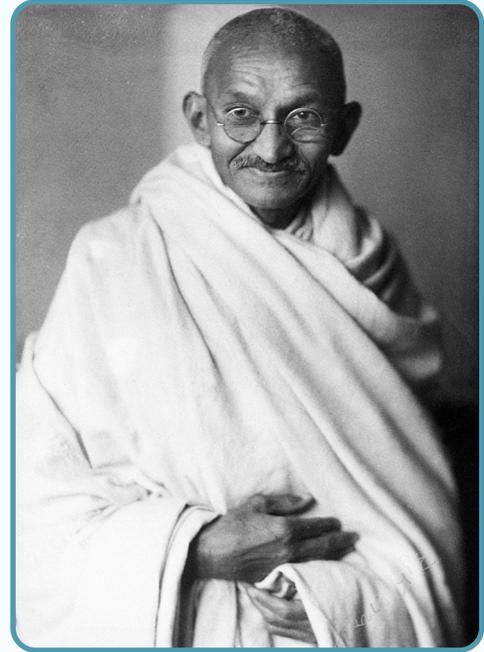


# Mahatma Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (also known as Mahatma Gandhi) is one of the most famous civil rights leaders in the history of mankind. Mahatma means 'great soul'. He led India (his home country) in its struggle for freedom against British rule. During Gandhi's lifetime, India was part of the British Empire, which means they were ruled by Britain. Britain dictated the law and day-to-day life in India, as well as other countries in the British Empire.



### Early life

Mahatma Gandhi was born on 2nd October 1869 in Gujarat, which is one of the western states in India. He grew up in a wealthy family and his father was a leader in the local community. Gandhi's parents had high hopes for their son and they dreamed of him becoming a barrister. When he was 19, Gandhi travelled to London to study law. Once qualified, he briefly returned to India before accepting a job in South Africa.

### What inspired Gandhi to stand up for equality?

Gandhi believed that India should be governed by Indian people. During his time in South Africa, Gandhi was thrown off a train even though he had a first class ticket. A white passenger had requested his removal. This act of inequality spurred him to return to India and fight for change as he refused to tolerate racial discrimination. Once back in India, Gandhi became heavily involved in the country's bid for freedom against the struggle of the overriding British rule.

### **How did Gandhi stand up to the British rule?**

He believed in peaceful protest and followed non-violent methods of protest, for example fasting and marches. Gandhi chose to dress in white clothing that he made himself, which symbolised living simply and showed sympathy for poor people. Gandhi organised many non-violent civil disobedience campaigns, such as refusing to work and boycotting the courts. Gandhi was often arrested and placed into prison for his actions. When in prison, he would fast (stop eating) to continue his protests. In 1930, Gandhi led what was to become his most famous march, the 'Salt march'. This march was to protest against British people as, under their rule, they had made basic food items like 'salt' expensive. Indians needed salt to stay healthy, yet the British refused to let the Indian people make their own (as it was cheaper). Gandhi and thousands of other Indians marched for 241 miles in order to go and make their own salt in Dandi. Gandhi was arrested because of this protest, and he was placed in prison for nearly nine months. Due to his arrest, people around the world were horrified and he gained global support for his actions.

Gandhi supported 'cottage industries', which meant small groups of people working from home making their own clothes. He felt it was unfair of British Government to buy raw cotton from Indian farmers at low prices, manufacture cotton clothes in their factories and then sell it back to the Indians at very high prices.

In 1942, Mahatma Gandhi launched the 'Quit India movement', where he fought for the independence of his country. He disagreed with Indian troops being sent to fight in World War Two.

### **What impact did Gandhi have on India?**

Finally, India received independence on 15th August 1947. Before ending British rule, the British divided India into two separate countries – India and Pakistan. Most



people in India were Hindus, whilst most people in Pakistan were Muslims. This was referred to as the 'Partition'.

### What happened to Gandhi?

In January 1948, Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, who did not agree with Gandhi's insistence on non-violence and non-retaliation.

There were many people who did not like that India had been divided. The day after his death, an enormous crowd (estimated at almost one million people) lined the five-mile route of the funeral procession to the bank of the Jumna River as Gandhi's body, which was draped in the Indian flag, was carried on an army truck. Air force planes flew overhead and dropped flowers.

### How is Gandhi remembered?

He is dearly known by all Indians as "Father of the nation" and today they still have a national holiday on the anniversary of his birthday. Globally, he is remembered for showing the world how it is possible to effectively protest in a peaceful manner. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize five times, but never actually won it. Such is Mahatma Gandhi's power and influence, that he is globally known by just one name – Gandhi.

