

Multiple Colours of Gandhi in Post-Colonial Cinema

A. Ajai, G. Bhuvaneshwari

Abstract--- Cinema is considered as the powerful medium for conveying ideas and documenting the history and cultures of the world. Every filmmaker has their style of expressing their ideas through their portrayal. Sometimes, the ideas may be conflicting and even controversial. Any individual once into public life is prone to criticism. Mahatma Gandhi, father of our nation who put forth Ahimsa, non-violence, Love for all is criticized for his stand on the partition of the nation, double side on Casteism, etc. This paper discusses the colors, herecolor refers to the stand or the faces of Gandhi as portrayed in different movies.

Keywords--- Mahatma Gandhi, Post-Colonial Cinema, Filmmaking, Mass Media.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cinema through its portrayal, screenplay, dialogs, and stunning visuals, turns into a universal language. By getting to and understanding what makes an across the board issue, the audiences can better draw in with the world around them (Wadhwa, 2014). Cinema is the medium of the masses, given its capacity to impart complex ideas through its propelled methods; it turns into a transporter of expected philosophies, affecting world cultures by a considerable margin. Mass media like cinema turned into the storage facility for immense chronicles, culture, and custom. Each religion is special so do their perspectives, articulation, and understanding. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, Indian freedom fighter; his life has been recorded in the media some documentaries and docudrama, and there it has distinctive perspectives on Gandhi.

M. K. "Mahatma" Gandhi (1869 – 1948) is known as an ultimate touchstone of moral authority for most Indians, having a certain impact in public talk relatively identical to that of Thomas Jefferson in the United States or the Quran in Islamic countries (Guha, 2015). His heritage is outstanding in India and all through the world, generally through his thoughts and actions on Indian freedom battle which in the end influenced him to show up on each Indian banknote (Philip Glass' Satyagraha, 1980). Shockingly there are a couple of Indian films about him and his part in the national show, the important battle for freedom, the most important occasion in twentieth-century India (Dwyer, 2011). Even though Gandhi's work can't be effectively overlooked, it generally must be recalled by the public to set a correct case among the society.

Postcolonial studies are a large, interdisciplinary field, fundamentally, worried about the colonial past and postcolonial identity (Stam 2000: 292). One intriguing territory from a postcolonial studies point of view is to relate these issues to ensnared control relations between former

colonizer and former colonized. A noteworthy report, deciding such hilter-kilter control relations, is the one of Orientalism by Edward Said; where he reveals how the West or the Occident have constituted, the Orient, for this situation, the colonized, as an alternate, objectivised others toward the western subject. From numerous points of view, the Occident has envisioned how the Orient is, for example, to extend colonialism (Said 1978). What is urgent is the means by which colonizer and colonized are classified into a few twofold resistances which build up the center contrast between the two and address subject positions. A portion of these is "cultured/characteristic," "edified/crude or savage," "discerning/silly," "dark/white." The field of postcolonial studies takes part in looking at how such issues are spoken to in a wide range of writings, for example, literature, theatre or cinema.

This paper expects to investigate the various ideas of Gandhi, for example, Ahimsa and his fight for the freedom of India spoke to in motion pictures and its ensuing effect on social studies.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi otherwise known as M.K. Gandhi known as 'Father of the Nation' is the Indian freedom fighter. By his principles over the freedom battles he is known as 'Mahatma.' He is being considered as the international icon of peace and peacefulness. He is a good example for Nelson Mandela who is the freedom fighter of black people in Africa. In any case, Gandhi is additionally being criticized by pioneers in his period for fore fronting the cowardice demonstration of 'Ahimsa.' People fomented when he kept quiet for the partition of the nation, as a different Muslim country 'Pakistan' with Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Likewise, at the season of the death sentence for Bhagat Singh, he has the benefit to shield him utilizing 'Gandhi-Irwin Pact,' yet he didn't.

There is some genuine tumult on his period, concerning his view towards Casteism. Casteism has roots profound into the Indian society. The people were discriminated against and regarded in the light of caste contrasts. Gandhi, in his movement and discourses the country over, tended to the caste discrimination. He addresses the most in reverse in the society 'Dalits' as 'Harijan' that is children of God. In any case, he never abandons the varnaashrama dharma in his compositions in his native language, which is intensely criticized by the social reformist like Ambedkar. This examination is to dissect his lessons and philosophy and depiction of Mahatma in cinema which tosses various shades of criticism over him.

Revised Version Manuscript Received on 22 February, 2019

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Published By:
Blue Eyes Intelligence Engineering
& Sciences Publication

III. GANDHIAN PRINCIPLES

Mahatma Gandhi is known far and wide more than an awesome human being; he was a politician, teacher, and philosopher. Moreover, for his entire life, he was a great active individual. He is additionally considered as the spokesperson for the non-violent developments and methodologies through his exceptionally popular thought called Satyagraha. Gandhi's principles are vital for each society with the goal that each ethical thing can be wiped out for the improvement of the people this paper is about how we investigate a portion of his important ideas.

3.1 Ahimsa and Satyagraha

Gandhi considered violence to be a depreciative method for conveying everything that needs to be carried and furthermore identified two types of violence. They are passive and physical. The act of doing passive violence deliberately and unwittingly is a day by day affair. It is additionally a fuel which invigorates the fire of physical abuse. Gandhi profoundly comprehended violence from its Sanskrit root word "himsa," which means damage. Gandhi trusts that the person who has nonviolence is honored. As per Gandhi, Ahimsa infers add up to nonviolence, which includes no physical and passive violence. He comprehended Ahimsa as affection.

"Satyagraha" is a compound word from the Sanskrit root words Satya which signifies "truth" and Agraah which signifies "courteous insistence." "Satya is gotten from "sat" which signifies "being." Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. Concerning satyagraha, Truth, along these lines, fuses, a) Truth in the talk, rather than deception, b) what is bona fide, as opposed to nonexistent (asat) and c) incredible rather than vindictiveness, or frightful. This was fundamental to Gandhiji's understanding of and confidence in quietness:" The world rests upon the bedrock of Satya or truth. Asatya, which implies distortion, moreover infers nonexistent, and Satya or truth similarly suggests what is. If deception does not as exist, its triumph isn't feasible. Also, truth be told which is, can never be devastated. This is the precept of satyagraha pretty much (Nagler, 2014)."

Comprehending the inherent connection amongst ahimsa and satyagraha is basic. Satyagraha is ordinarily connected with the entire standard of nonviolence, where it is significantly the same as ahimsa, and once in a while, it is utilized as a part of a "marked" which means to allude particularly to coordinate activity that is for the most part obstructive, for instance as civil disobedience.

Gandhiji says, "It is maybe obvious from the first, that without ahimsa it isn't conceivable to look for and discover Truth. Ahimsa and Truth are intertwined to the point that is essentially difficult to unravel and isolate them. They resemble the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic circle. By the by, ahimsa is the methods; Truth is the end. Intends to imply should dependably be inside our compass; thus ahimsa is our supreme duty (Gandhi, 2001)."

3.2 Casteism

Gandhi trusted that Hindu society in its untainted express, the Vedic circumstances, depended on Varnashrama dharma, or the law of varna and ashrama. As indicated by

him, this was society's "transcendent trademark." This showed two things, that dharma or "social direct" differed, right off the bat, as per each class of society and, furthermore, as per the four phases in the life of the individual.

He likewise trusted that it offered the premise of an egalitarian society. One significant normal for varna as per Gandhi is, birth decides it; however it can be held just by perceiving its obligations. One who neglects to do as such loses his title to the varna. Then again, a man, however, conceived in one varna, yet showing the overwhelming characteristics of another, is viewed as having a place with the second varna. He called the untouchables as the Harijan, the children of God.

3.3 Simple Living

Gandhi's style of living was effortless. He believed that purchasing things for himself was a waste of money. He never bought garments by any stretch of the imagination; he generally made his garments at his home even though he had a not too bad measure of money and constantly dressed like a poor western man. Indeed, if a man had no clue Gandhi's identity and saw him out of the blue, they would imagine that Gandhi was homeless with no money. Mahatma Gandhi did not have confidence in squandering money ceaselessly by doing things like purchasing garments when he could make them without anyone else's input. He was a reformer; he told the Indians that they ought to do manual labor. He informed the students concerning his opportunity to peruse professional subjects to act naturally dependent.

3.4 Love for humans

Mahatma Gandhi as often as possible explained respect for every human being. He didn't believe in discrimination on the grounds of caste, color, creed or religion. To him, all humans in the sky are offspring of God and thus have perfect to be worshiped and disapproved of similarly. Additionally, in his writings and speeches, he discussed it as well as, side-by-side said its significance in man's life. In this setting in one his inscriptions he went to the level of saying, "On the off chance that you have to give a message toward the West, it must be the message of Love." (Harijan, April 20, 1947)

Further, the first aspect of the Gandhian concept of love could be followed in its indivisible association with truth. Truth unequivocally pervades in love; therefore, it becomes boundless. To cite Gandhi himself, 'Genuine romance is boundless like the sea and rising and swelling inside one spreads itself out and crossing all boundaries and frontiers envelops the entire world.' (Young India, September 9, 1928).

IV. CONTRADICTIONARY VIEWS

There were reportedly around six attempts of assassination made on Gandhi. All the roots lead to a Hindu radicle Nathuram Godse, but no investigation is made on the issue.



Couple of bombing, Slaughtering and the last shooting at point blank range. Godse never flees of the place after the assassination, the death of Mahatma celebrated as a festival all over India by Hindu radicals. The reason behind the assassination attempts back in days when Gandhi fought for the untouchables in the Indian society for their equal rights and freedom in all classes of the society. This agitated the Hindu radicals. Further, he addressed the 'Untouchables' as 'Harijan' meaning 'Children of God.'

Later his double stand over the Casteism and his silence over the partition, even more, agitated the Hindu radicals. Gandhi moved to hold his office in Congress, so he held fasting in support of Pakistan. This heated up the country and even more rage over Gandhi.

However, Dr.B.RAmbedkar gives another point of view about Gandhi he states in a BBC radio interview that Gandhi is not a man of his words. He adds that Gandhi though addresses he wants to abolish untouchability, his magazine on his native language still supported Varnashramadharm. Also, most of his decision and stand against the reservation and constitutional drafting is delusive. This also reflected in the movie about Ambedkar.

There was more controversial criticism on Gandhi regarding his personal and political life. In the very beginning of post first world war many followed Gandhi's Non-co-operation and non-violent ideologies, but later when violence triggered by British ended up in the killing of about hundreds of people, he called off the movement and didn't condemn the British government. This paved the way for most of the youths of that period to follow Nethaji Subash Chandrabose. Most youths believed Ahimsa is a foolish act to stand with a flower against raging Tanks.

V. THE PORTRAYAL OF GANDHI IN FILMS

Unlike Christianity, the dominant guiding philosophy of the western world for centuries, the Gandhian philosophy more contemporary, nevertheless, his impact on the lives and culture of both, the west and the east is remarkable. This is one of the key influences behind the study.

In this paper, we study four movies, three from Indian cinema and one from Hollywood. Surprisingly, Hollywood took the first initiative to bring the Gandhian philosophy out to the world as we know it today.

As we will see later in this paper, the populist idea of Gandhi has been rejected or instead put under skepticism for his political and strategic handling of key moments in the history and thus has seemingly become irrelevant in the present generation. Gandhian philosophy, similar to other populist philosophies is black and white in its ideals. We hope to bring it into the areas of gray and probably illustrate a few dark colors in it.

5.1 Gandhi the Mahatma (1982) – Populist Views

Now, Gandhi is considered as Mahatma the world over; the one who led the Indian people to freedom from the British Raj and protesting peacefully to achieve independence, 'Ahimsa,' is what has kindled the world into this point of view. The movie biopic, Gandhi is completely based on these general views on The Mahatma's life.

The first attempt of portraying Gandhi in the film was made by Hollywood. Gandhi was written by John Briley and

produced and directed by Richard Attenborough. It was released on 30th November 1982 in India and later in the United Kingdom and the United States. Made on a budget of \$22 million and grossed over \$144 million at the box office. It premiered in the United Kingdom in the presence of Royal family Queen Elizabeth and Prince Charles. The film was screened retrospectively on 12 August 2016 as the Opening Film at the Independence Day Film Festival jointly presented by the Indian Directorate of Film Festivals and Ministry of Defense, commemorating 70th Indian Independence Day.

"My main aim in 'Gandhi' was to project him as the vanguard of non-violence. Nowhere in the world has a movement of non-cooperation sans violence received so much support from masses as Gandhi's movement in India did. He was, to a great extent, responsible for freeing his nation from the British Raj."
– Sir Richard Attenborough



"Gandhi" communicates M.K. Gandhi's displays of his morality and his ability to help in gaining India's freedom with his moral principles at the heart of this movement. Through his means of non-violence, non-cooperation and peaceful ways of protest, he left the British no choice but to leave India.

The nobility in his method it seems, is what helped in garnering support worldwide as well as at home from his followers and this is clearly seen in the willingness of his followers who were civil servants to take part in a nationwide fast, rendering the British Government officers useless, thus, conveying the inevitable fact that 100000 English men simply cannot effectively govern and control 350 million uncooperative Indians.

As any mass public figure of change, Gandhi in 'Gandhi,' is a flat, one-sided, highly optimistic version that was aimed to serve the growing populism of alternate lifestyles that rejects the earlier generation notions of the great American dream, conformist attitudes and patriotism.

5.2 The Legend of Bhagat Singh (2002) –The Pen and the Sword

The Legend of Bhagat Singh presents a side of Gandhi, which is much more controversial compared to the Pro-Gandhian vision projected in Mass media and International Media. One of the aspects of Gandhi that the film handles is the morality of him as an individual.

It makes us question whether the so-called Samaritan of non-violence is capable of taking a life through his decisions favoring the greater good.

The legend of Bhagat Singh, 2002 historical, biographical film was directed by RajkumarSantoshi with Ajay Devgn, Sushant Singh, D. Santosh and Akhilendra Mishra in the lead roles. The film underperformed in the box office but received positive critical reviews. The film also bagged two national awards for the Best feature film in Hindi and Best actor for Devgn even three film fare awards. A.R. Rahman's composition received a favorable review among the audiences.



Ignoring every cliché in a regular Bollywood film, RajkumarSantoshi portrayed Bhagat Singh well. The movie starts with the terrified British policemen's try to dispose of the body of Bhagat Singh in secrecy, where Bhagat's father saw angry protestors questioning Gandhi for which he has no answers. The narration starts with Bhagat's father. Bhagat Singh becomes a tool of reflection to portray a non-populist version of Gandhi. Bhagat Singh being someone, who had believed in non-violence during his formative years, takes the path of violence after the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation movement by M.K. Gandhi. The movie is spread with many such instances where Gandhi fails to be a good administrator, diplomat and someone who holds a huge responsibility in the birth of a nation.

This version of Gandhi is in juxtaposition to the much flatter international favorite version illustrated by Sir Richard Attenborough. One of the core argument laid about Gandhi is how he failed to be a good administrator and decision maker. He was unable to maintain the neutral position, in backing up Indian National Congress. When the whole nation expected that Gandhi would guard Bhagat Singh and his friends, instead he went on to sign Poona pact, which removed the ban on INC, released satyagrahi's; it mentioned that people in guilty of violence would not be released. This confirmed the sentence for Bhagat and his friends. This portrayed Gandhi in a different color as a reasonable person prone to mistakes in the decision and argues how he fails to be a leader for the newborn nation.

5.3 Dr. Baba SahebAmbedkar (2000) –Internal Division

This Marathi biopic is about a leader who played a vital role in framing the constitution of India. In the course of the narration of who Ambedkar is, we get to know a side of Gandhi, a team that shows his leaning towards Hinduism, majority representation and the strategic politician inside him. Dr. Baba SahebAmbedkar is a 2000 Indian feature film directed by Jabbar Patel. Mammooty plays the title role. The government of Maharashtra along with Ministry of Social justice and Empowerment funded the film. The film is dubbed in 9 languages and won National award for Best

Actor (Mammooty), the Best feature film in English, and Best art direction. Alongside Gandhi film, it was presented on the 70th Independence Day.



Gandhi played an essential part in the decisions that Ambedkar had to take. There are a few instances in the film where Gandhi and Ambedkar negotiate over the interest of the minority. One such situation is when Ambedkar tries to convince Gandhi that Dalits need a much higher representation in the constitution, given the context that they have faced oppression in the past 2000 years. The counter-argument presented in this case was that INC had spent 1.5 lakhs, a relatively large sum during the era.

“Caste is at the heart of the rot in our society. Quite apart from what it has done to the subordinated castes, it has corroded the moral core of the privileged castes. We need to take Ambedkar seriously.” – Arundhati Roy

According to Ambedkar, Gandhi is not a Mahatma and will never be one. He is an excellent strategic politician who knows how to manipulate the masses. He further goes on to say that Gandhi is a two-faced politician. While one of his faces fighting against untouchability, the other has been the staunch supporter of the religious majority; especially in his writings in Gujarati.

One of the critical moments in the film is when Gandhi takes on a fast to convince Ambedkar to dilute his fight for Dalit empowerment, thus being a manipulative leader. Even though was a voice against untouchability, he ends up being portrayed as a person who supported the caste system, which according to Ambedkar is the route of all evils.

5.4 Hey Ram – Partition and Non-Violence

Hey Ram! The Tamil thriller film which talks about the story of sufferings around the partition of India and the events leading up to the decisions to assassinate Gandhi, even though the screen space occupied by Gandhi is minuscule, the themes portrayed in the films revolve around him.

One of the critical accusations placed against Gandhi in the film is the poor decision making during the partition of India and Pakistan. The violence and human slaughter that ensued had caused emotional trauma on both Hindu and Muslims. Invariably, being the decision maker, Gandhi was blamed for the error.

Amidst all the glamour of the newly born nation, Gandhi is shown as someone who refused or instead forgot to take responsibility for one of the significant instances of violence witnessed in the sub-continent and return a group of people with collective sentiment against Gandhi decided to assassinate him.





Despite the blame on Gandhi's role in the partition, the movie portrays non-violence as the better way of life. The protagonist, who is put in charge of assassinating Gandhi along-side Nathuram Godse, becomes a mascot of non-violence after he witnesses the slaughter of the leader by his comrades. This is a subtle nod to how as masses we have forgiven Gandhi for his mistakes over what he gave back in return – the idea of 'Ahimsa.'

VI. CONCLUSION

As Rachel Dwyer writes in her essay *The Case Of The Missing Mahatma: Gandhi And The Hindi Cinema*, "This is not a political Gandhi but a Gandhi who is an inner conscience and moral guide, a pixie godmother who will help us understand the present dreams."

This research paper is one microcosm of the universal cluster that is Gandhian philosophy. As we have seen, the Gandhian philosophy is ever-changing and put to the test for its morals and origins by the films we have discussed. Knowingly or unknowingly, Gandhi had become the poster boy to the advantage of the comprador and the elite. Thanks to some of these films, the air has been cleared and the voices of some marginal communities and their leaders and slowly emerging. Even though there were a few political, moral flaws in the human being called Gandhi, this research attempts to focus on the philosophy behind the personality that has to be given credit for the motivation it has given to countless people towards non-violence. This study is expected to act as a valuable inter-text to the series of studies that exist on the same philosophy.

Gandhi is more than a personality, over a period has become an idea, ideology, and metaphor to a way of life that has its roots in rejection to years of colonialism, violence, wars and an industrialized form of modern life.

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