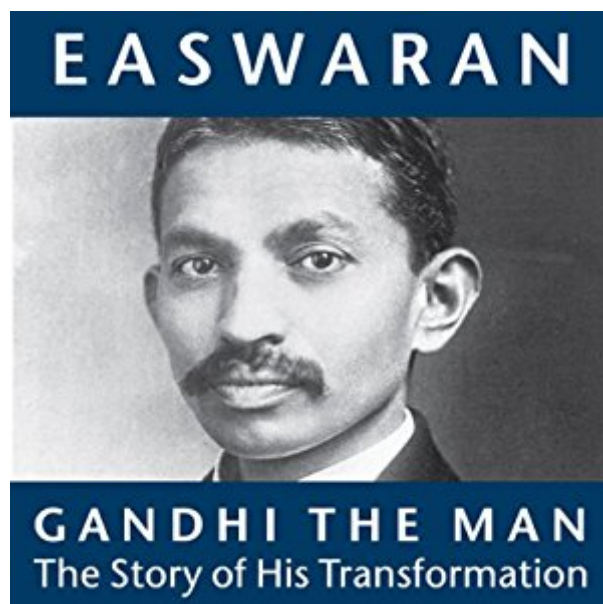


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Gandhi The Man: The Story Of His Transformation



Synopsis

This biography is Easwaran's compelling account of Gandhi's life and spiritual path, his personal transformation and teachings. Eknath Easwaran grew up in India and was deeply influenced by the way Gandhi brought spiritual values into daily living. His biography is an unusually personal story, for Easwaran focuses not on Gandhi's politics but on the way he lived, and on the lasting lessons he has for all of us. Gandhi's message is especially important today for anyone who wants to follow his example in transforming anger into compassion, fear into fearlessness, and hatred into love. In 1893 Mohandas Gandhi left India for South Africa as a shy, tongue-tied, very average young man of 23, whose past was full of failure. Ten years later, called a saint even by those who opposed him, he was the leader of 100,000 people in a remarkable war without violence. He returned to India as Mahatma, a "great soul", and became the acknowledged leader of 400 million Indians in their struggle for independence. In this lively reading, actor Paul Bazely gives voices to the rich cast of characters. The British lawyers and administrators with their clipped English accents, Gandhi's patient wife Kasturbai, his faithful secretary Mahadev Desai, the young Nehru and his father - all these, and above all Gandhi himself, come movingly to life to inspire us. "I have not the shadow of a doubt," Gandhi wrote, "that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith."

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 2 hours and 17 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Abridged

Publisher: Nilgiri Press

Audible.com Release Date: July 22, 2009

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B002IT3VO8

Best Sellers Rank: #12 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Hinduism > Gandhi #133 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Religion & Spirituality > Buddhism & Eastern Religions #319 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical & Political Figures

Customer Reviews

From front to back cover, this book cannot help but draw you in. Pick it up and simply flip through it:

with even more photographs than before - all of them digitally restored - you'll see Gandhiji walking and laughing in the pages. And the detailed chronology with map and notes make this a useful reference for anyone - young and old - trying to understand the historical stage on which he lived. Easwaran's introduction (not in the previous edition) brings to light his deep desire to understand Gandhiji's mesmerizing effect on Easwaran himself as well as the circle in which he lived. His quest to discover the underlying cause prompted a visit to Gandhi's ashram so that he could spend time with the Mahatma, and understand the deep inner transformation that Gandhiji underwent - to the end of his life - so that his every action was consistent with his deepest beliefs. I love Easwaran's ability to unlock historical events by illustrating, for example, how by conserving his anger at injustice and harnessing it instead through "the fierce discipline of satyagraha", Gandhiji became an instrument for the welfare of both British and Indians alike. Ultimately, as we see here, Gandhi's actions are far from "political"; instead, they are driven by a deeper understanding of the unity of life. There is no book on Gandhi that captivates my heart as much as this one, or shows me how to become even a small part like him, through my own inner transformation.

When I was in high school and college I read about Gandhi, and thought I understood who he was, and what he did; he liberated India. This book is my first understanding of how little I knew. Yes, he did liberate India but the path to having the force and the power to do that against the might of the British Empire is an amazing story. In this book I find that his own personal transformation was necessary, to get himself out the way, to get his ego out out of the way; appropriately, Gandhi called it reducing himself to zero. We think of warriors training themselves for battle and all the disciplines they must endure. Here, we find that Gandhi had the same training and disciplines to endure to make this transformation. And he had a training manual to follow: the Bhagavad Gita. A splendid bonus in this book is the chronology of Gandhi's life to allow one to follow the events being discussed. And another splendid bonus is the afterward by Timothy Flinders, which allowed me to finally get a grasp, an understanding of satyagraha and ahimsa, the twin pillars that Gandhi used in his life and in his struggle to free the people of India. Students everywhere need this book to see how truth, love and non violence are melded into powerful, powerful forces. And these forces are available to us today "if we choose to make the same effort."

This beautiful little book from Nilgiri Press, with its attractive cover and myriad photos, belies its simple but revelatory title. It goes behind the political persona of the Gandhi we all know so well to reveal the power that produced his political genius: his unshakable faith in and devotion to the

spiritual ideals contained in India's ancient text, the Bhagavad Gita, which he called his "mother" and upon which he meditated daily. Few Gandhi biographers, it seems to me, have pointed this out. In fact, I was happy to find actually the passage from the Gita that influenced him most on pages 146-7 of this 200-page gem of a book. A professor of language for many years, I feel it would make a superb classroom text.

I'm currently in the middle of his grandson's biography of the Mahatma ("Gandhi: The Man, His People, and the Empire"). As a "break" from this huge tome, Easwaran's little book seemed perfect. And what a wonderful interlude it provided! Whereas Rajmohan's book is an encyclopedia of the great man's life, Eknath Easwaran's distills the essence of Gandhi down to a fine jewel that motivates and inspires. Easily read in a day and chock full of gorgeous, meticulously rendered pictures and quotes that add immensely to its appeal, "Gandhi the Man" shows how each of us, regardless of our talent and ability, can make a difference. What a perfect message for our times! As Gandhi himself tells us, in a quote that opens the book, "I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith." Easwaran then proceeds to paint a portrait of Gandhi as an ordinary man who achieved his transformation through the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita - his prescription for living, to which he turned for guidance in every difficulty. Huston Smith's comment on the back cover reads "This book belongs in every public library in the English-speaking world." I agree, and would add to that every classroom as well. Teachers could give their students no greater gift!

I knew little of Gandhi before reading Ekanath Easwaran's account of Gandhi's life. It is like sitting with a great storyteller. As Easwaran tells one story after another, we see Gandhi transform himself from a man with everyday aspirations to one whose goal in life is to love and serve others. Through this love, he finds himself on the world stage. One particularly telling episode recounts Gandhi visiting villages to calm the pervading conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India. In one village a man steps out of the crowd and begins to choke Gandhi. Gandhi's deep inner reliance on love and nonviolence keep him from even trying to protect himself. The man falls to his knees weeping. The last chapter is quite compelling as it describes Gandhi's small everyday acts of love, kindness and self-discipline that can inspire any one of us to bring peace to our family, our immediate circle of friends, and our community. The many photos, maps and chronology add a lot to this really wonderful book.

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