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Long before short-form video became an industry, Tenzin Lhakyila was already performing into a camera. She started by making clips for the pleasure of making them, moved into Instagram comedy in the early 2010s, built an audience through monologues and character sketches, and eventually carried that self-taught performance language into mainstream acting. Her 2024 screen debut in Amazon Prime Video’s *Big Girls Don’t Cry* did not mark a sudden reinvention. It made visible what had been developing for years: a creator learning, in public, how to turn timing, observation and personality into performance.

Lhakyila’s career is useful because it predates many of the professional assumptions now attached to social media. When she began posting, “content creator” was not yet a stable job title in Nepal. There were no established creator agencies, brand-rate cards or obvious road maps from Instagram sketches to streaming television. She was participating in internet culture before the industry around that culture had properly formed.

By 2022, Kathmandu Post described her as a social-media phenomenon with hundreds of thousands of followers across Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. The striking part was not simply the scale. It was the consistency: she had been making videos for years, long enough for her audience to watch both the platforms and the performer change.

Before the Audience

Lhakyila has described being fascinated by YouTube while still in middle school. Like many young internet users of the late 2000s and early 2010s, she filmed arbitrary clips largely for herself and the people around her. One early video involved lip-syncing to a scene from the Hindi film *Sholay*, which her eldest sister, Keyang Yanki, enjoyed enough to show friends.

The encouragement mattered. Creative careers often begin before the person involved considers the activity professional, and family or friends become the first audience. In Lhakyila’s case, the

response suggested that her instinct for performance was entertaining beyond the private moment.

She kept making things. By early 2014, Instagram became a more serious outlet, and the platform gradually filled with self-recorded comedy sketches, monologues and observations about ordinary life.

The Comedy of Recognition

Lhakyila’s humour works because it is built around recognisable behaviour. The situations may be exaggerated, but the audience often understands the type immediately: family conversations, awkward social encounters, overthinking, the tiny frustrations of everyday life. Comedy emerges from the feeling that the viewer has seen a version of the same behaviour before.

This form of performance is particularly effective online because it does not require elaborate production. A face, voice and strong sense of timing can be enough. The creator can play several characters, shift tone quickly and allow editing to create the rhythm.

Lhakyila became good at this grammar. Her videos relied on expression and dialogue more than spectacle, helping build an audience that returned specifically for her personality rather than for one particular trend.

Why Timing Matters

Comedy is often discussed as writing, but timing is equally important. The pause before a reaction, the length of a look at the camera and the moment a sentence is cut can determine whether an ordinary observation becomes funny. Social video teaches these lessons with unusually direct feedback.

A creator posts and sees what viewers replay, quote or ignore. Over hundreds of clips, that creates an informal performance education. There may be no instructor in the room, but the audience functions as a continuous response mechanism.

By the time Lhakyila moved toward acting, she had already spent years practising timing under public conditions. That experience did not replace formal acting technique, but it gave her a highly developed awareness of what a camera notices.

Building an Audience Before Building a Career

Traditional entertainment usually asks performers to develop privately and audition publicly. Social media reverses the order. A person can build an audience before anyone in the conventional entertainment industry has decided to cast them.

Lhakyila’s career followed that newer route. Her followers accumulated around work she invented for herself, allowing her to

prove that viewers found her engaging without first receiving approval from a producer or broadcaster.

This is one reason creator-to-actor transitions have become common globally. Casting directors are not only looking at a résumé; they can see years of performance material and an existing audience. The creator effectively arrives with a public portfolio.

The Problem with Calling It “Just Content”

Internet comedy is sometimes treated as less serious than theatre or film because production can be simple. Yet simplicity often hides how many skills are being practised. A creator writes, performs, directs, edits and evaluates the finished scene, sometimes several times a week.

Lhakyila’s sketches required characterisation even when the character was only a slightly exaggerated version of someone familiar. They required control of voice and expression, and they required enough self-awareness to watch her own performance repeatedly during editing.

Those habits translate imperfectly but meaningfully into acting. The biggest difference is that professional productions take away some of the creator’s control.

The Move Toward the Stage

Before her streaming debut, Lhakyila also developed an interest in acting beyond her own videos, including stage experience in Nepal. Theatre changes the relationship with performance because there is no edit button. The actor has to sustain character and energy in real time while responding to other performers.

For someone whose digital work was heavily self-directed, theatre introduces collaboration and discipline. The performer cannot simply repeat a line until the take feels right. The scene moves forward whether or not every moment was perfect.

This kind of experience can expose the difference between being naturally watchable and being able to work inside a larger dramatic structure. Lhakyila's later screen work suggests she was actively interested in testing that difference.

Big Girls Don't Cry

In 2024, Lhakyila made a major transition with Amazon Prime Video's *Big Girls Don't Cry*, a coming-of-age series set in a girls' boarding school in India. She played Jayashree "JC" Chhetri, joining an ensemble cast rather than appearing as a version of herself. The project was directed across episodes by filmmakers including Nitya Mehra and Sudhanshu Saria.

The role placed her inside a production environment far removed from the self-contained world of Instagram sketches. Scripts, continuity, ensemble performance, costume, production schedules and directorial interpretation all shaped the character. The actor was one part of a system rather than the entire creative chain.

That loss of control can be difficult for creators, but it is also what allows growth. An actor has to serve a story that was not written around her existing public persona.

Playing Someone Else

One of the central challenges for a creator entering acting is that audiences already know the face. They may carry expectations based on the person’s social-media personality, making it harder for the performer to disappear into a character. Lhakyila’s role as JC therefore asked viewers to see beyond years of familiar online mannerisms.

The shift is subtle but important. In a sketch, the audience watches because the performer is Lhakyila. In a series, the goal is eventually for the viewer to care about the character even if they know nothing about the creator.

This is the difference between personal charisma and dramatic transformation. A long acting career usually requires both.

Representation Across Borders

Lhakyila’s casting also carried representational significance. She is a creator with Tibetan roots who built her public identity in Nepal and then entered an Indian streaming series. That movement reflects the increasingly porous cultural geography of South Asian entertainment.

Digital audiences already cross these borders easily. A Nepali creator can have Indian followers, a Tibetan-Nepali performer can appear in an Indian production and the finished series can be streamed globally. The old assumption that entertainment careers must belong neatly to one national market is weakening.

This matters especially for communities that have historically had limited representation in mainstream film and television. Visibility is not the same as structural inclusion, but it can widen the range of people audiences become accustomed to seeing on screen.

The Tibetan-Nepali Dimension

Lhakyila’s background gives her work a perspective that does not fit simple national categories. She has grown up and built her career in Nepal while also carrying Tibetan cultural identity. That complexity is increasingly common among young people whose lives span several cultural references at once.

In her comedy, identity often appears through ordinary behaviour rather than explicit explanation. Family dynamics, speech, food and social expectations can reveal culture without turning every video into a statement about culture.

This indirectness is one of comedy’s strengths. It can normalise a community’s presence by allowing the person to simply be funny, awkward or ordinary rather than forcing them to represent an entire group.

Why Her Early Internet Career Matters

Lhakyila’s longevity distinguishes her from creators who emerged after TikTok made short-form video an obvious route to attention. She had already been experimenting online for years before the economics of influencing were widely understood in Nepal.

That meant she learned under conditions where monetisation was less central. Early content could be strange, awkward or experimental because there was not yet the same commercial pressure to fit a brand.

Those years may have helped preserve a distinctive voice. When everyone has access to the same trends, a creator who developed before those templates became dominant often carries habits that are harder to copy.

From Instagram to TikTok

The platforms changed around her. Instagram moved from photographs toward video, TikTok normalised ultra-short performance and YouTube expanded into Shorts. Each shift required creators to adapt pacing and presentation.

Lhakyila survived because the core skill was not tied to one format. Humour based on expression and dialogue can move from a long YouTube clip to a short Reel as long as the rhythm is adjusted.

This platform flexibility is a form of career insurance. The internet rarely rewards the same content format forever, but a recognisable performer can migrate.

The Cost of Constant Visibility

Long-running creator careers also carry fatigue. A person who began posting for fun can eventually find that audiences expect continual access. The work becomes public before the creator has fully decided where the professional boundary should be.

For performers, this can be particularly challenging because personality itself becomes part of the product. Followers may expect the same energy in interviews, comments and everyday encounters that they see in scripted content.

Acting offers one possible expansion beyond that demand. The performer can be visible through characters rather than always through the self.

The Reunion Effect

Interest in *Big Girls Don't Cry* continued after release, especially as cast members built their own audiences. In 2025, Lhakyila's reunion in Nepal with co-star Aneet Padda drew renewed attention to the series and their off-screen friendship. The response demonstrated how streaming casts now live beyond the programme itself through social media.

This creates a circular relationship between acting and creator culture. The series gives the creator new visibility, and the creator's platforms keep the series present long after the original release window.

Studios increasingly understand this dynamic. Performers with digital audiences are not simply actors; they are also distribution channels.

The Risk of Being Typecast as Herself

Creator-actors face a specific danger: directors may want only a version of the personality already popular online. This can generate early opportunities while limiting artistic range. A comedian may repeatedly be offered comic supporting roles, and a

lifestyle creator may be cast mainly for familiarity.

For Lhakyila, the next stage of acting will be defined by whether she can move into roles that challenge the audience's assumptions. The ability to be funny is established. The more interesting question is how far the performer can stretch when a character demands restraint, seriousness or emotional transformation.

That kind of growth usually comes slowly, through work rather than follower count.

A Different Route into Acting

Lhakyila's journey represents a route that younger performers increasingly take: create first, audition later. The internet becomes a space for practising in public until conventional media eventually notices. This does not make theatre schools, acting workshops or auditions irrelevant. It creates another doorway.

The doorway is especially valuable in smaller industries where opportunities are limited. A performer can demonstrate ability without waiting for the small number of established productions to provide a first chance.

Nepal's digital generation has therefore expanded the definition of what counts as professional preparation. A decade of self-made sketches is not a traditional résumé, but it is still a decade of

work.

What Comes After the Creator Label

Lhakyila will probably remain a content creator even as acting becomes more important. The categories no longer need to replace each other. Her digital audience can support screen work, while acting can give the online identity new depth.

The more significant transition is psychological: moving from being the sole author of a performance to trusting other writers, directors and actors. That collaboration is where a creator can become more than the best-known version of herself.

If her acting career develops, the early sketches will likely look less like a separate phase and more like the informal training ground that made the later work possible.

The Performer Behind the Feed

It is tempting to describe Lhakyila as an influencer who became an actor. The phrase is convenient, but it misses the continuity. She had been acting long before a streaming platform gave the performance a formal credit.

The characters were smaller, the sets were simpler and the director was often herself. But the essential act was already there: observe people, exaggerate behaviour, inhabit a voice and make

an audience believe the moment.

Comedy as Informal Character Study

Years of sketch comedy also trained Lhakyila to observe people closely. A believable comic character usually begins with small details: how someone interrupts, the words they repeat, the expression they make when embarrassed or the way authority changes their voice. Social comedy rewards creators who notice those behaviours before everyone else does.

This observational habit can become valuable in dramatic acting because characters are rarely built from large gestures alone. The more convincing work often comes from details that make a person feel specific rather than generic.

Lhakyila’s online archive therefore represents more than entertainment. It is a long record of character experiments conducted in front of an audience, with each sketch testing which behaviours viewers recognise immediately.

The Difference Between Audience and Industry Validation

Digital creators can accumulate enormous audiences while still being treated cautiously by traditional entertainment industries. Follower count proves that someone can attract attention, but it does not automatically prove range, discipline or the ability to

work inside a production team. Lhakyila’s move into scripted acting required a different kind of validation.

Big Girls Don’t Cry mattered because it placed her inside an ensemble where performance could be judged independently of her own channel. She was not controlling the edit, writing every joke or choosing how the audience first encountered the scene.

That experience can be more valuable than simply receiving another million views online. It allows a performer to learn which habits survive outside the environment that originally made them famous.

What a Longer Acting Career Would Require

If Lhakyila continues moving deeper into acting, the next stage will likely involve roles that demand skills audiences have not already seen from her. Comedy created the opening, but longevity often depends on range: restraint, vulnerability, stillness and the ability to disappear inside characters who are not naturally close to the performer.

This is where training, repeated sets and collaboration become important. Internet experience provides confidence with the camera; professional acting adds the discipline of serving another person’s script and a director’s interpretation.

The strongest future for Lhakyila would not require abandoning her creator identity. It would allow each side to strengthen the other: social media providing independence and audience, acting providing new challenges that prevent the public persona from becoming repetitive.

Why Her Route Matters to Younger Performers

For aspiring actors in Nepal, Lhakyila’s path expands the imagination of how a career can begin. A performer does not necessarily need to wait until a film school, casting office or television producer provides the first stage. Self-produced work can become a legitimate way to develop voice and demonstrate ability.

That route still demands patience. Lhakyila posted for years before mainstream screen work arrived, and most creators will not convert followers into acting roles automatically. The value lies in using the waiting period productively rather than treating online fame as a shortcut.

Her career suggests that the camera in a bedroom, used seriously enough for long enough, can become the beginning of a professional education rather than merely a distraction from one.

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Tenzin Lhakyila’s career shows how the internet can function as a stage before the entertainment industry provides one. The phone camera did not distract her from acting; for years, it was where she learned how to do it.

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