

Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in Porbandar on the west coast of India in 1869, when India was under British rule. He trained as a lawyer in London and he spent 20 years in South Africa, where he was arrested several times for peaceful protests against the unfair treatment of Indian immigrants.

In India, Gandhi practised peaceful "non-cooperation" with the British. He refused to use British goods and institutions, but he never used violence. This form of protest attracted millions of people, but irritated the British. They arrested thousands of protestors, including Gandhi, who spent two years in prison. In 1919, at Amristar, hundreds of Indians were killed by British soldiers during a peaceful protest.

In 1930, thousands of people joined Gandhi in a protest against British taxes on salt. It was called "the Salt March", or "the March to the Sea", because they walked 300 km to the coast where they made their own salt.

When India gained independence from Britain in 1947, there was tension between Hindus and Muslims. Two new states were born - India for the Hindu community and Pakistan for Muslims. This was called "partition". Gandhi, who was Hindu, was against it: he wanted everybody to live together in peace. Gandhi inspired the world with his spirituality and his simplicity. He was known as Mahatma, which means "Great Soul". He ate only rice and vegetables and he slept on the floor. He always wore sandals and a white cotton garment, which he made himself.

On 30th January 1948 he was assassinated. His birthday, the 2nd October, is a national holiday in India and the "International Day of Nonviolence".

lawyer: avvocato goods: merci garment: indumento

Work: a lawyer, a philosopher and a politician.

Who he was: leader of the non-violent movement, the resistance without weapons and civil disobedience in order to obtain political and social rights; nicknamed *Mahatma, Great Soul*.

Education: he studied Law in London.

Important events:

- 1915: returns to India and protests peacefully against heavy British taxes and discrimination; for this he went to prison many times.
- 1921: leader of the *National Congress* and campaigns to help the poor and promote women's rights in India.
- 1930: non-violent protest against the British Salt Tax.
- Period of World War II: intensified the struggle for Indian independence.
- 1948: on 30th January, assassination in Delhi by a Hindu fanatic nationalist



Salt March, 1930



Gandhi in London, 1931

DID YOU KNOW?

His philosophy is called *Satyagraha* which means "adherence to truth". It's the opposite of oppression without using weapons but using civil disobedience. In Sanskrit, the Indian language, *satya* means truth and *ahimsa* means non-violence.