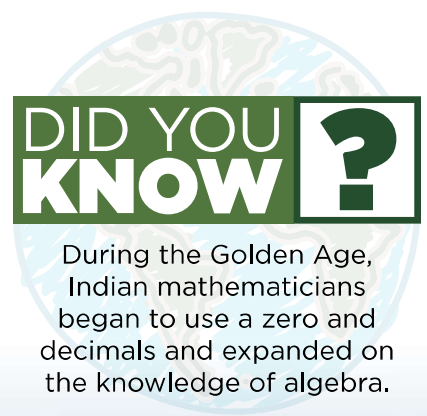


Section 2

A Brief History of India

As you read, look for

- ▶ the growth of nationalism in India;
- ▶ examples of civil disobedience;
- ▶ how World War II led to independence;
- ▶ why and how India was partitioned;
- ▶ the impact of Mohandas Gandhi on India's independence movement;
- ▶ **terms: nationalism, Indian National Congress, Muslim League, Rowlatt Act, civil disobedience, Government of India Act, dominion, partition.**



During the Golden Age, Indian mathematicians began to use a zero and decimals and expanded on the knowledge of algebra.

Early History

Around 4,000 years ago, the Indus Valley civilization, one of the world's oldest, flourished along the Indus River in what is now Pakistan. Its territory extended into northwestern India. This culture influenced the people living in the area that is now India. However, Aryan tribes from the northwest entered the Indian subcontinent about 3,500 years ago. Classic Indian culture grew from these roots, and the period known as the "Golden Age" (AD 4th to 6th centuries) saw the growth of Indian science, mathematics, art, and culture. Islam began to spread across the subcontinent around the year 700, and some Indians began to convert to the religion. In the 10th and 11th centuries, Turks and Afghans invaded India and established the Delhi Sultanate. In the early 16th century, the Emperor Babur established the Mughal Dynasty, which ruled India for more than three centuries.



Above: The Dholavira archeological site in western India reveals evidence of the Indus Valley civilization from over 4,000 years ago. **Left:** The Indus River in northern India was the site of an ancient civilization.



Colonization and Independence

European explorers began establishing footholds in India during the 16th century. By the 19th century, Great Britain had become the dominant political power on the subcontinent. Great Britain would eventually control all of India and other neighboring areas. Like most colonies, the indigenous people did not like being ruled by a foreign power.

A feeling of nationalism began to surface in India in the 1800s. **Nationalism** is the belief that people should be loyal to those with

whom they share common history, customs, origins, and sometimes language or religion. People who share these things often think of themselves as a distinct nation, although not all of these characteristics may be the same from one nation to another. People in India began to be upset that their country was a part of the British colonial empire. They were second-class citizens in their own country. The best jobs and best education were reserved for the British. Indian craftsmen were not allowed to run their traditional businesses if that meant competition

for the British. One example was the production of cloth. Indians grew fine cotton, and weaving was a traditional craft. Indians, however, were forced to send all of their cotton to Great Britain, and then had to buy the finished cloth from the British factories.

The first two groups to work for the rights of Indians were the **Indian National Congress**, organized in 1885, and the **Muslim League**, begun in 1906. The Indian National Congress attracted mainly Indian Hindus, and the Muslim League attracted Indians who followed Islam. As they gathered more members and became better organized, they began to call for Indian independence from British colonial control. Years of contact with the British had taught Indians about western ideas of democracy and self-government. However, the British did not want to share these two ideals with their colonies.



Top Left: Dadabhai Naoroji founded the Indian National Congress in 1885. This nationalist party worked for India's independence from Great Britain and is still active in the 21st century.

Top Right: The flag of the viceroy and governor-general of India from 1885 combines the flag of the United Kingdom with the Star of India and the British Imperial Crown. **Above:** Members of the All-India Muslim League assembled in 1940. They were led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah (center), who later became the first governor-general of Pakistan.



During World War I, millions of Indians joined forces with the British, hoping that their service would be rewarded with more control of their government. The British Parliament even promised that, when the war ended, India would be able to work toward self-government. Unfortunately, after the war, nothing changed. Those who began to protest were arrested under the new **Rowlatt Act**, which gave the British the power to send Indians to jail for up to two years without a trial. In 1919, British authorities opened fire on a large gathering of Indians in the town of Amritsar, claiming they were gathering illegally. Over 400 people were killed and another 1,200 wounded. This massacre made Indians all over the country furious, and almost overnight they were united in a call for complete independence.

Following the slaughter at Amritsar, Mohandas Gandhi began to urge Indians to refuse to cooperate with British laws they felt were unjust. He also urged them to be sure they did nothing violent in their protests. His goal was to show the world the injustice of British colonial rule in India. Gandhi's plan was one of what he called **civil disobedience** (the nonviolent refusal to obey an unfair law). Indians all over the country began to follow Gandhi's lead, boycotting British-made goods, refusing to attend second-class schools, and refusing to pay unfair taxes. In time, these efforts began to hurt the British economy, which was dependent on colonial markets. Though the British authorities often responded with arrests and beatings, Gandhi and his followers refused to do the same. The world watched as the British Empire found itself unable to stop the Indians' protests and refusal to obey British laws.

In 1935, the British government gave up. Britain passed the **Government of India Act** that gave India some self-government. This was a start but not the independence most Indians wanted. When World War II broke out, Great Britain offered India **dominion** (control or the exercise of control) status in the British Empire if they would help the war effort. This would mean more independence, but not the complete independence India wanted. Gandhi and the Indian National Congress refused the offer. They announced that they would not take sides in Britain's war with Japan and Germany. The Muslim League, however, had begun to worry that Indian independence might mean rule by the more numerous Hindus, and they supported the British war effort. They hoped they would be rewarded after the war ended. While many Indians did help the British war effort, support for the war became tangled up in India's desire for independence.



Top: Indian Maharaja Bhopinder Singh visited with Belgian generals at the war front in Belgium during World War I.

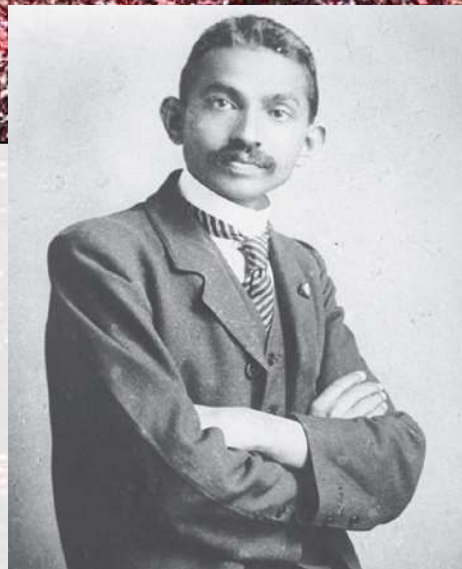
Above: Some Indians, like these two members of a tank division, served with the Allies in World War II, but Indians were divided about whether to support the British war effort.

special Feature

Gandhi

Mohandas K. Gandhi, born in 1869, was an Indian political leader who began his adult life as a lawyer. He lived for a time in South Africa, where he encountered that country's strict apartheid (the legal separation of the races) system. When he returned to India in 1914, he brought with him his determination that people should be treated equally, no matter what their nationality or situation in life. Though he was a Hindu, he saw much to admire in many different religions. Above all, he believed that all people deserved to be treated with equality and justice, and he felt the British colonial government of India did not offer that justice to Indians. He himself lived a very simple life, and as he became widely known and admired, his followers began to call him Mahatma, or the "Great Soul."

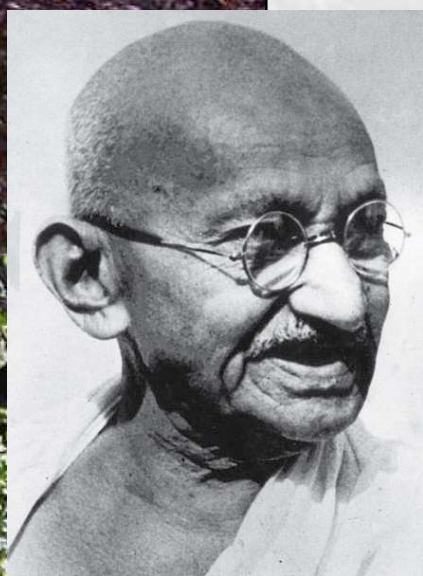
It was the awful massacre of Indians by the British at the Temple of Amritsar that spurred Gandhi to real action against the British colonial authority. He believed it was time for the people of India to stop obeying what he felt were unfair British laws. Because he was a believer in nonviolence, he urged people to resist unfair laws but to do it without any violence on their part. He developed what he called a system of civil disobedience (the refusal to obey unfair laws even if the result was punishment). He spoke of the power of what he called Satyagraha, or the force of truth. He believed civil disobedience would make the world recognize the injustice in British rule in India and force change without having to resort to violence.



Top: As a young man, Mohandas K. Gandhi lived in South Africa.

Background: This statue of Gandhi stands in the gardens of Tavistock Square in London, England. It honors Gandhi's nonviolent approach to social change.

The Indian National Congress adopted Gandhi's strategy on civil disobedience in the 1920s. Gandhi urged the people of India to resist British control in many ways. They were to stop buying British goods and refuse to pay taxes that did not benefit the Indian people. Gandhi also told Indians to resist paying a British tax on salt. He led a march across the country to the sea where people made their own salt by evaporating seawater. At a later march aimed at closing down a British salt factory, the British guards responded by clubbing and beating the peaceful demonstrators. The international press coverage of this violent response on the part of the British gave Gandhi and his followers a moral advantage (doing the right thing) they had not had before. People around the world began to call for the British to give the Indians the independence they wanted.



Gandhi's campaign of civil disobedience gradually wore the British down. After the end of World War II, the British formally gave up their colonial claims to the Indian subcontinent. Unfortunately, by 1946, disputes broke out among the Indians about how the country should be ruled. The final decision was to divide India into two countries, West and East Pakistan would be created for Muslims. India would be a Hindu country. Gandhi was very much disappointed by this decision. He wanted all Indians to live together in one country. He was even more distressed when violence broke out as Muslims and Hindus began to move from one area to another. On January 30, 1948, on the way to evening prayer, Gandhi was shot and killed by a person who was angry about the partitioning of India.

Gandhi is one of the most important individuals in the story of Indian nationalism. He saw Indian nationalism as consisting of many things—history, art, language, literature, customs, and religion. In spite of all he tried to do, when the national boundaries were established, religion ended up being the deciding factor in the creation of India and West and East Pakistan.

Above Left: Mohandas K. Gandhi, or Mahatma Gandhi, was a lawyer, politician, activist, and writer who fought for India's independence from British rule.



When World War II ended, the British decided to grant India independence. By this time, disputes had begun between Indian Hindus and Muslims about how power in the new country should be organized. The British colonial leader, Lord Louis Mountbatten, decided that the only way to grant independence and avoid fighting was to divide the country into Hindu and Muslim sections. Feelings of nationalism in each group were more strongly influenced by religion than by any of the other factors



Top: Lord and Lady Mountbatten with Mahatma Gandhi in 1947. **Above:** Lord Mountbatten was viceroy of India when the country gained independence in 1947. He served as independent India's first governor-general.

the people had in common. The country would be **partitioned**, or divided, into three new countries. Hindu India would be in the center, the largest because there were many more Hindus than people of any other religion. The Muslims would be moved to smaller countries created in both the east and the west along the borders of India. The areas were to be named West Pakistan and East Pakistan. Hindus living in those areas would have to move to the newly created India.

Through 1947, millions of people left homes they had lived in for generations to make the moves ordered by the creation of the new governments. There was much fighting, and many people lost their lives. In the end, the three new countries were created. On August 15, 1947, British rule in India came to an end, and the independent countries of India, West Pakistan, and East Pakistan were created. Today West Pakistan is called Pakistan and East Pakistan is Bangladesh.

Reviewing the Section

1. What is nationalism?
2. What is civil disobedience? Give two examples.
3. How did World War II help India gain independence?
3. Why and how was India partitioned?
4. Who was Mohandas Gandhi? How did he impact India's independence movement? Give three specific examples.