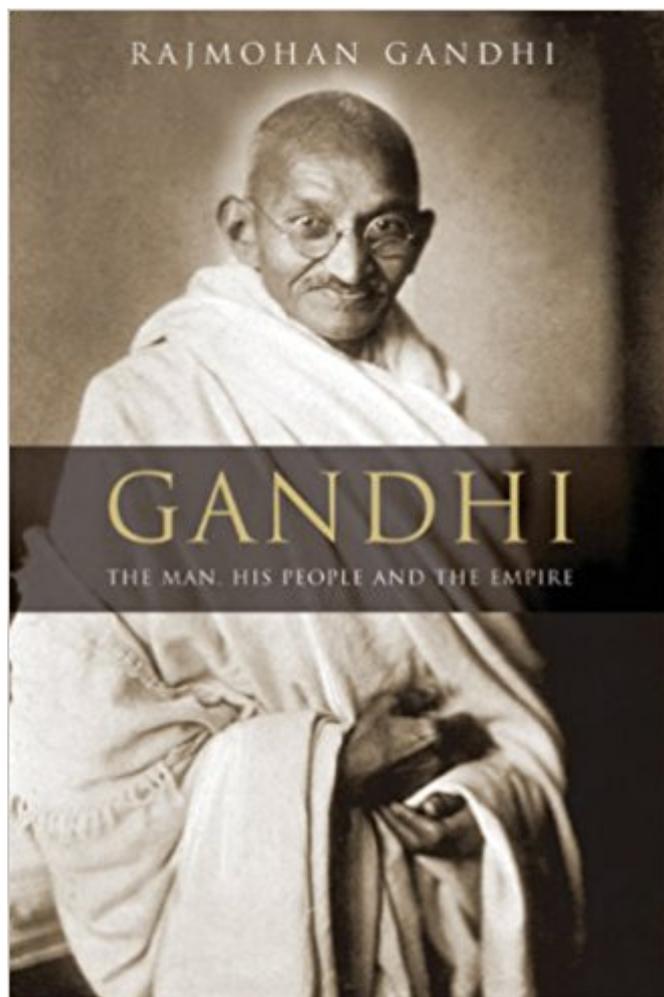


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Gandhi: The Man, His People, And The Empire



Synopsis

This monumental biography of one of the most intriguing figures of the twentieth century, written by his grandson, is the first to give a complete and balanced account of Mahatma Gandhi's remarkable life, the development of his beliefs and his political campaigns, and his complex relations with his family. Written with unprecedented insight and access to family archives, it reveals a life of contrasts and contradictions: the westernized Inner Temple lawyer who wore the clothes of India's poorest and who spun cotton by hand, the apostle of nonviolence who urged Indians to enlist in the First World War, the champion of Indian independence who never hated the British. It tells of Gandhi's campaigns against racial discrimination in South Africa and untouchability in India, tracks the momentous battle for India's freedom, explores the evolution of Gandhi's strategies of non-violent resistance, and examines relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, a question that attracted Gandhi's passionate attention and one that persists around the world today. Published to rave reviews in India in 2007, this riveting book gives North American readers the true Gandhi, the man as well as the legend, for the first time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a journalist who has reported on religion for a quarter of a century, my bookshelves are lined with most of the earlier volumes on this defining spiritual figure of the 20th Century -- a man whose brilliance even shaped the American Civil Rights movement half way around the world and whose teachings continue to inspire and provoke. Why buy this new book? (And I do urge you to buy it if you are intrigued by this figure who strides across the history of religion like a tireless titan to this

day.) Well, first of all, here's what this book is not. This isn't a breezy read and it isn't a fresh interpretation of one particular aspect or one particular era of Gandhi's life. Even though the biographer is Gandhi's grandson, who was a child when Gandhi was murdered, this is not a memoir of a close associate. Millions have read Louis Fischer's breezy introduction, first published in 1954. There's probably a paperback edition of Fischer somewhere in your public, school or parish library. You may even have a well-worn copy on your shelf. If you know that version -- Fischer's book (which still stands as a fine introduction) is like a magazine story compared to this full biography. A number of more ambitious biographies also have been published down through the years, including Eknath Easwaran's 1972 effort to describe Gandhi's "transformation" -- and Yogesh Chadha's thick biography more recently. What I like about Gandhi's new biography of Gandhi is the substantial, almost formal, way in which the grandson has cast this book as *The Definitive Biography*. And I agree. To put it simply, I think this is the version of Gandhi's life that we will find on library shelves 25 years from now as the recommended book to read to delve into his life.

A well-rounded description of one of the greatest figures of the 20th century. It follows him from his beginnings in India, to London as a young man, then South Africa and back to India. His evolution from a barrister to a full-fledged fighter for Indian independence is traced. While it is true that India would have achieved independence without Gandhi - it was Gandhi who stamped the "way" and "how" of this incredible movement. No nation has achieved autonomy in the Indian fashion - one has only to look at the notorious revolutions of Russia and China to see how these two countries have been mutilated by their violent uprisings for the "freedom" of their peoples'. Gandhi struggled against his own country's inequities. As the author recounts, Gandhi traversed India several times to understand and deal with its endless problems. He organized campaigns to end the exploitation of the poor from landlords. He formed unions of poor workers so they could demand better wages and working conditions. Gandhi agitated and fasted to attempt to end the stigma of "Untouchability". Britain did much to exacerbate and harm Gandhi - incarcerating him and his followers several times. Britain exploited the existing religious schisms in India to try to prolong their rule. One also gets the feeling that Gandhi never quite understood Europe - for example he encouraged European Jews in 1939-40 to non-violently resist Hitler. His suggestion to Britain in 1940 to allow Germany to invade was not exactly commendable. Gandhi as the writer (his grandson) points out had a rather strange puritanical streak; almost equating sexual enjoyment with sinfulness. He was also against any form of birth control.

With so many biographies of Gandhi to choose from, including his own autobiography (which, however, only takes us up to 1921) why should we read this one? The author, Rajmohan Gandhi, starts by confessing that he is no distant impartial observer but, rather, one of Gandhi's grandchildren. He was a 12 year old schoolboy in Delhi at the time of the Mahatma's assassination. His father, Devdas, was probably the closest of Gandhi's children to their father to the point where Gandhi would seek out Devdas's counsel. So although Rajmohan's direct experience of his subject was limited he would have absorbed much from his father, a man with an intimate understanding of what made him tick, both personally and politically. Then there is the fact that Rajmohan Gandhi comes to this work only after writing many other distinguished biographies and books on the history of the subcontinent. These include his biographies of Rajaji, Rajaji, a Life, Vallabhbhai Patel Patel, a life, Gaffar Khan, Gaffar Khan: Nonviolent Badshah Of The Pakhtuns, Jinnah and other Muslim leaders (told in

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