

**Piracy, Film Circulation and Popular Film
Culture in the Small Towns and Villages of North
Bihar 1995-2018**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of the degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
CINEMA STUDIES**

AMRIT RAJ



**School of Arts and Aesthetics
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi – 110067**

2021

RECOMMENDATION FORM FOR EVALUATION BY THE EXAMINER/S

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation/thesis titled piracy, Film circulation and popular film culture in the small towns and villages of North Bihar submitted by Mr/Ms AMRIT RAJ in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of degree of M.Phil/M.Tech/Ph.D of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, has not been previously submitted in part or in full for any other degree of this university or any other university/institution.

We recommend this thesis/dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of M.Phil/M.Tech./Ph.D.

Dr. Bhaskar

Signature of Supervisor

Date: 31/12/2021

[Signature]

Signature of Dean/Chairperson

Date: 31.12.2021

DECLARATION

This is to declare that the dissertation entitled *Piracy, Film Circulation and Popular Film Culture in the Small Towns and Villages of North Bihar 1995-2018*, submitted by me at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Cinema Studies, is an original work and has not been submitted so far, in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma to this or any other university or institution. I shall be responsible for the mistakes and inaccuracies in this dissertation.

Amrit Raj

AMRIT RAJ

Dedicated to Nanaji

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express deep gratitude and respect to my supervisor Prof. Ira Bhaskar for her dynamic guidance, useful insights, cooperation and constant encouragement throughout the course of this work. No words can explain her contributions to the research; without her this M.Phil would not have reached its conclusion. Her immense patience during the times I faltered, her understanding of my problems, her constant nudging me in the right direction, above all, her detailed suggestions and feedback made this dissertation what it is today. All that is good in my research has her imprint.

I would like to especially thank Prof. Ranjani Mazumdar for her inspirational class on Cinema and the City which helped me formulate my area of research and understand the implications of space, media and piracy in the movement of ideas, cultural forms and transformations of entertainment in rural and semi urban areas. Furthermore, I am grateful for her constant support of my project and for her suggestions as a member of my RAC that have helped me to improve my chapters.

I would also like to express my special thanks to Dr. Kaushik Bhaumik, who through his 2 a.m. discussions outside SAA helped me finalise my research topic. His sharing of his childhood memories of his father's experiences while he was posted in North Bihar and witnessed the illegal movement of goods across the border played an instrumental role in my visualising the entire idea of my research.

Thanks are also due to Dr. Veena Hariharan, Dr. Shikha Jhinghan, Prof. Naman P. Ahuja, Prof. Kavita Singh, Prof. Parul Dave Mukherjee, Prof. Y. S. Alone, Prof. Bishnupriya Dutt, Dr. Ameet Parmeswaran, Dr. Urmimala Sarkar, Dr. Brahma Prakash, Dr. Rustom Bharucha, Dr. Soumyabrata Choudhury and Dr. Suryanandini Narain, all of whom have immensely contributed to my learning.

It has been a very humbling experience to do academic research. The whole process has been about unlearning what I knew earlier and learning everything that I now know. It was full of wonders, new discoveries, new engagements, new bonding among many other things. Also, it was never a solitary journey.

I owe gratitude also to the staff of the School of Arts and Aesthetics, the SAA library and the JNU Central library for being very helpful and accommodating. I would especially like to remember the late Ghulam Rasool Sir who was extremely considerate and always provided

me with books and other materials whenever required. A special thanks to Harsh, Vinayak and Savita for help.

I am immensely fortunate to have my brave and loving mother, my supportive father, and my loving sister Chandni, my brother Navneet, and my brother-in-law Sudhir who have always supported my studies. I remember my late maternal grandfather, Nanaji, who introduced me to politics and whose ideals were influential in my formative years. My maternal grandmother, Naniji was responsible for educating my mother who in turn worked hard to provide me with education. It is a matter of pride for me that my mother and I completed our post-graduation simultaneously. I would also like to thank my maternal uncle, Mamaji, who was also a great source of support in my education. Also, I would like to thank Mausiji for her support.

The role of my paternal uncle, Bade Papa, has been enormous in my life. It is through his support that I came to Delhi for my higher studies. He provided the financial backing that made my education possible and where ever I stand today is due to his support. Also, I thank my brother-in-law, Mukesh Mani for always encouraging me to explore life and not be shy of trying something new in life.

A special thanks to Surachita Lal for providing me with all the confidence, motivation and encouragement in life. You have been a pillar of strength and support. I want to thank you for being there through the ups and downs, for being kind and loving. I hope our friendship will remain forever.

Also, this acknowledgement would be incomplete without mentioning C Uday Bhaskar, Swara Bhasker, Ishan Bhaskar and Bhoomika Joshi who has always encouraged me in my work and taught me to find a balance between my academic life and my other aspirations. They have taught me the importance of hard work and benevolence for every goal of life and I hope to strengthen our current relationship and learn many new facets of life from them.

A special thanks to Mayur Kumar, my roommate throughout my MPhil who has greatly helped in improving my language and co-operated during my research and writing process. He always put faith in me and was always present during the entire thesis writing process. Without continuous online sessions with him, this dissertation would not have been possible.

Sunil Naik, a great friend, has immensely helped me in my dissertation. He greatly facilitated my fieldwork and stood along with me whenever I faced any difficulty in my life. His warm and welcoming nature touched my soul and words cannot explain his contributions to my life.

Rudolf Alvares and Ashwin Grace have been good friends who have supported me beyond academics and it has been an honour to have such friends who have given me space in their hearts and home to share and discuss my problems.

The persons who have always been present by my side have also been my strongest support systems and greatest sources of joy in JNU. Deeplakshmi, Akash, Vishnu, Bandita, Yoi, Suruchi, Suraj, Afsara, Avinash, Sarika, Pratim, Shubanshu, Pushpika, Saket, Mritunjay, Garima, Vardaa, Ruchika, Shashank, Tanushree, Akhil, Khushboo, Ram Babu, Nayan, Divya, and Prerana have all contributed to this dissertation and my years in JNU have been eventful due to their presence in my life. I would like to express my gratitude to my DSF comrades who have been influential in shaping my political ideology which in turn has greatly influenced my research.

I fondly remember my friends from my engineering days, Akshay, Avinash, Vikas, Gargi, Tanvi and Madhusudan, who have been my compatriots in the initial stages of higher education. I would like to thank the Prashant Advait Foundation, Acharya Prashant Sir, Anushree Ma'am and Ananya Ma'am for introducing me to theatre and literature.

I would like to thank Nakul, Neha, Kavita, Mahesh, Tarni, Ishan, Udit, Shilpi, Akash, Kartikey and Anurag who introduced me to film-making, which in turn inspired me to join the School of Arts and Aesthetics.

Lastly, I extend my deepest respects to all who couldn't find a mention here but have contributed in some form or the other. Special thank you to all the scholars who have researched on topics related to my academic endeavor, for it is on the basis of their research that I am attempting to build my own work. Also, I would like to apologise to anyone whom I have hurt in life and have also forgotten to mention here.

Contents

List of Figures	iii
List of Tables.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Background	1
A History of trade between Bihar and Nepal:	5
A History of Entertainment in Bihar	7
The Research Field.....	11
Research Methodology.....	15
Chapterisation.....	17
Chapter 1 The Flows of Media Technologies to the Small Towns and Villages of North Bihar.....	21
Journey of media technologies to the small towns and villages:	21
Piracy Infrastructures	24
Circuits of Piracy in the villages of Bihar	26
The history of electronic shops in the small towns and villages of North Bihar	33
Renting Culture	36
Chapter 2 Media Technologies, Cinema Habits and the Revival of the Bhojpuri Film Industry.....	43
History of Film viewing in the Small Towns and Villages of Bihar.....	43
Single Screen Theatres:	46
Cinema exhibition in the village and its strategy:	49
The Influence of Media Entertainment on the Socio-Cultural life of Small Towns and Villages:	56
Impact of Hindi cinema on the youth of the village:.....	62
Marriage Videos:.....	64
Rise of an alternative, low cost and low technology Bhojpuri music and film industry	69
The rise of Bhojpuri cinema again	71
Chapter 3 The mobile phone and personalized viewing	76
A History of Telephones in India:.....	79
Arrival of the basic mobile phone	80
Arrival of affordable mobile phones and mobile phone shops in villages:.....	84
Digital mobile phones and the Chinese copies.....	86
Transformation of electronic shops at the village <i>Chowk</i>	86
Public Viewing to Personalized Viewing.....	89

Increased popularity of South Indian films and their dubbing into Hindi	92
Naming traditions in the Bhojpuri film industry	95
Unauthorized copy of film posters in Bhojpuri film industry	96
Online media consumption.....	98
Content creation for entertainment.....	99
Conclusion	102
Bibliography	106

List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Bihar showing districts sharing boundary with Nepal.....	2
Figure 2 - Ramachandra Manjhi getting ready for Launda naach	8
Figure 3 - Bicycle rim used as an antenna for signal reception	29
Figure 4 - Cheap Chinese battery-operated television found at Rajiv Nayan's house which he purchased from Birgunj in 2002.	30
Figure 5 - Electronics shop at a village chowk in Bettiah	35
Figure 6 - Some of the VCDs and DVDs for sale by the anonymous distributor.....	37
Figure 7 - Shyam Talkies situated near Bettiah.	48
Figure 8 - Battery operated DVD player.....	51
Figure 9 - <i>Jallaad</i> (1995) film VCD	52
Figure 10 - <i>Shapath</i> (1995) film VCD.....	53
Figure 11 - DVD Player from Rambabu's house.....	54
Figure 12 " <i>Virat Hindu Sammelan</i> " August 28 and 29, 1989, Milton Keynes	57
Figure 13 - Anointing of bricks at the "Virat Hindu Sammelan"	58
Figure 14 - A child portrayed as Ram, who is said to have come back to Babri Masjid.....	59
Figure 15 - Still from the film <i>Raam Ke Naam</i> (1992).....	60
Figure 16 - Still from the films <i>Raam Ke Naam</i> (1992)	60
Figure 17 - Screenshot is taken from the title Wedding Video.....	65
Figure 18 - Screenshot of wedding gift is taken from a Wedding Video	66
Figure 19 - Screenshot of wedding gift is taken from a Wedding Video	66
Figure 20 - Sunil Ji's Digital Multivisionshop	68
Figure 21 - High end Nokia mobile and its cheap Chinese counterpart	86
Figure 22 - Vinod Kumar's mobile repair shop	88
Figure 23 - Further evolution of mobile shops	89
Figure 24 Chinese mobile with dual speakers at the rear	91
Figure 25 - Stark difference in film name.....	92
Figure 26 - Popularity of Bhojpuri movies on YouTube.....	94
Figure 27 - Plethora of content on MX Player.....	95
Figure 28 - Similarity among the Posters	97
Figure 29 – <i>Vir Yodha Mahabali</i> poster	98

List of Tables

Table 1 - Reasons for the Informal trade between India and Nepal (Numbers indicate the Percentage of Informal Traders of the interviewed sample)	3
Table 2 - History of electronics shops in the small towns and villages of North Bihar	41
Table 3 - Phone Connections in India, 1947 to 2011-----	80
Table 4 - Bollywood films and their Bhojpuri counterparts -----	96

Introduction

This dissertation studies the forms of film, music and media entertainment that were accessed by the people of the small towns and villages of north Bihar and the technological developments that enabled this access. I have explored the circulation of Hindi, South Indian (mostly Telugu and Tamil) and Bhojpuri films in these regions from the post-liberalization era (1995) leading up to the recent 4G network penetration phase (roughly upto 2018). I look at how these films went beyond their life and times in cinema halls and how questions of film distribution responded to every kind of media shift that was taking place after 1995. If theatrical film viewing was a rare luxury in rural Bihar, video, and later digital technology changed the very patterns of everyday life since they allowed people to consume media in accordance with their own time and habits. After economic liberalization, electronic technologies came to Bihar from China via Nepal, and cassette players, TV sets, VCDs and DVDs player were assembled by local technicians in villages. A rural-urban traffic of mostly skilled personnel and pirated VHS tapes, VCDs and DVDs copies of Hindi films from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s ensured a steady supply of films to a media-hungry population in these regions. My interest, therefore, lies in the culture of *jugaad* within which such media habits, both of consumption and production, came to thrive. I have also looked at how these local practices were in conversation with wider paradigm shifts in global media infrastructures, especially as Bihar has existed in a trans-national exchange with Nepal and China.

Background

India shares a very porous border with Nepal, where trade continues both legally and illegally (Figure 1). Local Police and BSF (Border Security Force) remain part of this trade, and they are rewarded monetarily for facilitating it. Many products were traded in the past, and Birgunj (in southern Nepal) was the trade hub from where cloth, food items such as cooking oils/fats (especially Dalda), papads, and then later watches, torches, and radios were traded illegally. Most of the electronic goods were not produced in Nepal; rather these were produced in China and then through Nepal, they entered Bihar and many other places in India. This pattern of trade between India and Nepal including for cheap Chinese electronic goods still continues today. However, the product composition has drastically changed. Earlier goods like radios, watches, torches, etc. were traded; now goods such as memory cards, earphones, phone chargers, solar operated small electronic devices, batteries, screen

guards, mobile covers, mobile components for repair, etc are traded. Cheap electronic goods are consumed in large quantities in India, and Birgunj and Kathmandu used to be and still are the centre of this trade between India and Nepal.

Figure 1: Map of Bihar showing districts sharing boundary with Nepal



Source: Image downloaded from the Internet from <https://competitiveindia.com/> accessed on 05 January 2020.

After India's independence and until the liberalization of the 1990s, the import of foreign goods was very restricted in India and one had to acquire licenses from the Central government to import goods. This period was also called the "License Raj" phase. The reason that licenses were required was that India was a developing country with limited foreign exchange; therefore, by issuing licenses, the government could regulate foreign exchange in India.

However, trade between India and Nepal is very peculiar because the majority of trade between these two countries occurred informally. Indian goods entered Nepal through official channels, but goods from Nepal to India entered informally. The medium of exchange for this

cross-border informal trade was the Indian Rupee. Since neither licenses from the Central Indian government nor the Nepalese rupee were required, trade boomed between these two countries in these areas.

Even after the liberalization of the 1990s and the removal of the License Raj, informal trade between India and Nepal still remained predominant and continues to be so today. The primary reason for this is the cheap prices of goods due to the evasion of taxes. As prices of these imported goods are low, therefore, their demand is high. Some of the reasons for the high level of informal trade are indicated in the table below:

Table 1: Reasons for the Informal trade between India and Nepal (Numbers indicate the Percentage of Informal Traders of the interviewed sample)

Reasons	Nepal to India	India to Nepal
Low transportation costs	43	55
Lower time to reach destination	20	28
Imported from third country	70	0
No paperwork	62	78
No procedural delays	42	66
Lower bribes	60	48
Presence of haats/bazaars	44	70
Quick realization of payments	13	36
Absence/shortage of storage/warehousing facilities	8	17
Ethnic ties across the border	15	31
Absence of trading routes	1	8
Leakage of administered price goods	1	3
Presence of high duty in official channels	34	27
Quantitative restrictions	10	17
Easier to meet demand from across the border rather than the domestic market	25	23
Nexus between BSF personnel and the traders	27	35
Nexus between traders and politicians	4	4

Source: This table has been taken from *India's Informal Trade with Nepal* (2001) by Nisha Taneja and Sanjib Purohit. (Table 13, Page 2267) Note: Respondents were allowed to tick more than one option.

Another distinguishing feature of the trade between India and Nepal was that India did not directly engage with China; rather Nepal was used as a hub for trade. The above table shows that 70 per cent of respondents (of the 77 traders) were trading with Nepal to get goods from a third country (China). And as mentioned earlier, the huge savings due to evasion of taxes drastically reduced prices for the end consumer and allowed lower, middle and the poorer classes to buy goods.

The Victor Company of Japan developed VHS tapes in the early 1970s, which were released for commercial sale in Japan on September 9, 1976. These tapes were quite expensive and were not easily available in India. However, China began to produce cheap VHS tapes and VHS players, which were then sold to India through Nepal. A few years later, with the advent of VCDs in 1993, the entire Indian entertainment industry was revolutionized. The VCD was cheaper than its predecessor; it had improved sound and video quality; it was compact and highly portable.

Inexpensive parts for VCD and DVD players and TVs began to be manufactured in China and these also found their way to India through Nepal. This allowed for the opening of many electronic shops which dealt in either selling, repairing or both. Also, these electronic components/parts were assembled together in Bihar and sold as complete units in the neighbouring states. However, these TVs, VCD, and DVD players were still expensive, and only the rich could buy them. To counter the high prices of TVs, and VCD / DVD players, another important development at this time was the renting out of VCD and DVD players to individuals who used them for events like marriages, festivals, and other occasions for large social gatherings. This allowed the poorer sections of society access to a new means of entertainment and its popularity kept on increasing.

In this dissertation, I have described how these shops were set up in the major markets surrounding the villages and small towns of the region; how they were received by the people; and how these technological developments became new forms of mass media. The local technicians assembling these units were from small towns in Bihar. These technicians came to Delhi's Lala Lajpat Rai electronics market and got trained, and on their return, they also trained the local people. Furthermore, I have tried to highlight the impact of these technologies and how they were not just limited to the well-off segments of society; rather they reached every class and caste of the village.

In all these developments discussed above, one major driving force was the advent of pirated media. These pirated media were extremely cheap and could be used for hundreds of times before being discarded. Both its price and reuse allowed individuals to consume mass media at very high rates. Therefore, piracy can be seen as a democratically participatory form that became a part of life in the cross-border areas along with the cultural ties between Nepal and Bihar.

A History of trade between Bihar and Nepal:

The trade relations between India and Nepal are centuries old and the following section will briefly discuss the nature of trade, the commodities traded, and how governments influenced the trade between the two countries. Also, the role of the British in India is discussed below. The connection between India and Nepal, in colonial times, was made because of the geographical and ecological aspect of the Terai¹. The Nepal Darbar (court) and the colonial officials established the relationship between Bihar and Nepal by cooperation with each other. In the 18th century, the Nepal Darbar and colonial officials made a plan to settle the people of Bihar and Nepal in the forest areas of the Terai region, and efforts were made to especially settle the distressed farmers of Bengal and Bihar here (Kumar, 2018: 4). Similarly, Tharu² people were settled in Terai by the Nepalese state (Ibid.). Since these masses of people were required to move between the two regions, hence it is these geopolitics that shaped the Bihar-Nepal border. The boundary line between Nepal and colonial India was established after the Anglo-Nepal War of 1816 with the ratification of the Treaty of Sugauli (4). The treaty allowed for territorial concessions in which some territories controlled by Nepal were given to British India and a British representative was established in Kathmandu. This allowed Britain to recruit Gorkhas for military service. A containment zone was also established on the Bihar-Nepal border to stop illegal arms trade. To prevent this, many security posts were established and the number of security personnel was also increased. By the 1880s, security stations were built in Patna, Champaran, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and Munger districts to prevent the smuggling of arms. However, the smuggling of illegal weapons continued despite the security posts.

¹Terai is an area of dense forests in southern Nepal that receives extremely heavy rainfall.

²Tharu people identify themselves as people of the forest. Their life is based on agriculture and the forest. The Nepal government has recognised them officially, and the government of India has recognised them as a scheduled tribe.

After the formation of the Gorkha Battalion by the British, both the Gorkha Battalion and the District Police of Bihar worked together to stop the illegal arms trade (Kumar, 2018). Officials observed that since the Anglo-Nepalese War, Nepal had developed its own small firearms manufacturing facilities and thus Nepal did not require to mass smuggle weapons. While the Nepal Darbar discouraged the recruitment of Gorkhas by the British during the latter half of the 19th century, however, by the end of the 1880s, relations between Bihar and Nepal began to become more favourable as a result of the changes in the structure of the Darbar. During this period five battalions of Gorkhas were established by the British.

The famine of 1866 was very severe in the Bihar-Nepal border areas due to the severe floods caused by the Gandhak river breaking its banks and flooding the neighbouring areas in Nepal and Bihar. Due to the flood, the crops were completely destroyed. As a result, the supply of paddy/rice severely shrank and food items were brought from other parts of India to these isolated areas of Nepal and Bihar. The relationship between Nepal and India became stronger because of the solidarity shown towards each other in the time of distress. Due to the trade between the two regions, continuous movement of individuals across the borders, recruitment of Gorkhas in the army, and standing in solidarity with each other in difficult times, the cultural, economic, political, and social ties between Nepal and Bihar were strengthened.

Between 1877 and 1890, railway routes were established in many districts of Bihar which were close to Nepal and trade between Nepal and Bihar picked up further pace. For example, at the post near Kutkenwa in Champaran, rice and paddy were brought in from Nepal, while cotton, salt, sugar, kerosene, copper and brass articles, and betel nut went from Bihar to Nepal. On the way to Sonbarsa, timber and animal skins started coming to Bihar from Nepal. In Madhubani, tobacco, silk and English cloth became the main items that were imported by Nepal. Rice, paddy, oil, kerosene, salt and sugar started passing through almost all the border posts. So, with the introduction of railways and due to improvements in roads and road transport, trade between Bihar and Nepal increased significantly after the 1890s (Kumar 2018: 8).

Informal trade continued and illegal weapons and clothes, salt, paddy, etc., came to North Bihar through the Nepal forests bypassing the police and security posts. Along with these products, Nepalese Dalda (cooking fat) started getting traded in the 1970s. Dalda

produced in India was very expensive and Nepalese Dalda cost half of the domestically produced Dalda. One of my interviewees for this project explained that Dalda was brought from Nepal to Bihar through the forests on bicycles encouraged and helped by the local people of the villages adjacent to the border. Gradually, the volume of Dalda illegally brought to Bihar increased dramatically. Later in the 1990s, the bicycle was replaced by the ‘Rajdoot’ motorcycle.

Nepal shares its boundary with many districts of Bihar, namely, Bettiah, Motihari, Sheohar and Sitamarhi, and the illegal business of Dalda was particularly prevalent in these districts. After Dalda, other items like clothes, papad, torches, watches, tape recorders and radios and large quantities of electronics goods started coming to Bihar from Nepal. These goods were very easily accessible through illegal means. This led to strong social relations between Bihar and Nepal. Many people from Bihar had settled in Nepal. Bhojpuri and Maithili were also spoken in some areas of Nepal. Marriages also started taking place between the people of Bihar and Nepal. There is a popular proverb in Bihar that indicates the relationship between these two areas: *“Between Nepal and Bihar there is a relationship of daughter and bread.”* Many Nepali students still come to Bettiah to pursue education and the people of Nepal are hired in Indian government services. They also work in the Bihar government. No passport is required to visit Nepal. So, the movement of individuals across the border is seamless.

A History of Entertainment in Bihar

In the small towns and villages of Bihar, the means of entertainment were traditionally very few. Most people spent the majority of their time working in the fields. Their life was very monotonous, and the same activities were carried out for most of the year. When there was no work or the men had spare time, then they used to play cards, sit at their local ‘chowk³’ and discuss social, political, agricultural, and other matters there. This was village life for a majority of the people.

However, culturally life in the villages was quite rich. People used to sing folk songs while working and also according to the festival and season. Bhojpuri folk⁴ songs of different

³A market place or market area.

⁴In my area of analysis.

kinds were sung like the Jatsari, Ropani, Sohni, Jhumar, Chaiti, Purbi and Kajri were sung by women, and Nirguna, and Gond were sung by men. The songs of happiness and union were in the Jhumar style, while Purbi and Jatsari songs used to be in the Viraha (pain of separation) form.

Also, one of the important icons of Bhojpuri art, music and dance culture was Bhikhari Thakur (18 December 1887 – 10 July 1971). He started the art form ‘Naach’, which was an amalgamation of songs, dance, comedy and acrobatics. It was very popular in North Bihar, and Naach was performed for the whole night. As women did not perform, men, dressed as women, performed women’s roles. Hence this form was named ‘LaundaNaach’ (Male dance). The following is an image of a male artist getting ready for the LaundaNaach.

Figure 2 - Ramachandra Manjhi getting ready for *Launda naach*



Source: “Act like a woman: How a little-known folk art form is sweeping away barriers of caste and gender, one Launda at a time.” <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/act-like-a-woman-bihar-s-launda-naach-sees-a-surge-in-popularity-during-festive-occasions/story-oZELovYpTg43xZKrIenKsM.html> (Accessed on 12 March 2020).

The culture of singing in different festivals of Bihar is centuries old. The people of the villages used to have a lot of entertainment during the festivals. During Dussehra, Ramlila based on the *Ramayana* would be performed with participation from the villagers who enacted roles in the play. Apart from this, the story of King Harishchandra used to be played

(which still continues) in the Chhath⁵ festival. The rehearsals of the plays stretched from a few weeks to more than two months. Men played the role of both men and women in these plays. After the end of one particular scene, the background and the elements of the next scene were prepared. During the interim between the scenes, different fillers were acted out. For instance, comedy, satire using characters of the villagers, or a music/dance performance, etc. were used to fill the time gap between scenes.

The earliest source of electronic entertainment in these regions was the Radio. However, it was available with only few households in a village in the 1980s. Radio was primarily used to listen to Samachar (NEWS), cricket commentary and music shows. As very few people owned a radio, therefore, it was a status symbol and radio owners used to carry them on their shoulders. However, the late 1990s and the early 2000s witnessed a huge growth in the purchase of radios. This was mainly due to the availability of cheaper Chinese radios. One of my interviewees for this project, Rajeshwar Prasad, a resident of village Amwa Majhar, Bettiah spoke about how his family and others in his village acquired radios as follows:

In the 1980s, the radio of the National Panasonic Company came to my house. My father used to listen to the news on the radio. Only three people in the village had radios. Its battery was available for around two rupees. I started listening to cricket matches on the radio from the 1990s. After this more people in the village started buying radios. But after 2000, when FM radio started, then the attraction towards radio increased. The radio parts used to come from China to Nepal and then from Nepal through small towns of Bihar they reached our villages. This radio was available at very cheap prices. It was easily available for 200-300 rupees.⁶

As the prices of radio started declining in the 1990s, the number of households owning radios increased. Since the radio was seen as a status symbol, therefore, upper caste people did not like lower castes owning it. Another interviewee responded:

While I was carrying my radio over my shoulder and listening to music, an upper-caste person said '*kya samay aa gaya hai ki Musahar⁷ log radio lekar ghoom rahe hain*' ('how times have changed; now people of lower castes are also carrying radios').⁸

Later with the advent of FM radio stations in the mid-2000s, the radio became very popular and gained huge traction with the masses. Also, at the same time, the prices of radios

⁵Chhath is a one of biggest festivals of Bihar.

⁶Interview conducted by the author on 12 January 2019.

⁷Musahar is a scheduled caste (SC) in Bihar. Later they were categorized as 'Mahadalit' by Bihar government.

⁸Interview conducted by the author on 12 January 2019.

plummeted because of locally assembled radios whose major parts came from China. Due to this, radio ownership increased drastically. The prices of radio declined to Rs. 200 to 300 and these could be rented for as low as Rs. 20 per month from local electronic shops. So, shops centred around radios started developing. I discuss these shops in a later chapter.

Over the years, the sources of entertainment grew. Earlier, festivals were the time when huge gatherings of people occurred and there were fairs and plays that were organized. Then gradually, some better-off families acquired televisions and small groups of people would get together and watch television series like the *Ramayana* (1987), the *Mahabharata* (1988), *Shri Krishna* (1993), *Chandrakanta* (1994), and later *Shaktiman* (1997) which became a major source of entertainment. Furthermore, watching a film each Friday and finally watching *Chitrahaar* (1982) and *Rangoli* (1989) (music shows of top songs) on television provided both entertainment as well as informed the masses about new film releases and popular/hit songs. Television and its broadcasts thus became the main entertainment form in small towns and villages. The information about popular songs and the latest films from television was then used to buy/rent VHS and audio cassette tapes, and CDs from the market.

In the villages, before the advent of electricity, batteries (mostly 12 Volt) were the major source of electrical energy and TVs, Tape recorders, cassettes and CD players all ran on batteries. So, keeping the battery alive, especially at the weekend, required community effort and the entire community looked ahead to the weekend. Therefore, there was a big market for batteries, especially battery recharges. One prominent method to recharge the battery was to take it to the nearby market (often carrying it for many kilometres) and then get it recharged. Another source of battery recharge was the flour mills. Flour mill owners used generators to run both the flour mill and the dynamo. Using dynamos provided electrical AC current, which after using a power supply was reduced to 12 volts DC and was then used to recharge batteries. This brought higher income to flour mill owners as well as reduced the travel time for recharging batteries for the devices used for entertainment.

In villages, marriages and festivals were great sites of different kinds of entertainment. Weddings are very special occasions in villages. Since sources of entertainment in the past were scarce, therefore, marriages were great occasions to establish one's social status by providing appropriate means of entertainment. So, tents, stage, lighting, sound systems with

loudspeakers, etc. were hired for public performances and shows of dances – *launda naach* - or film screenings.

As the prices of VHS players declined, the businesses providing tents bought VHS players, VHS tapes, and televisions and started renting them out. The middle-classes also started renting VHS players and tapes along with tents to entertain the *baraatis* (grooms' party members)⁹. Two to three films on VHS tapes were played overnight on these occasions. People from the same village, as well as the neighbouring villages, used to come to watch these films. Because there were so many people from the lower classes who rarely watched films, these forms were exciting sources of entertainment. As technology improved, VHS tapes and players were replaced by VCDs and VCD players. These were cheaper than the VHS technology; therefore, gradually it started becoming affordable for the lower classes to hire these as well. Therefore, by the mid-2000s, lower-class households also started showing films through VCD players in marriages. The social gatherings would be smaller, but lower-class households also started asserting themselves in providing entertainment to their *baaratis*. Mostly Bollywood films were shown. I will discuss the nature of these films in a later chapter.

The Research Field

For this project on piracy, film circulation and popular film culture in the small towns and villages of north Bihar in the years between 1995 and 2018, my research has drawn on scholarly debates in the following areas to understand the transformations of media, film and entertainment cultures in the focused regions of my study: the impact of globalization in different parts of the world; new media technologies leading to infrastructural transformations that led to the emergence of informal economies; piracy and film and media circulation; media consumption in rural regions and by migrant populations; and the emergence of different local media production centres in remote and marginalized areas that foreground different understandings of modernity and globalization.

In this context, scholarship on the global mobility of capital, labour and information through transnational media networks, and the impact of these mobilities on human imagination, communities and cultures created around media forms that have expanded

⁹Baraatis are the groom's wedding party.

beyond the urban to enter remote areas of rural localities (Appadurai, 1996; Sundaram, 2010) has been very useful for my research. Peter Manuel's work on cassette and VCD cultures (1993; 2012) that revolutionized the popular music scene has been crucially important for understanding how music production was dramatically decentralized and led to the rise of syncretic folk-pop hybrids aimed at diverse regional audiences. With the emergence of VCDs and CDs with MP3 technologies that facilitated the storage of several songs on one CD, inexpensive popular music recordings with visual as well as audio components that could be marketed to diverse audiences was enabled. In the process, they became the core of a 'VCD culture' – in many ways akin to the preceding cassette culture – with its own characteristic genres, content conventions, distribution locales, and consumption practices. It is clear then that post-liberalization, India witnessed a proliferation of 'non-legal' media practices, and with a rise in the usage of VCRs, CDs, DVDs and smart phones, film and music piracy opened up parallel networks of production, circulation, and consumption.

The role of piracy in creating informal networks of distribution and infrastructures of media circulation is detailed in the work of Ravi Sundaram (2010) who has argued that in the late 1990s when pirate distribution and reproduction of mainstream film and music releases was localized, the differences between the 'original' and its copy were two – fold: the latter typically preceded the original release, was marketed with a modest cover screen printed or even handwritten. The main hubs of media piracy run by migrants were markets in Delhi in Nehru Place, Palika Bazaar, and Lajpat Nagar. I have drawn on Sundaram's arguments to make my point that after 1995, piracy was the dominant form through which villagers experienced new media technology.

Ramon Lobato has argued that informal distributors have played an important role in film culture, from the early years of the medium right up to the present (2012). They worked through illegal piracy, and supplied pirated CDs and DVDs in crowded bazaars, and vendors sold or rented them to the masses. Lobato believes that these informal operators should also count as distributors, and we should take them every bit as seriously as we do the distribution arms of Hollywood and Bollywood studios. He further argues that the conceptual shift from legal to informal distribution networks is best achieved by placing what he calls 'the shadow economies of cinema' – unmeasured, unregulated and extra-legal audio-visual commerce – at the centre of our analytical lens, and by considering the many ways in which they interface with conventional film industries. My findings in my focused research region of north Bihar

have only confirmed and corroborated Lobato's insights about the extra-legal audio-visual commerce that continues to be at the heart of the entertainment economy of my region.

In order to understand these processes further, I have also deployed Brian Larkin's formulation of infrastructure which according to him refers to both technical and cultural systems that create institutionalized structures, whereby goods of all sorts circulate, connecting and building people into collectivities (2008: 5–6). He has argued convincingly that pirates produce a viral infrastructure of media, generating both the speed of globalisation and the noise of postcolonial cultural production with used equipment, assemblages and decentralisation providing media products to subaltern populations. His work on Nollywood (the Nigerian film industry) with its prior history of pirated videos of imported films being circulated which provided the foundation later for a powerful and extensive film industry producing local film content has had a constitutive influence on my research. His analysis of the Nigerian example enabled me to understand the film cultures of small-town and rural Bihar where against the background of economic and infrastructural backwardness, and with enhanced access to global media technologies, smart phones and computer peripherals, the rural-urban routes of piracy networks benefited local communities giving them access to both regional and national media. Recent work on "*jugaad*" innovation and the adaptation of older technologies to newer ends (Radjou, Prabhu, Ahuja, 2012; Mahadevan, 2015; Amit Rai, 2019) has also been crucially relevant for my research and has helped me to demonstrate not only how local technicians innovated with available materials, components and technologies to provide inexpensive forms of entertainment, but also how this activity circumvented large corporations and media houses to provide media access to ordinary people.

Building on Ravi Sundaram's arguments in her work on the pirate networks of Malegaon, Ishita Tiwary has argued that the access to new technologies shifted films and their music into informal markets, "with the local circuits of digitally based economies opening up new media industrial spaces" (2015: 60). Similarly, Madhujā Mukherjee has argued in her work on the "*manbhum* videos", locally produced and circulated in a "marginalized" area of Bengal that the emergence of such local film and media production radically questions the notions of both "regional" and national cinemas (2016). This work has enabled me to understand the processes of locally produced Bhojpuri music in the area of my research focus. The other really major area of scholarship that has recently become extremely significant is the Bhojpuri film and music industries. Here the work of Ratnakar Tripathy,

Katherine Hardy and Akshay Kumar (2007; 2010; 2015; 2016) who have all raised questions of identity, belonging, regional cultures and the proliferation of a popular film and music culture disseminated through piracy has been very significant for my discussion of the local networks of the production, circulation and consumption of Bhojpuri music and cinema. Central to my research and understanding of the constantly developing and proliferating media cultures in north Bihar has been the realization that piracy led to the emergence of an alternative, low-cost and low-technology based Bhojpuri film industry.

While I have drawn on all these arguments that have enabled me to think through the pirate ecologies of North Bihar, I have focused on the circuits of trade (legal/illegal) and the pirate networks across the porous line of control that India shares with Nepal especially along the Nepal-Bihar border. I have looked into how films are downloaded, sold or shared through small village *chowk* shops on CDs/DVDs, pen drives or even in memory cards at cheap rates. I have analyzed how the infrastructures of piracy bypass big companies and cater to local and home audiences mostly with the help of illegal P2P (torrent) networks over the internet. Understanding the processes of piracy has enabled me to analyze the resurgence of the Bhojpuri film industry in its new avatar. Through the dissertation, I have argued how the development of village-level distribution networks in the early 1990s set-up for the distribution of Bollywood films, was taken full advantage of by the Bhojpuri film industry that benefited from this extra-legal, fully established distribution networks in the villages and small towns of north Bihar. These networks ensured the reach of films to places where cinema halls were inaccessible or unavailable, electricity connections not fully developed and to those who could not afford original CDs/DVDs. Akshaya Kumar has argued that the re-emergence of Bhojpuri cinema in 2004 took over Hindi film distribution in most of North India (2016), and that the success of the Bhojpuri film industry followed from a vibrant Bhojpuri music industry. While I agree with Kumar's proposition, I also seek to argue that there was an infrastructure in remote villages readily available to people who were watching mainstream Bollywood films on pirated CDs and DVDs. With the infrastructure of film viewing already in place, it was clear to me that the Bhojpuri films that were made were heavily influenced by mainstream Bollywood films that people were consuming in the region. Thus, in my dissertation, I have sought to prove that piracy had already created a widespread film-viewing infrastructure where people were watching Hindi films before Bhojpuri cinema which demonstrates that these regions had through piracy a non-theatrical but a deep and long-running affair with cinema.

Research Methodology

In this project, I have worked with a combination of a largely ethnographic methodology with spatial mapping of the spread of media technologies and forms in north Bihar as I looked into the inflow of hardware and software and the exhibition and consumption of films in these areas. Furthermore, using theoretical debates about globalization, modernity and piracy, I have attempted to understand the processes by which they have impacted the production and circulation of media content in my area of focus in this dissertation. Drawing on Brian Larkin's broader definition of infrastructure that refers to both technical and cultural systems, and the work of Radjou, Prabhu, Ahuja (2012) and Rai (2019) on "*jugaad*" innovations and piracy, I have traced how these modes merged and formed informal structures to create the technologies of entertainment, leading also to the re-emergence and popularization of Bhojpuri cinema.

At the outset, I have mapped the processes that enabled the trade between Nepal and Bihar through which goods and technologies moved across the border. I have conducted interviews with those who have been involved in the trade between the two countries in order to understand the trade flows over the last twenty-five years in these areas. I have spoken with shop owners and small business owners in Bettiah and the villages surrounding it. I have tracked the movement of parts for TVs, Cassette players and VCPs/VCRs and DVD players to wholesale dealers in nodal areas in Bettiah, Muzaffarpur, Sitamarhi from where the electronic goods were transferred to local workshops for assembling of the full units that were then bought by rental shops in these areas. Currently, the trade continues with Chinese phones and their parts that follow the same routes to the shops in these areas. These shops also repair electronic items and have become mobile phone shops in the last ten years. An interview with Ajay Kumar, the owner of the "Maa Jagadamba mobile centre" in Ganj Bazaar¹⁰ on one field trip in this area clearly demonstrated the processes I have outlined above:

I set up this shop in 2005. I started at first by assembling, repairing, selling and renting out VCDs, DVDs, TVs and batteries. Later, as VCD prices went down, people started buying them. Therefore, according to the need of the hour, I reorganized my business, and hence I started selling and repairing Chinese mobile phones and also transferring films onto the SD card. So, this transition made me buy a new desktop and also learn how to operate it. So, over the years I had to organize and reorganize my business to survive and grow in the market. And the major reason for

¹⁰A village in the Minapur block of Muzaffarpur district, Bihar.

this reorganization, according to me, has been the changes in the technology and lowering of the prices of electronic goods.¹¹

I have also conducted interviews with those who rented this hardware and organized screenings of films. These interviews enabled me to understand which films were circulating in the 1990s and the 2000s. Rajeev Nayan, a film enthusiast from rural Bihar, said to me,

In 1995 I rented a TV, CD player and three CDs from a small town called Bettiah in Bihar. I rented pirated CDs of *Betaab* (1983), *Sohni Mahival* (1984) and *Paap Ki Duniya* (1988). This was the first time we (villagers) watched a film together on a black and white TV.¹²

The TV that Rajeev Nayan refers to here is a Chinese TV that he bought from Birgunj in Nepal in 1995. From what he is saying here, it is clear that the films people were watching in the 1990s in the small towns and villages of Bihar were pirated Hindi films. I have also visited markets and shops where films and videos used to be rented/sold earlier, and talked to the shopkeepers about the films that they dealt with and how these items circulated. This has enabled me to track the circulation of media content and also understand the presence of Hindi cinema in these areas that was replaced for a while by Bhojpuri films with the re-emergence of Bhojpuri cinema with *Sasura Bada Paisewala* in 2004. However, from interviews conducted recently with the youth in these areas who are now watching films on their phones and the internet, it seems that all kinds of films are being consumed by them: mainstream A circuit films, B and C circuit films, Bhojpuri films, South Indian films and porn. More interviews with people in different age groups and the inclusion of women in the groups I have spoken to has ensured a broader sense of the films that have been consumed in these areas. The impact of these films on the cultural life of people is also evident through these interviews.

Shops and village *chowks* still carry posters of recent films. It is also interesting to me that the posters of Bhojpuri films resemble those of mainstream Hindi films of the past particularly those with the major Hindi film stars like Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, Sunny Deol, Akshay Kumar, Sri Devi, and Ajay Devgan. Thus, my methodology has combined empirical analysis and ethnography, while trying to maintain a proper concern for

¹¹Unless otherwise stated all interviews used in this dissertation have been translated from Hindi to English by the author. Interview conducted by the author on 25th January 2019.

¹²Interview conducted by the author on 21th January 2019.

the analysis of cultural flows but also the materiality of the technologies which have enabled these flows across borders and regions.

Chapterisation

Chapter One: The Flows of Media Technologies to the Small Towns and Villages of North Bihar

My first chapter looks into the history of the trade and circulation of media hardware and the entertainment they enabled in small towns like Bettiah, Narkatiyaganj, Raxaul, Sugauli, Sheohar, Sitamarhi, Muzaffarpur and the villages around them in northern Bihar. This trade-in technological hardware followed the established circuits of trade (legal/illegal) between Nepal and India that had been taking place for decades of various items like edible oils (Dalda), goods and technology. When TV, video, VCD and DVD technologies entered north Bihar, as pointed out earlier, they entered along the same routes with the same processes of illegal trade facilitation that had been already established.

In this chapter I point out that a majority of electronic goods were not produced in Nepal; instead, they were manufactured in China and exported (both legally and illegally) to Nepal, from where they found their way into India. The centre of this trade between India and Nepal was Birgunj, because of its proximity to Raxaul¹³. VHS technology also entered India from China via Nepal and inexpensive VHS players and tapes began to be sold throughout India. Similarly, VCD technology followed the same route and revolutionized the entertainment industry. Inexpensive components for VCD and DVD players and televisions were also manufactured in China, and once again found markets in Indian towns through Nepal (Birgunj) where they were assembled and sold as complete units. However, VCD and DVD players were yet not built for the masses; rather they were purchased by wealthy individuals and shopkeepers who then rented them out with VCDs/DVDs to those who hired them for an evening's entertainment.

The local technicians who assembled these units were from small towns in Bihar and were trained at Delhi's Lajpat Rai market, from where on their return they trained more local people as well. I have described in detail how the assembling shops were set up in the *chowks* of villages and the market places of the small towns in this area, how they were received by

¹³Raxaul is a sub-divisional town in the East Champaran district of the Indian state of Bihar. It is situated on the India-Nepal border opposite Birgunj (Nepal).

the people, and how these technological developments became new forms of mass media. Furthermore, it is important to point out that the impact of these technologies was not limited to the wealthy sector of society; rather they must be seen in the context of a democratically participant mass media form. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how piracy became a way of life in these cross-border areas, with a focus on the cultural relations between Nepal and Bihar and that piracy constituted a vernacular sector irrespective of caste and class.

Chapter Two: Media Technologies, Cinema Habits and the Revival of the Bhojpuri Film Industry

The second chapter analyses the relationship between electronic technologies and the film-viewing habits they enabled. Before the advent of these technologies, the villages of north Bihar did not have any facilities to watch films because there were no cinema halls in these villages, and the nearest film theatre was located in the small town of Bettiah that was also not easily accessible. In the late 1980s with the arrival of video technologies, people did start watching films on video by renting the cassettes and equipment for special occasions, especially marriages. Because the purchasing power of people was low and there was no stable source of electricity, these rented films were played on electric generators for an evening. These films were the big Hindi blockbusters that were screened, and the whole community gathered around to celebrate the occasion. Since the cost of the rental was borne by the community, it allowed the consumers to select several films for an occasion. Hence community entertainment was possible without getting into the hassle of purchasing the players or the VHS cassettes. However, with VCD and DVD technologies, costs came down a little and the practice of people watching films collectively in their own villages continued. Now instead of VCPs or VCRs, VCD/DVD players would be hired along with the pirated films. In this chapter, I look at the different exhibition strategies in these areas including the collective viewing of films in melas, village *chowks*, at festivals and outside homes. While community viewing was an established practice by this time, the reduction in rental costs also allowed families to set up their own entertainment outside their homes. There were usually three screenings of films, a big family film for everyone after dinner, followed by more adult-themed or action films in the next show, and finally late into the night and early hours of the morning, semi-porn films were consumed by the youth and older men.

These technologies also impacted the youth of these villages; for instance, when people watched *Tere Naam* (2003), they copied the hairstyle of Salman Khan from the film.

That's why I felt it was important for me to explore the impact of mass media on the socio-cultural life in these areas, how piracy and electronic technology introduced film culture to every class and caste of society and offered aspirational possibilities of self-transformation.

In the last section of the chapter, inspired by Ravi Sundaram's work on Delhi, I have explored how piracy in north Bihar established a complex network where low-cost hardware and software for television and music connected media markets, local dealers and retailers to provide access to cinema and other entertainment forms. Furthermore, these processes also led to the emergence of an alternative, low-cost and low-technique based Bhojpuri film and music industry that is even today primarily consumed through informal practices.

Chapter Three: The Mobile Phone and Personalized Viewing

In the third chapter I have examined the move from collective viewing to the personalized consumption of films on mobile phones, and the circulation of pirated Hindi, South Indian and Bhojpuri films in these areas. This personalised film viewing began around 2009 when inexpensive Chinese mobile phones came into the market which allowed ordinary people to watch films according to their convenience. They would purchase digital copies of films from local shops at nominal prices of about Rs 5-10 per film which was then owned by them. During this phase of inexpensive Chinese phones, the technology was simple and easy to use. Also, these phones had Bluetooth which enabled the sharing of films at a very fast rate. Soon, android devices with greater storage and faster transfer of films made the sharing of films easier for those who collectively purchased different films and then shared them to save money. A transition clearly took place from community viewing to personalised viewing with a "downloading" culture – where curated video packages were loaded onto memory sticks (SD cards and pen drives) for a nominal price. Thus, film consumption became easier and films more accessible.

While looking into how these piracy practices monetized themselves, I have concluded by examining how even these practices of buying content have been replaced by consuming films on the internet, demonstrating yet another turn in the piracy game. However, it is too early to read these signs and how their long-term effects will pan out in the future.

In the Conclusion, I have summarized the main arguments of the dissertation and demonstrated the processes of the absorption of new media technologies in the far-flung areas

of north Bihar. I have also reiterated the significance of piracy in the transformation of the media and entertainment scape of these areas and pointed to the consumption of entertainment on the internet by the population, especially the youth, of these areas.

Chapter 1

The Flows of Media Technologies to the Small Towns and Villages of North Bihar

In this chapter, I look at the history of when, how and where the trade and the movement of media hardware started in the small towns and villages of North Bihar like Bettiah, Narkatiaganj, Raxaul, Sugauli, Motihari, Sheohar, Sitamarhi, Muzaffarpur and their surrounding villages. Media hardware came to the villages of north Bihar through these small towns via Nepal. As discussed in the Introduction, the relation between Nepal and Bihar is centuries old. People of these neighbouring regions can easily move between the borders. Business has flourished between the two regions and the trade of goods and the movement of humans has occurred uninterrupted for almost a century. This business first started with edible items like paddy, wheat, Nepalese edible oil (Dalda). Then basic electronics goods like torches, radio, battery and electric tape recorders, etc. started getting traded and were traded for many decades.

Journey of media technologies to the small towns and villages:

After independence, India dreamed of becoming self-reliant. On the basis of that dream, the Indian government until 1978 followed economic and political policies designed to provide autonomy and self-reliance and instituted a protectionist policy to promote the indigenous industry, and did not allow foreign investors to invest. Capitalist development was controlled; a large public sector was invested in and developed and there was extensive bureaucratic regulation of the private sector. Because of this, the growth of technology was very slow in India. Foreign goods used to come to India only under special circumstances. Especially electronics goods used to come in very small quantities, because the tax on it was very high and getting a license for selling electronics goods was very difficult. Since the growth of technology in India was slow, India did not produce radios, audio cassettes and cassette players in the quantities that foreign countries, especially, East Asian countries did.

Radio and audio cassette players started coming to India from the late 1970s onwards. As Peter Manuel has pointed out:

By the late 1970s, cassette players had begun to appear in noticeable quantities throughout much of the country; most of these were Japanese “two-in-ones” (radio cassette recorders and players) brought by the tens of thousands of guest workers returning from the Gulf states (1991: 61).

In the 1980s, due to the slowing down of India’s economy, restrictions on foreign investments were relaxed. This led to electronics goods like televisions, audio and video cassettes recorders, cameras etc. coming to India. Peter Manuel says:

The economic liberalisation policies, together with other related developments commencing in the middle or late 1970s, led to the phenomenal, if slightly belated, spread of cassette technology in India. The purchasing power and increasing consumerism of the flourishing bourgeoisie stimulated demand for audio and visual entertainment systems. While tariffs on foreign televisions, tape players, and stereos remained over 100 percent, many middle-class Indians felt affluent enough simply to pay the high import duties on foreign electronics goods. Aside from the thousands of “two-in-ones” brought by Gulf guest workers, many Japanese tape players and televisions also found their way illegally into the Indian market (1993: 62).

However, since these items were very expensive, therefore, only the rich could afford them. At the same time, it was considered a prestige symbol to have access to these electronic goods in Indian society – both in towns and villages. Because of this, the demand for electronics goods in the Indian market was always high, even though very few could afford to buy them. Keeping in mind the huge demand for electronic goods, the Indian government allowed electronics components to come to India from abroad so that local manufacturers could produce these electronic goods. Manuel points out that companies like

Orson-Sony, BPL-Sayno and Onida-JVC started coming to India. Indian consumers started buying electronics a lot. The cassette industry expanded rapidly, from \$1.2 million around 1980 to \$12 million in 1986 and more than \$21 million in 1990 (Ibid).

Peter Manuel indicates how the prices of audio cassettes fell based on his interview with Anil Chopra in his book *Cassette Culture; Popular Music and Technology in North India* (1993).

The real cassette boom has happened mostly since 1984 or 85, especially because tape coating has started in India in a huge way... The big boom has been because the costs of these raw materials have become dirt cheap - available all over the country. The moulded shell [of the cassette], the hubs, the rollers, the whole thing is available dirt cheap. There wasn’t so much easily available

before that. Then from 82 to 85, the record dealers switched to cassettes, and the pan-walas started selling them (Page 62).

Gradually cassettes found their way to small towns through the big cities yet they hadn't reached the villages until much later in the 1990s, primarily because of the non-availability of electricity in the villages and the high cost of the infrastructure required. As prices declined and more and more upper and middle-class people in the villages started purchasing cassette players, they ceased being a novelty and more and more households wanted to buy them. Jainendra Dost told me during my research:

In the year 1994-95, I was in the 7th standard. A double speaker cassette player was purchased by my father. We had our own audio cassette tapes when I was very young. At this time everything was happening in front of me that I could understand. My elder brother Dharmendra Kumar Dost was very fond of audio cassettes. He decided which cassettes had to be bought, when the battery needed to be charged, the timing when the songs would be played, where the songs would be played (public or private), and also the volume at which the tape would be played. The cassettes of many film songs including *Aankhen* (1993), *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (1994), *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), Bhojpuri folk songs by Bharat Sharma, Ramshankar Yadav, and a few others slowly started coming into the house. Gradually many more houses in the village started owning tapes. Audio cassette players were mostly found in houses where people used to go to Bengal, Assam to earn. Such migrant workers and small businessmen often brought audio players to their homes. The effect of all this was that the shops of cassettes, battery charging and components for making audio players started opening in the city market. At that time, cassette companies like T-Series, HMV, Tips and Venus were dominant. Cassettes used to come in the range of Rs. 30 to 50. At that time, I did not know about piracy. The term piracy became common after the advent of CD/DVD. But at that time, there was a lot of piracy by recording and re-recording the cassette. The process of recording and re-recording the cassette tape is very interesting. A plain reel cassette was available at the cassette shop. On that plain cassette, the songs of our favourite films or albums were recorded. At that time cassettes were available according to the time that the tape would run for. And the value of the blank cassette was also according to its time period. That is, a cassette running for 60 minutes was available for Rs 10 and a cassette running for 90 minutes was available for around Rs 14-15. The shopkeepers used to charge Rs 5-10 for recording songs on that plain reel cassette. That is, cassettes ranging from 30 to 50 rupees were easily available for 10 rupees. That empty audio cassette had a plain paper stuck on it, on which people, after recording, would write down the name of the newly recorded film or album from which the songs had been recorded.

After a few years, it wasn't necessary to record the entire songs of a single film or album in one audio cassette. One could choose songs from different films if one wanted to. For example, I liked the songs "Tu Cheez Badi Hai Mast-Mast" and "Na Kajre Ki Dhar" from the film *Mohra*

(1994) and disliked the rest; so, there was no need for me to record all the songs of the film *Mohra*. I could record two songs from the film *Aankhein* (1993), two songs from the film *Kuch-KuchHota Hai* (1998) and two Bhojpuri folk songs. At that time the shopkeeper used to charge Re. 1 per song.

Then when the re-recording of audio cassettes started happening, I bought a new plain cassette and recorded 10 songs on it. When I got bored with those songs, I put 10 new songs on the same cassette. And I could do this for 3-4 times. Although all this used to degrade the sound quality, but I used to think ‘*na mama se kana mama accha*¹⁴’, that is, it is better to have entertainment in some quality than no entertainment.

At that time the electricity in our village was very bad. In such a situation, all the responsibility of playing the audio player depended on the battery. Most people used to keep small or big power batteries according to their convenience, which was either a 6-volt or a 12-volt battery. The battery charging shop was located in the market *chowk*. At that time, the rate for complete charging of the battery was up to Rs 10-15 according to the size of the battery. Exide Company batteries were very popular. But there were many local repairmen who assembled and repaired batteries in the market *chowk* at significantly lower prices than the Exide battery. Some of the people in my village also owned two batteries. The shopkeepers who charged batteries also rented out a fully charged battery at the rate of Rs 15-20.¹⁵

Jainendra Dost’s report to me indicates clearly the mass circulation and popularity of audio cassettes. Since there was a huge demand for these products at affordable prices, therefore, piracy found its way into these markets.

Piracy Infrastructures

Piracy entered the public domain in India in the context of globalisation in the 1980s using the already present technological infrastructures (Karaganis, 2011: 339). Here infrastructures, as defined by Larkin (2004), are the distribution channels that are used by pirates to reproduce (pirate) a good and make it available to the end consumer. He also states that technological infrastructure “creates channels that organize the movement of energy, information, and economic and cultural goods between societies but at the same time creates possibilities for new actions” (Larkin, 2008: 5). By this, he implies that technological infrastructures while enabling the movement of goods, services and information, also lay down the ground work for other activities including piracy. Piracy works through digital and mechanical reproduction, and it became an integral part of society with technological developments. In piracy, different media are taken and then using the required technology,

¹⁴It is better to have a one-eyed maternal uncle than not having any uncle at all.

¹⁵Interview conducted by the author on 15th March 2019.

they are reproduced and distributed using the already present infrastructure. As an example, big music companies put their albums up for sale. So, the technological infrastructure is used to market, distribute and sell the albums. However, this infrastructure also provides the necessary technology to pirate the album. As marketing is already done by the music company, therefore, these pirates use the same distribution channels, the popularity of the album and lower prices to sell these pirated goods. Thus, the infrastructure that is established to sell different media forms is used for piracy as well. Saseen (2002) has described the above-mentioned use of infrastructure for piracy as the “Organizational architecture” of globalisation (2008: 217).

As discussed at the beginning of this dissertation, India and Nepal have a long history of trade between them and due to the porous borders between these two countries, loose border patrolling and corruption, the movement of goods between Bihar and Nepal is relatively easy. With China emerging as a hub for cheap pirated electronic components, they found their way to Bihar through Nepal. And since they were significantly lower priced than their original counterparts and there was only a slight decline in performance, their demand was very high.

When piracy came to the cities, it made entertainment accessible to middle and lower-class people across the globe. As Brian Larkin points out in the context of Nigeria, due to piracy, foreign films, music, and other media forms reached Nigeria that led to rapid growth in the local film industry. Piracy thus came to be involved in the everyday lives of the people of Kano city, Nigeria with the duplication of broadcast Hausa dramas and Islamic religious cassettes, as well as the mass distribution of the two most popular drama forms in the region, Indian and Hollywood films. Kano became the regional distribution centre for electronic media in Northern Nigeria due to the organized systems of duplication and the sale of media. (2008: 224).

The people in Nigeria used to watch Indian and Hollywood films extensively that reached the cities of Nigeria through the Middle East. Larkin points out:

With the emergence of VCDs, the route of the market for Indian film has changed considerably. According to one Indian distributor, the market is now oriented towards Pakistan, where VCD plants make high-quality dubs of Indian films. Master copies are shipped via DHL to Kano, where

they are transferred to tape and sold in bulk to Hausa distributors. I was told that the gap between a film's release in India and its appearance in Kano can be as little as seven days. American films are pirated through similar networks. They are copied illegally in the United States and shipped to Dubai (2008: 224)

The above example demonstrates that piracy created its own network of acquiring the original media, reproducing the media in large quantities and then using the pre-existing distribution network to reach large and remote sections of society (the subaltern sections) which were most attracted to pirated goods.

Similarly, piracy in Bihar allowed people access to entertainment at much lower costs. This in turn led to a huge growth in demand for pirated goods as people from the lower and middle classes suddenly had access to entertainment media that they did not have before. Earlier, electronics shopkeepers sold legally purchased goods; however, once pirated goods started flooding the market, small electronic shopkeepers and even paan-walas started selling pirated goods, especially cassette tapes, MP3s and VCDs. This allowed greater consumption of music and films from Bollywood and Bhojiwood¹⁶. This also led to the development of the regional music industry and allowed Bhojpuri music and the Bhojpuri film industry to grow at a phenomenal pace. I will discuss the implications of this in a later section.

Along with the rising demand for entertainment in Bihar, the income of shopkeepers also started increasing because of piracy. It was an informal economy that was unaudited. While in post-colonial India, media was majorly consumed by the elite and in urban centres, with the advent of piracy and pirated goods, a larger section of society started consuming media. This enabled the dissemination of a sense of modernity among people who no longer felt that they belonged to a society where the consumption of media was very unevenly distributed. Thus, as Ravi Sundaram points out, "Postcolonial media urbanism produced an illicit form, pirate modernity" (2010: 6). In the following section, I will discuss how piracy came to Bihar.

Circuits of Piracy in the villages of Bihar

India's film and music industries have been dominated by domestic companies which compete with each other in terms of prices and distribution. In the past, these companies

¹⁶ The Bhojpuri film industry.

decided the price of film and music cassettes considering the consumers in big cities. And since the majority of consumers in these areas could afford these forms of entertainment, therefore, the companies kept the price of films and cassettes very high. But shopkeepers in small towns could not sell these films and music cassettes at those prices. However, once piracy spread, the shopkeepers of these small towns sold pirated cassettes in huge quantities and also made huge profits. So, piracy, in a short span of time, became a very popular mode of entertainment consumption.

Piracy has been a part of the cassette industry since its inception and cassette culture received a huge boost because of piracy. Peter Manuel has pointed out that after the 1980s, piracy dominated the original cassette company, making more profits from them, thus becoming an important part of the market. In India too, like that in any other country, piracy took three forms: bootlegging, dubbing of selected requested songs for individual clients, and above all, unauthorized re-recording of existing legitimate recordings (Manuel, 1993). Bootlegging meant that a song was being recorded and sold on cassettes without the permission of the artist, or the original company.

With the arrival of audio cassette technology in India, music companies like HMV had to move from producing vinyl records to recording and selling their copyrighted songs of films on audio cassettes. The demand for cassettes was very high and HMV was unable to meet this demand. So, the piracy industry filled this shortage of cassettes (Manuel, 1993). In the 1980s, the sale of pirated cassettes was estimated at only 10 percent, but by 1986, piracy's share had risen to 95 percent, as Dubashi has pointed out:

In 1985 legitimate companies sold five million cassettes while the pirates sold 180 million, or 95 per cent of the market. The potential loss was Rs 450 crore in sales. No wonder that the three biggest recording companies - Gramophone Company of India (GCI), Music India Ltd (MIL) and CBS - have accumulated losses of Rs 15 crore over the last three years on a total turnover of Rs 25 crore (1986).

The huge growth of piracy in India can be attributed mainly to 4 reasons, namely

1. The huge demand for music in India.
2. The lower prices of pirated music.
3. Ease of pirating the music, and
4. Superior distribution network of the piracy industry.

Around the 1990s in Bihar, cassette shops were set up in small towns where cassettes were sold, mixed and reproduced. Narkatiaganj, Bettiah, Motihari, Muzaffarpur, Sheohar and Sitamarhi also saw the emergence of these shops dealing with selling cassettes, repairing cassette players and tape recording in the 1990s. These towns, due to their relative proximity to Nepal, were the early centres of piracy in Bihar. Initially, people used to buy original cassettes but gradually duplicate cassettes came into the market along with cheap blank cassette tapes. Pirated cassettes were very cheap because they did not have to pay any taxes or pay for any recording, production, promotional, or royalty costs to the artists. Pirates bought blank tapes from unlicensed shops, transferred songs onto them and put cover pages (like in the original cassettes) and sold them at very low prices. Thus, cassettes of film songs, bhajans and ghazals, whose demand was very high were sold in the market in duplicate cassettes.

Cheap cassette players along with electronic components and blank cassettes made their way from China to Bihar via Nepal. These cassette players ran on both electricity and battery. The blank cassettes could be recorded with music numerous times; however, after the third re-recording, the audio quality drastically declined. Therefore, blank cassettes were used for three re-recordings. Due to the huge demand for music and the supply of inexpensive blank cassettes and tape recorders, shops started to emerge that specialized in recording one's desired music track or a complete album onto a blank cassette. This led to people creating their own playlist, and not just once, but rather at least three times without losing the quality of the audio.

Around 1995, the cost of putting a song into a blank cassette was Rs. 1-2. When the cassette culture got established in Bihar, initially people only listened to Hindi songs and Hindi bhajans. But after 1995, Bhojpuri singers who used to sing only in cultural programs started recording their own albums in these blank cassettes and put them up for sale under a non-established music label. This led to a huge growth of the Bhojpuri music industry, which led to the rise of many regional singers. Later, other regional languages of Bihar also picked up on this and music albums started coming out in Mathili, Angika and several other language dialects in Bihar. The next revolutionary source of entertainment was Television. It was an audio-visual form for entertainment. Again, like any new technology, it was owned by the rich in the major cities. Till 1991, there was only one television channel in India - Doordarshan, a public service broadcaster. The opening up of the Indian economy in the early

1990s made it possible for private broadcasters to enter India. The number of television channels increased manifold. By 2005, there were over 200 digital channels in India. But these were limited to the cities only. As Doordarshan was a free to air channel, therefore, it was the only channel available in villages till the arrival of Direct to Home Technology (DTH). In most parts of the village, the signal strength was very poor; therefore, the television antenna was raised using bamboo sticks. At other places, instead of the conventional antenna, a bicycle tyre rim was used as the antenna.

Figure 3 - Bicycle rim used as an antenna for signal reception



Source: Internet link:<https://rideforthetrees.wordpress.com/category/roadside-updates-journals/roadside-updates-ecuador/> Accessed on 5 April 2019.

People in the village thus relied solely on Doordarshan for entertainment and films that were telecast on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays which brought the whole community together. However, community viewing still excluded many individuals, especially from the middle and lower classes. The lack of accessibility left a very large market untapped which was later captured by VCDs through renting.

The three most popular brands for television were Salora, Onida and BPL. But as with any technology, they were very expensive at the beginning. However, China started manufacturing cheap television components, which found their way into Bihar through Nepal. These were used to assemble televisions in India. Some of these fake television brands were Falora, Tonida and PPL. As the technology grew, more new television brands emerged. As electricity, especially in rural areas was very limited, therefore, televisions were designed in such a way that they were also battery operable.

Figure 4 - Cheap Chinese battery-operated television found at Rajiv Nayan's house which he purchased from Birgunj in 2002.



Source: Author's own fieldwork

Simultaneously with the proliferation of televisions and assembled televisions in the mid-1980s, there was another technology – video – that impacted entertainment and resulted in critical structural changes in the distribution sector. It was in the early 80s that video cassette players appeared in the world; however, it was not until the late 1980s that this technology was widely available. Before video cassettes, the only medium for watching films was theatre or television. After the VHS came to India, many video theatres, parlours, and libraries emerged all around the country, threatening the cinema theatre business. While the disseminated recorded sound was mainly music in India, the content of the video was largely cinema during the decade of the 80s. These video cassette distribution circuits shaped film culture in particular ways and created a demand for new forms of cultural production.

In *Pirate Modernity*, Ravi Sundaram speaks about Ayesha Kagal, a journalist who travelled all over the country in January 1984 to investigate the proliferation of video, which had only been introduced to the country on an extensive basis a year before her tour. Sundaram points out that,

Kagal created a picture of bustling makeshift movie theatres and burgeoning cassette libraries. The video drew people from all walks of life, including youth, working people, businesspeople, women, and children. It showed the latest releases from Hindi and regional cinema and a respectable range of pornography. The magnificent scenery of India - the famous cattle market in Rajasthan, the hill station in central India, and Leh in Ladakh – all bore witness to the upheaval unleashed by video, with movie theatres closing, distributors going bankrupt, and a film industry under siege. “We're sunk,” film industry producer GUI Anand told Kagal. Cinema can't face the competition. Our prints are bulky; our processing charges are going up while the prices of cassettes are going down and will drop further. I sometimes feel the 35 mm projector is going to be a museum item. (2010: 113)

The biggest issue with video was piracy, since libraries and theatres quickly obtained the current film through a worldwide circuit, avoiding local laws and film industry limitations. The film was subsequently disseminated through local video libraries and improvised theatres using low-cost VHS cassettes. New parallel distribution infrastructures arose quickly, including cable networks, video libraries, and small video theatres. At the same time as the collapse of older cinemas and exhibition venues, a considerable growth of the media public was underway. M. Rashmi says:

Videophiles who consumed cinema in this format told me that video cassette players (VCPs) were kept in major restaurants and bars, carom and gambling centres, and video parlours. VCPs were very expensive when they were first seen in Bangalore (2014).

While in big cities like Bangalore, VCPs were found in restaurants and bars, in Bihar's small towns video parlours were set up in tents, and were accessed by the members of the middle and lower classes. These parlours were also set up in the village fairs. Video parlours attracted most of the people from small towns and villages, particularly those who couldn't afford to go to see films in theatres in Bihar's small towns. These parlours essentially served as movie theatres, with screenings arranged at specific times. While movie theatres screened just the most recent releases, video parlours screened a wider range of films, especially action and romantic Bollywood films.

For many people, especially the youth, these video parlours became important leisure areas. Women who couldn't access videos in parlours or films in theatres watched films on television. The 1990s featured several noteworthy advancements that helped to popularise video usage. Aside from watching films on TV, many families leased VCPs and VCRs from

video rental stores for special events and holiday seasons and indulged in movie watching marathons. In villages, middle-class people rented VCPs during big festivals or during marriages. VCP and VCR rental stores rented out both players and cassettes during these times. Such methods introduced video cassettes into the domestic sphere, reaching out to households with no access to a television or a VCR. A few houses had VCPs, and they only rented tapes from rental stores. Video cassettes were leased and circulated rather than bought and kept. Video rental shops played a significant role in facilitating such practices of consumption. With the advent of VCDs (Video Compact Disc) in 1993, the entire Indian entertainment industry was revolutionized. VCDs were much cheaper than VHS tapes; their sound and video quality were much better than what could be had on a VHS. The VCD player was also compact and portable which could be easily carried from one place to another. The initial VCD players that were available in the Indian market were very expensive; however, their price also fell sharply over the years. And rented VCDs and TVs made entertainment accessible to the previously deprived sections of society.

In small cities local cable TV operators started their channels during the VCD era, broadcasting films they did not have distribution rights for. They also frequently used to broadcast soft pornographic videos late at night. These services were exclusively available in the city. The fact that cable TV providers were always under police monitoring is a well-known fact, and the haphazard proliferation of cable TV in India provided a severe regulatory challenge. The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act of 1995 brought order to the chaos created by the sheer growth of cable television in India.

VCDs (video compact discs) were first introduced in the late 1990s. When they first came out, they were not affordable to everyone, just like any other technology. On the other hand, VCDs and DVDs had become commonplace in urban areas by the early 2000s. This period is exceptional in terms of the availability of a wide range of media content. With the advent of CDs and DVDs, video content was expanded to include TV programs, album songs, movie snippets, local theatre, music concerts, and wedding videos. The shops that used to rent out video cassettes changed to lending out CDs and DVDs, with borrowing prices ranging from twenty to thirty rupees per CD.

Thanks to digital technology, recording, and copying have become more accessible than ever before. Recent Bollywood and other south Indian language films have been pirated

and sold on the black market. T-Series, Shemaroo, and Goldmines Video were among the video production companies that only issued video CDs of South Indian films after their release in theatres. The CD and DVD industry grew so large in Bihar that they became pedestrian objects sold by little peddlers on busy streets near bus and train stations.

The next major technological development after VCDs was the DVDs (Digital Versatile Disc). It removed some of the limitations of VCDs like storage capacity (one film in VCDs compared to many films in DVDs), better audio (from MPEG 1 to MPEG 2), and resume features. However, DVDs could not reach the level of success that VCDs had reached. The primary reason for this was that the DVDs wasn't backward compatible, that is, DVDs could not run on VCD players. Therefore, one would have to discard one's VCD player to switch over to a DVD player. But as both VCDs and DVDs were available in the market, therefore, consumers could still consume their entertainment with the older technology.

The history of electronic shops in the small towns and villages of North Bihar

The history of electronics shops in the small towns and villages in my region of analysis demonstrates that as technology evolved, the activities that these shopkeepers engaged in also evolved. Three points need to be mentioned here: firstly, that not all shops engaged in all the activities mentioned below. For instance, not every VCD and DVD shopkeeper engaged in repairing or/and renting VCD and DVD players. Secondly, there was continuity and discontinuity in the adoption of technology by the shopkeepers. For instance, not all television shops started selling mobiles when mobile phones became the major technology. However, there is one shared feature, which is that most shops evolved with the current technology. Thirdly, these electronic shops did not have personnel who were engineers in repairing/assembling the different technology; rather they learnt their trade by working under other shopkeepers who had more knowledge than them. In this regard, New Delhi's Lala Lajpat Rai electronics market holds great relevance (Sundaram, 2009). Here these shopkeepers came and learnt repairing different electronic devices and later they taught these skills in their towns and villages to local people. As it was the place to buy large electronic components in bulk, so generally after learning their skill, they returned with all the necessary electronic devices and components to setup their own shops. As my region of

analysis is very close to Nepal, therefore, these shopkeepers also went to Nepal to acquire skills and necessary electronic devices for sale and electronic components for their shops.

One of the interviewees for my project, and the owner of “Muskaan”, an electronics shop gave me a brief history of his shop:

I opened my shop in 1990 near Ajanta Cinema in Bettiah city. At that time, I used to sell radios, clocks, tape recorders, and flashlights. Radios, tape recorders, cassettes, and watches were in high demand. But after some time, these electronics gadgets stopped working. So, then I hired a technician who could repair all these things. I used to bring these electronics items by going to Birgunj (Nepal). Along with radios, tape recorders, and watches, I also used to bring their parts. Sometimes things were not available in Birgunj, so I used to get them by going to Kathmandu. All these goods came from China. I used to go to Birgunj via Sugauli by train in the morning and come back by the evening after purchasing the goods I needed. My shop was running fine. But when VCD players came into the market, they were in great demand. Then I started bringing VCDs to my shop. In the beginning, very few people used to buy them. But in a single year, its demand increased a lot. Then I started going to Birgunj very quickly, and from there, I began bringing VCD players and their parts. I started assembling them. For assembling, I hired another technician, who used to work in an electronics shop in Delhi where he repaired VCD players. When the demand for VCDs increased, I also started keeping TVs in my shop. Earlier it was straightforward to get radios and their parts. I used to bring them by train. But when VCD players and TVs and their parts started to be carried, it was impossible to get them by train. I used to go and order the goods. The shopkeeper there sent goods by goods small trucks (pick-up). The drivers had their setting on the border. This vehicle used to belong to the villagers near the border; they had connections with the security forces of both Nepal and India. Every time these people brought goods into India after giving the security forces some money. Gradually, when DVDs came, the demand for these items increased. Many small electronics shops opened up around Bettiah city. These people used to take goods from my shop itself. I then took a storehouse in which I used to store these items. More shops opened like my shop, because the demand for TVs, Radios, VCD/DVD players kept increasing.¹⁷

¹⁷Interview conducted by the author on 10 March 2019.

Figure 5 - Electronics shop at a village *chowk* in Bettiah



Source: Author's own field work

Renting Culture

In my research area, the renting of televisions, VCD and DVD players; VCDs and DVDs and batteries led to a huge growth in entertainment consumption. The electronic shops mentioned above dealt with renting these out. As these shopkeepers were local, therefore, they knew the local people and hence there was very little probability of theft. Renting was so popular and widespread because of the following reasons:

1. It allowed the consumption of entertainment at a significantly lower cost and a group of individuals could easily contribute and rent their preferred form of entertainment.
2. As electricity supply was irregular and, in some instances, nonexistent, therefore, batteries were required to power the devices. However, recharging batteries frequently was both time-consuming as well as costly. Therefore, it discouraged ownership of media players and renting became preferable as one could rent a battery at less than 1/10 of the original cost of the battery.
3. It provided greater consumption choice because the cost of watching 3-4 films on rent was the same as buying a one film VCD.
4. Event managers, especially tent houses started renting televisions and VCD players for marriage functions. So, it also helped in popularizing renting as an alternate means for entertainment consumption.

The significance of renting was narrated by Amit Kumar, from Ganj Bazar, Muzaffarpur district. He stated that:

I used to come home with a battery for Rs 20, a CD player for Rs. 20 and a VCD for Rs. 10. I had a black and white TV in my house. So, by spending Rs. 50, I could watch a film with my whole family. So, this was the new means of watching films.¹⁸

During my research, I met a distributor (who insisted that he remain anonymous) in Bettiah city. He used to sell VCD and DVD players, CDs and DVDs in his shop and distribute VCDs and DVDs in his area. He showed me a suitcase full of VCDs and DVDs which he used to sell to different shopkeepers. Images of his stock of VCDs and DVDs are given below.

¹⁸Interview conducted by the author on 19 March 2020.

Figure 6 - Some of the VCDs and DVDs for sale by the anonymous distributor.



Source: Author's own field work

He also narrated that there was a lot of demand for VCDs around the year 2000. Earlier he used to bring pirated cassettes from Nepal in lakhs but eventually he bought his own machine and started pirating the films which were in high demand. Then he used to sell these copies to small shopkeepers of the surrounding towns and villages. According to him, there were primarily two sources of blank VCD and DVD discs in India - Nepal or Bangladesh via West Bengal.

He also informed me that the underworld don Dawood Ibrahim was also into piracy and this information is corroborated by different media articles¹⁹ on his involvement in film piracy. When Bollywood started making huge losses due to piracy, they wanted to stop this illegal business. The police started raiding many shops dealing with the production and

¹⁹<https://www.outlookindia.com/newswire/story/dawood-the-godfather-of-bollywood-piracy/658255>
<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/chilling-twist-film-piracy-83379/>
<http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/buying-pirated-dvd--you-could-be-helping-dcompany/431798/>
(Accessed on 26 April 2019)

distribution of pirated films in Bihar. There was a raid in Bettiah city too, and he (my interviewee) destroyed over 2 lakh VCDs/DVDs in his village.

As the demand for films was so high, factories were set up in Kathmandu, Birgunj and North Bihar's towns: Bettiah, Narkatiaganj, Raxaul, Sugauli, Sheohar, Sitamarhi, and Muzaffarpur where large quantities of pirated VCDs and DVDs were produced. The nexus between the pirates and film theatres was so strong that within hours of the release of a new film (in some cases even before the release), its pirated version was available in the market.

Due to such rampant piracy, the film production companies and distributors requested the government to take action to stop piracy. Acquiescing to their request, the Bihar government ordered the police to raid different manufacturing hubs. Raids were conducted in the Muzaffarpur district of Bihar and pirated cassettes were caught from many shops. Many of these shopkeepers were unaware that what they were doing was illegal. One such shopkeeper was Amit Kumar Khanna who was imprisoned for three months and was asked to pay a fine of ten thousand rupees. The following is an excerpt from the Patna High Court Order in the case between **Amit Kumar Khanna vs State of Bihar (14 July 2008)**. The court order stated that:

2. 14.7.2008. Heard the counsel for the petitioner and counsel appearing on behalf of the State. The petitioner is accused in a case under Sections 63/63A of the Copy Right Act and Section 293 of the Indian Penal Code. It is alleged that several cassettes and other types of pirated cassettes etc., were recovered from the shop of the petitioner. The petitioner is in custody since 8.5.2008 which is very short period. I accordingly, direct that the petitioner Amit Kumar Khanna should be released on bail after completing three months in custody on furnishing bail bond of Rs. 10,000/- (Ten Thousand) with two sureties of the like amount each to the satisfaction of the C.J.M., Muzaffarpur in connection with Muzaffarpur Town P.S. Case No. 189 of 2008.²⁰

Many similar cases were registered in other districts of Bihar. But the piracy never stopped. VCDs and DVDs were still very easily available. Many shopkeepers used to bribe the police to avoid getting caught.

²⁰<https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1034828/> (Accessed on 26 April 2019).

This chapter can be summarized thus:

1. As Bihar shares a long border with Nepal, therefore, trade between the two regions is very old. Also, due to the porous border, limited patrolling and corruption, there has been a seamless flow of goods across the border. However, this chapter also highlighted that trade with Nepal was very limited and India was mainly trading with China via Nepal. Also, informal trade constituted the over whelming majority of trade.
2. The trade between Bihar and Nepal started with radios, torches, papad, Dalda, cloth, etc.; however, later the majority of trade was in electronic devices and electronic components.
3. The chapter also highlights that when a new mode of entertainment arrives, it is accessible to only the rich and elite in towns. But as the technology grows older, cheaper and local options start emerging in the market and gradually this entertainment technology is adopted by larger sections of society.
4. Also, sources of entertainment, especially in villages, were very limited. Therefore, any source of entertainment brought the whole community together. However, since the 2000s, a majority of households have had access to some form of entertainment for private consumption at a reasonable cost.
5. The chapter also demonstrates that the speed of penetration of new technology in villages has increased over the decades. For instance, the radio took over 20 years to become a household item, whereas mobile phones only took 5-7 years to be widely available to ordinary people.
6. Also, there was a huge demand for Bollywood music and films. This is one of the major factors why all the new entertainment technology grew so rapidly and its cheap Chinese counterparts started flooded the markets.
7. The rapid growth in consumption of entertainment was largely possible due to piracy. As piracy lowered the prices dramatically, therefore, it became accessible to larger sections of society. Piracy developed new networks as well as utilized the existing distribution networks to reach even remote villages.
8. Renting was prevalent in my region of analysis. Once the prices of VCD players dropped and pirated VCDs became widespread, renting culture developed where groups of individuals and households rented in to consume entertainment.
9. The chapter also highlights that as technology changed over time, consumers got more choices with their entertainment. For instance, with radio and television, one only consumed what was being telecast. However, with the advent of tapes, VCDs/DVDs,

and finally with the mobile phone, the choices available to consumers increased enormously.

10. Lastly, each new technology reoriented the shops dealing with these technologies. There was both continuity and discontinuity in the activities performed by these electronic shops and they were instrumental (using the piracy infrastructure) in making entertainment accessible in remote villages. The following table summarizes the spread and dissemination of media technologies in the area of my research. However, the time period mentioned is based on responses of the interviewees and there can be a time lag between different towns and villages and among villages.

Table 2 - History of electronics shops in the small towns and villages of North Bihar

Technology	Activities carried out by the shopkeeper	Time period	
		Technology limited to elite and in towns	Technology accessible to large masses
Radio	Sale and repair of radio, watches and torches	Early 1980s	Late 1990s and early 2000s
Tape recorder and Tapes and music cassettes	Sale and repair of Tape/tape recorders, creating playlist on blank cassettes, sale and recharge of batteries	Mid 1980s	Mid 1990s
Television	Sale, repair, renting and assembling of Television, sale and recharge of batteries	Late 1980s	Late 1990s
VCDs and DVDs, and VCD and DVD players	Sale, repair, renting and assembling of VCD and DVD players, sale and renting of VCD and DVD	Mid 1990s	Early 2000s
Mobile Phones	Sale and repair of mobiles; Mobile recharge; sale of memory card; transfer of audio and video songs in memory card, films; wallpaper, themes, ringtone, and sale of mobile charger, battery and protective cover.	Early and Mid-2000s	Mid and Late 2000s

Source: Author's own fieldwork

The implications of the research reflected in this chart will be analyzed further in the chapters to come.

The current chapter has discussed the huge demand for entertainment media, the role of piracy and how entertainment reached the remote villages of Bihar. The following chapter will deal with entertainment preferences and an attempt will be made to explain those particular preferences. The following chapter will also try to explain the social, cultural impact of entertainment, particularly Bollywood in the area of my research. And finally, the chapter will also deal with how the Bhojpuri music and film industry developed using *jugaad* technology.

Chapter 2

Media Technologies, Cinema Habits and the Revival of the Bhojpuri Film Industry

In the first chapter, I have established how cheap electronics goods and the components of Radios, TVs, Cassettes, VCD and DVD players came from China to Nepal and Nepal to Bihar, and how electronics shops were established in the small towns and villages of north Bihar. These shopkeepers used to assemble and sell radios, TVs, audio and video cassettes, VCD and DVD players as well as rent them out. These shops were part of the pirated electronics infrastructure through which cinema reached the remote villages of north Bihar. In this chapter, I will analyse the relationship between video, digital technology and cinema viewing habits. How was cinema exhibited in the small towns and villages of North Bihar? What was the impact of mass communication on the social culture of these areas and what kinds of films did they watch in the villages? How did the Bhojpuri film and music industry develop through low cost and *jugaad* technology and how were all the people of the village able to watch and enjoy cinema?

History of Film viewing in the Small Towns and Villages of Bihar

Before the advent of electronic technology, there were hardly any facilities to watch films in the villages of North Bihar. There were a few cinema halls in the small towns of this area, but not in the villages. Generally, most of the people in the village did not have time to go to towns to watch films in the cinema hall as they were engaged in their daily work. It took an entire day for villagers to watch a film in a cinema hall in town. This was mainly due to the long travel time to cities because of limited and slow means of transportation. For instance, Jaukatiya village is 15 kms away from Bettiah town, and until 2010, the *tanga/tamtam*²¹ was the only mode of transportation available if more than one or two persons had to travel. Most people used to go to the city by bicycle. Only a few used motorcycles. Farmers, agricultural labourers and other labourers live mostly in the villages. Their earnings weren't large enough to support the leisure of watching films with the family in a cinema hall. But whenever the youth of the villages went to town for any work, then they

²¹Transport carrier run on horses; usually able to carry 6-8 people at a time.

used this opportunity to watch the morning show of a film. After watching the film, they returned to their village by evening after finishing their work. Here is an excerpt from a conversation with a grocery shopkeeper from Jaukatiya village. He narrates his story of watching films in a cinema hall in town before 2010:

I used to visit shops in town to procure stock for my shop. So, we (he along with fellow shopkeepers) used to go to town early morning on bicycles. Then we watched a morning film show in the cinema hall, followed by quick lunch and shopping for our shop. This was one of the ways that we watched films.²²

However, the way of watching films has changed a lot in recent times, especially after 2010 and now the people of the villages rarely go to cinema halls to watch films. I will discuss this later in this chapter and in the next one.

The cities fared better in consuming electronic technology that was available in cities in a big way after India's economic liberalisation in 1991. Cable television, cassette players and recorders, radios became very affordable in the cities. In this decade, as I have pointed out earlier, electronics goods used to come on a large scale from China to Nepal and from Nepal to the small towns of Bihar, and these were relatively cheaper than what was available in the India.

Electricity facilities, schools and colleges were good in cities. Those who migrated to cities as government job employees, students, migrant workers, etc. did avail electronic entertainment. People in cities used to watch films and soap operas through Doordarshan, and after 1995, cable facilities were also available in major cities; therefore, people in the cities had a greater array of choices in entertainment consumption. When those who had migrated to the cities went back to the villages, they discussed the lifestyle and entertainment consumption in cities. This aroused curiosity among the villagers, and they also started exploring ways to avail entertainment in electronic formats.

In villages, very few households had television; and also due to poor and intermittent electricity, and poor Doordarshan signals, television viewership was very limited. During special occasions, especially marriages, VHS players were hired by the girl's family for the

²²Interview conducted by the author on 14 October 2019.

guests' entertainment. Generators, tents, lighting was brought on rent from businesses that provided VHS and VCDs with their players on rent. Amit Kumar, resident of Ganj Bazar, a village 20 km away from Muzaffarpur city informed me that:

The daughter of Ram Surat Prasad in the village was married in the year 1998. For this marriage, a VHS player was rented for the entertainment of the *baraatis*. At that time, we saw three films on it. These films were of Amitabh Bachchan and Mithun Chakraborty. I can't remember the name of the films just now. We came to know about marriage and also about a VHS player being rented, so we went to the other village to watch the films. Here we watched films till early morning. Then I returned back to my home. We loved watching action films. We rarely got a chance to go to the cities. It was very expensive to go to the cities and watch films in the cinema hall, so we used to attend functions and gatherings where a VHS player was rented. And at these weddings, occasionally, we got the chance to eat as well.²³

So far, I have discussed how films were shown in villages through rented electronic devices during marriages; however, films were shown in the same manner during festivals like Durga Puja, Chhath Puja, Kali Puja and Saraswati Puja. There were two ways through which films were shown. Firstly, in a *mela* (fair), tents were setup inside which a VCD player along with a television was installed with seating arrangement (both chairs as well as seating on the ground) that was made to mimic a cinema hall. However, the seating capacity was very limited (usually 15-20 people at a time). Here films were shown till the time the *mela* continued (usually *melas*, depending on the type of *Puja*, lasted 5 to 10 days). This was quite inexpensive and did not require any travel; therefore, it was very popular among villagers. Rajesh Kumar narrates that he used to watch films in these types of cinema halls by paying Rs. 2: "I watched Mithun Chakraborty's *Sapath*, 1997 in the *Sawan ka mela*²⁴."

Also, film posters were put up and at times announcements were made in the village and the neighbouring villages by public address system on a rented *tangagadi* (horse cart). Secondly, the organizers of the *mela* would screen films on rented electronic devices during festivals mentioned above by collecting monetary donations (*chanda*) from the villagers. Another important dimension of film culture in these times and in these areas that is prior to the advent of television and mobile phones on a large scale was that entertainment, especially films, was mainly consumed by the men. Women could not go to the marriages, visit the

²³ Interview conducted by the author, March 2019.

²⁴ Fair organised during the monsoon season.

cinema halls in towns, or watch films in make shift cinema halls in melas. It is only after television became a household consumer good that women could watch soap operas, films and music channels. Therefore, it is clear that there was discrimination in entertainment consumption based on gender.

In the following section, I'll talk about the single screen cinema hall in a small town in north Bihar and discuss its history.

Single Screen Theatres:

The Janta cinema hall was established in 1938 by the zamindar in Bettiah, North Bihar. It was located in the heart of the city. Only the rich and elite could watch films in this cinema hall. I spoke to the owner of this theatre, Uttam Motani ji, who narrated the history of the Janta film theatre in these words:

This cinema hall was established around the year 1938 by my 'Par Dada ji'²⁵. At that time the cinema hall was started in a hut. Then gradually it was made into a pucca house. Then the Hall ran in a pucca house. During this time, my grandfather Bala Prasad Motani gave it on lease to Shahi ji. As the cinema hall was in the heart of the city, therefore, Shahi ji, closed the cinema hall and opened many shops around it. Once my father objected to it and decided to end the lease, then Shahi ji did not honour the lease and started operating on that property as an illegal occupant (Shahi ji ne kabja kar liya property). After many years, my family members fought a legal battle and in 1981 we won the case and got our land and cinema hall back. After winning this battle, we re-opened the 'Janata Cinema' in the building structure and it is still running to this day under our supervision. After 1993, I have taken over the management of the cinema hall. When the UFO system came to India in the year 2004, then I also got the UFO cinema distribution network²⁶ system installed in this cinema hall. Then in the year 2010, I got this cinema hall renovated, got the Dolby sound system installed. The cost of cinema tickets is decided by the state government. When I started managing the cinema hall, the best seat (back of the hall) cost Rs 4.20, the second-best seat (middle of the seating space) was Rs. 3 and the last category of seat (right in front of the screen) cost Rs. 1.55. As the ticket prices were set by the state government and were not revised regularly, therefore, we started making losses and due to this many cinema halls had to shut down. So, after meeting politicians and requesting them to make changes in the pricing mechanism, the government allowed us to fix the prices and they also started giving us tax exemptions. So, this allowed us to stay in the business.

²⁵ Great grandfather.

²⁶ UFO Films India Limited is an Indian digital cinema distribution network and an in-cinema advertising platform. Source Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UFO_Filmz

However, after the 2000s, when television started becoming cheaper, electricity supply improved, then the number of people coming to cinema halls started declining. Also, anti-social elements like thieves, pick-pockets, etc. started consuming hard drinks in the cinema hall. This greatly discouraged other individuals and families (especially women family members) from visiting cinema halls. Also, with the advent of anti-social elements in the cinema hall, the ambience of the cinema hall deteriorated drastically. These people used to eat *gutka* (chewing tobacco), *khaini* (crushed tobacco) and *paan* and spit next to their chair. They also engaged in fights in the cinema hall. All this ruined the film experience and I had to keep private security to manage such crowds. When VCD and DVD players became cheap and DTH services started increasing, then people started watching films at home. Especially after the year 2000, pirated cassettes destroyed the cinema hall. The day the new film was released in theatres, the same day in the evening that film was available on VCD and DVD. So, people started watching films through these pirated VCD/DVDs.²⁷

This history of the Janta cinema hall is indicative of the difficulties faced by single screen theatres in other parts of north Bihar as well. My area of analysis covers Muzaffarpur, Motihari and Bettiah and the major cinema halls of these areas are Krishna Talkies, Amar Jyoti and Shakuntala cinema halls in Muzaffarpur. Motihari has Madhav Talkies, Sangeet and Afsara cinema halls. And, Bettiah has Janta and Ajanta cinema halls as well as Shyam which is situated fifteen kms away from Bettiah. These cinema halls have a rating system and they are rated on the basis of price, quality and cleanliness.

Muzaffarpur is also called the capital of North Bihar. Many people from small towns come here to do business or get medical treatment. There are two main districts, Sitamarhi and Sheohar, adjoining Muzaffarpur. Both these cities are adjacent to the Nepal border. These districts act as a hub for illegal trade between Nepal and the rest of Bihar. Particularly Sitamarhi is a culturally prominent city of the Mithila region²⁸, which is mentioned in the *Ramayana* as the birthplace of Goddess Sita. Whenever people required medical treatment or had to buy goods that were not available in Sitamarhi and Sheohar, then they visited Muzaffarpur, and if they had some spare time in their hand then they used this opportunity to watch films in Krishna Talkies, Amar Jyoti and Shakuntala cinema halls. Krishna Talkies and Amar Jyoti showed newly released films and Shakuntala showed only Bhojpuri films. Similarly, in Bettiah, there was Janta, Ajanta and Shyam Talkies (15 kms away) and which screened Bollywood and Bhojpuri and old Hindi films. Cinema halls that showed Bollywood

²⁷Interview conducted by the author on 21 October 2019.

²⁸ Mithila is a mythological city covering parts of Bihar, Jharkhand and the Terai region of Nepal. Mythili is the most spoken language of this area.

films were higher priced as compared to cinema halls showing Bhojpuri films. The merchants who used to come to the city to buy groceries or clothes, they used to bring youths of a village with them, promising them that they will show them a film and in return they would have to help the merchant in buying his goods. The rickshaw, auto drivers and working class of the city watched Bhojpuri films in Shyam Talkies. All these cinemas were single screen. When Bhojpuri cinema did not become popular, some cinema halls used to run old Hindi films for the working class. Following is an image of Shyam Talkies established in 1983 in the Bettiah area.

Figure 7 - Shyam Talkies situated near Bettiah.



Source: Author's fieldwork

Shyam Talkies is situated near a sugar mill in the Bettiah area. Because of the sugar mill, small shops also started here and gradually this area turned into a small town. However, the area is much smaller than Bettiah city. Earlier old films used to be screened in this cinema hall, but once Bhojpuri films became popular in Bihar after the year 2002, Shyam Talkies completely shifted to showing only Bhojpuri films. This led to a huge inflow of people going to cinema halls to watch movies; however, as technology improved and became cost-effective, especially after 2010, the viewership in these cinema halls started declining. And presently, the situation is such that these cinema halls are on the verge of collapse. This also highlights the deficiency of single-screen theatres, that as there is only one screen to show movies, therefore, they are limited in catering to the wider needs of the audience.

Cinema exhibition in the village and its strategy:

With the introduction of video technology after the 1980s, the history of cinema changed worldwide. The *TV and Video World* magazine in the 1989 issue, declared the 1980s as the “Decade of Video”.²⁹ The magazine stated that “the 80s saw video as an exciting home entertainment medium” and Ishita Tiwari writes in her dissertation that video has “changed the social landscape of India” (2018: 2). However, when video technology came to India, it was initially only accessed by upper-class people. I believe that because of the drop in prices of electronic devices, piracy, and renting, video became available to all classes of society. Video also gave a new dimension to cinema. People could watch films on video at home; thus this technology made films accessible to all across the country. D. Herbert writes about video and film consumption in America thus:

The history of the home video demonstrates profound changes in the ways that Americans related to films. In the same process in which video stores became a normal part of the retail landscape, they simultaneously normalised the idea that films were tangible, portable commodities. Video stores situated Americans as shoppers of film content by promoting the idea that diverse tastes could be satisfied by the abundant film titles now made available to them (2014: 11).

Within the long history of cinema in India, the era of analogue video lasted from the late 1980s to the late 1990s, and it was followed by the era of cable television in the city. Cable technology was accessible to all households in the cities. The households in small

²⁹TV and Video World, Vol 6, Issue 11, Nov 1989, Cover Page. Accessed on 12 March 2019.

towns used to watch the films with great fervour through cable networks. In the villages, however, cable network wasn't able to spread as it did in the cities. Villages and small towns transitioned from free to air channels to direct to home technology (DTH). The history of watching cinema in the village started with VHS/VCR players, but when VCD players came into the market, it became very easy to watch films in the village. In the following paragraphs, I will explain how villagers rented VCD/DVD players and VCDs/DVDs, and address questions like what kinds of films did the villagers watch? What was cinema exhibition like?

In India, since the early 2000s, the prices of VCDs/DVDs and their players declined significantly. This fall in prices made VCDs/DVDs accessible to the majority of sections of society. In villages, shops emerged that dealt with selling/repairing/renting of VCD/DVD players. However, gradually renting became very popular for both buyers and shopkeepers. Buyers did not require investing large sums of money and secondly for the price of one VCD/DVD they could watch 4-5 films. And the sellers gained because by renting they could earn more than by selling VCDs/DVDs and their players. Also, the competition among the shopkeepers intensified. Now the main source of competition was to get the latest film releases and have a stock of popular films.

In north-Bihar, at a majority of village *chowks*, a complete package of VCD player, cassette, battery and television started being rented out. Similar electronics shops opened on every *chowk* all over Bihar. The people of the villages around the square used to take the package on rent at night. Ganj Bazar *Chowk* is about 20 kms from Muzaffarpur. Ajay Kumar had opened a VCD player and cassette shop there in 2000. There he rented out VCD players, VCDs, batteries and televisions. He explained,

I opened my shop at Ganj Bazaar *Chowk* around 2000. I used to rent a VCD player, cassette, battery and television. After opening the shop, people used to take it on rent on a large scale. Earlier, I use to give only to those people whom I knew. But slowly my business started increasing; more people started coming to rent. I added more VCD players, cassettes, batteries and televisions. I had kept ten sets of these. Every day the entire set would go out on rent. Gradually, when VCD players and televisions started getting cheaper, then the people of the village started buying them for their homes. Also, sometimes people bought these electronic devices on loan for which they had to pay in instalments every month. I started keeping a new VCD player and television at my own shop. I used to bring electronic parts from Muzaffarpur city, started

assembling them myself in my shop. Those who had bought televisions and VCD players would only rent batteries and cassettes. Those who did not have televisions and VCD players, they used to take these on rent. There was a lot of demand for action Bollywood films of the 80s and the late 90s.³⁰

The photograph used below (Figure 8) is that of a VCD player at the Amwa Majhar resident Dr Rajeev Nayan's house. He bought this VCD player in 2002 from Birgunj (Nepal) for Rs 2300. This DVD player can also run on a 12-volt battery. Dr Nayan also mentioned a small television whose image I have used in the first chapter. The people of his village started watching films on these VCD and DVD players and televisions. He used to rent batteries from the city and watch films using them. There was a lot of electricity shortage in the villages. After dinner, he used to set up the VCD player, VCDs and television outside the house, and sit and watch films with the villagers. In the first show, he used to show drama films like *Teesri Kasam* (1966), *Aradhana* (1969) etc. When the films of this show were over, then these people used to watch action films like *Sholay* (1975), *Mard* (1985), *Cheetah* (1994), etc.

Figure 8 - Battery operated DVD player



Source: Author's own field work

³⁰Interview conducted by the author on 11 December 2019.

I asked Dr Rajiv Nayan about what kinds of films he liked and what he thought people around him liked. He replied that:

Most of the villagers liked such films in which the actor is born in a poor household, and all the land of his village has been occupied by the zamindar there. Then the actor grows up and fights with the zamindar, and he takes back the land of his villagers. Then such films give a sense of hope, that we might be stuck in a backward region with limited opportunity, however, with strong will and unshakable perseverance, we can achieve anything.³¹

He also informed me that the young people of the village loved action films with love stories. *Jallaad* (1995) is an action film, with Mithun Chakraborty as the main hero of this film. I got the pirated cassette of this film from Dr Rajiv Nayan.

Figure 9 - *Jallaad* (1995) film VCD



Source: Found at Dr Rajiv Nayan's house during the author's own fieldwork

Mithun Chakraborty has a double role in the film *Jallaad* (1995). This film also has action along with a love story. There was a lot of demand for this film. This film was followed by another film *Sapath* (1997), which too was liked by the audience of the village. The CD of this film was also found at Dr Rajiv Nayan's house. It was also a pirated CD.

³¹Interview conducted by the author on 11 December 2019.

Figure 10 - *Shapath* (1995) film VCD



Source: Found at Dr Rajiv Nayan's house during the author's fieldwork

The popularity of renting grew so much that the people of the villages started collecting donations among themselves and hiring VCDs and the required equipment on rent. Mohan Sah, a resident of Amwa Majhar village, says that his brother had brought home a battery, a VCD player, a VCD and television on rent for the first time. The first film they saw was *Dilwale* (1994). His brother liked the film so much that he re-watched the film several times. Everyone in the village knew that my brother had seen *Dilwale* several times. The young people of the village started saying that he had seen this film more than 50 times. In the village, his brother came to be called Ajay Devgan of *Dilwale* (1994). The songs of this film also became very famous in the village.

Thus, according to their convenience in the village, people began to rent the equipment to watch films. After bringing the film and the equipment home, 50-100 people would gather there to watch. It was like a do-it-yourself cinema hall. In the film, when the hero kills the villain, the audience would clap. There were people of all ages in the audience. Since all the equipment was on rent, so three films would be screened in a row. The young people used to watch till the very last. It used to be a sort of film-watching festival.

VCD players were replaced by DVD players in the mid-2000s. DVD technology was a better technology since a DVD disc could contain more films and secondly, it had resume

feature, that is, if the film was interrupted due to power outage or any other reason, then the film could be resumed from where it had stopped. So, as VCD became inferior technology, therefore, its prices declined. As VCD players became cheaper, some people in the village bought televisions and VCD players. But still, they had to rent the VCDs and the battery. The problem with the VCD player was that if the battery attached to the VCD player got disconnected occasionally, this would stop the film and all the viewers would get disappointed that the film had to be fast-forwarded. It used to take a long time to fast forward the film. This drawback of the VCD player was removed in DVD players and this brought a lot of satisfaction to the audiences watching these films. As DVDs could contain 2-3 films, therefore, people preferred renting/buying DVDs that contained films with different actors and themes. So, they would suggest to the shopkeepers the different kinds of films that they wanted to be put on a DVDs.

Figure 11 - DVD Player from Rambabu's house



Source: Author's field survey

The above picture is taken from Rambabu's house. He bought this DVD player in 2011 for Rs 1300. This complete DVD player is made of pirated parts. The DVD player supports USB and is battery operated. So, people could also watch films by bringing them on a pen drive. But Rambabu did not know about USB. He only used to watch films by bringing

in DVDs. However, due to the lack of proper electricity in Rambabu's village and most of the villages in Bihar during this time, everyone had to rent batteries to watch films.

Villagers started watching films even on normal days, along with the middle and lower classes who would hire televisions and DVD/VCD players for their daughter's wedding. There is a committee in every village to observe *Durga Puja* and *Saraswati Puja*, in which the youth of the village are members. During *Durga Puja*, the Ramanand Sagar series, *Ramayana*, would be screened on VCD/DVD players. People used to come and watch *Ramayana* in large numbers. The cost of organising these events was taken care of by donations from the community.

Similarly, *Saraswati Puja* is celebrated in government schools, private schools and coaching centres in these villages. For this *puja*, donations are taken from teachers and villagers. On the day of *Saraswati Puja*, worship is done with great pomp; sweets are distributed in the form of *prasad*. When the *puja* is over in the evening, some people have to stay overnight at the place of worship. Because they have to stay awake, the students bring rented batteries, VCD players, VCDs and televisions to watch films all night long. On one such occasion, a villager man told me that students are watching a film in a government school in the village. But the shopkeeper, who had rented out the equipment and VCDs informed me that the students had also rented porn films. After watching two Hindi films, the students told the rest of the people that the battery was exhausted and that the others needed to return. Once everyone left, then these students took the whole setup behind the statue and started watching porn there. After a while, some people of the village reached there to check on the statue. Once they noticed what the students were doing behind the idol, they beat them up.

It became a practice among young people in the villages to rent porn VCDs, which they called 'blue films' or foreign films. These people would take the entire setup to a place where no one else could come and watch porn. For example, there is a *ghotha* place in the villages, which is at a little distance from the main house where pets, chicks, straw and ration (groceries, mainly cereals) are kept. Most of the people used to watch porn by going to the *ghotha*. Due to video technology, a new way of entertainment has been included in the life of the people of villages. After dinner, people would often enjoy watching a film. If they liked the film, they used to tell their friends also. After seeing the film *Tiranga* (1993) which Dr

Nayan had brought to the village for the first time, this film became a topic of discussion there. The film was watched with great interest throughout the village. In this manner cinema exhibitions used to take place in the villages.

The Influence of Media Entertainment on the Socio-Cultural life of Small Towns and Villages:

Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayana*

Media technology had a great impact on the people of small towns and villages. In the small towns, people used to watch television with great interest. They especially liked the serials of the 1980s and 1990s. The famous ones of that time are the following; *Hum Log* (1984), *Buniyaad* (1986), *Malgudi Days* (1986), *Ramayana* (1987), *Bharat Ek Khoj* (1988), *Mahabharata* (1988), *Mirza Ghalib* (1988), *Rangoli* (1988) etc. Of these serials, *Ramayana* (1987) and *Mahabharata* (1988) were very famous. When the VCR/VHS arrived, these serials became available in video cassettes and VCDs as well. Especially VCDs and DVDs of the *Ramayana* (1987) and the *Mahabharata* (1988) came into the market in large numbers. All these discs were pirated. From small towns to villages, people used to rent these. During *Dussehra*, people used to sit together and watch the *Ramayana* (1987) made by Ramanand Sagar. People had a lot of faith in the *Ramayana*. For those who were, watching *Ramayana*, it was not just entertainment, but a sacred ritual. Many villagers used to watch this serial after their baths. Sagar's *Ramayana* attracted a lot of people because of the special effects. Before the serial would begin the TV, set would be garlanded.

To understand the impact of the *Ramayana* on the consciousness of India, it is necessary to briefly consider the Ayodhya chapter of our history. When on the night of 22 December 1949, a Ram Lalla idol was mysteriously placed inside the Babri Masjid. Hindus across the country felt a great miracle had taken place. On the other hand, the Muslims felt that their mosque had been destroyed. As riots broke out, Jawaharlal Nehru ordered that the doors of the mosque be locked and guarded.

On 1 February 1986, the Faizabad District Judge KM Pandey ordered the opening of the Babri Masjid. He wrote in the order,

[...] Muslims are not to be affected by any influence of imagination if the door locks are opened and the idols inside the premises are seen and worshipped by pilgrims and devotees. If the locks of the gates are removed, the sky will not fall.

On 14 February 1986, Muslim groups observed a ‘Black Day’ to protest the opening of the locks in the Babri Masjid. There were nationwide riots especially in Delhi, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh and Anantnag, Jammu and Kashmir.³² Despite all this, *Ramayana* started on Doordarshan television on 25 January 1987.

Sagar was clearly political, his politics is evident from his presence at the “Virat Hindu Sammelan”, which was held in Milton Keynes on August 28 and 29, 1989. Funded by the UK's Gujarati business community and facilitated by members of the RSS, the gathering also included Lata Mangeshkar, who inspired the audience to think of themselves as Hindu. Some preachers, speaking about the Babri Masjid, said that Hindus have both *shaashtra* (sacred scriptures) and *shastra* (weapon).

Figure 12 “Virat Hindu Sammelan” August 28 and 29, 1989, Milton Keynes



Source: Screenshot taken from Virat Hindu Samelan UK 1989.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4M6Bgpl6Cw&ab_channel=jitsevani84

In the presence of two Labor MPs, the intention of the RSS got further approval. And the organizers consecrated the bricks that day, promising to use them while building the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

³²<https://www.thequint.com/videos/short-dogs/adyodhya-degoded-part-2-did-a-divine-monkey-unlock-babri-masjid> accessed on 10 April 2020.

Figure 13 - Anointing of bricks at the “Virat Hindu Sammelan”



Source: Screenshot taken from the Virat Hindu Samelan UK 1989.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4M6Bgp16Cw&ab_channel=jitsevani84

The Bharatiya Janata Party and the other Hindu organizations benefited a lot after this event. These people started doing politics with reference to the Ram temple. VHP general secretary Ashok Singhal, a key activist of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, said in an interview that the *Ramayana* (1987) was “a great gift to our movement”. (Shreevatsa Nevatia, *The Wire*, 24 May 2020) The serial inspired many youths to join the Bajrang Dal.

Arvind Rajagopal writes that Ramanand Sagar was influenced by the ideology of the RSS and it is clearly reflected in the serials as it shows Ayodhya as the place of Ram’s birth. In a 2000 interview with *Frontline* magazine, Rajagopal work mentions:

In one scene, Lord Ram reveals he’s carrying earth from his birthplace —this is not in any version of the Ramayana I’m aware of—and spoke to a specific political moment, the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. It’s an example of how the series reflected politics and vice versa.” (As cited by Rahul Verma, 2019)³³

For Rajagopal, “the Janmabhoomi issue transformed Ram into a symbol of a militant campaign claiming to span the country, and standing unanimously for nation and citizen.” Historians such as Ramachandra Guha have further argued that Sagar’s *Ramayana* was a “great contribution” to the Rama Janmabhoomi movement (Shreevatsa Nevatia, *The Wire*, 24 May 2020).

³³<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20191022-the-tv-show-that-transformed-hinduism?referer=https%253A%252F%252Fwww.google.com%252>. Accessed on 20 June 2020.

Rama is shown in the most important and glamorous form in the *Ramayana* serial on television. The idea of the serial inspired Hindutva organization activists to dress up as Lord Rama and Lakshmana in 1990 to collect bricks and money to build a Ram temple in Ayodhya. LK Advani was already familiar with Ram in the small town before his 1990 “Rath Yatra” because of the *Ramayana* serial. People were realizing the power of the special graphics on television. Seeing the public’s devotion to Ram, the activists of the ‘Viswa Hindu Parishad’ made a video of how Ram comes back to the Babri Masjid. In this video, a small child is dressed up as Ram and it is shown through graphics how powerful Ram ji is. As soon as the 3 children enacting Ram, Lakshman and Bharat reach the gate, the lock of the Babri Masjid breaks. A kind of fictional story was propagated through this video.

Figure 14 - A child portrayed as Ram, who is said to have come back to Babri Masjid.



Source: Screenshot from Film *Ram ke Naam* (1992)

This video was shown on television shops at that time in small towns. A scene appears at the very beginning of Patwardhan’s film *Ram Ke Naam* (1992), in which some youths are watching this fictional story with great interest.

Figure 15 - Still from the film *Raam Ke Naam* (1992)



Source: Screenshot from the film *Ram ke Naam* (1992)

Figure 16 - Still from the films *Raam Ke Naam* (1992)



Source: Screenshot from the film *Ram ke Naam* (1992)

It is very clear that with the *Ramayana* watched on television by millions of people, the desire for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya was consolidated in the minds of the masses and Hindu organizations took great advantage of the impact of the serial. People associated with this campaign started winning elections. They used to get votes in the

name of the Ram temple, and their work started spreading hatred against Muslims. For them, *Ramayana* was a great source of publicity. Due to all these reasons, a special reverence for Ram was born in the minds of the people. On 9 November 2019, the Supreme Court delivered the Ayodhya verdict, ordering the Ram temple to be built where the Babri Masjid used to be.

India went into lockdown on 25 March due to Corona, but on the same day, the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited Ayodhya and shifted the idol of Ram Lalla from a tin shed to a fibre structure built like a temple. “First phase of grand Ram temple construction completed today,” the CM also tweeted. Two days later, Prakash Javadekar, the IB minister, announced the telecast of Sagar's *Ramayana*. On Thursday, 2 April 2020 Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that he is sharing a video message with the nation at 9 am the next day, and RSS member Suresh Chavan tweeted, "Time, overlapping with *Ramayan* at 9 am". Accepting its apparent popularity, the show got delayed to 3 April. This is reminiscent of the late 1980s when the BJP once had to delay its meeting in Ahmedabad because of the telecast of the *Ramayana* on Sunday morning. Hundreds of people sat together and watched this serial, and only then did the meeting start (Shreevatsa Nevatia, *The Wire*, 24 May 2020).

While the revival of the *Ramayana* on television in 2020 was clearly politically motivated mobilizing its popularity, the serial has been very popular since it was the first telecast. It was shown via pirated VCDs at many places in the villages of North Bihar. A viewer from the village explains that when the Ramjanmabhoomi movement started, he wanted to watch the *Ramayana*, but was not very successful. However, when VCDs started being rented, he could go and watch the entire *Ramayana*. He also said that it is because of the Ram temple that he came to support the BJP. He is very happy today that Prime Minister Modi has initiated the building of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. It is necessary to point out that it is due to piracy that a large section of the population in the villages of my research area has come out in support of the Ram temple after watching the *Ramayana*. Some people told me that it was a pleasure to watch the *Ramayana* on TV. It seemed to them that Lord Rama and Hanuman were really present in front of them. It felt very real to them. Although people have been performing the Ramlila in the villages during Dussehra for many years, the pleasure of watching the story of Rama on television was different. In this way, a large number of people grew in faith, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has taken full advantage of this faith and is still taking advantage of this.

Impact of Hindi cinema on the youth of the village:

The Hindi film has had a great impact on the youth of the villages in the area of my study, and it is especially the 90s romantic films and their songs that seem to be very popular. The young people of the villages used to watch action cinema, but romantic films were also liked and films like *Aashiqui* (1990), *Saudagar* (1991), *Dilwale* (1994), *JaanTere Naam* (1992) etc. were very popular. They loved the songs of these films. Ajay Devgan, Akshay Kumar, Sunny Deol were their favorite actors. The youth of the villages used to listen to the songs through tapes and MP3 disks. But they also used to watch films of the 1970 - 80s and liked them. . Some of the film's dialogues became very famous, and became part of common day parlance. One young man of a village told me that he used to imitate the dialogues of Raj Kumar to his friends in school. Raj Kumar's dialogues have always been very popular. Some of the dialogues of Raaj Kumar that were used to insult and/or humiliate others are:

- “*Na talwar ki dhaar se, na goliyon ki bauchaar se. Banda darta hai to sirf parvar digaar se*” (*Tiranga*, 1992).
(Neither the sharpness of a sword, nor the rain of bullets ... the only thing that scares me, is the might of God)
- “*Jab Rajeshwar dosti nibhata hai toh afsane likhe jate hai. Aur jab dushmani karta hai to taarikh ban jati hai*” (*Saudagar*1991).
(When Rajeshwar proves his friendship, then stories are written...And when there is enmity, the date of death is finalised)
- “*Ham apane kadamon ke aahat se hava ka rukh badal dete hain,*” (*Betaaj Badshah*, 1994).
(I change the course of the wind with the sound of my footsteps)
- “*Jaanee.. ham tumhe maareng, aur zaroor maareng lekin vo bandook bhee hamaaree hogee, golee bhee hamaaree hogee aur waqt bhee hamaara hoga,*” (*Saudaagar*, 1991).
(Dear.. I will kill you, and I will surely kill but that gun will also be mine,he bullet will also be mine and the time will also bemine.)
- “*Hum kutto se baat nahi karte,*” (*Marte dum tak*, 1987).
(I don't speak with dogs)

- “*Sher ko saamp aur bichchhoo kaata nahin karate.. door hee door se rengate hue nikal jaate hain,*”(Saudaagar, 1991).
(Snakes and scorpions do not bite the lion. They crawl away from afar)
- “*Apana to usool hai. Pahale mulaakaat, phir baat, aur phir agar jaroorat pade to laot,*” (Tiranga,1992).
(It is my principle. First meet, then talk and then kick if needed)
- “*Hum aankhon se soorma nahin churate ... hum aankhen hi chura lete hain,*” (Tiranga1992).
(We don't steal the antimony from the eyes, we steal the eyes)³⁴

The young people of the villages used to speak these dialogues among themselves. Film watching became a culture in the village. People in the village would put up posters of famous actors in their houses. These posters were bought from the village fair. Even in the village, people started responding to the actor as a star. They wanted to see their favourite actors in real life as well. Some migrant labourers from the villages used to go to work in Mumbai. When those people returned to the village from Mumbai, then the people of the village would ask them if they had met Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, Mithun Chakraborty, Hema Malini, Rekha. People who used to come from Mumbai used to create a lot of atmospheres in the village, narrating stories of Mumbai that one day they saw a particular actor. Most of the villagers did not believe such stories, but some believed them.

Meanwhile, actors and actresses started campaigning for political parties for the elections. There would be a lot of curiosity in the people of the villages to see them in reality. Bollywood actress Hema Malini was invited by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to ‘Bada Ramna Stadium’ in Bettiah city (2009 General Elections). People from the villages around came to see Hema Malini by cycling over 15 kilometres. Hema Malini was famous in the villages for her role in the film *Sholay* (1975) and *Kranti* (1981). The people of the village had seen these films on pirated video cassettes or VCDs/DVDs and were therefore very excited to see her in real life. After seeing her, they used to discuss for several days in the village how she looks in reality, especially her eyes were mentioned a lot. Political parties and

³⁴Dialogues translated by the author.

political candidates gained traction in the constituency by doing this. This was the reason why Bollywood actors and actresses were invited for election campaigns.

Along with this, posters of Hindi cinema actors and actresses were put up in the village hair cutting salons. The poster of the film *Tere Naam* (2003) in 2003 could be seen everywhere in the village salons. In these salons, posters from Bhagwan (God) to Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, bold actresses and actors were used. The youth of the village really liked Salman Khan's hairstyle from the poster of *Tere Naam*. Young people used to get their hair cut in the style of Salman Khan's character in this film, and this hair cut started getting called 'Tere Naam Hair Cut' and was mostly adopted by the youth. It was very popular among the young; however, the elderly did not like this at all and people with these haircuts were called Lafua³⁵, Kamchor³⁶, gavaar³⁷ and aavara³⁸ by the elderly people of the village.

Marriage Videos:

Earlier only photographs were taken and later videographers were hired to video record marriages and marriage ceremonies. Video recording, again, was firstly popularised by the rich in town; but later found its way into villages as well. It was very expensive; however, gradually it became quite popular and with the setup of video editing computer rigs in small towns, it was increasingly adopted. People hired videographers for marriages and when the video was edited and returned to the family, then the whole family, close relatives and neighbouring households gathered to watch the marriage videos. An interesting feature of these marriage videos was its editing. The video editors made the wedding videos in Bollywood style, with the groom's procession reaching the venue with a welcome song. Garland ceremony was accompanied by another happy song, and the bride's departure for her husband's house was edited with a sad *vidai* song. Like the credits of films, both families' names were mentioned at the beginning and end of the wedding film. All transitions in the editing were blown over the top.

The people who edited these videos mostly learnt as someone's apprentice and then later incorporated their own style and elements into the video. However, one serious issue

³⁵ People roaming around without a sense of purpose in life.

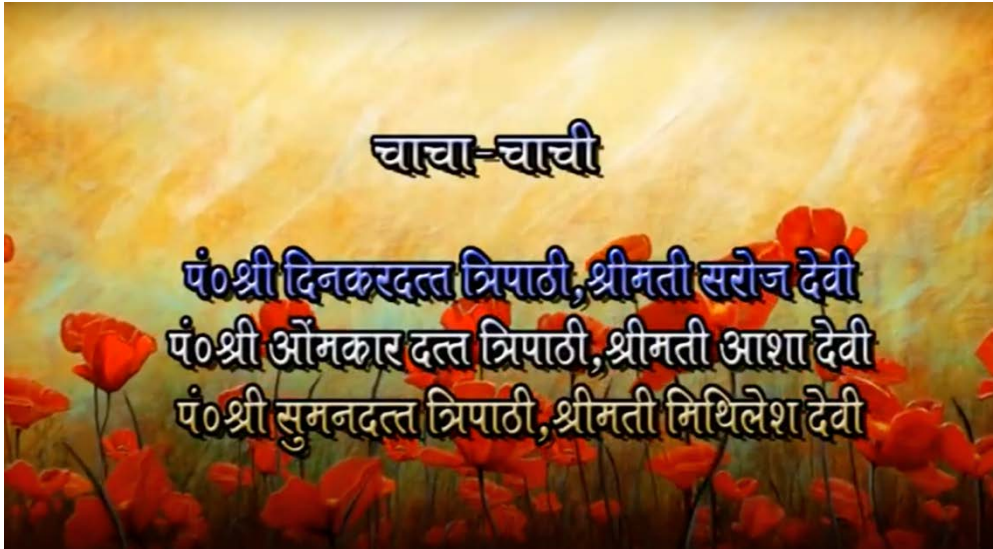
³⁶ People who shirk away from any work.

³⁷ Uncultured Person, Illiterate

³⁸ Vagabond

with these marriage videos was the audio quality. As no specific microphones were setup to capture sound, therefore, the sounds were not clear and were muffled in the background.

Figure 17 - Screenshot is taken from the title Wedding Video



Source: Screenshot taken by the author from a wedding film.

While making the video, the name was put in the title very carefully, and emphasis was laid that no names got missed. If the name of a relative or child was missed in the video, those relatives used to get angry. All the gifts that are received in the wedding were shot very carefully so that people remembered them. And whenever they watched these videos, invariably they discussed whether the gifts were good or not.

Figure 18 - Screenshot of wedding gift is taken from a Wedding Video



Source: Screenshot taken by author from a wedding film.

Figure 19 - Screenshot of wedding gift is taken from a Wedding Video



Source: Screenshot taken by author from a wedding film.

The entire video would be edited with Hindi film songs. Important rituals of the marriage would be included in the video. The video would be made and copies delivered to the families on VCDs and DVDs. The Wedding video would contain Hindi film songs. These songs were used without copyright. I am mentioning a few songs which are used in every wedding video.

- “Badee door se aayehain, pyaar ka tohafa laaye hain...” (Samjhauta, 1973).
(Have come from far away, have brought the gift of love)

- “*Har kisee ke dil mein ik ladkee ka khyaal rahata hai...*” (*Haan Maine Bhi Pyar Kiya*, 2002).
(There is one girl in everyone's heart)
- “*Raaton mein jagaaya, neendon ko udaaya, mera dil bhee churaaya hai...*” (*Naam Gum Jayega*, 2005).
(Woke me up in the nights, destroyed my sleep, stole my heart too)
- “*Hamaaree shaadee mein abhee baaqee hai hafte chaar...*” (*Vivah*, 2006).
(There are still four weeks left for my marriage...)
- “*Chale hai baaraatee ban than ke, khushiyon se ghungharoo bhee chhanake...*” (*Jigravaala*, 1991).
(The grooms party has left all dressed up for the marriage, the ghunghroos too sound with happiness...)
- “*Dil deevaana na jaane kuchh ho gaya...*” (*Daag The Fire*, 1999).
(My obsessed heart does not know what has happened to me...)
- “*Baabul ka ghar chhodke, betee piya ke ghar chalee, ye kaisee ghadee aae hai, milan hai judaee hai...*” (*Sainik*, 1993).
(Leaving the father's house, the daughter leaves for her husband's home, what kind of moment has come, there is union, there is separation...)³⁹

When the wedding film is ready, people excitedly watch it by playing it on the VCD player, as all the memories of the marriage come back. The people of the village and the households where the marriage is held love watching themselves on television. Those who had their own television and VCD player would watch the marriage videos numerous times. Whenever a new guest visited the house, the wedding video would be definitely shown to them. Even after many years of watching the video of the wedding, the memories of the marriage remained fresh.

³⁹Songs translated by the author.

During this research, I met Trilok Kumar, also locally known as Sunil ji. His shop is located in Bettiah city and is called “Digital Multivision”. It was established in the year 2003. He previously sold tape recorders and cassette tapes and components of VCD players. People used to buy VCDs and VCD players from his shop in the village. After a few years he went to Mumbai to learn how to handle a video camera, song mixing and editing. When he returned, he taught these techniques to those who worked with him. He said that after opening his shop, at first only the rich people of the village used to come to get wedding videos made. But after 2010, the number of people wanting wedding videos made has increased tremendously. The wedding season would be completely booked months prior to the wedding season. During the wedding season, they had to work day and night. Sunil ji told me that initially he used to make only wedding videos; however, with the growing popularity of Bhojpuri music, he setup a low cost, small studio and there he recorded videos for Bhojpuri songs, which he later edited, mixed and made copies of the final product (from 100s to 1000s) for distribution in the market.

Figure 20 - Sunil Ji’s Digital Multivisionshop



Source: Author’s field work

Rise of an alternative, low cost and low technology Bhojpuri music and film industry

In India, the Bhojpuri language is widely spoken in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, which we know as the Purvanchal⁴⁰ region. The Bhojpuri language is also spoken in countries like Nepal, Fiji, Guyana, Mauritius, South Africa, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago. The people of Purvanchal had migrated to these countries, where they later settled. So, people here speak Bhojpuri among themselves.

Bhojpuri is now only a spoken language. The script of Bhojpuri used to be the Kaithi script, but later it began to be written in Devanagari. About 51 million people in India recorded Bhojpuri language as their mother tongue in the 2011 Census. Bhojpuri speaking people have been agitating for many years demanding to keep this language in the 9th schedule of the constitution. There is solidarity regarding language in other states like Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh etc. On the same lines, the people of Purvanchal are demanding that they should have a separate state on the basis of language. This demand further strengthened the Bhojpuri film and music industry, which has now acquired a new form of cultural identity in Bhojpuri speaking places. Due to the Bhojpuri film and music industry, people have started coming together in the Bhojpuri speaking society. For instance, many migrant people of Purvanchal live in Delhi, especially in North East Delhi. Therefore, from this Lok Sabha constituency, the Bhojpuri film industry star Manoj Tiwari was fielded by the Bharatiya Janata Party as a candidate and Tiwari won the election with a huge majority. After this, he was also made President of the Delhi BJP unit so that he could get the votes of the people of Purvanchal for the party. Aam Aadmi Party also got Dilip Pandey to contest, who also comes from the Purvanchal region. Thus, it is clear that it is the Bhojpuri film and music industry that has brought the Bhojpuri language into the mainstream. The Bhojpuri film industry began in 1962, but after 2004 it has become a booming industry. Now, I will discuss how the Bhojpuri film and music industry reached the villages through small towns in Bihar.

Avijit Ghosh has chronicled the history of the Bhojpuri film industry in his *Cinema Bhojpuri* (2010). There he mentions that the first President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad had

⁴⁰Purvanchal is geographical region of eastern Uttar Pradesh and parts of Bihar where Bhojpuri is a dominant language among others that are also spoken like Mythili, Magadhi and Angika. But it is Bhojpuri that is the most popular and has a very popular film and music industry.

come to a film festival in Mumbai. At this film festival, Dr Rajendra Prasad met actor Nazir Hussain and he asked him if he was Punjabi. Nazir Hussain replied in the negative and said that he was from the Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh which is in the Purvanchal region of the state. Dr Rajendra Prasad belonged to Jiradei village of the Siwan district of Bihar and he started talking to Nazir Hussain Saheb in Bhojpuri as soon as he heard the name, Ghazipur. While speaking with him, Dr Rajendra Prasad suggested that Nazir Hussain should make a film in the Bhojpuri language.

Nazir Hussain had worked as an actor in Bimal Roy's film. He wrote a story, which he narrated to Bimal Roy and Bimal Roy appreciated the script. Bimal Roy was ready to make a film on that script; however, Nazir Hussain remembered Dr Rajendra Prasad's request of making a Bhojpuri film, and therefore, he took the Hindi script back from Bimal Roy and wrote the Bhojpuri version of the film. Nazir Saheb was an actor, so he did not have money to make a film. Biswanath Prasad Shahabadi was a businessman from Patna, who had cinema halls and coal business in Dhanbad. While he had gone to Bombay to watch the shooting of the film with his friend, he met Nazir Hussain at a tea stall. Nazir Hussain narrated the story of the film to Biswanath Prasad Shahabadi, and he loved it as soon as he heard the story. At that time, he had Rs. 10000 and he gave it to Nazir Hussain. So, Biswanath Prasad Shahabadi became the producer of Nazir Hussain's Bhojpuri film.

Now, Nazir Hussain started building the team to make the film, he took Kundan Kumar as the director of the film. Kundan Kumar was from Banaras in Uttar Pradesh and also knew Bhojpuri. The first shot of the film was taken on 16 February 1961 at Shaheed Smarak in Patna. The rest of the film was shot at Banaras in Uttar Pradesh and Bihta tehsil of Bihar, which is about 30 km from Patna. This way the first Bhojpuri film was made and was titled *Ganga Maiya Tohe Piyari Chadhaibo* (1962).

Avijit Ghosh in his book has divided Bhojpuri film industry into three phases. The first period (1862–68) begins with *Ganga Maiya Tohe Piyari Chadhaibo* (1962), followed by other films such as *Bidesia* (1963), *Lagi Nahi Chhoote Ram* (1963) and *Hamar Sansar* (1965). The second period, between 1969 and 1976, saw the release of only one Bhojpuri film, *Dher Chaal ki Jin Kara* (1971). The comedy genre returned to life with *Dangal* (1977), gaining momentum with superhit films such as *Balam Pardesiya* (1979) and *Ganga Kinare*

Mora Gaon (1983), and continued till 2001. There was no difference between the second and third phases, but the third phase saw the arrival of a new, confident Bhojpuri cinema.

The Bhojpuri film industry started with family drama films with a lot of songs in those films. But when action films started being made in Bollywood, Bhojpuri cinema had a setback. Bhojpuri speaking people also liked to watch Hindi action films. In the 1990s, the Hindi film industry started making films in many genres like Romance, Comedy, Action, Drama and Thriller, etc. The film audiences who were in the cities used to watch only Hindi films in the cinema halls and, very few people watched Bhojpuri films that were not showcased in cinema halls. That's why the Bhojpuri industry was on the verge of extinction.

But from 2001 people started liking Bhojpuri films and this industry spread on a very large scale. In the later sections, I will discuss what changed after 2001 that the Bhojpuri industry produced more than 275 Bhojpuri films in five years between 2004 and 2008. In 2006 alone, 76 Bhojpuri films were approved by the Censor Board. A small film industry of the 1960s, it has grown into a large regional film industry today. And after 2008, Bhojpuri films started being made in large numbers.

The rise of Bhojpuri cinema again

The Bhojpuri industry started in 1962, but gradually by the 1980s, it started to fade away. The main reason for this was that the films weren't getting released in cinema halls. In the 1980s, in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, Bhojpuri films were not being seen, and only Hindi films were seen. There was no television in the villages; people used to listen to mostly Hindi songs on the radio. Very few people used to go to the cinema to see films. The technology was very exclusive and before the 1990s, televisions, VHS players and tapes were available only to the affluent. In a poor state like Bihar, there were very few people who could afford these technologies. However, after the 90s, tape recorders saw a sharp fall in prices and reached the villages. Bollywood songs became very popular during the 90s. With the advent of the tape recorder, people used to listen to their favourite songs on audio cassettes by using cassette players. Abhija Ghosh has demonstrated how the "transformative shifts ushered in by the forces of globalisation in film music, media circulation, technological and industrial transformations," led to the "primacy of romance especially through their music" in the films of the late 80s and early nineties. Furthermore, she points out through the example of two films - *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989) and *Aashiqui* (1990), how this "emergent genre ...initiated a

structural shift in film production, catapulting the growing cassette-based music industry into the realm of film production and promotion” (2020: 161). *Aashiqui* (1990) was produced by Gulshan Kumar whose cassette company T – Series released the music of the film with great success. Thus it is due to the mass reach of audio tapes and cassette players and tape recorders that *Aashiqui* (1990) remains the largest-selling film album in the history of Bollywood. 20 million units of *Aashiqui*’s album were sold in no time. The film won the Film Fare award for the best music director among other awards. And till this day it remains etched in the minds of the rural population and can be easily heard while travelling on local buses and other means of transport in North India. This shows the impact of tape recorder technology; if the technology hadn’t been there then it would have been impossible for so many films and songs to gain the popularity that they did.

Inspired by the success of *Aashiqui*’s album and its wide circulation through audio cassettes, the local artists of the villages in Bihar, those who used to sing songs in *launda naach* programmes and those who performed in the local orchestras (musical band party) started making their own music cassettes and selling them in the market. This brought about the era of Bhojpuri songs in Bihar. It is through Bhojpuri film music that the Bhojpuri film industry began to rise once again from 2001.

Thus, due to the prevalence of film song cassettes in the 90s, artists started recording their music throughout the country in their own languages and according to their own culture. When there was no cassette culture, these artists used to sing songs at different functions. The music industry was revolutionized with the advent of the tape cassette player. Songs in every language were recorded on cassettes. Folk music was already very prevalent in the Bhojpuri areas. So, when technology became cheap in the market, it started being used. Because of this, Bhojpuri folk songs started getting recorded on a large scale on cassettes. Bhojpuri singer Kalpana Patowary and Maithili singer Sharda Sinha became very popular as folk singers. After this, many Bhojpuri film industry artists Manoj Tiwari, Vinay Bihari, Guddu Rangeela, Sunil Chaila Bihari, etc. became popular with Bhojpuri songs and then came into films. They usually got their own cassettes recorded and then sold them in the market themselves. Their marketing was very different from that of the Bollywood film industry. Unestablished Bhojpuri artists used to get many audio cassettes made and they used to, at times, personally distribute them in the market to local shopkeepers. And after a week they used to come back and collect the sales money from the shopkeepers. Also, the shopkeepers

introduced these new artists to the general public by publicizing their songs. Lastly, music was continuously played loudly on tapes in the shop, so people passing the shops heard the songs. And if they found the songs catchy and entertaining, then they would buy the cassette. Clearly, the Bhojpuri music industry had to struggle to rise to its current level.

When people started listening to these songs, then they also started demanding Bhojpuri films. Thus, it is that the Bhojpuri film industry was revived in a big new way. This started only because film culture had become part of the village and a media infrastructure had been created. Ratnakar Tripathi writes in his article “Music mania in the small town of Bihar: Emergence of a vernacular identity” (2012) that:

It is in fact possible to think of the Bhojpuri culture industry in terms of three concentric circles. The inner circle is of Bhojpuri films which have an approximate turnover of Rs 100 crore a year, equal to the budget of about three or four big – Bollywood films. The next circle is of the CD/VCD industry, estimated to be five to 10 times bigger and the outer circle of the - live show industry which is reported to be more than five times the size of the CD industry. We discovered that even the bigger players in the industry have no precise idea and differ far too much among themselves... It needs to be emphasised here that a vast majority of CDs are produced by the artists themselves. The company often spends nothing till an album makes a big enough hit to deserve large-scale replication. A large Delhi based company may easily release 5,00,000 CDs, whereas a much smaller company in Patna may diffidently toy with the figure of 20,000. These are the industrial volumes that this music industry works with. I decided to call the Bhojpuri music economy a - trickle economy - it is a big river but its main source is not a glacier but rather the innumerable small drops of water oozing out from a million places. If the CD industry is enjoying a continuing boom, the credit must eventually go to the local patron willing to spend Rs 3,000 to Rs 30,000 in a single night. In the process, the music companies seem to lose their tight grip on a market they have held captive... The live show audience appears to us as part customers, and part traditional patrons-sponsors. Analytically speaking, the live show industry may be a threshold between the pre-industrial and the industrial. But in reality, when you focus on the threshold it seems to magnify into the wide spaces of concert grounds, much larger than films or the cassette-CD industry, taxonomic ambiguities notwithstanding (2012: 59- 60).

As the Bhojpuri music and film industry grew, and its artists started gaining huge popularity, many folk singers went ahead and became actors in the Bhojpuri film industry. Manoj Tiwari initially became famous for his folk songs. His first Bhojpuri film *Sasura Bada Paisa Wala* came out in 2004 and it became a super hit film. There were 11 songs in this film, and the cassettes of the songs sold a lot. It was the biggest Bhojpuri film hit. The Bhojpuri

film industry started in the year 1962 but the biggest hit film came in the year 2004. The main reason for its huge success was the low-cost media infrastructure in the villages, which made watching films accessible to large masses. In the context of Bhojpuri cinema, the advent of these new, cheaper, easily transferable media and easy availability of these technologies led to a revolution in the Bhojpuri film industry. This period witnessed a huge growth in the creation and consumption of Bhojpuri content which was widely available after 2004. The Bhojpuri film industry had started in 1962; however, it is the period after 2000 that witnessed the greatest growth in the Bhojpuri film industry when it was reborn. Today, according to the Economic Times, the net worth of Bhojpuri Cinema is Rs. 2000 Crore⁴¹.

If we see Bhojpuri films of the mid-2000s, they have a lot of similarities with Hindi films. The Bollywood films which were very popular in the villages were copied by the Bhojpuri film industry including their names to capitalise on the success of the older films of Bollywood. The content of the film was majorly drawn from the original film with similar story patterns. However, due to Bhojpuri cinema's limited budgets, the overall appearance and quality of these films were drastically low. For instance, films like *Aakhiri Raasta* (1986), *Tridev* (1989), *Ram Lakhan* (1989), *Agneepath* (1990), *Jo Jeeta Vohi Sikander* (1992), *Baazigar* (1993), *Coolie No. 1* (1995), *Raja Hindustani* (1996), *Jab Pyaar Kiya To Darna Kya* (1997), *Hero No. 1* (1997), *Satya* (1998), *Dhadkan* (2000), *Nayak* (2001), *Maa Tujhe Salaam* (2002), *Tere Naam* (2003), *Vivah* (2006), *Sarkaar Raaj* (2008), and *Wanted* (2009) and many more were all very popular and several were remade as Bhojpuri films. (Discussed in detail in chapter 3).

In conclusion, I would like to say that while the Bhojpuri film industry has been in existence since the year 1962, the main reason for its popularity after 2004 is piracy. Due to piracy, cheap media technologies reached the interiors of the Bhojpuri speaking regions of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. A media infrastructure was created in the villages. Due to this the business of the Bhojpuri industry – both music and film - could grow rapidly. The Bhojpuri musical artists themselves made the cassettes of their albums available at the shops from village to village. Some producers say that the cost of a Bhojpuri film comes from the sale of its songs. And due to this the film never suffers. After the year 2004, the majority of revenue for Bhojpuri cinema came from the sale of songs rather than the box office collections from

⁴¹<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/media/entertainment/bhojpuri-film-industry-now-a-rs-2000-crore-industry/articleshow/57924026.cms> accessed on 27 October 2020.

the cinema hall. Right now, the Bhojpuri industry is touching the sky; big companies like T-Series have their own production houses to create different Bhojpuri songs and films. In the next chapter, I will speak about how the advent of multi-media phones has changed the way we watch films; how the Bhojpuri industry grew further and how the films of South India reached the villages of Bihar.

Chapter 3

The mobile phone and personalized viewing

In this chapter, I will explain how mass film exhibition ended with the advent of mobile phones, and how the experience of watching films became personalised. Other questions that are important for this chapter are how the trend of watching pirated Hindi, South Indian and Bhojpuri films started in these regions, and how after the advent of cheap digital mobile phones, the people in villages and small towns began to use them to watch films. Furthermore, what was the effect on the social life of people after the arrival of smart phones? Another set of questions has to do with how people began to use YouTube and how it became a habit to watch films online. I will also speak about how the people of villages and small towns came closer to technology and learned all these techniques by themselves.

There were two different versions of mobile phones. The first version was a mobile phone in which audio and video songs, ringtones, wallpapers, themes and films in 3GP format were inserted into micro-SD cards. The second version was when the video was played in MP4 format on mobile phones after the arrival of 3G and 4G networks. In interviews with ordinary villagers and labourers I learned about the impact of cheap technology, especially cheap mobile phones and how it personalised entertainment consumption in rural areas. A construction worker, Ram Babu from Amwa Majhar (near Bettiah), told me that cheap mobile phones allowed him to watch whatever he wanted at his own time. He narrated that earlier he and people coming from similar backgrounds as his used to watch movies on Friday night by sitting in the *baramdah* (courtyard) of rich and affluent people of his village. However, once he purchased a Micromax brand mobile phone with 2 GB external memory, he started putting pirated movies into the external SD card on a weekly basis and he enjoyed watching movies at his preferred time and also listening to music while working on the construction site and also while doing daily chores. Loading pirated movies onto his external SD card was a time-consuming process that also used up a lot of battery. However, transferring movies through Bluetooth was free, and so he could exchange movies with friends using Bluetooth. Therefore, this technology was extensively used by not just him, rather everyone he knew for exchanging and sharing films.

Thus, it is clear that as the technology got cheaper and cheaper over the years, society moved away from collective viewing to the personalized consumption of films on mobile phones, and the circulation of pirated Hindi, South Indian and Bhojpuri films flourished. This was enabled by the piracy of films which by the turn of the century was rampant in the villages and towns of North Bihar. While pirated films on VHS and then CDs and DVDs were available here from the latter half of the 1990s, when inexpensive mobile phones became available in these areas from 2009-2010 onwards, films were downloaded, sold or shared through small village *chowk* shops on CDs/DVDs, pen drives or even in memory cards at cheap rates. In effect, this corroborates Ramon Lobato's point about the "shadow economies" of audio-visual commerce that enabled the illegal distribution of film and music content. Speaking about a global phenomenon, Lobato says:

all around the world the cinema is bought from roadside stalls, local markets and grocery stores; they are illegally downloaded and streamed; they are watched in make-shift video clubs, on street corners and in restaurants, shops and bars (2012: 1).

Clearly, this is a form of film distribution and film watching that came to exist as much in the towns and cities of the developed world as it did in the villages and small towns of underdeveloped Bihar.

This form of film viewing started in north Bihar around 2009 when inexpensive Chinese mobile phones came into the market, allowing ordinary people to watch films at their convenience. These phones were very handy; people used to take them along with them, and in their spare time, they used to watch movies on them. They used to get films in their phone's memory from local shops at nominal prices of around Rs 5-10 per film. Earlier people used to watch films through VCDs/DVDs which they rented from the local shop. After watching the films, they would have to return the VCDs/DVDs to the shop from where they had taken them on rent. But after the arrival of the mobile phone, films used to come into their phones for ever or for whatever length of time the consumer wanted to keep the films in the phone. This was a huge difference in film consumption with the advent of mobile phones. This feature will be discussed, at length, later in the chapter.

Village electronics shops adapted to the new technology. People purchased movies from these shops at very low prices. During this phase of cheap Chinese phones, the

technology was simple and easy to use. Also, these phones had Bluetooth which allowed sharing of movies at a high-speed rate. This allowed people to collectively purchase different movies and then share them among themselves which saved money. Chinese mobile phones (relatively simple technology) to modern Android devices (which have greater storage capacity and allow even faster transfer of media than Bluetooth) thus changed how media was consumed. Also, with the new Android technology a “downloading” culture came into existence – where curated video packages were loaded onto memory sticks (SD cards) and pen drives for a nominal price.

As discussed in the previous chapter, people in the villages used to watch films with great interest and watching films had become the biggest means of entertainment. After renting a VCD/ DVD player, television, VCDs/DVDs and a battery from a shop in the village *chowk*, people in the neighbourhood watched films together. The majority of VCDs/DVDs were pirated. Original VCDs/DVDs were hardly sold in the villages and small towns. The companies that produced and released VCDs and DVDs into the market launched a campaign unitedly against pirated VCDs and DVDs. The police started raiding the shops that kept pirated VCDs and DVDs. In 2008, a major raid was conducted by the Jharkhand Police on the complaint of Super Cassettes Industries Limited (T Series), and over 1,35,000 pirated CDs, which included the popular albums of T-Series such as *Karz* (1980), *Om Shanti Om* (2007), *Partner* (2007), *God Tussi Great Ho* (2008), were seized along with copier machines worth more than Rs 50 lakh.⁴² Also, in another raid in Patna, pirated CDs of Bollywood films worth Rs.5 million were seized.⁴³

At the same time, computers and multi-media mobile phones started coming into the market. Now the films could be easily transferred from one device to another through SD memory cards or pen drives. It was impossible to track and catch which customers had films and from where they had accessed them. Gradually the pirated VCD/DVD shops were closed and generally from the same shops that earlier dealt in VCDs/DVDs, films were transferred into SD memory cards through the computer. Those who used to watch films on television, would rent out VCDs or DVDs which they had to return the next day. And those consumers who used to watch films on their smart phones used to get their favourite films from micro-

⁴²<https://www.masala.com/news-2/t-series-seizes-pirated-cds-6754> accessed on February 2021.

⁴³http://twocircles.net/2010jun23/pirated_cds_seized_patna.html accessed on February 2021.

SD cards into their mobile phones. Thus, with the advent of computer and mobile technology, watching films became more convenient and more individualized.

A History of Telephones in India:

I would like to start with a brief history of the telephone in India. The telephone was the first technology where one could send messages in real-time, and the mobile phone also works similarly, but is a much more advanced technology. So first we have to understand the arrival of the telephone in India. Then I will talk about the arrival of mobile phones.

When India became independent in 1947, the country had about 100,000 telephones for a population of 340 million people: i.e. one telephone for every 3400 people.⁴⁴ There was a huge demand for telephones at this time. Especially big business people demanded that they should be given telephones as soon as possible. There was a long waiting list to get an allotment of a telephone. The government used to determine who should be given a telephone first. In 1955, there was a demand for 34,000 phones in Bombay, India's commercial hub. As cited by Robin Jeffrey and Assa Doron in their book *Cell Phone Nation*, *The Times of India* newspaper reported that the First Minister of Communications had announced a "big plan for telephones in the city of Bombay" (2013: 49). But the government could not supply the telephones as per the demand. Gradually the waiting list kept increasing. By 1970 the national waiting list for telephones stood at around 700,000, and people had to wait for four years for a telephone to be installed in the house (Jeffrey and Doron, 2013:49).

The Indian economy was liberalized in 1991. After liberalization, telephones started coming in large quantities and more and more people started getting telephones installed in their homes. At this time there used to be one telephone per 165 persons. Most of these phones were either in government offices or with business people. You can see this data in Table No. 3 below. There was a great desire among ordinary middle-class families that telephones should be available in their houses as well. But getting a telephone connection was very difficult and costly. Therefore, the general public could not avail of the facility of telephones at home. After many years, some common people too started getting the facility of telephones.

⁴⁴*Forty Years of Telecommunications in Independent India* (New Delhi: Department of Telecommunications, n.d. (1987), p. v. pg. - 2. Accessed on 02 March 2021.

Table 3 - Phone Connections in India, 1947 to 2011.

Year	Number of phones in 000s	People per phone
1947	100	3400
1964	580	800
1984	2600	280
1991	5100	165
2001	37000	28
2011	900000	1

Source: Statistical Outline of India (Mumbai: Tata Services) and India: A Reference Annual (New Delhi: Publications Division) for relevant years.

But the people in the villages did not like to take a phone connection much, because of its high maintenance and poor connectivity. It took months to get the connection fixed. So, it was one major reason why there were very few landline connections in the villages of this region.

Arrival of the basic mobile phone

A tag line of an advertisement for the telephone in California in 1884 instructed people to ‘Speak directly into the mouthpiece, keeping moustache out of opening,’ (Claude Fischer, cited by Jeffrey and Doron, 2013:84) thus telling them how to use the phone. In the same way, when the mobile phone was launched in India, the shopkeeper was first trained how to use the phone. Telephone connections used to be the monopoly of the Government of India. But after liberalization, when the market was opened, a large number of foreign companies started investing in India, and one of the biggest investments was in the field of telecommunications. When mobile phones started coming into the Indian market, then the sellers and sales promoters here were trained by the company. These people used to tell the general public that it is very easy to use a mobile phone. These vendors and agents informed manufacturers and service providers about key customer needs, and this process shaped the way mobile phones were designed (Ibid.).

The mobile came to India at the same time that the mobile phone took off in the rest of the world. India had 5 million phones by 1991, however, none of them were mobile phones. In 2001 India had 36 million phones, but fewer than 3 million were mobiles; but in

2007, India had 206 million phones, of which 165 million were mobile phones⁴⁵. Mobile phones are the first form of electronic communication technology which is used widely because cellular network providers are cheaper than landline networks. Also, communication through phones does not require literacy.⁴⁶

However, until 2007 most of the people were not able to buy mobile phones. Airtel started its mobile service in the national capital, Delhi, in 1995. So initially the companies that launched mobile phones in India were Airtel, Hutch (which later became Vodafone) and Idea; however, calling charges were high (according to today's standards). In 1999, the charge for making a one-minute call used to be Rs. 16. This Rs. 16 used to be on an average half a day's income of a labourer.⁴⁷ Also, incoming wasn't free and there were incoming call charges. However, once Reliance communications entered the market, it changed the game and brought a lot of competition into the market. Reliance communication was the first company that provided one-year free incoming on its network. This greatly increased its market share and put a lot of pressure on other mobile operators to reduce charges. And this led to increased competition in the market. The calling charges plummeted and incoming calls were free and this intra industry competition was further accentuated by the arrival of companies like Aircel, Virgin Mobile and TATA Docomo. Lastly, a major change occurred with the arrival of Jio (5th September 2016), which allowed for greater mobile internet consumption than ever before in India.

Initially, the mobile connection was very easy to get but its call rates were very expensive. Apart from this, mobile handsets were also very expensive. But the mobile phone and its connections first came to the big city and then gradually expanded to the small towns. There were different companies that made mobile handsets, such as Nokia, Sony, Samsung, and Motorola which were the main companies. In the beginning, their handsets used to be very expensive. Around 2000, these companies launched compact phones, which were very easy to keep, but the call rates were still expensive. After 2000s, telecommunication companies started advertising their mobile phones more widely. Their advertisements spread rapidly to small towns of India.

⁴⁵ All figures for relevant years can be found at <http://www.trai.gov.in/Default.asp>, last accessed 10 April 2021.

⁴⁶ *Statistics of India* (Mumbai: Tata Services, for relevant years).

⁴⁷ TRAI, *Annual Report 2005–06*, p. 100. Accessed on 10 April 2021.

In the initial days of mobile service, companies used to charge for incoming and outgoing calls. But it was very easy to use. Most people of the upper-class and upper-middle-class started using mobile phones (roughly between 2004 to 2006). The mobile companies knew about India's huge population and that ease of communication was desirable and had a huge potential in terms of revenues. They knew that mobile phones were going to be the new medium of communication, and hence capturing the largest market share was really desirable. This led to huge competition among the telecom companies, and rapid growth in telecommunications in India. Also, within a very short time, the prices of mobile handsets declined, as did calling charges which slumped drastically during this competitive phase.

This period witnessed very rapid growth in communication infrastructure. The rate of mobile phone sales in India has been breaking records since 2000 once the market had time to stabilize after the introduction of mobile technology in 1995. As of October 2006, there were 130 million mobile phones in India, with six million new phones being purchased every month. With the advent of third-generation telephone technology and the increased sales in rural areas, Indian mobile phone users crossed the 300 million mark by 2011 (Sengupta 2006). Although Sengupta had assumed that the 300 million phone mark would be crossed by 2011, but in 2011 India had more than 900 million mobile phone subscribers.⁴⁸

New communication systems influenced and attracted local social, cultural and political processes. In 1999-2000, at a time when urban India was moving towards mobile phone usage and surfing the Internet, most people in rural areas in Bihar had neither electricity nor landline phones. After some years Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) started a mobile network in the village. Around 2007, many private companies also installed towers to bring their networks to the villages. Only a few wealthy families of the village could afford these mobile phones, and the ownership of a mobile phone reflected the status of the person in the village. In the beginning, those who had a mobile phone were considered to be very classy people.

Due to mobile technology, the village started connecting with the world. Our society has seen the explosion of information communication technology. The expansion of new

⁴⁸Information Note to the Press (Press Release No. 38/2011), Telecom Regulatory Authority of India [hereafter TRAI], New Delhi, 13 June 2011, with figures to 30 April 2011, <http://www.trai.gov.in/Default.asp>, last accessed 10 April 2021.

media technologies brought Indian villages into the mainstream. The simple Nokia phone arrived in the village around 2004. This phone was nothing less than a miracle for most people. Everyone wished that they had a phone.

In Amwa Majhar⁴⁹ village there were only one or two people who had landline phone connections. This was used as a telephone booth. A significant majority of the people of Amwa Majhar migrated to different parts of the country for their livelihood. Due to the migration of the people of the village to a different city of the country, their contact with the house was broken. There were primarily three sources of communication: the first - writing letters, the second, sending information through someone who was visiting the village, and lastly, the fastest but most expensive, was Subscriber trunk dialling (STD). There were dedicated telephone booth shops that provided long distance calling services. People used these booths to contact their family members. However, it wasn't a fool-proof method. It had its own problems. At times, the landline networks were down for more than several months. Also, since the STD wasn't personal, therefore, people couldn't call their family members at any time; rather they had to first call to send information to their family that they will call at a particular time and then they could communicate. Since, information had to be sent to the family members by the telephone booth owner, therefore, s/he charged a small sum in return for their services.

When mobile phones arrived, shopkeepers in the villages bought one and used it as a mobile (in the very literal sense) STD booth. Whoever used to call from outside, shopkeepers used to send mobiles to their homes to receive the calls. In this way, with the advent of technology, shops in the village used the mobile phone to generate business. Very soon people from the village who had gone to work in cities saved money and bought simple mobile phones and gave them to their families back home, so that they could contact their family members anytime.

But in most of the villages in North Bihar, there was a huge shortage of electricity. So, without electricity, people in the rural areas were not able to charge their phones. So, the shopkeepers who used to rent VCD/DVD players, televisions and batteries, also started mobile charging booths in their shops. They also charged for providing this service. So,

⁴⁹ This village is situated in Bettiah town of West Champaran district, Bihar.

gradually a simple mobile phone started being found in more and more rural households. Technology was evolving very rapidly and soon multimedia entered the mobile market. The popularity of multimedia mobile phones suddenly rose very high among the youth. Today multimedia mobiles are available in most of homes. Mobile phones have become part of everyday life. Now, I will discuss how affordable mobile phones reached the rural areas of Bihar.

Arrival of affordable mobile phones and mobile phone shops in villages:

The number of active users in 2011 were over 811.6 million, whereas in 2001, there were only 3.58 million mobile phone subscribers.⁵⁰ In 2006, a ‘One Rupee Per Minute’ tariff rate was introduced in India; however, by 2008-09, the cost of calling on a cellular network fell to less than one rupee per minute, and people from villages could afford to own and operate a cell phone (Jeffrey and Doron, 2012). The decade of the 2000s has seen mobile technology improving rapidly in India. First, the people of villages bought simple dial pad monochrome mobile phones. These simple phones used to be mainly of Nokia or Samsung brand. While the middle class and lower middle-class people of the village were buying monochrome mobiles, the upper-class people were buying colour mobiles. Buying a mobile phone was considered to be a huge achievement. After 2009, there was a big change in mobile phones. This change was in the form of multi-media mobile phones. The Nokia, Samsung, Sony and Motorola companies released their multimedia phones⁵¹ around 2009. But they were very costly. At the same time, China started making cheap multimedia phones.

In my first chapter, I talked about electronic shops in small towns and villages. These shops were re-structured after the arrival of mobile phones. In the initial stages, they started keeping the mobile phone’s battery, charger, and cover. Due to the shortage of electricity in the rural areas, some of the shopkeepers started charging mobile phones at certain prices. After some time, shopkeepers started selling sim cards and recharge coupons too. Even the majority of grocery shopkeepers started selling recharge coupons. Around 2009, the village’s electronic shops began changing rapidly. After some years there was the explosion of Chinese multi-media mobile phones. This Chinese mobile phone started coming into Bihar, as with

⁵⁰Information Note to the Press (Press Release No. 38/2011), Telecom Regulatory Authority of India [hereafter TRAI], New Delhi, 13 June 2011, with figures to 30 April 2011, <http://www.trai.gov.in/Default.asp>, last accessed 10 April 2021.

⁵¹A mobile phone that allows users to play video, audio, access the internet and take photos.

other electronic goods, through Nepal. At first, mobile phones came in, then their parts started coming in large numbers because people started buying Chinese phones in large quantities. So, the inflow of Chinese mobile phones kept increasing through Nepal. In villages, shopkeepers started selling phones with installment payments. Villagers started buying phones on monthly installments as an easier option than owning a mobile phone.

During my research for this project, Ajit Kumar, a shopkeeper from Ganj Bazar, Muzaffarpur district, who used to own a radio shop that he then upgraded to a mobile phone shop, gave me the history of his shop thus:

My father started this shop in 1989. He used to repair radios, torches and watches at that point on time, and the shop was very small. Gradually, he used to bring radio parts and assemble them together and sell radios. The people of the village whom we knew, we would give them radios even on monthly installments. After radios, we started keeping tape recorders as well. Along with my father, my elder brother also started sitting in the shop. He brought tape recorders that ran on batteries. And they recorded the customer's favorite songs on audio cassettes. After tape recorders, VCD players and VCDs came in and our shop became bigger. We started renting out VCD players with VCDs and batteries. After this, we also started selling VCDs, DVDs along with their players, TVs and Batteries, and we used to sell them on installments as well. Those who did not have the ability to pay money at once, they used to take them on monthly installments. They used to deposit the installment at the end of the month. Our shop was doing very well. After the advent of mobile phones, we started keeping the new mobile phones, their chargers and batteries. There was no electricity in the village, so we started charging mobiles too. After some years, Chinese multimedia phones also arrived in the market. So, we also started keeping them. After the arrival of multimedia phones, we changed our shop entirely. This was because around 2009 electricity too came to our village. So, we stopped giving batteries on rent. Most of the villagers bought their own VCD/ DVD players and TVs. We only sold VCD/DVD players, VCDs/DVDs and TVs. But when affordable multimedia phones arrived, the demand for these phones was very high. We started selling mobile phones too. And after the arrival of Chinese mobile phones, my elder brother went to town to learn mobile repairing. When he came back then we also started repairing mobiles at the same time.⁵²

Thus, it is clear that shopkeepers update their shops according to new technologies. Hence, after multimedia phones started coming to small towns and villages, shopkeepers bought computers and one of the members of the shop would get trained to repair mobile phones.

⁵²Interview conducted by the author on 05 March 2021.

Digital mobile phones and the Chinese copies

When multimedia mobile phones arrived in the market, they became very popular among the masses. People used to communicate, listen to music and radio, take pictures, etc. on their phones. The popular mobile brands at that time (around 2007) were Nokia, Samsung and Motorola. However, as the technology was new, therefore, these phones were out of reach of ordinary people, especially in the villages. However, given their rich features, most of the population wanted to own mobile phones. When gradually, China started producing cheap, copied versions of these popular mobile phones, and when these Chinese mobiles reached the Indian market, especially North Bihar, they were very popular because they were digital. These mobile phones could play audio, video formats, and more importantly, they had memory expansion slots that allowed more audio and visual files storage. Called the ‘Chinese Mobile’, these phones became very popular quickly as they were significantly cheaper than the phones mentioned above and also because they offered the same features.

Here is an image of a Chinese mobile phone that is a copy of the Nokia phone and looks absolutely similar but with a different name.

Figure 21 - High end Nokia mobile and its cheap Chinese counterpart



Source: Internet

Transformation of electronic shops at the village *Chowk*

As the number of phones in villages started increasing, the number of shops offering mobile services also started increasing. These shops did not pop up out of thin air; rather most

of these shops were earlier engaged in the sale, repair and renting out of VCD/DVD players and in the sale and renting of VCDs/DVDs. So, these shops evolved with the evolution of technology. While not all shops followed this trajectory, the majority of the shops did. At the end of this section, the further evolution of these shops is mentioned.

Mobile shops offered new mobiles, repair services, new sim cards, recharge coupons, mobile chargers, phone batteries, memory cards, and the transfer of new songs and films into memory cards. The mobile repair technicians in these small towns learned to repair mobile phones in major cities. Vinod Kumar, one of the technicians at a mobile repair shop in Bettiah, Bihar gave me an account of the process by which he began to repair mobile phones and the services he offered in his shop for his customers:

When the number of mobile phones in the village started increasing, then complaints about faulty chargers or faulty mobile phones increased. So, I started selling mobile chargers, batteries, memory cards, sim cards, etc. I went to Bakarganj, Patna to learn how to repair mobile phones and then started the sale and repair of mobile phones in Bettiah. I also taught many individuals how to repair mobile phones at my shop, who later opened their own shops in their respective villages. Along with other mobile repair shops, I charged less than half of what the authorised mobile repair shops charge. Also, the authorised mobile repair shops were available only in major cities; therefore, people in the villages relied on our services to get mobiles repaired. And we bought mobile repair spare parts from Nepal.

When the number of multimedia phones in the market increased and the demand for music and films saw a rise, then I got a computer for my shop. I used this to transfer music, films, ringtones, wallpapers, etc. at nominal prices. As films were large files and the demand for films was high, therefore, we started providing film packages, and I could transfer anywhere from 4-7 films into someone's micro-SD card. The charges for film transfer were nominal and it cost higher than music transfer because the file size was significantly large. So, the transfer charges depended on the file size, rather than the type of file.⁵³

An image of Vinod Kumar's mobile repair shop is given below. The mobile repair setup is on the right and the computer in the centre is used to transfer multimedia files into mobile phones.

⁵³Interview conducted by the author on 10 June 2021.

Figure 22 - Vinod Kumar's mobile repair shop



Source: Author's fieldwork

Another youth in the village informed me that once he went to the mobile repair shop and ordered an action film, to which the shopkeeper replied that he would provide him with a film that he would find very entertaining. He gave him B. Gopal's *Indira* (2002). It is a Telugu film, which is dubbed in Hindi and its name was changed to *Indira, the Tiger*. It is a very popular film in north India and the Bhojpuri speaking belt and this popularity led to it being dubbed into Bhojpuri as well.

Another aspect of technological development was that the rate of piracy increased exponentially with android devices. This is because an individual could take a film from a shopkeeper and transfer it to his friends and family at instantaneous speeds. Also, the shopkeepers did not worry about transporting and distributing films because earlier they were stored in VCD/DVD formats, which were space consuming. However, now films were transferred using computers/laptops and the films were stored in hard disks, and hence they could be easily taken from one place to another without worrying about police raids. Therefore, all these technological improvements helped in the faster distribution of media, required less space and after the advent of inexpensive internet, different media was on-demand through torrent (P2P sharing) and other websites.

Lastly, these mobile shops have further evolved and have started providing other services as well. For instance, the following image shows the new activities that these mobile shops have got involved with. Now they provide internet services, for example, getting tickets booked, printing Aadhar cards and other documents; providing photocopying facilities, checking examination results, downloading films on demand through torrent, etc. Also, the items for sale have increased; other than mobiles and their accessories, now these shops also sell portable fans, CFL bulbs, irons, speakers, etc. The following image shows the newer version of these shops.

Figure 23 - Further evolution of mobile shops



Source: Author's own field work

Public Viewing to Personalized Viewing

These new technologies greatly influenced how films/entertainment were consumed and led to a movement away from the community/household level of entertainment consumption to an individual/personalized level of entertainment consumption. Also, another important change due to private consumption of entertainment was that the choice of film for consumption became private. That is, earlier, films that were bought/ rented in were such that the entire family/community could watch together. However, with the advent of mobile

phones and thereby private consumption of films, one could watch anything according to one's preferences. So, the fallout of this was that it drastically increased the consumption of porn and India leads porn consumption on smart phones in the world and its consumption is at 89% in 2019, up from 87% in 2017⁵⁴. The following paragraph discusses how these methods (discussed below) changed from public to private.

Wallpaper: Earlier, wallpapers were purchased in local fairs (melas) and put up in homes, shops and other place like public transport hubs. However, with the advent of mobiles, both static and dynamic wallpapers were put into mobiles. Also, now these wallpapers did not come from any fairs; rather they were available from the above-mentioned mobile shops and from the internet. Also, earlier wallpapers were posters, but now with the new technology, especially gif format, wallpapers could be dynamic and could transition from one image to another.

Ringtone: Similarly, as with the wallpapers, ringtones also developed. In the early mobile phones, no external ringtone could be set. But with the advent of multimedia mobile phones, any sound could be set as a ringtone so long as it was in the right format (any audio file). Also, earlier ringtones were instrumental pieces, but newer ringtones could be anything: from a film dialogue to any song to a snippet of a popular song, to even recorded audio. Lastly, the shops, with the relevant software, could snip out a ringtone from any media file on demand.

Music: MP3 is the most popular audio format and is used extensively to play music. The mobile shops maintained an extensive library of music on their computers. They had folders based on artists, the type of buyer, Hindi/Bhojpuri songs, *shaadi* (marriage) songs, *bhajans*, patriotic songs, etc. They provided the songs based on the demands of the consumer.

The primary source of music was the continuous ripping of MP3 disks, which could contain over 100 songs and adding them to their existing library. Also, to increase the number of songs that could be transferred into the mobile, they significantly reduced the quality of the music file. For instance, the normal bit rate for an MP3 file is 128 kbps; however, they

⁵⁴ Are Indians Obsessed With Sex? Report Says India Leads Global Porn Consumption On Smartphones. <https://www.india.com/viral/india-leads-global-porn-consumption-on-smartphones-at-89-says-report-3896539/> Accessed on 10 July 2021.

reduced this to 48 kbps, which drastically reduced the file size and now more songs could be stored in the same space. So, this was quite popular in villages as the consumers did not care much about the audio quality, as well as, most of the time they were unaware of the process. They only cared about the number of songs on their mobile phones. Also, listening to music was very popular in the villages and there was a competition for the loudest mobile phone in the village. This created a demand for loud mobile phones. The Chinese manufacturers responded to this demand and produced mobile phones with double and even triple speakers. One such mobile phone is shown below.

Figure 24 Chinese mobile with dual speakers at the rear



Source: Internet

Music videos and films: As the screen size and quality of mobile phones improved, the demand for music videos and films improved steadily. 3gp format was one of the initial video playing formats. It had very poor audio and video quality; however, there weren't any other options available. Also, the file size in 3gp was very small. However, as the technology improved, mp4 came to be the dominant video playing format.

Video parlours ripped films in 3gp format and sold them to mobile repair shops which were later sold to consumers. The fees charged were nominal, and in a 2-gigabyte memory card (the most popular micro-SD card size), 4-7 films could be stored in 3gp format. Also, as these mobiles had Bluetooth in them which was very useful to transfer different files between

mobile phones, therefore, individuals used Bluetooth to transfer films amongst themselves. It took several hours to transfer one film; however, it was more frequent than one thinks. Now with android apps like 'SHAREit' transferring files from one mobile device to another has become very easy with speeds that are 500-600 times faster than what Bluetooth enables. Later, when mp4 became the dominant video format, in the same space, only 3 films could be transferred but the quality increased significantly.

Increased popularity of South Indian films and their dubbing into Hindi

In the Bhojpuri belt, there was a lot of demand for Tamil and Telugu films. The primary reason for this was that it had better action scenes compared to Bhojpuri and Hindi films. Telugu and Tamil films have found an entirely new set of audiences in North India. In the beginning, there were many unauthorized dubbing centres in Patna (Bihar) that dubbed the South Indian films into Hindi. They hired translators, voice actors, and sound mixers to dub the South Indian films. This was done illegally and no royalty was paid to the original creators of the film. Furthermore, the names of the films were invariably different from the original South Indian films. For instance, the Tamil film *Venghai* (2011) was titled *Meri Taqat*, *Mera Faisala* (2018). This was done to make the film title understood by the target audiences but also to avoid being caught out on piracy issues.

Figure 25 - Stark difference in film name



Source: Posters of the film from the internet.

As more and more south Indian films started getting dubbed the popularity of south Indian films grew even larger. Later on, some of the popular south Indian films started getting dubbed into Bhojpuri too.

Goldmines Tele films' YouTube channel has 57.3 million subscribers. There are many South Indian films dubbed into Hindi that are available on this channel where I saw Allu Arjun's films draw the biggest crowd online. For instance, the Hindi version of *Sarrainodu* (2016) amassed 170 million views in less than a year, whereas *Duvvada Jagannadham* (2017) came second with 152 million views in just six months. Most of the dubbed films are free of cost. So, many people from small towns and villages watch these online. But before watching these films online, people were watching South Indian dubbed films on mobile phones, given the huge demand for South Indian dubbed films in these areas, and they were buying these films from local shops at nominal prices.

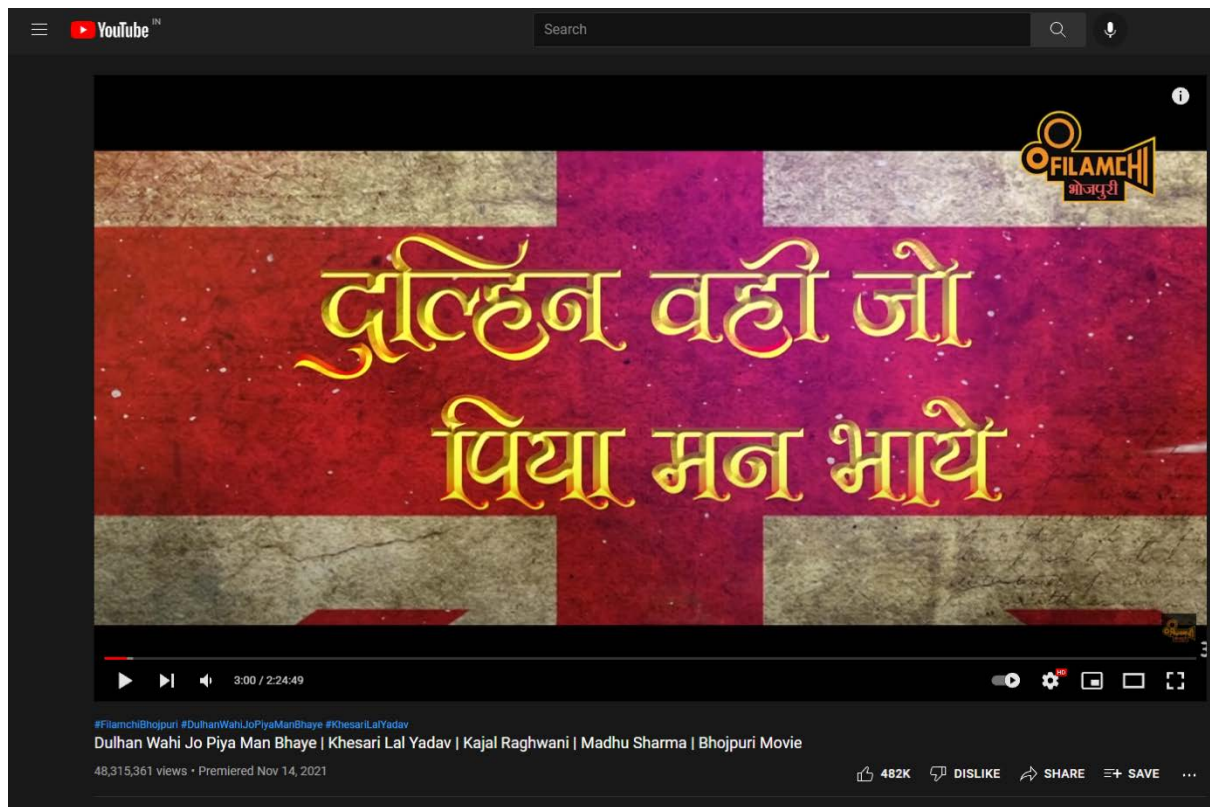
After the success of these dubbed films, the original filmmakers started dubbing their films in Hindi. Some of the older films they dubbed in Hindi and uploaded on YouTube. For instance, Pen Movies studio has a YouTube channel, and they have 16.4 million subscribers. *Jaya Janaki Nayaka* (2017), which is a Telugu film was dubbed into Hindi and uploaded on the YouTube channel of Pen Movies. This film has 468 million views on YouTube. One viewer of South Indian films from a village of north Bihar said that:

We search for 'South Indian action cinema Hindi' on YouTube, and watch one of them which comes at the bottom of the options list. Earlier, when there was no internet, we used to get the films from the shopkeeper of the village *chowk*. Now watching films has become very easy. We watch movies and video songs only on YouTube. Everything is available for free of cost on YouTube. We love South Indian films. There is a lot of action in South Indian films. We also watch Bhojpuri films.⁵⁵

Clearly, even Bhojpuri films are very popular on YouTube. For instance, the following images show the popularity and reach of these movies. The Bhojpuri film, *Dulhan Vahi Jo Piya Man Bhaye* (title taken from the 1977 Rajshri film), released on 14th November 2021, got over 48 million views on YouTube in less than one month, with over 482 thousand likes.

⁵⁵Interview conducted by the author on 13 July 2021.

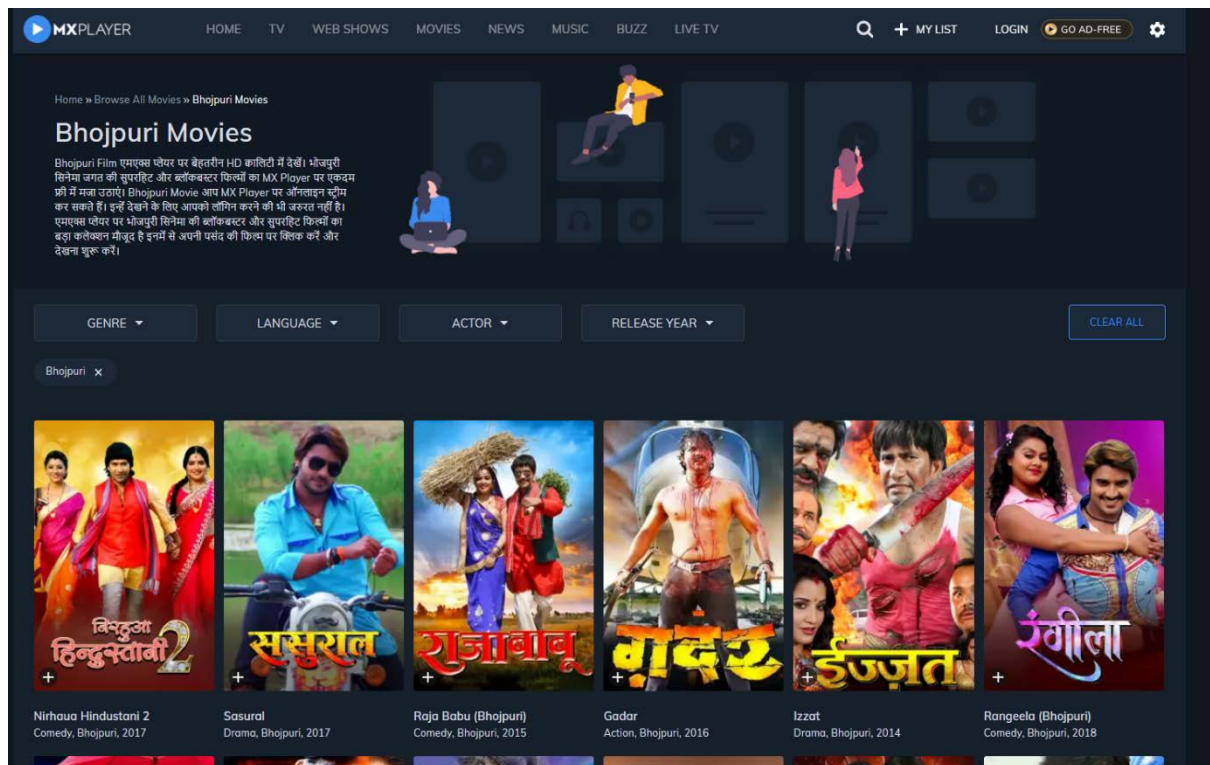
Figure 26 - Popularity of Bhojpuri movies on YouTube.



Source: Screenshot taken from YouTube.com.

Another free source of free Bhojpuri movie publication is MX player, where there are over 1000 Bhojpuri movies. The following image shows the source and some of the contents of the website.

Figure 27 - Plethora of content on MX Player



Source: Screenshot taken from mxplayer.in.

Naming traditions in the Bhojpuri film industry

Another important feature of the Bhojpuri film industry is its naming conventions. This industry has always tried to use the titles of popular Hindi and South Indian films to sell their own films. I have already spoken about the example of *Venghai*, the Tamil film titled *Meri Taqat*, *Mera Faisla*, which was dubbed into Hindi. However, in 2019, a slightly modified name was used by the Bhojpuri film *Meri Jung*, *Mera Faisala*. Similarly, the exact title of the Hindi film *Doodh ka Karz* (1990) was used by a Bhojpuri film in 2016, and the Bhojpuri *Doodh ka Karz* was also a huge monetary success and part of its success can be attributed to its name. These remakes more or less followed the story lines of the original Hindi films; however, the degree of similarity varied from one remake to other. Some other examples of the copying of Hindi film names and their narratives are shown below;

Table 4 - Bollywood films and their Bhojpuri counterparts

Bollywood films	Bhojpuri films
<i>Aakhiri Raasta</i> (1986)	<i>Aakhiri Raasta</i> (2016)
<i>Tridev</i> (1989)	<i>Tridev</i> (2016)
<i>Ram Lakhan</i> (1989)	<i>Ram Lakhan</i> (2016)
<i>Agneepath</i> (1990)	<i>Agneepath</i> (2019)
<i>Jo Jeeta Vohi Sikander</i> (1992)	<i>Jo Jeeta Vohi Sikander</i> (2014)
<i>Baazigar</i> (1993)	<i>Baazigar</i> (2014)
<i>Coolie No. 1</i> (1995)	<i>Coolie No. 1</i> (2019)
<i>Raja Hindustani</i> (1996)	<i>Raja Hindustani</i> (2020)
<i>Jab Pyaar Kiya toh Darna Kya</i> (1997)	<i>Jab Pyaar Kiya toh Darna Kya</i> (2014)
<i>Hero No. 1</i> (1997)	<i>Hero No. 1</i> (2015)
<i>Satya</i> (1998)	<i>Satya</i> (2017)
<i>Dhadkan</i> (2000)	<i>Dhadkan</i> (2017)
<i>Nayak</i> (2001)	<i>Nayak</i> (2019)
<i>Maa Tujhe Salaam</i> (2002)	<i>Maa Tujhe Salaam</i> (2018)
<i>Tere Naam</i> (2003)	<i>Tere Naam</i> (2016)
<i>Vivah</i> (2006)	<i>Vivah</i> (2020)
<i>Sarkaar Raaj</i> (2008)	<i>Sarkaar Raaj</i> (2017)
<i>Wanted</i> (2009)	<i>Wanted</i> (2018)

Source: Author's research on the internet.

Unauthorized copy of film posters in Bhojpuri film industry

The Bhojpuri film industry makes a lot of commercial films and does not shy away from taking ideas from Bollywood or the South Indian film industry, mainly from Telugu and Tamil movies. However, sometimes they go overboard in borrowing the idea so that it seems more like copy and paste rather than taking an idea and improving on it. The following posters show the blatant theft of ideas from South Indian films.

Figure 28 - Similarity among the Posters



Source: Internet

More recently, the Bhojpuri film industry has announced a copy of the critically acclaimed and financially super successful *Baahubali* (2015) as *Vir Yodha Mahabali* (poster shared below). It is said to release in five different languages, namely Bhojpuri, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil and Telugu.

Figure 29 – *Vir Yodha Mahabali* poster



Source: Internet

Online media consumption

With the advent of Jio (Reliance Jio Infocomm Limited on 5th September 2016), a landmark event in India because it made fast internet available to rural populations, the internet consumption in the country shot up tremendously. And this further personalized the consumption of media, with the opening of a plethora of options for entertainment consumption even for the rural population. Now, YouTube wasn't unavailable to them, which meant that they did not have to rely on getting films from the mobile shops; rather, they could download them or watch them on different websites (that illegally hosted films), or just watch YouTube and keep themselves occupied.

Thus, YouTube has emerged as another important landmark in entertainment consumption in rural India. Earlier YouTube was mainly restricted to people who had internet connections (generally well-off) and in urban centres. But as YouTube is such a content-rich platform, with a very strong algorithm to keep one hooked to YouTube, its consumption is unlike anything seen before. This has led to a huge growth of many YouTube channels in India and across the world. T-Series has become the world's biggest channel on YouTube with over 1.9 billion subscribers. Also, before Jio, there was no online gaming community in India; however, after its advent and with the massive success of the PUBG mobile in India, a gaming community has also developed here. Similarly, youth from Bihar have also started playing PUBG and started making a name for themselves and have started their own clans to play the game.

Ram Babu, one of my interviewees, told me about the film consumption pattern after the introduction of Jio. He said:

After Jio, watching films has become very easy. One is not required to visit any mobile shop to get a film. Rather most films are available on YouTube. And if in case, I don't find any particular film on YouTube then I just watch some other similar content. For instance, if I search for the best south Indian film, YouTube gives me numerous suggestions. Based on those recommendations, I choose a film and that's how I and many others like me consume films. Also, I am not confined to just watching films on YouTube; I listen to old *ghazals* and old Hindi film songs as well.⁵⁶

During the time of the lockdown due to COVID-19, Ram Babu has spent most of his time watching old films.

Content creation for entertainment

After the advent of Jio, with cheap internet accessibility, the number of content creators has increased dramatically in villages. People have started making vlogs, gaming videos, cooking videos, and numerous other such videos online (primarily YouTube). They use YouTube to learn how to make thumbnails, click bait titles, and various recording and editing methods to make these videos. Another platform where a lot of content creators have emerged is TikTok. It's a platform, where an individual can post up to 60-second videos which can cover a plethora of topics. India fell in love with TikTok and had the world's largest TikTok community. It had the maximum number of content creators and consumers of such content in India. Also, the young especially gravitated towards this platform. Another

⁵⁶Interview conducted by the author on 13 July 2021.

important feature of TikTok is that its transition from towns to villages was almost instantaneous. Unlike other technology and platforms which first take root in big towns and then gradually reached villages, TikTok did not face any such lag. Some content creators were also able to monetise their efforts and gained a lot of popularity.

There are over 500 million smart phone users in India and over 77% of these smart phone users are online⁵⁷. The growth rate of smart phone users has also been very rapid. In 2018, the total number of smart phone users in India was 345.9 million and in 2019 this number rose to 439.42 million⁵⁸. Mobile phones, especially multimedia phones, have brought about a landmark change in entertainment consumption in India. Mobile phones with audio and video playback capabilities became very popular in a very short time and the people's demand for them made China produce mobiles with the same features as the phones of other multinational companies at remarkably low prices. This increased the penetration of multimedia phones into even remote areas of north India especially Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

As the number of multimedia phones increased, the nature of shops changed. From shops specializing in the renting out of VCD/DVD players, these shops evolved and made mobiles, their repairs and dealing with the distribution of available entertainment as their main and primary operations. Initially, these mobile phone shops provided a plethora of audio-visual entertainment pieces to their consumers. But two of their major components were films and songs, and they provided both music and films on demand. Also, the rate of transfer and piracy reached new heights.

These developments personalized the entertainment consumption pattern in India, especially in rural areas. Now, the whole community did not require to come together to arrange for the community consumption of entertainment. Also, now entertainment wasn't the focal lens through which the community came together. Thus, in terms of entertainment or media, be it films, songs or news, the consumption got personalised, individualised and more customised.

⁵⁷ Over 500 million Indians now use smartphones, 77 percent of who are online: techARC. <https://gadgets.ndtv.com/mobiles/news/over-500-million-indians-now-use-smartphones-77-percent-of-who-are-online-techarc-2172219> Accessed on 09 August 2021.

⁵⁸Newzoo's Global Mobile Market Report 2019 and 2020.

However, the major change in entertainment consumption occurred with the advent of Jio. It opened numerous doors for online entertainment for smart phone users. Now, they were not just restricted to getting films from the mobile phone shops or sharing films among peers; rather than that, they could now watch a whole lot of new content from YouTube and other websites. Also, the number of content creators from villages increased drastically. TikTok was a major platform, where lot of content creators emerged from villages. However, when the Government of India decided to ban TikTok (29 June, 2020), there was a huge disappointment among the rural population. Since then, many platforms have tried to replace TikTok; however, none have been able to reach the level of success that TikTok achieved.

While YouTube and other platforms enabled the access of media and entertainment for rural and poorer populations in the cities, on-demand media streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Zee 5, Sony Live and Hotstar are still mainly restricted to affluent populations and to cities. These platforms still need to penetrate the rural population. To conclude, then, the advent of smart phones and the internet has made the consumption of entertainment a private affair with wider and on-demand choices that have and are having a revolutionary impact psychologically, socially and culturally, the effects of which still remain to be mapped out.

Conclusion

Trade between India and Nepal isn't new and Nepal has been used as a trading hub for trade between India and China for over a century. However, what is new is the degree and nature of trade with China through Nepal. Earlier both India and China offered goods that were beneficial for each other; however, after independence this trade has not been direct or even equal. Rather a range of Chinese products have come into India via Nepal, especially cheap electronic goods and parts.

As discussed in this dissertation, trade between Bihar and Nepal started with radio, torches, papad, dalda, cloth, etc.; however, later the majority of the trade was in electronic devices and electronic components. China's ability to keep developing and manufacturing cheap electronic goods and components had a huge impact on entertainment consumption in India. In fact, to a great degree it can be argued that if the trade between China and Nepal had not been as smooth as it was, then changes in the entertainment consumption across a vast majority of the population of the villages and small towns of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh would have been slower. Thus, a proxy trade with China via Nepal, the production of cheap electronic goods by China, and piracy are the three most important factors that impacted the level of entertainment consumption in north India and the pace at which it accelerated and transformed in this area from the early 2000s. Thus, the rapid growth in the consumption of entertainment was largely possible due to piracy. As piracy lowered the prices dramatically, therefore, entertainment became accessible to larger sections of society. Piracy developed new networks as well as utilized the existing distribution networks to reach even remote villages.

My research has highlighted that in the 1970s and 80s there weren't many sources of entertainment. And people had to rely on special occasions for entertainment. However, after liberalization, the modes of entertainment consumption increased dramatically and tape recorders and audio and video cassettes and VCRs and VHS players emerged as a major source of entertainment that was enabled by piracy on a very wide scale. These local practices were responding to the wider paradigm shifts in global media infrastructures, especially as Bihar has existed in a trans-national exchange pattern with Nepal and China. Piracy became a

way of life in these cross-border areas, enabled by the economic and cultural relations between Nepal and Bihar, and piracy constituted a vernacular sector irrespective of caste and class. The vendors in these areas sold low-quality videos that bypassed cinemas, big-box retailers, and diasporic video companies, and catered to local and home audiences mostly with the help of illegal P2P (torrent) networks over the internet.

Thus, piracy of audio and video files and the renting of audio and video players made entertainment accessible to the previously marginalised sections of society. Renting and piracy drastically reduced the cost of entertainment consumption. And all this was made possible by the evolving technology and the constantly evolving shops that catered to this demand with electronic devices. Electronic shops thus had a major role in making entertainment accessible. These shops evolved with the technology of the time as they dealt in the sale, repair, renting of pirated media products as well as the sale of media accessories.

Furthermore, what I have realized through my research is that whenever a new technology of entertainment arrives, it is accessible to only the rich and elite in towns. However, gradually, as the technology becomes cheaper, a larger section of society starts consuming entertainment through that technology, and specifically, because of piracy, people of every class of society in northern Bihar began accessing media. Piracy provided easy access to entertainment that in the 1980s and 90s was not available to every sector of society.

The major impact of piracy was the sharp rise in demand for Bollywood music and films. A major fallout of this rise in demand was the resurgence of the Bhojpuri film industry. Various small artists emerged into the limelight by selling their audio tapes in the local market using tape recorders. Gradually, when VCDs became popular, then the demand for Bhojpuri films increased. The Bhojpuri film industry borrowed many ideas from Bollywood and South Indian films (at times directly copied ideas and narratives), and used these to expand its market base. Names, scripts, posters, music and other creative ideas were taken from Bollywood and the South Indian films and were used by the Bhojpuri film industry. In Bihar, piracy had already created a widespread film-viewing infrastructure whereby people were watching Hindi films. Because of this infrastructure, the Bhojpuri film industry boomed after early 2000.

The development of village-level distribution networks set-up for the distribution of Bollywood films, took full advantage of the efficiencies of street-level trade in Bihar. Hence, the benefits of this extra-legal, fully established distribution networks in villages were reaped by the Bhojpuri film industry in the 21st century when Bhojpuri films found their way to an audience mostly through piracy networks, thus establishing a different kind of fan following in and out of Bihar and especially among the working classes. In a way, the Bhojpuri film industry in its contemporary phase revived through pre-existing pirate networks, which provided the structure which enabled it to cater to the growing appetites of a pan-Indian working-class audience. These networks ensured that the new Bhojpuri films got to places where cinema halls were inaccessible or unavailable, electricity connections not fully developed and for those who could not afford original VCDs/DVDs. Thus, piracy became, as is evident from this account, a driver of liberty and democracy and enabled a new cinema to emerge.

However, the big break-through in media consumption came with the advent of the multimedia phone which was faster, mobile and enabled individual choices. This completely revolutionized media consumption for the people in remote villages. Now, multimedia consumption was entirely personalized and did not require community effort for availing entertainment. Now, individuals could get films from a mobile shop and share them among peers. This media infrastructure allowed people to consume media in accordance with their own time and habits. And piracy became a way of life in these areas.

The pace of multimedia consumption through mobile phones was further intensified after the advent of Reliance's Jio network which gave unlimited internet access at first free of cost, and then at nominal prices. As expected, this enabled the low-income groups to also have access to the internet. Earlier, people in the villages consumed entertainment offline, that is, they went to mobile shops to get their desired films for viewing. However, after the advent of Jio, people started watching films online. YouTube gained a huge audience and now people came closer to the world. Now individuals in villages consume a majority of their entertainment on YouTube. Also, their entertainment basket has changed. Now they are consuming Hindi dubbed South Indian films (later south Indian films started getting dubbed into Bhojpuri), infotainment channels, gaming channels, etc. However, on demand media streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Zee 5, Sony Live and Hotstar are still mainly restricted to cities and accessed by the affluent population. These platforms still need

to penetrate the rural population and the major reason for their low penetration in the rural areas is the lack of knowledge about the content available on these platforms and the payment method. Only MX Player has been able to penetrate villages because it is free.

So, in a nutshell, this research can be summarised as:

- The speed of absorption of a new technology has increased over time.
- Piracy, renting, and cheap electronic multimedia devices from China have resulted in the penetration of entertainment to a majority of households in villages.
- Shops evolved to deliver new technologies to the market and they became the bridges between technology and the consumer. And their innovative strategies, like renting VCD/DVD players, batteries, etc. were very important for bringing entertainment technology to the marginalised sections of society.
- Mobile phones and the internet completely transformed entertainment consumption (from offline media consumption to online media consumption) and now the majority of entertainment is consumed online from YouTube.

The impact of all these developments is the personalization of entertainment consumption in India. Now, the entire community is not required to consume entertainment. And finally, the choices in terms of media consumption are unlike anything seen in the past.

Bibliography

- AP, Nyay Bhushan. "A chilling twist on film piracy". *The Hollywood Reporter*, 5 May 2009.
<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/businessnews/chilling-twist-film-piracy-83379/>(Accessed on 26 April 2019).
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: The Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1996.
- Belton, John. "If Film is Dead, What is Cinema?" *Screen* 55, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 460-70.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Technology and Culture: The Film Reader*, edited by Andrew Utterson, 105-26. London and New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Benzon, Paul. "Bootleg paratextuality and digital temporality: towards an alternate present of the DVD." *Narrative* 21.1 (2013): 88-104.
- Bottomore, Stephen. "An international survey of sound effects in early cinema." *Film History* 11.4 (1999): 485-498.
- Castells, Manuel. "The Other Face of the Earth: Social Movements against the New Global Order." In *The Power of Identity. Vol. 2*, 71-167. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2010.
- Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong, Anna Watkins Fisher, and Thomas Keenan. *New media, old media: A history and theory reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Denson, Shane, and Julia Leyda. "Perspectives on Post-Cinema: An Introduction." In *Post-Cinema Theorising 21st Century Film*, edited by Shane Denson and Julia Leyda, 1-19. Falmer: Reframe Books, 2016.
- Doron, Assa. "Consumption, technology and adaptation: care and repair economies of mobile phones in North India." *Pacific Affairs* 85.3 (2012): 563-585.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "Early Film History and Multi-Media: An Archaeology of Possible Futures?" In *New Media Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, edited by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thomas Keenan, 13-25. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Express Team. "Buying pirated DVD? You could be helping D-Company". *Indian*

- Express*, 6 March 2009. <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/buying-pirated-dvd--you-could-be-helping-dcompany/431798/> (Accessed on 26th April 2019).
- Fiol, Stefan. "Articulating regionalism through popular music: The case of Nauchami Narayana in the Uttarakhand Himalayas." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71.2 (2012): 447-473.
- Fiol, Stefan. "From folk to popular and back: Musical feedback between studio recordings and festival dance-songs in Uttarakhand, North India." *Asian Music* (2011): 24-53.
- Forty Years of Telecommunications in Independent India* (New Delhi: Department of Telecommunications, n.d. (1987), p. 2. (Accessed on 02 March 2021).
- Fischer, Claude S. *America Calling. A Social History of the Telephone to 1940*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992)
- Freidberg, Anne. "The Multiple." In *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft*, 191-239. Massachusetts, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006. Print.
- Ghosh, Abhija. *Celluloid in Transit: Film Society Cultures in India*. MPhil diss., Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2012.
- Ghosh, Agnitra. *Cinephilia and Bombay Cinema: Film Culture in the Digital Era*. MPhil diss., Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2010.
- Gopal, Sangita, and Sujata Moorti, eds. *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi song and dance*. U of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Hansen, Miriam. "Early cinema, Late Cinema: Transformations of the Public Sphere." In *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, edited by Linda Williams, 134-52. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995.
- Hardy, Kathryn C. "Mediating Bhojpuriya: Migration, circulation, and Bhojpuri cinema." *South Asian Popular Culture* 8.3 (2010): 231-244.
- Hasan, Daisy. "Talking back to Bollywood: Hindi commercial cinema in the North- East." In *South Asian Media Cultures: Audiences, Representations, Contexts*, edited by Shakuntala Banaji. London and New York: Anthem Press, 2010, 29–50.
- Hasan, Sheeba. "T-Series seizes pirated CDs". Masala.com, 18th September 2008. <https://www.masala.com/news-2/t-series-seizes-pirated-cds-6754> (Accessed on February 2021).
- Hernandez, Eloisa May P. "The Beginnings of Digital Cinema in Southeast Asia." In *Glimpses of Freedom: Independent Cinema in Southeast Asia*, edited by May Adanol Ingawanij and Benjamin McKay, 223-36. Ithaca: Cornell University

- Press, 2012.
- Hilderbrand, Lucas. "Grainy Days and Mondays: *Superstar* and Bootleg Aesthetic". *Camera Obscura* 19, no. 3 (2005): 57-91.
- Hilderbrand, Lucas. *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Hine, Christine. Introduction to *Virtual Ethnography*, 1-13. London: SAGE Publications, 2009.
- Gupta, Sen. "Indian Mobile user will cross 300mn mark". *Hindustan times*, 14th October 2006.
- Hoek, Lotte. *Cut-pieces: Celluloid Obscenity and Popular Cinema in Bangladesh*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.
- "Unstable Celluloid: Film Projection and the Cinema Audience in Bangladesh." *BioScope* 1, no. 1 (2010): 49-66.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/097492760900100107> (Accessed April 20, 2016).
- Huhtamo, Erkki, and Jussi Parikka, eds. *Media archaeology: Approaches, applications, and implications*. University of California Press, 2011.
- Huhtamo, Erkki, and Jussi Parrika. "Introduction: An Archaeology of Media Archaeology." In *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, edited by Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011, 1-21.
- IANS. "Pirated CDs seized in Patna". *Twocircles.net*, 23 June 2010.
http://twocircles.net/2010jun23/pirated_cds_seized_patna.html (Accessed on February 2021).
- India, Telecom Statistics. "Economics Research Unit." *Department of Telecommunications, Government of India* (2019).
- Indo-Asian News Service. "Over 500 million Indians now use smartphones, 77 percent of who are online: techARC". *gadgets.ndtv.com*, 30 January 2020.
<https://gadgets.ndtv.com/mobiles/news/over-500-million-indians-now-use-smartphones-77-percent-of-who-are-online-techarc-2172219> (Accessed on 09 August 2021).
- Information Note to the Press (Press Release No. 38/2011), Telecom Regulatory Authority of India [hereafter TRAI], New Delhi, 13 June 2011, with figures to 30 April 2011, <http://www.trai.gov.in/Default.asp>, last accessed 10 April 2021.
- Ingawanij, May Adanol. "Introduction: Dialectics of Independence." In *Glimpses of*

Freedom: Independent Cinema in Southeast Asia, edited by May Adanol Ingawanij and Benjamin McKay, 1-14. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012.

Jaikumar, Priya. "More than Morality: The Indian Cinematograph Committee Interviews 1927." *The Moving Image* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 82-109. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/43869> (Accessed November 3, 2017).

Jeffrey, Robin, and Assa Doron. "The Mobile Phone in India and Nepal: Political Economy, Politics and Society." *Pacific Affairs* 85.3 (2012): 469-481.

Jeffrey, Robin, and Assa Doron. *Cell phone nation: How mobile phones have revolutionized business, politics and ordinary life in India*. Hachette UK, 2013

Jha, Lalit. "Dawood, the Godfather of Bollywood Piracy". *Outlook India*, 15 April 2009. <https://www.outlookindia.com/newswire/story/dawood-the-godfather-of-bollywood-piracy/658255>(Accessed on 26 April 2019)

Johnson, Matthew D., et al. *China's Generation: Cinema and moving image culture for the twenty-first century*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2014.

Jyoti, Dhubo. "Act like a woman: How a little-known folk art form is sweeping away barriers of caste and gender, one Launda at a time". *Hindustan Times*, 05 November 2017.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/act-like-a-woman-bihar-s-launda-naach-sees-a-surge-in-popularity-during-festive-occasions/story-oZELovYpTg43xZKr1enKsM.html> (Accessed on 12 March 2020).

Karaganis, Joe, ed. *Media piracy in emerging economies*. Lulu. com, 2011.

Koprivnik, S., and B. R. E. D. A. Luthar. "Class, cultural capital, and the mobile phone." *Czech Sociological Review* 47.5 (2011): 507-529.

Kumar, Akshaya. "The Aesthetics of Pirate Modernities: Bhojpuri Cinema and the Underclasses 1." *Arts and aesthetics in a globalizing world*. Routledge, 2020. 185-203.

- "Deswa, the film and the movement: taste, industry and representation in Bhojpuri cinema." *Contemporary South Asia* 26.1 (2018): 69-85.
- "Bhojpuri cinema and the "rearguard": Gendered leisure, gendered promises." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 33.2 (2016): 151-175.
- "Bhojpuri Consolidations in the Hindi Territory: Infrastructure, Aesthetics, and Competing Masculinities in North India." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 7.2 (2016): 189-206.

- *Provincialising Bollywood: Bhojpuri cinema and the vernacularisation of North Indian media*. Diss. University of Glasgow, 2015.
 - “Provincialising Bollywood? Cultural economy of north-Indian small-town nostalgia in the Indian multiplex.” *South Asian Popular Culture* 11.1 (2013): 61-74.
- Kumar, Anup. “*Jugaad* Time: Ecologies of Everyday Hacking in India.” *Pacific Affairs* 94.1 (2021): 181-183.
- Kumar, Mithlesh. “Migrants, Smugglers, Traders, and Treacherous Rivers: A Genealogy of Bihar-Nepal Border from Treaty of Sugauli to c. 1947”. *Journal of Migration Affairs* Volume I, Issue 1, September 2018.
- Kuotsu, Neikolie. “Architectures of pirate film cultures: Encounters with Korean Wave in “Northeast” India.” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 14.4 (2013): 579-599.
- Kuotsu, Neikolie. *Korean Wave in ‘Northeast’ India: Rethinking Regional Film Culture*. MPhil diss., Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2010.
- Larkin, Brian. “The grounds of circulation: Rethinking African film and media.” *Politique africaine* 1 (2019): 105-126.
- “The politics and poetics of infrastructure.” *Annual review of anthropology* 42
 - Introduction to *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*, 1-15. Durham and London: Durham University Press 2008.
 - *Signal and noise*. Duke University Press, 2008.
- Liang, Lawrence. “Piracy, Creativity and Infrastructure: Rethinking Access to Culture.” *SSRN* (July 20, 2009).
http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1436229 (Accessed 10 November 2021).
- Lobato, Ramon. *Shadow economies of cinema: Mapping informal film distribution*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012.
- M. Rashmi. On that small mobile phone shop in your street corner, Sarai, <http://sarai.net/on-that-small-mobile-phone-shop-in-your-street-corner/> 2014. (Accessed 13 March, 2021).
- Toward a History of Consumption and Circulation of Media Content – Part One, Sarai, <http://sarai.net/toward-a-history-of-consumption-and-circulation-of-media-content-part-one/> 2014. (Accessed 21 March 2021).
 - Toward a History of Consumption and Circulation of Media Content – Part Two, Sarai, <http://sarai.net/toward-a-history-of-consumption-and-circulation-of-media->

- content-part-two/ 2014. (Accessed 21 March 2021).
- Mahadevan, Sudhir. *A very old machine: The many origins of the cinema in India*. SUNY Press, 2015.
- "Traveling Showmen, Makeshift Cinemas: The Bioscopewallah and Early Cinema History in India." *BioScope* 1, no. 1 (2010): 27-47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097492760900100106> (Accessed April 20, 2016).
- Manovich, Lev. "Digital Cinema and the History of a Moving Image." In *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press 2002, 249-259.
- Manuel, Peter L. "The regional North Indian popular music industry in 2014: From cassette culture to cyberculture." *Popular Music* 33.3 (2014): 389-412.
- "Democratizing Indian Popular Music: From Cassette Culture to the Digital Era." (2013). https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1336&context=jj_pubs (Accessed 10 November 2021).
 - "Popular Music as Popular Expression in North India and the Bhojpuri Region, from Cassette Culture to VCD Culture." *South Asian Popular Culture* 10, no. 3 (2012): 223-36. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2012.706012> (Accessed 10 November 2021).
 - *Cassette Culture: Popular Music and Technology in North India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
 - "The cassette industry and popular music in North India." *Popular Music* 10.2 (1991): 189-204.
- Marks, Laura U. "The Memory of Images." In *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and Affect*, 24-77. Durham and London, Duke University Press.
- Mazzarella, William. "Beautiful balloon: The digital divide and the charisma of new media in India." *American Ethnologist* 37, no. 4 (2010): 783-804.
- McCarthy, Anna. "From Screen to Site: Television's Material Culture, and Its Place." *October* 98 (Autumn, 2001): 93-111.
- Mesthrie, Rajend. *Language in Indenture: A Sociolinguistic History of Bhojpuri-Hindi in South Africa*. London: Routledge, 199.
- Mukherjee, Madhuja. "Toward a New Frame for Regional Films: Manbhum Videos and the Other Side of (Indian) Cinema." *BioScope* 7, no. 1 (2016): 58-79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0974927616635939> (Accessed July 10, 2020).

- Mukherjee, Rahul. "Imagining Cellular India." In *Global Digital Cultures: Perspectives from South Asia*. Eds. Aswin Punathambekar and Sriram Mohan. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019, pp. 76-95.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Passing Time: Reflections on the Old and the New." In *Critical Cinema: Beyond the Theory of Practice*, edited by Clive Myer, 71-81. London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2011. Print.
- Muni, S.D. *India and Nepal: A Changing Relationship*. New Delhi: Konark Publishing Pvt. Ltd., 1992.
- Odin, Roger. "Spectator, film and the mobile phone." *Audiences*. Amsterdam University Press, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048515059-013>, 155-169.
- Pang, Laikwan. *Cultural control and globalization in Asia: Copyright, piracy and cinema*. Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2007.
- Parajulee, Shekhar, and Martin Chautari. "Seven Decades of Radio Listening in Nepal." *Westminster Papers in Communication & Culture* 4.2 (2007).
- Parikka, Jussi. "Introduction: Cartographies of the Old and the New." In *What is Media Archaeology?* 1-18. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012.
- Breckenridge, Carol Appadurai, ed. "*Consuming modernity: Public culture in contemporary India*". Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Radjou, Navi, Jaideep Prabhu, and Simone Ahuja. *Jugaad innovation: Think frugal, be flexible, generate breakthrough growth*. Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.
- Rai, Amit S. "Introduction: India and the New Nonlinear Media Assemblage." In his *Untimely Bollywood: Globalisation and India's New Media Assemblage*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009, 1-20.
- Rai, Amit. *Jugaad Time: Ecologies of Everyday Hacking in India*. Duke University, 2019.
- Rajadhyaksha, Ashish. "The 'Bollywoodisation' of Indian Cinema: Cultural Nationalism in a Global Arena." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 4, no. 1 (2003): 25- 39.
- Rajagopal, Arvind. *Politics after television: Religious nationalism and the reshaping of the Indian public*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Rajadhyaksha, Ashish, and Paul Willemsen. *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 1994.
- Roy, LahaTasmayee. "Bhojpuri film industry now a Rs 2000 crore industry". *Economicstimes.indiatimews*, 01 April 2017.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/media/entertainment/bhojpuri-film-industry-now-a-rs-2000-crore-industry/articleshow/57924026.cms>

(Accessed on 27 October 2020).

Schleiter, Markus. "VCD crossovers: Cultural practice, ideas of belonging, and Santali popular movies." *Asian Ethnology* 73.1/2 (2014): 181.

Sing, Ritu. "Are Indians Obsessed With Sex? Report Says India Leads Global Porn Consumption On Smartphones". *India.com*, 2 January 2020.

<https://www.india.com/viral/india-leads-global-porn-consumption-on-smartphones-at-89-says-report-3896539/> (Accessed on 10 July 2021).

Sundaram, Ravi. "Post Postcolonial Sensory Infrastructure." *e-flux journal* 64 (April 2015): 1-10.

- *Pirate Modernity: Delhi's Media Urbanism*, 105-38. London and New York: Routledge, 2010.

Taneja, Nisha and Pohit, Sanjib. "India's Informal Trade with Nepal." *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 36, No. 25 (Jun. 23-29, 2001), pp. 2263-2269.

Tenhunen, Sirpa. "Mobile technology in the village: ICTs, culture, and social logistics in India." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14.3 (2008): 515-534.

Tiwary, Ishita. *Digital Proliferations: Mapping the Contemporary Media Scenario in India*. MPhil diss., Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2013.

- "Screening Conjuality: The Affective Infrastructure of the Marriage Video." *Post Script* 35, no. 4 (Summer 2016): 19-34. Accessed November 5, 2017. https://www.academia.edu/35261981/Screening_Conjugality_The_Affective_Infrastructure_of_the_Marriage_Video_Post_Script_Essays_in_Film_and_Humanities_Vol_35_No_3

- "The Discrete Charm of Local Practices: Malegaon and the Politics of Locality." *BioScope* 6, no. 1 (2015): 67-87. Accessed March 21, 2021.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0974927615586928>

TRAI, *Annual Report 2005–06*. (Accessed on 1 March 2021).

Treverton, Gregory F. *Film piracy, organized crime, and terrorism*. Vol. 742. Rand Corporation, 2009.

Tripathy, Ratnakar. "Bhojpuri Cinema: Regional Resonances in the Hindi Heartland." *South Asian Popular Culture* 5, no. 2 (2007): 145-65.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14746680701619552> (Accessed March 21, 2021).

- Tripathy, Ratnakar. "Music Mania in Small-town Bihar: Emergence of Vernacular Identities." *Economic & Political Weekly* 47, no. 22 (June 2, 2012): 58-66. TV and Video World, Vol 6, Issue 11, Nov 1989, Cover Page. (Accessed on 25th January 2021).
- Vasudevan, Ravi S., et al. "Circulation, adaptation, and assemblage in media history." *BioScope: Screen South Asian Trust*, 2016.
- Vasudevan, Ravi. "The Cinematic Public-II: Cinema and Film After the Proliferation of Copy Culture." In *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema*, 406-14. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2010.
- Verma, Rahul. "The TV show that transformed Hinduism". *BBC.com*, 22 October 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20191022-the-tv-show-that-transformedhinduism?referer=https%253A%252F%252Fwww.google.com%252F> 52 (Accessed on 20th June 2020).
- Virak, Aviral. "Ayodhya Part 2: Did a Divine Monkey Unlock Babri Masjid?" *The Quint*, 11 November 2017. <https://www.thequint.com/videos/short-dogs/ayodhya-decoded-part-2-did-a-divine-monkey-unlock-babri-masjid> (Accessed on 10 April 2020).
- Williams-Qrberg, Elizabeth. "The paradox of being young in New Delhi: urban middle class youth negotiations with popular Indian film." Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, Lund University, 2008.