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## who will be a gurkha – The Journal

5-6 minutes

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If you've been complaining about Nepali cinema, I think now is the time to stop.

For the past decade, we've been critiquing the Nepali film industry – we've had nothing good to say about the movies, actors, directors, and everything associated with Nepali movies. Most of us thought that the movies made in the 80s and early 90s had more substance – take for example movies like *Jeevan Rekha*, *Kusume Rumal*, *Samjhana*, *Saino* and *Lahure*.

The rise of superstars Rajesh Hamal and Karishma Manandhar gave nothing apart from some super cheesy movies with the age-old formula of romance tangled in between social hierarchy (Note: An upcoming movie [Manjari](#) seems to follow the same lead.)

Personally speaking, I think Nepali movies remained pretty stagnant throughout the latter half of the 90s and mid-2000. Then *Kagbeni* happened in 2008. Shot with 2K digital camera for the first time, the movie included top names in the industry. Many thought it to be the “redefining moment” of Nepali cinema. But technological advancement isn't the answer to making good movies. And needless to say, the movie wasn't impressive.

“It felt like Stanley Kubrick's *Shining* meets Eric Valli's *Caravan*

meets a Nepali tele-serial,” Kesang Sherpa, who has studied films closely, told me in a [2010 interview](#). According to her, the movie lacked originality.

*Kagbeni*, though failed to impress the audience, paved way for the “next generation” of Nepali movies that were technologically sound but suffered from content malnutrition.

Movies like [Sano Sansar](#) (*I liked the soundtrack though*), [Kohi Mero](#) and [First Love](#) had promising trailers. But when I watched them, they were nothing but localized versions of Bollywood movies – they lacked originality.

But the music video-turned film director Alok Nembang defended his films *Sano Sansar* and *Kohi Mero*.

“We cannot expect things to happen overnight,” he said. “And the existing trend of commercial boy meets girl, mushy love stories are a good way to begin.”

And this week, with the latest movie [Kathaa](#), the boy meets girl love story has set a new benchmark for Nepali cinema.

Prashant Rasaily shines as a director, actors Saugat Malla, Usha Rajak and Timothy Rai delivers performances that are rare in Nepali cinema. The love story of Kancha and Kumari is so simple and delicately handled that it wins over your heart.

*Kathaa* certainly fills in the void of good storytelling and execution.

Just days before *Kathaa*, I watched another Nepali movie, or a documentary as a matter of fact, which equally kept me on a spell.

Kesang Tseten’s [Who Will Be A Gurkha](#) is an emotionally engaging piece of reality related to the selection process on Nepalis for British Gurkhas, which is often overlooked. Technically

sound, the documentary allows the audience to experience the story – you feel for the characters, laugh with them and even cry. And that’s the beauty of a good piece of cinema – being a part of the movie while watching it.

Also, with both *Kathaa* and *Who Will Be a Gurkha*, the movies were original and localized to an extent that Nepali audience could actually relate to them.

Director Nabin Subba of the critically acclaimed 2008 movie *Numafung* said he tried to do exactly the same with his project.

“Films are a medium of expression that showcase the society,” he told for the story I was working in 2010. “And with *Numafung*, at least the global audience could understand that it was a film for Nepal.”

However, it is equally important for local audience in Nepal to feel the same way – that it’s a movie from Nepal made for Nepalis and to which they can actually relate to, even if it’s just a piece of onscreen fiction.

Lately, movies like [Chhadke](#) and [Loot](#), though over-hyped and didn’t live up to the expectation, they were genuinely making an effort to bringing a fresh take on the Nepali screen.

While talking to filmmaker Subba in 2010, analyzing the recent releases then, he said he doesn’t see the silver lining very near. But I think he would be happy to see the change in Nepali cinema during the two years’ time and hence change his statement.

Having kept a distance from Nepali cinema for a long time, I am happy to make my comeback as an audience.

It’s indeed a great feeling to watch Nepali cinemas and appreciate

the talents that we have in the country. Directors like Nabin Subba, Kesang Tseten, Prashant Rasaily and Tsering Rhitar gives us, the audience, something to look forward to. And actors like Saugat Malla, Arpan Thapa, Timothy Rai, Dayahang Rai, Usha Rajak, Dia Maskey and Reecha Sharma have steered from conventional roles, delivering performances that we appreciate, not mock.

And with movies like [Badhshala](#) and [Uma](#) releasing in the coming months, Nepali movies are certainly creating a good buzz. I'm happy to see that progressive side of Nepali cinema and that they're keeping the audience satisfied.

*Click here for my 2010 story: [Re-defining the Nepali film industry](#)  
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