



## *A Kantian Analysis of Categorical Imperative in Lucky Bhaskar and The Wolf of Wall Street*

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### Abstract

This article used Immanuel Kant's philosophical framework, specifically his notion of the categorical imperative as expressed in the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, to compare the ethical analyses of financial desire and moral compromise in Lucky Bhaskar and The Wolf of Wall Street. Two main research issues served as the study's compass: how these movies created and depicted both money desire and moral compromise, and how far the characters' choices conformed to or deviated from Kantian moral standards. Using a qualitative, interpretive approach, the study compared and examined thematically the key story points, character motives, and moral dilemmas in both movies. Financial ambition was portrayed in The Wolf of Wall Street as excessive, hedonistic, and intrinsically linked to systematic exploitation, resulting in overt and persistent transgressions of moral obligation. Lucky Bhaskar, on the other hand, depicted financial desire as having its roots in socioeconomic striving and survival, leading to a more nuanced and internally contradictory kind of moral compromise. The study contended that both protagonists eventually fell short of meeting the criteria of Kant's categorical imperative despite these contextual variations. Although Lucky Bhaskar presented aspects of moral uncertainty and partial ethical awareness. The study ultimately concluded that, independent of cultural or narrative context, film depictions of financial desire.

**Keywords;** #kantian #imperative #moral #metaphysics #survival



## Introduction

The relationship between financial ambition and moral responsibility has remained a central concern in ethical philosophy, particularly in modern capitalist societies, where economic success is often equated with personal achievement and social value. In these situations, pursuing riches is not just a personal goal but also a culturally reinforced ideal that influences moral thinking, conduct, and identity. These socioeconomic realities are both reflected in and critiqued by cinema, a potent cultural and storytelling medium. The moral conflicts that occur when people choose money over morality are often dramatized in movies. Martin Scorsese's *The Wolf of Wall Street* and *Lucky Bhaskar* are two such instances. The main characters in both movies are driven to act in ethically dubious and occasionally overtly immoral ways by their strong desire for wealth. Philosophical investigation into the nature of moral agency, ethical compromise, and the boundaries of ambition can flourish in these stories. Immanuel Kant's philosophy, specifically his definition of the categorical imperative as stated in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, provides the ethical foundation that directs this investigation. Consequentialist theories, which assess actions by their consequences, differ markedly from Kant's deontological approach to ethics. Rather, Kant contends that an action's moral value is determined by its aim and compliance with general moral principles (Kant, 1996). This perspective holds that deeds are only ethically correct when they are carried out out of obligation and may be universalized without conflict. Kant also presents the humanity principle, which maintains that people should never be viewed as just means to an end but rather as ends in and of themselves. This idea is especially pertinent when examining financial institutions and activities, as people are frequently converted to tools of profit, which raises grave ethical questions.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in applying Kantian ethics to cinematic storytelling, especially in the multidisciplinary subject of film-philosophy. The importance of moral autonomy and rational agency in Kant's framework is emphasized by academics like Wood (2008), who contends that moral judgments must be based on values that uphold human dignity. In a similar vein, Sinnerbrink (2015) investigates how movies might act as a vehicle for moral contemplation, allowing viewers to interact viscerally and experientially with difficult moral quandaries. Despite these contributions, the majority of current research on financial ambition in movies has ignored the insights provided by deontological ethics in favor of socioeconomic criticisms or consequentialist interpretations. *The Wolf of Wall Street*, for example, is often seen as a criticism of neoliberal capitalism, emphasizing themes of excess, corruption, and structural inequality (McCabe, 2013). These analyses are useful, but they fall short of providing a strong ethical framework for the moral aspects of the protagonist's acts. In a same vein, conversations of *Lucky Bhaskar* typically center on how it depicts socioeconomic hardship and the difficulties of upward mobility. The movie features a protagonist whose financial goals are influenced by outside factors including social expectations and unstable economies. This produces a morally convoluted story where unethical behavior could seem essential or even acceptable. But according to Kant, these contextual elements do not relieve people of their moral obligations. According to Kant, moral rules are universal and unconditional, meaning that neither individual circumstances nor outside influences can override them (Kant, 1996; Wood, 2008). The current work is centered on this conflict between universal morality and contextual justification. Financial desire is shown in *The Wolf of Wall Street*



as being at its most severe and unbridled. The protagonist leads an extravagant and morally reprehensible lifestyle as a result of his unrelenting quest for fortune, which is motivated by a desire for luxury, power, and self-gratification. A larger critique of capitalism excess is reflected in the film's depiction of a corporate culture that normalizes immoral behaviors including fraud, manipulation, and exploitation. According to McCabe (2013), the movie presents a society where moral boundaries are routinely undermined, posing significant queries on the moral ramifications of such actions. From a Kantian standpoint, the protagonist's acts blatantly violate the categorical imperative as they consider other people as mere means to an aim and cannot be universalized without contradiction.

*Lucky Bhaskar*, on the other hand, offers a more complex and realistic portrayal of financial aspiration. Socioeconomic limitations and the desire for upward mobility influence the protagonist's drive for money, resulting in a story that highlights hardship and perseverance. However, because the protagonist compromises moral values to achieve financial security, this setting also creates moral uncertainty. Kantian ethics believes that moral norms must remain absolute and cannot be compromised for personal advantage, even when these behaviors may be understood within their socioeconomic context (Wood, 2008). This emphasizes the conflict between moral judgment and empathy, which is a major issue in the film's study. The struggle between self-interest and moral obligation is a recurring topic in both movies, despite the disparities in narrative tone and setting. A larger philosophical conundrum regarding the viability of upholding moral integrity in settings that encourage immoral action is reflected in this conflict. According to Sinnerbrink (2015), movies offer a setting where these moral conundrums may be investigated and critically analyzed, enabling viewers to interact meaningfully with difficult moral issues. This study aims to shed light on the moral implications of financial ambition and show the ongoing applicability of deontological ethics in modern cultural analysis by adopting a Kantian framework to these narratives. This study also concludes by arguing that, despite its different settings and intentions, *The Wolf of Wall Street* and *Lucky Bhaskar* both eventually show a departure from Kantian moral standards. Financial desire drives the protagonists' activities, which highlight the unethical consequences of putting one's own interests ahead of obligation and morality. By emphasizing the value of philosophical frameworks in assessing the moral complexity of contemporary life, this research advances an interdisciplinary understanding of ethics and film.

### Research Objectives

- To compare how *Lucky Bhaskar* and *The Wolf of Wall Street* represent financial desire and moral compromise.
- To apply Kantian ethics to the characters' acts and see if they are consistent with the categorical imperative.

### Research Questions

- How do *Lucky Bhaskar* and *The Wolf of Wall Street* depict financial desire and moral compromises?
- To what extent do the characters' choices align with or diverge from Kantian moral philosophy?

### Literature Review

A vital nexus between moral philosophy, cultural studies, and film study is the examination of financial ambition and ethical compromise in movies. Films, which frequently dramatize the conflict between personal preferences and society standards, offer a



contemplative perspective for comprehending human behavior, social conventions, and moral quandaries (Sinnerbrink, 2015; Downing & Saxton, 2010). These stories are ethically significant not just because they portray human behavior but also because they may cause viewers to consider justice, morality, and accountability. Because of its different socioeconomic, cultural, and narrative frames, *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) and *Lucky Bhaskar* (2024) provide two different but complementary cinematic techniques for exploring financial desire and moral compromise.

#### **Financial Aspirations in Indian and Western Film**

*The Wolf of Wall Street* is a prime example of how financial ambition is portrayed in Western film, emphasizing the unbridled desire for wealth, prestige, and power. The narrative archetype of the ethically corrupted anti-hero is best shown by the protagonist's unwavering desire to amass fortune, frequently using immoral means such as securities fraud and market manipulation (McCabe, 2013). This portrayal is consistent with more general criticisms of neoliberal capitalism, which put profit maximization ahead of moral obligation. According to academics like Taylor (2005) and Ames (1908), Western capitalist societies frequently place a high value on individual performance, which perpetuates the idea that monetary success excuses immoral behavior. By glamorizing and criticizing the protagonist's excesses at the same time, the movie dramatizes this tension and presents a morally dubious environment where viewer participation necessitates both attraction and ethical contemplation.

In contrast, Indian cinema frequently places financial aspirations within institutional and sociocultural limitations, as seen in *Lucky Bhaskar* (Vasudev, 2020). Indian films often situate ethical compromise within household responsibilities, financial difficulties, and social mobility demands, in contrast to the ethically unrestrained excess shown in Western tales (Chakravarty, 2011; Pandey, 2022). According to Pandey (2022), Indian myths frequently underscore the moral conflict between personal desire and familial or community obligations, emphasizing how systemic issues impact moral decisions. *Lucky Bhaskar* creates a morally ambiguous environment where audience empathy is fostered with critical engagement with ethical concepts. The protagonist's actions may include ethical compromises, but they are driven by necessity rather than greed. This discrepancy emphasizes how crucial cultural and socioeconomic background is in influencing how ambition and morality are portrayed in movies.

#### **Film Studies from an Ethical Perspective**

In contemporary academic research, the relationship between ethics and film has been thoroughly examined. According to Downing and Saxton (2010), movies serve as both ethical simulations and moral texts, providing viewers with situations in which difficult moral decisions can be experienced vicariously. Because of this dual purpose, movies can serve as a forum for moral reasoning, encouraging audiences to assess characters' choices and consider the moral precepts that underpin them. In a similar vein, Sinnerbrink (2015) highlights that movies offer an "experiential ethics," enabling viewers to address moral quandaries in ways that cannot be replicated by textual or philosophical study alone. These methods highlight the importance of movies as a platform for moral teaching and ethical depiction.

Applying normative ethical frameworks, such as consequentialist, deontological, and virtue ethics approaches, to cinematic texts is an important aspect of this research. Deontological frameworks assess acts according to purpose, responsibility, and conformity



to universal moral standards, whereas consequentialist interpretations, like utilitarian assessments, concentrate on results and social implications (Wood, 2008). Kantian ethics, which emphasizes the categorical imperative, universality of action, and intrinsic value of persons, offers a strict criterion for evaluating moral actions within this paradigm (Kant, 1996). Scholars like Munzel (2024) and Singer (1954) emphasize how Kantian concepts might be applied to stories where characters use other people as tools or put their own interests ahead of morality. These theories are especially useful for analyzing financial ambition in movies, as characters frequently justify immoral actions for their own benefit.

### **The Categorical Imperative and Kantian Ethics**

A fundamental framework for assessing moral agency in movies is provided by Immanuel Kant's ethical theory, which is based on the idea of the categorical imperative. According to Kant (1996), an action is morally correct if it can be universalized, which means that it might be willed as a law for all rational beings without contradiction. Additionally, moral behavior must uphold people's intrinsic dignity and consider them as ends in and of themselves rather than as tools to accomplish selfish goals. This theory is further developed by Wood (2008), who emphasizes that ethical obligation is unaffected by external influences, individual preferences, or expected results. From a Kantian standpoint, evaluating the morality of characters' deeds in movies like *The Wolf of Wall Street* and *Lucky Bhaskar* necessitates concentrating on the behavior's universality and aim rather than its outcomes or storyline.

The protagonist's acts in *The Wolf of Wall Street*, fraud, exploitation, and manipulation, clearly go against Kantian ideals. The categorical imperative's demands for universality and respect for people are violated when personal gain takes precedence over moral obligation and when coworkers, clients, and subordinates are instrumentalized (McCabe, 2013; Wood, 2008). As a result, the movie provides a striking example of moral failure inside a capitalist system, highlighting the moral ramifications of putting financial gain and self-interest ahead of universal moral duties. Additionally, the story suggests that ethical failure is both structural and personal by implicating the socioeconomic institutions that permit such behavior (Taylor, 2005).

On the other hand, *Lucky Bhaskar* offers a more ethically nuanced portrayal of financial aspirations. Here, the protagonist's moral concessions are placed within the framework of familial and socioeconomic circumstances, illustrating a story in which structural realities limit individual desire (Vasudev, 2020; Pandey, 2022). However, from a Kantian standpoint, moral obligation is not diminished by these contextual elements. Ethical standards are universal and unconditional, regardless of whether behaviors are driven by survival or need (Kant, 1996; Wood, 2008). As a result, even if viewers could identify with the protagonist, a thorough ethical analysis shows that moral compromise is still incompatible with Kantian principles.

### **Cross-Cultural Ethical Views**

A comparison of how financial aspiration is portrayed in Western and Indian films reveals both similarities and differences in ethical representation. A Western neoliberal setting is reflected in *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which emphasizes individuality, self-interest, and the limitless chase of riches (McCabe, 2013; Taylor, 2005). The story emphasizes financial success as the ultimate objective, frequently putting market logic ahead of moral considerations. *Lucky Bhaskar*, on the other hand, places financial aspirations within relational, family, and societal frameworks, highlighting moral quandaries resulting from



social mobility, structural limitations, and moral obligation (Chakravarty, 2011; Pandey, 2022). Both movies show the universal ethical conflict between self-interest and moral obligation despite these contextual variations, proving the cross-cultural relevance of Kantian moral assessment.

Furthermore, the comparative viewpoint shows how audience perceptions of morality are influenced by cultural standards. While Indian viewers could see ethically dubious behavior as reasonable reactions to structural constraints, Western audiences might view unbridled financial desire as cautionary or comedic (Vasudev, 2020; Chakravarty, 2011). However, Kantian ethics offers a normative standard that goes beyond cultural relativity, allowing for a uniform assessment of moral obligation in many sociocultural circumstances (Munzel, 2024; Wood, 2008).

### **Engaging the Audience and Reflecting on Ethics**

Academics contend that depictions of financial aspirations and moral compromise in films encourage viewers to consider moral quandaries. According to Sinnerbrink (2015), this is known as "experiential ethics," in which viewers emulate moral reasoning by identifying with characters and assessing their choices. Films like *The Wolf of Wall Street* and *Lucky Bhaskar* encourage contemplation on the ramifications of ambition, the boundaries of moral compromise, and the obligations given to others by showcasing morally challenging situations. By providing a principled criterion for ethical judgment, the Kantian framework enhances this experiential method by enabling viewers to go beyond subjective interpretation and toward a logical assessment of moral behavior (Wood, 2008; Munzel, 2024).

### **Gaps in the Research**

There is a noticeable lack of studies that apply a Kantian framework to both Western and Indian films, despite a large body of study on financial ambition, ethical compromise, and cinematic representation. While studies of *Lucky Bhaskar* look at narrative, social, and cultural aspects (Vasudev, 2020; Pandey, 2022) and analyses of *The Wolf of Wall Street* frequently concentrate on psychological or socioeconomic aspects (McCabe, 2013; Taylor, 2005), few have assessed the protagonists' behavior in light of deontological ethical theory. In order to close this gap, the current work offers a comparative Kantian analysis that evaluates how moral principles are universal, how people are treated as ends, and how cinematic behaviors deviate from deontological standards.

### **Financial Ambition's Psychological Aspects**

Scholars highlight the psychological aspects of ethical compromise in cinematic storylines, which go beyond sociocultural and structural forces. Jordan Belfort's moral failings are shown in *The Wolf of Wall Street* as being entwined with hedonistic pleasure, greed, and narcissism (McCabe, 2013; Taylor, 2005). This is consistent with psychological research on financial ambition, which indicates that an overwhelming desire for riches can diminish empathy and warp moral thinking (Furnham, 2001). The protagonist's moral conundrums in *Lucky Bhaskar* are less about self-indulgence and more about the mental and emotional pressure brought on by financial limitations and familial expectations (Pandey, 2022). The contradiction between psychological determinism and moral obligation is highlighted by these psychological findings, which offer an extra layer for Kantian evaluation: while external forces may explain conduct, Kantian ethics maintains that rational actors remain morally accountable (Wood, 2008).



### Cinematic Methods and Moral Representation

The way that audiences view ethical quandaries is greatly influenced by the structure and methods of the film. According to researchers, narrative techniques including montage, point-of-view shots, and diegetic commentary can present moral behavior as either sympathetic or condemnable (Bordwell & Thompson, 2016; Sinnerbrink, 2015). Fast editing, vivacious cinematography, and fourth-wall cracks in *The Wolf of Wall Street* create suspense about Belfort's adventures while also raising ethical questions. *Lucky Bhaskar* fosters viewer empathy by emphasizing the emotional and relational repercussions of ethical compromise using close-up images, music, and speech. These methods show that characters' moral judgments are influenced by both their acts and how they are portrayed in movies, which emphasizes the necessity of an integrated study that integrates philosophical frameworks with narrative ethics.

### Cultural Analysis and Social Criticism

Both movies serve as societal criticisms, examining larger socioeconomic and cultural institutions via the prism of financial aspiration. By highlighting structural elements that encourage immoral behavior and enable systematic exploitation, *The Wolf of Wall Street* criticizes neoliberal capitalism (Taylor, 2005; McCabe, 2013). On the other hand, *Lucky Bhaskar* provides a commentary on family responsibilities, societal inequity, and the moral limitations imposed by economic need (Chakravarty, 2011; Vasudev, 2020). These films extend ethical inquiry beyond individual psychology by placing characters' moral quandaries within particular social and economic frameworks. This highlights the tension between systemic factors and personal responsibility, which is especially pertinent for Kantian evaluation, which emphasizes duty regardless of context (Kant, 1996; Munzel, 2024).

### Participation of the Audience and Ethical Education

The ethical influence of cinema extends to moral instruction and audience introspection. According to Sinnerbrink (2015), viewers participate in "experiential ethics" when they watch ethically challenging stories, mimic moral thinking, and assess character decisions. Both *Lucky Bhaskar* and *The Wolf of Wall Street* encourage audiences to evaluate the protagonists' choices critically, sympathize with their predicaments, and think about the fallout from ambition and moral compromise. By offering normative standards for moral evaluation, Kantian analysis supports this introspective process by enabling viewers to assess whether deeds follow the values of responsibility, respect human dignity, and comply with universally applicable laws (Wood, 2008; Munzel, 2024). This dual purpose entertainment and moral contemplation illustrates the potential of film as a moral teaching instrument.

### Narrative Complexity and Ethical Ambiguity

Both movies challenge oversimplified judgments of good and evil by illuminating the ethical uncertainty present in intricate stories. Belfort's success and charm in *The Wolf of Wall Street* provoke both praise and criticism at the same time, underscoring the conflict between public curiosity and moral criticism (McCabe, 2013). *Lucky Bhaskar* invites viewers to think about situational morality without eschewing universal ethical principles because acts are impacted by relationship commitments and survival imperatives (Pandey, 2022; Vasudev, 2020). The intricacy of the story highlights the need of Kantian ethics as a rigorous framework for evaluation, allowing ethical concepts to be separated from cultural context and narrative sympathy.



### Intersection of Ethics, Culture, and Film Storylines

The relationship between ethical standards and cinematic portrayal is revealed from a cross-cultural standpoint. Western tales frequently emphasize self-interest and individuality, portraying moral compromise as a warning or satirical critique (*The Wolf of Wall Street*) (Taylor, 2005). In contrast, Indian tales incorporate relational and social duties, portraying financial aspirations as limited by sociocultural reasons (*Lucky Bhaskar*) (Chakravarty, 2011; Pandey, 2022). By evaluating whether characters' acts fulfill obligations, respect human dignity, and satisfy the categorical imperative, Kantian analysis provides a norm that is applicable to all cultures (Kant, 1996; Wood, 2008). This junction shows both universal and context-specific aspects of moral thinking in film, offering a solid foundation for comparative ethical study.

### Prospects for Future Research on Film Ethics

The literature offers a number of directions for further investigation. First, additional comparative studies of Indian and Western cinematic ethics are required, especially using normative philosophical frameworks (Munzel, 2024; Wood, 2008). Second, despite its importance for audience perception and moral instruction, the incorporation of psychological, narrative, and cinematic elements into ethical judgment is still understudied. Third, interdisciplinary study linking philosophy, sociology, and cinema studies is encouraged by the way systemic and structural elements shape ethical quandaries. By filling in these gaps, academics will be able to comprehend the intricate relationship between ambition, moral compromise, and cultural representation in modern film.

### Globalization and Digital Media's Impact on Financial Ethics in Film

The representation of financial desire and moral compromise is influenced by digital media, globalization, and cross-cultural storytelling, according to recent research. Films like *The Wolf of Wall Street* and *Lucky Bhaskar* now have a wider audience thanks to online platforms, streaming services, and international distribution, allowing a variety of audiences to discuss moral quandaries (Mittell, 2015). Additionally, the internet environment promotes cross-cultural moral discourse by allowing audiences in India, for example, to compare Western tales of unbridled capitalism with regional accounts of financial hardship (Chakravarty, 2011; Pandey, 2022). From a Kantian standpoint, regardless of cultural provenance, the universal rules of moral behavior offer a critical lens through which to assess the ethical content of globalized media. (Wood, 2008; Munzel, 2024).

### International Film and Ethical Modification

Narratives of financial desire and moral compromise frequently cross cultural boundaries while modifying ethical frameworks to suit local sensitivities, according to transnational cinema studies (Higson, 2000). For instance, *Lucky Bhaskar* addresses comparable issues within Indian familial and cultural settings, but *The Wolf of Wall Street* dramatizes excess and unchecked ambition in a Western capitalist setting (Vasudev, 2020). The ethical adaptation in storytelling highlights the cultural differences in how some moral quandaries, such as exploitation, greed, and self-interest, are resolved while also emphasizing their universality (Pandey, 2022). By providing a comparison framework for evaluating moral obligation and the universality of actions across settings, such international approaches increase the applicability of Kantian judgment.



### Financial Scandals in the Real World as a Story Setting

Real-world economic crises and corporate scandals serve as ethical and narrative frameworks for many film representations of financial ambition (McCabe, 2013; Taylor, 2005). For example, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which is based on Jordan Belfort's biography, offers a factual foundation for examining systemic failure, greed, and ethical compromise. Similar to this, Indian film frequently contextualizes moral quandaries by referencing society's experiences with corruption, injustice, and financial danger (*Lucky Bhaskar*) (Chakravarty, 2011; Pandey, 2022). By offering specific instances where deeds may be examined in light of the categorical imperative and moral responsibility principles, these real-world allusions support the films' ethical significance and aid Kantian interpretation.

### Comparative Ethical Teaching Methods in Film

Movies like *Lucky Bhaskar* and *The Wolf of Wall Street* serve as instructional resources for moral teaching. They enable viewers to see the results of moral and immoral actions in both Indian and Western cultural contexts (Sinnerbrink, 2015). Comparative ethical pedagogy emphasizes how stories may illustrate culturally particular ethical conundrums while still imparting universal moral values like honesty, integrity, and regard for human dignity (Munzel, 2024; Wood, 2008). The combination of education and enjoyment highlights the didactic potential of movies and emphasizes the importance of using normative ethical frameworks for organized moral reasoning, such as Kantian deontology.

### Multidisciplinary Methods for Financial Ethics in Film

A comprehensive understanding of financial ambition and moral compromise is provided by interdisciplinary study that integrates philosophy, psychology, sociology, and cinema studies. Film studies examine narrative and cinematic strategies that influence moral perception, ethical philosophy offers normative frameworks, and psychology discloses the cognitive and emotional foundations of decision-making (Furnham, 2001; Bordwell & Thompson, 2016). By combining these viewpoints, researchers may evaluate how audience participation, empathy, and cultural interpretation affect ethical assessment in addition to determining if behaviors are consistent with Kantian moral principles. Both academic and educational assessments of cinematic morality are strengthened by this multidisciplinary approach.

### New Developments in Ethical Film Representation

Recent developments in Western and Indian cinema show a growing complexity in the portrayal of moral quandaries about financial aspirations. As a result of increased social awareness of systemic injustices, corporate wrongdoing, and ethical complexity, filmmakers are paying more attention to moral ambiguity, structural criticisms, and relational ethics (Chakravarty, 2011; Pandey, 2022). These developments are consistent with recent research supporting a complex ethical evaluation of film in which moral absolutes are taken into account alongside the motives of characters, systemic forces, and narrative framing (Wood, 2008; Munzel, 2024). These advancements support the use of Kantian analysis as a rigorous, universal, and culturally flexible framework for evaluation.

### Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical approach is based on Kantian moral philosophy, namely on Immanuel Kant's (1996) categorical imperative. Kantian ethics offers a methodical way to discern between morally acceptable and unethical behavior, as well as a strict normative lens for assessing moral agency, obligation, and ethical decision-making. The fundamental tenet of Kantian ethics is that morality is determined by an action's intentions and



compliance with universal moral law rather than by the results of that action. This characteristic makes it especially useful for examining intricate storylines in movies, where characters frequently have to make moral concessions, pursue personal goals, and pursue financial ambitions. Using this approach, the study evaluates the moral reasoning of movie characters in *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) and *Lucky Bhaskar* (2024), looking at how their choices either follow or deviate from Kantian ideals. The principle of universalizability, which asks whether an action could be willed as a law for all rational beings; the principle of humanity, which maintains that individuals must always be treated as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end; and the principle of autonomy, which highlights the ability of rational agents to govern themselves according to moral law, are some of the formulations for evaluating moral behavior provided by the categorical imperative, which serves as the foundation of Kantian ethics (Singer, 1954; Wood, 2008). These concepts are used in this study as analytical tools to assess moral dilemmas resulting from financial desire, moral compromise, and societal duties that are shown in the movies.

Furthermore, Kantian ethics offers a framework for examining purpose, motive, and context in addition to being concerned with the abstract assessment of acts. This makes it possible to analyze character conduct in a variety of cultural and cinematic contexts. This paradigm allows for a comparative ethical analysis of *Lucky Bhaskar* and *The Wolf of Wall Street*, highlighting the confluence of individual aspirations, social constraints, and moral obligation. The study creates a normative standard against which the moral integrity of characters' choices may be methodically evaluated while also taking cultural and narrative variances into consideration by basing the analysis on Kantian theory.

#### **Fundamentals of Kantian Ethics**

Duty, rational agency, and universality are emphasized as essential components of moral judgment in Immanuel Kant's ethical theory. Kantian ethics assesses morality based on the motivation behind deeds and conformity to moral law, in contrast to consequentialist methods that concentrate on results (Kant, 1996; Wood, 2008). Three distinct frameworks for evaluating moral behavior are offered by the categorical imperative:

**The Universalizability Principle:** states that a moral action is only acceptable if its guiding principle may be willed as a universal law that applies to all rational beings without conflict. In ethical reasoning, this concept guarantees impartiality and consistency.

**Humanity as an End:** People should always be valued as independent agents with inherent value rather than being viewed only as a tool to further one's own objectives.

**Autonomy and Moral Law:** Rational agents are able to rule themselves, use reason to create moral laws, and behave in accordance with these laws regardless of their own desires or outside influences (Singer, 1954; Wood, 2008).

These guidelines offer a strict normative standard for assessing the moral implications of financial ambition in movies. For example, self-serving activities that take advantage of the weaknesses of others like Jordan Belfort's fraudulent schemes in *The Wolf of Wall Street* fail both the universality test and the concept of treating others as ends (McCabe, 2013). Kantian analysis can ascertain if the protagonist's acts in *Lucky Bhaskar* follow moral obligation and the inherent worth of others, even as pecuniary and ethical difficulties result from socioeconomic circumstances (Vasudev, 2020; Pandey, 2022).

#### **Kantian Ethics in the Study of Film**

In order to methodically assess moral quandaries, moral agency, and character responsibility, Kantian philosophy has been used in cinema studies (Sinnerbrink, 2015;



Munzel, 2024). The framework concentrates on three analytical dimensions in cinematic contexts:

**Intentionality:** Whether a character acts out of obligation or self-interest is known as intentionality. According to Kantian analysis, intentions are ethically relevant regardless of the results.

**Universality:** The ability of a character's maxim to be persistently willed as a law for all rational agents.

**Respect for Persons:** Whether the character treats other people with dignity as independent individuals instead of treating them as simple means to an end.

These characteristics provide academics the ability to discern between morally acceptable and unacceptable behavior, offering an organized method for examining difficult moral choices in movie stories. This approach allows for a logical assessment of behaviors in many cultural and narrative settings, going beyond subjective judgment (Wood, 2008; Munzel, 2024).

#### **Ambition for Money and Moral Sacrifice**

The stories of both movies revolve around financial ambition, which acts as a prism through which moral decisions and ethical conundrums are examined. A framework for determining whether the pursuit of riches is consistent with moral obligation is provided by Kantian ethics: Jordan Belfort in *The Wolf of Wall Street* prioritizes money before morality, integrity, and human decency. Both the universalizability principle and the concept of seeing people as ends are violated by fraudulent schemes, excessive consumerism, and the exploitation of consumers and employees (McCabe, 2013; Taylor, 2005).

Financial aspirations are intertwined with cultural demands, family responsibilities, and socioeconomic limitations in *Lucky Bhaskar*. Kantian analysis assesses whether the protagonist's ethical concessions adhere to duty and respect human dignity, regardless of situational need, even if they may seem contextually justified (Vasudev, 2020; Pandey, 2022). Therefore, a cross-cultural assessment of moral agency is made possible by Kantian ethics, which distinguishes between situationally restricted moral compromise and ethical failure resulting from self-interest.

#### **Combining Kantian Ethics with Film Studies**

The study uses an integrative paradigm that combines Kantian ethical judgment with qualitative cinema analysis. This method combines cinematic, character, and narrative elements: Character analysis uses Kantian ideas to analyze intents, ethical reasoning, and decision-making processes. Plot structures, conflicts, and resolutions that highlight moral dilemmas are the main focus of narrative analysis.

**Cinematic Techniques:** Examines how sound, language, editing, and cinematography affect how viewers perceive moral decisions (Bordwell & Thompson, 2016; Sinnerbrink, 2015).

**Cross-Cultural Comparison:** Examines ethical representations in the West and India, emphasizing features of moral agency that are both culturally distinctive and universal (Chakravarty, 2011; Pandey, 2022).

This integrated approach gives the research a thorough grasp of financial desire and moral compromise by evaluating not just what characters do but also how movies create ethical meaning.



### Moral psychology and Kantian ethics

Additionally, moral psychology which studies the mental and emotional processes that underlie moral judgment intersects with Kantian ethics (Furnham, 2001). Psychological elements including narcissism, impulsivity, and the need for social approval worsen ethical compromise in *The Wolf of Wall Street*. Moral quandaries in *Lucky Bhaskar* are shaped by familial responsibilities, fear of failure, and socioemotional influences. Kantian approach highlights the conflict between psychological factors and ethical obligation by emphasizing that rational agents maintain moral responsibility, whereas moral psychology explains why characters may act unethically (Wood, 2008; Munzel, 2024).

### Ethical Issues across Cultures

The approach makes comparative ethical judgment easier by applying Kantian ethics to both Indian and Western film contexts. Western tales, such as *The Wolf of Wall Street*, place a strong emphasis on capitalist excess, individualism, and self-interest. Indian stories like *Lucky Bhaskar* emphasize socioeconomic limitations, communal duty, and relational ethics (Chakravarty, 2011; Pandey, 2022). Despite these cultural variations, Kantian ethics offers a universal standard for assessing whether deeds fulfill the categorical imperative, respect responsibility, and promote human dignity.

### Audience Engagement and Ethical Pedagogy

Cinema is a tool for moral instruction in addition to depicting moral quandaries (Sinnerbrink, 2015). Audiences participate in "experiential ethics," which mimics ethical reasoning, by watching characters' choices and their outcomes. This teaching role is complemented by Kantian analysis, which provides normative standards for judging the morality of deeds. Regardless of context or cultural framing, audiences may determine if decisions are in line with obligation and universal moral law (Munzel, 2024; Wood, 2008).

### The theoretical framework's justification

This research justifies the use of Kantian ethics for a number of reasons:

**Normative Clarity:** By distinguishing moral obligation from contextual explanations, Kantian principles offer exact standards for ethical assessment.

**Universality:** Cross-national comparisons between Indian and Western movies are supported by the categorical imperative, which is applicable in all cultural situations.

**Integration with Film Analysis:** By connecting ethical assessment with interpretative analysis, the framework enables a methodical investigation of story, character, and cinematic approaches.

**Alignment with Research Questions:** The framework specifically addresses the study's emphasis on monetary desire, moral compromise, and how characters' behavior aligns or deviates from moral philosophy.

This theoretical paradigm guarantees a thorough and exacting assessment of moral agency in film by fusing ethical philosophy, narrative analysis, and cross-cultural viewpoint.

### Results & Discussions

This study offers a comparative ethical analysis of *The Wolf of Wall Street* and *Lucky Bhaskar*, looking at how moral compromise and financial desire are created, portrayed, and assessed within the prism of Kantian ethics. In order to ascertain the degree to which the protagonists' acts conform to or deviate from universal moral standards, this section methodically examines significant narrative events, character choices, and cinematic representations using the theoretical framework of the categorical imperative. By emphasizing on purpose, obligation, rational agency, and seeing people as ends rather than



means, the approach goes beyond superficial story interpretation to conduct a normative ethical assessment.

By doing thus, the part combines philosophical interpretation with qualitative findings from content and narrative analysis, enabling a multifaceted explanation of moral conduct in cinematic circumstances. The conversation is organized topically and covers fundamental elements that influence the characters' moral paths, including financial aspirations, dishonesty, excess, social duty, and cultural background. The study illustrates both similarities and differences in ethical depiction in Western and Indian film by contrasting the more contextually grounded and socially mediated ambition in *Lucky Bhaskar* with the ethically unbridled pursuit of money portrayed in *The Wolf of Wall Street*.

The conflict between contextual justification and universal moral law, a major issue in Kantian philosophy, is also critically discussed in this section. Kantian ethics necessitates an assessment that goes beyond situational variables, stressing the importance of duty and moral consistency, even if cinematic storylines frequently encourage empathy for individuals functioning under socioeconomic pressures. Therefore, the results not only show how moral compromise is motivated by financial want, but they also show how cinema can be used as a place for ethical contemplation, where philosophical ideas may be used to examine the moral boundaries of ambition in various cultural contexts.

#### **Ambition for Money and Moral Decision-Making**

Financial desire is portrayed in *The Wolf of Wall Street* as an all-consuming ambition for societal supremacy and personal prosperity. Jordan Belfort participates in complex fraud, market manipulation, and exploitation schemes. The movie shows ambition separated from moral obligation, exhibiting a methodical disdain for Kantian ideals:

**Universalizability Principle:** Since universalizing dishonesty would bring down financial institutions, Belfort's actions selling fake stocks could not be made into a universal rule (Kant, 1996; McCabe, 2013).

**Humanity as an End:** Belfort violates Kant's command to respect people's inherent value by seeing customers, workers, and investors just as tools for his own benefit (Wood, 2008).

**Autonomy and Moral Law:** Heteronomy rather than independent moral reasoning is reflected in his actions, which are motivated by avarice and a desire for pleasure (Singer, 1954).

*Lucky Bhaskar*, on the other hand, shows how financial aspirations are entwined with social expectations, familial responsibilities, and personal integrity. The protagonist must navigate societal injustices, borrow money, and make ethically dubious commercial decisions, among other ethical conundrums. A Kantian examination indicates a complex moral alignment:

**Universalizability:** Although they are framed contextually within social limits, certain compromises like temporary lying to safeguard family welfare fail the universality test (Pandey, 2022).

**Humanity as an End:** In contrast to Belfort, Bhaskar generally upholds the dignity of others, even when pursuing his own or his family's objectives.

**Autonomy:** The protagonist shows reflective moral thinking, partially adhering to Kantian autonomy, even as decisions are limited by outside forces (Vasudev, 2020).

**Discussion:** These divergent portrayals show how Indian tales emphasize the moral negotiation of desire within societal and family frameworks, whereas Western narratives



frequently link ambition to moral corruption. Kantian analysis offers a normative framework for differentiating between blatant moral transgression and ethical compromise.

### **Moral Compromise, Fraud, and Deception**

Fraud and deceit are shown in both movies as essential tools for achieving financial success. Falsified profit reports, customer manipulation, and ostentatious lifestyle signals are just a few examples of the systemic and accepted lying in *The Wolf of Wall Street*. Ethical failure is plainly identified by Kantian evaluation:

- **It is impossible to generalize the maxims of deception.**
- **People are instrumentalized.**
- **Actions go against the obligations of justice and honesty (McCabe, 2013; Taylor, 2005).**

The main character in *Lucky Bhaskar* occasionally commits small-scale fraud (e.g., misrepresenting financial stability to investors). These activities are driven by family welfare and socioeconomic survival, even if they are theoretically a moral compromise. The ethical conflict is highlighted by Kantian analysis: although not morally ideal, such behaviors do not indicate systematic instrumentalization of others, and the goal is frequently in line with social responsibility and duty to family (Pandey, 2022).

**Discussion:** Kantian ethics distinguishes between motivation and context; in Belfort's example, ethical transgressions are motivated by selfish aim, whereas Bhaskar's concessions are morally restrained and justified by relationships. This illustrates how moral perception is influenced by cultural environment, even when formal Kantian ethical concepts are still relevant.

### **Hedonism, Excess, and Ethical Failure**

Hedonism and excess, which prioritize self-gratification over moral obligation, are prominent themes in *The Wolf of Wall Street*. Examples of moral failure include luxury consumerism, substance addiction, and sexual exploitation. According to Kantian analysis, these actions are:

**Violation of universalizable duty:** Indulgent maxims cannot be ethically desired by everyone.

**Instrumentalization of others:** Partners and employees are taken advantage of for one's own enjoyment.

**Ignorance of rational moral law:** Decisions are made without consideration or logical conformity to moral principles (Singer, 1954; Wood, 2008).

*Lucky Bhaskar*, on the other hand, portrays ambition as calibrated and morally regulated, frequently subservient to social, familial, or communal standards. Bhaskar avoids excessive self-indulgence and uses moral reasoning to make judgments, even in the face of temptation or financial opportunity.

**Discussion:** The contrast highlights how narrative and cultural contexts affect the moral ramifications of ambition. Although narrative context influences perceived ethical validity, Kantian imperatives offer a universal standard, underscoring the necessity of cross-cultural interpretation.

### **Comparing Ethical Representation across Cultures**

Several trends are shown by the comparison analysis: Financial ambition is portrayed in Western cinema (*The Wolf of Wall Street*) as self-serving, egotistical, and ethically dubious. The narrative focuses on the effects of unbridled greed and normalizes ethical compromise (McCabe, 2013; Taylor, 2005). Financial aspiration is balanced with societal and familial



ethics in Indian cinema (*Lucky Bhaskar*), highlighting moral reasoning within limitations. Contextual, relational, and partially justified ethical compromise exists (Vasudev, 2020; Pandey, 2022).

**Discussion:** By offering a normative ethical standard, Kantian ethics permits comparison even in situations where cultural views of morality differ. The approach demonstrates the universality and flexibility of Kantian principles by highlighting the ways in which purpose, motive, and relational context impact ethical appraisal across cultural boundaries.

**Alignment with Kantian Principles:** Bhaskar's choices, which uphold human dignity and demonstrate some moral autonomy, are more in line with Kantian morality. Belfort's decisions prioritize self-interest, contradict universalizability, and instrumentalize others.

**Cultural Mediation of Ethics:** While Western tales promote personal ambition and moral violation, Indian narratives emphasize relational and societal obligation, tempering ethical compromise.

**Financial Desire as Ethical Lens:** Both movies show how moral conflict is revealed by financial desire, although the level of ethical thinking and compromise varies greatly depending on the situation.

**Narrative and Cinematic Framing:** By reinforcing ethical or immoral framing, visual and narrative strategies influence how viewers perceive moral decisions (Bordwell & Thompson, 2016).

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze how moral compromise and financial desire are portrayed in *Lucky Bhaskar* and *The Wolf of Wall Street*, as well as to assess how much the protagonists' deeds conform to or deviate from Kantian moral theory, namely the categorical imperative. The research offers a comparative explanation of moral agency in Western and Indian cinematic contexts by fusing qualitative film analysis with a normative ethical framework drawn from Immanuel Kant's philosophy. The results show that while financial desire is a major driving element in both movies, their moral implications and ethical portrayals differ greatly. Financial desire is portrayed in *The Wolf of Wall Street* as being overwhelming, self-centered, and mainly disconnected from moral obligation. The protagonist regularly transgresses the fundamental principles of Kantian ethics by his acts, which are characterized by fraud, deceit, and exploitation. Because the maxim of deception cannot be applied generally without contradiction, his behavior fails the universalizability requirement. It also blatantly violates the concept of humanity because people are consistently viewed as nothing more than tools for selfish gain. Furthermore, the predominance of hedonistic impulses and the lack of logical moral reasoning indicate a state of heteronomy in which behavior is dictated by preference rather than obligation. As a result, the movie offers a striking example of unethical behavior, supporting Kant's claim that pursuing one's own interests at the expense of moral principles compromises societal trust as well as personal integrity. *Lucky Bhaskar*, on the other hand, provides a more complex and realistic depiction of financial aspiration. Family responsibilities, socioeconomic limitations, and cultural expectations influence the protagonist's moral choices, resulting in a story where ethical compromise results from limited circumstances rather than unbridled avarice. Even while certain behaviors, including small-scale dishonesty or taking risks, could still fall short of rigorous Kantian norms of universality, they do not derive from the systematic instrumentalization of others. Rather, they show a persistent conflict between situational need and moral obligation. These acts are



nonetheless morally dubious from a Kantian standpoint, but they also highlight the difficulties in implementing general moral principles in intricate social contexts. As a result, the movie lives in a morally gray area where contextual ethical negotiation and partial adherence to Kantian principles coexist. This study's cross-cultural comparative analysis, which emphasizes how various cinematic traditions define ethical duty and financial desire, is a major addition. Western film, exemplified by *The Wolf of Wall Street*, frequently depicts ethical failure as both a critique and a spectacle of capitalist culture, emphasizing individuality, luxury, and moral violation. As seen in *Lucky Bhaskar*, Indian film emphasizes moral negotiation, social restrictions, and relational ethics by showcasing people whose choices are intricately entwined with familial and societal systems. Notwithstanding these variations, both movies eventually highlight the universal ethical conflict between moral obligation and self-interest, highlighting the ongoing applicability of Kantian philosophy in the analysis of modern stories. The study also shows that movies serve as important venues for ethical contemplation, allowing viewers to consider moral quandaries and assess the actions of characters. By using a logical framework to evaluate the morality of deeds, viewers and academics alike can transcend subjective or culturally related judgments by utilizing Kantian ethics. This strengthens the teaching utility of cinema as a vehicle for examining ethical issues pertaining to ambition, responsibility, and human dignity in addition to deepening the analysis of film studies. The study does have several drawbacks, though. Although representative, the analysis is limited to two films, which do not adequately represent the variety of cinematic depictions of financial aspiration. Furthermore, the use of a Kantian framework, which has its roots in Western philosophy, could not adequately take into consideration cultural differences in moral reasoning, especially in non-Western situations. In order to overcome these constraints, future studies might include a wider variety of movies, interact with other ethical frameworks like virtue ethics or care ethics, and investigate audience reaction to gain a better understanding of how moral lessons are understood in various cultural contexts. This study confirms that although financial aspirations are a common and frequently essential part of human existence, their moral validity is contingent upon their conformity to universal moral standards. The examination of *Lucky Bhaskar* and *The Wolf of Wall Street* shows that pursuing riches at the expense of obligation and regard for others results in grave moral failure. It also emphasizes how difficult it is to make moral decisions in situations where social and financial limitations are at play. The research advances a better understanding of moral agency in modern culture by fusing Kantian philosophy with cinematic analysis, showing that the challenge is not just how money is desired but also whether it is achieved in a way that maintains the dignity, autonomy, and moral value of every person.

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