
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/jodem.v15i1.68910>

Hegemonic Masculinity in *Ghamad Shere (Persistent Shere)* Directed by Hem Raj BC

Asmita Bista, PhD

Lecturer of English

Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan, Sunsari

email: asmitabista15@gmail.com

Abstract

Nepali film Ghamad Shere promotes hegemonic masculinity by presenting the central character as a struggling person, who overcomes every problem by ascertaining his masculinity. In Ghamad Shere, the central character, Sher Bahadur, appears as bold, aggressive, and industrious man. In the film, including Sher Bahadur, while exhibiting the so-called masculine power, the male characters involve in the competition to outsmart each other. Thus, the paper aims to investigate how the practice of hegemonic masculinity has affected the life of males in Chhinchu village. It analyzes the problems the characters go through in their life caused by the imposition of conventional masculine roles and identities. This paper also assesses the reasons that force the males to perform the stereotyped gender roles. To analyze the film, R.W. Connell's and Michael Kimmel's idea of masculinity theory has been used as an approach. Kimmel and Connell argue that since the traditional gender roles are constructed, masculinity is a constructed entity that is achieved through constant performance. Revealing the gender practices in Chhinchu village, Ghamad Shere unfolds problems such as to leave the village for foreign country in search of employment, being cheated by their wives and the like, faced by the males of this village. The paper concludes that constrained to the normative gender roles, the males of this village keep their hegemonic masculinity intact. The article further concludes that the male characters of this film encircle them to hegemonic masculinity because being part of that society, one hardly can escape from the socially enforced gender roles.

Keywords: gender roles, hegemonic masculinity, stereotyped gender roles, gender normativity, Nepali film

Department of English, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Historical Development of Film in Nepal after People's Movement

After the political change, of 1990 in Nepal, people's right to freedom of speech and broadcasting get established. Since the society becomes more open after the establishment of democracy, film industry gets a favorable environment for producing films. Nevertheless, as far as the Maoist revolution starts in the mid-1990s, there comes a drastic change in the environment of film industry. The film industry begins to face downfall because in the period of war and conflict, the film makers hesitate to produce the films. As Anand Chandrasekhar views that the Maoist insurgency period was a "difficult time for filmmakers" (par. 14) because in such state of fear, a very small number of films are produced. Not only that, audience numbers also decrease sharply. Consequently, at the pick time of the ongoing conflict, the production of Nepali films almost gets halted. The Nepali film industry starts to flourish again only after Maoists coming into mainstream politics. Since post-people's movement II converted the country into a republic state, Nepali film industry broadens its horizon and explores the issues of gender, ethnicity, and reformatory social practices.

Likewise, in this period, Nepali film industry tastes the fruit of success. Bishnu Prasad Dahal observes that "After many successful films were made and released, film industry is growing replacing the market of Indian films in Nepal" (4). Instead of making the carbon copy of Bollywood films, Nepali film makers make the film that represent Nepali soil, its people and culture. Krandan Chapagain points out that Nepali films, produced in 2000s, reflect Nepali flavor (216). Apart from that, people's consciousness to their rights, equality, and freedom is also become a prominent subject of Nepali films. After 2000s, more varied roles have been assigned to both the female and the male characters in Nepali films. However, variation does not eliminate stereotyped representation of the males' and females' roles in films. Dixit has claimed that, Nepali filmmakers have not yet freed themselves from the conservative and narrow thought; therefore, they still present the male characters in major roles in films. Citing the example of the film *Machha Machha*, Avimanyu Dixit has opined: "This film isn't just misogynist, it's also racist" (par 7). Likewise, Naresh Newar unravels that even after 2000s, Nepali films do not stop reinforcing the stereotyped gender roles, in which unbelievably strong hero defeats dozens of macho males, whereas feeble female character seems to be waiting for her prince charming to rescue her from the problematic situations (par. 5). Actually, though the Nepali films produced during twenty-first century focus on gender issues, these films do not seem to break the trend of presenting stereotyped gender image. Following the same trend, in *Ghamad Shere*, Hemraj BC allocates the conventional gender roles to the characters.

An Overview on *Ghamad Shere*: A Literature Review

The film *Ghamad Shere* received critics attention massively since its release. The film was reviewed and commented in different media including YouTube and Face Book. Since BC presents an original idea with a great story, *Ghamad Shere* draws huge critical acclaim. Critics such as Diwakar Pyakurel, Abhimanyu Dixit, Sudeep Sharma, appreciate the film for providing agency to common/downtrodden people. They view that the beauty of this film reflects in its plot as the plot of *Ghamad Shere* unveils the exploitation and injustice faced by a gullible person like Sher Bahadur. This section reviews the ideas of these critics in detail.

In his review, Pyakurel finds *Ghamad Shere* as a powerful film because this film depicts a lively inter-conflict among the characters; likewise, it portrays the realistic picture of Nepali society in a satirical way. He argues that BC establishes the genre satire in this film. Pyakurel claims that in his superb presentation, BC seems “one step ahead of other contemporary productions in terms of satirizing the current political system” (par. 2). In his perception, this movie clearly shows how the absence of qualified officials at local government authorities mocks the system.

Similarly, Dixit appreciates BC’s specialty on using progressive ideology through the medium of realistic depiction of events, places and people. Dixit notices that “*Ghamad Share* has conflicts and dilemmas that are close to life” (par. 3). The protagonist of the film fights against the oppression against the authority. He further opines that as seventh film of BC’s career, *Ghamad Shere* is a perfect film because in this film “BC has evolved quite well into a mature storyteller” (par.8). According to Dixit, BC has presented minor details of village life in interesting way. He views that, *Ghamad Share* makes strong political statements about the government’s policies concerning compensation for flood victims. He applauds BC for raising a real issues of flood victims of Surkhet district in the film.

In the same vein, Sudip Sharma unravels that to depict realistic picture of a remote village of Surkhet district is the main agenda of this film. Apart from that, the film presents romance between the protagonist, Sher Bahadur, and his sister-in-law in an interesting way. Likewise, Sharma further reveals that, highlighting the people’s difficulties caused by the lack of qualified officials in local government, BC has made the film more exciting. In fact, in the confusion and mockery, the film builds on an innocent person who ends up filing a complaint against a river (par 1). Similar view to that Sharma, Anand Nepal observes that *Ghamad Shere* has captured the painful story of a remote village of Nepal. In his view, the film reveals that there is still injustice and oppression in the society. Nevertheless, villagers like Sher Bahadur have started to raise

their voice against the injustice; in fact, rage is emerging on the exploited and oppressed people (par. 4). He rates this film as BC's splendid creation because the director/writer unfolds the true picture of Nepali society in this film. These critics have concentrated their reviews on illustration of the form, genre, and theme of the film, but they have not analyzed internal as well as external problems faced by the male characters caused by the imposition of stereotyped gender roles. Therefore, by applying hegemonic masculinity as a tool, this research tries to fill the gap. R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt argue that the term hegemonic masculinity "embodied the currently most honored way of being a man" (832). In fact, the term 'hegemonic masculinity' is coined to acclaim males' superiority as it "refers to the most dominant and most socially prized form of masculinity available to men" (Chris McVittie et al. 121). To carry forward this research, concept of Hegemonic masculinity theory has been used.

Sher Bahadur as an Embodiment of Masculinity

Hemraj BC-directed *Ghamad Shere* portrays the central character, Sher Bahadur, at his performance of the stereotyped gender roles. The plot of the film *Ghamad Shere* revolves around Sher Bahadur's endless effort on ascertaining his masculinity. In *Ghamad Shere*, Sher Bahadur is assigned to the role of a sole-earner of the family. Moreover, he is obligated to take care of the comfort of his family. Therefore, he goes abroad for the employment. When he returns home, every family member seems concerned whether he will go back to his workplace i.e., abroad or not. As his father asks him, shortly after his arrival, "*Babu kati sammako ho basaa?*" ("Son, how long have you decided to live in the country"? His father shows interest about Sher Bahadur return to his work because he is guided by the belief that as a male member of the family, he should take the role of a provider and for that he has to return to his job. His family members' expectation towards him confirms that "Men and women are socially constituted" (Haraway 131). Haraway views that personal and collective identity is precariously and constantly socially reconstituted (Haraway 148). For Haraway, gender identity is a process that goes through social and cultural norms, rituals and practices; consequently, men and women get accustomed to recognize their respective places in social and familial hierarchy. In the film, Sher Bahadur's family do not leave him any choice rather than performing the role of a provider of the family.

From the first shot, audience find Sher Bahadur as a stubborn, arrogant, and aggressive person. The first shot of the film frames the running van from where the audience overhear males' voice involved in a ferocious quarrel. After some minutes, a man is thrown out from the microbus by the conductor as he denies to pay more than the government-sanctioned fare:



Figure 1. Sher Bahadur carrying luggage and heading towards home after he is thrown out from the bus

(Source: author's screen shot)

In this shot, Sher Bahadur appears in his sheer manliness as he is carrying heavy luggage. His stout built is also visible in this shot. He seems strong and aggressive. Likewise, as a rigid person he sticks on his decision even though he is aware about the outcome of his denial i.e., he is thrown out from the van. He does so because he knows that to do compromise with the conductor means to be defeated with him. Not only that, even after this incident, he firmly maintains his masculine image by carrying heavy luggage in hand. He even discloses “*saalaa dui ghantaako baato ta ho ni pailaa pani khasi bokera hineko baato ho yo*” (“it not a big deal because it takes only two hours to reach home; moreover, I have already walked on this road by carrying goat”). From the first scene of the film, Sher Bahadur constructs the image of a strong and rigid male.

Sher Bahadur is under the constant familial and social pressure to shoulder the responsibility of his family because ‘masculinity’ is associated “with being bread-earner and the protector of the family” (Connell, *Masculinities* 90). Depicting Sher Bahadur’s difficulties, *Ghamad Shere*, reveals that males need to go through several hardships while maintaining the socially assigned gender roles. He buys land and a house in the town because in that social milieu, to own the property in the city is a status marker, mostly of man. As Sarah C White points out, “masculinity is being rather fragile, provisional, something to be won and then defended, and something under constant threat of loss” (18). In that village, males are in competition to exhibit success. Therefore, he is under pressure to showcase his success. For that, he decides to earn money. So, he cultivates vegetables as he plans to sell the vegetables in a local market and sustain his life depending on it.



Figure 2. Sher Bahadur working in his vegetable farm

(Source: author's screen shot)

In this shot, Sher Bahadur seems to be performing the role of a hard-working individual. He puts his toil in the field, he works days and nights to uplift the economic status of his family because male's masculinity is measured in terms of his success. As Michael Kimmel observes that in most societies, hegemonic masculinity refers to the exalted form of masculinity; therefore, men try to be 'more masculine' through exhibiting physical strength, self-control, and power (Kimmel 218). Hence, in the film, constrained to the masculine image, Sher Bahadur aptly keeps the arrangement to fulfill the needs and demands of his family members.

In the film, ascertaining his masculinity, Sher Bahadur exhibits the traits such as strength, competitiveness, assertiveness, and confidence those are associated with hegemonic masculinity. Cliff Cheng views that "hegemonic masculinity is broadly characterized by "domination, aggressiveness, competitiveness, athletic prowess, stoicism and control" (298). Sher Bahadur appears aggressively all the time. He seems to be ever ready to fight with the people. In fact, he is arrested by police for several times for his involvement in hooliganism.

He fights with the thieves when they deny to take money for cigarette that he buys from the shop, where the thieves are stealing the goods. The thieves deny to take money out of fear as they want to get rid of Sher Bahadur as soon as possible but he takes it as his insult. He considers his insult as a challenge to his masculinity; so, he fights with them.

Likewise, when a broker, Vagat Prasad/Vyaagute's fraud against him is disclosed, he fights with Vyaagute's assistant. Moreover, he badly beats him.



Figure 3. Sher Bahadur fighting with Kaya, a local hooligan

(Source: author's screen shot)

In this shot, Sher Bahadur's anger and his aggressiveness has been portrayed. Sher Bahadur's body language shows that he is not in a mood of giving-up. Rather, he seems determined to finish his enemy.

Through this scene, the film exposes that while ascertaining their masculinity the male characters recurrently try to defeat each other. While exhibiting his success in his business, Vyaagute scams to gullible villagers. He also cheats Sher Bahadur by selling a barren river bank to him. Moreover, he uses a group of hooligans to threaten the people who try to create hurdle in his path. He also takes support from the local politicians to boost up his business that is based on the deception. Likewise, a lawyer misguides Sher Bahadur as he thinks that by doing that, he outsmarts him. In that social milieu, males are obligated to showcase their manliness, for that they have to earn money, they have to become a successful person, and they have to outsmart another man. In normative masculine sense, a male should "construct the image of a successful man" (Kimmel 120), for that, he should acquire personal and social achievements as well as economic and social success. Similarly, Whitehead and Barrett point out how the so-called masculine behavior is an outcome of social and cultural practice and expectation, "Masculinity reflects social and cultural expectations of male behavior rather than biology" (16). In the film most of the male characters seem to put their effort in ascertaining their so-called masculinity.

In the film, Sher Bahadur tries to follow the model of masculinity prescribed by the society. In Vikki Krane's perception, social script forces man to become physically strong, to become competent leader, to become provider of the family, to become hardworking and successful person, and to find ways to achieve goals despite obstacles

(3-4). Therefore, Sher Bahadur also struggles hard to flounce off the hurdles that come in the path of his success. Moreover, he faces the problems confidently. When the land, that he bought from Vyaagute, turns into a barren land due to the flood, he does not give up. First of all, he fights with Vyaagute and his followers. He forces them to return his money. Then, he goes to the police station and files a complaint against the scam of Vyaagute. He frequently visits police station to seek the help. After that, following the suggestion of sub-inspector, he files a case in a local government. Connell reveals the hardships that a male has to bear while ascertaining masculinity as he claims that becoming a masculine male “follows many different paths and involves many tensions and ambiguities, and sometimes produces unstable results” (Connell, *Gender* 6) Though local government pretends to give him justice by declaring the verdict that “you have to get compensation from the river as river the river is responsible to convert your fertile land to a barren land”, but the verdict cannot improvise his condition. However, he does not give up.

At the same day, when he gets verdict in his favor from the local government, he faces very unexpected and unpleasant incident as his wife elopes. Nevertheless, he cannot believe that she ditched him because he thinks that he is a perfect husband as he has fulfilled all the demands of his wife. Likewise, he is confident that he never lets his masculinity to be questioned. So, when after the police investigation, he comes to know that his wife eloped with her boyfriend, he cannot bear the pain. Consequently, in order to suppress his emotion, he starts to consume more alcohol. As Chris McVittie et al. underscore that hegemonic masculinity “include refusal to acknowledge weakness or to be overcome by adverse events, while discouraging other behaviors such as the expression of emotions or the need to seek the help of others” (122). The incident becomes unbearable for him but he cannot share his agony because to share his pain means to accept his weakness. Since being a male, he is restricted to shed tears, he takes the help of alcohol to handle the painful state.

Ghamad Shere endorses the existing practice of hegemonic masculinity by showcasing Sher Bahadur’s victory over his enemies at the end of the film. When Sher Bahadur realizes that the most of the villagers, including the local government and the police, have conspired to make him a fool, by declaring the verdict that “he has to take compensation from the river that flooded his land”, he decides to turn the table in his favor. So, he starts taking compensation from the river. He supplies sand and pebbles of the river to the customers. Likewise, he takes charge from the farmers who use water to irrigate their land from that river.



Figure 4. Sher Bahadur declaring his authority over the river

(Source: author screen shot)

In this shot Sher Bahadur's powerful status is showcased. By declaring his authority over the river, Sher Bahadur ascertains his masculinity confirming that "the power of men and the authority of masculinity are relatively connected" (Connell, *Gender and Power* 109). Later, when Vyagute's men come to claim their share in the river, Sher Bahadur beats them badly. Though Sher Bahadur is taken to the police station for striking Kaya and his friends, but he gets released after accepting the police inspector's proposal of bearing the expenses of Kaya's medical treatment. The people gathered to see the inspector's verdict also take Sher Bahadur's behavior normally confirming that, "Hegemonic customs and behaviors are so widely visible that they are rarely questioned, rather they are accepted as 'natural'" (Vikki Krane 3-4). Sher Bahadur's efforts while acclaiming his masculinity is the main subject of this film. The film carries a message that a male is not allowed to give up. He has to struggle till he gets success as male's success is a testing measure of his masculinity. Therefore, Sher Bahadur obstinately sticks on the mission of getting compensation of his lost land. Ultimately, he succeeds not only in taking reimbursement but also in ascertaining his masculinity.

Conclusion

Film *Ghamad Shere* portrays Sher Bahadur's image as a so-called masculine figure. He performs the role of a responsible father and a hard-working husband. As a good provider, he goes abroad and earns lot of money. He enables to buy a piece of land and a house in the town. As per his wife's demand, he admits his son to a private school. He toils in the field and grows vegetables. Later, his land is flooded, his wife

elopes but still he does not give up. Maintaining the so-called masculine image, he fights against the fraud Vyagute, a real-state owner, who sells that useless field to him. Similarly, fighting against the whole system, he well performs the socially assigned role to a male i.e., of a courageous fighter. Depicting the sufferings and difficulties faced by a male protagonist Sher Bahadur, the film *Ghamad Shere* unveils the social system that puts all the burden to the male's shoulder. Since the society assigns the male to the role of a provider, Sher Bahadur goes through several problems while performing that role. He goes abroad for the employment, toils in the field, and fights with the cheats such as Kaya and his friends. The film also exposes that the people who cause problems to Sher Bahadur's life are all males. They do so because in order to maintain their manliness, they have to outsmart each other. Since they are in the competition of proving themselves as smarter, wealthier, and successful individual they seem to forget to act humanly. Rather, they involve in cheating, insulting, and hurting each other. Since the film depicts the females' issues as well, *Ghamad Shere* can also be analyzed from the perspective of feminist theory. Apart from that, Marxist criticism is equally relevant for the study of this film.

Works Cited

- B C, Hem Raj, director, *Ghamad Shere (Persistent Shere)*. BC Motion Pictures, 2021.
- Chandrasekhar, Anand. "Nepali Films Ready for the Big Stage after Civil War." *Swissinfo*, 19 April 2016. https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/culture/maoist-revolution_nepali-films-ready-for-the-big-stage-after-civil-war/42065540
- Chapagain, Krandan. *Rila Dekhi Dijitala Samma [From Reel to Digital]*. K.P. Pustak Bhandar, 2015.
- Cheng, Cliff. "Marginalized Masculinities and Hegemonic Masculinities: An Introduction." *Journal of Men's Studies*, vol.7, no. 3, 1999, pp.295-315.
- Connell, Robert William. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Sandford U P, 1987.
- - -. *Gender in World Perspective*. Polity P, 2009.
- - -. *Masculinities*. University of California P, 2005.
- Dahal, Bishnu Prasad. "Real Story in Reel Life; Ethnographic Description of Contemporary Nepalese Films." *Triyuga Academic Journal*, vol. 2, 2021, pp. 1-17.
- Dixit, Avimanyu. "Crime Doesn't Pay—Unless It's in a Movie." *Kathmandu Post*, December 2019. <https://kathmandupost.com/movie-review/2019/12/14/crime-doesn-t-pay-unless-it-s-in-a-movie>

-
- - -. "Ghamad Shere has Everything Going For It, But Still Falls Short." *Kathmandu Post*, 16 Nov. 2019. <https://kathmandupost.com/art-culture/2019/11/16/ghamad-shere-has-everything-going-for-it-but-still-falls-short>
- Haraway, J. Donna. *Simans, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Routledge, 1991.
- Karne, Vikki. "Fair Treatment and Discrimination in Sport" *Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology*. vol.2, 2004, pp.1-10
- Kimmel, Michael. *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. Free P, 1996.
- McVittie, Chris et al. "Masculinities and Health: Whose Identities, Whose Constructions?" *The Psychology of Gender and Health: Conceptual and Applied Global Concerns*. Edited by Pilar Sanchez Lopez and Rosa M. Limina, Academic Press, 2017, pp.119-141.
- Nepal, Anand. "Nepali Movie-Ghamad Shere." *X-Nepali*, 23 April 2022. <https://xnepali.net/nepali-movie-ghamad-shere/>
- Newar, Naresh. (2003). "Kollywood: It's not the Same Old Song-and-dance Anymore in Nepal Industry." *Nepali Times*, vol.156, 2003. <http://archive.nepalitimes.com/news.php?id=3503#.YMHNfPkzY2w>
- Pyakurel, Diwakar. "Ghamad Shere Movie Review: Interesting Blend of Political Satire and Undesirable Romance." *Onlinekhabar*, 10 Nov. 2019. <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/ghamad-shere-movie-review-interesting-blend-of-political-satire-and-undesirable-romance.html>
- Sharma, Sudeep. "Movie Review: Ghamad Shere." *Utsav 360*, 25 Dec. 2019. <https://utsav360.com/moview-review-ghamad-shere>
- White, Sarah C. "Men Masculinities and the Politics of Gender Development." *Gender and Development*, vol. v, no.2 June1997, pp.14-22.
- Whitehead, Stephen M. and Frank J. Barrett. "The Sociology of Masculinity." *The Masculinities Reader*, edited by Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett, Polity P, 2001, pp. 1-26.