

Bollywood Blockbusters: Boons and Bans in the Realm of Politics

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ABSTRACT

Bollywood Blockbusters: Boons and Bans in the Realm of Politics" explores the multifaceted relationship between Bollywood movies and political parties in India. The paper delves into the potential benefits and drawbacks that blockbuster films may bring to governments, as well as their impact on the general public. Through a mixed-methods approach, including literature review, interviews, surveys, and content analysis, the study investigates the use of propaganda films by political parties to sway public opinion, promote their ideologies, and influence national narratives. It also examines instances of government bans on movies that are perceived as divisive or critical of the ruling regime. The research findings shed light on how political parties navigate the complex landscape of Bollywood's political influence, and the implications of such decisions on artistic freedom and public discourse. The study highlights the challenges faced by ordinary citizens who often bear the brunt of political propaganda-driven actions and limited access to diverse perspectives in entertainment. Ultimately, this research seeks to raise awareness about the interplay between Bollywood's commercial success and its role as a tool for political agendas, urging for greater transparency and accountability in the regulation of film releases.

I Introduction

An ideological the effects of a Bollywood film on a government might be beneficial or detrimental, depending on the film's subject matter and reception. Let's look into the possible causes of this:

A Government's Best Friend as Boon

Public opinion may be swayed in Favor of the government's beliefs and policies with the help of a well-made propaganda film. It has the potential to improve the public's opinion of the government by highlighting its successes, policies, and long-term goals.

Support for the government may be bolstered when films like these inspire a sense of patriotism, nationalism, or devotion to the current administration.

To move public attention away from current events or scandals and onto the government's desired narrative, all it takes is a well-timed propaganda film.

Citizens' morale may be raised and a sense of national pride instilled by watching propaganda films that feature heroic deeds, historic triumphs, or show the government favourably.

Diplomacy and international relations may be strengthened through the production of propaganda films that highlight the nation's culture, achievements, or growth.

Government Prohibitions as Ban:

Opposition parties, civic society, and the media might react negatively to a propaganda film if they believe it to be obviously biased or deceptive. Censorship or even a ban might be called for as a result.

Perception of Public: If a propaganda film distorts or manipulates the facts, it can damage public confidence in the government and its ability to protect its citizens.

Extreme examples of demonstrations, social unrest, or community violence may be sparked by a propaganda film that promotes divisive beliefs or communal tensions, bringing shame and instability to the government.

Reputational Damage Abroad If a propaganda film is viewed as spreading false information or crushing dissent, it will likely draw the ire of other nations and undermine the country's standing abroad.

Legal Challenges: Propaganda films that break laws, such as those prohibiting incitement to violence or the dissemination of hate speech, may be challenged in court, which might result in the banning or punishing of the film.

It's worth noting that the pros and cons of a propaganda film rely on a number of variables, including the nature of the film itself, how it's received by the public, the state of politics, and the government's capacity to manage the narrative and mitigate any negative effects. The government's use of propaganda films can be advantageous or detrimental, depending on how it's handled. It's worth noting that a political party's behavior may change depending on the unique circumstances and the current political atmosphere. Some broad considerations that might shed light on how various political factions would respond to the releasing of potentially divisive films are provided below.

II Bhartiya Janta Party

The BJP often promotes the value of free speech and the independence of the arts. It's possible they'd be more open to releasing films with content that's divisive or even critical of the government. The BJP may see the rise of the creative sector, especially the film industry, as an important part of India's soft power and cultural diplomacy, and hence actively work to foster its development. A policy of limited interference and censorship may be adopted by the BJP-led states, with the ultimate decision on whether or not a film is fit for distribution resting with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC).

(National Indian) Congress:

Congress-led states may be more hesitant to release contentious films that address divisive social or political problems. They might think about how it will affect public opinion in order to keep the peace.

Interest Group Pressure Congress is vulnerable to pressure from specific interest groups or communities, which might prompt them to ban a film out of an abundance of caution in the

face of probable unrest or controversy. Congress-led states may place a premium on maintaining public order and ban a film if officials there believe it will spark law and order issues or racial tensions.

Be in consideration that these are simply broad generalizations that may or may not hold true in any given circumstance. Political parties weigh a variety of factors, including public opinion, the letter of the law, and the need of good governance, when deciding how to respond to the distribution of potentially divisive films.

Political parties' positions may shift over time, and individual cases may deviate widely from the trends discussed. It is essential to take into account the unique background and political forces at play within that era in order to comprehend the reasons underlying the administration of a particular contentious movie release.

III Literature Review

The Accidental Prime Minister teaser has gone viral on social media. The movie trailer tops YouTube's Trending videos as its view count rises. Nevertheless, the movie trailer and crew have also scorched left liberals.

Despite official denials, reports of a Madhya Pradesh ban have appeared. Congress has historically banned movies that disagree with its objectives. Here are five important Congress-banned films:

Akasher Neech

This 1959 Bengali film directed by Mrinal Sen arguably the first ever Congress-banned film. A Chinese immigrant has a unique sibling bond with the local freedom warrior in this touching story. It was prohibited for its "overt political sentiments," starting a pattern of censoring strong films.

Garam Hawa

M S Sathyu's 1973 film provided a unique look at India's terrible Partition. The Central Government requested that the Censor Board prohibit the picture due to "communal tension." The intelligentsia's outcry led the then-PM to reconsider the restriction, and the picture was released uncut.

Aandhi

This film showed the intolerance the Congress has been of any screen representation of the Nehru Gandhi family. The film, directed by S S Kalra alias Gulzar, was largely on Bihar politician Tarakeshwari Sinha, the first woman to serve as the deputy Finance Minister in India as an independent nation.

The 1975 Emergency gave then-PM Indira Gandhi dictatorial powers, and the film, starring Sanjeev Kumar and Suchitra Sen, was misinterpreted as a biography. Aandhi was prohibited for a brief period after its release, even though the CBFC and I K Gujral cleared it. Aandhi received a second chance in 1977 after the Janata Party took power.

Kissa kursi Ka

Despite the outcry, Aandhi released unharmed. Unlike "Kissa Kursi Ka." It was a comedy directed by Amrit Nahata that mocked Sanjay Gandhi and his friends who ran the country during the Emergency, including Swami Dharendra Brahmachari, R K Dhawan, and notorious socialite Rukhsana Sultana.

The film's prints were taken and burned in a Maruti plant in Gurgaon [now Gurugram] by Sanjay Gandhi, starring Surekha Sikri, Shabana, Raj Kiran Azmi, Utpal Dutt, Rehana Sultan and others. In 1977, the director remade the picture as a telefilm.

Kuttrapathirikai

Another film showed Congress's liberalism. The 1991 film, set against the killing of Rajiv Gandhi, was voided by the government in 1993 for its "drastic political message." Madras High Court reversed the verdict in 2007, releasing it. Anupam Kher played Rajiv Gandhi, ironically. Anupam Kher has a history of insulting the Gandhi family.

As Congress tries to trash "The Accidental Prime Minister" and keep people out of the theatres with hundreds of erroneous and phony stories, let us remember their repeated tyranny over the creative arts. The Congress's ban culture on the performing arts is evident in its list of prohibited movies.

The publication of "The Kerala Story" sparked a major political uproar across the country. The film has been prohibited in certain states while being tax-free in others. It appears to be a source of friction between states governed by the BJP and those governed by the Opposition parties. Protests against the May 5th release of the film have been organized by various political parties and Muslim political organisations.

Bengal (West)

In West Bengal, the controversial movie has been banned. West Bengal's the chief minister, Mamta Banerjee has issued a ban on the film The Kerala Story, directed by Sudipto Sen. To prevent acts of aggression and animosity and to keep the peace across the state, this is necessary. The whole point of "The Kashmir Files" is to make fun of a specific demographic. What exactly is "The Kerala Story"? Banerjee argued that this was a skewed account.

Province of Tamil Nadu

As a "precautionary measure," the Tamil Nadu Film and the multiplexes Management Association halted the film's screenings on Sunday. The measure was undertaken to keep the peace and safeguard their property from the groups that object to the movie's message. Tiruppur M. Subramaniam, head of the Tamil Nadu Regardless of whether it and Multiplex Owners' Association, stated, "The film had to be taken off the screens almost all theatres." Only in urban areas did the film premiere. It's a Hindi film without any stars, thus it won't make any money.

IV Located in central India, Madhya Pradesh

When the BJP took over in Madhya Pradesh, they exempted movies from sales tax. The video depicts the devastation that befalls girls who fall into the "love jihad" trap, as stated by CM

Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Terrorism's planning is also laid bare. Though we have legislated against (forcible) conversion, the video raises awareness of the problem. The legislature of the state of Madhya Pradesh, India, has decided to waive the state sales tax on the film so that more people may enjoy it.

Kerala

The high court in Kerala found that the motion picture was "inspired by true events," hence they did not have the authority to prohibit its distribution. Unsurprisingly, the Bhartiya Janata Party-led Union government, as well as state governments headed by the BJP, have actively supported the film. The film's release date of May 5 was chosen to coincide with the critical Karnataka elections. Prime Minister Narendra Modi attempted to unify the voter base in the face of growing anti-incumbency sensation against the state's BJP government. Modi lauded "The Kerala Story" for uncovering anti-India efforts during a campaign event in Karnataka. He accused the Congress party of being too lenient toward terrorists. (Incidentally, the ruling BJP was thrown out of Karnataka, its only bastion in south India, in the recent elections, despite similar attempts.) After seeing "The Kerala Story" at a movie theatre in New Delhi, Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani of the BJP called it a wake-up call and labelled opponents as "supporters" of terror organisations. BJP-ruled governments such as Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Uttarakhand even proclaimed the film tax-free, lowering the cost of tickets for the general people.

In fact, prominent YouTuber Dhruv Rathee disproved the claims made in "The Kerala Story" in a viral video a few days after its debut. He demonstrated, using official reports, that just three women, Fatima Isa (Hindu), Sonia Sebastian (Christian), and Merrin Jacob Pallath (Christian), rather than the 32,000 reported in the video, had joined the Islamic State. The fact that this propagandist film has become one of the highest-grossing films, grossing over \$18 million in just a fortnight, speaks volumes.

V Methodology

This study will adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively analyse the impact of Bollywood blockbusters on political parties and their decisions on bans and promotions. Conduct an extensive literature review to identify relevant studies, academic papers, articles, and reports on the influence of Bollywood movies on politics, the role of bans and promotions in political propaganda, and the implications for the general public. This review will provide the theoretical framework for the study and identify gaps in existing research.

VI DATA COLLECTION

a) Primary Data: Interviews and Surveys

Conduct in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including politicians, filmmakers, film critics, and members of the general public to gather insights into the decision-making process behind movie bans and promotions and their perceived impact on politics and society. Additionally, administer surveys to a diverse sample of moviegoers to understand their

perceptions of political propaganda in Bollywood blockbusters and how bans and promotions affect their movie choices.

b) Secondary Data: Content Analysis

Perform content analysis of Bollywood blockbusters released in the past years and decades to identify patterns of political messaging, propaganda, and censorship. Analyse media coverage and public responses to movies that faced bans or were heavily promoted for their political content

Synthesize findings from the data analysis to draw conclusions on the role of Bollywood blockbusters as tools of political propaganda and the implications of bans and promotions on the general public. Offer recommendations for enhancing transparency and accountability in political decisions related to the entertainment industry.

VII CONCLUSION

Political parties' ability to veto or greenlight film releases has far-reaching consequences for both themselves and the public. The ramifications of such actions, which are frequently motivated by political gain or propaganda, are felt well beyond the domain of politics. Political parties may abuse their power to restrict films that criticize their beliefs or highlight their shortcomings, thereby silencing critics while directing the narrative. However, they may promote films that support their goals in order to expand their sway over the populace. The audience members are caught in the crossfire of this power struggle and suffer as a result. Artistic freedom, the ability to express oneself creatively, and exposure to new ideas are all hampered by censorship and prohibitions. The public's freedom of expression is violated since fewer perspectives may be presented to them through entertainment. Ordinary folks pay the ultimate price for propaganda-driven actions like these when they are deprived of the ability to make educated decisions and experience an unfettered visual landscape. In the past, Bollywood flicks often included positive portrayals of Hindus and Muslims getting along. The government used to designate them tax-exempt in order to encourage respect for India's constitution. These days, it's all the rage to produce tax-free movies that actively sow seeds of discord among people. This disturbing tendency in Indian film uses the medium to depict Indian Muslims in a negative light. Another reason for producing such films is to distract audiences from worrying about serious problems like rising unemployment and economic suffering. The local media has a significant role in promoting these films and altering the national debate. The media, rather than tackling the economy or other crucial concerns, has chosen to speak about the recently released anti-Muslim film, keeping people preoccupied and so preventing them from addressing the genuine issues at hand.

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