

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, (born October 2, 1869, Porbandar, India—died January 30, 1948, Delhi), Indian lawyer, politician, social activist, and writer who became the leader of the nationalist movement against the British rule of India. As such, he came to be considered the father of his country. Gandhi is internationally esteemed for his doctrine of nonviolent protest (satyagraha) to achieve political and social progress.

In the eyes of millions of his fellow Indians, Gandhi was the Mahatma (“Great Soul”). The unthinking adoration of the huge crowds that gathered to see him all along the route of his tours made them a severe ordeal; he could hardly work during the day or rest at night. “The woes of the Mahatmas,” he wrote, “are known only to the Mahatmas.” His fame spread worldwide during his lifetime and only increased after his death. The name Mahatma Gandhi is now one of the most universally recognized on earth.

Gandhi was the youngest child of his father’s fourth wife. His father—Karamchand Gandhi, who was the *dewan* (chief minister) of Porbandar, the capital of a small principality in western India (in what is now Gujarat state) under British suzerainty—did not have much in the way of a formal education. He was, however, an able administrator who knew how to steer his way between the capricious princes, their long-suffering subjects, and the headstrong British political officers in power.