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Mahatma Gandhi: A Political and Social Activist

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INTRODUCTION

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, also known as Mahatma Gandhi, was a prominent figure in 20th-century Indian nationalism and a proponent of nonviolence. He was born on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, India, and passed away on January 30, 1948, in Delhi. Gandhi was raised in a deeply religious household and hence took religious tolerance and the ahinsa (non-harming of all living things) doctrine for granted. From 1888 to 1891, he studied law in England, and in 1893, he accepted a position with an Indian company in South Africa. He developed there as a powerful defender of Indian rights.He initially used Satyagraha, his method of nonviolent protest, in 1906. His achievements in South Africa earned him a reputation on a global scale, and after returning to India in 1915, he soon rose to prominence as the head of a widespread movement for Indian home rule. Gandhi possessed influence by 1920, a level never before obtained by an Indian political figure.

In 1920–22, 1930–34 (including his historic march to the sea to collect salt to protest a government monopoly), and 1940–42, he launched significant campaigns of nonviolent resistance. He transformed the Indian National Congress into an effective political tool of Indian nationalism. He also worked to reduce prejudice against India's lower caste "untouchables" (Dalits; formally known as Scheduled Castes) throughout the 1930s, focusing on rural education and cottage industry promotion. India attained dominion status in 1947, but Gandhi, who had long advocated for Hindu-Muslim unity, was deeply disappointed by the subcontinent's division into India and Pakistan. He fasted to put an end to rioting in Calcutta (Kolkata) in September 1947. Gandhi, who went by the name Mahatma. he had gained the love and support of countless people. A teenage Hindu zealot shot and killed him in January 1948.

In the western Indian city of Porbandar, Karamchand Gandhi is born. His father is a capable administrator who serves as the city of Porbandar's dewan. His mother is totally engrossed in her faith. Vaishnavism, the worship of the Hindu god Vishnu, and Jainism, a morally strict Indian religion whose major tenets are nonviolence and the conviction that everything in the cosmos is everlasting, are strongly ingrained in the home where Mohandas grows up. Cassandra Gandhi Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting's Photo Division. Gandhi marries Kasturba Kapadia, also 13, while he is only 13 years old. Later, Kasturba also take part in several of her husband's civil disobedience initiatives.

Gandhi is a law student in London. There, among other prominent people, he encounters playwright George Bernard Shaw and social activist Annie Besant. He learns about the Bible and the Bhagavadgita, which he reads for the first time in Sir Edwin Arnold's English version. Gandhi joins an Indian law company in South Africa in 1893, where he immediately learns about the country's racial discriminatory practises. He relocates to Durban and starts a legal practise. He establishes the Natal Indian Congress in 1894 to fight for Indian rights. He in stills a sense of unity in the diverse Indian population through that political organisation. He constantly pours well-reasoned declarations of Indian complaints into the press, the legislature, and the executive branch of government. Important publications start to pay attention to the issues that Gandhi discusses, including The Times of London and The Statesman and Englishman of Calcutta (now Kolkata).

The Transvaal territory of South Africa passes a discriminatory rule in 1906 requiring all Indians to register with the provincial government or suffer penalties. The Indian community promises to violate the law and to bear the consequences of its rebellion under Gandhi's leadership. This method becomes known as satyagraha, a strategy for righting wrongs by inviting suffering rather than inflicting it, for confronting opponents without resentment, and for combating them without violence. Gandhi is regularly imprisoned in the years that follow. Thousands of other Indians are shot, flogged, or imprisoned. The law is finally repealed, but racial inequality persists in the nation. In 1915, Gandhi returns to India. Images of Mahatma Gandhi Gandhi take the reins of the Indian National Congress political party in 1919. He promotes swaraj, sometimes known as "self-rule." He seeks to bring all social strata and religious groups together, particularly Muslims and Hindus. He starts a campaign of non-cooperation against Britain in 1920, advising Indians to spin their own cotton and to shun British commodities, institutions, and policies. He is imprisoned as a result from 1922 to 1924.

Getty Images/Salt March Hulton Archive Gandhi organises a 385-kilometer (240-mile) march by tens of thousands of Indians to the sea to harvest their own salt. A total of 60,000 people are detained as a result of the march, which is in protest of a salt tax in the United Kingdom. Gandhi and the British viceroy sign the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931, putting

an end to a period of Indian civil disobedience against British rule. Gandhi agrees to end the satyagraha movement in exchange for the British viceroy releasing all prisoners and allowing Indians to produce salt for domestic consumption. Gandhi is once more behind bars under a new viceroy. He observes a fast while incarcerated in opposition to the British government's intention to allocate separate electorates to the so-called untouchables (the lowest caste in India) under the new constitution. Because of the fast's emotional impact on the nation, the British decide to alter their policy.

Gandhi, who had left the Indian National Congress in 1934 as its leader and a member, returns to politics at the beginning of World War II and calls for quick independence as payment for India's support of Britain in the conflict. From 1942 to 1944, he is detained once more. India officially separates from British domination. Gandhi, who has long advocated for Hindu-Muslim unity, is extremely disappointed by the subcontinent's division into India and Pakistan. In many places, rioting over the division breaks out between Muslims and Hindus.

Gandhi again chooses nonviolence, fasting until the Delhi rioters promise to maintain calm. Gandhi was a renowned champion of civil and national rights during the 20th century. He participated in the fight for social justice and India's independence from British control as a lawyer, politician, and activist. Gandhi is revered around the world for his philosophy of using nonviolent protest (satyagraha) to advance political and social change.

The Development of Satyagraha

In 1893, Gandhi immigrated to South Africa and soon met racial prejudice. He was asked to remove his turban in a Durban court by the European magistrate; he declined and walked out. He was kicked out of a first-class train car a few days later on his trip to Pretoria, and the white driver of a stagecoach later beat him up for refusing to ride on the footboard to make room for a European passenger. In addition, he was denied access to hotels designated "for Europeans only." Gandhi, though, experienced something when he reacted negatively to the insults directed at him.

His test came on that trip from Durban to Pretoria. He would no longer put up with unfairness. He would stand up for his honour as a man and an Indian. Gandhi battled against South Africa's segregation regime with varying degrees of success. His words made the world aware of the injustices experienced by Indians and others, and he created the Natal Indian Congress. As a method of peaceful opposition, Satyagraha (which means "devotion to truth") was created in 1906. Satyagraha had become a powerful tactic in the struggle for social justice by the time Gandhi returned to India in 1915.

Achieving India's Independence

Gandhi dominated Indian politics by 1920 and had a significant impact on the country's populace. Gandhi used nonviolent tactics to lead the Indian National Congress (Congress Party) into becoming a large-scale organisation. Banned items from Britain as well as its legislatures, courts, offices, and schools were among them. Gandhi started the Salt March in 1930 to protest a British salt levy. One of Gandhi's most effective campaigns was the march. But by 1934, he had grown weary of the rivalry among Congress Party members. He began constructing the country "from the bottom up." Gandhi thought India might achieve peace and independence by focusing on rural education, social equality, and cottage industry. In 1942, the last battle for Indian freedom was under way. The Quit India Movement, started by Gandhi, called for the immediate departure of the British from India.

Gandhi struggled for the next five years to assist Muslim, Hindu, and British politicians in negotiating Indian independence. He was powerless to stop the Mountbatten Plan, which split the subcontinent into India, which has a majority of Hindus, and East and West Pakistan, which has a majority of Muslims. India became independent on August 15, 1947. The subsequent Muslim-Hindu riots were put an end to by Gandhi's efforts. Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948, by a radical Hindu who was angry about Gandhi's attempts to make peace between Hindus and Muslims.

Gandhi's Legacy

Gandhi is regarded as the founding father of India. His capacity to unite disparate communities and promote social justice by nonviolent means, together with his acceptance of all major world religions, are what people most often remember him for. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights activists were influenced by the satyagraha model. Gandhi is one of the most well-known and respected people in the world today. Gandhi's ashes were scattered in the Ganges River in Allahabad, India, in January 1997, nearly 50 years after his murder, as part of a ceremony honouring his memory. Thousands of spectators sang slogans in commemoration of the man who had succeeded, though temporarily, in uniting a nation that had historically been divided along religious and ethnic lines while Tushar Gandhi, Gandhi's great-grandson, carried out the act of scattering the remains.

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