

Peaceful Inspiration

October 2, 1869. What does this date mean to you? To India, and the millions of people who come from there, it means the day one of the greatest human beings was born. Mohandas Gandhi (muh-HAHT-muh GAHN-dee) is better known to the world as Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma means great soul in Hindi, the language spoken in most parts of India.

If it weren't for Mahatma Gandhi, I probably would not be where I am today. I am originally from India, and am the first generation of my family to grow up in America with all kinds of opportunities I would not have if I were still in India. I only know how India is today, at this moment. My visits to my birth place spark my curiosity to know how it was when the British ruled. I believe that every person should know where they came from, and its history. Mahatma Gandhi is a great part of my country's history.

Gandhi first started out as a worker in a law firm in Durban, South Africa. When he saw how Indian immigrants were treated, he fought against the South African government. Gandhi developed satyagraha during his struggles. Satyagraha is basically pledging to communicate your opinions and try to see as much of the truth as possible in a nonviolent way. You must not want to inflict violence on anyone and there is never any winning or losing, just finding the truth. Even though he ended up in jail more than once, he was never discouraged. After several years of peaceful struggle, the South African government finally agreed to many of Gandhi's demands.

Soon after his success in South Africa, Gandhi returned to India. India was under British rule at this time. In 1919, the Rowlatt Act was met with opposition from many

Indians, including Gandhi. The Rowlatt Act proclaimed that the British Government had the power to arrest anyone who was suspected of an act of terrorism and keep them in prison without a fair trial. The Rowlatt Act also said that newspapers could not report the truth about the government. Gandhi and other political leaders fought this act, not with guns but with a boycott of all Britain made products. Unfortunately, even with the huge success of the boycott, Indians were not ready for a completely peaceful rebellion. Then the Amritsar Massacre happened.

The Amritsar Massacre occurred on April 13, 1919 in Jallianwala Bagh, a public square in the city of Amritsar. Thousands of Indians, including men, women, and children, had gathered there for a peaceful meeting. None of these people were armed. Edward Dyer, a British General, panicked seeing all of these Indians grouped together, and commanded his troops to brutally slaughter the people. They ruthlessly fired with no remorse at all. About 400 victims died that day, with thousands severely injured. This horrible event led to a union of Indians which finally brought the freedom to India from Britain.

Now that India was free, Gandhi focused on Hindu-Muslim relations. He worked with this for some time. In 1947, part of India was turned into a whole other country, Pakistan. People everywhere were tense, which led to an outbreak of violence. Gandhi was trying to calm the situation mainly in Delhi and Calcutta when he was assassinated on January 30, 1948. The best way to describe how the world took Mahatma Gandhi's murder is the following quote from an anonymous source: "Just an old man in a loincloth in distant India: Yet when he died, humanity wept."

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