

2

THE TRANSFORMATION OF M.K. GANDHI - Phase I

Key Concepts

- Early childhood and school days in India

Family Background

School Days of Mohandas -
Karamchand Gandhi

The kettle incident

- Student Life in London

London Vegetarian Society

Theosophical influences

Religious Influences on M.K. Gandhi

Hinduism

Buddhism

Jainism

Christianity

Islam

Impact of London life on Mohandas
Karamchand Gandhi

- M.K. Gandhi as a barrister in India

- Influences

Srimad Rajchandra

(Raychand)

Gopalakrishna Gokhale

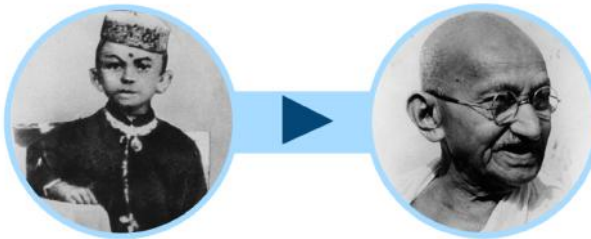
This Chapter discusses the transformation of Moniya (the pet name of M.K. Gandhi) to 'Mahatma'.

Early Childhood and School days in India

Let us recall the main features of Indian culture, heritage and civilization discussed in the first chapter. Discuss and list them.

- Spirituality
- Oneness and Wellness of all
- Cultural and religious pluralism
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These cultural specialties and rich heritage of India had a direct impact on Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in his transformation towards Mahatma Gandhi. If we analyse Mahatma Gandhi's life and philosophy we can trace the elements of these influences in his words, thoughts and deeds.





Let us check

Write at least two values that you have already acquired in life from your culture, tradition, parents or family.

- 1.
- 2.

Compare your answers with that of your partner.

Family background

Everyone is influenced by their family background, parents, close relatives and friends, their culture, religion, education and the period in which they live. In the case of Mahatma Gandhi these have been unique and significant.

Today modern behavioural scientists and developmental psychologists endorse the influence of parenting and early familial experiences in the formation of one's personality. For Gandhi his family was a blessing with Karamchand Gandhi and Putlibai as his parents.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2 October 1869 in Porbandar in Kathiawad. He belongs to the Baniya caste of the Vysya Varna. Gandhi's grandparents were known for their honesty, simplicity and loyalty. Gandhi's grandfather Uttamchand Gandhi was the Diwan of Porbandar. Later he quit the post due to some differences with the then Queen of Porbandar, Roopaliba. He returned to his ancestral village Kuthiyana. He spent his days there in prayer. During that time, the Nawab of Junagadh invited Otha (Uttamchand Gandhi). He saluted the Nawab with his left hand. When asked about this, he told that his right hand was already given to Porbandar. Such was his loyalty towards the native place.

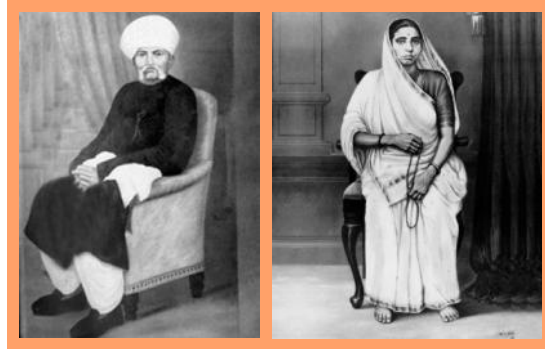
Porbandar – Geographical History

Porbandar was an old sea port town in Saurashtra, now in Gujarat. The word 'Porbandar' comes from 'Porai' and 'Bandar'. The word 'Porai' is the name of the local goddess and 'Bandar' means port or harbour. It is believed that Porbandar is associated with the birth of Sudama - Lord Krishna's friend, it was also known as 'Sudamapuri'.



Let us know

His father Karamchand Gandhi then became the Diwan of Porbandar. He served Porbandar for 28 years. M.K. Gandhi describes his father in his autobiography as follows:



Karamchand Gandhi and Putlibai
(M.K Gandhi's parents)

“My father was a lover of his clan, truthful, brave and generous, but short tempered... My father never had any ambition to accumulate riches and left us very little property. He had no education, save that of experience... But his rich experience of practical affairs stood him in good stead in the solution of the most intricate questions and managing hundreds of men.” These words show that M.K. Gandhi inherited virtues like honesty and practical wisdom from his family.

As Gandhi's father was Diwan, religious men of many faiths used to visit his house. They engaged in religious discussions. M.K. Gandhi used to listen to these discussions with great interest. The unique environment at home had sown the seeds of religious pluralism and tolerance in the mind of young Mohandas. In later years, these influences became the foundation of his firm belief that all religions deserved equal respect.



Let us check

Read a few verses of various religious scriptures in the class and make a note of it.

Mohandas once stole a bit of gold from his brother's bracelet. This was to clear the debt made by his brother. But Gandhi could not stand the pain in deceiving his father who had deep faith in him. He decided to confess to his father in order to clear his conscience. He wrote a confession letter, admitting his guilt. He promised his father that he would never repeat the crime. He also asked to be punished for what he had done. After reading this letter, tears rolled down through his father's cheeks. Gandhi too was in tears. Gandhi felt that his father's tears of forgiveness had cleansed him. For him, it was a good confession. M.K. Gandhi says, “A clean confession, combined with a promise never to commit the sin again, when offered before one who has the right to receive it, is the purest type of repentance.”

M.K. Gandhi later acknowledged that this incident was an object-lesson in *ahimsa* (Non-violence). Gandhi writes in his autobiography: “This was for me, an object-lesson in *ahimsa*. Then I could read in it nothing more than a father’s love, but today I know that it was pure *ahimsa*. When such *ahimsa* becomes all-embracing, it transforms everything it touches. There is no limit to its power.”

M.K. Gandhi’s mother was also deeply religious. She frequently visited temples and took children with her. She led a simple life. She took the hardest vows and practised them.

M.K. Gandhi writes about his mother: “The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness. She was deeply religious. She would not think of taking her meals without her daily prayers.”

This had a lasting influence over Gandhi’s religious outlook such as his faith in God, respect for vows etc. Gandhi formed the image of woman as the embodiment of love and sacrifice from his mother.



Let us check

Identify the influences of your beloved ones (mother, father etc.) on your personality highlighting some similarities with that of Gandhi. Write a report on it.

Activity

Discuss with your partner the childhood fears he/she had? How did he/she overcome them? Share the information with the class.

Let us find out how Mohandas overcame his childhood fears.

Rambha, the old servant in his family, also sowed the seeds of faith in God. Gandhi was afraid of ghosts and spirits in his childhood. Rambha advised him to repeat

‘*Ramanama*’ as a solution for his fear of ghosts. Gandhi later acknowledged that ‘*Ramanama*’ had been sure remedy for him throughout his life.

Another major influence during Mohandas’ childhood was a play about the King Harishchandra. He sacrificed everything for the sake of Truth. Gandhi asked himself, “Why should not all be truthful like Harishchandra?”

Mohandas had always felt a great fascination for Truth. The story of Harishchandra reinforced his faith and determination to stand by Truth.

The story of King Harishchandra



Let us know

The gods wanted to test Harishchandra. They sent a Brahmin to him. The Brahmin asked for alms. He would not be satisfied until the king gave him all that he had including his kingdom. Harishchandra, true to his dharma, parted with all his possessions. He became a slave. He was put in charge of the cremation grounds. His wife left him after taking their son with her. After a while, when the son died the wife brought the corpse to Harishchandra for cremation. But, he insisted on the customary fee which the woman was unable to pay. The gods were pleased with the truthfulness of Harishchandra. They returned the kingdom to him.

M.K. Gandhi read the *Shravana Pitrubhakthi Nataka* (a play about Shravana's devotion to his parents). He read it with great interest. The image of Shravana carrying his blind parents on his shoulders had a deep impact on Mohandas. Gandhi decided to become as loyal to his parents as Shravana and to serve them with dedication and love. Obedience to parents became his motto. For Mohandas, King Harishchandra and Shravana became living models and an inspiration to do better and lead a pure life. They had left an everlasting impact on his personality.

The Story of Shravana



Let us know

When king Dashrath ruled Ayodhya, there lived a boy named Shraavan Kumar. His parents were old and blind. He had to do all the work for them. Shraavan Kumar did everything with earnestness and love. He fulfilled all their wishes. One day, Shraavan Kumar's parents expressed their desire to go on a pilgrimage. As an obedient son, he wanted to fulfill their wish. But, how was he going to do that? He couldn't afford any transportation since he did not have money. He found another way. He took a strong bamboo-stick, tied baskets at its two ends, and placed his parents in those baskets. He, then, started on a pilgrimage carrying the baskets on his shoulder. The parents were very pleased with their son's devotion.

School Days of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

You have come across several real life stories of very young people supporting their parents. What could be the reasons? What qualities would they be developing as part of their personality at this stage? Discuss.

School is one of the most important institutions of socialisation. It had a significant role in forming the behaviour of teenage Gandhi. Teachers and friends greatly influenced M.K. Gandhi. The virtues of Gandhi in his later life had their roots in the school life.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi went to a Primary School in Rajkot in 1876. Later, he attended the Kathiawad High School, Rajkot in 1880, when he was 11 years of age. He was an average student in the class. He had no friends at all. Gandhi never spent more time at school. He never lied. "I do not remember having ever told a lie, during this short period, either to my teachers or to my schoolmates."

Alfred High School

The School was constructed during the British rule and was the first English school in Saurashtra region. It was founded on October 17, 1853. It was originally known as Rajkot English School. It came to be known as Rajkot High School by 1886. The school was named as Alfred High School in 1907 in the memory of Prince Alfred (H.H. Nawab of Junagadh). Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi did his schooling from Alfred High School. After Independence the name of the school was changed to Mohandas High School.



Can you imagine what could be the conditions of a school about hundred and thirty seven years ago in a country like India?

The Rajkot High School where Gandhi studied for seven years, was the ninth English school started in Bombay Presidency (find out from your elders what this was) and the first in Kathiawad (now Saurashtra). It had a good building with benches and desks in classrooms (unlike most other schools of the time). Inside the class-room, the teacher had his seat on a raised dais (or platform) facing the boys. Girls did not attend this school. (In fact, there weren't many schools for girls.)

At the age of 11 years, 2 months and 2 days, the young Mohandas was enrolled in standard I-B. The school fee for standard I was 8 *annas* (50 paise) a month. On week days the school worked from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a recess of an hour from 2-3. On Saturdays it worked for half an hour less. The subjects Gandhi had to study in standard I were arithmetic, Gujarati, history and geography. In geography, he scored zero marks in the first terminal examination of standard I. In English dictation, he got no marks at all. In the same exam his rank was 32nd among the 34 students of his division. At the annual exam, though, he was able to secure the sixth rank in both divisions.

*Adopted from "Mahatma Gandhi as a Student"
edited and compiled by J.M. Upadhyaya.*



Let us discuss what M.K. Gandhi did as a student.

He was not interested in sports and other extracurricular activities. But later he admitted that physical education had its influence on the development of one's personality. Again he was not at all concerned about his handwriting when he was a student. But later he said that good handwriting is the sign of perfect education.

There is an instance in Gandhi's school days where the teacher himself prompted Gandhi to copy down the answer from another student. But Gandhi refused to do so. He showed the purity of character throughout his life right from the very early days.

The 'kettle' incident

One day the Inspector of Schools, Mr. Giles came to the school. He read out five English words to the class and asked the boys to write them down. Mohandas wrote four words correctly, but he could not spell the fifth word 'kettle'. The teacher noticed this and tried to prompt Gandhi to copy the word from his neighbour. But Gandhi could not bring himself to do this. The other boys wrote all the five words correctly. After the Inspector had left, the teacher scolded him. 'I told you to copy from your neighbour,' he said angrily. 'Couldn't you even do that correctly?' Everyone laughed. He could not believe that his teacher who should have been concerned with the truthfulness and character of his students was himself prompting him to cheat.

Activity

Tick (✓) the item(s) in that you have participated so far. Specify the event.

Put 'X' if you have not participated in any of them.

1. Race events
2. Throw events
3. Jump events
4. Any games

Ask your partner the reasons for participation/non-participation. What did he/she gain/lose out of it? Share your findings in the class.

Think and Share

1. If this incident occurs in your life, what will be your reaction?

Activity

Select a patriotic song/poem. Discuss its theme and its influence on you. Sing or recite it in the class.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was also influenced by many songs and poems when he was a student. Let us discuss two such poems and their influences on Gandhi.

M.K. Gandhi was patriotic right from his schooldays. Due to the influence of a popular poem by the Gujarati poet Narmad, and the insistence of his friend, Sheikh Mehtab, Gandhi started eating meat. The poet believed that eating meat was necessary for strength. Gandhi believed that he had to eat meat to become powerful so that he can bring an end to English rule in India. This shows his patriotism. Gandhi continued this for one year. But meat eating was strictly forbidden in his family. Then he realised that it was a great sin to deceive one's own parents. So he stopped meat eating.

Mohandas was also influenced by a poem by Shamal Bhatt. It emphasises returning good for evil. Gandhi said, "A Gujarati didactic stanza likewise gripped my mind and heart. Its precept - return good for evil - became my guiding principle. It became such a passion with me that I began numerous experiments in it."

Poem of Narmad

Behold the mighty Englishman
He rules the Indian small,
Because being a meat-eater
He is five cubits tall.

(From Gandhi's autobiography, P 23)



Let us know

Shamal Bhatt's poem

For a bowl of water give a goodly meal;
For a kindly greeting bow thou down with zeal;
For a simple penny pay thou back with gold;
If thy life be rescued, life do not withhold.
Thus the words and actions of the wise regard;
Every little service tenfold they reward;
But the truly noble know all men as one,
And return with gladness good for evil done."

(Gandhi's autobiography, Page 39, 40)



Let us know

Again M.K. Gandhi pointed out the impact of Shamal Bhatt's poem in following words. "It was from Shamal Bhatt's couplet... that I had first learnt the principle of winning over even an enemy with love."

M.K. Gandhi's marriage took place at the age of 13. He was still a student in the Alfred High School at Rajkot. Kasturba, his wife, was also of the same age. She had never been to school. Recalling the day of their marriage, Gandhi said, "I do not think it meant to me anything more than the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum beating, marriage processions, rich dinners and a strange girl to play with." Later, Gandhi strongly opposed child marriage. According to him it was thoughtless and dangerous. After high school, Mohandas joined the Samaldas College in Bhavnagar. He found the studies difficult. Meanwhile his father died in 1885. A family friend Mauji Deve suggested that if young Gandhi hoped to take his father's place as Diwan in the state service he should become a barrister. He could do the studies in England in three years. Mohandas agreed to this and overcame his mother's objection by taking a solemn vow not to touch wine, women and meat.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was given a send-off by his fellow-students of the Alfred High School, Rajkot, when he was leaving for England. Gandhi in his reply pointed out his intention after his legal studies in London.

"I hope that some of you will follow in my footsteps, and after you return from England you will work wholeheartedly for big reforms in India." In 1888, M.K. Gandhi sailed to England, to study law at University College, London, despite the stiff resistance from elders.

Student Life in London

Let us discuss what M.K. Gandhi did while he was in England as a student.

Gandhi tried to adopt "English" customs and lifestyles in every possible manner. Gandhi

Activity

Observe your friends in the classroom and note down the peculiar appearance of their hair style, dress and accessories. Ask the friend the reason behind the change/modification.

Discussion points

- What is the reason for adopting this style?
- Have you achieved anything out of this?
- Have you lost anything out of this? (money, or time)
- Is it suitable for your culture or family environment? If not, suggest modifications to yourself and your friends.

decided to become an “English gentleman”. So he started practising elocution, western dance and music and French. He began to imitate the British life style. According to Narayan Desai, “Gandhi tried to imitate externally, whom he considered superior. Later Gandhi realised that no one can become civilised just through imitation.”

M.K. Gandhi also advised the Indian students in England how they can survive by economising their needs.

London Vegetarian Society

M.K. Gandhi was influenced by “Plea for Vegetarianism” written by Henry Salt. The book brought a change in his attitude and convinced him that vegetarianism was ideal for man. He became a vegetarian by choice and by conviction.

In the beginning of 1890, M.K. Gandhi came across the periodicals *The Vegetarian Messenger* of Manchester and *The Vegetarian* of London, and the Vegetarian Societies there. He attended the International Vegetarian meeting with Josiah Oldfield. In September Gandhi joined the Vegetarian Society and became a member of its executive committee. On February 20, 1891 Gandhi made his maiden speech at the Vegetarian Society meeting. He started writing articles in *The Vegetarian*, the journal of the Vegetarian Society.



The Vegetarian Society's May Meeting, held at Portsmouth, in 1891.
Front row (left-right): T.T. Mozumdar, Josiah Oldfield, Mohandas K. Gandhi
(From: *The Vegetarian Messenger and Health Review* of September 1936.)

Henry Salt's speech at London Vegetarian Society's Annual Social Meeting on November 20, 1931

“Mr. Gandhi was put under a vow by his mother to abstain from meat. My position was different, since my mother was frantic because of my abstinence, and she thought I would perish.”



Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Henry S. Salt on the London Vegetarian Society's Social Meeting on November 20th, 1931. (© Photo courtesy of Simon Wild from the Jon Wynne-Tyson 'Henry Salt Collection')

Henry Stephens Salt

Born	: 20 September, 1851 in India
Died	: 19 April, 1939.
Studied	: University of Cambridge
Profession	: Writer, ethical vegetarian, socialist, naturalist, pacifist and anti- vivisectionist
Notable works	: 1. A Plea for Vegetarianism, 2. Biography of Henry David Thoreau

He founded 'Humanitarian League' in 1891 to prevent cruelty against animals and to protect animal rights.



Let us know

M.K. Gandhi on Henry Salt

"I launched out in search of a vegetarian restaurant (in London 1887), I would trot ten or twelve miles each day. Go into a cheap restaurant and eat my fill of bread, but would never be satisfied. During these wanderings I once hit a vegetarian restaurant in Farringdon Street. The sight of it filled me with the same joy that a child feels on getting a thing after its own heart. Before I entered I noticed books for sale exhibited under a glass window near the door. I saw among them Salt's *Plea for Vegetarianism*. This I purchased for a shilling and went straight to the dining room. This was my first hearty meal since my arrival in England. . . From the date of reading this book, I may

claim to have become a vegetarian by choice. I blessed the day on which I had taken the vow before my mother. I had all along abstained from meat in the interests of truth and of the vow I had taken, but had wished at the same time that every Indian should be a meat-eater, and had looked forward to being one myself freely and openly some day, and to enlisting others in the cause. The choice was now made in favour of vegetarianism, the spread of which henceforward became my mission.”

Theosophical influences on M.K. Gandhi

Theosophical Society was established in New York in 1875. Gandhi was introduced to Blavatsky and Annie Besant of Theosophical Society in London. He was attracted towards the principles of Theosophy. On March 26, 1891 Gandhi was enrolled as an associate member of London Theosophical Society. Theosophical involvement and acquaintance with many vegetarians in London helped Gandhi in his spiritual development to a great extent.

Theosophical Society



Let us know

Blavatsky, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott and William Quan Judge with several others, founded The Theosophical Society on September 7, 1875.

Objectives of the Theosophical Society

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
2. To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.
3. To investigate unexplained laws of Nature, and the powers latent in man.

The Key to Theosophy (1889) by Madam Blavatsky

This book was a clear exposition in the form of question and answer, on ethics, science and philosophy. Theosophical Society was founded to study these areas. Gandhi read this book while he was in London and was attracted towards the Theosophical Society.

In May, 1882, a large estate was brought at Adayar, near Chennai in South India and The Theosophical Headquarters were moved there by the end of the year.

During 1899 the Theosophical influence led M.K. Gandhi to read Madam Blavatsky's *The Key to Theosophy* and other religious literature including Edwin Arnold's *The Song Celestial*, *The Light of Asia*, the Bhagavat Gita in original and the Bible.

M.K. Gandhi twice heard the speech of Annie Besant, theosophical leader in London. "How I became a Theosophist" was the theme of the speech. Gandhi went to the Queen's Hall in London to hear the speech of Annie Besant. In it she said, "Write the following lines in my epitaph. This Lady lived for Truth and died for Truth. Then I will be the happiest woman". These words had a profound influence on Gandhi.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891)

Born: 12 August, 1831 in the Russian Empire (now Dnipropetrovsk)

Died: 8 May 1891 in London, United Kingdom

Notable works:

1. The Voice of Silence
2. The Secret Doctrine
3. The Key to Theosophy



Let us know

Annie Besant

Born: 1 October, 1847 Clapham, London, United Kingdom

Died: 20 September, 1933, Adyar, Madras Presidency, British India.

Known as Theosophist, Women's rights activist, Writer and orator.

Supporter of Indian Nationalism .

Founded at the Central Hindu College of Benares in 1898.



Let us know

Annie Besant Quotes

"India is a country in which every great religion finds home".

"The destruction of India's village system was the greatest of England's blunders"

"Refusal to believe until proof is given is a rational position; denial of all outside of our own limited experience is absurd"



Let us know

Religious influences on M.K. Gandhi

M.K. Gandhi was raised as a Hindu and never left that tradition. Yet he was also open to other influences. As a youth he absorbed much from the Jain tradition. It was popular in his native state of Gujarat. When he studied law

in London in the early 1890s, he developed a great interest in Christianity, especially in the New Testament. As a young lawyer in South Africa, he became the leader of the movement for legal rights for all Indian people living there, the Muslims as well as the Hindus. He received help from some Jewish friends too. This was the setting in which he first experimented with what he called Satyagraha. But he soon recognised that, for him, political action had to be rooted in religious truth. Since his movement embraced Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Jews, he developed a deeper appreciation for the resources of all these traditions.

Influence of Hinduism

“No country but India and any religion but Hinduism could have given birth to a Gandhi”, said the editorial in the London Times on the day Gandhi’s assassination (From the preface of ‘Mahatma Gandhi’ Essays and Reflections by S.Radhakrishnan).

Hinduism remained the foundation and framework of all his thought and life. Being born into an orthodox Hindu family, Gandhi was deeply influenced by the religious atmosphere in Kathiawad. The two epics of Hindu religion, the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha left a lasting impact on Gandhi’s mind. He listened to the reading of Tulasidas’ Ramayana at the age of 13. Reading of Ramayana left a deep impression on me before my father. That laid the foundation of my deep devotion to the Ramayana. Today I regard the Ramayana of Tulasidas as the greatest book in all devotional literature.” For Gandhi, the Bhagavat Gita conveyed the message of triumph of good over evil. He was influenced by the relevance of detached duty and purity of means in the Bhagavat Gita.

M.K. Gandhi was introduced to the Bhagavat Gita by Edwin Arnold’s “*The Song Celestial*”. Gandhi read this translation of the Bhagavat Gita and became greatly interested in it. He read the original Bhagavat Gita and was enchanted by the beauty of it.

According to him, ‘Bhagavat Gita is the essence of Hinduism’. The ‘Nishkama karma’ propounded by the Gita attracted him. He said, ‘it opened to me a new view of life’. It became Gandhi’s spiritual dictionary. The Hindu belief in the oneness of all life confirmed and sustained his faith in *ahimsa* (non-violence). According to Gandhi, in it there is a room for the worship of all the prophets of the world. He says ;

*"...a work which persons of all faiths can read,
It does not favour any sectarian view.
It teaches nothing but pure ethics."*

M.K. Gandhi says "It was through the Hindu religion that I learnt to respect Christianity and Islam." "I am a Hindu because it is Hinduism which makes the world worth living. I am a Hindu hence I love not only human beings, but all living beings." (Young India, January 12, 1926)

"Hinduism is like the Ganga, pure and unsullied at its source but in its course the impurities in the way. Even like the Ganga it is beneficent in its total effect. It takes a provincial form in every province, but the inner substance is retained everywhere." (Young India, 3.4.1926)

Influence of Buddhism

M.K. Gandhi was acquainted with the life and teachings of Buddha from Edwin Arnold's book, *The Light of Asia*. Buddha's life of renunciation and his doctrine of compassion and tolerance had influenced Gandhi. For 'Gandhi, Buddha was a reformer of Hinduism. He admitted that he was influenced by the teachings of Buddha'. According to Gandhi, "I am trying my level best to follow Buddha's life."

Sir Edwin Arnold

Born : June 10, 1832, Gravesend, United Kingdom

Died : March 24, 1904

Profession : journalist, editor, poet and teacher.

Nationality : English

In 1856 he came to India as the Principal of the Government Sanskrit College, Puna, a post he held for seven years, which included a period during the first war of Indian independence in 1857.

He was of the view that "There is no caste in blood"

Notable works: 1. The Light of Asia, 2. The Song Celestial



Let us know

The **Noble Eightfold Path** is one of the main teachings of Buddha. He described it as the way leading to happiness and self-awakening.

Influence of Jainism

Gujarat has a rich history of Jainism. Gujarat is the region which gave birth to great Jain sanyasis like Acharya Hemachandra, Acharya Sheel Gun Soori, Shrimad Raj Chandra, Kanaji Swami and others.

Kathiawad was greatly influenced by Jainism. So was Mahatma Gandhi. He was influenced by the overall Jain environment of his native place, his mother Putalibai's affiliation to Jainism and his friendship with the great Jain philosopher Shrimad Rajchandra.

Gandhi adopted all the five vows of Jainism for laymen, with a higher degree. The vows include Non-violence, Truth, Non-stealing, Non-possession and Celibacy.

But beyond that, he seems to be a true Jain when we consider his braveness. We do not see any instance in which he behaved like a coward. He was a brave man without a weapon, throughout his life. Another great influence of Jainism on Gandhi was simplicity in life and simple dress code.

Mahatma Gandhi was very much influenced by the *PanchamaVritas* of Jainism. Gandhi was also influenced by the three Retnas (Jewels) of Jainism. Gandhi says "No religion of the world has explained the principle of non-violence so deeply and systematically, with its applicability in life as in Jainism...Bhagawan Mahaveera is sure to be respected as the greatest authority of non-violence."

Influence of Christianity

Gandhi was introduced to the Holy Bible when he was in England. He was influenced by the New Testament. According to him, "But the New Testament produced a different impression especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart. I compared it with the Gita. The verses, 'But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man take away thy coat let him have thy cloak too', delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind Shamal Bhatt's 'For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal', etc. My young mind tried to unify the teaching on the Gita, *The Light of Asia* and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly." Gandhi insisted always that Jesus occupied in his heart the place of one of the greatest teachers who had a considerable influence in his life ... Gandhi often affirmed: "It is that sermon which has endeared Jesus to me."

But what did Jesus mean to Gandhi? He says "I regard Jesus as a great teacher of humanity". What really attracted Gandhi to Jesus' life and message is the aspect of Jesus' suffering. Suffering for others form one of the pillars of Gandhi's message to the world. It is worth noting that Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence - *satyagraha* has three principles: Truth- *Sat/Satya*, Non-violence- *Ahimsa* and self-suffering- *Tapasya*. These are called the pillars of Satyagraha. Failure to grasp them is a handicap to the understanding of Gandhi's non-violence. Gandhi saw all these principles in Jesus' life and the one that really attracted him was the third aspect that is *Tapasya* - willingness to self-sacrifice or suffering. Gandhi declares: "the example of Jesus' suffering is a factor in the composition of my undying faith in nonviolence which rules all my actions, worldly and temporal." Jesus for him was the prince of *satyagrahis*.

Influence of Islam

The meaning of the word Islam is peace. Gandhi read "*Heroes and Hero Worship*", by Thomas Carlyle when he was in London. Gandhi wrote, "I read the chapter on the Hero as prophet and learnt of the Prophet's greatness and bravery and austere living." He was influenced by the concept like non-exploitation, justice and charity in the Holy Koran. Islam is against caste system. The aim of life according to the Holy Koran is happiness and well-being of the individual. It also preached religious tolerance and universal love.



Let us check

What are the influences of various religions in Gandhi's life?
Discuss in groups and make a report.

Impact of London life on Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

- Became a vegetarian by choice.
- Acquired good command over English language.
- Developed skills in writing and publishing articles.
- Internalised organisational skills and techniques.
- Came in contact with progressive movements.
- Became familiar with scriptures of various religions.
- Became more spiritual.

- Became a barrister
- Passed the London University Examinations in English, Latin, French, Mechanics, Chemistry, Physics, History, Geography, and Mathematics
- Became familiar with the English life style and Modern civilisation
- Practised punctuality
- Started writing diary about daily life.
- Interacted with thinkers and writers like Sidney James Webb and George Bernard Shaw.
- Came in contact with philosophers like Edward Carpenter, Madam Blavatsky and Annie Besant

Activity

Select five most important impacts from the list and rank them from 1-5. Discuss in group and present it in the class.

The transformation of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to Mahatma was the outcome of so many influences. India's cultural heritage, civilization, his family background, childhood experiences, school and his three years' stay in London are some of them. Gandhi was initially shy by nature. But in London his shyness did not stop him from learning new things. He engaged in debates and social activities with great interest.



Let us check

Discuss various influences and their impact on the transformation of M.K. Gandhi.

M.K. Gandhi as a Barrister in India

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to India on June 12, 1891. The death of his mother was his first shock. Later he enrolled in Bombay High Court in May, 1892. But the first case itself was a failure to Gandhi.

He returned to Rajkot and helped his brother Lakshmidas. He was asked to make a recommendation for his brother before E.B.K. Olivent, the Political Agent. Gandhi had known him while he was in London. But Olivent was angry and furious towards Mohandas because his brother Lakshmidas was guilty. He insulted Gandhi for trying to persuade him. After this incident, Gandhi decided not to exploit friendship for anybody.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi became unhappy about his life in India. He eagerly wished to get out of India. At that point of time he got an offer from Dada Abdulla & Company in South Africa for a period of one year. He took the offer and proceeded to South Africa in 1893 at the age of 24.

Influences

Rajchandra (Raychand)

The famous Jain philosopher Shrimad Rajchandra was one of the best friends of M.K. Gandhi. Rajchandra was a genius with deep knowledge of Jain philosophy. Gandhi met him when he returned from England. Raychand was a man of great character. He was also known as 'Shatavadhani', (one having the faculty of remembering or attending to a hundred things simultaneously). He had a wide knowledge of scriptures. Gandhi realised the spiritual wisdom of Raychand from his speeches and articles on religion and God. Gandhi discussed the concept of self-realisation and the passion to see God face to face with Raychand. When Gandhi was in South Africa, he sent a long questionnaire to Shrimad Rajchandra. The questionnaire had 27 questions which were promptly answered by Shrimad Rajchandra. Gandhi admitted the influence of Raychand in his spiritual development in his autobiography.

Gopalakrishna Gokhale

M.K. Gandhi acknowledged Gokhale as his political guru. Gokhale treated Gandhi as his younger brother. Gandhi was greatly influenced by Gokhale's style of work. According to Gandhi, 'To see Gokhale at work was as much as a joy as education.' Gokhale never wasted a minute and he always worked for his countrymen. He was very much concerned about India's poverty. Gokhale's spirit of freedom attracted Gandhi. In general, the personality, life style, practical wisdom, the simplicity of Gokhale influenced M.K. Gandhi very much and helped him shape his own personality.



Summary

- The transformation of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to Mahatma was the result of his numerous experiments with truth.
- The cultural uniqueness of India, family background, parents, education in India, London, and other influences have contributed to his transformation.
- In London M.K. Gandhi read numerous books including scriptures of various religions.
- M.K. Gandhi had numerous discussions with thinkers, writers and social activists which contributed to his intellectual development.
- M.K. Gandhi came in contact with progressive ideas and movements while in London. This is a significant stage in his inner transformation.
- M.K. Gandhi had acquired inner strength and developed convictions in the first phase of his transformation to Mahatma during this period.



I can

- explain how the family background and parenting influenced Gandhi in the formation of his personality.
- draw out the role of Truth and Non-violence from Gandhi's early experiences.
- analyse the early childhood and student life of M.K. Gandhi.
- identify various London influences and their impact on M.K. Gandhi.
- explain how London Vegetarian Society helped Gandhi to overcome his shyness and develop leadership qualities in M.K. Gandhi.
- evaluate various influences and its impact on transformation of M.K. Gandhi.
- identify various religious influences and its impact on Gandhi.
- explain the influences of Rajchandra and Gopalakrishna Gokhalae on M.K. Gandhi.



Let us assess

1. The cultural specialties and rich heritage of India had a direct impact on Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in his transformation towards Mahatma Gandhi. Evaluate.
2. Everyone is influenced by their family background, parents, close relatives and friends, culture, religion, education and the period in which they live. In the case of Mahatma Gandhi this has been unique and significant. Analyse.
3. Gandhi writes in his autobiography: "This was for me, an object-lesson in ahimsa. Then I could read in it nothing more than a father's love, but today I know that it was pure ahimsa." Identify the incident and say how will it be an object lesson for you?
4. For Mohandas, King Harishchandra and Shrivastava became living models and an inspiration to do better and lead a pure life. How is their influence reflected in Gandhi's life and ideology?
5. The 'kettle' incident shows that Mohandas never made a compromise with his basic principles even when he was a school student. Comment on this with reference to Mr. Giles' school inspection.
6. "Mr. Gandhi was put under a vow by his mother to abstain from meat. My position was different, since my mother was frantic because of my abstinence, and she thought I would perish." This was Henry Salt's speech at London Vegetarian Society's Annual Social Meeting on November 20, 1931. How did Gandhi become a messenger of vegetarianism?
7. "It was through the Hindu religion that I learnt to respect Christianity and Islam." Evaluate how the Hindu religious values influenced M.K. Gandhi?