

The British Raj Begins (1858)



British India in 1909

After 1858, Great Britain ruled India formally as a colony without the veil of the Company or the Mughal crown. Both the English East India Company and the Mughal Empire came officially to an end. The British Raj—Hindi for “rule” or “reign”—in India would last another 90 years (1848-1947). Queen Victoria became the Empress of India and in her Proclamation of 1858 she announced that all Indians would be treated equally under British law regardless of race or religion. Failure of the Raj to live up to her promises would later become fodder for Indian national movements (Peers 75-76). The stark contrast between British wealth and Indian poverty continued. In 1877, the year Queen Victoria lavishly celebrated her title as Empress of India, famine killed approximately 4 million Indians (75).

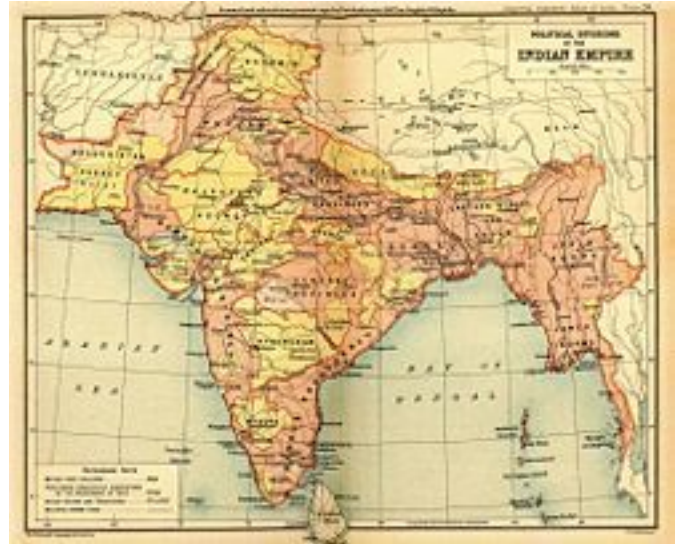
People, technology, and ideas now migrated and interacted more rapidly throughout British India. By the end of the 19th century, the Suez Canal and the prevalence of steam ships dropped travel time from Britain to India to just three weeks—as opposed to six months travel time 100 years earlier (Peers 11). Railroad building increased under the Raj both to encourage economic growth and to expand the benefit of moving troops efficiently across the country for security. Between 1860 and 1880, miles of railroad tracks increased from 836 miles to almost 10,000 (50). Industrial infrastructure could have negative consequences too. Railroads resulted in deforestation for railroad ties and fuel. During the era of peak railroad construction, builders chopped down 35,000 trees per year (14).

The British Raj relied on Indians to carry out the heavy lifting of imperial occupation and governance. As late as 1921, there were only 156,000 British citizens living in India, one for every 1,500 Indians (Copland 3). A cornerstone of the Raj, therefore, was a well-armed Indian army of over 200,000 who helped keep their fellow Indians in check if they threatened to revolt. In 1900, 30% of government spending went to paying for the Indian Army (32). The Raj also needed a large, cooperative, and efficient civil service of clerks and lawyers to govern India. To this end, the government invested in more secondary schools and a few colleges. In the twenty years between 1881 and 1901, annual high school graduates increased from 150,000 to 420,000 (31). The 30,000 college graduates in 1900, through a small fraction of the total population, would have the opportunity to enter professions such as medicine, education, journalism, and law (31). The Raj hoped that these native Indians would be willing to rule India for the British for years to come.

By 1900, the colony of India had become indispensable to the seemingly boundless imperial and industrial success of the British Empire. India had become the largest market in the world for British goods. By 1913, 60% of all Indian imports came from Britain (James 219). Despite the central position of India in the Empire, all was not well for the Queen’s subjects. Most continued to live in poverty and were vulnerable to diseases and natural disasters. For example, yet another famine in 1900 killed five million Indians and the Raj provided little relief (Copland 18). Even the small but rising Indian middle class resented various forms of institutional discrimination, such as the lower wages they received for equal work. Some looked for an outlet for their simmering frustrations.

British Raj

British Raj (*rāj*, lit. "rule" in Hindi) or **British India**, officially the British **Indian Empire**, and internationally and contemporaneously, **India**, is the term used synonymously for the region, the rule, and the period, from 1858 to 1947, of the [British Empire](#) on the Indian subcontinent. The region included areas directly administered by the [United Kingdom](#)^[1] (contemporaneously, "British India") as well as the princely states ruled by individual rulers under the paramountcy of the British Crown. Prior to 1858, Britain's interests and possessions in India had been administered by the [British East India Company](#), which was officially a commercial enterprise chartered by the Government. It operated in India as an agent of the [Moghul Empire](#). After the [First War of Indian Independence](#) (known as the mutiny) the British government assumed direct responsibility for ruling its Indian territories. A policy of expansion followed that brought the whole of India within the Empire. The princely states, of which all entered into treaty arrangements with the British Crown, were allowed a degree of local autonomy in exchange for accepting protection and complete representation in international affairs by the United Kingdom.



Known as the "Jewel in the Crown" of the [British Empire](#), India was over the years a source of wealth for Britain, although the Raj's profitability declined in the years before independence was finally granted. On the other hand, [railway](#), [transport](#) and [communication](#) systems were built that helped to knit the previously independent regions of India into a whole, which actually aided the Indian independence struggle under the leadership of the [Indian National Congress](#). This movement was led by the very class of Indians that the British [education](#) system had produced, who read in English literature about the concepts of fair-play, [justice](#) and about the mother of [Parliaments](#) in Westminster but observed that the British seemed to leave these values and the practice of [democracy](#) at home when they arrived in India. The Raj's policy has been described as one of "divide and rule." This partly refers to the way in which much territory was acquired, by playing one Indian ruler against another, and to the way in which the British stressed what they saw as intractable differences between different religious communities, arguing that it was only their presence in India that prevented a blood bath.

Definition and Geographical Expanse

The British *Indian Empire* included the regions of present-day [India](#), [Pakistan](#), and [Bangladesh](#), and, in addition, at various times, Aden (from 1858 to 1937), Lower Burma (from 1858 to 1937), Upper Burma (from 1886 to 1937) (Burma was detached from British India in 1937), British Somaliland (briefly from 1884 to 1898), and [Singapore](#) (briefly from 1858 to 1867). British India had some ties with British possessions in the Middle East; the Indian rupee served as the currency in many parts of that region. What is now [Iraq](#) was, immediately after World War I, administered by the India Office of the British government. The *Indian Empire*, which issued its own passports, was commonly referred to as *India* both in the region and internationally. As *India*, it was a founding member of the [League of Nations](#), and a member nation of the Summer Olympics in 1900, 1920, 1928, 1932, and 1936.

Among other countries in the region, [Ceylon](#) (now [Sri Lanka](#)), which was ceded to the [United Kingdom](#) in 1802 under the Treaty of Amiens, was a British Crown Colony, but not part of British India. The kingdoms of [Nepal](#) and [Bhutan](#) although having been in conflict with Britain, had both subsequently signed treaties with Britain, and were recognized as independent states and not part of the British Raj.^{[2][3]} The Kingdom of [Sikkim](#) was established as a princely state after the *Anglo-Sikkimese Treaty* of 1861, however, the issue of sovereignty was left undefined.^[4] The [Maldiv Islands](#) were a British protectorate from 1867 to 1965, but not part of British India.

The system of governance lasted from 1858, when the rule of the [British East India Company](#) was transferred to the Crown in the person of [Queen Victoria](#) (and who, in 1877, was proclaimed Empress of India), until 1947, when the British Indian Empire was partitioned into two sovereign states, the *Dominion of India* (later the [Republic of India](#)) and the *Dominion of Pakistan* (later the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the People's Republic of Bangladesh). Burma was separated from the administration of the British Indian Empire in 1937 and directly administered thereafter; it received independence from the UK in 1948 as the *Union of Burma*.

History - Company rule in India

On December 31, 1600 [Queen Elizabeth I](#) of [England](#) granted a [royal charter](#) to the [British East India Company](#) to carry out trade with the East. Ships first arrived in India in 1608, docking at Surat in modern-day Gujarat. Four years later, British traders battled the [Portuguese](#) at the Battle of Swally, gaining the favor of the Mughal emperor Jahangir in the process. In 1615, [King James I](#) sent Sir Thomas Roe as his ambassador to Jahangir's court, and a commercial treaty was concluded in which the Mughals allowed the Company to build trading posts in India in return for goods from Europe. The Company traded in such commodities as [cotton](#), [silk](#), saltpetre, indigo, and tea.

By the mid-1600s, the Company had established trading posts or "factories" in major Indian cities, such as [Bombay](#), [Calcutta](#), and Madras in addition to their first [factory](#) at Surat (built in 1612). In 1670 [King Charles II](#) granted the company the right to acquire territory, raise an army, mint its own money, and exercise legal jurisdiction in areas under its control.

By the last decade of the seventeenth century, the Company was arguably its own "nation" on the Indian subcontinent, possessing considerable military might and ruling the three presidencies.

The British first established a territorial foothold in the Indian subcontinent when Company-funded soldiers commanded by Robert Clive defeated the Nawab of Bengal - Siraj Ud Daulah at the [Battle of Plassey](#) in 1757. Bengal became a British protectorate directly under the rule of the East India Company. Bengal's wealth then flowed to the Company, which attempted to enforce a monopoly on Bengali trade (though [smuggling](#) was rife). Bengali farmers and craftsmen were obliged to render their labor for minimal remuneration while their collective tax burden increased greatly. Some believe that as a consequence, the famine of 1769-1773 cost the lives of ten million Bengalis^[5]. A similar catastrophe occurred almost a century later, after Britain had extended its rule across the Indian subcontinent, when 40 million Indians perished from famine. The Company, despite the increase in trade and the revenues coming in from other sources, found itself burdened with massive military expenditures, and its destruction seemed imminent.

Building the Raj: British expansion across India

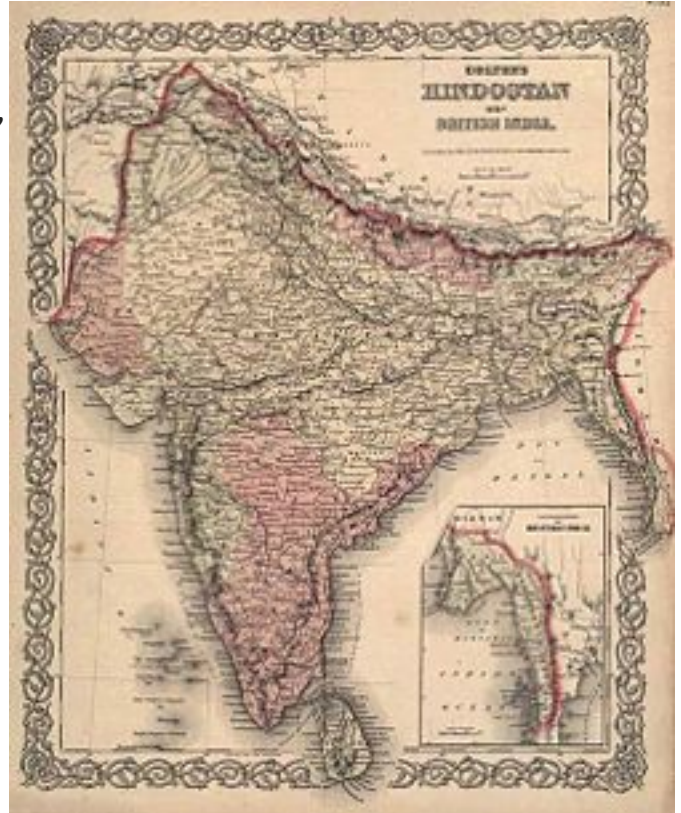
Lord North's India Bill, [The Regulating Act](#) of 1773, by the British Parliament granted Whitehall, the British government administration, supervisory (regulatory) control over the

work of the East India Company but did not take power for itself. This was the first step along the road to government control of India. It also established the post of [Governor-General of India](#), the first occupant of which was [Warren Hastings](#). Further acts, such as the [Charter Act of 1813](#) and the [Charter Act of 1833](#), further defined the relationship of the Company and the British government.

[Hastings](#) remained in India until 1784 and was succeeded by Cornwallis, who initiated the Permanent Settlement, whereby an agreement in perpetuity was reached with zamindars or landlords for the collection of revenue. For the next 50 years, the British were engaged in attempts to eliminate Indian rivals.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Governor-General Lord Wellesley (brother of the Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington) began expanding the Company's domain on a large scale, defeating [Tippu Sultan](#) (also spelled Tippoo Sultan), annexing Mysore in southern India, and removing all [French](#) influence from the

subcontinent. In the mid-nineteenth century, Governor-General Lord Dalhousie launched perhaps the Company's most ambitious expansion, defeating the [Sikhs](#) in the Anglo-Sikh Wars (and annexing the Punjab with the exception of the Phulkian States) and subduing [Burma](#) in the Second Burmese War. He also justified the takeover of small princely states such as Satara, Sambalpur, Jhansi, and Nagpur by way of the doctrine of lapse, which permitted the Company to annex any princely state whose ruler had died without a male heir. The annexation of Oudh in 1856 proved to be the Company's final territorial acquisition, as the following year saw the boiling over of Indian grievances toward the so-called "Company Raj."



First War of Indian Independence

On May 10, 1857 soldiers of the British Indian Army (known as "*sepoys*," from Urdu/Persian *sipaahi* = "soldier"), drawn from the Indian [Hindu](#) and [Muslim](#) population, rose against British in Meerut, a cantonment 65 kilometres northeast of [Delhi](#). At the time, the strength of the Company's Army in India was 238,000, of whom 38,000 were Europeans. Indian soldiers marched to [Delhi](#) to offer their services to the Mughal emperor, and soon much of north and central India was plunged into a year-long insurrection against the [British East India Company](#). Many Indian regiments and Indian kingdoms joined the uprising, while other Indian units and Indian kingdoms backed the British commanders and the HEIC.

Causes of the rebellion

The rebellion or the war for independence had diverse political, economic, military, religious and social causes.

The policy of annexation pursued by Governor-General Lord Dalhousie, based mainly on his "Doctrine of Lapse," which held that princely states would be merged into [company](#)-ruled territory in case a ruler died without direct heir. This denied the Indian rulers the right to

adopt an heir in such an event; adoption had been pervasive practice in the Hindu states hitherto, sanctioned both by religion and by secular tradition. The states annexed under this doctrine included such major kingdoms as Satara, Thanjavur, Sambhal, Jhansi, Jetpur, Udaipur, and Baghat. Additionally, the company had annexed, without pretext, the rich kingdoms of Sind in 1843 and Oudh in 1856, the latter a wealthy princely state that generated huge revenue and represented a vestige of Mughal authority. This greed for land, especially in a group of small-town and middle-class British merchants, whose *parvenu* background was increasingly evident and galling to Indians of rank, had alienated a large section of the landed and ruling [aristocracy](#), who were quick to take up the cause of evicting the merchants once the revolt was kindled.

The justice system was considered inherently unfair to the Indians. The official Blue Books — entitled *East India (Torture) 1855–1857* — that were laid before the [House of Commons](#) during the sessions of 1856 and 1857 revealed that Company officers were allowed an extended series of appeals if convicted or accused of brutality or crimes against Indians.

The economic policies of the East India Company were also resented by the Indians. Most of the [gold](#), jewels, [silver](#) and [silk](#) had been shipped off to Britain as tax and sometimes sold in open auctions, ridding India of its once abundant wealth in precious stones. The land was reorganized under the comparatively harsh Zamindari system to facilitate the collection of taxes. In certain areas farmers were forced to switch from subsistence farming to commercial crops such as indigo, jute, [coffee](#) and tea. This resulted in hardship to the farmers and increases in food prices. Local industry, specifically the famous weavers of Bengal and elsewhere, also suffered under British rule. Import [tariffs](#) were kept low, according to traditional British free-market sentiments, and thus the Indian market was flooded with cheap clothing from Britain. Indigenous industry simply could not compete, and where once India had produced much of England's luxury cloth, the country was now reduced to growing cotton which was shipped to Britain to be manufactured into clothing, which was subsequently shipped back to India to be purchased by Indians. This extraordinary quantity of wealth, much of it collected as 'taxes', was absolutely critical in expanding public and private infrastructure in Britain and in financing British expansionism elsewhere in Asia and Africa.

The spark that lit the fire was the result of a British blunder in using new cartridges for the Pattern 1853 Enfield rifle that were greased with animal [fat](#), rumored to now be a combination of [pig-fat](#) and [cow-fat](#). This was offensive to the religious beliefs of both Muslim and Hindu sepoys, who refused to use the cartridges and, under provocation, finally mutinied against their British officers.

The rebellion soon engulfed much of North India, including Oudh and various areas that had lately passed from the control of Maratha princes to the company. The unprepared British were terrified, without replacements for the casualties. However, after getting reinforcements, the British army was able to suppress the uprising and restore British control over these areas.

It was a monumental event in history, for both Indians and British alike. The Rebels had achieved (at that time) the impossible in uniting and overthrowing (if only temporarily) an apparently unbeatable army and a now semi-despotic ruling power. Heroic defenses of British bases such as the Siege of Lucknow, Siege of Cawnpore and the retaking of rebel held cities as in the Siege of Delhi also passed into history.

Isolated uprisings also occurred at military posts in the centre of the subcontinent. The last major sepoy rebels surrendered on June 21, 1858, at Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh), one of the principal centres of the revolt. A final battle was fought at Sirwa Pass on May 21, 1859, and the defeated rebels fled into [Nepal](#).

Aftermath of the 1857 Rebellion and the formal initiation of the Raj

The rebellion was a major turning point in the history of modern [India](#). In May 1858, the British exiled Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar II (r. 1837–1857) to Rangoon, [Burma](#) (now Yangon, [Myanmar](#)), after executing most of his family, thus formally liquidating the [Mughal Empire](#). Bahadur Shah Zafar, known as the Poet King, contributed some of [Urdu](#)'s most beautiful poetry^[6], with the underlying theme of the freedom struggle^[7]. The Emperor was not allowed to return and died in solitary confinement in 1862. The Emperor's three sons, also involved in the 1857 Rebellion, were arrested and shot in [Delhi](#) by Major William Stephen Raikes Hodson of the British Indian Army.

Cultural and religious centres were closed down, properties and estates of those participating in the uprising were confiscated. At the same time, the British abolished the [British East India Company](#) and replaced it with direct rule under the British Crown. In proclaiming the new direct-rule policy to "the Princes, Chiefs, and Peoples of India," [Queen Victoria](#) (upon whom the British Parliament conferred the title "Empress of India" in 1877) promised equal treatment under British law, which never materialized.

Many existing economic and revenue policies remained virtually unchanged in the post-1857 period, but several administrative modifications were introduced, beginning with the creation in [London](#) of a cabinet post, the Secretary of State for India. The [governor-general](#) (called *viceroy* when acting as representative to the nominally sovereign "princely states" or "native states"), headquartered in [Calcutta](#), ran the administration in India, assisted by executive and legislative councils. Beneath the governor-general were the governors of Provinces of India, who held power over the division and district officials, who formed the lower rungs of the Indian Civil Service. For decades the Indian Civil Service was the exclusive preserve of the British-born, as were the superior ranks in such other professions as law and medicine. This continued until the 1880s when a small but steadily growing number of native-born Indians, educated in British schools on the Subcontinent or in Britain, were able to assume such positions. However, a proposal by Viceroy Ripon and Courtenay Ilbert in 1883 that Indian members of the Civil Service have full rights to preside over trials involving white defendants in criminal cases sparked an ugly racist backlash. Thus an attempt to further include Indians in the system and give them a greater stake in the Raj, ironically, instead exposed the racial gap that already existed, sparking even greater Indian nationalism and reaction against British rule.

The [Viceroy](#) announced in 1858 that the government would honor former treaties with princely states and renounced the "Doctrine of Lapse," whereby the East India Company had annexed territories of rulers who died without male heirs. About 40 percent of Indian territory and 20–25 percent of the population remained under the control of 562 princes notable for their religious ([Islamic](#), [Hindu](#), [Sikh](#) and other) and ethnic diversity. Their propensity for pomp and ceremony became proverbial, while their domains, varying in size and wealth, lagged behind socio-political transformations that took place elsewhere in British-controlled India. A more thorough re-organization was effected in the constitution of army and government finances. Shocked by the extent of solidarity among Indian soldiers during the rebellion, the



government separated the army into the three presidencies. The Indian Councils Act of 1861 restored legislative powers to the Presidencies (elite provinces), which had been given exclusively to the governor-general by the Charter Act of 1833.

British attitudes toward Indians shifted from relative openness to insularity and [racism](#), even against those with comparable background and achievement as well as loyalty. British families and their servants lived in cantonments at a distance from Indian settlements. Private clubs where the British gathered for social interaction became symbols of exclusivity and snobbery that refused to disappear decades after the British had left India. In 1883 the government of India attempted to remove race barriers in criminal jurisdictions by introducing a bill empowering Indian judges to adjudicate offences committed by Europeans. Public protests and editorials in the British press, however, forced the viceroy George Robinson, First Marquess of Ripon, (who served from 1880 to 1884), to capitulate and modify the bill drastically. The Bengali "Hindu intelligentsia" learned a valuable political lesson from this "white mutiny": the effectiveness of well-orchestrated agitation through demonstrations in the streets and publicity in the media when seeking redress for real and imagined grievances.

Effects on economy

Some of the modernization associated with the [industrial revolution](#) did benefit India during this period. Foreign investors set up jute mills around [Calcutta](#), and Indian merchants set up [cotton textile](#) factories in Gujrat and around Bombay. However, this was accompanied by the collapse of traditional industry, which was faced with the ferocious competition of cheap British-made goods. When the British arrived to India for trading, a prosperous India accounted for more than 17 percent of the world GDP, but when the British left India in 1947, it is believed that India accounted for less than one percent of the world [Gross Domestic Product](#).

Post-1857 India also experienced a period of unprecedented calamity when the region was swept by a series of frequent and devastating famines, among the most catastrophic on record. Approximately 25 major [famines](#) spread through states such as Tamil Nadu in South India, Bihar in the north, and Bengal in the east in the latter half of the nineteenth century, killing 30–40 million Indians.

Contemporary observers of the famines such as Romesh Dutt as well as present-day scholars such as Amartya Sen attributed the famines both to uneven rainfall and British economic and administrative policies, which since 1857 had led to the seizure and conversion of local farmland to foreign-owned plantations, restrictions on internal trade, inflationary measures that increased the price of food, and substantial exports of staple crops from India to the United Kingdom [\[8\]\[9\]\[10\]\[11\]](#). On the other hand some other scholars have argued that, whilst the [famines](#) may have been exacerbated by British policy, they were primarily caused by [drought](#) and ecological factors.[\[12\]\[13\]](#)

Some British citizens such as William Digby agitated for policy reforms and better famine relief, but Robert Bulwer-Lytton, 1st Earl of Lytton, son of the poet Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 1st Baron Lytton and the governing British viceroy in India, opposed such changes in the belief that they would stimulate shirking by Indian workers. The famines continued until independence in 1947, with the Bengal Famine of 1943–1944—among the most devastating—killing three–four million Indians during [World War II](#). Famine relief methods were inefficient as they often involved making undernourished people do heavy labor on public works. However, there were some famines (ex. 1874 and 1907) in which English officials acted effectively. During the famine of 1897–1902 the [Curzon](#) administration spent £10,000,000 (money of the day) and at its peak 4,500,000 people were on famine relief. From the 1880s onwards British administrators built a series of [irrigation](#) canals in India, much of it for the purpose of famine prevention.[\[14\]](#) After 1902 there was not a single famine in India

until 1943 in Bengal. 'What the British added was above all the power of a unified an authoritarian state, which acted because it saw the danger of drought and famine to its rule'.^[15] After the major famines the British government conducted "serious investigations"^[16] into the famine. Lord Lytton's administration was particularly negligent when it came to famine relief, with disastrous results. It was Lord Lytton's belief that market forces would see that food got into famine stricken areas, therefore government aid would not be necessary and in fact would inhibit famine relief efforts (Niall Ferguson, *Empire* and Lady Beatty Balfour, *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*). As a result of the calamity of 1877 Lord Lytton lost his job but not before he established the Famine Insurance Grant. The results of this was that the British prematurely assumed that the problem of famine had been solved forever^[17]. This, sadly, proved not to be the case and the complacency that resulted from it contributed to the lack of action by the Elgin^[18]. Curzon abhorred the seeming indifference many Britons at home had towards famine in India^[19]. 'It was the tragedy of 1876-1878 that led to the establishment of a general famine commission under Richard Strachey and the consequent adoption of a famine code'^[20] A famine code was not adopted in Bengal however, which contributed to the disaster in 1943. In order to limit the effects of famine "Successive British governments were anxious not to add to the burden of taxation"^[21]. The twenty-first century Indian legal system, India's governmental structure, the national capital, and the railway network (the world's biggest employer) all remain substantially influenced by the British period. The predominance of the English language in India, has also proved to be a critical advantage for Indian tourism, call centres and [computer software](#) developers. As a direct result of former ties between the UK and India, substantial numbers of Indian nationals have been allowed to emigrate to the UK. For several decades this large community has imported Indian products to sell in the wider British market, has sent remittances home and has invested British earned capital in Indian business ventures.

Beginnings of self-government

The first steps were taken toward self-government in British India in the late 19th century with the appointment of Indian counsellors to advise the British viceroy and the establishment of provincial councils with Indian members; the British subsequently widened participation in legislative councils with the Indian Councils Act of 1892. Municipal Corporations and District Boards were created for local administration; they included elected Indian members.

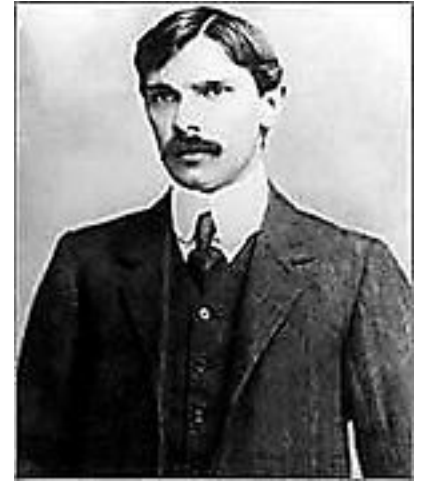
The Government of India Act of 1909—also known as the Morley-Minto Reforms (John Morley was the secretary of state for India, and Gilbert Elliot, fourth earl of Minto, was viceroy)—gave Indians limited roles in the central and provincial legislatures, known as legislative councils. Indians had previously been appointed to legislative councils, but after the reforms some were elected to them.

At the centre, the majority of council members continued to be government-appointed officials, and the viceroy was in no way responsible to the legislature. At the provincial level, the elected members, together with unofficial appointees, outnumbered the appointed officials, but responsibility of the governor to the legislature was not contemplated. Morley made it clear in introducing the legislation to the British Parliament that parliamentary self-government was not the goal of the British government.



The Morley-Minto Reforms were a milestone. Step by step, the elective principle was introduced for membership in Indian legislative councils. The "electorate" was limited, however, to a small group of upper-class Indians. These elected members increasingly became an "opposition" to the "official government." Communal electorates were later extended to other communities and made a political factor of the Indian tendency toward group identification through religion.

For Muslims it was important both to gain a place in all-India politics and to retain their Muslim identity, objectives that required varying responses according to circumstances, as the example of Muhammed Ali Jinnah illustrates. Jinnah, who was born in 1876, studied law in England and began his career as an enthusiastic liberal in Congress on returning to India. In 1913 he joined the Muslim League, which had been shocked by the 1911 annulment of the partition of Bengal into cooperating with Congress to make demands on the British. Jinnah continued his membership in Congress until 1919. During this dual membership period, he was described by a leading Congress spokesperson, Mrs. [Sarojini Naidu](#), as the "ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity."



After World War I

A number of factors influenced the evolution of the Raj's India policy during and after [World War I](#). Before and during the war, militant movements had been on the rise, and during the war, massive efforts had been made by the Germans, along with expatriate Indian groups like Ghadar and the Berlin Committee to destabilize British India. During the war, the revolutionary movement in Bengal was significant enough to nearly paralyze the local administration. This militancy was, however, on its wane by the end of the war. Further, India's important contributions to the efforts of the [British Empire](#) in [World War I](#) stimulated further expectations and demands within India for political progress, and found response from Montagu, the newly appointed and liberal Secretary of State for India. The Congress Party and the Muslim League met in joint session in December 1916. Under the leadership of Jinnah and Pandit Motilal Nehru (father of [Jawaharlal Nehru](#)), unity was preached and a proposal for constitutional reform was made that included the concept of separate electorates. The resulting Congress-Muslim League Pact [\[22\]](#) (often referred to as the Lucknow Pact) was a sincere effort to compromise. Congress accepted the separate electorates demanded by the Muslim League, and the Muslim League joined with Congress in demanding self-government. The pact was expected to lead to permanent and constitutional united action.

In August 1917 the British government formally announced a policy of "increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire." Constitutional reforms were embodied in the Government of India Act 1919, also known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (Edwin Samuel Montagu was the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for India; the Viscount Chelmsford was viceroy). These reforms represented the maximum concessions the British were prepared to make at that time. The franchise was extended, and increased authority was given to central and provincial legislative councils, but the viceroy remained responsible only to London.

The changes at the provincial level were significant, as the provincial legislative councils contained a considerable majority of elected members. In a system called "dyarchy," based on an approach developed by Lionel Curtis, the nation-building departments of government—agriculture, education, public works, and the like—were placed under ministers who were individually responsible to the legislature. The departments that made up the "steel frame" of British rule—finance, revenue, and home affairs—were retained by executive councillors who were often (but not always) British, and

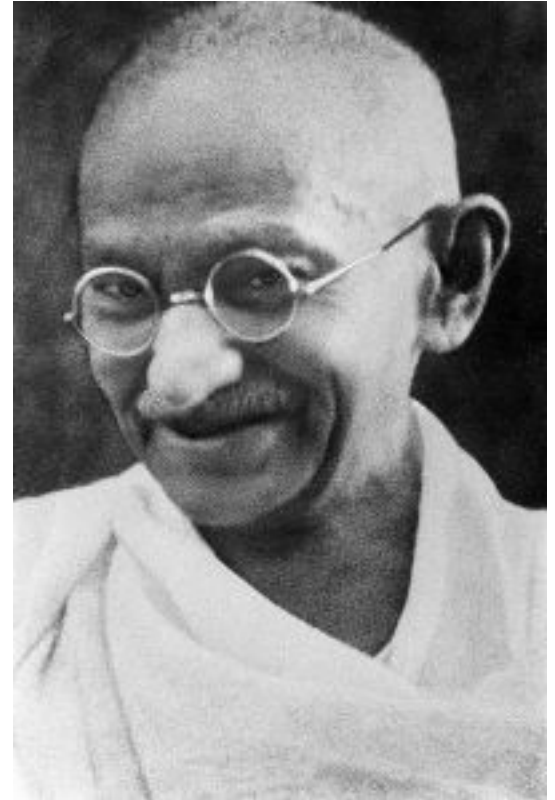
who were responsible to the governor. The act indirectly increased the number of elected Indian members in district boards and municipal corporations, since the authority to regulate local government bodies was placed in the hands of the popularly elected ministers, whose constituents naturally wanted more democracy. Later, tariff protection was finally given to Indian industry.

The 1919 reforms did not satisfy political demands in India. The presence of Indian nationalists in Afghanistan and the remnants of the terrorist movements in Punjab and Bengal (which, unrealized by the Raj, was declining), along with popular unrest in the midst of economic depression in the post-war scenario (including strikes by mill workers in Bombay and similar labor unrests in the rest of the country) necessitated the institution of the Rowlatt Commission to investigate the German and [Bolshevik](#) links to these unrests, especially in Punjab and Bengal. British repressed opposition and re-enacted restrictions on the press and on movement. An apparently unwitting example of violation of rules against the gathering of people led to the massacre at Jalianwala Bagh in Amritsar in April 1919. This tragedy galvanized such political leaders as [Jawaharlal Nehru](#) (1889 – 1964) and [Mohandas Karamchand "Mahatma" Gandhi](#) (1869 – 1948) and the masses who followed them to press for further action.

The [Allies'](#) post-World War I peace settlement with [Turkey](#) provided an additional stimulus to the grievances of the Muslims, who feared that one goal of the Allies was to end the [caliphate](#) of the [Ottoman](#) sultan. After the end of the [Mughal Empire](#), the Ottoman caliph had become the symbol of Islamic authority and unity to [Muslims](#) in the British Raj. A pan-Islamic movement, known as the Khilafat Movement, spread in India. It was a mass repudiation of Muslim loyalty to British rule and thus legitimated Muslim participation in the Indian nationalist movement. The leaders of the Khilafat Movement used Islamic symbols to unite the diverse but assertive Muslim community on an all-India basis and bargain with both Congress leaders and the British for recognition of minority rights and political concessions.

Muslim leaders from the Deoband and Aligarh movements joined Gandhi in mobilizing the masses for the 1920 and 1921 demonstrations of [civil disobedience](#) and non-cooperation in response to the massacre at Amritsar. At the same time, Gandhi endorsed the Khilafat Movement, thereby placing many Hindus behind what had been solely a Muslim demand.

Despite impressive achievements, however, the Khilafat Movement failed. [Turkey](#) rejected the caliphate and became a secular state. Furthermore, the religious, mass-based aspects of the movement alienated such Western-oriented constitutional politicians as Jinnah, who resigned from Congress. The movement was given a final blow when the Amir of [Afghanistan](#) closed off its borders and many of the participants of the Khilafat movement perished due to lack of food and exposure to the elements. Other Muslims also were uncomfortable with Gandhi's leadership. The British historian **Sir Percival Spear** wrote that: "*a mass appeal in his [Gandhi's](#) hands could not be other than a Hindu one. He could transcend [Hindu caste](#) but not community. The [Hindu](#) devices he used went sour in the mouths of Muslims*". In the final analysis, the movement failed to lay a lasting foundation of Indian unity and served only to aggravate Hindu-Muslim differences among masses that were being politicized. Indeed, as India moved closer to the self-government implied in the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, rivalry over what might be called the spoils of independence sharpened the differences between the communities.



Mahatma Gandhi

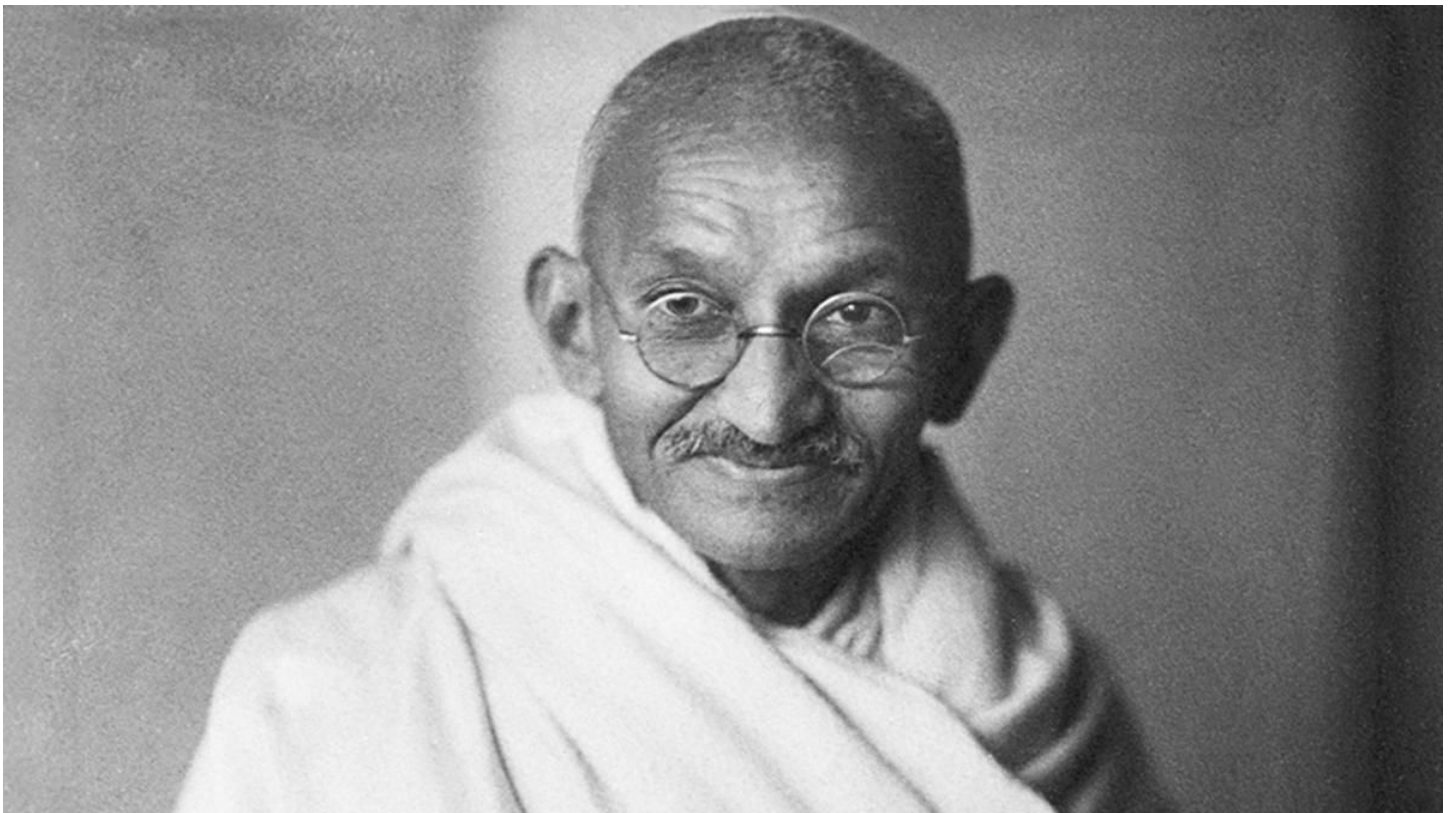
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Anti-War Activist(1869–1948)

Mahatma Gandhi was the primary leader of India's independence movement and also the architect of a form of non-violent civil disobedience that would influence the world.

Who Was Mahatma Gandhi?

Mahatma Gandhi (October 2, 1869 to January 30, 1948) was the leader of India's non-violent independence movement against British rule and in South Africa who advocated for the civil rights of Indians. Born in Porbandar, India, Gandhi studied law and organized boycotts against British institutions in peaceful forms of civil disobedience. He was killed by a fanatic in 1948.



Mahatma Gandhi

Religion and Beliefs

Gandhi grew up worshipping the Hindu god Vishnu and following Jainism, a morally rigorous ancient Indian religion that espoused non-violence, fasting, meditation and vegetarianism.

During Gandhi's first stay in London, from 1888 to 1891, he became more committed to a meatless diet, joining the executive committee of the London Vegetarian Society, and started to read a variety of sacred texts to learn more about world religions.

Living in South Africa, Gandhi continued to study world religions. "The religious spirit within me became a living force," he wrote of his time there. He immersed himself in sacred Hindu spiritual texts and adopted a life of simplicity, austerity, fasting and celibacy that was free of material goods.

Gandhi's Ashram & the Indian Caste System

In 1915 Gandhi founded an ashram in Ahmedabad, India, that was open to all castes. Wearing a simple loincloth and shawl, Gandhi lived an austere life devoted to prayer, fasting and meditation. He became known as "Mahatma," which means "great soul."

In 1932, Gandhi, at the time imprisoned in India, embarked on a six-day fast to protest the British decision to segregate the “untouchables,” those on the lowest rung of India’s caste system, by allotting them separate electorates. The public outcry forced the British to amend the proposal.

Gandhi’s Assassination

In the late afternoon of January 30, 1948, the 78-year-old Gandhi, weakened from repeated hunger strikes, clung to his two grandnieces as they led him from his living quarters in New Delhi’s Birla House to a prayer meeting. Hindu extremist Nathuram Godse, upset at Gandhi’s tolerance of Muslims, knelt before the Mahatma before pulling out a semiautomatic pistol and shooting him three times at point-blank range. The violent act took the life of a pacifist who spent his life preaching nonviolence. Godse and a co-conspirator were executed by hanging in November 1949, while additional conspirators were sentenced to life in prison.

When and Where Was Gandhi Born?

Indian nationalist leader Mahatma Gandhi (born Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi) was born on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, Kathiawar, India, which was then part of the British Empire.

Wife and Family

Mahatma Gandhi’s father, Karamchand Gandhi, served as a chief minister in Porbandar and other states in western India. His mother, Putlibai, was a deeply religious woman who fasted regularly. At the age of 13, Mahatma Gandhi wed Kasturba Makanji, a merchant’s daughter, in an arranged marriage. In 1885, he endured the passing of his father and shortly after that the death of his young baby. In 1888, Gandhi’s wife gave birth to the first of four surviving sons. A second son was born in India 1893; Kasturba would give birth to two more sons while living in South Africa, one in 1897 and one in 1900.

Early Life and Education

Young Gandhi was a shy, unremarkable student who was so timid that he slept with the lights on even as a teenager. In the ensuing years, the teenager rebelled by smoking, eating meat and stealing change from household servants.

Although Gandhi was interested in becoming a doctor, his father had hoped he would also become a government minister, so his family steered him to enter the legal profession. In 1888, 18-year-old Gandhi sailed for London, England, to study law. The young Indian struggled with the transition to Western culture.

Upon returning to India in 1891, Gandhi learned that his mother had died just weeks earlier. He struggled to gain his footing as a lawyer. In his first courtroom case, a nervous Gandhi blanked when the time came to cross-examine a witness. He immediately fled the courtroom after reimbursing his client for his legal fees.

Gandhi in South Africa

After struggling to find work as a lawyer in India, Gandhi obtained a one-year contract to perform legal services in South Africa. In April 1893, he sailed for Durban in the South African state of Natal. When Gandhi arrived in South Africa, he was quickly appalled by the discrimination and racial segregation faced by Indian immigrants at the hands of white British and Boer authorities. Upon his first appearance in a Durban courtroom, Gandhi was asked to remove his turban. He refused and left the court instead. The Natal Advertiser mocked him in print as “an unwelcome visitor.”

A seminal moment in Gandhi’s life occurred days later on June 7, 1893, during a train trip to Pretoria, South Africa, when a white man objected to his presence in the first-class railway compartment, although he had a ticket. Refusing to move to the back of the train, Gandhi was forcibly removed and thrown off the train at a station in Pietermaritzburg. His act of civil disobedience awoke in him a determination to devote himself to fighting the “deep disease of color prejudice.” He vowed that night to “try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process.” From that night forward, the small, unassuming man would grow into a giant force for civil rights. Gandhi formed the Natal Indian Congress in 1894 to fight discrimination.

At the end of his year-long contract, Gandhi prepared to return to India until he learned, at his farewell party, of a bill before the Natal Legislative Assembly that would deprive Indians of the right to vote. Fellow immigrants convinced Gandhi to stay and lead the fight against the legislation. Although Gandhi could not prevent the law’s passage, he drew international attention to the injustice.

After a brief trip to India in late 1896 and early 1897, Gandhi returned to South Africa with his wife and children. Gandhi ran a thriving legal practice, and at the outbreak of the Boer War, he raised an all-Indian ambulance corps of 1,100 volunteers to support the British cause, arguing that if Indians expected to have full rights of citizenship in the British Empire, they also needed to shoulder their responsibilities as well.

Satyagraha and Nonviolent Civil Disobedience

In 1906, Gandhi organized his first mass civil-disobedience campaign, which he called “Satyagraha” (“truth and firmness”), in reaction to the South African Transvaal government’s new restrictions on the rights of Indians, including the refusal to recognize Hindu marriages.

After years of protests, the government imprisoned hundreds of Indians in 1913, including Gandhi. Under pressure, the South African government accepted a compromise negotiated by Gandhi and General Jan Christian Smuts that included recognition of Hindu marriages and the abolition of a poll tax for Indians. When Gandhi sailed from South Africa in 1914 to return home, Smuts wrote, “The saint has left our shores, I sincerely hope forever.” At the outbreak of World War I, Gandhi spent several months in London.

In 1919, with India still under the firm control of the British, Gandhi had a political reawakening when the newly enacted Rowlatt Act authorized British authorities to imprison people suspected of sedition without trial. In response, Gandhi called for a Satyagraha campaign of peaceful protests and strikes. Violence broke out instead, which culminated on April 13, 1919, in the Massacre of Amritsar, when troops led by British Brigadier General Reginald Dyer fired machine guns into a crowd of unarmed demonstrators and killed nearly 400 people. No longer able to pledge allegiance to the British government, Gandhi returned the medals he earned for his military service in South Africa and opposed Britain’s mandatory military draft of Indians to serve in World War I.

Gandhi became a leading figure in the Indian home-rule movement. Calling for mass boycotts, he urged government officials to stop working for the Crown, students to stop attending government schools, soldiers to leave their posts and citizens to stop paying taxes and purchasing British goods. Rather than buy British-manufactured clothes, he began to use a portable spinning wheel to produce his own cloth, and the spinning wheel soon became a symbol of Indian independence and self-reliance. Gandhi assumed the leadership of the Indian National Congress and advocated a policy of non-violence and non-cooperation to achieve home rule.

After British authorities arrested Gandhi in 1922, he pleaded guilty to three counts of sedition. Although sentenced to a six-year imprisonment, Gandhi was released in February 1924 after appendicitis surgery. He discovered upon his release that relations between India’s Hindus and Muslims had devolved during his time in jail, and when violence between the two religious groups flared again, Gandhi began a three-week fast in the autumn of 1924 to urge unity. He remained away from active politics during much of the latter 1920s.

Gandhi and the Salt March

In 1930, Gandhi returned to active politics to protest Britain’s Salt Acts, which not only prohibited Indians from collecting or selling salt—a dietary staple—but imposed a heavy tax that hit the country’s poorest particularly hard. Gandhi planned a new Satyagraha campaign that entailed a 390-kilometer/240-mile march to the Arabian Sea, where he would collect salt in symbolic defiance of the government monopoly.

“My ambition is no less than to convert the British people through non-violence and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India,” he wrote days before the march to the British viceroy, Lord Irwin.

Wearing a homespun white shawl and sandals and carrying a walking stick, Gandhi set out from his religious retreat in Sabarmati on March 12, 1930, with a few dozen followers. By the time he arrived 24 days later in the coastal town of Dandi, the ranks of the marchers swelled, and Gandhi broke the law by making salt from evaporated seawater.

The Salt March sparked similar protests, and mass civil disobedience swept across India.

Approximately 60,000 Indians were jailed for breaking the Salt Acts, including Gandhi, who was imprisoned in May 1930. Still, the protests against the Salt Acts elevated Gandhi into a transcendent figure around the world, and he was named Time magazine’s “Man of the Year” for 1930.

Gandhi was released from prison in January 1931, and two months later he made an agreement with Lord Irwin to end the Salt Satyagraha in exchange for concessions that included the release of thousands of political prisoners. The agreement, however, largely kept the Salt Acts intact, but it did give those who lived on the coasts the right to harvest salt from the sea. Hoping that the agreement would be a stepping-stone to home rule, Gandhi attended the London Round Table Conference on Indian constitutional reform in August 1931 as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress. The conference, however, proved fruitless.

India's Independence from Great Britain

Gandhi returned to India to find himself imprisoned once again in January 1932 during a crackdown by India's new viceroy, Lord Willingdon. After his eventual release, Gandhi left the Indian National Congress in 1934, and leadership passed to his protégé Jawaharlal Nehru. He again stepped away from politics to focus on education, poverty and the problems afflicting India's rural areas.

As Great Britain found itself engulfed in World War II in 1942, though, Gandhi launched the "Quit India" movement that called for the immediate British withdrawal from the country. In August 1942, the British arrested Gandhi, his wife and other leaders of the Indian National Congress and detained them in the Aga Khan Palace in present-day Pune. "I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside at the liquidation of the British Empire," Prime Minister Winston Churchill told Parliament in support of the crackdown. With his health failing, Gandhi was released after a 19-month detainment, but not before his 74-year-old wife died in his arms in February 1944.

After the Labour Party defeated Churchill's Conservatives in the British general election of 1945, it began negotiations for Indian independence with the Indian National Congress and Mohammad Ali Jinnah's Muslim League. Gandhi played an active role in the negotiations, but he could not prevail in his hope for a unified India. Instead, the final plan called for the partition of the subcontinent along religious lines into two independent states—predominantly Hindu India and predominantly Muslim Pakistan.

Violence between Hindus and Muslims flared even before independence took effect on August 15, 1947. Afterwards, the killings multiplied. Gandhi toured riot-torn areas in an appeal for peace and fasted in an attempt to end the bloodshed. Some Hindus, however, increasingly viewed Gandhi as a traitor for expressing sympathy toward Muslims.

Legacy

Even after Gandhi's assassination, his commitment to nonviolence and his belief in simple living — making his own clothes, eating a vegetarian diet and using fasts for self-purification as well as a means of protest — have been a beacon of hope for oppressed and marginalized people throughout the world. Satyagraha remains one of the most potent philosophies in freedom struggles throughout the world today, and Gandhi's actions inspired future human rights movements around the globe, including those of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. in the United States and Nelson Mandela in South Africa.