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Posted on 09 January 2018 By Louis Fischer

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

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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

Matilda

Charlie and the
Chocolate Factory

Harry Potter and the
Deathly Hallows

Sarah, Plain and Tall

Winnie-the-Pooh

Charlie and the Great
Glass Elevator

The Paper Bag Princess

Frindle

My Side of the Mountain

The Saturdays

From the Mixed-Up Files
of Mrs. Basil E.
Frankweiler

Chemistry: The Atom
and Elements

Cellular Biology:
Organelles, Structure,
Function

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

Bunnicula

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Henry Sugar: And Six
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the World

Stone Fox

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Central Nervous System

Pinkeltje en de boze
tovenaar

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 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. 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 lessonseven Malcolm X, may God have mercy upon his noble soul,

respected Gandhi. 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. 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 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. Best Books, The Life Of Mahatma Gandhi Author Louis Fischer. This

Is Very Good And Becomes The Main Topic To Read, The Readers Are Very Takjup And Always Take Inspiration From The Contents Of The Book The Life Of Mahatma Gandhi, Essay By Louis Fischer Is Now On Our Website And You Can Download It By Register What Are You Waiting For Please Read And Make A Refission For You 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. 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

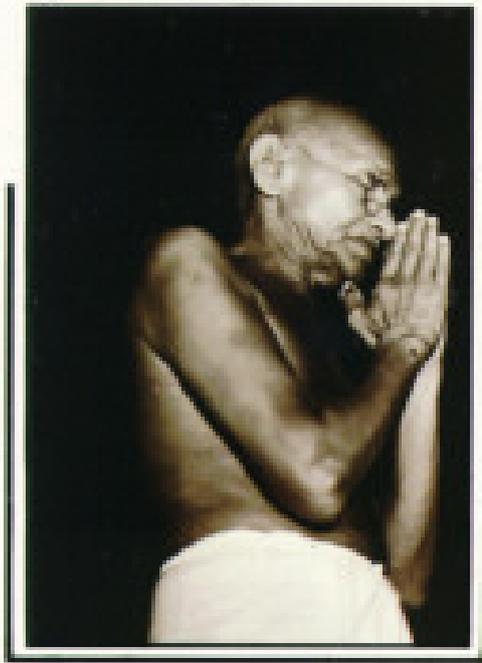
controversial figure His blatant worship of Gandhi made me highly critical of his telling of Gandhi Another thing that made me highly critical was his lack of citations Fisher reports that he spent a total of four weeks with Gandhi before his death Spending a month with someone cannot make one an expert on their life His lack of citations about specific thoughts and events make me doubt him and his book. 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, 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 ineradicable 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. Gandhi is a Great of the 20th century This book is 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 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. Over all I am not too pleased with this book I'm very

interested in biography and 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.



GANDHI

*His Life and Message
for the World*



LOUIS FISCHER