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Born in Hong Kong, raised in Dharan and educated in Britain, Miruna Magar returned to Nepal to learn acting. Her breakthrough came only after several films struggled. What followed was more than a box-office turnaround: her roles became part of a wider change in whose lives Nepali cinema puts at the centre of its stories.

There is a paradox at the heart of Miruna Magar’s career. An actress who spent formative years in Britain has become closely associated with women rooted in Nepal’s villages, languages and communities. She has played a village teacher in *Kabaddi 4*, a Limbu woman challenging the limits placed upon her in *Jaari*, and

characters whose choices are shaped by social expectations far removed from her own upbringing.

That contrast is not incidental. It is part of what makes her trajectory worth examining. Magar is neither the first member of the diaspora to enter Nepali entertainment nor the sole reason that regional stories have found commercial audiences. Yet her work sits at a conspicuous intersection of migration, ambition, casting and representation.

As *Kabaddi 5: After the Final Match* brings the franchise back to cinemas in October 2026, the more revealing story is how she arrived at this point—and how much of her career was built before a box-office success finally changed its direction.

Home was not always in the same country

Miruna Lisara Magar was born in Hong Kong in 1994. She moved to Nepal as a small child and grew up in Dharan before relocating to Britain at around twelve. Her family background, like that of many Nepalis connected to British Gurkha service, crossed borders long before she began travelling for work.

Her mother, Shashi Thapa Subba, worked in theatre in Dharan. Art was therefore present at home, even as the younger Magar pursued her education abroad. In Britain she studied sociology and later undertook postgraduate studies. Returning to Nepal was not inevitable: she had family ties and educational opportunities

overseas. But acting offered a reason to explore another path.

In a profile published by Onlinekhabar, she explained that her parents had given her room to make her own choices. She also resisted turning her decision into a prescription for others. Not every young Nepali abroad has the resources, family support or professional options that make a return possible.

That qualification matters. A successful homecoming is an appealing story, but it can obscure the structural reasons many people leave Nepal in the first place. Magar's decision was personal, not proof that migration is a mistake or that returning will reward everyone equally.

Learning the craft before becoming a star

Magar returned to Nepal around 2016 and trained at Anup Baral's Actors' Studio. She appeared in the stage production *Kathadesh 3* before being cast in *Lalpurja*. A 2016 account of her casting described a newcomer with a theatre course behind her and an opportunity to work opposite established actors.

Her film debut followed in 2018. It did not produce instant stardom. Other early films—including *Rose*, *Saino* and *Cha Cha Hui*—also failed to establish her as a dependable box-office draw. It is tempting to write this period as a straightforward apprenticeship, in which every disappointment pointed towards eventual success. At the time, no such outcome was guaranteed.

In later interviews, Magar acknowledged the effect of those disappointments. Ratopati reported that she considered whether she might have to leave film after the poor performance of her initial projects. The setbacks were real, even if audiences now view them through the lens of her subsequent popularity.

One lesson of that period is less romantic than the usual perseverance narrative. A performer’s opportunity often depends on the right director, the right script, financing and distribution—not simply talent or determination. Magar continued working until a project arrived in which the character, the story and the audience appeared to align.

The two films that changed her prospects

That project was *Kabaddi 4: The Final Match* in 2022. As Shanti, a teacher who enters Kaji’s world, Magar joined an established franchise led by Dayahang Rai. The film’s commercial success introduced her to a much larger audience and altered the industry’s perception of her marketability.

Then came *Jaari* in 2023. Directed by Upendra Subba, the film centres on a Limbu couple, marriage, conflict and a woman’s struggle to exercise agency within the expectations of her community. Magar’s Hangma is not merely a reward or obstacle in a man’s story; her decisions are integral to the narrative.

The importance of these roles should not be exaggerated into a claim that a single actress transformed Nepali cinema. Both films depended on writers, directors, ensembles and audiences receptive to culturally specific stories. Their success nonetheless demonstrated that stories grounded in community life could reach the mainstream without abandoning local detail.

Those projects gave Magar more than visibility. They connected her screen persona with women negotiating the restrictions around them, sometimes with greater defiance than she says she has shown in her own life. Speaking at a 2025 public discussion reported by Nagarik, she reflected on the difference between her life in Britain and the lives of the women she portrays.

Representation is more than a costume

Nepali cinema has long used rural communities as settings, but a location alone does not make a story representative. Who gets to speak? Whose decisions carry consequences? Does a female character possess a life independent of the male protagonist?

Magar’s work has made these questions more visible. Her characters have appeared in films drawing from Limbu, Thakali and other regional social worlds, and she has argued for depictions that go beyond familiar stereotypes. In a 2025 discussion covered by Kantipur, she noted that Indigenous women were increasingly being written as people capable of important

decisions rather than being confined to narrow supporting roles.

There is a counterargument worth taking seriously. Casting a widely recognised star in stories about communities different from her own can increase visibility, but it can also concentrate opportunities among familiar faces. Representation involves not only the character on screen but also who writes, directs, finances and gets cast. A successful performance does not resolve those broader questions.

Magar’s value to such films is therefore partly commercial and partly artistic. Her growing recognition can help draw audiences towards stories they might otherwise overlook. But the depth of those stories still depends on the people making them and the communities whose experiences they depict.

Success brings scrutiny, not just applause

Public attention has not always been comfortable. During promotional activities for *Kabaddi 4* in May 2022, a dispute involving Magar and a monk became a widely reported controversy. She accused him of touching her inappropriately; the episode led to protests and an agreement between the parties, while subsequent legal proceedings were also reported. The available reporting does not establish the ultimate disposition of every later claim.

The episode illustrates the speed with which an actor’s public image can become entangled with debate beyond the work itself. It also shows why serious coverage should distinguish a person’s account, another party’s response and the legal record rather than treating social-media reaction as a verdict.

For an actress whose career was gaining momentum, the episode underlined a less visible part of stardom: the expectation that a public figure will be judged in real time, often before a complete account of events is available.

Beyond a single breakthrough

After *Jaari*, Magar continued to work across different kinds of productions, including *Nango Gaun*, *Rangeli*, *Mansarra*, *Gharjwai* and the 2025 film *Unko Sweater*. Her part in *Jaari 2* extended the life of a character strongly associated with her rise.

A busy filmography is not, by itself, evidence of artistic growth; some roles may be stronger or more demanding than others. But it does give an actress the chance to resist being defined by one successful franchise. Magar’s career now poses a different question from the one it faced before 2022: whether commercial recognition can translate into sustained range and greater influence over the stories offered to her.

Her name is also included in the ensemble of *Kabaddi 5*, which opened on 23 October 2026. The new film’s cast brings together familiar franchise performers and newer additions. Her participation connects the present instalment to a project that substantially changed her professional prospects four years earlier. The extent of her role should be assessed from the film itself, rather than inferred from the billing.

The diaspora is part of the audience, too

Magar’s trajectory also reveals something about the Nepali film industry’s changing geography. Actors may train overseas, return for projects and then appear before viewers spread across the Gulf, Europe, Australia and North America. The industry is national in language and subject matter, but its audience is increasingly transnational.

That reach presents an opportunity and a constraint. Diaspora viewers may welcome culturally specific stories as a connection to Nepal, yet their experiences and expectations differ from those of audiences in Kathmandu or rural districts. No single portrayal can stand for the whole country.

In a Nepali Times report on returnees in cinema, Magar described coming back deliberately to develop her acting and explore different characters. Her choice makes sense as a personal ambition; it is not a universal formula for diaspora success.

The making of Miruna Magar

There is an easy version of this story: a young woman leaves London, struggles briefly, becomes a star and finds her true home. It is also an incomplete one. Magar spent years learning, faced commercial setbacks, navigated public controversy and found opportunities through films that were the work of many people. Her career cannot be separated from the larger evolution of Nepali storytelling—or reduced to it.

What distinguishes her is the convergence of several experiences. An international upbringing gave her one set of perspectives. Theatre and unsuccessful early films provided another. *Kabaddi 4* and *Jaari* then put her before a much wider audience, often as women negotiating choices that mainstream cinema once left at the margins.

Her next challenge is not simply to repeat a hit. It is to show how much more she can do when the expectations attached to her name become both an asset and a limitation.

That is how Miruna Magar is still being made: not through an inevitable ascent, but through the continuing negotiation between ambition, identity, opportunity and the stories Nepal chooses to tell.

Reporting references: Onlinekhabar profile; Nagarik interview coverage; Ratopati on early films; Kantipur on women’s representation; Nepal News on Kabaddi 5.

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