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**Command and Leadership Series**

**Mohandas 'Mahatma' Gandhi**

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## Mohandas “Mahatma” Gandhi (1869 - 1948)

### Introduction

Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand (1869-1948), more widely known as Mahatma Gandhi, became a leader in a complex struggle during the Indian campaign for home rule and was one of the founding fathers of the modern Indian state. He helped bring about India's independence from British rule, inspiring other colonial peoples to work for their own independence and dismantle the British Empire, replacing it with the Commonwealth.

Gandhi became the international symbol of a free India. He lived a spiritual and ascetic life of prayer, fasting, and meditation. Refusing earthly possessions, he wore the loincloth and shawl of the lowliest Indian and subsisted on vegetables, fruit juices, and goat's milk. Indians revered him as a saint and called him Mahatma, a title reserved for the greatest sages. Gandhi's advocacy of non-violence was the expression of a way of life implicit in the Hindu religion. By the Indian practice of non-violence, he hoped that Great Britain would eventually consider violence useless and would withdraw from India.

Gandhi's political and spiritual hold on India was so great that the British authorities dared not interfere with him. In 1921 the Indian National Congress, the group that spearheaded the movement for nationhood, gave Gandhi complete executive authority, with the right of naming his own successor. A series of armed revolts against Great Britain broke out, culminating in such violence that Gandhi confessed the failure of the civil disobedience movement. The British government seized and imprisoned him in 1922. After his release from prison in 1924, Gandhi withdrew from active politics and devoted himself to propagating communal unity. Unavoidably, however, he was again drawn into the vortex of the struggle for independence. In 1930 he proclaimed a new campaign of civil disobedience, calling upon the Indian population to refuse to pay taxes.

Gandhi was a larger-than-life figure in relations between the Hindu and Muslim communities of India. It is said that he ended communal riots through his mere presence. He was vehemently opposed to any plan, which segregated India into two separate countries (a plan which was eventually adopted; creating a Hindu-dominated India, and a Muslim-dominated Pakistan). On the day of power transfer, Gandhi did not celebrate independence with the rest of India, but mourned partition alone in Calcutta. On January 30 1948 Gandhi was assassinated in New Delhi by Nathuram Godse, a Hindu radical who held him responsible for Partition.

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This bibliography has been designed to provide a guide as to where to find information on Mahatma Gandhi. Please note that the list of references below is a selection of the more relevant titles and information on the subject. The list is not intended to be exhaustive or definitive but is an introductory guide to some of the resources available.

### Monographs

Adair, John. **Great Leaders**. London: The Talbot Adair Press, 1989, 312 p.

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Fischer, Louis. **The Life of Mahatma Gandhi**. London: Cape, 1997, 671 p.

Gandhi, Karamchand Mahatma. **An autobiography or the story of my experiment with truth.** India: Navajivan Publishing House, 1966, 404 p.

Gardner, Howard. **Leading minds: an anatomy of leadership.** London: HarperCollins, 1997, 400 p.

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Iyer, Raghavan. **The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi.** Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, 449 p.

Marlay, Ross, & Neher, Clark. **Patriots and Tyrants: ten Asian leaders.** Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, 353 p.

### **Websites**

The Official Mahatma Gandhi eArchive & Reference Library  
<http://www.mahatma.org.in>

### **Any Queries**

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