Nepal Digest

LIFE. CULTURE. PEOPLE & NEPAL

PEOPLE / PROFILES

# From Reels to Bhajans: How Simpal Kharel Built a Cross-Border Digital Music Audience

Simpal Kharel moved from TikTok, modelling and Nepali pop into Hindi devotional music, building a major audience across Nepal and India.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2026

# From Reels to Bhajans: How Simpal Kharel Built a Cross-Border Digital Music Audience

Simpal Kharel moved from TikTok, modelling and Nepali pop into Hindi devotional music, building a major audience across Nepal and India.

**By Nepal Digest** - September 25, 2026 - Nepal

**Simpal Kharel’s career has crossed several borders at once: from TikTok to music, from Nepali pop into Hindi devotional songs, and from a domestic audience into a large Indian listenership. She became widely visible through short-form video, modelling and mainstream Nepali music, but her most distinctive turn came when she began releasing bhajans in Hindi and discovered that devotional music could carry a Nepali artist far beyond Nepal’s entertainment market. Her journey is a study in what happens when a digital creator refuses to stay inside one language, one genre or one platform.**

Born in Bhaktapur in 2000, Kharel grew up in an environment where music and religious practice were already familiar parts of daily life. Later profiles have described a family in which devotional songs were frequently heard at home, giving her an early memory bank of bhajans long before she considered them professionally. She also developed a strong interest in language and became comfortable switching between Nepali, Hindi and English.

That multilingual ability would become one of her greatest advantages. Nepal’s domestic music industry is comparatively small, while the Hindi-language market connects artists to hundreds of millions of potential listeners across India and the global South Asian diaspora. Kharel did not move into Hindi because she was abandoning Nepali music. She described the decision as an experiment in discovering what she could do.

## Before the Bhajans

Kharel’s early public career was built through a mix of music, modelling and social media. She gained attention through songs such as “Ma Geet Hoon Timro,” worked with singer and composer Kamal Khatri and appeared in music videos that helped establish her as a recognisable young entertainment figure. She also directed and acted in the video for “Jaula Relaima,” a project noted for addressing caste discrimination through a romantic narrative.

This period positioned her inside the conventional Nepali music-video ecosystem, where songs circulate through YouTube and social media rather than relying primarily on album sales. The artist is expected not only to sing but to appear visually, promote the work and remain active online. Kharel was unusually well suited to that environment because she was already comfortable in front of the camera.

At the same time, TikTok accelerated her public reach. By 2026, public analytics listed her among Nepal’s most-followed TikTok creators, with roughly 3.7 million followers. Her Instagram audience also extended into the millions, giving her a distribution network that many recording artists once needed television and radio to achieve.

## When Social Media Becomes the Record Label

Kharel’s rise illustrates how dramatically the economics of music have changed. A young singer no longer needs to wait for a label to decide whether she is worth marketing. A creator with millions of followers already possesses something labels historically controlled: access to an audience.

This changes the order of the career. Instead of releasing music first and hoping fame follows, a creator can become famous through personality, fashion and short video, then introduce music

to people who already know her. The artist’s social-media identity becomes part of the promotional infrastructure.

That advantage does not guarantee musical success. Followers may enjoy dance clips without streaming a song. But it lowers the cost of discovery and allows experimentation at a scale previous generations of Nepali singers rarely had.

## The Turn Toward Devotional Music

Kharel’s decision to sing Hindi bhajans was initially unusual for a young creator associated with fashion, modelling and social-media entertainment. Devotional music is often imagined as belonging to a different demographic from TikTok culture. Yet that contrast is precisely what made the move interesting.

She began experimenting with devotional material including Krishna-focused bhajans, eventually producing songs such as “Shri Krishna Govind Hare Murari” and “Radha Rani Lage.” She has said the choice emerged from a desire to explore music rather than from outside pressure. Hindi allowed her to test herself in a language she had long been comfortable speaking.

The experiment worked far beyond expectations. Indian listeners responded strongly, giving Kharel an audience in a market where even established outsiders can struggle to gain recognition. By 2024, she was already telling Nepali media that the level of

acceptance from India had surprised her and that her audiences in Nepal and India were becoming comparable.

## Why Bhajan Worked

Devotional music has several characteristics that make it unusually durable online. It is not tied to one release season, film or trend. Listeners return to bhajans during prayer, festivals, travel and daily routines, allowing songs to accumulate streams over much longer periods than many pop singles.

It also crosses generations. A teenager may encounter the music through YouTube, while an older family member may play the same track for religious reasons. This gives devotional songs a broader household audience than much youth-oriented pop.

For Kharel, the genre also connected personal memory with professional strategy. Reports describe her growing up hearing devotional music at home. Singing bhajans therefore did not require inventing an entirely artificial identity; it brought an older part of her musical environment into the centre of her public work.

## Radha Rani Lage and a Different Scale of Audience

“Radha Rani Lage” became one of the clearest demonstrations of how far that strategy could travel. The Hindi devotional track

gathered enormous YouTube attention and was later reported in Nepali media as setting a significant viewership benchmark for a song by a Nepali artist. Its success made Kharel increasingly recognisable to Indian devotional-music listeners who may have had little prior knowledge of the Nepali entertainment industry.

This changed the meaning of her career. She was no longer simply a Nepali creator with some international followers. She had found a musical category capable of generating a substantial audience independent of her domestic fame.

The distinction matters because cross-border recognition is usually difficult for Nepali artists. Language, industry scale and distribution all favour larger markets. Kharel’s devotional catalogue found a way around those barriers by entering a genre where the cultural vocabulary was already shared.

## Language as Strategy and Curiosity

Kharel has spoken directly about the importance of language to her musical exploration. She has said she was fluent in Hindi from an early age and enjoyed learning languages, making it natural to imagine songs outside Nepali. She also suggested that future work could include other languages, including English.

This multilingual attitude reflects a larger shift among younger South Asian artists. Streaming platforms do not require a musician to choose one permanent national market. An artist can release in

several languages and let audiences form around individual songs.

For Nepal, this is especially valuable. The domestic market can support identity and recognition, while neighbouring-language markets provide scale. Artists who can move credibly between both have greater room to experiment.

## The Difference Between Creator Fame and Musical Credibility

Kharel’s career also raises a useful question: when does a social-media personality become primarily a musician? The two identities can overlap, but audiences often treat them differently. Creator fame is driven by frequency, personality and visibility; musical credibility depends on songs people continue choosing even when the creator is not actively promoting them.

Devotional music gave Kharel a particularly strong route toward that second kind of recognition. If listeners repeatedly return to a bhajan for its musical or spiritual value, the song develops a life beyond the influencer feed.

Her growing catalogue on streaming platforms suggests that this distinction increasingly matters to her. By 2026, Spotify listed her with a large monthly listenership and a catalogue dominated by devotional tracks alongside other music.

## Directing, Performing and Controlling the Image

Kharel has not limited herself to singing. Earlier in her career, she directed and appeared in music videos, reflecting the multi-role expectations placed on digital-era artists. The same person can be singer, performer, director, promoter and distribution channel.

This creative control has advantages. An artist can shape how the song is visually interpreted rather than handing that responsibility entirely to others. It also creates more work and requires decisions outside the traditional boundaries of musicianship.

Kharel’s background in social media makes those responsibilities less unusual. Creators are accustomed to producing complete pieces of content from idea to publication. Music simply expands the scale of that production.

## Fashion, Modelling and the Public Persona

Kharel’s online identity remains broader than devotional music. Her Instagram and TikTok feeds include fashion, modelling and lifestyle content, creating a public image that is very different from the stereotypical presentation of a devotional singer. That contrast has not prevented audiences from accepting the music.

Instead, it reveals how younger listeners compartmentalise less rigidly. A person can follow the same artist for fashion content and religious songs without seeing a contradiction. Digital culture allows identities that older entertainment industries may have considered difficult to market.

This flexibility is one of Kharel’s strongest assets. She can move between visual glamour and devotional material because the unifying brand is the person rather than one genre.

## The Indian Audience

Winning acceptance in India is difficult because the market is both enormous and saturated. Thousands of singers, devotional channels and established music companies compete for attention. Kharel has acknowledged that she did not expect the level of response she received there.

Her success demonstrates how digital distribution can flatten some national barriers. An Indian listener encountering a YouTube recommendation does not need to know that the singer is Nepali before deciding whether to play the song. The music is evaluated in the same feed as domestic material.

Once the listener connects, nationality can become part of the artist’s story rather than an obstacle to discovery. This is a more fluid route into cross-border recognition than traditional music-

industry expansion.

## Why Nepal Benefits from Cross-Border Creators

Artists like Kharel expand the cultural visibility of Nepal in ways that are difficult to measure through conventional diplomacy. A listener may first encounter Nepal indirectly through a singer, a creator or a video rather than through news or tourism advertising.

This kind of cultural circulation matters because Nepal is often represented internationally through mountains, politics or heritage. Contemporary creators provide another image: young Nepalis participating in regional digital culture as producers rather than simply consumers.

Kharel’s Hindi music does not need to sound overtly Nepali to contribute to that visibility. Her identity itself carries Nepal into the larger market.

## The Risk of Being Everywhere

Versatility can become a weakness if audiences struggle to understand what the artist stands for. A creator moving between fashion, modelling, pop songs, bhajans and lifestyle content risks appearing scattered rather than multidimensional.

Kharel has addressed this indirectly by framing experimentation as deliberate. She has said she wants to understand what she can do rather than remain limited to one category. That approach gives the variety a logic.

The next challenge is depth. As her musical catalogue expands, the work will increasingly be judged not by novelty but by whether individual songs remain meaningful after the first wave of views.

## Social Media as Opportunity and Pressure

Kharel’s career depends heavily on the same platforms that can make public life exhausting. Interviews have occasionally reflected anxiety around social media, a reminder that millions of followers do not make online attention psychologically simple.

Creators face constant public evaluation, and female public figures are frequently judged on appearance and private life in addition to professional work. The larger the audience grows, the more difficult it becomes to control how content is interpreted.

This is another reason music can provide a useful shift. A song gives the audience something external to discuss. The artist remains visible, but the work itself can carry part of the public attention.

## From Viral Creator to Long-Term Artist

By her mid-twenties, Kharel had already accumulated several careers’ worth of visibility. She had millions of social-media followers, a catalogue of songs, music-video credits and a cross-border devotional audience. The question now is not whether she can attract attention. It is what she wants that attention to become.

She has said that music is likely to remain her main focus for the coming years. If that commitment continues, the most important shift may be from platform-driven celebrity toward a catalogue that can stand independently of the algorithms that first amplified her.

Devotional music has already given her a foundation unusually suited to longevity. Bhajans do not age at the speed of TikTok trends.

## A Career Built by Refusing One Box

Simpal Kharel’s journey makes sense only if the boundaries between creator, singer, model and director are allowed to remain porous. She did not leave one identity behind each time she entered another. She layered them.

That layering is increasingly normal for digital artists. The audience follows a person across formats, allowing music, video

and lifestyle content to support one another.

What makes Kharel distinctive is the direction she chose when that freedom became available. Rather than moving only toward more commercial pop, she entered devotional music and discovered a larger regional audience.

## Devotional Music and Digital Longevity

Kharel’s success in bhajans also reveals an important difference between entertainment built around trends and entertainment built around ritual. A dance challenge may disappear when the sound falls out of fashion, but a devotional song can return every morning, every festival season and every year. Repetition is not a sign of audience fatigue in this genre; it is often the entire point.

This gives devotional music unusually strong long-tail potential on platforms such as YouTube and Spotify. A song does not need to remain culturally “new” to remain useful to listeners. For an artist whose early fame was tied to fast-moving social media, that durability offers a different relationship with time.

It may also explain why Kharel has spoken about a special satisfaction in singing bhajans. The music can function simultaneously as performance, spiritual practice and catalogue material that keeps finding new listeners long after the release campaign ends.

## What Cross-Border Success Changes

An audience divided between Nepal and India changes the economics of an artist’s career. It expands streaming potential, brand partnerships and live-performance possibilities while also raising expectations around language, repertoire and cultural familiarity. Kharel can no longer think only in terms of a domestic release cycle.

This broader market can be liberating, but it can also create pressure to prioritise the material that travels best. If Hindi devotional music consistently outperforms Nepali songs, commercial logic may encourage more of the same. The artistic challenge is preserving experimentation even after the market begins rewarding one formula.

Kharel’s own comments suggest she remains conscious of this tension. She has framed Hindi and bhajan work as exploration rather than a permanent narrowing of identity, leaving room for pop, Nepali music and perhaps other languages in the future.

## The Value of Owning a Catalogue

Social-media creators often depend on daily visibility because older posts rapidly disappear from the feed. Musicians possess another kind of asset: a catalogue. Every song can continue generating streams, discovery and cultural memory without requiring the artist to recreate it each day.

For Kharel, the catalogue is becoming increasingly important. As more listeners discover one devotional track, streaming platforms can lead them into earlier and later releases, making each successful song strengthen the others. This is a more durable economic structure than relying only on sponsored posts.

The long-term opportunity is therefore not simply to remain a famous creator who also sings. It is to become an artist with enough songs that the music itself sustains discovery even during periods when she chooses to post less.

## A Nepali Artist Inside a Regional Market

Kharel’s career offers a practical lesson for Nepal’s music industry. Small national markets do not necessarily require artists to become less local; they require artists to understand where cultural overlap creates larger audiences. Hindi devotional music happened to provide that overlap for her.

Other Nepali artists may find different routes through folk fusion, electronic music, regional languages or diaspora scenes. The broader principle is the same: digital distribution allows musicians to identify audiences by interest rather than by national border alone.

Kharel’s success is therefore significant beyond her own view counts. It demonstrates that a Nepali artist can enter a much

larger cultural market without waiting for a major Indian label to manufacture the opportunity first.

## The Next Measure of Success

For the next phase of Kharel’s career, raw follower numbers will matter less than the strength of the musical catalogue she continues to build. Social platforms reward frequency and novelty, while music rewards songs that remain worth playing after the campaign around them has ended. That difference creates a useful test of whether her career is becoming increasingly artist-led rather than platform-led.

Live performance may become another important measure. Streaming demonstrates reach, but concerts reveal whether listeners feel enough connection to buy a ticket and spend an evening with the music. For an artist whose audience spans Nepal and India, live shows could also reveal which parts of her catalogue truly travel across borders.

There is room for experimentation as well. The devotional audience gives Kharel a strong base, but her multilingual background and earlier pop career allow her to move between forms without starting from zero. The most interesting future would not be choosing between “creator” and “singer,” or between Nepali and Hindi, but building a body of work in which those categories become less important than the consistency of

the voice behind them.

## Beyond the View Count

The next stage of Kharel’s career will be easier to judge through depth than scale. Millions of followers and enormous YouTube totals have already established reach; the harder question is whether listeners continue attaching particular songs to moments in their own lives. That kind of connection cannot be measured fully through analytics.

If devotional work continues to sit beside pop and multilingual experiments, Kharel may end up with a catalogue that reflects the same flexibility as her creator identity. The most durable version of her career is one in which social media keeps opening doors while the music increasingly gives audiences a reason to stay.

The next few years will show whether that freedom produces a recognisable musical identity broad enough to contain all of these experiments. Kharel does not need to choose one language forever, but listeners do need a reason to recognise the person behind each shift in style. If that continuity comes from voice, composition and emotional tone rather than genre alone, her cross-border career may prove more durable than any single viral track.

**Simpal Kharel’s most important move may have been the decision not to treat Nepal’s borders—or the borders**

**between genres—as fixed. The creator who became famous through short video found a different kind of permanence in songs meant to be played again and again.**

---

Originally published by Nepal Digest - https://nepaldigest.com/simpal-kharel-singer-bhajan-digital-creator-story/