



Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World

Louis Fischer

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This is the extraordinary story of how one man's indomitable spirit inspired a nation to triumph over tyranny. This is the story of Mahatma Gandhi, a man who owned nothing-and gained everything.

Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World Details

Date : Published November 2nd 2010 by Signet Classics (first published January 1st 1950)

ISBN :

Author : Louis Fischer

Format : Kindle Edition 222 pages

Genre : Biography, Nonfiction, History, Cultural, India, Philosophy

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From Reader Review *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World* for online ebook

Travis says

Simply put: One of the best books I have ever read.

Joseph Adelizzi, Jr. says

Admittedly I have a very poor memory. I read books and then what seems like just minutes later most of the information which had so thoroughly engrossed me is erased from my mind. However, Louis Fischer's book and, more so, Gandhi's life so captivatingly described therein, contains scenes, sayings, concepts, and descriptions which I'm sure will stay with me forever:

“In the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists.”

“Nor could one fail to notice, in each sentence and attitude, his lifelong loyalty to a few simple, widely flouted principles: the exaltation of means over ends; nonviolence; the primacy of truth; the curing qualities of trust; and consideration for the other person's doubts, time-lag, environment, and inner conflicts.”

“Gandhi's greatness lay in doing what others might do but don't.”

Finally there is the inerasable final moment of Gandhi's life: a bow of reverence followed quickly by a fatal shot, followed quickly by an exclamation of shock, a lament, a prayer, a greeting all captured with two final words - “Oh God.”

Stephanie says

As I turned the last page of *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World*, I felt like I should say to it, “It's not you. It's me.”

The fact is, I had a hard time reading this book. This is one of those books that is better than my rating would indicate. My own personal issues prevented me from fully enjoying the book.

More than anything else, I think my problems stem from Louis Fischer's writing style, not from his subject matter. Perhaps biography writing styles were different in 1954 when this was written. The current style tends to be journalistic, in which authors inject as little of their own opinions as possible, preferring to let the facts speak for themselves. Fischer, on the other hand, doesn't hesitate to say things like, “[Gandhi was:] the greatest individual of the twentieth century, if not of twenty centuries...” (p.88).

I can't help but roll my eyes at hyperbole like that. (Fischer does realize that Jesus is a product of the past twenty centuries, doesn't he?) I don't begrudge Fischer his obvious admiration for a very great man, but his constant gushing became a little tedious.

I also felt that the book would have been better titled simply *Gandhi: His Message for the World*. Fischer does an excellent job of expounding on Gandhi's philosophies, to the point where dates and milestones are swept away by the force of Gandhi's spiritual message. It would be difficult to make a timeline of the events in Gandhi's life (especially personal ones like the birth of children) based on this book. Often, while reading the book, I would find this lack of concrete details disorienting. I realized that I, as a reader, need those sorts of particulars to tether me to a story.

Are any of these real problems? No. So Fischer tends to get excited about his subject. So the message overwhelms Gandhi's personal story (Gandhi would no doubt approve of that). In spite of these personal stumbling blocks, Gandhi's message of love and acceptance comes through loud and clear.

Riku Sayuj says

Gandhi: The Observer

To change something you love is the hardest. It requires you to set aside your love for the thing and be objective. Real change cannot be imagined otherwise. My favourite description of Gandhiji's uniqueness of vision comes from Naipaul.

Naipaul says that Gandhi saw India like no other, he observed critically, with an impartial, almost colonial eye. And then he acted on them. And this is what made his vision of India so revolutionary. He questioned things that were taken for granted, things that were assimilated into our Idea of India.

Mohandas Gandhi: Mahatma, great-souled, father of the nation, deified, his name given to streets and parks and squares, honoured everywhere by statues, his portrait garlanded in every pan-shop, hung in hundreds of offices, bare-chested, bespectacled, radiating light and goodness, his likeness so familiar that, simplified to caricature and picked out in electric lights, it is now an accepted part of the decorations of a wedding house... he is nevertheless the least Indian of Indian leaders.

He looked at India as no Indian was able to; his vision was direct, and this directness was, and is, revolutionary. He sees exactly what the visitor sees; he does not ignore the obvious. He sees the beggars and the shameless pundits and the filth of Banaras; he sees the atrocious sanitary habits of doctors, lawyers and journalists. He sees the Indian callousness, the Indian refusal to see.

Why, for instance, was Gandhi so obsessed with human waste?

This is Naipaul's explanation:

It is a correct emphasis, for more than a problem of sanitation is involved. It is possible, starting from that casual defecation in a veranda at an important assembly, to analyse the whole diseased society. Sanitation was linked to caste, caste to callousness, inefficiency and a hopelessly divided country, division to weakness, weakness to foreign rule. This is what Gandhi saw, and no one purely of India could have seen it.

No Indian attitude escapes him, no Indian problem; he looks down to the roots of the static, decayed society.

And the picture of India which comes out of his writings and exhortations over more than thirty years still holds today: this is the measure of his failure, and ours...

Mikey B. says

Gandhi is a Great of the 20th century. This book is more personal as the author had met Gandhi – its focus is on Gandhi the man. It cites his speeches and how Gandhi influenced events around him. Gandhi was a doer and the method and means were everything.

Compare Gandhi with the rise of communism (Lenin-Stalin) of the same time period and there is no doubt who and which approach is the more admirable and humane. Marxism-Leninism led to the death of millions.

The book describes many aspects of not just Gandhi's struggle to make India independent but to free it of its vast internal problems – Hindu – Muslim conflict, to liberate untouchables. Surrounding all this was Gandhi's non-violent philosophy and his commitment to truth.

My favourite quote in this book from Gandhi: "I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever".

Gandhi, as this book aptly demonstrates, was a modern-day Christ-like figure.

Lisa Butterworth says

I Overall I really enjoyed this book, but I wish it would have been a little more linear (or something). I am glad to understand Gandhi and his life and philosophy better. I'm interested to read another biography now, from a more er. . historical perspective.

Leslie says

Men and women and children knew, or felt, that when Gandhi fell by the assassin's three bullets the conscience of mankind had been left without a spokesman.

Louis Fischer clearly loved Mahatma Gandhi. An entire nation loved him. How could such a tiny little man impress the world in such a way? Before I read this book I knew next to nothing about him. Only that he had strange diet practices ("Many such experiments taught me that the real seat of taste was not in the tongue but in the mind,") was obsessed with spinning, and that he loved peace and India ("Prejudice cannot be removed by legislation...They yield only to patient toil and education.")

This book spans his entire life, from his birth in 1869, to his schooling in England and time spent in South Africa, his many years in India, and finally his death in 1948. He did a great many things for his country, for their eventual independence from Great Britain, and most especially for the poorest among them. Even though this book deals very strongly with Gandhi's philosophies - the history of his life being secondary, I still saw the underlying weakness of the man and his deep sense to overcome it, through his diet; through his

fasting to make a point; through his celibacy. Through sheer will, he was able to overcome many obstacles, but he was not perfect. A foreigner once asked him, "How is your family?"

"All of India is my family," Gandhi replied. Great men often make poor husbands and fathers. He was no exception, but by the end of this book I couldn't help but forgive the man his faults. India may still have been under British rule today if not for his influence one hundred years ago. Can any person, no matter how small and meek change a nation? By the end of this book I felt that yes, they can. With all that's going on in the world today, I long for another Gandhi to reappear. No one seems willing to take up the mantle again. At least not yet.

Stephanie says

This is the type of book that had a lot of potential. What ruined the book for me was Fisher's writing style. Throughout the entire book, Fisher idolizes Gandhi. There is not one passage of criticism which is unusual considering that Gandhi can be a controversial figure. His blatant worship of Gandhi made me highly critical of his telling of Gandhi. Another thing that made me highly critical was his lack of citations. Fisher reports that he spent a total of four weeks with Gandhi before his death. Spending a month with someone cannot make one an expert on their life. His lack of citations about specific thoughts and events make me doubt him and his book.

Miroku Nemeth says

Gandhi was a hero of my first teacher, my mother, and in reading this book, I now see that much of how she strove to raise me came from his example and teaching. I read a biography of the "Gandhi of the Frontier" Badshah Khan two days ago, and bought this book last night and read it in its entirety today because the example of the Muslim Pashtun leader who created a non-violent uniformed army of 100,000 Pashtun and his love and respect for Gandhi touched me deeply. As a Muslim who is tired of the senseless and futile cycles of violence that I see unfolding between Muslims and others today, as someone who has lived in the Middle East, I found the example of Gandhi's life, and the life of the Muslims like Badshah Khan and others, to be an amazing and timely inspiration--their examples need to be studied and taught today--as the ongoing cycles of violence spiral on and on, and so much blood and treasure are spent in war while they could be used to uplift and honor humanity.

If you have never read a biography on Gandhi, read....

If you have read a biography on Gandhi, reflect upon the lessons...even Malcolm X, may God have mercy upon his noble soul, respected Gandhi....

Kanika says

I just finished reading 'The Life of Mahatma Gandhi' by Louis Fischer and one word that can describe my feeling at the moment is awe. We were taught in school about India's history, about our freedom struggle, about our fearless leaders and their countless sacrifices. We studied the contributions of leaders like Gandhi,

Nehru, Patel, Ambedkar, Lajpat Rai et al to our struggle for independence, but as we grow up and become enmeshed in the humdrum of our daily activities, these names begin to have diminishing relevance in our lives.

So what brought me, a humble fiction reader, to pick up a 526 pager, non-fiction account of the life of M.K Gandhi, authored by a foreign journalist? To begin with, it was a debate with my friends about Gandhi, which started with the discussion about Nathuram Godse, the man who shot Gandhi on 30th January, 1948. Was Gandhi a saint or an evil genius? Was he a soft-hearted democrat or a dictator with a soft touch? Was he responsible for the partition of India or was he heart-broken over the vivisection of his beloved nation that he struggled so hard to keep unified? Was he a saviour of the backward classes or did he strive to keep them suppressed? These were some of the debatable points that came up. Even the biggest detractors of Gandhi among my friends reluctantly admitted that Gandhi “was not a bad man per se”.

My mind was made up. I couldn't participate in a debate effectively unless I was well-equipped with the facts. I needed an objective, neutral biography on Gandhi. Louis Fischer was a journalist who worked in Europe and Asia. He spent considerable time in pre-independence India hobnobbing with prominent Indian leaders, not only Congressmen but also Muslim League leaders like Jinnah.

I am happy to report that I was not in the least disappointed. The biography presents an unbiased, objective narrative of the life of Gandhi. The facts are presented to the reader, allowing her to draw her own conclusions. The same action of Gandhi may appear genius to one reader while leaving another reader unimpressed. It is an excellent book for anybody interested in Indian history. To understand the psyche of the Indian society today, it is imperative to understand how it all began. I give a five star rating to this book. And here I list down some of the facts presented in the book that have left an indelible impression on my mind:

1. Mahatma Gandhi died on 30th January, 1948 as a private citizen without wealth, property, official title, official post, academic distinction, scientific achievement or artistic gift. Yet men with governments and armies behind the paid homage to the little brown man of seventy-eight in a loincloth. Some of the people who paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi included Albert Einstein, Pope Pius, the Dalai Lama of Tibet, the chief Rabbi of London, the United Nations, the Soviet Union, and the people of India and millions of people all over the world.
2. The Gita was Gandhi's 'spiritual reference book', his daily guide. It condemned inaction and Gandhi condemned inaction. More importantly, it shows how to avoid the evils that accompany action; this, Gandhi asserted, is the central teaching of the Gita. Gandhi's interpretation of the Gita was thus: The Gita is an allegory. The battlefield is the human soul where Arjuna, representing higher impulses, struggles against evil. 'Krishna', according to Gandhi, 'is the Dweller within, ever whispering to a pure heart. The Gita described the duel that perpetually went on in the hearts of mankind.' Gandhi strived throughout his life to achieve detachment and become a Karma Yogi. In tough times, instead of becoming disheartened or angry, he turned the light towards his inner self, exploring his own shortcomings. He never accused or criticized others; he endeavoured to look inwards to find solutions to his problems. In today's age of politicians who bicker and crib, who point fingers at others at every possible opportunity, do we have a single leader who comes close to Gandhi?
3. History is abundantly sprinkled with examples of the times when Gandhi insisted on travelling by third class train, sweating and rubbing shoulders with the masses, even when he could afford first class travel. He continued to do so even at the height of his popularity. He wanted to be treated like the common man. How could he travel by first class when millions in the country were starving and living in unhealthy conditions? How many Indian politicians of today can even conceptualize such sacrifices? Other examples of self-abnegation included living and working in heat when he could have lived in comfort, walking several miles

under the unrelenting Indian sun, working manually with his hands and encouraging his family and friends to do likewise, denying his frail, old body food, water and medical treatment while fasting for his various causes, non-violence being the most prominent one.

4. Gandhi arrived in South Africa in May 1893. He went there on business, to win a law suit. When Indians in South Africa were faced with a legislation depriving them of their right to elect members of the legislature, Gandhi consented to stay a month to help resist the move. He ended up spending 20 years fighting for the rights of Indians in South Africa. He won. As a result of his mass civil disobedience movement, Hindu, Muslim and Parsi marriages were declared valid (which were earlier declared invalid by the government to check immigration), the tax on indentured labourers (most of them Indian) was abolished, and indentured labour influx from India was stopped. While individuals in several continents have practised passive resistance, nobody except Gandhi has ever led a successful, non-violent, mass, civil disobedience campaign.

5. Gandhi was his own greatest critic. He accepted his faults, his mistakes publicly. He never chastised anybody else as publicly or severely. Just the way he was harshest with himself, his severity of conduct extended to those closest to him – his family. When Gandhi left South Africa for India in 1901, the Indian community in South Africa gave him and his wife expensive gifts and jewellery. He set up a community fund for Indians in South Africa and donated all the gifts, including the gold necklace given to Kasturbai, to the fund. He was extremely critical about the faults of his sons; nobody was given special treatment because of being related to Gandhi.

6. Gandhi's ashram in Admedabad housed many people apart from his family. When an untouchable family came to his ashram and asked to become permanent members, he welcomed them. Everybody else objected. He insisted that the family stays at the ashram. He even adopted the daughter Lakshmi as his own. Gandhi said, "I do not want to be reborn, but if I have to be reborn I should be reborn an untouchable so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts levelled against them in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from their miserable condition." He took to cleaning the lavatories of the ashram. His disciples voluntarily joined him. Gandhi began calling them 'Harijans' (Children of God), and later named his weekly magazine after them. Once a leper came to the ashram. Everyone was scared to go near him for fear of contamination. Gandhi welcomed him and even gave him a massage.

7. Indian people worshipped Gandhi. When the train he was travelling in passed by towns and villages, people gathered in large numbers to see him and wave to him. The trains were delayed. They kissed the dust under his feet. They followed his call for passive resistance. At a protest, hundreds of people walked in without resistance to protest. Policemen charged the protestors with rods on their heads, but not one person lifted a hand to defend himself/herself. Many were admitted to the hospital with severe skull injuries and a few died. This was the extent of influence Gandhi had on the masses.

8. Gandhi was vehemently opposed to the partition of India. He was opposed to vivisection of any kind, based on considerations of religion, caste or creed. The Muslim League, lead by Jinnah, wanted nothing less than Pakistan. The non-Muslim minority in north-west Pakistan was close to 38%, and in the north-eastern area (now Bangladesh) was 48%. These figures show, claimed the Cabinet Mission, that partition would not solve the communal minority problems. Jinnah also wanted Punjab, Bengal and Assam to be included in Pakistan, but these areas had a large non-Muslim population. The Cabinet Mission advised a united India. Unable to have its way, the Muslim League under Jinnah, declared 16th August 1946 as Direct Action Day. Savage riots broke out all over the country. Jinnah's threat of a civil war forced the Congress to accept the proposal of partition. Gandhi was opposed to the decision as he was against division of any kind.

9. When the communal riots broke out between Hindus and Muslims after partition in 1947, Gandhi went to Calcutta where the situation was the worst. He fasted and promised to continue his fast until people gave up the madness. He succeeded. The riots subsided. After that he went to Delhi where Muslims were being slaughtered by Hindus and Sikhs. Similar riots were taking place in Pakistan where Hindus and Sikhs were being butchered. He appealed to Hindus and Sikhs to not answer violence by violence, to allow Muslims to return to their houses. As he was harshest with himself and those close to him, he was severest with Hindus. To bring about unity and tolerance between different religions, he often read verses from the Koran during his evening prayers. Fanatic Hindus called him a Muslim lover. Fanatic Muslims accused him of opposing partition. Towards the end of his life, 95% of his mail was hate mail. Once somebody asked him, "If there is one God, should there be only one religion?" Gandhi answered, "A tree has a million leaves. There are many religions but all are rooted in the same God." Gandhi was responsible for stemming riots that broke out after partition. If it wasn't for him, many more innocent people would have lost their lives.

10. Hindus like Madan Lal (who had tried to assassinate Gandhi by throwing a grenade) and Nathuram Godse were incensed by the presence of Muslims at Hindu services and the reading of selections from the Koran. They resented Gandhi for criticising Hindus for indulging in rioting. Godse shot Gandhi at close range just before the evening prayers on 30th January, 1948. Gandhi fell, and died murmuring 'Hey Ram'.

Elliott Bignell says

I would like to avoid making this a review of Gandhi rather than of a book about Gandhi, but for the best possible reasons that is hard to do. The author knew Mohandas Gandhi personally, visited him repeatedly and, so far as I can ascertain, reflected his philosophy in this moving account as faithfully as still water. The book, in reading, seems to melt seamlessly into the Mahatma as if you were at his feet. There are three or five men whom I would call the greatest of the last century - Gandhi, Mandela and Churchill, plus perhaps Hitler and Stalin for their negative impact - and this book touches on the lives of four, only one of whom comes out a saint. It is odd to read of a saint of non-violent change at such a time, as at the time of writing someone close to me has met death, quite probably through violence, and I am struggling with the ferocity of a vengeful inner demon. Gandhi, and his philosophy transmitted through Louis's prose, have a hand on my shoulder, and it comforts me.

Gandhi was not born a saint. He had little patience for meretricious consistency and his morality grew and matured to become the Mahatma whose gentleness pried the grip of the British talon loose. He ate meat as a young man. He was impatient and demanding with his young wife, although she stayed with him for decades, while repudiating child marriages. He possessed towering certainty and sometimes naivety, a combination which conspired to make him great but must also have made him trying. He was curiously loyal to the British Empire and characteristically did not condemn us British even when he abandoned that faith. He had a faith in human nature which ultimately betrayed him in the orgy of bloodletting which accompanied partition and in the persistence of untouchability. And eventually his faith met the ultimate betrayal at the hands of a lone, deranged killer who felt only rage at Gandhi's expression of love for his "brothers", India's muslims. The saint departed; humanity lowered its flag.

Fischer examines Gandhi's love and does not agree with all that he finds, but explains its power with eloquence. A world with a few more Gandhis might be a paradise. However... One cannot forgive his exhortation for European Jews to submit to the Nazi knife and thus win honour and dignity. Most did exactly this, and it led to their eradication. This cannot, one feels, be the way, and Fischer appears to agree. Gandhi

himself admitted that non-violence cannot sway the policy of the totalitarian state, but he believed in it anyway, as he saw rewards in subsequent lives. My secular soul cannot accommodate this as it knows no afterlife and sees only the waste of this life, but it cannot deny the power of the moral message: Gandhi, the better Christian than any Christian. And face to face with an Empire, he prevailed.

This is the most moving biography I have read to date, and masterfully written. If I could do the John Wayne accent, I would finish: "Truly, this man is the Son of God."

Hannah says

Over all I am not too pleased with this book. I'm very interested in biography and pretty anything in that category but when I started reading this book I knew it was a mistake. Even the beginning of the book was boring. I read the first 100 pages and didn't like it. The reason I read that many pages was I was waiting for the book to get interesting but frankly it didn't. It had very small print that hurt my eyes and along with that it was flat out boring. There wasn't any cool or interesting things that happened. Now from reading other book I know he had a very interesting life but for some reason this book made it extremely boring. I don't like this book and I don't plan on reading it again.

Dr.J.G. says

The editorial description of the book went

"This is a biography of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948). He led the fight for Indian independence from British rule, who tirelessly pursued a strategy of passive resistance, and who was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic only a few months after independence was achieved."

The editorial description is notable in light of facts of history that took place around independence of India - for one thing Gandhi desperately wished to visit the newly partitioned land of Pakistan in west, to make efforts to bring peace where millions were being murdered; the then premier Liaqat Ali Khan issued a flat warning to the effect that he could not guarantee security of any sort to Gandhi who was seen as leader of Hindus by Muslim League officially, even though the people then living in the new nation did not all perceive it that way (in fact people of North West Frontier Province were extremely upset about not being included in India so much so the Viceroy's tour was cut short, and their leader - called Sarhad Gandhi, "Gandhi of frontier", due to his following Gandhi and his ways, was jailed by Pakistan government almost all his life); consequently Gandhi could not visit the region so recently a part of India and now torn with so much violence against Hindus, amounting to an exodus and a massacre both. Government of India could not ignore the warning and declaration by Liaqat Ali Khan about safety of life of Gandhi, and he was pleaded not to carry on his intention (whether he actually was denied a visa as most Indian dignitaries and artists can be summarily through the history of six odd decades of Pakistan is not the question) and he went east to Bengal instead, where he was successful in bringing peace within Indian borders.

Pakistan meanwhile attacked India in the northern state of Kashmir and Jinnah pretended it was all tribal hordes, and atrocities by attackers included rapes and murders of nuns in a convent; and while this was going on, Pakistan also demanded a larger share of the treasury while flatly refusing to share the debts of India before partition (you pay what India owes, give us share of what India had) and logically as well as

strategically (paying huge sums to those that are attacking you is extreme folly for any sort of statesmanship, surely?) it was obvious to see why the Indian parliament, cabinet, everyone was in agreement that such demands were ridiculous.

Gandhi insisted, however, in giving in to the demands made by Pakistan, no matter how dishonourably they behave. When it was clear this would not be done he was unhappy and went on yet another fast for clearing of his soul. Naturally the government of India gave in.

Meanwhile refugees from west had been pouring in from Pakistan and their horrendous stories were becoming known in various corners of the nation where they could find a place to rest - refugees from west went everywhere, where ever they could, from Amritsar in Punjab to Delhi, U.P., Mumbai, Bangalore, name it. One such refugee camp near an army training school town near Mumbai a volunteer helping in the camp, a local person, went from anger to determination of not letting this continue, and he went and shot Gandhi after bowing down to him in reverence first.

Epithets ascribed to this man, a lonely person who hardly ever talked to anyone even within his family, range from crazy to fanatic to Hindu fanatic. The last is merely a convenient tool to use this man's background to crucify a tremendous culture with a very ancient tradition that is identified with India, something convenient for those that would destroy this open wide and deep treasure trove of a tradition that is a democratic faith, an inclusive culture, a tolerant and secular religion, a tremendous source of knowledge of mind and spirit.

An equal parallel would be to call John Wilkes Booth a "Christian fanatic", killers of Kennedys "American fanatics", the popes who ordered murder of Elizabeth I "Catholic fanatics", and so forth.

What could one call the people in US that attacked people and shops and so forth belonging to those that looked Asian, not only innocent of the 911 attacks but often not even of Islamic faith, then? The first person to be so murdered was a Sikh, wearing his faith's attire, taken by the killer to be a 911 attacker. What sort of fanatic should one call him, the killer who did not know the difference? Ignorant is merely accurate, but to parallel an accusation of the sort in the editorial description one would have to find something more fitting.

So much for the official description of the book. Facts in short are more along the lines of following:-

This is a biography of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948). He led the fight for Indian independence from British rule, who tirelessly pursued a strategy of passive resistance, and who was assassinated by a loner crazed by the harrowing tales of refugees, only a few months after partition which accompanied independence, along with the separated part Pakistan attacking India, demanding share of treasury and refusing to share debts, while Gandhi insisted (and was followed) in his wish that those demands be met, attacks by Pakistan continuing nevertheless. Pakistan had incidentally refused to allow Gandhi to enter the new country for a peace tour to attempt to stop the massacres, declaring the government of Pakistan could not guarantee security of Gandhi's life if he visited, since the Muslim League (- which carried out a massacre of a few thousand with knives in Calcutta in 1946 on a day named Action Day by Jinnah before Gandhi broke and agreed to the demand of partition of India into a separate nation for Muslims) called Gandhi a "Hindu leader".

Rahul Khanna says

I am not wise enough to write a review of a book which is a biography M.K Gandhi. Nevertheless i will

write a very compelling line from this book

Mountbatten told the royal empire society on 6 October, 1948, that in India Gandhi 'was not compared with some great statesman like Roosevelt or Churchill. They classified him simply in their minds with Mohammed and Christ'. Millions adored the Mahatma, multitudes tries to kiss his feet or the dust of his footsteps. They paid him homage and rejected his teachings. They held his person holy and desecrated his personality. They glorified the shell and trampled the essence. They believed in him but not in his principles.

Jared says

I have to admit that it took me three tries to finish this book. I think I started it at least two years ago. The first two times I got about 100 pages in and lost steam. The content was mostly interesting, but I was getting bogged down by a lot of the political details. I started over once again from the beginning, convinced that reading this biography would be "good for me." This time, after about 200 pages, I couldn't get myself to read anything else until I finished.

Gandhi has to be one of the most intriguing individuals to grace our planet. His life was an example of unfailing devotion to principles of non-violence, religious tolerance, self-discipline, relief of suffering, and the brotherhood of humanity. We know him well for his role in bringing about the independence of modern India, but it was interesting to learn that this cause was secondary to the aforementioned principles.

Although I don't share all his beliefs or behavioral codes he promoted, there were many reasons to be impressed. A few thoughts that will stick with me for a while:

* He was a Hindu, and one of the best examples of Christian behavior who ever lived.

* He was quite open-minded and tolerant of others, even those who fought against him. At the same time, there was a stubbornness about him that seemed to be at the core of his self-mastery efforts and his commitment to principles he believed in.

* His attainments in self-mastery were remarkable, yet it was an ongoing process that included setbacks along the way as he worked to master physical appetites and passions. The hard-fought process resulted in his spirit having considerable power over his flesh.

* He persisted in what he knew was right, even when multitudes abandoned his views.

Gandhi the man gets 5 stars, the book itself gets 3 stars, for an average of 4 stars. And I get my own gold star for sticking with it.
