



LONDON INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL

# Gandhi

+ intro

On the film's 40th anniversary LIFF presents and re-examines the epic movie that brought Indian leader Gandhi to the world's attention in the 1980s and allegedly helped inspire the non-violent Czech Velvet Revolution. Richard Attenborough's labour of love took many years to realise, in part due to its gigantic, lavish scenarios and stellar cast. Gujarati-British actor Sir Ben Kingsley gives an Oscar®-winning performance as the Mahatma.

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Films about Gandhi had been mooted in the past by Gabriel Pascal, Otto Preminger and Michael Powell among others. The idea was first proposed to Richard Attenborough in 1962 by Motilal Kothari, a dedicated follower of Gandhi who had taken upon himself the mission of getting a film made that would teach people about the Mahatma's life and work. He persuaded Attenborough to read Louis Fischer's monumental biography. Attenborough was captivated, though the phrase that seized him and continued foremost in his thinking, was a comment made by Gandhi after suffering a racial insult in South Africa, as a very young man: 'It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings.'

Attenborough received only discouragement from his friends and associates. His old partner Bryan Forbes declined to attempt a script, because he felt it was impossible to encompass Gandhi's life in a film. Attenborough's agent and lawyer both sensibly felt that the project was far too ambitious for a first-time director – this was seven years before his directing debut with *Oh! What a Lovely War*. His only support came from the dogged Kothari and Attenborough's wife, who 'said that if this was something I really desperately cared about and was a story I was determined to tell, then I shouldn't let anything or anybody put me off.'

After 20 years of struggle, when the finance to make *Gandhi* finally materialised, it happened with a speed that seems almost to have taken Attenborough by surprise. The financing was finally assembled by the Canadian Jake Eberts of Goldcrest Films International, without whom, Attenborough readily states, the film would never have been made. Thanks to the support of Mrs Gandhi, who was now Prime Minister, the National Film Development Corporation of India also invested substantially. Attenborough set about assembling his unit, whose members either were, or would become, his regular collaborators, notably his production collaborator Terrence Clegg, his first assistant, the formidable David Tomblin with his unique talent for marshalling crowds (the extras for Gandhi's funeral were estimated at 400,000); the brilliant and resourceful production designer Stuart Craig. The great Indian musician Ravi Shankar composed the music, together with a then little known young English composer, George Fenton. Diana Hawkins, who was to play an increasingly important role as a production associate on all Attenborough's subsequent films, organised the mammoth task of press and publicity.

Over the years two generations of actors – some very improbably – had been considered for the role of Gandhi, in addition to those already approached by Attenborough. They included Peter Finch, Robert De Niro, and Dustin Hoffman. The favourite of one studio was Richard Burton: his presence alone it seems would have ensured financing. The final choice was between John Hurt and Ben Kingsley, who had first been drawn to the attention of Attenborough by his theatre director son Michael. The screen tests showed the problems of making an Englishman look convincing as an Indian. Kingsley, whose father was in fact Indian, was finally chosen, and applied himself with extraordinary diligence to the role, shedding weight, taking up yoga, learning to spin cotton and indeed trying to live life as Gandhi lived so far as was possible. The huge cast included such distinguished names as John Gielgud, Michael Hordern, John Clements, Trevor Howard and John Mills – few actors refuse even a walk-on part for Attenborough. From younger generations were Ian Charleson, Edward Fox, Martin Sheen and Ian Bannen. Daniel Day-Lewis had a line as a South African roughneck. Long before, when they were acting together on *The Sand Pebbles*, Attenborough and Candice Bergen had mutually agreed that she should play Margaret Bourke-White. Shooting began on 26 November 1980, post-production took up most of 1982 and the film was finally ready for release at the end of 1982 – in time to qualify for the all-important Academy Awards. Attenborough had, against all the odds, realised his dream, and consolidated his place in film history.

*Gandhi* is the central event of Attenborough's life, not just of his career and creation. He devoted so many years to the project and risked everything he possessed. Somehow both he and his grand idea survived the years of disappointments, delay, frustration, ridicule and obstruction without becoming stale or sour. By persistence and stubbornness, which would have seemed quixotic folly in anyone else, Attenborough finally achieved his ambition – and more. No film made in Britain has ever won greater critical acclaim and commercial success. Its eight Academy Awards were only the first of the honours heaped upon the film and its maker. Attenborough's greatest reward though was the certainty that some at least of his audience recognised themselves enriched by the encounter with Gandhi, through his screen portrait. That, after all, was what he had most wanted to accomplish.

David Hughes wrote in *The Sunday Times*: 'Its arrival on the screen is a masterly piece of timing. In range of content, nobility of purpose and generosity of spirit Sir Richard Attenborough's achievement coincides with a national longing for just the kind of heart's ease he dispenses. The film is inspired because it offers inspiration. Sir Richard is often heckled for his lack of individual style as a director. He can rest easy. Here with love, with truth, he serves Gandhi well by giving an immensely personal account of him, but on a political scale that travels far beyond the borders of India into the heart of our lives at home.' Perhaps the most remarkable feat of the film was for a Western artist to perceive in Gandhi the essence that was universal. Much that is most significant for the East in Gandhi's teaching is manifested in spiritual qualities elusive to the West. Without betraying or perverting this aspect of him, Attenborough managed to create an image that touched the civilisations of East and West alike. An Englishman, marvelled Gandhi's grandson, 'has enabled the dead Mahatma to speak to the whole world.'

**Extracted from *Richard Attenborough* by David Robinson, (BFI Publishing, 1992)  
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GANDHI

*Director:* Richard Attenborough; ©Carolina Bank, Ltd.; ©/Presented in association with: National Film Development Corporation; *Presented by:* Columbia Pictures Corporation; *Presented in association with:* International Film Investors, Goldcrest Films International, Indo-British Films Ltd.; *Executive Producer:* Michael Stanley-Evans; *Producer:* Richard Attenborough; *Co-producer:* Rani Dubé; *Associate Producer:* Suresh Jindal; *Production Supervisor:* Terry Clegg; *Production Co-ordinator:* Loretta Ordewer; *Production Managers:* Alexander De Grunwald, Shama Habibullah; *2nd Unit Production Manager:* Devi Dutt; *Unit Managers:* Grania O’Shannon, Gerry Levy, Rashid Abbasi; *Location Managers:* Graham Ford, Sudesh Sayal; *2nd Unit Location Manager:* Rajiv Suri; *Post-production Assistant:* Margaret Adams; *Production Assistants:* Sharlene Chatelier, Eleanor Chaudhuri; *Researcher:* Lorna Mueller; *2nd Unit Director:* Govind Nihalani; *Assistant Directors:* David Tomblin, Steve Lanning, Roy Button, Peter Waller, Kamal Swaroop, M. Shahjehan, Bhisham Bhasin, Julian Wall; *2nd Unit Assistant Director:* U.S. Pani; *2nd Unit Assistant Director:* John Matthew; *Screenplay:* John Briley; *Directors of Photography:* Billy Williams, Ronnie Taylor; *2nd Unit Photographer:* Govind Nihalani; *Aerial Photographer:* Robin Browne; *Camera Operator:* Chic Anstiss; *2nd Camera Operator:* A.K. Bir; *Special Effects Supervisor:* David Watkins; *Editor:* John Bloom; *Assembly Editor:* Chris Ridsdale; *Associate Editor:* Alan Pattillo; *Production Designer:* Stuart Craig; *Supervising Art Director:* Bob Laing; *Art Directors:* Ram Yedekar, Norman Dorme; *Set Decorator:* Michael Seirton; *Set Dressers:* Jill Quertier, Nissar Allana, Amal Allana, Aruna Harprasad; *Costumes:* John Mollo, Bhanu Athaiya; *Indian Costumes:* Manju Raj Saraogi; *Wardrobe:* Nic Ede; *Indian Wardrobe Adviser:* Sina Kaul; *Make-up:* Tom Smith; *Titles:* Advance Film Promotions; *Music:* Ravi Shankar; *Orchestral Score/Additional Music:* George Fenton; *Music Co-ordinator:* Vijay Raghav Rao; *Music Performances:* Sultan Khan, Sharad Kumar, T.K. Ramakrishnan; Lakshmi Shankar, Ashish Khan, Ashit Desai, P. Desai, Wren Orchestra; *Music Director:* George Fenton; *Music Co-ordinator:* Francis Silkstone; *Music Recording:* John Richards; *Sound Recording:* Simon Kaye; *Sound Re-recording:* Gerry Humphreys, Robin O’Donoghue; *Sound Editor:* Jonathan Bates; *Military Adviser:* Colonel Balachandra; *Historical Consultant:* R. Puri; *Stunt Co-ordinator:* Gerry Crampton

Cast

Ben Kingsley (*Mahatma Gandhi*); Candice Bergen (*Margaret Bourke-White*); Edward Fox (*General Dyer*); John Gielgud (*Lord Irwin*); Trevor Howard (*Judge Broomfield*); John Mills (*The Viceroy*); Martin Sheen (*Walker*); Ian Charleson (*Charlie Andrews*); Athol Fugard (*General Smuts*); Günther-Maria Halmer (*Herman Kallenbach*); Geraldine James (*Mirabehn*); Amrish Puri (*Khan*); Saeed Jaffrey (*Sardar Patel*); Alyque Padamsee (*Mohamed Ali Jinnah*); Roshan Seth (*Pandit Nehru*); Rohini Hattangadi (*Kasturba Gandhi*); Ian Bannen (*Senior Police Officer*); Michael Bryan (*Principal Secretary*); Richard Griffiths (*Collins*); Bernard Hepton (*GOC*); Shreeram Lagoo (*Professor Gokhale*); Virendra Razdan (*Maulan Azad*);

John Clements (*Advocate General*); Nigel Hawthorne (*Kinnoch*); Michael Hordern (*Sir George Hodge*); Om Puri (*Nahari*); Richard Vernon (*Sir Edward Gait*); Harsh Nayyar (*Nathuram Godse*); Prabhakar Patankar (*Prakash*); Vijay Kashyap (*Apte*); Nigum Prakash (*Karkare*); Supriya Pathak (*Manu*); Nina Gupta (*Abha*); Shane Rimmer (*commentator*); Peter Harlowe (*Lord Mountbatten*); Anang Desai (*J. B. Kripalani*); Winston Ntshona (*Porter*); Peter Cartwright (*European passenger*); Marius Weyers (*conductor*); Richard Mayes (*Baker*); Alok Nath (*Tyeb Mohammed*); Dean Gasper (*Singh*); Ken Hutchison (*police sergeant*); Norman Chancer (*reporter*); Gulshan Kapoor (*rich merchant*); Charubala Chokshi (*Ayah*); Raj Chaturvedi (*Harilal Gandhi*); Avpar Jhita (*Manilal Gandhi*); Anthony Sagger (*Ramdas Gandhi*); David Gant (*Daniels*); Daniel Day-Lewis (*Colin*); Ray Burdis, Daniel Peacock (*youths*); Avis Bunnage (*Colin’s mother*); Caroline Hutchison (*Sonja Schlesin*); Mohan Agashe (*Tyeb Mohammed’s friend*); Suhanshu Mishra (*man in gallery*); Deena Nath (*miner*); John Savident (*manager in the mine*); John Patrick (*mounted police sergeant*); Michael Godley (*clergyman*); Stewart Harwood (*prison officer*); Stanley McGeagh (*prison guard*); Christopher Good (*young Englishman*); David Markham (*older Englishman*); Jyoti Sarup (*young Indian reporter*); John Naylor (*English reporter*); Wilson George (*American reporter*); Hansu Mehta (*older Indian reporter*); Sudarshan Sethi (*Motilal Nehru*); Sunila Pradhan (*Mrs. Motilal Nehru*); Moti Makan, Jalal Agha (*travellers on train roof*); Rupert Frazer (*cavalry troop leader*); Manohar Pitale (*Shukla*); Homi Daruvala, K.K. Raina, Vivek Swaroop, Raja Biswas (*Nehru’s friends*); Dominic Guard (*Subaltern*); Bernard Hill (*Sergeant Putnam*); Rama Kant Jha (*village leader*); Nana Palsikar (*villager*); Alpana Gupta (*villager’s wife*); Chandrakan Thakkar (*policeman*); John Quentin (*batsman*); Graham Seed (*wicket-keeper*); Keith Drinkel (*major*); Bob Barbenia (*police guard*); Gerald Sim (*magistrate*); Colin Farrell (*clerk*); Sanjeev Puri (*young man*); Gareth Forwood (*secretary*); Vijay Crishna (*chauffeur*); Sankalp Duvey (*servant*); James Cossins (*brigadier*); Gurcharan Singh (*speaker in Jallianwalla Bagh*); John Vine (*ADC*); Geoffrey Chater (*government advocate*); Ernest Clark (*Lord Hunter*); Habib Tanvir (*Indian barrister*); Pankaj Mohan (*Mohadev Desai*); Subhash Gupta, Aadil (*policeman at Chauri Chauras*); Rajeshwar Nath, S.S. Thakur (*marchers at Chauri Chaura*); Rahul Gupta (*boy with goat*); Barry John (*police superintendent*); Brian Oulton (*clerk of court*); James Snell, John Boxer, Gerard Norman (*court reporters*); Bernard Horsfall (*General Edgar*); Richard Leech (*brigadier*); Pankaj Kapoor (*Pyarelal*); Tarla Mehta (*Sarojini Naidu*); David Sibley (*subaltern*); Dalip Tahil (*Zia*); Stanley Lebor (*police officer*); Terence Hardiman (*Ramsay Macdonald*); Jack McKenzie (*major at Aga Khan Palace*); Tom Alter (*doctor at Aga Khan Palace*); Jane Myerson (*Lady Mountbatten*); Roop Kumar Razdan (*Hindu youth at Ashram*); Bani Sharad Joshi (*woman refugee*); Vagish Kumar Singh (*man refugee*); Dilsher Singh (*Abdul Ghaffar Khan*); Sudheer Dalavi (*police commissioner*); Tilak Raj (*Tahib*); Irpinder Puri (*Sushila Nayyar*); Pren Kapoor, Vinay Apte, Aswani Kumar, Avinash Dogra, Shreedhar Joshi, Suhas Palshikar (*Hindu youths in Calcutta Street*) ;Karkirat Singh (*Nehru’s aide*); Sekhar Chatterjee (*Suhrawardy*); Amarjit, Pratap Desai, Bhtawadekar Prakash, Sunil Shende, Rovil Sinha (*goondas*)

USA/India/UK 1982©  
188 mins

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