual and public views, it also serves as a reminder of the persistence of patriarchal ideologies in society. Truck literature vibrantly conveys political, cultural, and romantic sentiments. More than that, it functions to reinforce patriarchal norms, often concealed in humor that masks structural inequality, asserting masculinity at top and positioning women in subordinate roles.

Truck literature highlights the deep-rooted gender hierarchy of society artistically. It is a new form of expression that shapes everyday life and social structures. To conclude, the freedom of literature on such moving canvases on highways allows the frame narratives that reinforce male dominance while positioning women within traditional and subordinate roles. Such literature, through subtle humor, is strengthening the patriarchal system as well as normalizing male dominance over female.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable

Consent for publication

Not applicable

Competing interests

No such competing interests applicable.

Funding

No funding involved in this research.

Authors' contributions

The author himself collected all the necessary data for this research, analysis process, and writing article. All sources of data and ideas have been properly acknowledged.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Associate Professor Dr. Man Bahadur Khatri for providing the opportunity to have this paper reviewed and published.

I would also like to thank Dr. Rajendra Raj Timilsina for his valuable suggestions and consistent follow-up throughout the process. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Dr. Mira Mishra and all the anonymous peer reviewers of the Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology for their thoughtful and critical reviews of my research paper. Their constructive comments and insightful suggestions have significantly contributed to the improvement of this paper. I would also like to remember Mr. Dikesh Maharjan for his valuable initial feedback, which helped shape the early stages of the paper. I am


also deeply thankful to my wife Mrs. Shanti Gurung for her dedicated support in collecting truck literature from the highways, an essential component of this research, who also reviewed this article and provided invaluable comments in the result section. Deep gratitude to Ritisha Dhungana for her invaluable feedback as well.

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