

**1919** The Amritsar Massacre heightens anti-British feeling in India.

**1930** Mohandas K. Gandhi leads protest against British rule.

**1935** The British Parliament passes the Government of India Act.

## Section 2

# India's Struggle for Independence

### Setting the Scene

#### ► Terms to Define

pacifist, civil disobedience, satyagraha

#### ► People to Meet

Mohandas K. Gandhi, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Jawaharlal Nehru

#### ► Places to Locate

India, Amritsar, Ahmadabad

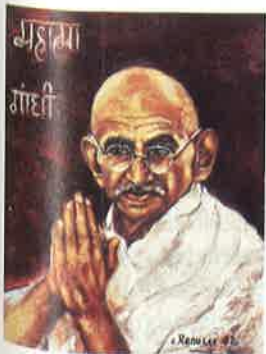
**Find Out** What methods did Gandhi use in India's struggle for independence from British rule?

### The Storyteller

*Riswati and Kamala, once friendly neighbors in Bombay, had not spoken to each other for months—since relations between Muslims and Hindus had deteriorated. The British could use the problem as an excuse for delaying Indian independence. The two women had argued over which group, Muslims or Hindus, was more to blame. Kamala recalled the example of Mohandas Gandhi*

*and resolved to visit Riswati and renew their friendship. Perhaps she could quote Gandhi saying, "It does not matter to me that we see things from different angles of vision." Kamala caught sight of Riswati at the market. Quickly she crossed the square toward her old friend.*

—adapted from *Communal Unity*, M.K. Gandhi, reprinted in *World Civilizations*, Volume 2, 1994



Mohandas Gandhi

When World War I began, the most important territory in the British Empire was India. As in the Middle East and Africa, nationalism was spreading in India. Some Indians wanted independence. Many were willing to remain in the British Empire but demanded home rule. Two of the largest nationalist organizations were the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League.

During World War I, Indian nationalists supported Great Britain and its allies. More than a million Indian soldiers fought on the battlefields of the Middle East and Africa. Indian wheat fed the Allied troops, and Indian cotton kept them clothed. In return for this aid, Great Britain promised in 1917 to support eventual self-rule for India.

## The Amritsar Massacre

Independence did not come easily to India. After the war, the Indian National Congress staged demonstrations to protest British rule. The nationalist movement, however, was divided by religion. The Hindu majority and the Muslim minority did not trust each other. The British authorities in India encouraged that distrust.

A second difficulty was British opposition. Many Britons were unwilling to see their empire's power reduced and staunchly opposed freeing India. In 1919 Great Britain imposed on India harsh laws intended to stifle opposition to British rule. British officials could arrest nationalists without cause and jail them without trial.

British repression reached an extreme in the Punjabi city of **Amritsar** in April 1919. The British had outlawed all large gatherings and declared that they would respond to any violation with force. When 10,000 unarmed Indians assembled in a



### Visualizing History

During the 1920s and 1930s, Gandhi was India's leading nationalist. He worked to promote unity between Hindus and Muslims in the Indian National Congress party. Where did Gandhi first use nonviolent methods to protest injustices?

walled garden in Amritsar for a political meeting, the local commander decided that the British needed to demonstrate their authority. Without warning, British troops blocked the only entrance to the garden and began firing into the trapped crowd. When the firing ceased, nearly 400 people, including many children, lay dead. Another 1,200 people were wounded. Criticized for his action, the British commander declared:

“I fired and continued to fire until the crowd dispersed, and I consider this is the least amount of firing which would produce the necessary moral effect.... If more troops had been at hand, the casualties would have been greater.”

### Footnotes to History

#### Gandhi and the West

Mohandas K. Gandhi has had a profound influence on people in the West. He served as a model for Martin Luther King, Jr. King led the African American civil rights struggle until his assassination in 1968. Like Gandhi, King protested injustice with nonviolent boycotts and marches.

Indians across the country were shocked by the brutal massacre and the general's justification of it. In large numbers, they came together in meeting after meeting, more determined than ever to drive the British out of their land. However, they needed a strong leader to spearhead their struggle.

### TURNING POINT

## Gandhi's Campaign

In the months following the Amritsar Massacre, **Mohandas K. Gandhi** became the leading Indian nationalist. Born in India of middle-class parents in 1869, Gandhi had been educated in England. He later practiced law in South Africa, where he and other Indians experienced mistreatment because of their dark skin.

Until 1914 Gandhi lived in South Africa and led protests against racial discrimination. He was a **pacifist**, a person opposed to using war and other violence to settle disputes. In keeping with his beliefs, Gandhi used protest methods based on **civil disobedience**, or the refusal to obey laws that are considered unjust.

When Gandhi returned to India, he began working with the Indian National Congress and led a nonviolent movement for self-government and for greater tolerance among the country's many social and religious groups. Gandhi urged Indians to reject much of Western civilization for its use of brute force, its worship of money, and its prejudicial attitudes toward non-Western peoples. Gandhi's understanding of India's problems made him popular throughout the country. The Indian people called Gandhi *Mahatma*, meaning "great soul."

Gandhi's doctrine of moral nonviolent protest won him international attention. He believed that one could force an evil person or government to change by challenging it directly, but without violence. Gandhi used the term **satyagraha** (suh •TYAH•gruh•huh), which means "truth force," to describe the nonviolent protests he led after the Amritsar Massacre. One effective form of protest was the boycott, in which Indians refused to buy British cloth and other manufactured goods. As a step toward independence, Gandhi urged Indians to begin spinning their own cloth.

Gandhi practiced what he preached by spinning cloth for a half hour every day. He made the spinning wheel the symbol of the National Congress, and he wore nothing but simple homespun clothes for the rest of his life.



Gandhi's courage inspired millions of Indians to join in protests. In 1922, however, the British arrested Gandhi, and he disappeared from active protest for the rest of the decade. Undaunted, the Indian National Congress continued to protest, but it achieved very little success until Gandhi's return in 1930.

## Toward Independence

Gandhi planned his next major protest around salt. In India's hot climate, the millions of people who worked in fields and factories needed salt to replace what they lost daily in sweat. The British controlled the salt mines and the ocean salt fields. They taxed every grain of salt they sold and jailed Indians who gathered salt on their own.

In 1930 Gandhi protested the salt tax. First he led thousands of his followers on a 200-mile (322-km) march from **Ahmadabad** to the sea, where they made salt from sea water. One month later, Gandhi openly defied British authority by wading into the sea and picking up a lump of salt. The British did not dare arrest him, but they did arrest thousands who followed his example. To quell the mounting protests, they arrested him a month later, but the protests only increased. Webb Miller, a British journalist, described one such protest, in which a group of Indians marched on a heavily guarded salt mine: "Although every one knew that within a few minutes he would be beaten down, perhaps killed, I could detect no signs of wavering or fear.... There was no fight, no struggle; the marchers simply walked forward until struck down."

This pattern continued throughout the 1930s. As Indians protested, the British responded with guns and clubs. Their violence could not stop the millions of people motivated by nationalism.

### Limited Self-Rule

Under pressure from the nationalist movement, the British began to give Indians more political

power. In 1935 the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act, which created a constitution for India. This measure gave provincial legislatures control over the making of law in the provinces. Areas such as agriculture, education, public health, and public works came under the control of the provincial governments. The British government retained control of national lawmaking, finance, defense, and foreign affairs.

The majority of Indian nationalists rejected the act, wanting complete independence. However, the Indian National Congress, at the insistence of Gandhi, finally accepted it as the first step toward self-rule. The Indian historian K.M. Panikkar states that with the Government of India Act, "British authority in India was in full retreat, in the administrative field no less than in the political and economic fields." Nevertheless, independence was not yet won.

### Hindu-Muslim Relations

Even as India moved toward independence in the 1930s, conflicts among Indians increased. For every Muslim, India had three Hindus. As independence approached, the Muslims began worrying about their future treatment by the Hindus, and many joined the Muslim League.

In 1937 the Indian National Congress, controlled by Hindus, won election majorities in 7 out of 11 provinces. Muslims came to power in the others. This heightened bitter feelings. The Muslim League, headed by **Mohammed Ali Jinnah**, split with the Congress party. It demanded a separate Muslim nation for the millions of Muslims in India. The Hindus, led by **Jawaharlal Nehru**, a follower of Gandhi, wanted a united India.

Although a Hindu, Gandhi was concerned about the deepening rift between Hindus and Muslims. His pleas for toleration were largely ignored by both groups. As 1939 ended, India continued its long struggle for freedom. But now the nationalist movement had split in two, and not even Gandhi could put it together again.

## SECTION 2 REVIEW

### Recall

1. **Define** pacifist, civil disobedience, satyagraha.
2. **Identify** Mohandas K. Gandhi, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Jawaharlal Nehru.
3. **List** the three countries in

which Gandhi spent most of his life. Locate these countries on the Atlas map on page A-5.

### Critical Thinking

4. **Synthesizing Information** What could Hindus have done to keep Muslims united with

them against the British?

### Understanding Themes

5. **Change** What nonviolent methods did Mohandas K. Gandhi use to bring about change?