

Mohandas “Mahatma”



“The spirit of democracy is not a mechanical thing to be adjusted by abolition of forms. It requires change of heart.”

Mohandas K. Gandhi was born in 1869 to Hindu parents in the state of in Western India. He entered an arranged marriage with Kasturbai Makanji (more affectionately known as “Ba”) when both were 13 years old. His family later sent him to London to study law and in 1891 he was admitted to the Inner Temple. After that admission he was called to the bar. In Southern Africa he worked ceaselessly to improve the rights of the immigrant Indians. It was there that he developed his creed of passive resistance against injustice, *satyagraha*, meaning truth force, and was frequently jailed as a result of the protests that he led. Before he returned to India with his wife and children in 1915, he had radically changed the lives of Indians living in Southern Africa.

Back in India, it was not long before he was taking the lead in the long struggle for independence from Britain and the slavery of lower class Indians. He never wavered in his unshakable belief in nonviolent protest and religious tolerance. When Muslim and Hindu compatriots committed acts of violence, whether against the British who ruled India, or against each other, he fasted until the fighting ceased. Independence, when it came in 1947, was not a military victory, but a triumph of human will. To Gandhi's despair, however, the country was partitioned into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. The last two months of his life were spent trying to end the appalling violence, leading him to fast to the brink of death, an act that finally quelled the riots. In January 1948, at the age of 79, he was killed by an assassin as he walked through a crowded garden in New Delhi to take evening prayer.

Official website: <http://web.mahatma.org.in/index.asp>