



renaissance

college of commerce & management

MAHATMA GANDHI

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2 October 1869 to a Hindu Modh Baniya family in Porbandar (also known as Sudamapuri), a coastal town on the Kathiawar Peninsula and then part of the small princely state of Porbandar in the Kathiawar Agency of the Indian Empire. His father, Karamchand Uttamchand Gandhi (1822–1885), served as the diwan (chief minister) of Porbandar state.

Employing nonviolent civil disobedience, Gandhi led India to independence and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. The honorific Mahatma applied to him first in 1914 in South Africa—is now used worldwide. He is also called Bapu in India.

Born and raised in a Hindu merchant caste family in coastal Gujarat, western India, and trained in law at the Inner Temple, London, Gandhi first employed nonviolent civil disobedience as an expatriate lawyer in South Africa, in the resident Indian community's struggle for civil rights. After his return to India in 1915, he set about organising peasants, farmers, and urban labourers to protest against excessive land-tax and discrimination. Assuming leadership of the Indian National Congress in 1921, Gandhi led nationwide campaigns for easing poverty, expanding women's rights, building religious and ethnic amity, ending untouchability, but above all for achieving Swaraj or self-rule.

In 1847, Rana Vikmatji appointed Uttamchand's son, Karamchand, as diwan after disagreeing with Uttamchand over the state's maintenance of a British garrison.[17] Although he only had an elementary education and had previously been a clerk in the state administration, Karamchand proved a capable chief minister.[19] During his tenure, Karamchand married four times. His first two wives died young, after each had given birth to a daughter, and his third marriage was childless. In 1857, Karamchand sought his third wife's permission to remarry; that year, he married Putlibai (1844–1891), who also came from Junagadh, and was from a Pranami Vaishnava family. Karamchand and Putlibai had three children over the ensuing decade, a son, Laxmidas (c. 1860 – March 1914), a daughter, Raliatbehn (1862–1960) and another son, Karsandas (c. 1866–1913).

Gandhi's London experience provided a solid philosophical base focused on truthfulness, temperance, chastity, and vegetarianism. When he returned to India in 1891, his outlook was parochial and he could not make a living as a lawyer. This challenged his belief that practicality and morality necessarily coincided. By moving in 1893 to South Africa he found a solution to this problem and developed the central concepts of his mature philosophy.

Gandhi famously led Indians in challenging the British-imposed salt tax with the 400 km (250 mi) Dandi Salt March in 1930, and later in calling for the British to Quit India in 1942. He was imprisoned for many years, upon many occasions, in both South Africa and India. Gandhi attempted to practice nonviolence and truth in all situations, and advocated that others do the same. He lived modestly in a self-sufficient residential community and wore the traditional Indian dhoti and shawl, woven with yarn hand-spun on a charkha. He ate simple vegetarian food, and also undertook long fasts as a means of both self-purification and social protest.

Gandhi's vision of an independent India based on religious pluralism, however, was challenged in the early 1940s by a new Muslim nationalism which was demanding a separate Muslim homeland carved out of India. Eventually, in August 1947, Britain granted independence, but the British Indian Empire was partitioned into two dominions, a Hindu-

majority India and Muslim Pakistan.[8] As many displaced Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs made their way to their new lands, religious violence broke out, especially in the Punjab and Bengal. Eschewing the official celebration of independence in Delhi, Gandhi visited the affected areas, attempting to provide solace. In the months following, he undertook several fasts unto death to promote religious harmony. The last of these, undertaken on 12 January 1948 at age 78, also had the indirect goal of pressuring India to pay out some cash assets owed to Pakistan. Some Indians thought Gandhi was too accommodating. Nathuram Godse, a Hindu nationalist, assassinated Gandhi on 30 January 1948 by firing three bullets into his chest at point-blank range.

Indians widely describe Gandhi as the father of the nation (Hindi: राष्ट्रपिता). The title "The Father of the Nation" for Gandhi is not an official title and has not been officially accorded by Government of India. An RTI query filed by a 10-year-old girl from Lucknow in February 2012 revealed that PMO has no records of ever according such title to Gandhi. MHA and National Archives of India also communicated of not having any records. Origin of this title is traced back to a radio address (on Singapore radio) on 6 Jul 1944 by Subhash Chandra Bose where Bose addressed Gandhi as "The Father of the Nation". On 28 Apr 1947, Sarojini Naidu during a conference also referred Gandhi as "Father of the Nation". The RTI applicant had also pleaded for Gandhi to be officially declared as "Father of the Nation" to which the MHA informed that Gandhi cannot be accorded with the title by Government of India since the Indian constitution does not permit any titles except educational and military titles.[14]

His birthday, 2 October, is commemorated as Gandhi Jayanti, a national holiday, and world-wide as the International Day of Nonviolence.

Gandhi was 24 when he arrived in South Africa to work as a legal representative for the Muslim Indian Traders based in the city of Pretoria. He spent 21 years in South Africa, where he developed his political views, ethics and political leadership skills.

Indians in South Africa included wealthy Muslims, who employed Gandhi as a lawyer, and by impoverished Hindu indentured labourers with very limited rights. Gandhi considered them all to be Indians, taking a lifetime view that "Indianness" transcended religion and caste. He believed he could bridge historic differences, especially regarding religion, and he took that belief back to India where he tried to implement it. The South African experience exposed handicaps to Gandhi that he had not known about. He realised he was out of contact with the enormous complexities of religious and cultural life in India, and believed he understood India by getting to know and leading Indians in South Africa.

In South Africa, Gandhi faced the discrimination directed at all coloured people. He was thrown off a train at Pietermaritzburg after refusing to move from the first-class. He protested and was allowed on first class the next day.[52] Travelling farther on by stagecoach, he was beaten by a driver for refusing to move to make room for a European passenger.

He suffered other hardships on the journey as well, including being barred from several hotels. In another incident, the magistrate of a Durban court ordered Gandhi to remove his turban, which he refused to do.

In 1906, the Transvaal government promulgated a new Act compelling registration of the colony's Indian population. At a mass protest meeting held in Johannesburg on 11 September that year, Gandhi adopted his still evolving methodology of Satyagraha (devotion to the truth), or nonviolent protest, for the first time. He urged Indians to defy the new law and to suffer the punishments for doing so. The community adopted this plan, and during the ensuing seven-year struggle, thousands of Indians were jailed, flogged, or shot for striking, refusing to register, for burning their registration cards or engaging in other forms of nonviolent resistance. The government successfully repressed the Indian protesters, but the public outcry over the harsh treatment of peaceful Indian protesters by the South African

government forced South African leader Jan Christiaan Smuts, himself a philosopher, to negotiate a compromise with Gandhi. Gandhi's ideas took shape, and the concept of Satyagraha matured during this struggle.

When he returned to India in 1915, he was proficient at public speaking, fund-raising, negotiations, media relations, and self-promotion. Gandhi developed these skills in the context of his South African law practice.

Gandhi's first major achievements came in 1918 with the Champaran and Kheda agitations of Bihar and Gujarat. The Champaran agitation pitted the local peasantry against their largely British landlords who were backed by the local administration. The peasantry was forced to grow Indigo, a cash crop whose demand had been declining over two decades, and were forced to sell their crops to the planters at a fixed price. Unhappy with this, the peasantry appealed to Gandhi at his ashram in Ahmedabad. Pursuing a strategy of nonviolent protest, Gandhi took the administration by surprise and won concessions from the authorities.

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In 1932, through the campaigning of the Dalit leader B. R. Ambedkar, the government granted untouchables separate electorates under the new constitution known as the Communal Award. In protest, Gandhi embarked on a six-day fast on 20 September 1932, while he was imprisoned at the Yerwada Jail, Pune. The resulting public outcry successfully forced the government to adopt an equitable arrangement (Poona Pact) through negotiations mediated by Palwankar Baloo. This was the start of a new campaign by Gandhi to improve the lives of the untouchables, whom he named Harijans, the children of God. On 8 September 1931, Gandhi who was sailing on SS Rajputana, to the second Round Table Conference in London, met Meher Baba in his cabin on board the ship, and discussed issues of untouchables, politics, state Independence and spirituality.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was assassinated in the garden of the former Birla House (now Gandhi Smriti) at 5:17 pm on 30 January 1948.