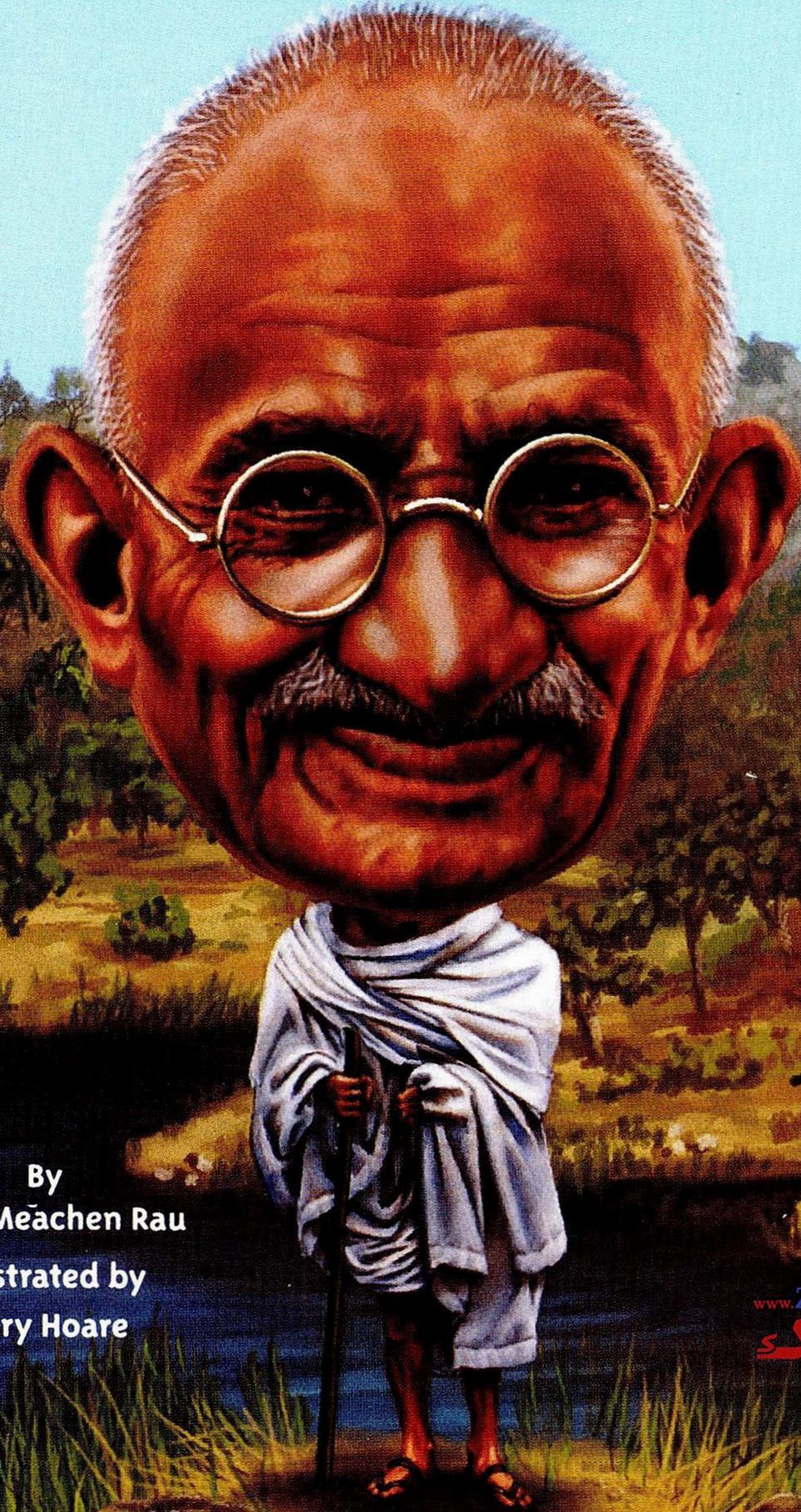


# Who Was Gandhi?



By  
Dana Mēachen Rau

Illustrated by  
Jerry Hoare

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## Contents

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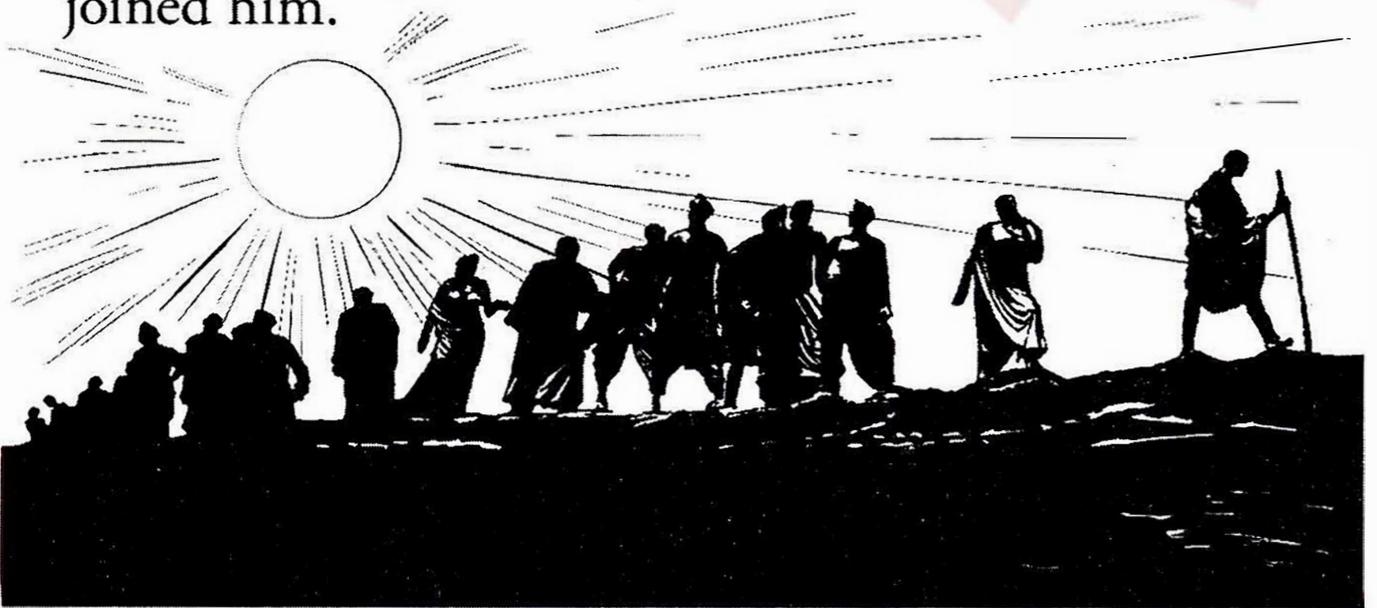
Who Was Gandhi?.....	1
Child Groom.....	4
London Lawyer.....	18
An Unwelcome Visitor.....	26
Truth Force.....	36
Mahatma in India.....	51
Nonviolent Noncooperation.....	68
Quitting India.....	87
A Light Has Gone Out.....	97
Timelines.....	102
Bibliography.....	104

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## Who Was Gandhi?

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On March 12, 1930, sixty-year-old Mohandas Gandhi set out from his home in Ahmedabad, India, with seventy-eight men and women at his side. They walked 240 miles along winding, dusty roads. It took twenty-four days in the hot sun to reach the town of Dandi on the western coast. Gandhi spoke with villagers all along the way. By the end of his journey, several thousand people had joined him.



When the marchers arrived in Dandi, they prayed. The next morning, April 6, on the shore of the Arabian Sea, Gandhi picked up a lump of salt from the mud. By doing so, he broke the law. This peaceful act was powerful. It united many Indians against the unfair Salt Act laws. The Salt Acts stated that Indians could not gather, make, or sell their own salt.



Instead they had to buy it from the British, who ruled India from 1858 to 1947. Salt was a basic need in Indian households to flavor food. After Gandhi's small but brave action, Indians all over the country began to gather and sell their own salt. Gandhi's Salt March started India on a path to freedom from British rule.

Mohandas Gandhi fought for freedom in India. But he did not fight with weapons. He believed words and actions were more powerful than violence. Above all, he had a simple message—to find truth through love and caring for others. People called him *Mahatma*, which means "Great Soul."

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## Chapter 1 Child Groom

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Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, India. Porbandar was a small state on the western coast of a very large country.

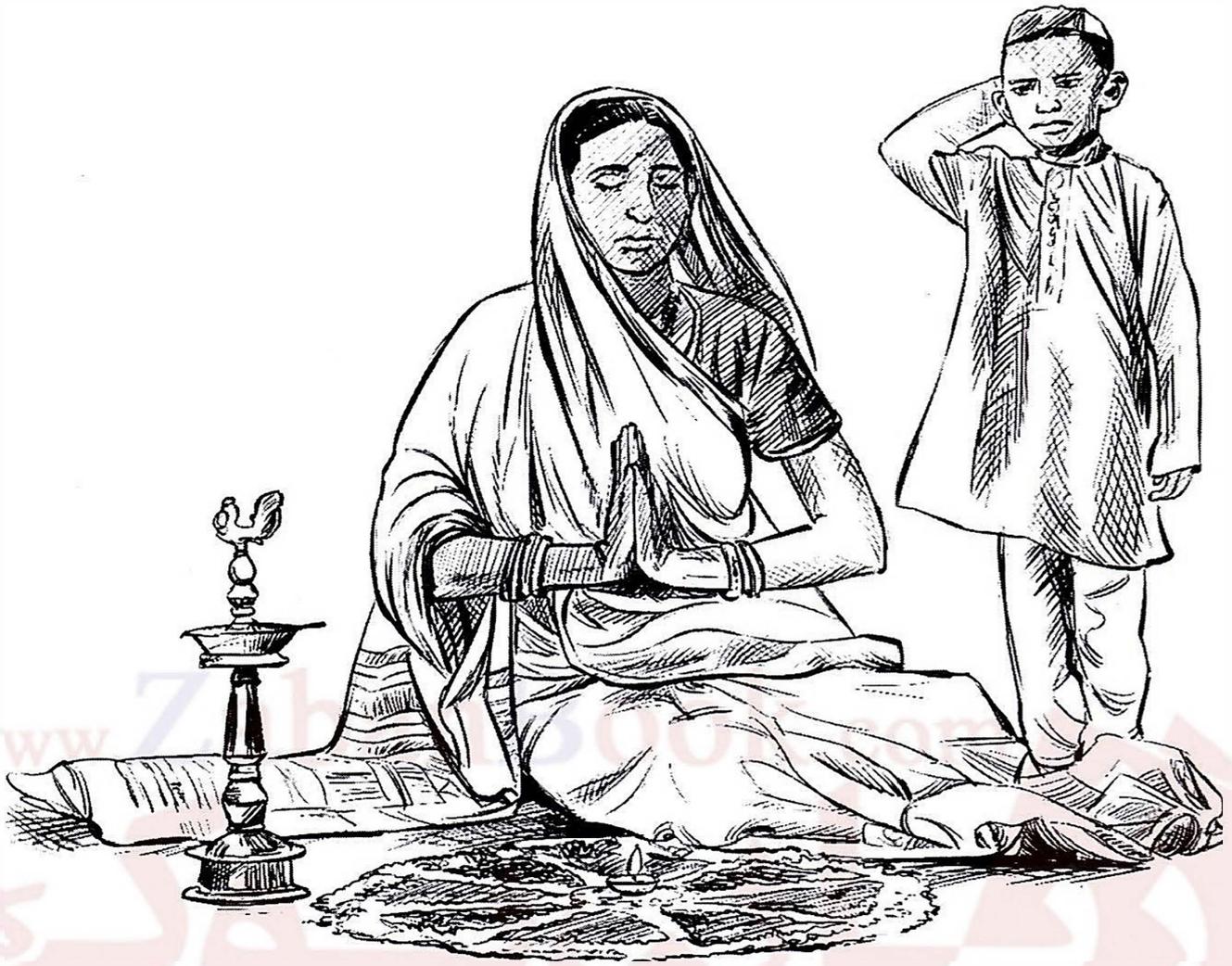
Mohandas, called Mohan by his family, grew up with his mother, father, two

half sisters from his father's previous marriages, oldest brother Laxmidas, sister Raliatbehn, and brother Karsandas. Mohan was the youngest.



His father, Karamchand, was the *diwan*, or political leader, of Porbandar. The large family lived well, with servants, in a three-story house.

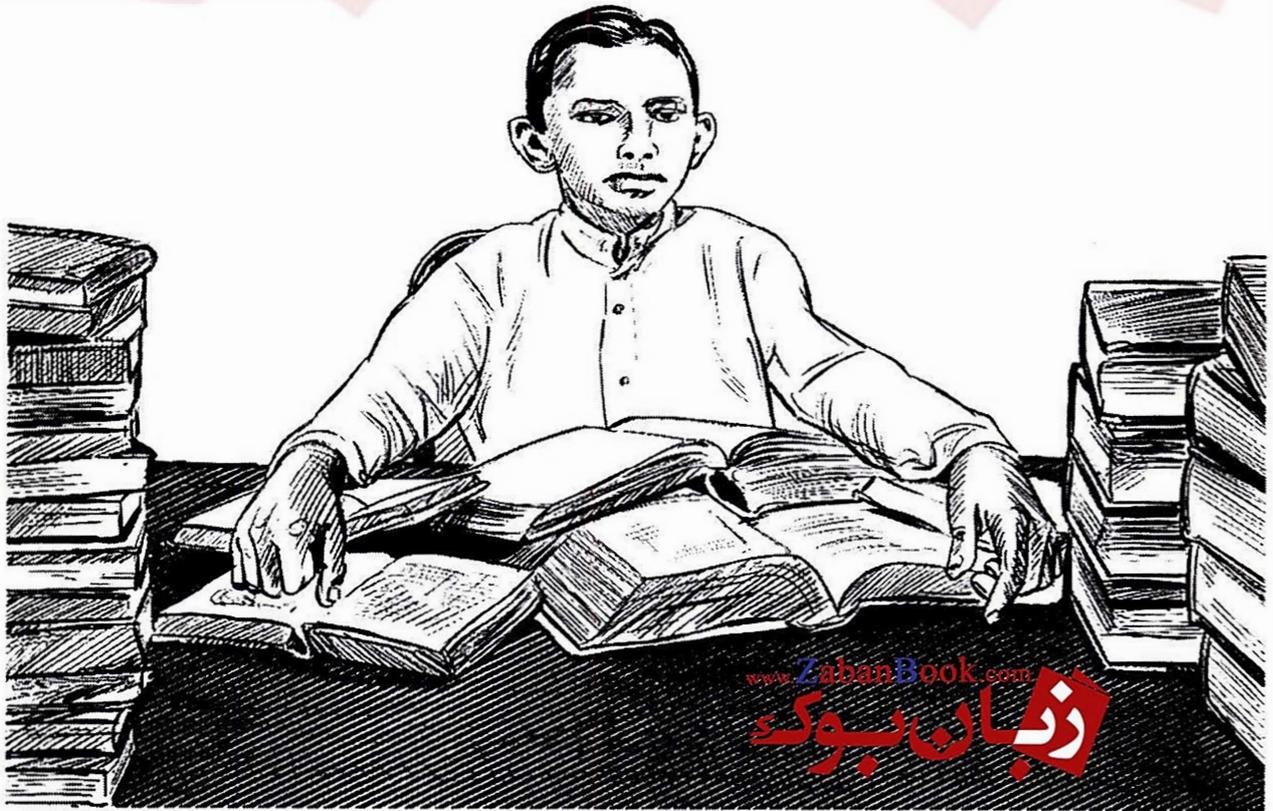




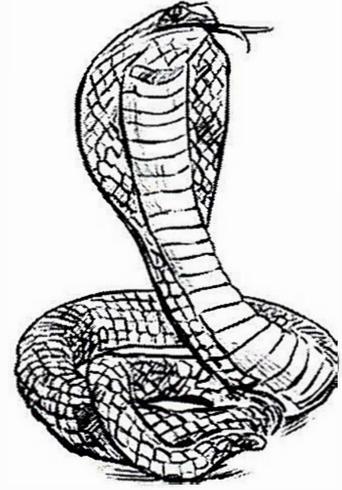
Mohan grew up in a country with deep Hindu traditions. His mother, Putlibai, was especially religious. Every day, she went to the temple for worship. She prayed before meals. Sometimes she fasted, or gave up food, to show her devotion to God. During one period of four months during the rainy season, Putlibai said she would not eat until the sun came out. Gandhi later said,

“We children on those days would stand, staring at the sky, waiting to announce the appearance of the sun to our mother.” His mother’s devotion left a big impression on little Mohan. He saw her as a saint.

When Mohan turned seven, his family moved from Porbandar to the more inland city of Rajkot. At school, Mohan was an average student and extremely shy. “My books and my lessons were my sole companions,” he said. As soon as school ended,



he would run home. He did not want to have to talk to anyone or risk someone making fun of him. Mohan was also very fearful as a child, and even into adulthood. He was afraid of thieves, snakes, ghosts, and most especially the dark.



Hindu parents arranged the marriages of their children. When Mohan was only seven, his parents had betrothed (or promised) him to a girl. Kasturbai was the same age as Mohan. She was the daughter of a merchant in Porbandar who was a good friend of Mohan's father. When Mohan and Kasturbai turned thirteen, they would be married.

Later in life, Gandhi was very outspoken against the idea of child marriage. "I can see no moral argument in support of such a preposterously early marriage," he wrote. But during his own wedding, Gandhi enjoyed himself.





“Everything on that day seemed to me right and proper and pleasing,” he said. The wedding was a huge party with many guests, colorful parades, and much celebration.

The bride and groom were fond of each other.



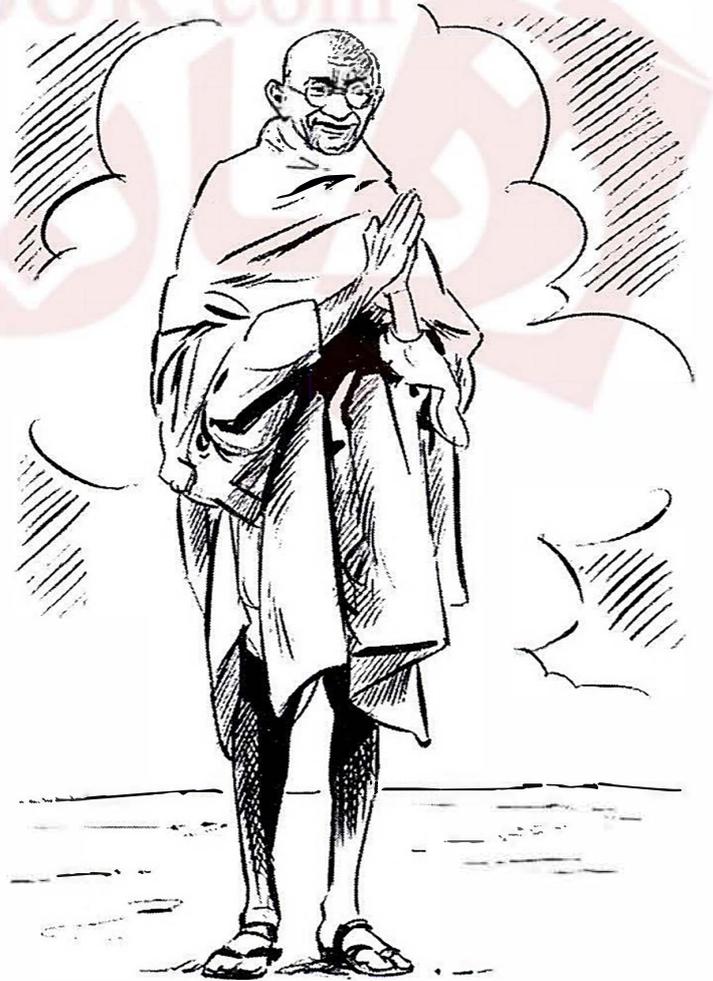
But marriage was not easy. Mohan and Kasturbai had to learn how to be a husband and a wife.

The preparations, wedding, and new married life interrupted Mohan's studies. He had to take a year off before he returned to school.

through the crowd to get close to him. He bowed before Gandhi. Then he took out a pistol. He fired three shots right into Gandhi's chest. Gandhi fell to the ground.

The evening Gandhi died, Prime Minister Nehru said in a radio address, "The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere."

The people of India, and people everywhere, mourned the loss of one of the world's greatest teachers. Gandhi had been a light to the people of India and to the world. His light continued to shine as India grew as an independent nation. He proved that truth and love are the strongest forces for change.



# TIMELINE OF THE WORLD

Abraham Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation to abolish slavery in the United States	1863
The first transcontinental railroad is completed in America, connecting the nation from east to west	1869
Thomas Edison invents the electric light bulb	1879
The Eiffel Tower is built as the entrance for the World's Fair in Paris	1889
Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi sends the first communication over radio signals	1895
Robert Peary and Matthew Henson discover the North Pole	1909
World War I begins	1914
The United States passes the Nineteenth Amendment, giving women the right to vote	1920
Archaeologist Howard Carter discovers the tomb of Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamen	1922
World War II begins	1939
The official government policy of apartheid (a separation of whites and nonwhites) begins in South Africa	1948
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gives his famous "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, DC, to speak out for equal rights of black Americans	1963
Mother Teresa is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work with the poor in India	1979

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\* Gandhi’s autobiography was first published in 1927 and 1929 in two volumes. The English translation first appeared in *Young India* as a series of articles. Then the English translation was collected into book form in 1940.

# Who Was Gandhi?

- A shy boy who married at age thirteen
- The champion of an independent India
- A global icon of peace and freedom
- All of the above!

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