

# **Movies as a Reflection of Electoral Politics: Analysing the Impact on Political Campaigns and Elections**

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## **Abstract:**

Movies have long been a mirror reflecting various aspects of society, including electoral politics. This research paper explores how movies portrays electoral politics, political campaigns, and elections, and how these representations influence public perception and understanding of the democratic process. This study aims to shed light on the relationship between movies and electoral politics, as well as their potential impact on voter behaviour and political discourse. For the purpose a range of films have been examined. Movies selected for analysis are prominently feature themes related to electoral politics, political campaigns, elections, or the democratic process. These themes may include the portrayal of political candidates, campaign strategies, election day events, and voter behaviour. It is found that political cinema has played a significant role in reflecting and influencing electoral politics. From early idealized portrayals to modern critical analyses, movies have served as a powerful medium for engaging with political issues, stimulating political discourse, and advocating for social change. The influence of cinematic voting scenes on civic engagement underscores the power of storytelling in motivating political participation. By examining how cinema portrays political campaigns, candidates, and elections, we gain insights into the ways in which movies both reflect and influence public perceptions of the democratic process. From the depiction of campaign strategies to the portrayal of election outcomes, films have the power to shape political discourse and impact voter behaviour, making them an essential component of the broader political landscape.

**Key words:** Electoral politics, Political Campaign, Election, Portrayal, Civic engagement, Movies, Democratic process.

## **I Introduction**

Movies have been an integral part of human culture and entertainment for over a century. Throughout this time, cinema has evolved from its humble beginnings as silent films to the technologically advanced and immersive experiences of modern-day cinema. The early years of cinema, filmmakers began to experiment with political themes, providing audiences with glimpses of political campaigns and the electoral process. These early portrayals laid the groundwork for the development of political cinema and offered insights into the evolving relationship between movies and electoral politics. Some of the earliest portrayals of political campaigns were influenced by real-life political events, such as elections and political scandals. The Watergate scandal, for example, inspired filmmakers to create narratives around political corruption and its consequences. In the early days of cinema, short films and newsreels provided brief glimpses of political campaigns and election coverage. These short

films were often used as a form of political commentary, providing audiences with timely information about political events. As the early films were silent, political campaigns were conveyed through visual storytelling, relying on facial expressions and body language to communicate messages. The early portrayals of political campaigns in film laid the foundation for the development of political cinema. These early experiments with political themes influenced future filmmakers, contributing to the evolution of political storytelling in movies. Over the years, movies have not only served as a form of entertainment but have also acted as a medium of artistic expression, capturing and reflecting various aspects of human society and culture. One domain where their influence is particularly profound is electoral politics. Throughout cinematic history, films have been instrumental in capturing the intricacies of political campaigns and elections, showcasing the high-stakes drama, power struggles, and ideological battles that shape the democratic process. Beyond mere entertainment, these movies have had a tangible impact on political campaigns and elections, wielding the power to sway public opinion, inspire social change, and mould the narratives that drive political discourse. This research paper highlights the significant role movies play as a reflection of electoral politics. The paper will delve into the multifaceted relationship between movies and electoral politics. The aim of the paper is to understand their impact on shaping public opinion, mobilizing voters, and influencing the trajectory of political movements.

## II Methods and Methodology

The research begins with review of the few literatures (Bhoopaty, 2003), (Gokulsing and Dissanayake, 2004), (Haas and Haas, 2015), (Robin Wood, 1986), available dealing with the relationship between electoral politics and cinema. This literature review provides a foundation for understanding the existing body of knowledge and helps to identify gaps or areas that require further investigation. For further investigation, movies related to electoral politics have been analysed. While it is not possible to analyse every movie related to electoral politics, the research aims to create a representative sample that covers a wide spectrum of electoral themes, allowing for a well-rounded examination. For the purpose I have analysed some important Bollywood movies that reflects the reality of Indian Electoral politics like *Upkaar* (1967), *MLA Ram Avatar* (1984), *Nayak: The Real Hero* (2001), *Rajneeti* (2010) and *Newton* (2017). The primary method of analysis is qualitative. Each selected movie is viewed and analysed in-depth to identify its portrayal of electoral politics, political campaigns, and related themes.

### **Upkaar (1967)**

"Upkaar" is a Bollywood film released in 1967, directed by Manoj Kumar, who also played the lead role in the movie. The film is a social and political drama that explores themes of patriotism, sacrifice, and the role of individuals in building a just and equitable society. "Upkar" emphasizes the value of patriotism and the duty of citizens to contribute selflessly to the progress and well-being of the nation. The film encourages individuals to rise above personal interests and work towards the betterment of the country. The film opens with a flashback to Bharat's childhood, where he promises his father to always help those in need and to serve his country. As an adult, Bharat embodies the values of simplicity, hard work, and compassion. He dedicates himself to improving the lives of villagers and fighting against

injustice. He actively participates in community development and is admired and respected by the villagers. The story takes a political turn when a wealthy landlord and moneylender, Thakur Sarang (Prem Chopra), exploits the villagers, subjecting them to debt and harsh conditions. Bharat becomes the voice of the oppressed and challenges the Thakur's tyranny, leading to conflicts between the two. The narrative culminates in Bharat's decision to contest the upcoming elections, seeking a political platform to bring about broader changes and serve the nation on a larger scale. The film's message of social responsibility and the fight against injustice resonated with the audience, making "Upkaar" a significant contribution to the genre of politically-themed Bollywood movies. "Upkar" touches upon the importance of holding government and public officials accountable for their actions. It advocates for a responsible and transparent governance system that serves the interests of the people.

### **MLA Ram Avatar (1984)**

"MLA Ram Avatar," movie was released in 1984. The movie portrays the journey of Ram Avatar, played by Rajesh Khanna, who is a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) representing the common people. He witnesses firsthand the rampant corruption and unethical practices among politicians and decides to take a stand against it. Throughout the film, Ram Avatar fights against the corrupt system and works to improve the lives of ordinary citizens. The movie emphasizes the importance of honest and principled politicians who genuinely work for the welfare of the people they represent. It also highlights the challenges faced by individuals who want to bring about positive change in a system dominated by corruption and vested interests.

"MLA Ram Avatar" serves as a commentary on the state of Indian politics, pointing out the need for political reform and the significance of having leaders who prioritize the public interest over personal gain. It encourages viewers to question the existing political system and to demand accountability from their elected representatives.

### **Nayak: The Real Hero (2001)**

"Nayak: The Real Hero," released in 2001 and directed by S. Shankar, is a political thriller that explores the journey of a common man who gets an opportunity to be the Chief Minister of the state for a day. The film conveys several important messages. The movie emphasizes the importance of holding politicians and public servants accountable for their actions. When the protagonist, Shivaji Rao (played by Anil Kapoor), becomes the Chief Minister for a day, he realizes the weight of responsibility that comes with the position and takes significant steps to address issues in the state. "Nayak" celebrates the power of the common man to bring about positive change in society. Shivaji Rao, a regular television reporter, uses his newfound authority to tackle corruption, inefficiency, and other social problems during his one-day tenure as Chief Minister. The movie encourages individuals to be proactive and participate in the democratic process actively. It suggests that ordinary citizens should not remain passive spectators but should engage with political affairs and work towards positive change. "Nayak" promotes the idea of ethical leadership and the need for politicians who genuinely care about the welfare of the people they serve. It contrasts the selfless actions of Shivaji Rao with the corrupt and power-hungry politicians he encounters during his brief tenure. Overall, "Nayak: The Real Hero" delivers a powerful message about

the potential of an individual to make a difference in society and the responsibility that comes with leadership. It urges viewers to question the status quo, demand accountability from those in power, and actively participate in the democratic process to create a better society.

### **Rajneeti (2010)**

The movie "Rajneeti," released in 2010 and directed by Prakash Jha, is a political drama that delves into the complex world of Indian politics, power struggles, and family dynamics. The film explores how ambition and the thirst for power can lead individuals to compromise their principles and indulge in unethical practices. The movie showcases how some characters are willing to go to great lengths to gain and retain political power, even if it means betraying their own family members or manipulating the electoral process. The film highlights the prevalence of political dynasties in India, where leadership positions are often inherited within families. It portrays the challenges and conflicts that arise within the family when multiple members vie for political supremacy, often at odds with each other's ideologies. "Rajneeti" sheds light on the issue of corruption in the political sphere. It showcases how corruption can seep into every aspect of politics, from election campaigns to governance, and the devastating impact it can have on the common people. The movie draws inspiration from Niccolò Machiavelli's political treatise "The Prince," as it portrays characters using cunning and manipulative tactics to achieve their political objectives. It shows how politicians can resort to both overt and covert means to gain an advantage and eliminate rivals. "Rajneeti" underscores that political power comes at a cost. It explores the personal sacrifices and moral dilemmas faced by politicians in their pursuit of power, and how the decisions they make can have far-reaching consequences on their personal lives and the lives of others. The film also touches upon the role of caste and regional dynamics in Indian politics. It portrays how caste affiliations and regional loyalties can heavily influence electoral outcomes and political alliances. "Rajneeti" presents its characters as multi-dimensional and flawed, showcasing the intricacies of human nature and the interplay of emotions, ambitions, and relationships. Overall, "Rajneeti" offers a compelling narrative about the intricacies and darker aspects of Indian politics. It serves as a reflection of the real-world political landscape while weaving a gripping and dramatic tale of power, betrayal, and redemption.

### **Newton (2017)**

"Newton" is a critically acclaimed Bollywood film released in 2017. The movie is a black comedy that highlights the complexities and challenges faced during the electoral process in remote areas of India. Directed by Amit V. Masurkar. "Newton" revolves around Newton Kumar, a principled and idealistic government clerk, who is sent on election duty to a Naxal-controlled village in the jungles of Chhattisgarh. His task is to conduct a free and fair election in a region where the fear of violence and apathy towards voting loom large. Upon reaching the village, Newton faces various hurdles, including resistance from the locals who are deeply distrustful of the government and its promises. The Naxal rebels, on the other hand, try to intimidate the villagers and discourage them from participating in the electoral process. Determined to fulfil his duty despite the adversities, Newton tries to convince the villagers about the importance of casting their votes and exercising their right to choose their representative. He faces opposition from the village head, Loknath, who believes that the

elections are merely a farce and will not bring any meaningful change to their lives. In his efforts to ensure a successful election, Newton seeks the support of Aatma Singh, a seasoned but cynical military officer, who is assigned to provide security during the polling process. Aatma Singh's pragmatic and forceful approach clashes with Newton's commitment to non-violence and fair play. As the election day approaches, Newton and his team must navigate through a web of challenges, both internal and external, to conduct a legitimate election. The film delves into themes of democracy, governance, power dynamics, and the struggle to bring about positive change in a society grappling with deep-rooted issues.

"Newton" offers a compelling portrayal of electoral politics in India, particularly in the context of remote and conflict-affected regions. The film highlights the prevalent electoral apathy and resistance among the villagers in the Naxal-controlled area. Many villagers are disillusioned with the political system and perceive elections as meaningless exercises that do not address their real issues and concerns. "Newton" sheds light on the role of election officials, represented by the protagonist Newton Kumar. It emphasizes the challenges faced by these officials in conducting free and fair elections, especially in regions where violence, fear, and distrust are rampant. The movie explores the power dynamics at play during the electoral process. It shows how the government, military, and Naxal forces exert their influence on the villagers, often manipulating them for their own interests. The film delves into the security concerns in conflict-affected areas during elections. It portrays the tension between the election officials' commitment to non-violence and the military officer's pragmatic approach, who believes in using force to ensure the voting process goes smoothly. "Newton" highlights the struggle to encourage voter participation in such challenging areas. Newton's efforts to convince the villagers to cast their votes while battling their resistance and fear form a central conflict in the movie. The film touches upon the significance of representation and how the election process can impact the governance of marginalized and remote communities. It questions the effectiveness of the democratic system in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable sections of society. "Newton" employs satire and humor to critique the flaws in India's electoral politics. The film satirizes various aspects of the election process, including the government's tokenistic efforts and the media's sensationalist coverage.

Overall, "Newton" offers a nuanced and thought-provoking perspective on the challenges and complexities of electoral politics in India, particularly in regions affected by conflict and apathy. It serves as a commentary on the functioning of democracy and the need for genuine representation and governance in the country.

### **III The role of movies in shaping perceptions of electoral politics**

The role of movies in shaping perceptions of electoral politics is significant and multifaceted. As a powerful form of storytelling and visual communication, movies have the ability to influence public perception, beliefs, and attitudes towards electoral processes, political figures, and the broader political landscape. Movies often depict the excitement and drama of political campaigns, showcasing the strategies and tactics used to win elections. These portrayals can influence public understanding of the electoral process and the complexities of running a political campaign. Movies demonstrate the consequences of political decisions on characters' lives and communities, highlighting the significance of electoral outcomes. By personalizing the impact of political choices, movies make viewers

more aware of the stakes involved in elections. Movies reflect the prevailing societal values, concerns, and anxieties related to politics, influencing how audiences perceive political issues. They can reinforce or challenge prevailing narratives and offer alternative perspectives on political matters. Some movies challenge dominant political narratives, questioning official accounts of historical events and offering alternative interpretations. By presenting different viewpoints, movies encourage critical thinking and a more nuanced understanding of electoral politics. Movies that depict characters engaging in political activism or civic participation can inspire audiences to become more politically engaged. By showing the power of individual action, movies can encourage viewers to take an active role in the democratic process. Movies based on historical events or figures can shape perceptions of historical elections and political movements. They can influence how people remember and interpret the past, impacting their understanding of present-day political realities.

#### IV Summary

Movies have served as a mirror of politics, reflecting and critiquing various aspects of electoral politics throughout history. The portrayal of political campaigns in films has evolved from idealized depictions to more realistic and critical portrayals, reflecting changing public sentiments. Movies have dramatized election day and polling processes, emphasizing the importance of voter participation and the significance of individual votes. The portrayal of voter suppression and electoral fraud in films has shed light on the challenges to democratic principles and the need for safeguarding the right to vote. Cinematic voting scenes have had an impact on civic engagement by creating emotional connections with characters and encouraging political interest.

In summary, movies play a crucial role in reflecting electoral politics and have a significant impact on political campaigns and elections. They can shape public perception, inspire and mobilize voters, and influence the political discourse. However, it's essential for viewers to critically assess the information presented in these films and seek a balanced understanding of the political landscape.

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