

"It was interesting to read about Gandhi's experiences in England and South Africa, which really influenced how he thought about India." Sherin, 12



MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH

MAHATMA GANDHI

'Get out!' the official said, 'or I will get a constable to push you out!' 'Do that,' I told him. 'I will not get off this train!'

Mahatma Gandhi is best known as the father of the Indian nation and a charismatic leader in the fight for justice for all. But who was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and what made him the phenomenon he became?

Born into a middle class family, Gandhi's thirst for truth was evident from an early age, and his insistence on speaking and living his truth often got him into trouble. Why did it matter so much to him not to cheat at school, to stand up to officials who told him what he could and could not do, to fight relentlessly for the rights of the poor and those with little power over their own lives?

What was it about Gandhi's life and experiences that brought him to the clear understanding that love and non-violence are the best weapons in any struggle?



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Gandhi



Retold by Nandini Nayar
Illustrated by Shailja Jain Chougule



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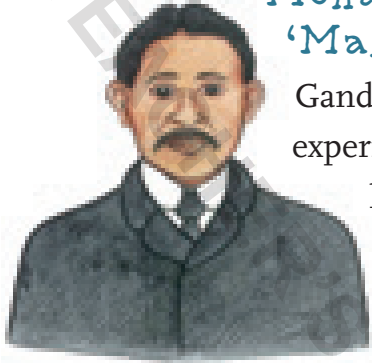
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THE CHARACTERS

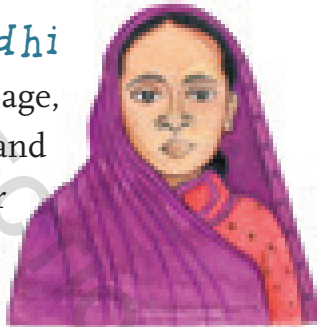


**Mohandas Karamchand
'Mahatma' Gandhi**

Gandhi's education in England and experiences in South Africa have led him to question the values and beliefs he grew up with in India. Will he be able to help lead his people to freedom?

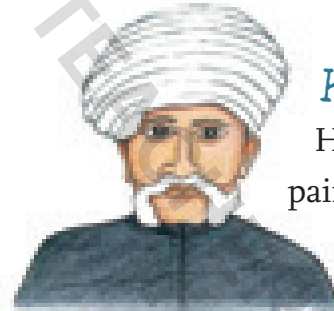
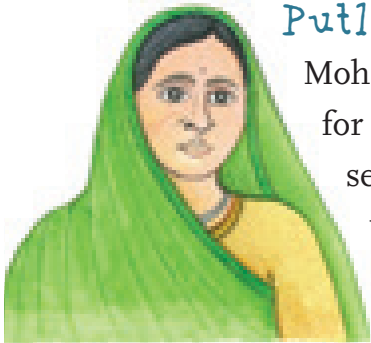
Kasturbai Gandhi

Married to Mohandas at a young age, Kasturbai is his companion and student. Can she maintain her independence while supporting her demanding husband?



Putlibai

Mohandas's mother, well known for her generosity and patience, sets an example to her children which can be hard to follow. Will Mohandas be able to keep his promises to her?

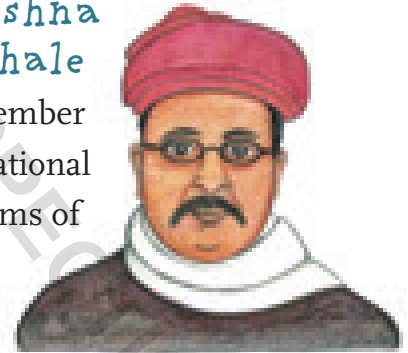


Karamchand Gandhi

His father's calm acceptance of the pain of his illness impresses Gandhi. Will he be able to fulfil his father's expectations?

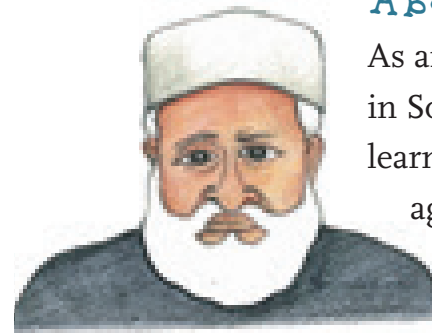
**Gopal Krishna
Gokhale**

An important member of the Indian National Congress, Gokhale dreams of independence for India. Will his dreams be fulfilled?



Abdulla Sheth

As an Indian businessman in South Africa, Abdulla has learnt to accept discrimination against Indians. Will his support of Gandhi help his community?





MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH

Our family, the Gandhis, are Hindus belonging to the Bania caste, which consists largely of merchants, spice dealers, money-lenders and bankers. The menfolk of the Bania traditionally held important government posts. My grandfather was the Prime Minister of Kathiawad in Gujarat, a western state of India, while my father, Karamchand Gandhi, was the Prime Minister of Rajkot. My father was an honest and fearless man. My mother, Putlibai, my father's fourth and last wife, was a very devout woman. Together they had a daughter and three sons. I was their youngest son, born in the Indian coastal city of Porbandar, on October 2nd 1869.

When I was seven we moved to Rajkot, where I continued my schooling. I was a good student but I was very shy, running home after school to avoid talking to my classmates. One day at school there was great excitement. Mr Giles, who was the state Education Minister, was inspecting our

high school. In order to test our class he said he would give us five English words to spell, which we had to write on our slates. When I had finished I felt someone nudge my foot. I looked up and saw that it was our teacher, who was quietly encouraging me to copy from my neighbour. It was obvious that I had made a mistake, but I wasn't willing to copy. Mr Giles checked our slates. 'Only Gandhi has got a word wrong. Gandhi,' he glowered, 'you got *kettle* wrong!' The teacher glared at me, and I knew I had failed him, but I was happy that I had not cheated.



During my childhood, there were two stories which greatly influenced me. One was the story of Shraavan, who was renowned for his devotion to his parents. This inspired me to serve my own parents as well as I could. The second was the story of Harishchandra, a noble king of ancient India. Harishchandra was pious and

just, never breaking a promise. His story made me wonder why we couldn't all be as truthful as he was.

When I was thirteen, I married a beautiful woman called Kasturbai. I am afraid I was a possessive husband, and my attempts to control Kasturbai led to frequent quarrels.

In my early teens, cricket and gymnastics were made compulsory at school. Although I was not fond of physical exercise I always attended these sessions. One Saturday I miscalculated the time and arrived late. I was fined for being late, but what hurt me the most was that the principal refused to believe that I had just misread the clock. I realised then that if I wanted to be accepted as a truthful person, I must accept that people will sometimes insist on their own truths. But in the matter of handwriting I am afraid I *was* careless. All attempts to improve later in life were unsuccessful, and to this day I regret not having good handwriting.



- Gandhi first went to jail in 1908, where he learnt to eat without salt or spices. He also learnt that self-imposed restrictions work better than those enforced by others.

Back in time

When Mohandas Gandhi was born in 1869, Europe ruled the world. The colonial powers of Britain, France, Germany, Holland, Spain and Portugal controlled huge territories in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The British Empire ruled all of India, from present-day Pakistan in the west to present-day Burma in the east; this Indian realm, often called the Raj (raj means 'rule' in Hindi), was seen as the brightest jewel in an empire that also included Canada, Australia, much of Africa, and countless smaller territories.

India was an ancient and in many ways very advanced civilization. The lure of trading with a country known for its spices and silks brought English merchants to India. The first wave of Englishmen who came to India

admired Indian culture and languages, which several of them studied in depth.

With the decline of Mughal power in India, the British didn't so much conquer India as fill a power vacuum, first under the auspices of the East India Company, which used British troops to protect and expand its trade, and then after 1857 directly under the British Crown. As time passed, British influence over the kings of India increased, as did their role in the politics of the country. The Battle of Plassey (Palashi) in 1757 was the first decisive victory of the British East India Company. It established Company rule in Bengal, which expanded over much of India over the next hundred years.

As the British administrative control over people's lives in India increased, so did their attempts to mould India and Indians to their needs. Indians became increasingly disturbed at the unwanted interference in the social, cultural and even religious aspects of their lives.

A rumour spread that a new rifle, one that used bullets covered with animal fat, was to be