

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO  
GANDHI

Even today, six decades after his assassination in January 1948, Mahatma Gandhi is still revered as the father of the Indian nation. His intellectual and moral legacy – encapsulated in works such as *Hind Swaraj* – as well as the example of his life and politics serve as an inspiration to human rights and peace movements, political activists, and students in classroom discussions throughout the world. This book, comprising essays by renowned experts in the fields of Indian history and philosophy, traces Gandhi's extraordinary story. The first part of the book, the biography, explores his transformation from a small-town lawyer during his early life in South Africa into a skilled political activist and leader of civil resistance in India. The second part is devoted to Gandhi's key writings and his thinking on a broad range of topics, including religion, conflict, politics, and social relations. The final part reflects on Gandhi's image – how he has been portrayed in literature and film – and on his legacy in India, the West, and beyond.

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**Anthony Parel** is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Calgary. His published works include *Gandhi: Hind Swaraj and Other Writings Centenary Edition* (2009) and *Gandhi's Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony* (2007).

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Edited by Judith Brown, Anthony Parel  
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Edited by Judith M. Brown  
*University of Oxford*

Anthony Parel  
*University of Calgary*



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## Glossary

- Adhikar*: authority, qualification  
*Adivasis*: aboriginal inhabitants of India  
*Advaita*: branch of Vedanta philosophy emphasizing the unity of the individual and God  
*Ahimsa*: nonviolence  
*Anasakta*: one who acts without attachment to the fruits of action  
*Aparigraha*: non-possession  
*Artha*: pursuit of wealth and power  
*Ashram*: religious community in the Indian tradition  
*Ashramite*: member of an ashram  
*Atmakatha*: autobiography  
*Atman*: highest principle of life affecting everything in the world; a person's soul  
*Bania*: merchant caste  
*Bhangi*: sweeper caste  
*Bhoodan*: gift of land (movement started by Vinoba Bhawe)  
*Brahmachari*: one who practises brahmacharya, celibate  
*Brahmacharya*: celibacy  
*Charkha*: spinning wheel  
*Dadagiri*: bullying, loutish behaviour  
*Dalits*: lit. 'the oppressed', name preferred by Untouchables for themselves  
*Dharma*: duty, ethics, religion  
*Diwan*: senior minister of Indian princely state  
*Dvaita*: the part of Hindu philosophy that states that the individual and God have separate existences  
*Ek-praja*: one nation  
*Gandhigiri*: a Hindi neologism, indicating opportunist or hypocritical practice of Gandhian teachings and methods  
*Gandhivad*: Gandhi's philosophy  
*Gandhivadi*: a follower of Gandhi's philosophy  
*Gramdan*: gift of a village (movement started by Vinoba Bhawe)



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- Harijan: lit. 'child of God', name chosen by Gandhi for Untouchables  
 Himsa: violence  
 Hindutva: an aggressive sense of Hindu identity, which presupposes a Hindu state  
 Holi: Hindu spring festival  
*Itihas*: 'history'  
 Jati: 'caste', popular name for local caste groups  
 Kala pani: lit. 'black water', the sea  
 Kama: pleasure  
 Khadi: hand-spun cloth  
 Khalifah: Caliph, spiritual head of worldwide Muslim community  
 Kshatriyas: warriors, one of the four varnas  
*Kudhar*: bad civilization  
*Langoti*: loincloth  
 Mahatma: 'great soul', honourific title  
 Mohurram: Muslim festival  
 Moksha: spiritual liberation, salvation  
 Panchayat: village council  
*Praja*: nation  
*Purna swaraj*: full independence  
*Purusharthas*: the aims of life  
 Raj: rule (hence British raj)  
*Ramanam(a)*: recitation of the name of Ram  
*Ramarajya*: kingdom/rule of Ram  
 Rishi: Hindu wise man, hermit  
 Sadhana: ascetic discipline, spiritual path  
 Sadhu: Hindu holy man  
 Sanatani: orthodox Hindu  
 Sant: saint  
 Sarvodaya: welfare of all  
 Sati: self-immolation of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre  
 Satya: Truth  
 Satyagraha: truth force, nonviolent resistance to wrong  
 Satyagrahi: practitioner of satyagraha  
 Savarnas: upper castes  
 Sena: army  
 Shudra: one of the four varnas  
 Smriti: tradition that is remembered, as distinct from divine revelation  
*Sthitpragnya*: person of stable wisdom

*Sudhar*: good civilization

*Surajya*: the good state

*Swadharna*: one's own duty

Swadeshi: use of things made in one's own country

Swaraj: self-rule, independence

Vaishnavism: Hindu sect

Varna: 'caste', scriptural name for caste

*Varnashrama dharma*: the caste system

Yajna: sacrifice

## A chronology of Gandhi's life

- 1869 2 October, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi born, Porbandar, Kathiawar, Gujarat. Son of Karamchand and Putlibai.
- 1876 Moves to Rajkot with family; attends primary school there.
- 1882 Marries Kasturba Makanji.
- 1885 Death of father.
- 1888 Goes to England to study law. Enrols in the Inner Temple, London.
- 1891 June, called to the Bar and returns to India.
- 1893 April, leaves India for South Africa on a one-year contract with the firm of Dad Abdullah & Co., after failing to establish legal practice in India. June, thrown off a train at Pietermaritzburg Station, Natal: a critical experience of discrimination.
- 1894 Helps found the Natal Indian Congress, and enrols as barrister in the High Courts of Natal and Transvaal.
- 1895 Begins major publicity for Indian rights, including a pamphlet, *The Indian Franchise: An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa*.
- 1896 June–November, visits India and brings his family to South Africa.
- 1899 Boer War; organizes Indian Ambulance Corps.
- 1901 October, returns to India with his family, intending to stay. Meets Indian politicians.
- 1902 November, returns with family to South Africa to fight for Indian rights in the Transvaal.
- 1903 Sets up legal practice in Johannesburg. Launches *Indian Opinion*.
- 1904 Reads J. Ruskin, *Unto This Last*: establishes Phoenix Settlement near Durban.
- 1906 June–July, Zulu Rebellion, does ambulance work. Takes vow of celibacy. September, addresses mass meeting at Empire Theatre in Johannesburg when a large number of Indians agreed to resist the proposed Asiatic Registration Bill. October–December, visits London to campaign for Indian rights in South Africa.
- 1907 Start of Passive Resistance, later called satyagraha from 1908.
- 1908 January and October–December, imprisoned.
- 1909 February–May, imprisoned. June–November, visits England; writes *Hind Swaraj* on return voyage.
- 1910 Establishes second community at Tolstoy Farm, near Johannesburg.
- 1911 Agreement with J. C. Smuts leads to suspension of satyagraha.

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- 1913 Renews satyagraha. Women joined the struggle, including Kasturba, who is imprisoned. November–December, Gandhi imprisoned for fourth time.
- 1914 January, reaches agreement with Smuts and suspends satyagraha. July, leaves South Africa finally and sails to London. Outbreak of World War I. In London, clearly ill after his work and periods in prison in South Africa. Helps to organize Field Ambulance Training Corps for Indian students in London to help empire at war, and particularly Indian soldiers wounded in Europe. December, sails for India.
- 1915 January, arrives in India. May, founds ashram at Ahmedabad. Awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal for services to Indians in South Africa.
- 1917 April, begins working on problems of farmers growing indigo in Champaran, Bihar; leads to individual satyagraha.
- 1918 February–March, leads satyagraha on behalf of millworkers, Ahmedabad. March–June, leads satyagraha in Kaira district, Gujarat, on the issue of land revenue. November, end of World War I.
- 1919 6–18 April, leads all-India satyagraha against the Rowlatt legislation and suspends it after outbreaks of violence; admits to a ‘Himalayan miscalculation’. 13 April, massacre at Jallianwalla Bagh, Amritsar. Becomes editor of *Navajivan* and *Young India*. Becomes involved in the issue of the Khilafat (the post-war future of the Sultan of Turkey). December, advises Congress to respond to the Royal Proclamation and cooperate with the reforms provided for by the 1919 Government of India Act; thinks this marks his real entry into Congress politics.
- 1920 September, advises non-cooperation with the government on the issues of the Punjab and the Khilafat. September, special session of Congress at Calcutta accepts the programme of non-cooperation, and this is confirmed by the December session at Nagpur. November, Congressmen in significant numbers boycott elections to the new legislatures.
- 1920–2 Non-cooperation movement (withdrawal of lawyers from courts, students from government schools, return of titles, swadeshi, etc.).
- 1921 August, rebellion in Malabar, southwest India. October, vows to spin daily. December, preparations for civil disobedience under strict conditions.
- 1922 4 February, massacre of policemen in Chauri Chaura, UP. Gandhi fasts in protest against violence and calls off civil disobedience. March, arrested, pleaded guilty to inciting disaffection towards the government, and jailed until February 1924.
- 1923 Begins writing *Satyagraha In South Africa*.
- 1924 January, operated on for appendicitis and released in February. Supports satyagraha in Vaikom, Travancore, to allow Untouchables to use roads around temples. September, three-week fast for Hindu–Muslim unity.
- 1925 Congress President for the year. Founds All-India Spinners’ Association.
- 1926 Year spent in the Ahmedabad ashram.
- 1927 Extensive tours publicizing khadi. Serious ill health from overwork. Publishes *Autobiography* initially in a series of newspaper articles.
- 1928 February–August, satyagraha in Bardoli district, Gujarat, on issue of land revenue, led by Vallabhbhai Patel under Gandhi’s direction. Publishes

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- Satyagraha In South Africa*. Moves resolution at Calcutta Congress in favour of independence if dominion status is not granted by the end of 1929.
- 1929 Declines Congress Presidentship and suggests Jawaharlal Nehru instead. Tours rural India to publicize khadi. Declaration of Viceroy, Lord Irwin, announcing dominion status as goal for India, offering Round Table Conference in London as first step; but negotiations between Gandhi, Congressmen, and Moderates to accept this proved abortive. Frames main resolution passed at Congress session in Lahore, calling for independence, and also boycott of the legislatures and civil disobedience.
- 1930 26 January, declaration of independence prepared by Gandhi proclaimed. Gandhi plans forthcoming civil disobedience movement, which begins with his march (12 March–6 April) from the Sabarmati ashram to Dandi on the coast to make salt illegally, thus launching civil disobedience on 6 April, imprisoned May 1930–January 1931. Round Table Conference in London leads to hope of a major political advance and British government wishes to include Congress in subsequent discussions if possible.
- 1931 26 January, Gandhi and other Congress leaders released. Gandhi negotiates a settlement with the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, to end civil disobedience; their 'Pact' signed on 4 March. September–December, Gandhi is in England for the second session of the Round Table Conference. Stays at Kingsley Hall in Bow, in the East End. Apart from attending the conference and its committee work, he visits several important places where there are groups of people he wishes to influence, including Lancashire, Oxford and Cambridge, and Eton. He also meets a wide range of Christian leaders.
- 1932 Civil disobedience resumes; and Gandhi arrested and imprisoned in Yeravda jail, Poona, from January 1932 to May 1933. September, Gandhi begins fast to death on the issue of separate electorates for Untouchables given by the British 'Communal Award' after Congress and the minorities fail to reach agreement at the second Round Table Conference. Gives up his fast after a compromise worked out with Untouchable leaders, the so-called Poona Pact.
- 1933 Founds Harijan Sevak Sangh and new paper, *Harijan*. May, three-week fast; released from prison. Announces disbanding of Ahmedabad ashram. August, rearrested and released after less than a month. Begins extensive tour on the Harijan cause, which lasts from November 1933 to June 1934.
- 1934 April–May, Gandhi suggests suspension of civil disobedience and revival of work in the legislatures by those Congressmen who wished to. June, escapes bomb attempt on his life. September, announces decision to retire from politics and engage in rural development, work for Harijans and new forms of education. Inaugurates All-India Village Industries Association and resigns from Congress.
- 1935 Government of India Act provides for provincial autonomy and plans for India's future as a dominion, bringing together British India and the princely states. (The latter part of the plan never achieved because of the outbreak of war in 1939; the first part came into force after elections to the new legislatures in 1937.)

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- 1936 April, settles at Sevagram, near Wardha, Central Provinces, making his ashram there his home and headquarters.
- 1937 October, presides over Educational Conference in October at Wardha and sets out a scheme of Basic Education. Congress becomes government in seven provinces in British India following elections.
- 1939 Fasts in early March in protest at ruler of Rajkot's refusal to reform his administration. September, outbreak of World War II. October, Congress withdraws from cooperation in provincial government, reflecting Gandhi's wishes. Gandhi becomes central again in Congress politics.
- 1940 March, Congress at Ramgarh demands independence and a constituent assembly to frame new constitution. Announces that it plans to embark again on civil disobedience. Muslim League at Lahore demands 'Pakistan' for Muslims at independence. October, Gandhi launches individual satyagraha by handpicked volunteers to protest against cooperation in the war effort.
- 1941 December, Japanese attack Pearl Harbour and begin drive through Burma. United States enters the war. Gandhi writes *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*.
- 1942 February, fall of Singapore. March–April, mission of Sir Stafford Cripps to India on behalf of British government, offering elected body after war to frame new constitution for India, and during war Indian participation in government. Envisages India as dominion after war but with the implication that secession from the Empire-Commonwealth would also be possible. Also assumes that no part of India could be forced to join dominion, thus opening path to some form of partition. Congress and League reject Cripps's offer. August, Congress launches 'Quit India' movement of civil disobedience. It is declared unlawful organization, leaders imprisoned and violence firmly controlled. Gandhi imprisoned from August 1942 to May 1944. During this prison term, Mahadev Desai dies (1942) as does Kasturba (1944).
- 1944 May, released from prison because of ill health. September, abortive talks with Jinnah on future of Indian Muslims.
- 1945 May, surrender of Germany and end of war in Europe. June–July, Gandhi attends conference at Simla as Viceroy Wavell attempts to restart the political process by reconstituting his Executive council from among Indian politicians. Conference fails. August, surrender of Japan and end of war in Asia.
- 1946 March–June, Cabinet Mission visits India, sent by new Labour government, in attempt to achieve political settlement. Gandhi meets members of Mission. Congress and League both reject Cabinet Mission Plan. Severe communal violence in Bengal and Bihar, and Gandhi tours area on foot for four months from November.
- 1947 Communal situation deteriorates as there is no political agreement and British authority wanes. February, Prime Minister Attlee announces that British will leave India by June 1948 and send Mountbatten to India as Viceroy to replace Wavell. June, Mountbatten announces plan of partition of India at independence and British intention to withdraw in August 1947. Gandhi deeply distressed at plan for partition but does not

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- block it. His political influence is clearly waning. 15 August, subcontinent attains independence and is partitioned into India and Pakistan. Violence breaks out, particularly in Punjab, and mass migrations of people occur as they attempt to move to the side of the border where they think they will be safe, Muslims to Pakistan and Hindus and Sikhs to India. Congress becomes the party of government in India and Jawaharlal Nehru becomes India's first Prime Minister. September, Gandhi fasts in Calcutta for communal peace.
- 1948 13–18 January, Gandhi fasts in Delhi for communal unity. Gandhi writes document advising Congress to disband as a political organization and devote itself to social service. 30 January, Gandhi assassinated by Hindu man who confronts him as he is walking to prayer meeting in grounds of Birla House, New Delhi.