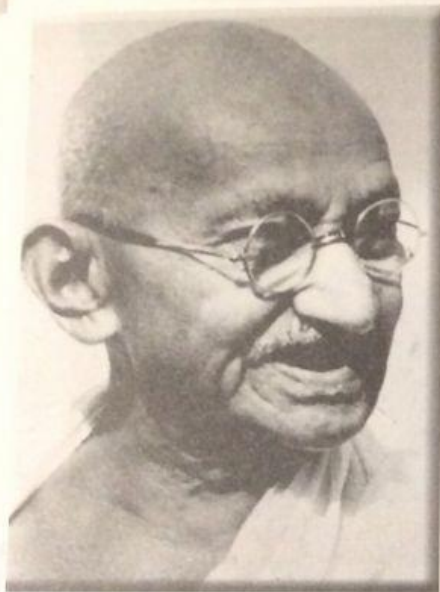




Mahatma Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2 October 1869 in Porbandar, West India.

He was the leader of Indian nationalism in British-ruled India. He was the most famous example of non-violent civil disobedience. With these pacific methods he led India to independence. Gandhi was a great inspiration for other movements for non-violence, civil rights and freedom. He fought for women's rights, poverty, religious and ethnic amity, to put an end to caste discrimination and for the independence of India from British domination. As young he studied law in London and then fought with non-violence methods for the civil rights of Muslim and Hindu Indians in South Africa. During his 20 years in South Africa he was sent to prison many times. He was a pioneer of "Satyagraha", that means "devotion to truth" and resistance through mass non-violent civil disobedience. Finally in 1914 the South African government conceded some of Gandhi's demands. In 1915 he returned to India where supported the Home Rule movement, and became leader of the Indian National Congress advocating a policy of non-violent non-co-operation to obtain independence. His purpose was to help poor farmers and labourers protest that fought against oppressive taxation and discrimination.

In 1931 Gandhi attended the Round Table Conference in London on Indian constitutional reform. In 1946, he negotiated with the Cabinet Mission which suggested the new constitutional structure. After independence, in 1947, he tried to stop the Hindu-Muslim conflict in Bengal, but on 30 January 1948, he was assassinated in Delhi by a Hindu fanatic. Gandhi's dedication to non-violent methods and his belief in simple living have been a symbol of hope for oppressed and marginalized people throughout the world.

Gandhi's Views On Nonviolence

I am not a visionary. I claim to be practical idealist. The religion of nonviolence is not meant merely for saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Nonviolence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law-to the strength of the spirit. I have therefore ventured¹ to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice. For satyagraha and its off-shoots, non-co-operation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering. The rishis², who discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence, were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realized their uselessness and taught a weary³ world that its salvation lay not through violence but through nonviolence.

Young India, 11-8-1920

Vocabulary

1. ventured: azzardato.
2. rishis: i compositori degli antichi libri Veda.
3. weary: stanco.