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*From biopics Gandhi by Richard Attenborough and Shyam Benegal's The Making of the Mahatma to Jhnu Barua's Maine Gandhi Ko Nahin Maara, the life and philosophy of the Father of the Nation has inspired a number of films.*

Seeking to join this illustrious list is debutant filmmaker Amit Rai, whose Hindi film Road To Sangam, in which Gandhi's great grandson Tushar Gandhi plays himself, is trying to attract international attention at the Market Section of the Cannes Film Festival.

The film, which is being shown to prospective buyers at the India Pavilion at the Marche du Film (Film Market), is a story set in present-day Allahabad, but draws heavily from Gandhi's last days and thereafter tries to make a comment on the communalised society of India today. Rai, who was associate director in the internationally-acclaimed Marathi film Tingya sometime ago, is seeking to make a sensitive statement through his film about contemporary society.

"I got the idea for the story from two things — the fact that the car which was used to carry Gandhiji's ashes from Allahabad city to Sangam in 1948, and now kept at a museum in Allahabad, was run within the museum campus a few years ago after its engine was rebuilt by a Muslim man called Hashmatullah, and the news item a couple of years ago that an urn containing Gandhiji's ashes was found in a bank vault in Orissa," says Rai.

In the film, these two facts have been combined to develop the story which shows that the same car is being used to take out a procession of the urn through Allahabad city, but now, thanks to the situation, the car cannot move through a Muslim-dominated city where Hashmatullah lives.

The film has a powerful cast, with Paresh Rawal playing Hashmatullah, and Om Puri and Pavan Malhotra playing moderate and hardliner Maulvis respectively. Gipsy House, which has produced the film, plans to get it released in India in July or August.

"It is my tribute to the values and principles that Gandhiji espoused during his lifetime, which he did from a common man's point of view," says Rai.

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