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Ben Kingsley is the reason this film works. Attenborough says he spent 20 years of careful searching to find the actor to play Gandhi. The search paid off; for Kingsley, a star for the past 15 years with the Royal Shakespeare company, is superb in the title role. He looks like Gandhi. He walks like Gandhi. He has the enigmatic smile, the toughness, the humanity of Gandhi. Kingsley's real name is Krishna Rihanji — he's half Indian. He's the same height as Gandhi and, after losing 17 pounds for the film, was the same weight: half Indian. He's the same height as Gandhi and after losing 17 pounds for the film was the same weight: half Indian.

Two weeks into production, Kingsley played the old Gandhi in a setting 30 miles south of Delhi. Make-up and authentic stepped out of his car and was confronted by an elderly peasant who knelt to touch his feet in the traditional gesture of profound respect. Embarrassed and deeply touched, Kingsley explained that he was merely an actor in the guise of the beloved Mahatma. "We know," replied the old villager, "but through you, he will surely live again."

And he does in this film. Rich with the clatter and beauty of India, filled with the "important" public movements of Gandhi's struggle against imperialism, the film opens a window to the past allowing us to walk with Gandhi on the salt march, to overhear strategy sessions, and to see him slowly, inevitably, painfully, win his case in court.