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**Elementary School: 1st  
place winner**



## **IndiaFEST 2010– Essay Contest**

### **An Essay about Mahatma Gandhi**

Mahatma Gandhi was a great leader and freedom fighter. His work was very important to India. He made it possible for many people to make a decent living. He tried to persuade people in a peaceful manner to accept the outcasts. He became famous for his great work in the nation.

Gandhi's early years were very different from other children. On October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1869 he was born to Karamchand. He was the diwan of the small city-state of Porbander. At that time British merchants came to trade with India. They ended up hunting India's most beautiful tigers. The British eventually took over rule of India. Gandhi was a child at this time and was eager to start school. Unlike other kids of his age, even when he was a little he emphasized always being truthful. Once, Gandhi and his friends stole Lord Rama's statue from the temple. When the priest caught them, Gandhi was the only one to admit that he stole it.

Gandhi emphasized not only truth but also education. Gandhi's father soon moved to Rajkot for another job. It was at this time when Gandhi took the entrance exam to get into High school. He scored 9<sup>th</sup> place out of 69. He struggled in English class because he was raised to speak Gujarati. However, he was determined to succeed in English and got 4<sup>th</sup> in his class. Even though he was only in High School, he got married to Kasturba Makanji, when he was 13. They later had a child together named Harilal. After high school he had to leave his wife and child to go to England and study law. He studied very hard and passed his exams.

After law school, he decided to go back to India. When he reached he found out that his mother had died. He struggled with this as well as being a lawyer because he was too shy to stand up and speak. He heard of another job in South Africa and moved there. At this time the British and Boers ruled over South Africa. The British treated in

Indians unfairly. Gandhi wanted to help them. He opened up his own law office to persuade the people to accept the Indians as equals. He also campaigned for Indian's Human Rights.

Even with his efforts, life was still difficult for the Indians in Africa. Gandhi invented a new protest called "Satyagraha" which means "truth" and "force". He stood for the equality of the people. But would never use violence. During this time, the British and the Boers were fighting. Gandhi organized an ambulance to be sent to the war to help the British. This persuaded them to finally give Independence to his people in 1914. He felt his work was done so he returned to India.

Gandhi had missed many things during the 20 years he was gone so he traveled around India to learn as much as he could. While traveling he met Rabindranath Tagore who won a noble prize. Rabindranath gave Gandhi the name "Mahatma" which means the great soul. He continued to travel and teach people Satyagraha. He saw that life was difficult for the Indian especially the untouchables. They were called untouchables because they were dirty, poor and had the most unwanted jobs.

Gandhi finally settled in western India where he started his own community. He called it Satyagraha Ashram. He invited the untouchable to live in his community. This almost destroyed Satyagraha Ashram. But eventually he convinced people to accept the untouchables and with a big donation was able to save his community. He also helped communities in North India. Gandhi heard that the landlords were putting pressure on farmers up north to grow certain crops. If they had any losses the farmers had to pay with their own income. Gandhi was able to help the farmers without violence and it showed how his campaign worked.

In 1918, the British government passed a law called the Rowlatt Bill. Any troublemakers could be put in prison. Gandhi and others organized a peaceful protest. At Amritsar (Jallianwala Bagh), the hartal went peacefully until a procession was attacked by British troops. Gandhi and other Indians were arrested, buildings were burned and many people were being killed. The court put Gandhi in jail for 4 years. He spent his time reading books. He became ill with appendicitis. After 2 years they finally released him. Gandhi wasn't happy because Muslims and Hindus still had bloodshed. He decided he wanted to bring Hindus and Muslims together so he fasted until they reunited. Gandhi tried spend an hour a day spinning and encouraged other Indians to do the same. He wore simple clothes made from cotton that had been grown, spun, and woven in India. If people produced their own thread, there would be no raw cotton for the British to export. And Indian would not have to rely on the British to produce their fabric. In 1929 Gandhi led the salt march across India making their own salt from the

ocean. Thousands of protesters and Gandhi were imprisoned, but it was a success. The protesters were released.

The British also allowed Gandhi to go to a Conference in London about India's future. But the conference did not go well. Separate voting for untouchables was proposed by some other Indian delegates. Back in India, Gandhi started another fast, this time to persuade the politicians to change their plans for the untouchables. He was successful. In 1942, the British politician Sir Stafford Cripps arrived in India. He planned for an eventual independent "Indian Union." Each province of India could decide if it wanted to join. Gandhi saw that this could divide India, as Muslim areas would not want to join a union in which most areas were Hindu. Muslim leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah wanted a separate Muslim State. The Indian National Congress turned down Cripps's proposals. It demanded that Britain "quit India" right away. The British arrested Gandhi (for almost 2 years) and other leaders for anti-British activities. Upset by the violence breaking out all over India, he began fast, hoping to calm things down. Gandhi was imprisoned alongside both with his wife, Kasturba and his secretary Mahadev Desai.

Mahadev Desai and wife Kasturba died in prison on Aug 15<sup>th</sup> 1942 and Feb 22 1944.

Gandhi begins talks with Muslim leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah about united India but could not come to an agreement over India's future. Soon things were changing in Britain. World War II ended. A Labour government came to power in Britain and determines that India should be independent. The disagreements between India, Hindus and Muslims led to rioting and bloodshed. Gandhi tried to calm things down, traveling around the country to try stopping the fighting. India finally became independent on Aug 15<sup>th</sup> 1947, but only after partition into two countries. Hindus though Gandhi was too sympathetic toward the Muslims. One of these Hindus, Nathuram Godse, went to a prayer meeting attended by Gandhi. After bowing to Gandhi, Godse shot him on January 30<sup>th</sup> 1948.

Gandhi did many things without violence. He went through many struggles to fight for India's independence. He sacrificed a lot for what he believed in. Even though he felt like his life wasn't a success when he died, he made a huge impact on the world. He was a great man who believed in truth and peace. We could all learn a lot from him.