

Who Was Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi

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Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (2 October 1869 – 30 January 1948) was an Indian lawyer, anti-colonial nationalist, and political ethicist 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 now used throughout the world.

Born and raised in a Hindu family in coastal Gujarat, Gandhi 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 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 and India.

Gandhi's vision of an independent India based on religious pluralism was challenged in the early 1940s by a Muslim nationalism which demanded a separate homeland for Muslims within British India. In August 1947, Britain granted independence, but the British Indian Empire was partitioned into two dominions, a Hindu-majority India and a Muslim-majority Pakistan. As many displaced Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs made their way to their new lands, religious violence broke out, especially in the Punjab and Bengal. Abstaining from the official celebration of independence, Gandhi visited the affected areas, attempting to alleviate distress. In the months following, he undertook several hunger strikes to stop the religious violence. The last of these was begun in Delhi on 12 January 1948, when Gandhi was 78. The belief that Gandhi had been too resolute in his defence of both Pakistan and Indian Muslims spread among some Hindus in India. Among these was Nathuram Godse, a militant Hindu nationalist from Pune, western India, who assassinated Gandhi by firing three bullets into his chest at an interfaith prayer meeting in Delhi on 30 January 1948.

Gandhi's birthday, 2 October, is commemorated in India as Gandhi Jayanti, a national holiday, and worldwide as the International Day of Nonviolence. Gandhi is considered to be the Father of the Nation in post-colonial India. During India's nationalist movement and in several decades immediately after, he was also commonly called Bapu, an endearment roughly meaning "father".

Sanjay Gandhi

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During his lifetime, he was widely expected to succeed his mother as head of the Indian National Congress and Prime Minister of India, but following his death in a plane crash, his elder brother Rajiv became their mother's political heir and succeeded her as Prime Minister of India and President of the party after her assassination. His wife Maneka Gandhi and son Varun Gandhi are politicians in the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Harilal Gandhi

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Heeralal Mohandas Gandhi (formerly Abdullah Gandhi; born Harilal Mohandas Gandhi; 23 August 1888 – 18 June 1948) was the eldest son of Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturba Gandhi. He had three younger brothers: Manilal Gandhi, Ramdas Gandhi and Devdas Gandhi.

Priyanka Gandhi

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Priyanka Gandhi Vadra (née Gandhi; born 12 January 1972) is an Indian politician who is serving as the member of the Lok Sabha for Wayanad, Kerala, since November 2024. A member of the Indian National Congress, she is also serving as a general secretary of the All India Congress Committee (AICC).

Gandhi Vadra is a member of the politically prominent Nehru–Gandhi family. She is also a trustee of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation.

Rajiv Gandhi

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Rajiv Gandhi (20 August 1944 – 21 May 1991) was an Indian statesman and pilot who served as the prime minister of India from 1984 to 1989. He took office after the assassination of his mother, then–prime minister Indira Gandhi, to become at the age of 40 the youngest Indian prime minister. He served until his defeat at the 1989 election, and then became Leader of the Opposition, Lok Sabha, resigning in December 1990, six months before his own assassination.

Gandhi was not related to Mahatma Gandhi. Instead, he was from the politically powerful Nehru–Gandhi family, which had been associated with the Indian National Congress party. For much of his childhood, his maternal grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru was prime minister. Gandhi attended The Doon School, an elite boarding institution, and then the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. He returned to India in 1966 and became a professional pilot for the state-owned Indian Airlines. In 1968, he married Sonia Maino; the couple settled in Delhi for a domestic life with their children Rahul and Priyanka. For much of the 1970s, his mother was prime minister and his younger brother Sanjay an MP; despite this, Gandhi remained apolitical.

After Sanjay died in a plane crash in 1980, Gandhi reluctantly entered politics at the behest of his mother. The following year he won his brother's Parliamentary seat of Amethi and became a member of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of India's Parliament. As part of his political grooming, Rajiv was made general secretary of the Congress party and given significant responsibility in organising the 1982 Asian Games.

On the morning of 31 October 1984, his mother (the then prime minister) was assassinated by her two Sikh bodyguards Satwant Singh and Beant Singh in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star, an Indian military action to remove Sikh separatist activists from the Golden Temple. Later that day, Gandhi was appointed prime minister. His leadership was tested over the next few days as organised mobs rioted against the Sikh community, resulting in anti-Sikh massacres in Delhi. That December, the Congress party won the largest Lok Sabha majority to date, 414 seats out of 541. Gandhi's period in office was mired in controversies such as Bhopal disaster, Bofors scandal and Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum. In 1988, he reversed the coup in Maldives, antagonising militant Tamil groups such as PLOTE, intervening and then sending peacekeeping troops to Sri Lanka in 1987, leading to open conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). His party was defeated in the 1989 election.

Gandhi remained Congress president until the elections in 1991. While campaigning for the elections, he was assassinated by a suicide bomber from the LTTE. In 1991, the Indian government posthumously awarded Gandhi the Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian award. At the India Leadership Conclave in 2009, the Revolutionary Leader of Modern India award was conferred posthumously on Gandhi.

Sonia Gandhi

Sonia Gandhi (Hindi: [soʋnʋjaʋ ʋʋaʋndʋiʋ], Italian: [sʋʋnja ʋʋandi]; née Maino [ʋmaino]; born 9 December 1946) is an Indian politician. She is the longest-serving

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Born in a small village near Vicenza, Italy, Gandhi was raised in a Roman Catholic family. After completing her primary education at local schools, she moved for language classes to Cambridge, England, where she met Rajiv Gandhi, and later married him in 1968. She then moved to India and started living with her mother-in-law, the then-Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, at the latter's New Delhi residence. Sonia Gandhi, however, kept away from the public sphere, even during the years of her husband's premiership.

Following her husband's assassination, Gandhi was invited by Congress leaders to lead the party, but she declined. She agreed to join politics in 1997 after much pleading from the party; the following year, she was nominated for party president. Under her leadership, the Congress went on to form the government post the 2004 elections in coalition with other centre-left political parties. Gandhi has since been credited for being instrumental in formulating the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), which was re-elected to power in 2009. Gandhi declined the premiership following the 2004 victory; she instead led the ruling alliance and the National Advisory Council.

Over the course of her career, Gandhi presided over the advisory councils credited for the formation and subsequent implementation of such rights-based development and welfare schemes as the Right to Information, Food Security Bill, and MGNREGA, as she drew criticism related to the National Herald case during the Manmohan Singh premiership. Her foreign birth has also been a subject of much debate and controversy. Gandhi's active participation in politics began to reduce during the latter half of the UPA government's second term owing to health concerns. She stepped down as the Congress president in December 2017 but returned to lead the party in August 2019.

Although she has not held any public office in the government of India, Gandhi has been widely described as one of the most powerful politicians in the country, and is often listed among the most powerful women in the world.

Indira Gandhi

Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi (née Nehru; 19 November 1917 – 31 October 1984) was an Indian politician and stateswoman who served as the prime minister

Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi (née Nehru; 19 November 1917 – 31 October 1984) was an Indian politician and stateswoman who served as the prime minister of India from 1966 to 1977 and again from 1980 until her assassination in 1984. She was India's first and, to date, only female prime minister, and a central figure in Indian politics as the leader of the Indian National Congress (INC). She was the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, and the mother of Rajiv Gandhi, who succeeded her as prime minister. Her cumulative tenure of 15 years and 350 days makes her the second-longest-serving Indian prime minister after her father.

During her father Jawaharlal Nehru's premiership from 1947 to 1964, Gandhi was his hostess and accompanied him on his numerous foreign trips. In 1959, she played a part in the dissolution of the communist-led Kerala state government as then-president of the Indian National Congress, otherwise a ceremonial position to which she was elected earlier that year. Lal Bahadur Shastri, who had succeeded Nehru as prime minister upon his death in 1964, appointed her minister of information and broadcasting in his government; the same year she was elected to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian Parliament. After Shastri's sudden death in January 1966, Gandhi defeated her rival, Morarji Desai, in the INC's parliamentary leadership election to become leader and also succeeded Shastri as prime minister. She was the world's second female prime minister after Sirimavo Bandaranaike when she became Prime Minister of India. She led the Congress to victory in two subsequent elections, starting with the 1967 general election, in which she was first elected to the lower house of the Indian parliament, the Lok Sabha. In 1971, her party secured its first landslide victory since her father's sweep in 1962, focusing on issues such as poverty. But following the nationwide state of emergency she implemented, she faced massive anti-incumbency sentiment causing the INC to lose the 1977 election, the first time in the history of India to happen so. She even lost her own parliamentary constituency. However, due to her portrayal as a strong leader and the weak governance of the Janata Party, her party won the next election by a landslide and she returned to the premiership.

As prime minister, Gandhi was known for her uncompromising political stances and centralization of power within the executive branch. In 1967, she headed a military conflict with China in which India repelled Chinese incursions into the Himalayas. In 1971, she went to war with Pakistan in support of the independence movement and war of independence in East Pakistan, which resulted in an Indian victory and the independence of Bangladesh, as well as increasing India's influence to the point where it became the sole regional power in South Asia. Another military operation against Pakistan, codenamed Operation Meghdoot, occurred during her tenure in 1984, which led to India expanding the territory it effectively controlled in the disputed Kashmir region.

Gandhi also played a crucial role in initiating India's first successful nuclear weapon test in 1974. Her rule saw India grow closer to the Soviet Union by signing a friendship treaty in 1971 to ward off perceived geopolitical threat as a result of the U.S. warming up to China. India received military, financial, and diplomatic support from the Soviet Union during its conflict with Pakistan in the same year. Though India was at the forefront of the Non-Aligned Movement, Gandhi made it one of the Soviet Union's closest allies in Asia, each often supporting the other in proxy wars and at the United Nations.

Responding to separatist tendencies and a call for revolution, she instituted a state of emergency from 1975 to 1977, during which she ruled by decree and basic civil liberties were suspended. More than 100,000 political opponents, journalists and dissenters were imprisoned. She faced the growing Sikh separatism movement throughout her fourth premiership; in response, she ordered Operation Blue Star, which involved military action in the Golden Temple and killed hundreds of Sikhs. On 31 October 1984, she was assassinated by two of her bodyguards, both of whom were Sikh nationalists seeking retribution for the events at the temple.

Gandhi is remembered as the most powerful woman in the world during her tenure. Her supporters cite her leadership during victories over geopolitical rivals China and Pakistan, the Green Revolution, a growing economy in the early 1980s, and her anti-poverty campaign that led her to be known as "Mother Indira" (a pun on Mother India) among the country's poor and rural classes. Henry Kissinger described her as an "Iron Lady", a nickname that became associated with her tough personality. Critics note her cult of personality and authoritarian rule of India during the Emergency. In 1999, she was named "Woman of the Millennium" in an online poll organized by the BBC. In 2020, she was named by Time magazine among the 100 women who defined the past century as counterparts to the magazine's previous choices for Man of the Year.

Ramdas Gandhi

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Pratik Gandhi

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Pratik Gandhi (born 28 April 1980) is an Indian actor who primarily works in Gujarati and Hindi films, theater, and television. He is best known for portraying Harshad Mehta in the Sony LIV biographical series Scam 1992 (2020). Gandhi has since starred in the 2024 films Madgaon Express and Do Aur Do Pyaar.

Family of Mahatma Gandhi

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The Gandhi family is the family of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (2 October 1869 – 30 January 1948), commonly known as Mahatma Gandhi; Mahatma meaning "high souled" or "venerable" in Sanskrit; the particular term 'Mahatma' was accorded Mohandas Gandhi for the first time while he was still in South Africa, and not commonly heard as titular for any other civil figure even of similarly rarefied stature or living or posthumous presence.

Mohandas Gandhi was the leader of the Indian independence movement in British-ruled India. Mohandas Gandhi has been called contemporary, post-colonial sovereign India's Father of the Nation, a title first given to him by Subhas Chandra Bose on 6 July 1944 during Bose's address on the Singapore Radio. On 28 April 1947, Sarojini Naidu too referred to Gandhi with the title Father of the Nation. Mohandas Gandhi is also referred to as Bapu (Gujarati: endearment for "father") in India, as prime minister Nehru called him at his funeral. In common parlance in India he is often called Gandhiji; 'ji' being a honorific suffix. Gandhi has also been referred to (mostly by British officials) as Gae-ndy or Ga-ndhi as in Hindi the a makes an "ah" sound.

In 1883, Mahatma Gandhi married Kasturba (née Kasturbai Makhanji Kapadia). They had their first baby in 1885, who survived only a few days. The Gandhi couple had four more children, all sons: Harilal, born in 1888; Manilal, born in 1892; Ramdas, born in 1897; and Devdas, born in 1900. Mohandas and Kasturba being third generation members of the cogent strata of this clan in a modern continuous descent, following upon a notable first generation progenitor who was first in the family to hold the office of full Diwan, Prime Minister as the Mahatma translates it, in a princely state, their issue now has notable and active members in their family's seventh generation and continue to be steadily prolific. The Mahatma writes that "The Gandhis belong to the Bania caste and seem to have been originally grocers."

Prior to the Mahatma's grandfather being a Prime Minister in two different monarchical states, after a principled falling out with a royal faction in his first state, several generations of the Gandhi men had been Deputy Prime Ministers, if their career status is considered sufficiently notable in this family of political officials, then numeration of their generations as a 'dynasty' of ministers would be several numbers higher. Five generations before the Mahatma's grandfather, Lalji Gandhi (born circa 1674) was the first of 5 successful generations of Naib Diwans of the Princely state of Porbander.

The Nehru-Gandhi family, India's other significant family with surname Gandhi, is unrelated by biology and marriage to the family of Mahatma Gandhi, however the same spelling of 'Gandhi' came into the Nehru-Gandhi family when Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter Indira married politician Feroze Gandhi who had changed the spelling of his surname Ghandy to Gandhi precisely to match that of Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, revered as the 'father of the Indian nation'.

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