

## **Gandhian Plurality in the Visual Narration: A Reading of *Gandhi, Lage Raho Munnabhai and Papilio Buddha***

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**Abstract:** *This paper proposes to examine the representation of Gandhi in the visual narrations, as an attempt to comprehend the reconstruction of Gandhi in the contemporary popular aesthetics and also to apprehend the plurality of Gandhi. Even decades after Gandhi's death, the ideas of Gandhi and Gandhism are becoming the subject for the popular visual narratives. The contemporary popular aesthetic like film has been polemical in nature in its approach to Gandhi. Treating Gandhi by means of the present-day cultural parameters, namely films and visual representations provide new space for exploring new possibilities to reconstruct and reinterpret Gandhi and Gandhian thought. The contemporary popular medium of art endeavored to admonish the established historical format of Gandhi on the one side, but some other attempted to celebrate and romanticize Gandhian philosophy in a didactic way. The representation of Gandhi in films is a strategy for marketing Gandhian philosophy, and a new visual experiment in proliferating the different aspects of Gandhi which is not freely expressed anywhere in the formal format. Plurality in representing Gandhian identity is the present ways of explicating Gandhi for further comprehending the methods and functions of Gandhian ideology. For instance, Richard Attenborough presents Gandhi as national figure who agitated against the powerful British with Ahimsa and Satyagraha to attain freedom for India. Rajkumar Hirani has depicted Gandhi in comic pattern to impart Gandhian philosophy in the contemporary age, and thereby to provide a suitable space for infusing Gandhian thought in a novel way. Jayan K Cherian, on the other hand seriously attempts to approach Gandhi in a very critical manner; Gandhi is being approached here from the perspective of the dalit sensibility. Hence, this paper strives to examine the different traits of representation of Gandhi in select films, namely Gandhi (1982), Lage Raho Munnabhai (2007) and Papilio Buddha (2013), for understanding the new aesthetic ways of interpreting and theorizing the Gandhism in the present socio-cultural conditions within contemporary socio-cultural context.*

**Keywords:** *Gandhi, Gandhism, Satyagrah, Lage Raho Munnabhai, Papilio Buddha, Representation*

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This paper proposes to examine the representation of Gandhi in the visual narrations, as an attempt to comprehend the reconstruction of Gandhi in the contemporary popular aesthetics and also to apprehend the plurality of Gandhian representation. The act of de-centering or reinterpreting the once acknowledged ideas or persons with the contemporary visual narrative mode would perhaps extend the meaning of the persons or ideas within a particular socio-political and cultural context. The contemporary popular culture has represented Gandhi, not only for admiring Gandhi and Gandhian thought but also for condemning his socio-political and personal ideals. The act of disapproving as well as glorifying becomes explicit in the creative formula of aesthetics. The story of Gandhi's novel political ideas from his involvement in Indian public life on return from South Africa in 1915 has encompassed extensively in Indian literature and other arts. After his arrival from South Africa, he soon got engaged in Indian liberation movement and later his novel political strategies and methods became the celebrated subject for artists to portray his ideas and philosophies in the genre of subjective exercises. Harish Trivedi in his essay "Literary and Visual Portrayals of Gandhi" published in *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi* (2011), remarks on the representation of Gandhi in the literary works of art as, "...he is found to be everywhere, from office walls to public spaces to collective memory either personal or transmitted. He has been represented to enduring effect by a variety of foreign writers and artists as well, from points of view that serve to illuminate him differently and often with a striking supplementary" (199).

Indian cinema has provided a remarkable space for detailed reference to the leadership stories of Indian liberation movement. Many political personalities and their contributions have always been an inspiring subject for the making of the cinema. By endorsing the act of film making with reference to prominent leaders of the freedom movement Gautam Kaul in his work *Cinema and Freedom Leaders* (1998) notes the relevance of cinema in spreading the values of Gandhism as, “a performing arts movement developed for spreading the message of the freedom struggle to the remotest villages...cinemas had made the main leaders of the freedom struggle known by their faces and Mahatma Gandhi was better known to remote rural audiences than some of their own regional leaders” (41). The Gandhism and Gandhi have been the stimulating subject for representation and interpretation in various art forms, namely film, theatre, music, literature, painting, cartoon, sculpture and music. Though many have represented the spirit of freedom movement in the cinema since the advent of Indian national struggle under the leadership of Gandhi, but Gandhi had revulsion to the cinema which he once said in his *Harijan*: “You will be surprised to hear that I have never turned in to a radio, nor have I ever been to a cinema...I may say that cinema films are often bad. About radio, I do not know” (qtd.in Kaul, 45).

Many films are being released in the current age by endorsing and eschewing Gandhi and Gandhism. Gandhi as protagonist was first represented in a British film by name *Nine Hours to Rama* (1963). This film shows the nine hours in the life of Nathuram Godse who assassinated Gandhi. The second significant undertaking in which Gandhi was projected most completely was in Richard Attenborough's Oscar winning *Gandhi* (1982). There were several films which represented not with Gandhi but some constituents of Gandhism. They are namely *Achhut Kanya* (1936) by Franz Osten (*Dunia Na Mane* is its Hindi version (1937)), and *Dr. Kotniski Amar Kahani* (1946) by V. Shantaram. The relevance of Gandhism in the contemporary Indian society has been ardently discussed and debated through films like *The Making of Mahatma* (1996) directed by Shyam Benegal, Ashutosh Gowariker's *Swadesh* (2004), Jahnu Barua's *Mane Gandhi Ko Nahin Mara* (2005) or *I Did Not Kill Gandhi*, Raj Kumar Hirani's *Lage Raho Munnabhai* (2006), and *Papilio Buddha* (2014). Apart from these genre of Gandhian films there had also been films where Gandhian contemporaries were represented as the main protagonist; Jamil Dehlavi's 1998 epic biographical film *Jinnah* discusses the life of the founder of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah. This was released in the United Kingdom and Pakistan. Sam Dastar has acted the role of Gandhi in this film. *Veer Savarkar* is a noted film directed by Ved Rahi in 2001 which is based on the life of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. In this movie Surendra Rajan played the role of Gandhi. This movie was released in Gujarati language on 28 May, 2012 the then chief minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi. *Sardar* is a 1993 biopic film on the life of Sardar Vallabhai Patel, directed by Ketan Mehta and written by noted Indian playwright Vijay Tendulkar. Annu Kapoor, the famous television anchor best known for the vocal reality show *Antakshari*, enacted the role of Gandhi in this film. The film *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar* directed by Jabbar Patel in 2000 tells the story of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The famous south Indian actor Mamooty played the role Ambedkar and won the national best actor. The well known Indian theatre actor Mohan Gokhale has played the role of Gandhi. *Gandhi: My Father* (2007) explores the problematic relationship between Gandhi and his son Harilal, directed by Feroz Abbas Khan and DarshanJariwali as of Gandhi. Here, this paper would attempt to examine the aspects of representation of Gandhi and Gandhism in the films of *Gandhi*, *Lage Raho Munnabhai* and *Papilio Buddha*.

Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* provides a space for the most of the significant events of Gandhi's life by a strict edited narrative and it presents Gandhi in an idealized manner. It was a herculean task from the part of Attenborough for dealing with the subject of Gandhi. During the initial stage of the preparation of this movie the then Indian Prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru has warned Richard Attenborough by saying, “Whatever you do, do not deify him-that is what we have done in India-and he was too great a man to be deified” (Trivedi, 208). Raman P. Sinha in his article “Gandhi and Art” published in the anthology *Gandhi: Practical Idealism and Strategies of Inclusion* (2011) comments on the basic narrative pattern of the film:

“Generally this film is considered to be historically correct but as far as the portrayal of the protagonist is concerned it was suggested from some quarters that Gandhi is over-idealized here and it is simply hagiography. But approach of this film was quite clear from the beginning as it opened with these words: “No man's life can be encompassed in one telling

...least of all Gandhi's, whose passage through life was so entwined with his nation's struggle for freedom" (179).

*Gandhi* is a deeply felt and motivated film which offered the real spirit of the life of Gandhi. This film is not the history of India's freedom struggle, but it the story of one man, Gandhi. *Gandhi* provides the aesthetic space to represent the major events of the protagonist's political life. The childhood days of Gandhi and his student years in England for studying law had been totally ignored by Attenborough in the movie. It took twenty-two years for Attenborough to complete the complex subject in an able way. The film opens with the episode of assassination of Gandhi, by a Hindu fanatic, Nathuram Godse, the similar way Luious Fischer's biography *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (1951) opens: "At 4.30 P.M., Abha brought in the last meal he was ever to eat ... Gandhi murmured, 'Hey Rama (Oh, God)'. A third shot rang out. The limp body settled to the ground." (11-13). The date and the place of the shot, "New Delhi India 30<sup>th</sup> January 1948" is visibly shown in the screen. Soon after the assassination scene, the soldiers' feet moving in dignified requiem march in a slow step as a mark of respect for Gandhi is shown in close shot. The huge funeral procession, we see hundreds of men of army, navy and air force bears the body of Gandhi. In the crowd, camera focuses on the close foreign associates of Gandhi, namely Mirabhen, German Kallenbach and an American newspaperman Walker are shown in a gloomy face. Gandhi's life in South Africa has been captured in the first section soon after the funeral scene by high camera which captures the railroad track stretching across the dark showing a subtitle as "South Africa 1893". The remarkable events of South Africa are all visible as the young barrister attempts to organize non-violent resistance to discriminatory regulations and his formative stages of experiments with his novel act of satyagraha are captured brilliantly in the film.

This film *Gandhi* envisages the history of the modern India, which includes the historical episode of India's political agitation against the British imperialism, and also the contribution of Gandhi's philosophy in making India free from the British hegemony. Several historically significant events in the freedom movement of India are visualized in this film through the life narration of Gandhi and his political methods and strategies. Richard Attenborough missions the idea that the history of India's freedom struggle would be incomplete without envisaging the political life of Gandhi. The film portrays the much considerably the period of Gandhi's arrival from South Africa to India in 1915. This film has been received by the Indians as a film of national importance, on all national importance days, namely Independence Day, Republic day and Gandhi Jayanthi the telecast of the movie is a regular feature. On the eve of the Republic Day on January 26, 2015 this film was showed in the Lok Sabha Channel.

Richard Attenborough opens the film with one of the most tragedies of the Indian history, which is the assassination of Gandhi, in a highly close range camera in an attempt to recall the distressing event in the life of Gandhi. Showing this tragic scene at the very outset could perhaps create pathos before getting into the life narration of Gandhi. Portraying the assassination scene in the initial stage of the film provides a sentimental and sympathetic sense towards the film. Representing the political assassination of the national leaders has always been a tool to evoke sympathy among the people for getting support for the political purpose. Louis Fischer's *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (1950) too opens with the episode of Gandhi's assassination, before getting into the further life story of Gandhi. One of the most disturbing episodes in the history of modern India could be the unnatural demise of Gandhi, and this tragic event has become a context for representing and narrating Gandhi in various art forms. When discussing a personality like Gandhi, it would a natural tendency from the part of the authors or directors to foreground the assassination episode. Beginning to narrate a story of a person from his last phase or even death could perhaps convey the reason for the strange demise through his other events of the life. Why Gandhi was assassinated and the possible explanation of it could be comprehended from his other political and personal instances. Here, Richard Attenborough has successfully framed the *mise-en-scene* in portraying the tragic episode, but the film has not drawn critically the reason for the assassination.

Gandhi's sojourn to South Africa and his first ever insult at Pietermaritzburg station resulted in the further political agitation against the British rule in South Africa. His political strategies and methods of inter-racial settlement in Tolstoy farm and Phoenix settlement were not given much

emphasis in the film. Gandhi's British associates and Indian co-workers like Henry Polak, Sonja Schlesin, Millie Polak, Thambi Naidoo, P.S. Aiyar, and Pranjiven Mehta have played a significant role in the non-violent agitation against British exploitation in South Africa. The South African episode of Gandhi's experiments with non-violent Satyagraha has not fully captured in film. One of the Chinese associates who got inspired from Gandhi was Leung Quinn, but Richard Attenborough has discredited the significant relationship with this Chinese associate in South Africa. The sufferings and sacrifices of Gandhi in running his family, his relationship with his sons and the role wife in his were not completely visualized in the film. The absence of Zulu revolt that broke out in Natal in April 1906, and the role played by Gandhi in serving the victims of the war has sidelined the moral face of Gandhi in South Africa. The film mainly focuses his fight against Asiatic bill which could bring injustice to the Asians in the South African land. Gandhi's political agitation through his novel methods and strategies provoked the British authorities to reconsider the bill and finally the bill favored the Asians.

Back in India, the film compressed many years into a few minutes' shots by portraying a train journey of Gandhi across the country side. Gandhi's arrival at Champaran district to listen to the concerns of the peasants problems is visually carried out in detail. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre with the terrible role of General Dyre is shot with the high seriousness and suspense. This traumatic scene is the longest one in the film, which spared more than five minutes. The other sets were the Dandi March and Satyagraha with the inspired music of Pandit Ravi Shankar. The death of Kasturba, played by Rohini Hattangadi, has been depicted with high sense of melancholic visuals. Mohammed Ali Jinnah has been given enough space on the screen, with this purpose, to have a new nation on basis of Muslim religion and it convinces the audience as it incorporated the major political movement of the period. The last half of the movie deals with the partition of India and the communal riots and the retribution on Gandhi by the Hindu extremist. Film ends as it began with a recap of the assassination. One can doubtlessly remark that Richard Attenborough's intention in the representing Gandhi of film is to endorse his life and philosophy.

Richard Attenborough has portrayed all significant historical event related to Gandhi, namely journey to South Africa, Non-violent resistance to the discriminatory regulation, experiments with Satyagraha, Champaran episode, the Swadeshi movement, Salt march, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, and finally Godse' gunshot. Sashi Kumar, in his article *In Search of Gandhi* (1983) published in *The Hindu* remarks on Attenborough's treatment of Gandhi thus:

There is hardly a single intimate moment in the film where the man's mind progress or his conflicts or 'experiments' with Truth are probed. Indeed, much of Gandhi's autobiography where the transformation of his self is to revelatory, is of no use to Attenborough ... As more than fifty years of Gandhi's life are compressed into a naturalistic, episodic three-and-a quarter-hour long narrative, there is the uncomfortable feeling that Attenborough has bitten off far more than he can chew. Scenes collide into one another – a fresh one seems to start before the previous one has quite ended- and historic characters appear flitting around in Gandhi' orbit" (19).

Ramachandra Guha, the contemporary popular historian of India, in his recent work *Gandhi before India* (2014) remarked on Richard Attenborough's treatment of Gandhi's life:

This account was then dramatized ...in Richard Attenborough's blockbuster film *Gandhi*, which (for this and other episodes) took Fischer's book as its main source. The film begins with Gandhi's assassination in 1948 and then goes straight back to his ejection from the train in 1893, making it the first major moment in the Mahatma's life and career. Based, therefore, on a popular book and an even more popular film, the standard narrative of Gandhi's life draws a straight, clear line from the incident at the train station on to the mass movements he later led in South Africa and in India (122).

The portrayal of the very significant episode in the history of Indian liberation movement and also in the life of Gandhi have been justified through a refined interpretation by Attenborough, namely the first ever insult to Gandhi from a foreign land as part his train journey in first class ticket. The intervention in the problems of the peasants in Champaran is an inevitable chapter in the making of the life narration of Gandhi. Attenborough clearly presents the Champaran struggle through his camera. Gandhi's high determination in protecting the peasants of Champaran makes the

British police to fail in stopping him entering Champaran station. Richard Attenborough has depicted the ethical strategies of Gandhi in bringing Hindu –Muslim unity in the nation. Through this remarkable episode in the film the secular nature of Gandhi and his sense of mutual understanding of inter –religious sensibility has been foregrounded. Jinnah’s demand for a new nation for Muslim majority and the conversation between the leaders including Gandhi has explicitly described through the visuals in such a way that the political reason for the partition is being unambiguously visualized:

**GANDHI:** India has Muslims and Hindus in every village and city, have you propose to separate?

**JINNAH:** Where there is Muslim majority that will be Pakistan; the rest is your India.

**PATEL:** Muslims are in majority in two different sides of the country.

**JINNAH:** Let us worry about Pakistan. You worry about India.

By endorsing the presence of Jawaharlal Nehru, SardarValabhai Patel, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mohammed Ali Jinnah and other European supporters of Gandhi in India, on the one hand, and on the other Attenborough has eschewed the historical figures like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Subash Chandra Bose and C. Rajagopalachari : “Attenborough’s lop-sided priority in keeping certain characters and events in and some others out of the film...the absence of Rajaji, Tagore , Bose and Ambedkar , or of the entire Quit India phase, becomes a serious lapse” (Sashi Kumar 1983:19). The purpose of the film *Gandhi*, as it is very much evident from its treatment, is to reiterate the popularity of Gandhi among the world audience. Attenborough’s mission in the making of *Gandhi* could be an attempt to hide Gandhi’s personal concerns which he himself had revealed in his autobiography. David Hardiman in *Gandhi: In His Time and Ours* (2003) substantiate this view: Gandhi interpreted his sexual desire for his young wife as a detraction from his duty towards his father...he regarded his sexuality as a passion to be disciplined, rather than something that provided the basis for a relationship...In his autobiography he explains many of his early shortcomings and failures, both personal and political, in terms of his continuing sexual profligacy”(102). All the visual narration of the film shows the fact that Attenborough has determined to keep intact in his shots the identity ‘Mahatma’, though he has not used ‘Mahatma’ in the title of film. The decades after the making *Gandhi* there came many biographies on Gandhi which have severely condemned the ideas and sensibilities. For instance the biography *Gandhi: Naked Ambition* (2010) by Jad Adams, presents the more vivid personality of Gandhi, namely his sense of sexuality, ideas of celibacy, views on husband and wife relationship. Harish Trivedi has quoted Salman Rushdie’s loudest serious opinion on *Gandhi* in *Literary and Visual Portrayals of Gandhi* as, “perhaps the sharpest critical voice against the film was raised by Salman Rushdie, who described it as “inadequate as biography, appalling as history, and often laughably crude as a film” (208).

A serious attempt by film makers in drawing the life story of Gandhi could be analyzed for parallel understanding of history of India freedom movement as well the brief biographical portrayal of Gandhi. The film brings the notion that the history of India would be incomplete without the trace of Gandhi’s life story. Image of Indian nationalism is showed through the heroic intervention of Gandhi. Though, the film has ignored the controversial side of Gandhi, it has provided the sense of Gandhism in visuals by not hurting the emotional sense of Indian national sensibility. Such herculean task in making a biopic film, that too by a British director deserve an academic appreciation for the reason that such kind of movie though made by Indian film makers, it stands apart for its visual technicalities and its strategy of narrating a story of person along with the history of a nation. Taking all these visual reasons into consideration, it is right to banner the film as an inspirational biography.

Whereas, the story line of the film *Papilio Buddha* (2013) is influenced by Kerala’s recent Dalit uprising for the demand of legitimate land from the government and this movie was banned initially in Kerala. The film is about a group of untouchables in the Western Ghats who converted into the religion of Buddhism as a ways to escape caste oppression. According to the press statement given by the makers, this film explores new identity of political uprising based on Ambedkarism gaining momentum among the Dalit’s in the region, in the milieu of an ongoing

land struggle. It sharply criticizes Gandhi's view of power politics of Hindutva. The film has visuals of garlanding the effigy of Gandhi with *chappals* and burning it, on the other side it also refer to Gandhi as a homosexual taking the fact from the book *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggles with India* (2011) by Joseph Lelyveld. This book is given a critical space in the film, and on the basis of this references the characters in the film converse:

**NEETHU:** It's Amazing! Did you read it?

**SHAJAHAN:** Yes, nothing new here ...we all know this Kallenbach and Gandhi was having a...

Joseph Lelyveld has described this controversial homoerotic relationship between Gandhi and Hermann Kallenbach as, "Hermann Kallenbach...the most intimate, also ambiguous, relationship of his lifetime. "They were a couple". Tridip Suhrud, a Gandhi scholar, said when I met him in the Gujarat capital of Gandhinagar...Kallenbach later remarked that they'd lived together "almost in the same bed"... [Sic]One respected Gandhian scholar characterized the relationship as "clearly homoerotic" rather than homosexual (88). Unlike other Gandhian films, *Papilio Buddha* touches the inner intentions of then Gandhi towards Dalit, and the film brings Buddha's idea of religion in forefront which motivates the characters to deny Gandhi and Hindu religion. Gandhi had astutely integrated Dalits into a large population of Hindus. Dr.Ambedkar's visions are given much prominence in this movie. Image of Gandhi has been severely criticized for hidden political motives. Hindutva or Hindu *varnashrama*- based national identity was Gandhi's idea. Dr.BabasahebAmbedkar in his *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) counters the views of Gandhi in radical way:

There is no Hindu consciousness of kind. Dr.Ambedkar's visions are given much prominence in this movie. Image of Gandhi has been severely criticized for hidden political motives. In every Hindu the consciousness that exists is the consciousness of his caste. That is the reason why the Hindus cannot be said to form a society or a nation...The Caste System prevents common activity and by preventing common activity it has prevented the Hindus from becoming a society with a unified life and a consciousness of its own being (39-40).

The film attacks the views of Gandhi on Hindutva which is not based on the fiction but on the historical note. D.R. Nagaraj, in *The Flaming Fleet and Other Essays* (2010) reiterates the notion of Gandhian Hindutva: "When anxiety, a product of colonial experience, became unbearable for Gandhi, thus threatening the very integrity of existence, Indian spiritual traditions provided him with a healing touch. However, Gandhi never allowed spiritualist zeal towards annihilation of the caste ego to turn his priorities upside down in the larger task of nationalist struggle" (27).

Taking the subjects of the film into account it is much evident that Gandhi is not a completely examined subject, but it needs to be approached critically from the contemporary socio-political discourse. *Papilio Buddha* is a radical visual endeavor in presenting the tribal people's sufferings and oppressions from the ruling class, and it explores the cultural conditions of them in a drastic political method. In the process of attacking the political and religious demigods, namely E .M. SankararanNamboodiripad, Gandhi, Ambedkar, Ayyankali, and Hindutava, Buddhism has been presented as a method to solve the contemporary social crisis of the tribal community; it also put forward the possibility of annihilating caste through Buddhist response to Hinduism. Tribal rebellion against the ruling class for the land in Chengara and Muthanga (both in the state of Kerala) has become the base for this movie, and it enquires the socio-cultural position of the tribal community for reaching out the cause of the suppression and degradation of the isolated tribal force. The cause for the conflict between the tribal community and Government is due to land problem. As per the constitution, the tribal people has the fundamental right to get their own land area but it is denied by the power of the ruling class for supporting the multinational companies of heavy weight millionaire as a part of the political hegemony through corporatization for development regardless of the people and environment, the idea is evident form the conversation between the two important characters of *Papilio Buddha*:

**SANKARAN:** Dad, he is asking about EMS? I told him he is your God.

**KARIYAN:** Once he was my God. When the land reform started he became a Brahmin and I remained as an untouchable. We are also citizens of this country. We have the fundamental

rights. Areas of land are being given to multinationals, religious institutions, temples...we have a right to the land as promised in the constitution by Dr. Ambedkar.

The image of Gandhi and the Marxist legacy of Kerala are put to severe examination from the perspective of tribal community as a part of their struggle to attained justice. Incidence of severe rape by the group of Hindu upper class fundamentalist and unconventional way of torturing the young man by the police which is very rare in any Indian films, provide audience a painful visual experience. As a result of these verbal busts in the dialogue, this movie was banned in Kerala and also it was not given a space in International Film Festival of Kerala. Dismantled image of Gandhi by severe verbal smash makes the movie a radical in its approach in reading Gandhi within the contemporary cultural space:

**DASJI:** Youngsters feel that fasting is a toothless weapon. The peace mantra of India has always been Satyagraha, the weapon Gandhi used to defeat the British. In a crisis situation, there is no weapon better than Satyagraha. A Gandhian has no other formula than Satyagraha.

**SANKARAN:** Neo-Gandhians like ...have come to destroy our movement. As Dr. Ambedkar said about Gandhi's fasting in Yeravada jail in 1932, 'Satyagraha is a foul and filthy act; it is the most corrosive act'.

**SANKARAN:** High caste Indian leaders including Gandhi were cheating Dalits. We should recognize that Hinduism, the religion of the oppressors and its Sanathana Dharma were sharp weapons in the hands of Gandhi against Dalits. We hereby declare that we are giving up Hinduism and its caste.

The treatments of Marxism, Gandhism and Buddhism in the film are foregrounding the possibility of complete revamping of the modern-day political ideology of power and religious institutions, namely Hinduism. Jayan K Cherian through his filmic tool foresees a new cultural and political space with freedom and justice for all section of the people irrespective of their caste, creed, religion or political ideology. As a result of these verbal busts in the dialogue this movie was banned in Kerala and also it was not given a space in International Film Festival of Kerala.

Unlike other Gandhian films (discussed above) a new alternative aesthetic method is used in propagating Gandhism in the patriotic comic genre *Lage Raho Munnabhai*. In age of tremendous growth of science and technology, the manner of presenting the ideas also gets changed. The film has attempted to bring historical significance by the popular identity. This film is an example for transforming history into the popular culture space, where one can accommodate the nuances of history as part of their common cognitive capacity. The film shows the spirit or apparition of Gandhi that is visible only to the hero Murali Prasad Sharma or Munnabhai.

In an article published in *The Hindu* in 2009, "Come, Smile with the Mahatma" by Ziya Us Salam remarks on the very feature of this movie: "Lage Raho Munnabhai is that rare, rare genre: a patriotic comedy. No jingoism in the name of patriotic cinema, no documentary-style narration masquerading as cinematic tributes to the freedom fighters. No longer will we have to fight historians from different schools giving their color, their slant to history. In conformity lies salvation here." An attempt to bring Gandhi in a comic genre is a challenging task in presenting without losing the essence of the intention to bring Gandhian principles in foreground. The conversation between the characters tells the intensity of the comic element in the movie:

**Jhanvi:** Do you walk on the path shown by Mahatma Gandhi?

**Munnabhai:** Of course! I walk three miles every day on Mahatma Gandhi Street. What is on 2<sup>nd</sup> October?

**Circuit:** Dry day, brother. Do you want to order stock (of liquor)?

The protagonist begins to practice Gandhism and as a result of it there follows a transformation in his character and life style in totality. All day experience of Munnabhai has got oriented towards the principles of Gandhi, where ever the chance of violence happens, he uses Gandhism to solve it. Ziya Us Salam mentions the experience of Dilip Prabhawalkar (who acted as Gandhi) in the write up entitled "His moment under the sun!" published in *The Hindu* as, "There is nothing preachy about Gandhi here. His philosophy is shown as very practical. While doing the role I

realized the true greatness of the man...I am very cool by temperament. By playing Bapu I have imbibed compassion, empathy and benevolence". The practicing of non-violence, truthfulness and fearlessness is practiced and presented in a comic way but the values that is expressed through this presentation and dialogue seem to be a novel method of calling Gandhi back into the contemporary cultural space for providing a better society:

**Munnabhai:** (Munnabhai is slapped by a police officer) Gandhi said if you slapped, kindly show them the other cheek!

**Munnabhai:** (The officer slaps his other cheek, Munnabhai punches him) Gandhi didn't say what to do after he hits the other one!

The film shows the spirit or apparition of Gandhi that is visible only to the hero Murali Prasad Sharma or Munnabhai. The apparition of Gandhi is showed as an adviser of Murali Prasad Sharma, and his advices to him are in a very short and straight forward manner. In the real life also Gandhi had a style of his own way of speaking, he listens to everybody and share his views in very simple manner. This fact has been observed in the work *Music of the spinning Wheel*: "His words come across as the words of a living man, eager to listen to you and also to share his thoughts ...If you remain unconvinced and choose to disagree, he respect your choice...film *Lage Raho Munnabhai*, made by Rajkumar Hirani and Vidhu Vinod Chopra, and starring Sanjay Dutt. Circumstances compel the film's bumbling hero to become –or, rather, pretend to be – a Gandhi scholar. But whenever he is in quandary, or has a query, the ever helpful Mahatma comes to him as a ghost to show the way. And without his knowing this small –time criminal in a big city gets transformed into a genuine servant of society and fighter for justice". (Kulkarni 365).

The undercurrent of the movie has no trace of Gandhism as a serious subject matter but through the genre of comic narration Gandhism is foregrounded along the other commercial feature of a movie. The confluence of the commercial filmic entity, entertainment value and a serious subject like Gandhi are rendered in such a way that it reveals the influence of changed cultural of aesthetic sensibility in the new age of post-globalization. In the globalized age, the sensibility of the film has drastically transformed its outlook and presentation, and the subject matter that has to be discussed – whether it is an age old or new – is treated within the parameters of the contemporary style. This filmic venture is a new experiment in providing an aesthetic space for Gandhi in order to propagate the ideas of Gandhi in an era of new understanding of art forms. Through this movie it could also be observed that the text of Gandhi is not outdated in the contemporary age of new high tech oriented literary art forms. The focus is on the three basic principles of Gandhi, namely Non –violence, Truthfulness and Fearlessness. An entertainment movie with all the required commercial entities tries to capture the three ideas of Gandhi in the lifestyle of Munnabhai. *Lage Raho Munnabhai* in its movie features has proved that Gandhi and Gandhism could be allocated a space for re-interpreting and re-enacting even at the time of changing formulas of the contemporary filmic version.

Gandhi as subject could be experimented in not only in the print literary medium but also in the visual narrative, for bringing the notion that Gandhism is an inspiring and motivating topic for literary genre for criticizing and endorsing. Today's visual representation is new culture of aesthetics in conveying a message. Filmic communication as an art form reflects the voice of the voiceless for providing a space for them the raise their voice. Any art form is a tool for transforming the humankind to witness the new cultural format. In the present age of globalization and high technologies, there is always a possibility of proliferating the medium of literary expression for the formation of new genre to place the realities. Therefore, this paper has examined the possibilities of representing an International icon Gandhi in a visual narration to disclose how the person would be approached in plurality to bring new meaning and message. The visuals are today's language in which the world speaks.

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