

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi^[c] (2 October 1869 – 30 January 1948)^[2] was an Indian lawyer, [anti-colonial nationalist](#), and [political thinker](#) who employed [nonviolent resistance](#) to lead the successful [campaign for India's independence](#) from [British rule](#). He inspired movements for [civil rights](#) and freedom across the world. The honorific *Mahātmā* (from [Sanskrit](#), meaning great-souled, or venerable), first applied to him in [South Africa](#) in 1914, is used worldwide.^[3]

Born and raised in a [Hindu](#) family in coastal [Gujarat](#), Gandhi was trained in the law at the [Inner Temple](#) in London and was [called to the bar](#) at the age of 22. After two uncertain years in India, where he was unable to start a successful law practice, Gandhi moved to South Africa in 1893 to represent an Indian merchant in a lawsuit. He went on to live in South Africa for the next 21 years. Here, Gandhi raised a family and first employed nonviolent resistance in a campaign for civil rights. In 1915, aged 45, he returned to India and soon set about organising peasants, farmers, and urban labourers to protest against discrimination and excessive land tax.

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](#), and, above all, achieving *swaraj* or self-rule. Gandhi adopted the short *dhoti* woven with [hand-spun](#) yarn as a mark of identification with India's rural poor. He began to live in a [self-sufficient residential community](#), to eat simple food, and undertake [long fasts](#) as a means of both introspection and political protest. Bringing anti-colonial nationalism to the common Indians, Gandhi led them in challenging the British-imposed [salt tax](#) with the 400 km (250 mi) [Dandi Salt March](#) in 1930 and in calling for the British to [quit India](#) in 1942. He was imprisoned many times and for many years in both South Africa a

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