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## Influence of Mahatma Gandhi Onscreen: A Study of *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* (2006) and *Gandhi, My Father* (2007)

Dr. Tania Kumari

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Lalit Narayan Mithila University, Darbhanga, Bihar, India

## Abstract

Whilst Gandhi despised cinema, which, he believed, corrupted human minds, he became the subject of investigation and of cinema as well. The article aims at studying Gandhi's life and his indelible impact on the Indian freedom struggle that changed the face of political protest through *Satyagraha*. Nowadays, Gandhian principles are treated perfunctorily and it sees a bleak future, therefore, the study intends to do an exhaustive re-reading of Gandhi to realize the universality of his persona through cinema. The movies of *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* (*LRMB*) (2006) and *Gandhi, My Father* (*GMF*) (2007) are taken for the study to explore the nuances of Gandhi's life including both his shortcomings and strengths. Through the movies, it is notable to read whether Gandhi's philosophy is utopian or there is a revival of his thoughts. The purpose of the present study is not to question Gandhi as a saintly being but to posit certain questions through the movies which might provide some aid to understand Gandhi's role and relevance in the present times. The study proposes to examine Gandhi's influence upon Munna (the protagonist in *LRMB*) in an era of post-liberalisation, who adopts neologistic approach of "Gandhigiri" (a portmanteau of "Gandhism" and "dadagiri") creating an immediate magical effect. Gandhi in *LRMB* replicates Nandy's fourth form of Gandhi who is more of a common man and travels along with Munna to figure out solutions to his day-to-day problems. However, in *GMF*, Gandhi's life is portrayed along with his relation with humankind and his eldest son, Harilal. Moreover, through *GMF*, the study purports to analyse Gandhi's contributions and his ineffaceable role in India's Struggle for Independence along with his impact in South Africa. Both the movies reflect Gandhi's impression— firstly upon Munna, for whom Gandhi becomes an impeccable influencer/ problem solver; secondly, upon Harilal, for whom Gandhi becomes the major problem creator. Therefore, the study seeks to unravel how Gandhi, the advocate of peace, becomes one of the finest examples for the sustainable growth of humanity and society. As a result, this study accesses Gandhi whose universality and aura transcended globally, thus, it can be speculated that his philosophy of life is still very much relevant in the present era.

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## Introduction

After Independence, leaders such as Subhas Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh made their ideologies more poignant in the Indian mind; countenancing the people to choose hard power over the obsolete soft power of Gandhian principles. Eventually, ferocity emanated mostly through the image of machoism or dissident protagonists, such as the “angry-young man” in the Hindi Cinema and worldwide; showcasing the young Indian minds of the necessity to take action for seeking justice. Nowadays, people know little about what nationalism means in true sense; and how the legendary figure like Mahatma Gandhi sacrificed himself for the nation and its freedom. Over the years, the chronicles of Gandhi are restricted in the history books that the young generation read as a part of their syllabus to pass the exams. Moreover, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi is commemorated as a national holiday—a day treated as leave from office. Besides, people tend to stain the public icons like Gandhi marking his weaknesses; stooping him down to a mere commoner, thus, erasing Gandhi’s eminent personality to someone who can be mocked at. Somehow, the youth of the present times are skeptical about the relevance of Gandhian ideologies in the present time. Consequently, the Gandhian principles are treated perfunctorily, and it points to a bleak future, therefore, it requires an exhaustive re-reading of Gandhi to realize the universality of his persona and principles.

As technology has over-powered human minds, movies have become a vital tool for education and awareness. Movies on biopics, historical figures, lead people to gather knowledge, yet, it is not possible to wind up one’s whole life history within a few hours of a film. Nevertheless, cinema serves as a platform for educating the common mass along with the visual learners. Whilst Gandhi despised cinema, which, he believed, corrupted human minds, Gandhi became the subject of investigation and of cinema as well. The movies of *Lage Raho Munna Bhai (LRMB)* (2006) and *Gandhi, My Father (GMF)* (2007) directed by Rajkumar Hirani and Feroz Abbas Khan respectively, are taken for the study to explore the nuances of Gandhi’s life including both his shortcomings and strengths. Through the movies, it is notable to determine whether Gandhi’s philosophy is utopian or there is a revival of his thoughts. The purpose of the present study is not to question Gandhi as a saintly being, but to posit certain questions which might provide some aid to understand Gandhi’s role and relevance in the present era.

### Gandhi’s Effects on Munna’s Mind: *LRMB*

*Lage Raho Munna Bhai* is based on Gandhian theme and its reverberations on the contemporary India. A kind-hearted goon Munna Bhai listens to his long-coveted love's voice, Jahnavi (Radio Jockey) on radio every day. The quiz on Gandhi was aired by Jahnavi and Munna tries to win by all means to grab the opportunity to meet Jahnavi whom he desires to meet since long. He wins the online quiz by forcing five experts to get answers for him. After the meeting, RJ requests Munna (who introduces himself as a Professor Murli) to visit her home to deliver a lecture to the oldies who live with Jahnavi's house named "Second Inning" with her father. The old people who are thrown out by their children are provided shelter by Jahnavi in her house "Second Inning". Munna readily accepts to visit Jahnavi's house; however, he is in a dilemma about speaking of Gandhi as he knows nothing about "Bapu". After all the futile efforts to enact his pseudo-knowledge about Gandhi, Munna finally goes to the Gandhian Library to read about him. Engrossed in reading, Munna started hallucinating Gandhi, whose ideology of non-violence Munna later uses to combat the issues of the present times and finally succeeds in it.

In an era of post-liberalisation, Gandhi's values of non-violence and peace seem to lose its vitality as society is more turning into a theme park of materialism. Under such societal setup, when Munna visits the Gandhian Library, one is bound to find only dust on tables indicating the collapse of Gandhian values as there is no visitor in the library. Seeing Munna, the library keeper feels elated. The faith on Gandhian principles is looked upon with despair and it seems the faith on Gandhi is "lost, but a faint memory of it still survived" (Wilson 321) with Munna's entry in the library, representing a ray of hope just "as does the light of the sun after it has set below the horizon" (Wilson 321). In *LRMB*, one finds Gandhi as a new trend, i.e., antithetical from the "Mahatma" Gandhi, one knows. Munna's excessive engrossment with Gandhian books leads him to visualise Gandhi's apparition, i.e., the after-effect of Munna's excessive study creating an illusion of Gandhi in his mind.



**Fig. 1.** Munna visualised Gandhi in library (Pic. courtesy of the film *LRMB*, screenshots captured by the author)

Interestingly, the apparition of “Bapu” appears who provides aid and solutions to Munna whenever he needs and that serves as a prime source to garner public’s attention. The appearance of Gandhi’s apparition is, in fact, Munna’s readings on Gandhian principles that find a way out of the problems he encounters.

An understanding of the transformation of Gandhi, as he gained different experiences from not only India but mostly from South Africa, makes people aware of various aspects of Gandhi’s personality and his evolution as “Mahatma”. About the different traits of a person, William James can aptly be quoted:

Our ordinary alterations of character, as we pass from one of our aims to another, are not commonly called transformations, because each of them is so rapidly succeeded by another in the reverse direction; but whenever one aim grows so stable as to expel definitively its previous rivals from the individual’s life, we tend to speak of the phenomenon, and perhaps to wonder at it, as a “transformation.” (James, p. 148-149)

Gandhi, too, had different characteristics creating different cults that every phase of his life provided him. With various experiences and exposures, Gandhi grew into a person different from his earlier one, as Ashis Nandy writes in his essay “Gandhis after Gandhi” about the four forms of Gandhi (Nandy, “Gandhis after Gandhi”). The first form of Gandhi represents a man of nationalism; the second form represents a man who is devoid of politics; the third form of Gandhi represents a man of his own bizarreness who disgusts the cold drinks including hard drinks; while the fourth form of Gandhi is less read, and he is much of a common man who roams around and solves the issues of the society. Gandhi in *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* (LRMB) replicates Nandy’s fourth form of Gandhi who is more of a common man and travels along with Munna (who is a known *Bhai* in Mumbai) to figure out solutions to his day-to-day problems. Even, Munna’s visuals of Gandhi who guides him, is termed by psychiatrists as chemical imbalance of mind, but, actually, it is the metamorphoses of Munna’s character too, for the goodness he inherits after reading about Mahatma Gandhi.

### **Munna and His “Gandhigiri” in LRMB**

The word “Gandhigiri” (a portmanteau of “Gandhism” and “dadagiri”), meaning Gandhism with hooliganism, is a neologistic approach of Munna that creates an immediate magical effect upon the viewers. The audience is keen to see Gandhism with hooliganism, striking an impregnable bond with “Gandhigiri”. Through “Gandhigiri”, the image of Gandhi is being re-

created in the film giving the audience a new flavour of peace without dueling for it. The film establishes Munna's popularity that provides remedies through his "Gandhibiri" on air broadcasted on the radio channel. The two ideas of "dadagiri" and Gandhism are poles apart, nevertheless, Munna, precisely embodying the twin attributes and excellently merging both his "dadagiri" tone and Gandhi's teachings, combats the present issues of the society.

There is no dearth of dramatic scenes on Munna's tips based on "Gandhibiri", airing on radio, and gaining popularity amongst the audience. The film revolves around social issues such as corruption, unemployment, falsehood amongst many. One such instance is an episode of a depressed guy, Victor D'Souza, who calls up Munna in his show "Bapu ka Magic", broadcasted on radio. Intimidated Victor narrates about the financial loss of 7 lakhs (the lifetime savings of his father) in the share market. In such circumstances, Victor desires to commit suicide than to face his father. Hearing Victor's intentions, Munna gets enraged and in his "dadagiri" tone, preaches Victor of Gandhi's cardinal principle of truth to confront his father as the only apt step. Knowing the truth of Victor, dismayed father wanted to slap his son. Yet, the father is advised by Munna on air, not to react at this moment or it will instil lasting fear in Victor's mind to express the truth. The father hugs his son for his honesty depicting the harmony of father-son. Guilt-stricken Victor promises his father to work in a fair way, be it whatever job he gets. Gandhi, too, speaks of erasing the title "saint" (Mahatma) from his name because he describes himself as a "humbler searcher after Truth, [who] knows his limitations, makes mistakes, never hesitates to admit them when he makes them" (Gandhi qtd. in Prabhu et al. 14). Another example is of a corrupt official who blocks the pension of a senior citizen and asks for bribe to release the money. However, on Munna's advice, the senior citizen disgraces the official by giving his belongings including purse, bag, eye-glasses, hearing aid device and even moves on to shed off his clothes too. This act embarrasses the official, resulting in the release of the senior citizen's pension, thus, setting an example of the power of "non-violent revolution [that] is not a programme of seizure of power [rather] a programme of transformation of relationships, ending in a peaceful transfer of power" (Parekh, p. 67).

These are some of the social issues presented in the limited scope of the movie, but at the same time, the root cause of these issues is left untouched. The problem of securing a job for Victor is projected at a surface level, but, in the larger level, it showcases the present unemployment issues that today's youth faces. Victor fails to secure a job and finds a job of taxi-driver to earn his living. The airing of Munna's show on radio is heard by the listeners of Mumbai including Lucky Singh, the policeman, Munna's bosom friend Circuit and others.

Listening to the solutions provided by Munna, the feeling of pity and oneness arise in the minds of the listeners. Although well executed through the film, it can be said that the film takes up the concept of humanism from the perspective of individual's consciousness rather than delving deep into the underneath cause of these issues. Munna initially incurs severe criticism for his transformation from a *Bhai* (goon) in Mumbai to a "Satyagrahi" especially from the villain, Lucky. Eventually through the series of his truthfulness, Munna succeeds to champion the cause, showcasing the relevance of Gandhian thoughts. The possibility of establishing the truth comes from Gandhi's theory and Munna is successful in building those ideologies into practice.

The twin cardinal principles of Gandhi (truth and non-violence) are espoused by Munna throughout the film. The confrontation with the villain Lucky Singh who seizes house of Jahnavi, and the way Munna compels Lucky to return the house through his non-violent protest by sitting outside Lucky's house is commendable. Here, one finds Gandhian principles with an interesting twist through Munna, as one views Munna's technique of Gandhism accompanied by "dadagiri" tone to achieve the ends. Also, *The Times of India* applauds the character of Munna by penning that "thanks to Munna Bhai, at best what exists of Gandhism is "Gandhigiri", a watered-down, Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* version of the original" (Suraiya). Using the soft power of "ahimsa", Munna reinforces his demand of reversing Jahnavi's house which ultimately influences Lucky to surrender. Also, in a common stance against his false identity to gain Jahnavi's love, Munna feels guilty, finally leading him to confess the truth. As bitter truth has certain repercussions, so did Munna's revelation and, as predicted by the audience, Jahnavi leaves him. Nonetheless, Munna's sharp focus on the truth and "ahimsa" urges the villain Lucky and his love Jahnavi to potentially succumb to Munna's goodness and truthfulness.

Munna represents all the people who believed upon Gandhian thoughts and aggrieved at the assassination of Gandhi as it was a moment of crisis for the whole nation. Emerging as a reminder of Gandhian thoughts, Munna successfully teaches to follow Gandhian principles. However, Munna brings in the concept of "Gandhigiri" with a twist, provoking the audience to think that the Gandhian philosophy cannot be effaced merely by his assassination, as is propounded by Munna's fictional counsellor Gandhi (or the apparition of Gandhi) that the three bullets had killed him but cannot erase his philosophy. Instantly, *LRMB* was a blockbuster hit and its influence can be seen by the word "Gandhigiri" as a movie of the same name was released in 2016. Vinayak Chakravorty from *Hindustan Times* reviews as "*Lage Raho Munna*

*Bhai rocks*” (Chakravorty). The impact of “Gandhgiri” was hugely seen after this movie as Mihir Shah lauds “Gandhgiri [as] a philosophy for our times” (Shah). About *LRMB*, the editor of *The Christian Science Monitor*, Mark Sappenfield states that “it took a comedy to revive Gandhi’s ideals in India” (“The Christian Science”), whereas Shastri Ramachandaran writes “Jollygood Bollywood Munnabhai rescues Mahatma” (“The Tribune”). Surprisingly, the practical application of “Gandhgiri” was pertinently seen in 2007, when US authorities restricted the number of permanent residencies for skilled foreign workers. Inspired by the *LRMB*, the Indians applied “Gandhgiri” by sending thousands of flowers to the US Citizenship and Immigration Director, Emilio Gonzalez and it “work[ed] [like] magic for Indians seeking green card” (“News 18”). Here, one finds Gandhi as the “Bapu” of his nation and his values are still relevant in the contemporary society. Subsequently, the movie, *GMF* seeks to unravel Gandhi not only as a father of the nation but also for his sons, especially Harilal.

### **Gandhi’s Relationship with His Son Harilal: *Gandhi, My Father***

In *GMF*, Mahatma Gandhi’s life is portrayed along with his relation with humankind and the eldest son Harilal. The movie is based on the historical times, and through the movie, *GMF*, it is important to note that the values of Gandhi are a sheer representation of Indian culture of oneness. The influence of Mahatma Gandhi and his contribution for India’s freedom struggle including the inspiring movements of non-violence set an example not only for Indians but for the Westerners, such as Albert Einstein, Martin Luther King, Steve Jobs, amongst many. Regarding Gandhi, Ashis Nandy says in an interview:

He (Gandhi) has survived as a vector in our public lives and as a dangerous, demanding part of our collective conscience. Rulers everywhere fear him because the most successful movements against autocracy in the last 70 years have been led by people who have been called Gandhians, from Martin Luther King in the United States to Nelson Mandela in South Africa and Lech Walesa in Poland to the Dalai Lama of Tibet. Whenever people launch successful movements that are peaceful and non-violent yet effective, they are called Gandhian. In this sense, Gandhi is also a universal propensity. (Nandy, “Mumbai Mirror”)

There are many world leaders, writers and authors including entrepreneurs who have spoken the richness of his personality. George Bernard Shaw, the Irish Playwright and Nobel Prize winner, compares Gandhi’s eminent personality with the Himalayas: “Impressions of Gandhi?

You might well ask for someone's impression of the Himalayas" ("Tributes").

The movie states Gandhi's transformation into "Mahatma" and Kasturba's role as an understanding wife. Through the movie, *GMF*, Mahatma Gandhi's struggle of being the "Bapu" of the nation along with his troubled relationship with Harilal is depicted. As Mahatma Gandhi was passionate for his country, so was Harilal for his dream to be a barrister like his father and desired formal education. Mahatma Gandhi pens in his autobiography:

All my children, excepting the eldest, Harilal, who had stayed away in India, were brought up in Johannesburg in this manner. Had I been able to devote at least an hour to their literary education with strict regularity, I should have given them, in my opinion, an ideal education (*sic*). But it was been there (*sic*), as also my, regret that I failed to ensure them enough literary training. The eldest son has often given vent to his distress privately before me and publicly in the press; the other sons have generously forgiven the failure as unavoidable. I am not heartbroken (*sic*) over it and the regret, if any, is that I did not prove an ideal father. (Gandhi *An Autobiography*, ch. 100)

Conscience-stricken Gandhi wrote the above lines in his autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*, when he failed to accord with his son Harilal regarding the cause of India's freedom struggle. Gandhi's proscribing Harilal's formal education, for he believes western education will corrupt his son than to build his character, makes Harilal turn bitter towards his father. Later, in the film, one finds, the influential Gandhi in remorse when he thinks about his disruption of his eldest son. In the film, somewhere Mahatma Gandhi is seen entangled with his own patriarchal setup and for Harilal, it becomes more burdensome than the British colonization. However, Gandhi tries to provide financial aid to Harilal for his establishment, but, after a certain period, Gandhi limits financial help as he donates his South Africa's earnings there itself. In a scene of *GMF*, Harilal speaks to his father about Pranjivan fellowship to study law in London to which Gandhi denies because Pranjivan provided the scholarship with a condition that only Gandhi's children can utilise it. This nepotism was against Gandhi's principle and he felt that accepting the scholarship would be taking an undue advantage of being Gandhi; and it would be a return-gift for whatever Gandhi did for the society till date. Harilal is deeply aggrieved at knowing this and quietly leaves the place. With Gandhi's adoption of assertiveness, that is built upon his strong will-power and the soft power of "ahimsa", India discovered a man who can lead them to independence, however, he loses Harilal in his later years.

Gandhi was not a kind of father who would leave his wealth behind for his sons. In a train scene, when Harilal comes to receive his parents, Harilal asks for a bit more financial assistance to which Gandhi denies by saying that his son is old enough to earn and maintain his family. Furthermore, when Harilal queries about the property, Gandhi plainly presents contributions of his brothers for Gandhi's trip to South Africa, Harilal's marriage along with other expenses, and that Gandhi had distributed all his wealth amongst his brothers. A disheartened Harilal wanted his father to leave behind his veneration, but after all these instances, he starts believing that his father never accepted him wholeheartedly. The film projects Mahatma Gandhi as not transfiguring his image, but as affirming Harilal's beliefs. One finds Gandhi's "Mahatma" that comes in between the relationship/ conversation of father-son duo and shatters Harilal in every phase. Harilal fails to seek the true father who always reverses his principles first, be it at home or outside, thus, Gandhi's virtues become vices for his son.

Consistently, in the film *GMF*, Gandhi has often been severely criticised, nonetheless, the audience learns how Gandhi acts as a father, for not only his sons but father for Harilal's children, too. After his wife's death, Harilal picks up the habit of drinking alcohol, going to brothels and changes his religion to Islam, and he later reverts back to Hinduism after Kasturba's plea. Though he abhorred his father, but Harilal loved his mother. In the film, one finds dilapidated Harilal, who comes to station and presents an orange to his mother Kasturba. Seeing this, Gandhi asks Harilal about his present to which, Harilal, with a depleted voice, says "nothing" (*GMF*). Additionally, Harilal charges his mother by telling her to eat it alone. On being asked by Gandhi to accompany them, Harilal sternly denies his father and enforces the fact that the reason behind Mahatma Gandhi's adulation is only because of his "Ba"/ mother. The following picture presents Harilal's reverence for his mother and disdain for his father:



**Fig. 2** Harilal comes to visit his mother, Kasturba (Pic. courtesy of the film *GMF*, screenshots captured by the author)

Here, the unveiling of Harilal's views showcases his chief fulcrum of contempt and emulsion of disappointment for his father as Harilal declares "Gandhi is my father but I am not his son" (*GMF*). Visualizing Gandhi as a father solely would be a misinterpretation as Gandhi acts a prism for his sons and nation. Harilal misunderstands Gandhi's existence and his principles and demeans his greater motif for the nation. Upholding his own principles, Gandhi becomes "Bapu" of his belligerent son and the divided nation. Towards the end of the movie, one finds the desolated old Gandhi, enunciating his compunction about the two people whom he failed to convince all his life: "my Kathiawari friend, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and second my son, Harilal" (*GMF*). The promiscuous approach of Gandhi throughout the film untangles the beauty of his character but at the cost of his son's dreams. However, in his last days too, Gandhi remained firmed in his principles as he has been an "unapologetic dissenter" (Nandy, "Mumbai Mirror"). In an article, Dhupelia writes about young Manilal (second son of Gandhi) who too, desired for formal education to secure himself a good job. However, Manilal's life was not a failure as he "absorbed the best of Gandhian philosophy and developed a fearlessness that stood him in good stead in many jail terms in South Africa and India" (Dhupelia, p. 35). Somewhere, Manilal resonates with Munna who faced all the challenges without any fear and went to jail along with Circuit for the good cause.

### **Influence of Gandhi: *GMF***

In the initial stage of his life, Harilal joins Gandhi's cause against the Whites in South Africa. Gandhi urges Harilal to be his first "Satyagrahi" to eradicate the slavery and later asks the people of South Africa to burn their passes collectively. The movie *GMF* reveals Harilal's obedience to his father who wanted to revoke against Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance (Black Act) and for his disobedience, Harilal was incarcerated. In the court, Gandhi adopts *Satyagraha* and advocates by saying to the Judge that they "won't retaliate but won't accept the law either" (*GMF*). Devising the technique of *Satyagraha* in South Africa, Gandhi used it later for India's freedom struggle. There are instances in *GMF* regarding the encouragement of women folk to participate in the freedom struggle. One such example is when Gandhi urges Kasturba to fight for the legitimization of non-Christian marriages in South Africa. Moreover, the "charisma" and the transcendental aura of Gandhi gathered masses for the cause of India, irrespective of any caste, religion, creed, and race. His *Satyagraha* was unique in its kind as this technique was a battle fought without any arms (Guha, Prologue). As Guha pens:

After arriving in Durban, Natal, Gandhi founded Natal Indian Congress in 1894.

Also, Gandhi brought out “The journal [which] was named *Indian Opinion*. The first issue, appearing on 4 June 1903, announced itself as the voice of the Indian community, now ‘a recognized factor in the body politic’ of South Africa”. (Guha, ch. 7)

In the earlier scenes of *GMF*, Gandhi is shown working in the press with the staffs who belonged to diverse classes, races, and religions. Apart from the other journals, Vyavaharik, the owner of the press used to print articles in four languages— Hindi, Gujarati, English and Tamil too. Regarding this, Guha states:

In starting *Indian Opinion*, Gandhi was setting himself up as a knowledge-broker and bridge-builder. The journal would carry news of Indians in South Africa, of Indians in India, and general articles on ‘all subjects – Social, Moral, and Intellectual’. It would ‘advocate’ the Indian cause, while giving Europeans ‘an idea of Indian thought and aspiration’. (Guha, ch. 7)

In 1904-1905, the journal started carrying reports on law and ‘commingling’ of races of the future South Africa. Gandhi, by this time, began practicing *Satyagraha* as a “cure for the predicament of Africans, too” (Guha, ch. 22). Living in South Africa for 21 years as an attorney and social worker shaped Gandhi’s character and left a lasting impression on him. It helped him in nurturing his own philosophy of life to eradicate India’s age-old stigma of untouchability, promoting independent work (e.g., “charkha” to earn one’s own livelihood and boycott British goods), and fostering Hindu–Muslim unity.

In the years to follow, Gandhi fails to save India from splitting into two nations. Regardless of all his efforts, Gandhi could not convince All-India Muslim League and Indian National Congress. Along with the growing agitation for the two-nation theory amongst the masses, India becomes the boiling pot of conflict between Hindus and Muslims. As the film *GMF* ends, so does Gandhi’s productive charkha that starts losing its vitality and momentum. The spinning wheel/ charkha of Gandhi, representing self-sufficiency and independence, had to sadly churn a wheel of divided nation that Gandhi reluctantly agrees to avoid bloodshed and balkanization. He, thus, becomes a father of a broken family and a divided nation.

### **Harilal vs Munnabhai**

Contrary to Munna in *LRMB*, Harilal, Gandhi’s eldest son in the movie *GMF*, defies Gandhian values. *GMF* presents Gandhi’s twin impact, i.e., on one side, Harilal blames Mahatma Gandhi for his damaging effect on Harilal while on the other side, Mahatma Gandhi has an indelible

impact on the Indian freedom struggle that changed the face of political protest through *Satyagraha*. Based on the pre-independent India, *GMF* is deeply rooted to the influence Gandhi had on the society during the historical times. Besides, *LRMB* is based on the post-liberalization era, when Munna revives Gandhian thoughts which are highly misinterpreted and treated as obsolete in the present society. Mahatma Gandhi becomes an impeccable influencer for Munna; and the same Gandhi becomes a tarnished one in the eyes of Harilal. For Harilal, Gandhi becomes a problem creator whereas Munna regards Gandhi as a problem solver.

Harilal becomes the first “Satyagrahi” of Gandhi, yet, he succumbs to his angst for the failed dreams and blames his father throughout his life. Nilam Parikh’s *Gandhiji Lost Jewel: Harilal Gandhi* too talks about the passion of Gandhi that partially reflected in Harilal. Therefore, Harilal is in a sense an alter-ego of his father, yet, Harilal becomes a kind of nemesis to Gandhi as he denies Harilal’s desires. On the other hand, Munna becomes one of the “Satyagrahis” who follows his path throughout his life like Manilal. In the end, when Jahnavi visits Munna in jail, she confesses her love and admires his truthfulness by saying, “There are many professors who preach the teachings of Gandhi but to actually practice ‘Gandhigiri’ is only one (Munna)” (*LRMB*). Gandhi’s Munna helps to create a society where both his loved ones and foes live in harmony leading to a sustainable society.

It can be said that Mahatma Gandhi though becomes the “Bapu” of the nation, including for all his sons (Manilal, Ramdas and Devdas), but not for Harilal. Gandhi is highly misunderstood by Harilal and the differences grow more with the passage of time, thus, tearing their relationship apart. Harilal is the tragic character of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who fails to foresee his father’s vision. However, Munna, being a fictional character in the movie, weaves the philosophy of Gandhi, validating his principles in the post-liberalization era where people are focusing on immediate success, making them impatient to fulfill their dreams. Munna revives Gandhi’s principles of “ahimsa”, “truth”, and “fearlessness”. Gandhi’s strong will and perseverance become obstacles for the British Empire, but, with the advent of technology, people are more prone to quick result, lacking patience and courage. Consequently, Munna brings a new trend of peace and fearlessness with humour and wit. Munna (fictional character) and Harilal (historical character) draw the analogy of followers and non-followers of Gandhi’s thoughts.

## Summing Up

An attempt to glorify Gandhian principles has been made in *LRMB*, and, sacrifices and

contributions of Gandhi are marked in *GMF*. Gandhi's spirit of tolerance and non-violence are frequently manifested in *LRMB* whereas *GMF* presents Gandhi's universal values such as love for all human beings, peace, freedom, irrespective of any biases. Both the movies are an ongoing pursuit to recreate a new social order and effect a positive change to the re-evaluation of Gandhi's life and his contribution for the nation that is established on the values of humanity. Thus, it can aptly be said that Gandhi's principles are of higher status quo which cannot be understood from a superficial reading. One of the reasons why Gandhi persists in being a subject of investigation and of cinema as well is, perhaps, his considerable influence on human minds as most of the day-to-day grave issues can be resolved by following Gandhian principles. Therefore, both the movies unveil Gandhi, an advocate of human rights, as one of the finest examples of the peace of all mankind. As a result, this study assesses Gandhi whose universality and aura transcend globally, thus, it can be speculated that his philosophy of life is still very much relevant in the present era.

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