

*Tribute to Dev Anand*

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**Dev Anand and the Uncontested Election**



*Producer, Director, and Actor Dev Anand announced a political party called the 'National Party' and set foot toward making his dream a reality. With much effort and minute details, he prepared the 16-page blueprint or election agenda and got ready for the elections. But what happened after? This is the quest for the same!*

Yes! What you're reading is correct. This is the right title. 'Dev Saab and Election', together, these two words might sound strange, yet the title stands correct.

The 'title' is a significant aspect, whether it's an article, play, or cinema. The title of one of Dev Saab's films *Hum Dono*

(1961), may make one think that 'two of us' means *Him* and *Her*. However, the film is about two men in the Indian army. This film has Dev Saab in a double role, one without a moustache and one with an odd long one. Along similar lines, reading 'Dev Anand and election' in the same sentence might surprise

you, but it almost had become a reality. This title and its story might seem interesting and exciting, but its climax differs from that of a commercial film. Indeed!



Actors and actresses have always had a close association with politics, especially in our country. The trend has enjoyed prominence in the South. However, it is changing today and that's a different topic altogether. Let's focus on Dev Saab so he was also influenced heavily by politics and politicians. Social causes interested him, too. He was one of the sensitive people who had witnessed the partition and had its unhealed scar on his heart. He had faith in our country, people, society, and culture. An Indian standing tall in the world was also the base of his thoughts. Despite experiencing a tumultuous life, he decided to enter active politics and contest elections. Everyone around him was surprised. However, "Politics isn't for the faint-hearted.", was his reaction after ending a brief stint in politics that left people speechless. This isn't a dialogue from any of his films.

One of Dev Saab's final movies was *Mister Prime Minister* (2010), where he played the character of a politician. Except for this film, one cannot think of others where he played a politician. Even in this movie, he did

not play the lead character or even a patron. Yet, the film title manages to directly indicate its political nature. In one or two scenes of the film *Guide* (1965), Dev Saab's attire suggested that he could be playing an experienced politician, but his character was miles different. While beginning the transformation of 'Rosie' into 'Nalini', we see Raju in a white kurta-pyjama and a Gandhi topi. In the initial shots of '*Piya tose naina lage re*' we see the same outfit progress further. But that was all. Apart from this, we never saw Dev Saab in a similar character.

In *Guide* (1965), 'Dev' said "*Maut ek khayal hain, jaise zindagi ek khayal hain. Na sukh hain na dukh hain, na din hain na duniya, na insaan, na bhagwaan...sirf main hoon, main hoon, main hoon....main!*" and took us to nirvana. In real life, he continued his starry life while being influenced by thinkers and their mighty thoughts.



Dev Saab's journey to Mumbai began in the year 1943. With a mere Rs. 30 in his pocket, he set out from Lahore Railway Station in July with the Frontier Mail and reached the dream city of Mumbai. He carried the dream of working in cinema and making it big. But even in this dream, he would not have thought that in 56 years he would receive a phone call from the Prime Minister of India,



Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee. “Make sure you are ready tomorrow morning. Our officers will take you to Delhi and then we will head to Lahore. You have fans in our neighbouring country too. And yes, don’t forget to bring your passport.”



Indeed, after 56 years Dev Saab was on his way back to Lahore. Before this historical bus journey, when Prime Minister Vajpayee asked Nawaz Sharif, “Should I bring you something from India?” Nawaz Sharif’s response was astonishing. He said, “If you want to bring something and you can, then bring Dev Anand.” Nawaz Sharif was a great admirer of Dev Saab. He had watched, scratched, and destroyed the *CID* (1956) film’s DVD. Nawaz Sharif’s wife, Ms. Kulsum, complained to Dev Saab about the same thing. In the song ‘*Leke pehla pehla pyaar*’, where Dev Saab spun around, that was Nawaz Sharif’s favourite moment in the entire film. Nawaz Sharif’s wife complained that he had watched the same bit repeatedly, which eventually destroyed the DVD. Dev Saab was a great actor. An excellent star, too. Having a global fan base was a natural phenomenon for him. Several dignitaries visiting India or even from other states used to decide on one particular activity in advance: a visit to Dev Saab’s film set and

watch him during the shooting. While shooting the song ‘*Hum bekhudi mein tumko pukare chale gaye*’ from the film *Kala Pani* (1958), a message was received that announced the arrival of Indonesian President, Mr. Sukarno on the set. The crew took a break for a massive and lengthy shot on a track and trolley. However, the shot was filmed even after two hours when the guests did not arrive. Just then, the Indonesian President arrived with other guests. The unit was confused as to what to do, the shot being very lengthy with a lot of film to be exposed. Dev Saab reshot the same lengthy shot by saying, “He is our national guest, and must be welcomed well.” Notably, it was not a tick mark shot; everyone involved gave their best, as Dev Saab led them. Every guest that arrived was filled with joy and President Sukarno offered pleasing remarks to Dev Saab repeatedly. This incident is one of many. The Navketan shooting floor, mostly in Mehboob Studio, was always filled with international guests.



Dev Saab enjoyed tightly knit relationships with politicians across myriad

political parties. Some of them were even loyal fans. Politics is part of every field, no matter its intensity. But it's always present. Speaking of it is a great reason to mention Dev Saab's significant contemporaries like Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar. Dev Saab wholeheartedly praises Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar in his memoir, 'Romancing with Life'.



The praise depicts the depth of their friendship. After the success of *Awara* (1951), every Indian who visited Russia was asked, "You're from the country where *Awara* is, isn't it?" Even Prime Minister Nehru experienced this when he visited Russia. People asked him questions about *Awara* first, then enquired about him. Dev Saab has written in detail about the discussions that happened in the study room when Panditji was not keeping well. It is essential to mention here that it was Panditji to whom Dev Saab first expressed, "I want to make a *Guide*". However, when the movie finished filming and was released, Panditji had already passed away. '*Guide*, the 1965 Vijay Anand directorial, Navketan's dream project, experienced a close association with Indira Gandhi. It would not be wrong to think that fans got to watch *Guide* because of her. The Censor Board of Film Certification rejected the film for release as they objected to a few

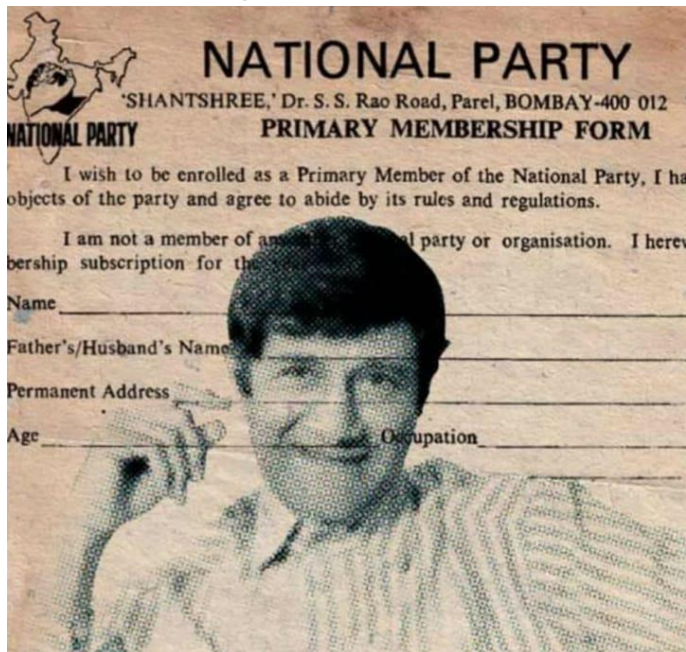
scenes. However, the producer Dev Saab and director Vijay Anand were not ready to exclude the said scenes from the film. They were also not part of the original novel. There seemed to be no solution. When Dev Saab realized this, he reached out to the then Information and Broadcasting Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi. He requested her to watch *Guide* once. She agreed and a special screening of *Guide* was arranged for her in Delhi. It's noteworthy that *Guide* was already a much talked about film of that year and though the screening was arranged only for 'Madam' the theatre was full before she arrived. Mrs Gandhi watched the film and immediately ordered the Censor Board to clear its way to release. Dev Saab thanked Mrs. Indira Gandhi for removing all the hassles for the release of the *Guide*, which is considered a milestone in Indian Cinema today. However, it was noteworthy that Dev Saab expressed his disappointment over the 'Emergency' exactly a decade later. Consequently, Dev Saab's films and songs



faced restrictions while being broadcast. It was probably during this period when Dev Saab raised his voice through as many public platforms as he could, and perhaps this was when the seeds of contesting elections in the future were sown in his mind.



Exhausted due to the ‘Emergency’, people voted for the new party but something went wrong. ‘The country needs a party that will establish a stable government. Dev Saab said the ‘National Party’ is a platform that can unite like-minded people. After much effort and minute details, a 16-page blueprint was also created, Dev Saab believed in detailing. A form was created for the party’s membership with Dev Saab’s photo, which was also smiling!



We can see that during this period, pictures of several respectable artists with Dev Saab. The ‘National Party’ platform saw all these artists come together. A huge celebration was arranged to announce this political party’s entry into the mainstream. Needless to say, Vijay Anand, Dev Saab’s younger brother, stood by him. Several dignitaries like Shantaram Bapu and G P Sippy participated too. The party’s first-ever rally was arranged in the historical Shivaji Park ground in Dadar, the heart of Mumbai. It received a similar response as ‘*Na bhuto, Na bhavishyati*’. It boosted Dev Saab’s spirit and made him feel optimistic about public support during the elections around the corner.

Contesting in the Loksabha elections was inevitable but ‘*Delhi abhi door thi*’ (It would take a long time and effort to fulfil this goal). Eventually, each of them started discovering ‘politics’. Party members started dropping out. Dev Saab realized that he had the time and members to contest the Loksabha elections. Who would contest the elections? He understood the underlying issue: contesting elections takes guts and is not a one-person job. Soon, everyone started realising it, too. The ‘National Party’ did not establish itself well. Dev Saab’s dream to contest elections, win, and create a New India dissolved before it took form.

The two events, not creating a new India and dissolving of the ‘National Party’ shook Dev Saab to his core. Today, it is astounding to read and learn his views about the future of India. Are they for real? Could someone think this way? Such kind of creative thinking is hard to believe. Dev Saab yearned to weave the ‘culture of the past with progress of the future’ in the present. His peculiar vision of an advanced India did not



take shape. Among others, Dev Saab believed that, in an independent India, non-violence should precede social and political situations.

One day, Dev Saab drove into the Bombay Talkies premises excitedly, honking with his new car. While parking it beside



Dada Muni's car he thought everyone would ask him, 'New car, Dev?' When he came to the studio, Dev Saab was already in his get-up and make-up. The studio crew approached him with gloomy faces. Dev Saab asked, 'Why aren't we having a shoot today?' and got a reply, 'Don't you know, Bapu is no

more'. Dev Saab remembered a prayer Bapuji sang himself on the *chowpatty* in Mumbai. On this day Dev saab's heart broke once again, 'Unka dil ek baar aur toota tha.' 'How could anyone kill Mahatma Gandhi?' was a question for which he scooped out answers. Dev Saab surely faced such minor and massive shocks throughout his life.

'Could Dev Saab have enjoyed politics?' Both the question and its answers are quite difficult. "Agar himmat hain, hunar hain, lagan hain, shauk hain... toh jo kuch 'namumkin' hain, mere saamne aayein!". Penned by Goldie Saab for 'Raju' in *Guide*, Dev Saab uttered these words with style and lit up the whole screen.

Dev Saab transformed several 'namumkin' into 'mumkin' throughout his life, but the Loksabha elections remained 'namumkin' to date.

(Picture Courtesy: Dev Saab Fans and Internet)

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