

**British rule in India:** This followed on from commercial and trading activity, and traders who started with exploitation became controllers of people (imperialists) from the late 1700s as Muslim rule declined. The East India Company controlled trade with British military defence and government support but the Empire began in earnest with the end of the East India Company in 1858. Most villagers were left in hopelessness but intelligent Indians saw a possible career path through the government of India and throughout the Empire. Only a few Indians benefited from an English style of education and civil service careers, and the rest experienced great discrimination on racial grounds. Indians who worked for the British were poorly paid and there was continuing poverty through India. British ideals of fair play did not apply to Indians as it did to the outside British rulers. Relationships between the British and Indians resulting in children were very frowned upon. Many urban and intelligent Indians protested, and rebels and crowds threatening British rule were treated harshly. Britain left India in 1947.

Gandhi wrote on British rule: *Little do the town dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they can get for the work they do as foreign exploiter, that the profits and brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realise that the government established by law in British India is carried on for the exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures, can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye.*

**Gandhi's religion:** Gandhi's main religious influence as a guru figure was Rajchandra Ravjibhai Mehta, or Raychandbhai. He was a Jain first met in 1891. He was both spiritual regarding Jainism and in this world as a jeweller and businessman. Gandhi met many Christian missionaries in South Africa, but who were less strident than those in India when he was a boy. He could not accept their insistence salvation through Jesus alone. It went against his Hindu pluralism of the divine and Moksha as liberation from lives rather than sin. He was urged by Muslims to read the Qur'an, and did so, but preferred the Sufi view in 1907 in *Indian Opinion* that God was in the heart, not the cross, temple, Kandahar, Herat, hill or cave. When Theosophists asked for help regarding Hinduism, he learnt the Bhagavad Gita off by heart brushing his teeth every morning. In 1894 Gandhi returned to Raychandbhai for advice and guidance, and took from Jainism the value of working in your own tradition, that truth is many sided, working out the dharma in the world, and ahimsa (disciplined resistance). Thus the Bhagavad Gita was Gandhi's main spiritual source and yet also learnt from Thoreau on civil disobedience and on Tolstoy changing love into practical action. Gandhi used different words for God but used Truth increasingly, but did not indulge in the many gods of Hinduism. People should work on their karma as soon as possible, meaning working out truth in action, to release the divine within. By 1906 he was becoming religiously active, whereas he had not been, so that he removed matters that were not important to this quest. This meant service and truth as well as the Jain model of renunciation.

Gandhi followed:

SATYAGRAHA (adherence to the truth in love)

AHIMSA (non-harming truthful resistance)

SARVODAYA (welfare for all)

BRAHMACARYA (total self-control)

**Upanishads and Gita:** 1000-500 BCE, majority in 500s when Buddhism and Jainism emerged. Some Upanishads written in 1500s. Traditionally 108 but 225 known. Atman first meant breath/ wind, and then cosmic to individual principle. Humans should become fully aware of the illusory nature of this world to free the Atman to Brahman. These are old Upanishad ideas because it is in the Aitereya Upanishad (linked to Rig-Veda, which has microcosm to macrocosm in the universe) and Katha Upanishad. The Mundaka Upanishad looks at Brahman and Mandaknaya Upanishad tackles OM. The Bhagavad Gita 2000 years old develops the connection into duty and is a book of choices and became a book of Indian nationality and independence.

**Hinduism and discrimination:** Hinduism has a potent discriminatory past into the present. The caste system did conveniently order society into roles. These

were the Varnas: Brahmin (priests and religious teachers, close to Moksha), Kshatriya (kings, warriors and aristocrats), Vaishya (traders, merchants and professionals), Sudra (workers and servants). Then there are Harijans or untouchables, of concern to Gandhi and recruitment targets for Buddhists. The religion has phases of working against caste, for example when Buddhism and Jainism was active, and Sikhism grew, and in modern movements as with Gandhi. Modern India outlawed caste for economy and society but it does continue in family and religious identities.

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