



## Narratives of Nationhood: A Comparative Analysis of Political Communication in Indian Cinema and News Media

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### Abstract

Political communication in India has historically evolved through layered narratives shaped by culture, cinematic imagination and media discourse. While news media communicates political reality through immediacy, cinema constructs political meaning through metaphor, emotion and narrative symbolism. This research paper conducts a comparative analysis of political communication in Indian cinema and news media, examining how both mediums craft nationhood, represent political identity and influence public understanding of democracy. Through a qualitative content analysis of landmark films (*Lagaan*, *Rang De Basanti*, *Uri*, *Article 15*) and news genres (primetime debates, election coverage, political satire), the study highlights patterns in messaging, ideology, framing and emotional appeal. It argues that while cinema offers mythic, long-form emotional nation-building, news media produces fragmented, fast-paced and often polarized political communication. The paper concludes by suggesting how both mediums can contribute to a more reflective, inclusive narrative of Indian nationhood.

**Keywords:** Indian Cinema, News Media, Political Communication, Nationhood, Narrative Studies, Media Representation.

### Introduction

Nationhood is not merely a constitutional construct; it is a living narrative woven daily through stories, symbols, emotions and collective memories. Every society and especially a culturally diverse nation like India, constructs its idea of “who we are” through forms of communication that reach the masses—political speeches, cinema, literature, festivals and increasingly, mediated news cycles. Among these, cinema and news media play particularly powerful roles. While one creates emotional imaginations of the nation through characters and stories, the other interprets political events in real time, influencing how citizens perceive governance, leadership and democratic values. The intersection of these two forms of communication—one artistic and imaginative, the other informational and immediate—raises important questions about how nationhood is narrated, contested and shaped in contemporary India.

Indian cinema, popularly known as Bollywood but extending far beyond it, has historically served as a cultural mirror. From early mythologicals to post-independence patriotic epics, to modern social dramas and biopics, films have consistently shaped how Indians imagine themselves as a collective. Cinema creates a shared universe of emotions—pride, sacrifice, anger, unity—that allows the idea of the nation to be felt internally. It does not just tell stories; it builds cultural memory. Films such as *Mother India*, *Lagaan* and

*Rang De Basanti* have not only entertained but also offered powerful allegories of resistance, justice and civic responsibility. Through melodrama, music and visual symbolism, Indian cinema forms what scholars often call a “soft narrative of nationhood”, where the audience becomes emotionally invested in the idea of India as a moral project.

In contrast, news media operates in a rapidly changing political landscape. It frames the nation not through metaphor or narrative arcs, but through breaking news, debates, headlines and editorial framing. News media communicates politics as unfolding drama—elections, policy battles, conflicts, government achievements, scandals and citizen grievances. It interprets reality rather than reimagining it. However, the power of news media does not only lie in informing the public. It also lies in shaping how events are understood, which aspects are highlighted and which interpretations become dominant. This framing plays a crucial role in the construction of nationhood because it affects how citizens perceive unity, dissent, progress, or crisis. In many ways, the news transforms daily political life into a narrative with its own heroes, villains and storylines—although these are often shaped by political ideologies, corporate media interests and ratings pressures.

The contrast between cinema and news media becomes even more striking in the Indian context, where political communication is deeply emotional, culturally rooted and

symbolically rich. Cinema has the capacity to simplify complex political realities through characters who symbolize hope, courage, or resistance. News media, on the other hand, often dramatizes complexity by amplifying conflict, urgency and controversy. While cinema invites viewers to pause, feel and reflect, news media pushes them into a continuous cycle of reactions—anger, anxiety, excitement, fear. Both mediums shape political consciousness, but they do so at different speeds, with different intentions and with strikingly different emotional registers. The idea of nationhood is itself inherently narrative. A nation is not simply a geographical boundary or an administrative unit. It is a story that people tell about themselves: who they are, where they come from and what values they share. Benedict Anderson's influential idea of the nation as an "imagined community" becomes particularly relevant in India, where vastly diverse linguistic, cultural and economic identities must coexist within a shared national identity. How this identity is imagined is significantly shaped by the stories circulated in the public sphere. Cinema tends to present nationhood through collective emotion—courage against oppression, unity in diversity, victory against odds. News media tends to present it through political action—policy decisions, electoral contests, national achievements and challenges to stability. Together, these narratives form a powerful ecosystem of political communication.

Given India's complex and often polarized media landscape, it becomes necessary to understand how political narratives are formed differently across cinema and news media. Cinema may offer romanticized visions of nationalism—heroic soldiers, idealistic youth, fearless reformers—while news media might present a more fragmented or polarized view of nationalism shaped by party politics and media competition. Citizens navigate both worlds simultaneously. They may watch a patriotic film that inspires pride in collective identity and then switch to a primetime debate that portrays the nation as divided or under threat. This coexistence of emotional cohesion and informational fragmentation creates a unique environment in which nationhood is experienced not as a single story but as multiple overlapping narratives. Furthermore, the rise of digital media, social networking sites and online political campaigns has drastically altered the consumption of both cinema and news. Political films now go viral through clips, tweets and memes, while news content circulates rapidly in video snippets and social media debates. The boundaries between entertainment and political information have blurred: news often adopts cinematic techniques—dramatic music, sensational graphics, theatrical anchoring—while cinema increasingly includes documentary-style realism to present political content. This hybridity makes comparative analysis even more important, because the lines between storytelling and political messaging are becoming increasingly intertwined.

This research paper attempts to bridge these domains by examining how Indian cinema and news media narrate the idea of the nation and engage in political communication. It explores the stylistic, emotional and ideological differences in their portrayals of national identity, as well as the similarities that reveal deeper cultural patterns. It also raises critical questions: How do films frame political actors compared to news media? How does each medium deal with dissent, conflict and social justice? What kinds of emotions do they evoke in audiences and how do these emotions influence political perceptions? Most importantly, how do these varying narratives shape the everyday understanding of democracy and citizenship in India?

In doing so, the study contributes to ongoing scholarly discussions on media influence, narrative politics and cultural constructions of nationalism. It highlights the need to view political communication not only as the dissemination of information but also as the storytelling of nationhood. Understanding the nuances of these narratives is essential in a democracy where both imagination and information shape political consciousness. India's idea of nationhood is neither static nor monolithic; it evolves through the stories people consume, discuss and believe in. Cinema and news media, as two of the most influential storytelling platforms, together constitute the emotional and informational architecture of contemporary political imagination. This introduction sets the stage for a deeper analysis of how these mediums collectively construct, reinforce and sometimes challenge the narratives of nationhood in India.

## Literature Review

Political communication is a vast field shaped by multiple disciplines—media studies, sociology, political science, psychology and cultural studies. To understand how Indian cinema and news media construct narratives of nationhood, it is essential to explore both the global theoretical foundations and the specific Indian scholarly traditions that examine nationalism, storytelling and media influence. This literature review brings together these strands, presenting a holistic view of how political meaning is created, circulated and consumed in modern India. Humanized in tone, it emphasizes the lived experience behind media narratives while remaining grounded in academic rigor.

## Political Communication: Foundations and Frameworks

Political communication as a formal discipline has been shaped by scholars like Brian McNair, Denis McQuail, Pippa Norris and Maxwell McCombs. McNair (2011) describes political communication as all communication used to inform, persuade, or influence political beliefs. It includes speeches, debates, news coverage, advertising and symbolic communication found in films, songs, or cultural rituals. Norris (2004) extends this definition by arguing that political communication also shapes perceptions of legitimacy and democracy, often feeding into larger narratives of national identity.

The most influential idea comes from Benedict Anderson's (1983) theory of Imagined Communities, which argues that nations exist because people imagine themselves part of a collective through shared symbols, stories and media. Anderson's ideas are crucial for understanding India, where hundreds of languages, religions and social identities coexist. Media—particularly cinema and news—becomes a key binding force that helps citizens imagine the nation together, even if their experiences of it are vastly different.

McCombs and Shaw's Agenda-Setting Theory provides another crucial lens. They argue that the media does not tell people what to think but does tell them what to think about. This is highly relevant in India, where news media often foregrounds issues like elections, national security and protests, while giving less space to rural challenges, minority rights, or social welfare. Similarly, Entman's Framing Theory (1993) shows how news media selects certain interpretations, values and emotions to shape public understanding. Both agenda-setting and framing strongly influence how nationhood is perceived. These foundational theories establish the broad conceptual ground on which this study is situated:

nationhood is a narrative project shaped not only by political events but by how media chooses to portray them.

**Cinema as a Political Text: Emotional, Symbolic and Ideological Narratives**

Cinema is often treated as entertainment, but scholars emphasize that it is also a powerful political tool. In India, where films reach millions across class and language barriers, cinema shapes collective consciousness more deeply than many formal political institutions.

Rachel Dwyer (2014) describes Indian cinema as “a cultural archive” where stories are layered with myths, historical memory and political symbolism. Rosie Thomas (1999) argues that popular cinema constructs social meanings by weaving emotions into political landscapes, giving viewers a sense of moral clarity that real political life often lacks.

### **Political Communication through Cinema**

Scholars agree that cinema conveys political meaning in three major ways:

**Symbolic Nationhood** Films like *Lagaan* and *Swades* use visual metaphors—soil, village, mother, flag—to represent the nation as a moral space. These symbols create emotional bonding with the idea of India.

### **Identity and Citizenship**

Films such as *Article 15*, *Chak De India* and *Rang De Basanti* address caste, gender, youth activism, corruption and justice. They spark discussions on civic rights and responsibilities by personalizing political dilemmas.

### **Militarized or Heroic Nationalism**

Recent blockbusters like *Uri*, *Shershaah*, *Kesari* and *The Kashmir Files* reflect a shift toward assertive nationalism. Scholars suggest these films create a sense of strong, decisive nationhood that appeals to contemporary political mood.

Cinema’s emotional and aesthetic tools—music that stirs patriotism, close-up shots that build intimacy, dramatic dialogues that echo political slogans—make political messaging deeply immersive. As Madhava Prasad notes, Indian cinema naturalizes ideology by embedding it within melodrama, making political values feel like personal truths.

Yet, scholars also caution that cinema can simplify complex realities. Characters often become archetypes—heroic rebels, corrupt politicians, helpless victims—creating moral binaries that real political life does not reflect. This simplification, however, is precisely what gives cinema its persuasive power.

### **News Media: Real-Time Political Narratives and the Construction of Nationhood**

Indian news media, particularly television news, has undergone dramatic transformations since liberalization in the 1990s. Scholars note that it has shifted from being largely informational to highly competitive and, at times, sensational.

**News as Political Performance**

Sahana Udupa (2015) argues that news anchors in India often perform nationalism through dramatic tone, aggressive interviewing and adversarial framing. This performative style turns news into a stage where national identity is debated, contested and emotionally charged.

Thomas Hanitzsch highlights that global news trends show increasing “tabloidization”—a blending of entertainment with news—and India exemplifies this strongly. Primetime debates resemble theatrical conflicts where political identities are simplified into binaries: patriotic vs. anti-national, development vs. obstruction, majority vs. minority.

### **Framing of Nationhood**

Scholars note three dominant frames in Indian news:

- **Crisis Frame – The nation presented as under threat**

Examples: border conflict, economic distress, political protests.

- **Competition Frame – India as a global competitor**

Examples: GDP rankings, startup success, international diplomacy.

- **Spectacle Frame – Elections as Entertainment**

Using graphics, sound effects and real-time tracking, elections become a national show. These frames influence how citizens think about the nation—either as something to be defended, something to be proud of, or something to observe as a performance.

### **Polarization and Political Narratives**

The Reuters Digital News Report notes rising distrust in Indian media due to perceived bias and ideological leaning. Scholars like Jeffrey Witsoe argue that news media often aligns itself with political power structures, shaping narratives that favor the ruling ideology. This affects how nationhood is framed, especially around issues like dissent, minority rights, or social protests. Yet despite criticisms, news media remains a primary source of political information for millions. It shapes the vocabulary of public debate: nationalism, development, corruption, governance, secularism—all gain meaning through repetitive media framing.

### **Comparative Insights: Cinema vs. News Media in Existing Scholarship**

Few studies compare cinema and news media together, but the ones that do provide valuable insights. Cinema constructs long-term emotional narratives, while news constructs short-term political narratives. Cinema often builds a unified or idealized vision of the nation, while news frequently reveals its fractures and conflicts. One is reflective and symbolic; the other is immediate and argumentative.

### **Citizen Representation**

Scholars note that cinema often portrays citizens as heroes who transform society—think of *Rang De Basanti*’s youth or *Article 15*’s principled officer. News, however, tends to portray citizens either as victims (farmers, protesters, disaster survivors) or as voters measured through surveys and exit polls.

### **Dissent and Protest**

Cinema tends to romanticize dissent—as righteous rebellion. News media, depending on ideological orientation, may delegitimize dissent as anti-national or disorderly.

### **Political Actors**

Cinema personalizes politics through protagonists. News media personalizes it through anchors and political leaders. Both create identities that influence how people engage with political life.

### **Gaps in Literature**

Despite rich scholarship, several gaps remain:

Few studies look at nationhood narratives across cinema and news media together.



Little work compares emotional nation-building (cinema) with informational nation-building (news).

There is limited analysis of how both mediums influence youth political identity. Scholars rarely examine how cinematic nationalism feeds into news media narratives and vice versa. Most comparative studies are Western; Indian contexts have not been fully explored. These gaps justify the present research, which aims to offer a coherent comparative framework for understanding political communication in Indian media ecosystems.

### Conceptual Framework

Understanding how Indian cinema and news media construct narratives of nationhood requires an integrated conceptual framework that brings together theories of political communication, narrative studies, nationalism and media influence. This framework does not treat media merely as a channel that delivers information, but as a cultural space where meanings are constructed, emotions are mobilized and national identities are negotiated. The aim of this section is to outline the theoretical anchors that guide this research and explain how they interact to support a comparative analysis of political communication in cinema and news media.

**Media as a Narrative Space: The Foundation of Nationhood**

The first conceptual pillar draws from Benedict Anderson's idea of Imagined Communities, which argues that nations are constructed through shared narratives, symbols and collective imagination. In India—a multilingual, multi-religious, multicultural society—nationhood cannot depend solely on administrative structures. Instead, it is reinforced daily through cultural communication, from cinema songs to news bulletins. Media becomes the bridge that allows diverse citizens to imagine themselves as belonging to one collective entity.

Within this framework, both cinema and news media are understood as narrative-producing institutions. They do not simply reflect the nation; they actively create ways of seeing the nation. Cinema does so through emotional storytelling, while news media does so through framing political events. Thus, the first conceptual element is nationhood as a narrative construction, not a fixed or purely political reality.

### Political Communication: Meaning-Making in Public Life

Political communication theories form the second pillar. Brian McNair defines political communication as all forms of communication used to shape political beliefs and actions. This includes speeches, campaigns, television debates—but also cultural products like films. In today's hypermediated India, political communication is no longer restricted to politicians; it includes filmmakers, journalists and media corporations who shape public conversation.

Within this lens, cinema and news media are understood as agents of political communication, influencing how citizens interpret governance, leadership, social justice and national identity. The emotional charge of cinema and the informational force of news both contribute to political meaning-making. Political communication is therefore not just a transmission of messages; it is a cultural process, shaped by values, symbols and emotional experiences.

**Framing and Agenda-Setting: How Media Shapes Public Perception**

The third conceptual element arises from media effects theories—Agenda-Setting (McCombs & Shaw) and Framing (Entman).

Agenda-setting suggests that the media tells people *what to think about* by selecting which issues receive attention. For example, news channels may highlight national security, elections, or corruption, making these issues central to how citizens imagine the nation. Cinema also does agenda-setting by choosing which themes—patriotism, war, social injustice, youth activism—appear in popular narratives.

Framing, on the other hand, explains how media shapes *how people think about an issue*. A protest may be framed as a fight for justice in films, but as chaos or anti-national behavior in certain news channels. Films may frame the nation as a moral project where corruption can be fought, while news may frame it as a space of constant political conflict. In this framework, framing and agenda-setting are not limited to news media; they apply equally to cinema. Both industries use narrative framing to make certain interpretations of nationhood appear natural, obvious, or emotionally compelling. Therefore, the comparative study examines how cinema and news prioritize and interpret political themes differently.

### Emotional Communication: Cinema's Role in Nation-Building

This framework pays special attention to **emotion**—a dimension often sidelined in political communication research. Cinema constructs national identity primarily through emotional storytelling: the sacrifice of a soldier, the struggle of a farmer, the courage of a reformer, or the unity of a diverse group of citizens. These emotional narratives create what scholars call “affective publics”—citizens who feel connected to the nation through shared emotions.

Films trigger pride, empathy, anger and hope. News media, too, taps into emotion—through dramatic visuals, passionate debates and crisis language—but its emotional tone is often urgent or polarizing rather than reflective or inspirational.

Thus, this study conceptualizes emotion as a central driver of nationhood narratives. The emotional realism of cinema and the emotional urgency of news shape how the nation is imagined in different but complementary ways.

### Representation of Citizens, Leaders and Institutions

Another conceptual pillar concerns representation—how different actors are portrayed.

- **Cinema often simplifies political roles:** the heroic leader, the corrupt official, the awakened youth, the suffering citizen. These archetypes make political narratives accessible and emotionally powerful.
- **News media typically portrays political actors through real-time events:** leaders as decision-makers, citizens as voters, protesters as problem-solvers or troublemakers depending on framing.

By comparing these representations, the study aims to explore how each medium shapes citizenship, that is, what it means to be a responsible or patriotic citizen in India. Representation thus becomes a conceptual tool to understand the emotional and ideological construction of political identity.

### Nationhood as a Dynamic, Contested Construct

A key aspect of the conceptual framework is that nationhood is dynamic, not static. It is constantly renegotiated between unity and diversity, tradition and modernity, dissent and consensus. Cinema may promote an idealized vision of the nation, while news media often exposes its tensions and contradictions. This tension between imagined unity and lived

complexity is central to this research. Nationhood is therefore conceptualized as a contested narrative, shaped by competing meanings, symbols and voices. The framework understands the nation not as a singular story but as a conversation between multiple, sometimes conflicting narratives.

### Comparative Media Lens: Bridging the Two Worlds

The final conceptual element is the comparative media lens. Instead of studying cinema and news media in isolation, the framework positions them as interconnected yet distinct forms of political communication:

**Table 1:**

Cinema	News Media
Emotional, symbolic	Immediate, informational
Slow, reflective narrative	Fast-paced, dramatic narrative
Idealizes nationhood	Problematizes nationhood
Focuses on characters	Focuses on events
Encourages empathy	Encourages reaction

This comparative perspective allows the research to highlight differences and overlaps in how nationhood is constructed. The two mediums often reinforce, challenge, or contradict each other, creating a multi-layered national consciousness.

### Methodology

The methodological design of this study is grounded in the belief that political communication is not merely transmitted—it is felt, interpreted and lived. Indian citizens encounter nationhood in multiple forms: a film scene in a crowded theatre, a breaking-news bulletin on television, a viral video on a mobile phone. To truly understand how these experiences shape the “idea of India,” this study adopts a mixed qualitative framework that brings together content analysis, discourse analysis and audience insights. The methodology is intentionally human-centered, acknowledging that narratives are powerful only when they resonate with people.

This chapter outlines the research design, sampling strategy, analytical tools, ethical considerations and limitations.

#### Research Design

This study employs a qualitative comparative research design, drawing insights from two major cultural institutions:

- i). Indian Cinema (mainstream Bollywood + selected regional films)
- ii). Indian News Media (broadcast channels + digital portals)

The comparative design helps identify not only what stories are told but how they are told differently across mediums. Cinema often communicates through symbolism, emotion and metaphor. News media rely on immediacy, crisis framing and repetition. Together, these platforms create a multi-layered public imagination of the nation.

The research design is exploratory in nature because the purpose is not to measure “how much nationalism,” but to explore how political messages are woven into cultural narratives and how these narratives encourage certain understandings of identity, unity, conflict, or citizenship.

### Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling method is used to ensure the selected materials represent diverse political moments, ideological perspectives and narrative styles.

#### A). Film Sample (2014–2024)

Films were selected using three criteria:

- i). Political or national themes (direct or indirect)
- ii). Cultural or electoral relevance
- iii). Strong penetration into public discourse

Based on these criteria, the study includes:

- **Mainstream Bollywood:** *Uri*, *Raazi*, *Shershaah*, *Article 15*, *Jai Bhim*, *The Kashmir Files*, *Kesari*, *Padmaavat*
- **Regional Cinema:** Selected Tamil, Malayalam and Marathi films that discuss social justice, regional identity, or national conflict.

The timeframe (2014–2024) corresponds to a decade of heightened political communication in India, marked by digital media expansion, polarized debates and cultural nationalism.

### B). News Media Sample

Three categories of media are studied:

#### i). Television News Channels

Examples: Republic TV, Aaj Tak, NDTV, ABP News

These represent diverse ideological leanings and narrative styles.

#### ii). Digital News Platforms: The Quint, The Wire, OpIndia, Firstpost—chosen to represent liberal, centrist and right-leaning orientations.

#### iii). Election Coverage & Breaking-News Windows

Special attention is given to coverage during:

- 2014, 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha elections
- Key national events: Pulwama, Article 370 abrogation, farmers’ protest, Ram Temple verdict

This sampling offers a rich, diverse ecosystem of political storytelling.

### Data Collection Tools

#### A). Textual and Visual Data

- C). Film scripts (when available)
- D). Subtitled sequences
- E). Promotional materials
- F). News transcripts
- G). Digital articles and headlines
- H). Social media posts by news platforms

These allow a holistic view of political communication across mediums.

### B). Audience Insights through Digital Ethnography

Public comments on YouTube trailers, Twitter threads and Facebook discussions were analyzed to understand audience responses. This helps bridge the gap between media texts and their social impact.

Digital ethnography does not treat comments as “data points” alone; it sees them as emotions in motion—anger, pride, fear, joy, suspicion—all of which shape the public sphere.

### Analytical Framework

#### A). Content Analysis

A structured coding sheet was prepared to capture the following elements:

##### i). Themes of Nationhood

- Nationalism
- Security
- Sacrifice
- Identity

- Unity vs. division
- Minority representation
- Gendered portrayals of citizenship

ii). **Technique of Communication**

- Visual symbolism
- Dialogue and slogans
- Mise-en-scène
- Media framing
- Emotional tone
- Use of urgency or spectacle

iii). **Representation of Political Actors**

- State
- Military
- Political parties
- Citizens
- Institutions of justice

Coding was done manually to retain nuance and avoid over-mechanical interpretation.

**B). Discourse Analysis (Foucauldian + Narrative Analysis)**

Film and news narratives were examined to identify:

- What is considered “truth,”
- Who is given voice,
- How authority speaks,
- How dissent is framed,
- How national identity is constructed.

Cinema often uses metaphor and character arcs to define “good citizens” or “traitors.” News media, on the other hand, use crisis narration, expert panels and selective framing. Discourse analysis reveals how power circulates through stories.

**C). Comparative Analysis**

The two mediums were compared using the following dimensions:

- Emotional vs. informational communication
- Long-form narrative vs. real-time updates
- Symbolism vs. direct framing
- Unity narrative vs. conflict narrative
- Myth-making vs. fact-making

This comparison allows us to see how the same idea of nationhood can be romanticized in cinema but polarized in news media—or vice versa.

**Reliability and Validity**

**Reliability Measures**

- Cross-verification of themes by multiple readings
- Triangulation using films, news content and audience responses
- Transparent coding categories

**Validity Measures**

- The sampling of diverse ideological sources ensures balanced representation
- Inclusion of regional cinema reduces metropolitan bias
- Real audience data improves authenticity
- Longitudinal timeframe strengthens contextual understanding

The goal is interpretive validity: ensuring the interpretations reflect how citizens actually consume these narratives.

**Results and Analysis**

This section presents the findings of the comparative analysis of Indian cinema and news media in their construction of national narratives. While the national discourse resonates across India, Bihar provides a particularly revealing lens because it is a state where cinema consumption, political awareness and news media engagement remain deeply intertwined with everyday life. From single-screen theatres in small towns to WhatsApp groups and television in rural households, the “idea of the nation” flows through both emotional and informational channels.

The results are organized across three dimensions:

- i). Media Content Analysis (Cinema and News Media)
- ii). Audience Perception in Bihar
- iii). Comparative Synthesis

Tables are presented for clarity, followed by humanized interpretation.

**Content Analysis of Indian Cinema**

Indian cinema—particularly Bollywood—continues to serve as a cultural engine for imagining the nation. The films analyzed (2014–2024) present India as a nation of courage, sacrifice, unity and often, a site of ideological conflict. Three key themes emerged prominently.

**Table 2:** Dominant Themes of Nationhood in Selected Films (2014–2024)

Film	Dominant National Themes	Representation of Citizens	Political Communication Style
<i>Uri</i>	Military nationalism, retaliation	Citizens as emotional supporters	Action-driven, patriotic slogans
<i>Raazi</i>	Espionage, sacrifice	Moral duty over personal desire	Subtle, character-driven communication
<i>Article 15</i>	Social justice, constitutional rights	Marginalized voices foregrounded	Investigative realism
<i>Shershaah</i>	Heroism, martyrdom	Citizens as grateful beneficiaries	Biographical, emotional narrative
<i>The Kashmir Files</i>	Identity conflict, victimhood	Citizens polarized by trauma	High-voltage emotional framing
<i>Kesari</i>	Historical bravery	Collective courage of common people	Mythic storytelling

**Interpretation**

Cinema communicates nationhood through emotion, especially in Bihar where viewers often identify with characters who struggle, sacrifice, or fight injustice. In interviews and digital ethnography comments:

- Youth relate strongly to soldiers and “heroes of the nation.”
- Marginalized communities feel seen in films like *Article 15*, which address caste injustice—an issue strongly felt in Bihar.

- Historical and conflict narratives evoke pride but can also deepen political polarization.

Cinema in Bihar is not consumed as entertainment alone; it is experienced as collective feeling, often discussed in tea stalls, bus stands and coaching hostels.

**Content Analysis of News Media**  
News media—television and digital platforms—construct nationhood in a more immediate, crisis-driven manner. Three major findings emerged.

Table 3: News Media Framing Patterns during Key National Events

Event	Right-Leaning Channels	Centrist Channels	Left-Leaning/Digital Platforms
Pulwama Attack (2019)	Aggressive nationalism; enemy-naming	Emotional but restrained	Contextual, diplomatic focus
Article 370 Abrogation	Celebration as historic step	Constitutionality debates	Federalism and human rights
Farmers' Protest	Anti-'anti-national' framing	Policy analysis	Protesters' livelihood focus
Ram Temple Verdict	Victory narrative	Balanced reporting	Emphasis on social harmony

**Interpretation**  
News media shape nationhood through urgency and repetition. In Bihar:

- Television remains the dominant source of political communication in rural areas.
- Digital platforms influence urban youth, especially students preparing for competitive exams.
- WhatsApp and local channels retell national news with a regional flavor, often amplifying emotional or moralistic angles.

While cinema unites through emotion, news media often divide through frames—patriotic, constitutional, or ideological.

**Audience Perception in Bihar: Findings from Digital Ethnography & Informal Interviews**  
Bihar's audience presents a uniquely rich mix of political awareness and cultural memory. The responses analyzed through YouTube comments, Twitter threads and group discussions (offline and online) revealed three clusters of perception.

Table 4: Audience Perception of “Nationhood Narratives” in Bihar

Perception Cluster	Description	Who Belongs to This Cluster?	How They Interpret Nationhood
A. Emotional Nationalists	Strong emotional identification with heroic figures, soldiers, cultural pride	Youth in coaching centres, small-town cinema-goers	Nation as “family” needing protection
B. Social Justice Interpreters	Emphasis on inequality, caste, constitutional rights	Students, activists, OBC/SC communities	Nation as an unfinished democratic project
C. Pragmatic Observers	Mix of pride and skepticism; prefer balanced news	Middle-class families, teachers, govt employees	Nation as both aspiration and responsibility

**Interpretation:**  
A young student in Patna said during an online thread:

*“Jo film humko rula de ya inspire kar de, woh desh ka matlab sikhati hai.”*

(“A film that makes us cry or inspires us teaches us the meaning of the nation.”)  
Meanwhile, a teacher in Saharsa commenting on *Article 15* wrote:

*“Desh tab banta hai jab sab ko insaaf mile.”*

(“A nation is formed only when everyone receives justice.”)

The variety in responses shows that Bihar is not a passive recipient of media narratives. Instead, it actively interprets, negotiates and sometimes resists them.

**Comparative Analysis: Cinema vs. News Media**  
This part analyzes how the two mediums differ and intersect in shaping national imagination in Bihar.

Table 5: Comparative Synthesis of Cinema and News Media Narratives

Parameter	Indian Cinema	Indian News Media	Impact in Bihar
Emotional Tone	High, symbolic, inspirational	High but crisis-driven	Cinema unites; news polarizes
Narrative Style	Metaphorical, slow-burn	Breaking-news, repetitive	Cinema builds memory; news builds immediate opinion
Representation of Citizens	Moral heroes/victims	“Panels vs. people”	Cinema empowers people; news often sidelines them
Political Messaging	Indirect, artistic	Direct, ideological	Youth prefer cinematic patriotism over news shouting matches
Discussion in Society	Long-term cultural references	Short-lived debates	Cinema becomes generational memory

**Interpretation:**  
**Cinema Provides Emotional Nationalism**  
News media produce performative nationalism. In Bihar, citizens respond more strongly to emotional nationalism

because it connects with local culture—songs, festivals, community celebrations and oral storytelling traditions. News media, on the other hand, often generate distrust, especially when debates appear sensational rather than informative.



**Data Table:** Bihar-Specific Sentiment Distribution (Based on 500 Online Comments)

**Table 6:** Sentiment Distribution toward National Narratives in Cinema & News Media

Sentiment	Toward Cinema	Toward News Media
Positive Nationalist Sentiment	62%	41%
Critical/Analytical Sentiment	21%	33%
Polarized Sentiment	10%	18%
Fatigue/Disinterest	7%	8%

## Conclusion

The narratives of nationhood that circulate through Indian cinema and news media form more than just entertainment or information; they shape the emotional, cultural and political imagination of millions. This study shows that cinema and news media do not merely reflect the nation—they actively participate in constructing it. Their messages influence how people perceive citizenship, conflict, justice and identity. Nowhere is this dynamic more visible than in Bihar, a state where political awareness, cultural pride and media consumption intersect in unique ways.

The findings indicate that Indian cinema builds nationhood through emotional storytelling, drawing heavily on metaphors of sacrifice, bravery, social justice and collective memory. Films such as *Shershaah*, *Uri* and *Article 15* resonate strongly among Bihar's youth because they align with local aspirations of social mobility, dignity and heroism. Cinema becomes a shared cultural experience, often shaping long-term attitudes and values.

News media, by contrast, construct nationhood through immediacy, repetition and ideological framing. Television debates, breaking-news formats and polarized digital commentary generate short-lived but intense impressions of national events. While these narratives can shape opinion quickly, they often create fragmentation, mistrust, or fatigue. For Bihar's citizens, who value sincerity and moral clarity, sensationalized news loses credibility compared to the emotional authenticity that cinema provides. A key insight emerging from this study is that citizens in Bihar do not passively absorb narratives. They reinterpret them through local realities—caste, social justice concerns, migration and aspirations for upward mobility. Nationhood, therefore, becomes a negotiated space where media stories meet lived experience. This reinforces the understanding that political communication must move beyond top-down messaging and genuinely engage with regional contexts and cultural memory.

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