

# RRR (2022)



The film is full of spectacular rescue and fight scenes, plus a dance number equal to a Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly number! (c) Netflix

Set in British-ruled India in 1920 S.S. Rajamouli's spectacular film is a patriotic reworking of history from which Mahatma Gandhi is totally absent. Instead of the apostle of nonviolence who is often referred to as the Father of India, we are given two heroes based on historical revolutionaries but who never met. Rajamouli imagines them meeting and working together to overthrow the British Raj—well, working together in the first part of the film, but then violently opposing one another for a while.

The epic story begins in a small Indian village where the British administer Scott Buxton and his wife Catherine become so enchanted with the singing of the little village girl Malli that they toss a coin to the mother and snatch the girl. It becomes plain to the mother that her initial thought, that the coin was payment for her daughter's song is actually payment for the girl! The tribe's guardian Komaram Bheem, vowing to bring back the captive, leaves for Delhi where he disguises himself as a Muslim named Akhtar.

Meanwhile the ambitious officer in the Indian Imperial Police A. Rama Raju puts down a riot by overcoming a mob of

hundreds—clearly this guy makes the Marvel Comics heroes seem like wimps! When Catherine and her husband are warned about Komaram Bheem coming for the girl she gives Raju the mission of stopping him.

The two meet, their identities unknown to each other at a railroad bridge where a train wreck of flammable oil cars threaten to incinerate a little boy in a boat beneath the bridge. The two cooperate together in an aerial ballet of ropes and swoops and loops about the bridge that are astonishing to watch. Most films would be leading up to such an intricately executed action scene, but this is just the beginning of an entire series of incredible enacted scenes, such that action fans may not be satisfied to return to Marvel Studios for their adrenaline highs. I thought this was an example of a Bollywood film on steroids, but quickly learned that it is considered a Tollywood film, a term new to me. It seems there is another active film center, south of Bombay producing films in the Telugu language

The title is a short form for a all to action—"Rise, Roar, Revolt"—against the British Raj, which in this film is depicted as just a little bit short of as brutal as the Nazis. What distresses me about the film is that Gandhi and his methods of resistance are totally ignored in the film. Violence is not only presented in a highly stylized way—the action is truly awe-inspiring, but as praiseworthy and noble.

The plot becomes very complicated, with two heroes drawn into a close friendship, until Raju is revealed to be a member of the British military, though one never fully trusted or given his due by the prejudiced whites. It is quite a shock when Bheem discovers for whom his friend is working. And then there is a twist to Raju's identity, which complicates their violent confrontation. There also are two romances, Raju's for Sita, a beautiful girl back in his village, and Bheem's for Jenny, a liberal-minded British lady. These are very low key affairs, though Jenny is prominent in one scene at a posh party to

which Raju and Bheem are invited. When they are insulted by an English snob, declaring they don't belong there, she comes to their defense. Not that they really need it, because the two pair up in an elaborate take on tap dancing that wows all the Brits. Their dance steps are so raped and intricate that they would have Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly green with envy.

The film builds to an orgy of violence at the end in which Raju assumes the garb and weapons of a Hindu god and kills dozens of nasty Brits with flaming arrows. Bheem transforms his motorcycle into a battle-ax-like weapon which he whirls about his head into the bodies of soldiers. One has to remember that this is 1921, with Independence a quarter century ahead, else one might include that these two have won their nation's independence by the end of the film, so defeated are the British and Buxton and his Catherine receiving their just desserts.

Along with being the most expensive Tollywood made—and the crowds and great special effects show this—the film is distinguished as the first to be included in the Oscar nominations. One of several songs, [Natu Natu](#) has been nominated for “Best Song.” Although the British were certainly shown as callous and cruel in *Gandhi*, in Rajamouli's film they are almost as demonic as Nazis. In one scene a soldier is about to shoot an Indian when his officer stops him, giving a short lecture on the value of a bullet, manufactured in England, shipped to India, and then given out—that this far outweighs the value of an Indian life—and so orders the soldier to kill him by another means. This trope is repeated two or three times, until Raju says, “He said that an Indian's Life is not worth a bullet. So how will this bullet earn its value? When it comes out of your gun and pierces an Englishman's heart.” I can almost hear Gandhi weeping, as he did on the night of the partitioned subcontinent's independence and Hindus and Muslims slaughtered each other as they exchanged significant portions of the populations of

India and Pakistan.

*No questions for this film.*