

# Mahatma gandhi and nonviolent resistance essay sample



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In this paper, I would like to examine the movie "Ghandi". Mohandas Gandhi was born in 1869 in India which was a colony of the British Empire. The life of young Mohandas centered on his mother, who taught him about the Hindu doctrine of ahimsa, which is the refusal to do harm and the duty to do good. This belief was foundation for the bold and courageous acts that led to Gandhi's fame as a proponent of nonviolence resistance.

"It is better to be violent, if there is violence in our hearts, than to put on the cloak of nonviolence to cover impotence."

Gandhi's first significant encounter with the discrimination based on the color of his skin occurred, not in his native India but in South Africa. In 1893 as a young attorney he accepted an offer to work for one year for an Indian firm as an attorney. He bought a ticket to travel first class, as was the custom for lawyers. His pleasant journey was interrupted because a white passenger objected to his presence in the first-class compartment. When a conductor asked Gandhi to move to the luggage compartment, Gandhi refused, stating that he had a first-class ticket. The conductor called a policeman, who pulled him out of the first-class compartment and ordered him to go to the rear compartment. Gandhi again refused and was dumped off the train along with his luggage; he was forced to sit all night in a cold waiting room. This incident painfully introduced Gandhi to the indignities that Indians in South Africa and India have endured. "Victory attained by violence is tantamount to a defeat, for it is momentary."

Despite the violence and beatings, Gandhi insisted that the correct response was love for the opposition. His ability to maintain the loyalty of followers

from the diverse segments of Indian society won him deep respect. Gandhi made plans to lead a raid on government salt mine. Not long before the scheduled raid, he was arrested; but his followers carried out his plans. The raid, which resulted in violence and bloodshed, proved to be a turning point in the movement.

The British government realized that no amount of force was going to completely wipe out the acts of civil disobedience. World opinion brought pressure on the government to release Gandhi from jail. A series of meetings between him and the British Viceroy led to a treaty that required compromises on both sides. The treaty was a significant first step toward the ultimate goal of complete independence for India.

“ We may never be strong enough to be entirely nonviolent in thought, word and deed. But we must keep nonviolence as our goal and make strong progress towards it.” (Gandhi)

Gandhi and his followers waged an unrelenting struggle for independence for over a decade, often in the face of violent opposition from the British government. Failing health and numerous jail terms did not deter the courageous efforts of Gandhi. India's long struggle for freedom ended in 1947, when independence was granted. The achievement of independence was hailed as a victory for nonviolent resistance.

Throughout the years of Gandhi's reign his dream was not fulfilled to the extent he had desired. Gandhi was dismayed by Hinduism's treatment of the Muslim minority in India, and by the resulting calls for the creation of a separate Muslim state of Pakistan. Widespread distrust and hatred was

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growing between Hindus and Muslims which still goes on to this day.

Growing up with a mother who is Indian and a father who is Muslim has had many quarrelling. I believe all Gandhi wanted was to embrace each other regardless of their religion or race. On the eve of India's independence, riots erupted all over India. The country became a bloodbath, in which it was estimated that a million lives were lost. The movie gives graphic details, gruesome as it may be it was touching.

Many believed that Gandhi's non-violence had failed. Mohandas K. Gandhi, the "Great Soul," was anything but a failure. In a world seemingly dominated by violence and hatred, Mahatma Gandhi reincarnated the ancient idea of Ahimsa, non-violence, as the only way of living in peace. His example influenced and inspired many later peaceful struggles, such as the civil rights movement of Martin Luther King, Jr. The Apartheid in South Africa, Nelson Mandela was inspired too by Gandhi and made a difference. Despite India's shortcomings, Gandhi never lost faith in Ahimsa, the Hindu doctrine he earned from his mother at a young age about peace, love and faith.

## References

Erickson, Erik H. *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1969

Schechter, Betty. *The Peaceable Revolution*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963.

Fischer, Louis. *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*. 7th ed. India: Bhavan, 1998.

## Links

Mahatma Gandhi: The Complete Information – provides information on his

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philosophies, struggles, biography etc. This site also has the beginnings of an internet edition of his collected works.