

## Gandhi Goes Global

*Compiled by Ramesh Gupta, MD*



Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born October 2, 1869 in Porbandar, India. He was assassinated on January 30, 1948 in New Delhi, India. Today he is remembered as an anti-colonialist, an advocate of nonviolence, a pioneer of civil disobedience and the father of the world's largest democracy. Believers in his vision used Gandhi's tactics during America's civil rights movement and to end apartheid in South Africa.



He achieved a great deal as a political leader, working against discrimination, poverty and the caste system. He ended "Untouchability". He expanded women's rights, religious tolerance and economic self-reliance.

For all of these things, Gandhi is rightly honored. But in the long run, Mahatma (literally "Great Soul") may be best remembered for his contribution to humanity's inner life. Gandhi advocated a simple and unassuming lifestyle. He lived modestly, wore the traditional Indian dhoti and shawl, and ate plain vegetarian food. He said it did not require money to be neat, clean and dignified.

He undertook long fasts, sometimes for self-purification, other times as social protest. And he had a sense of humor. When asked what he thought about Western Civilization, Gandhi replied, "I think it would be a good idea."

Gandhi suffered many hardships in life. He was imprisoned several times for many years in both South Africa – where he first employed nonviolent civil disobedience as an expatriate lawyer – and India. During these periods, he took the time to write down his key principles. Here are just a few of his thoughts:

- "In matters of conscience, the law of the majority has no place."
- "All of your scholarship, all your study of Shakespeare and Wordsmith would be vain if at the same time you did not build your character and attain mastery over your thoughts and your actions."
- "A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes."
- "The only tyrant I accept in this world is the 'still small voice' within."
- "Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will."
- "I do not want to foresee the future. I am concerned with taking care of the present."
- "What a great thing it would be if we in our busy lives, could retire into ourselves each day, for at least a couple of hours, and prepare our minds to listen to the voice of the great silence."
- "True happiness is impossible without true health, and true health is impossible without a rigid control of the palate. All the other senses will automatically come under our control. And he who has conquered his sense has really conquered the whole world."

More than 60 years after his death, Gandhi is still viewed as one of the world's great spiritual leaders. He dedicated his life to the purpose of discovering "Truth" – something he insisted could be revealed only to those with a deep sense of humility – and believed the most important battle is

overcoming our own fears and insecurities. The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing, Gandhi insisted, is sufficient to solve most of our problems.

Gandhi taught tolerance and loves for all people. Albert Einstein offered that “Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth. Gandhi asked that his writings be cremated with his body. He wanted his life to be his message, not what he had written or said. In the end, he believed the words are meaningless. Actions alone show our true priorities. Or, as he famously said, “You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”