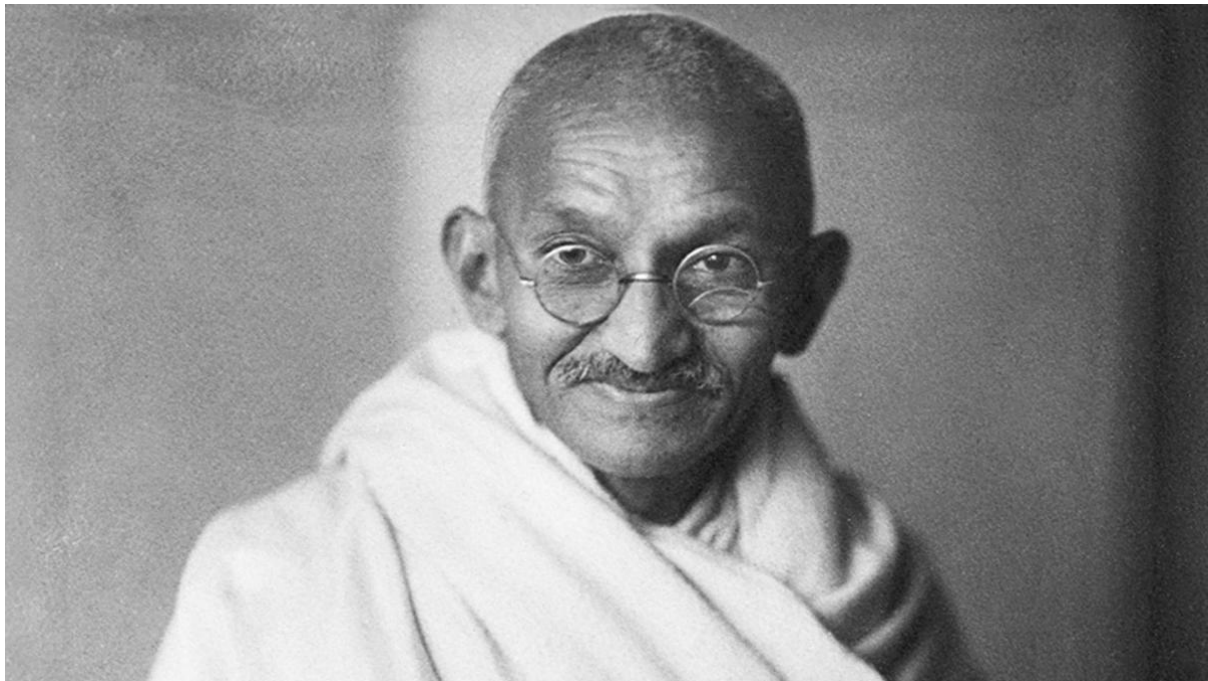


Personalities

India as a country has produced hundred and thousands of remarkable men and women over the ages who have helped to make a difference in the world. This article will cover only a few of them, from different fields to showcase their contributions to India and the world at large.

Mahatma Gandhi

Born on 2nd October 1869, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is widely recognised as one of the twentieth century's greatest political and spiritual leaders. Regarded by Indians as the 'Father of the Nation', he pioneered and practised the principle of *Satyagraha* – or resistance to tyranny through mass nonviolent civil disobedience. While leading nationwide campaigns to ease poverty, expand women's rights, build religious and ethnic harmony and eliminate the injustices of the caste system, Gandhiji (as he was called) supremely applied the principles of nonviolent civil disobedience to free India from foreign domination. He was often imprisoned for his actions, sometimes for years, but he accomplished his aim in 1947 when India gained its independence from Britain. Due to his stature, he is referred to as Mahatma, meaning "great soul." World civil rights leaders—from Martin Luther King Jr., to Nelson Mandela—have credited Mahatma Gandhi as a source of inspiration in their struggles to achieve equal rights for their people.



Mahatma Gandhi – a man so synonymous with peace, that the Nobel Committee actually didn't award anyone the Peace Prize the year he died.

In 1883, he was married at the age of 13 to Kasturba Kapadia, who was 14 years old at that time. He had five sons with his wife, of which four survived.

After completing his legal studies at London, he went to South Africa where he practised law for almost twenty years. There he faced racial discrimination directed towards Africans and Indians and made up his mind to fight for rights of the people. This turned him into an activist and he took upon him many cases that would benefit Indians and other minorities living in South Africa. Gandhiji was influenced by the idea of Satyagraha (devotion to the truth) and implemented non-violent protests around 1906.

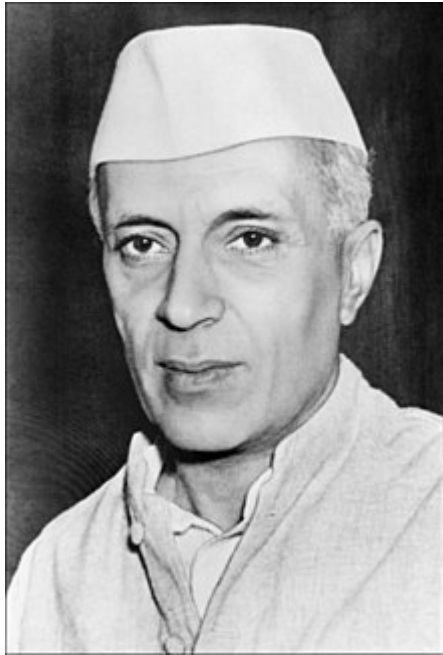
The non-cooperation Movement was one of Gandhiji's most important movements against the British. He believed that the British succeeded in ruling India only because of the co-operation of the greater part of Indian society. He launched a Salt Satyagraha, by embarking on a march from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi in 1930. The protest was successful and resulted in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in March 1931.

The 'Quit India Movement' or the 'Bharat Chhodo Andolan' was the most aggressive movement launched by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi was a prolific writer. His most famous work remains his autobiography: *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. One of his earliest publications was *Hind Swaraj*, released in 1909, that became the intellectual blueprint for India's independence movement. He also wrote *Satyagraha in South Africa*, which described his struggle there. In the 1960s, the Indian government published Gandhi's complete works under the name *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*.

Mahatma Gandhi's life came to an end with his assassination on 30th January 1948.

Jawaharlal Nehru



Jawaharlal Nehru was born on 14 November, 1889, in the city of Allahabad. He was the first Prime Minister of India and a central figure in Indian politics before and after independence. He is known for establishing parliamentary government in the country and became noted for his nonaligned policies in foreign affairs.

He was the son of Motilal Nehru, a barrister belonging to the Kashmiri Pandit community, who served twice as the President of Indian National Congress during the struggle for independence. He was educated at home by private tutors and became interested in Science and Theosophy. These interests induced him to peruse Buddhist and Hindu scriptures, which became his 'initial impulse' for the long intellectual quest which eventually gave us "The Discovery of India".

During his youth, he became an ardent nationalist, and the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese war filled his mind with the idea of Indian freedom from the clutches of Europe. With these thoughts in mind he went to Trinity College, Cambridge and graduated in natural sciences. Later, he went to study law at Inner temple Inn, London, and was called to the Bar in 1912. He became an advocate in Allahabad High Court after his return to India in 1912.

With the rise in the independence movement, he joined the Indian National Congress, and began working closely with Mahatma Gandhi. He played a key role in developing the internationalist outlook of the struggle by trying to forge relations with foreign allies and links with independence movements across the world. To achieve this, he also worked closely with Subhas Chandra Bose, but the two split after an opinion clash.

He played a key role in merging of those princely states with the Republic of India after independence. He took over as Prime Minister of India on 15 August, 1947 and gave his inaugural address titled "Tryst with Destiny". He advocated a mixed economy and laid down policies based on import substitution and industrialisation. His policies were focussed on developing core industries – coal, iron, steel and power – and agrarian reform. He oversaw

the establishment of institutions of higher learning, including the Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management, All India Institute of Medical Sciences and National Institutes of Technology.

Nehru's health dramatically began to decline after the Sino-Indian War in 1962. He died due to health complications on 27th May, 1964. In recognition of his dedication towards the welfare and education of children, his birthday, 14th November, is celebrated as Children's Day in India. He was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1955.

Shaheed Bhagat Singh

Bhagat Singh was born on September 28, 1907 in a Sikh family in Punjab. When Bhagat Singh was 9 years old in 1916, he met political leaders Lala Lajpat Rai and Rash Behari Bose, and was very motivated by them. Following the infamous Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919, he went to the site and collected some soil from that place and kept it as a souvenir to strengthen his desire to oust British rule from the country.

He believed in a complete reconstruction of Indian political system. With B.K. Dutt, Bhagat Singh made a statement in June 1929, "By revolution we mean that the current order of things, which is based on clear injustice, should be changed". After the death of Lala Lajpat Rai he had planned to kill the British official John Saunders and throw a bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly. Bhagat Singh offered no defence during the investigation. He was sentenced to death on March 24, 1931 but was hanged on March 23.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose



Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23rd January 1897 at Cuttack. His father was a leading lawyer and he came from a well-to-do family. Subhas Chandra Bose was a brilliant student at school. He cleared the I.C.S. examination and was appointed as Presidency Magistrate, Calcutta (now Kolkata), a post to which no Indian had been hitherto appointed. Bose was a

firm believer in God, and his beliefs were predominantly shaped by Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda.

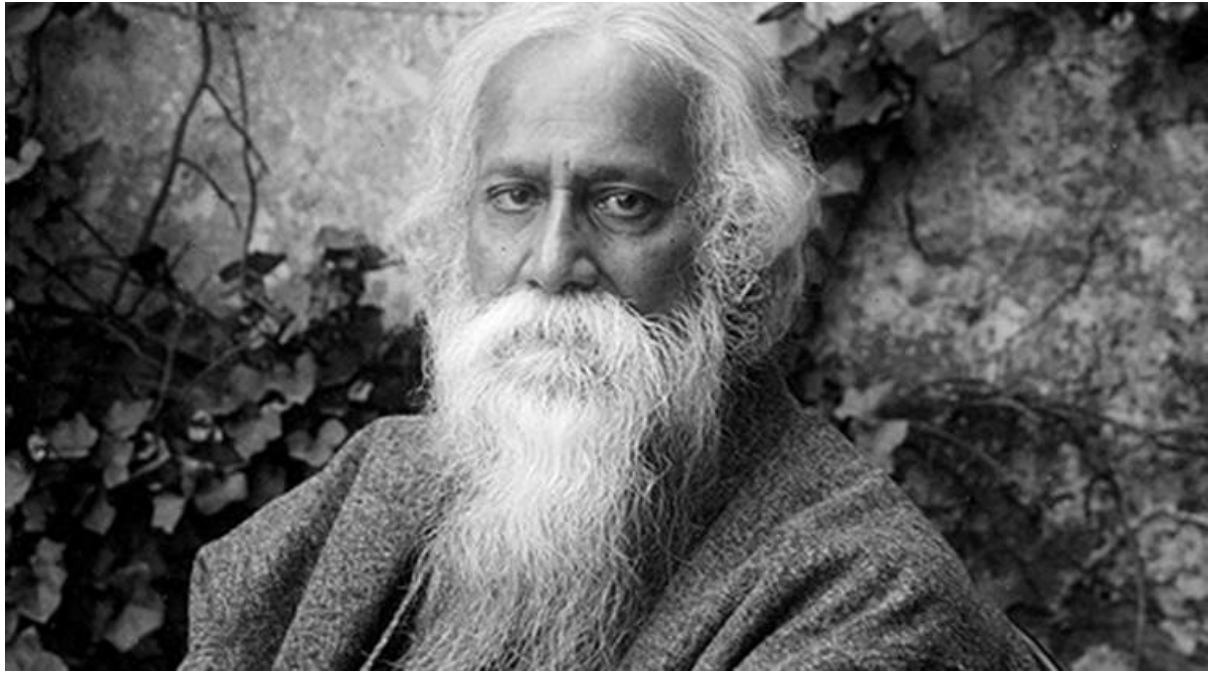
He resigned from the I.C.S. and joined the freedom struggle where he proved to be an uncompromising revolutionary. Subhas Chandra Bose was elected as President of the Indian National Congress at Tripura. As he could not agree with the views of Gandhiji, he resigned from the Presidency of the Indian National Congress and organised the Forward Bloc in 1939. After being arrested by the British Government, he escaped in January 1941 and reached Berlin in April 1941 travelling through Peshawar, Kabul and Moscow.

Bose established a Free India Centre in November 1941. This centre gave strength to the Azad Hind Movement, which gave to us the war cry 'Jai Hind'. Because of his role in the freedom struggle and his role in the strengthening and organisation of the Indian National Army, Bose is also called "Netaji".

Netaji with the help and cooperation of Indian youth and prisoners of war in Germany raised the 'Indian Legion' a national militia to struggle for India's freedom. He christened the Legion as "Azad Hind Fauj". In 1942, Netaji left Germany on his onward journey to Japan.

As Japanese forces started withdrawing from South-East Asia, Netaji planned to go to Russia to continue his fight for freedom from there. But destiny willed otherwise. He was last seen on August 17, 1945. Later, it was heard that the plane in which he travelled had crashed. Even today Netaji's disappearance is a mystery as there is no universally accepted view of the incident. Netaji was one of the most beloved freedom fighters of colonial times, coining the slogan "*Tum mujhe khoon do, mai tumhe azaadi dunga*", meaning "give me your blood, I shall win you freedom."

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore



Known as “Gurudev” by his disciples, Rabindranath Tagore was the first ever Indian, for that matter, the first Asian, to win a Nobel Prize. Rabindranath was born on 6th May 1861 at his ancestral home at Jorasanko in Calcutta. From his early years, Rabindranath wrote poems, some of which were published in periodicals.

He enrolled at a public school in Brighton, England, and later studied at University College, London. He lived much of his life in Shantiniketan in West Bengal. He was very popular among readers of the Bengali language, as well as other people who knew his works through translations and reviews. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for his famous book of songs called 'Gitanjali' in 1913. The British Crown awarded him a Knighthood, which he returned as a mark of protest against the inhuman massacre at Jallianwala Bagh.

Tagore also wrote a hundred-line poem about poverty in Kolkata. Satyajit Ray later based one of his movies on this poem. During his final days, Tagore wrote fifteen volumes of prose-poems. They covered many aspects of human life. In his last years, Tagore took an interest in science, and wrote a collection of essays. These essays explored biology, physics, and astronomy. He spent the last 4 years of his life enduring pain and sickness. He finally passed away from the world on 7th August 1941, without getting to witness the independence of India from British clutches.

J.R.D. Tata

Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata was born on July 29, 1904. For 52 years he was the chairman of the largest industrial group in India – Tata Industries – which produced everything from steel and electric power to chemicals and automobiles. JRD went ahead with his

industrialisation programme under the British Empire in Colonial India; while in the remaining four decades, he expanded this industrial empire in Independent India.

The House of Tata played a leading role in setting up great institutions like Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Mumbai, and also provided the necessary financial support to Dr. Homi Bhabha to establish the Institute of Fundamental Research. He was also an expert pilot and established Air India – the first company in the Indian aviation industry. He was the first chairman of Air India. Even at the age of seventy he piloted his aircraft from Mumbai to London.

In 1932 Tata established Tata Air Mail, a courier service connecting Karachi, Ahmedabad, Bombay (now Mumbai), and Madras (now Chennai). Over the next half-century Tata strengthened existing businesses such as steel, power, and hotels and drove the group to diversify its interests to include chemicals, automobiles, pharmaceuticals, financial services, and information technology. In 1945 he founded Tata Motors, a locomotive manufacturing company by forming a joint venture with Daimler-Benz of Germany. This company dominated the commercial vehicle market in India for years before entering the passenger vehicle market. He founded the Tata Tea Limited in 1964, Tata Consultancy Services in 1968 and Titan industries in 1987.

Tata received a number of awards, including the Padma Vibhushan (1957), the Daniel Guggenheim Medal for aviation (1988), and the United Nations Population Award (1992). In 1992 he received India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna. He was also the proud recipient of several international awards for aviation, including The Tony Janus Award (1979) and Edward Warner Award of the International Civil Aviation Organisation, Canada (1986). JRD died in November 1993 at the ripe age of 89.

Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi

Rani Laxmibai was born as Manikarnika on November 19, 1835 at Kashi (Varanasi). Laxmibai was married to Gangadhar Rao, the King of Jhansi, in 1842. In 1851, the Rani had a son who unfortunately died when he was barely four months old. Raja Gangadhar Rao could not bear the shock and after a long illness, he died on November 21, 1853. In 1857, the kings of the neighbouring states of Jhansi, Orchha and Datia attacked but Rani Laxmibai defeated them successfully. In March 1858 the British army besieged the city of Jhansi. But the Rani, with her adopted son Damodar Rao, was able to escape. This valiant queen died on June 18, 1858.



“Khoob ladi mardani, wo to Jhansi wali rani thi”

Rani Laxmibai was one of the first freedom fighters to fight against British conquest of India and went on to be a role model for many more freedom fighters to come. She was one of the great heroines of the First War of Indian Independence. She was the embodiment of patriotism, self-respect and heroism. Her life is a thrilling story of womanliness, courage, adventure, deathless patriotism and martyrdom. At a time when feminist ideas were not so widespread, the Rani not only held on to the throne of the kingdom of Jhansi, but also successfully defended it against intruders.

APJ ABDUL KALAM



Known as the “Missile Man of India”, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the eleventh President of India was born on 15 October, 1931, in the island town of Rameshwaram, in Tamil Nadu. He was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1997 for his contributions in the field of science and engineering. Dr Kalam served in Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) from 1963 to 1982. At Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, he developed the Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV 3), which put the satellite Rohini into orbit.

Kalam obtained a degree in Aeronautical Engineering from Madras Institute of Technology. He developed five projects for defence services - Prithvi, Trishul, Akash, Nag and Agni. He led India into an era of self-dependence. Agni, which is a surface to surface missile, is his unique achievement. Its successful launch made India a member of a club of highly developed countries.

He was also an author, having published books such as *Wings of Fire*. His talks and books revolved primarily around the youth and college going students, as he believed them to be the backbone as well as the future of the country. Dr Kalam has received many honorary doctorates from Universities all over the world. Kalam passed away on 27th July 2015 due to a cardiac arrest, while giving a lecture at the Indian Institute of Management, Shillong. It was

fitting that the President most popular among the youth met his end while surrounded by college students, and he took his last breath while inspiring the new generation of India.

Lata Mangeshkar



Lata Mangeshkar, with a career spanning over 7 decades, is one of the most recognised Indian playback singers. Lata Mangeshkar was born on September 28, 1929 in Indore, to Pundit Deenanath Mangeshkar, a theatre actor and classical singer, and Shevanti Mangeshkar.

She started taking music lessons from the age of 5 and showed virtuosity in music from a very young age. She used to pick *ragas* at once and could master vocal exercises at the first attempt. She was taught by many famous musical gurus including Aman Ali Khan Sahib and Amanat Khan. Despite having a great voice, she was not given a chance until 1948, as many people believed that her voice was too thin and high-pitched.

She made her debut as a playback singer in a Marathi film '*Kiti Hasaal*', but the song was eventually edited out. She finally got her big break in the film *Majboor*. Year after year, in film after film, her songs became the heartthrob of millions of people in India and abroad, and hundreds of them are runaway hits. She has sung thousands of songs in different languages. She was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 2001.

A.R.Rahman



Allah Rakha Rahman is one of the most versatile and talented music composers that India has today. Such is his prolific contribution to Indian music that he was in the list of World's Most Influential People by TIME magazine in 2009. Mastering most music forms, from Carnatic music to Western classical, Hindustani music, even the *Qawwali* style of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Rahman blends these styles to deliver spectacular and outstanding compositions and performances.

A.R. Rahman was born in Chennai as A.S. Dileep Kumar to R.K. Shekhar, a notable music composer and conductor for Tamil and Malayalam films. After the death of his father, he began learning how to play musical instruments under the tutelage of Malayalam composer and a close friend of his father, M.K. Arjunan. Eventually, he started playing for eminent composers of those times, M. S. Viswanathan, Ilaiyaraaja, Ramesh Naidu, and Raj-Koti. His work eventually led to him getting a scholarship from Trinity College, London. He was introduced to Islam by a Sufi when his sister fell terribly ill. Thereafter, he changed his name from A.S. Dileep Kumar to A.R. Rahman.

His musical career began with composing music scores for documentaries, jingles for advertisements and Indian television channels, and other smaller projects. His first film composition came with Mani Ratnam's Tamil film *Roja* (1992), which bagged him the Rajat Kamal award for Best Music Director at the National Film Awards.

He has been awarded the Rajat Kamal Award three more times for *Minsara Kanavu* in 1997, *Lagaan* in 2002, and *Kannathil Muthamittal* in 2003, a record among composers.

Rahman has also been involved in several other projects, the most eminent being the 'Vande Mataram' album, released on India's 50th anniversary of independence in 1997. Till date, the album is the largest selling non-film Indian album in the country. In 1999, he collaborated and performed with international artists like Michael and Andrew Lloyd Webber. With the success of the internationally acclaimed 'Slumdog Millionaire', Rahman bagged two Academy Awards and a Golden Globe, becoming the first Asian to do so.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj



Shivaji Maharaj was born in 1630 in Poona (now Pune). His father, Shahaji Bhonsle, was a Maratha general. His mother Jija Bai was a pious lady, and Shivaji imbibed the best qualities of his character from her nature. The stories of oppression of Mughals upon the local populace had a great influence upon him. He made up his mind to free his country and people from the hands of the Mughals.

He first conquered some forts and districts belonging to Bijapur, in response to which, Adil Shah sent his general Afzal Khan to arrest him. Afzal Khan tried to kill him in a private meeting. But Shivaji, being on his guard, reacted quickly and killed Afzal Khan. However, his real enemy was the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.

Raja Jai Singh, the best General of Aurangzeb, was sent against to persuade Shivaji to meet Aurangzeb. He reached Agra under the assumption of talks but was instead arrested and imprisoned. Shivaji, thanks to his clever thinking and presence of mind, managed to escape, and reached his kingdom safely. He got back all the forts which he had given to Aurangzeb and became the crowned king in 1674 at Raigad. He died in 1680 at the age of 53.

It is said that the Mughal influence on India would have been reduced even further if Shivaji did not pass away at such a young age. Shivaji was a devoted Hindu and built many temples in the kingdoms over which he ruled. In many senses, Chattrapati Shivaji Maharaj was the first Indian to rise against foreign opposition with such remarkable success.

Sachin Tendulkar



Sachin Tendulkar was born on 24th April, 1973 in Mumbai. He had a very clear dream ever since he was a child – he wanted to represent the nation as a cricketer. Luck favoured him when Ramakant Achrekar, known as the Dronacharya of the cricket world, accepted him as his disciple. Sachin also toiled hard along with Achrekar and at the age of thirteen years, he created history in partnership with his childhood friend, Vinod Kambli, by making a record partnership of 664 runs for the sixth wicket in his school's cricket competition. This achievement only fuelled his hunger.

Nearly every batting record in cricket belongs to the Master Blaster – most runs in ODI, first cricketer to score 200 runs in an ODI, most centuries in Tests as well as ODIs, and so on. He represented India for more than two decades, and terrorised bowlers all over the world. Sachin might have retired without a World Cup, but the Indian team's stellar performance in the 2011 World Cup Final ensured that Sachin did not retire without a World Cup win. Sachin, along with his determination and desire to play for the team, is undoubtedly one of the many legends India has produced.

He bade adieu to cricket on November 16, 2013. He played his 200th and the last test match against West Indies at Wankhede Stadium of Mumbai. The government of India has honoured him with the 'Bharat Ratna'.

Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar



Best known as the 'Architect of Indian Constitution', he was popularly known as Babasaheb. He was born on 14th April, 1891, in the town of Mhow, Madhya Pradesh. His early education was in the same town and it was here that he first came across the reality of caste discrimination in India. His experiences inspired him to fight the injustice and dedicate his life to the upliftment of lower castes.

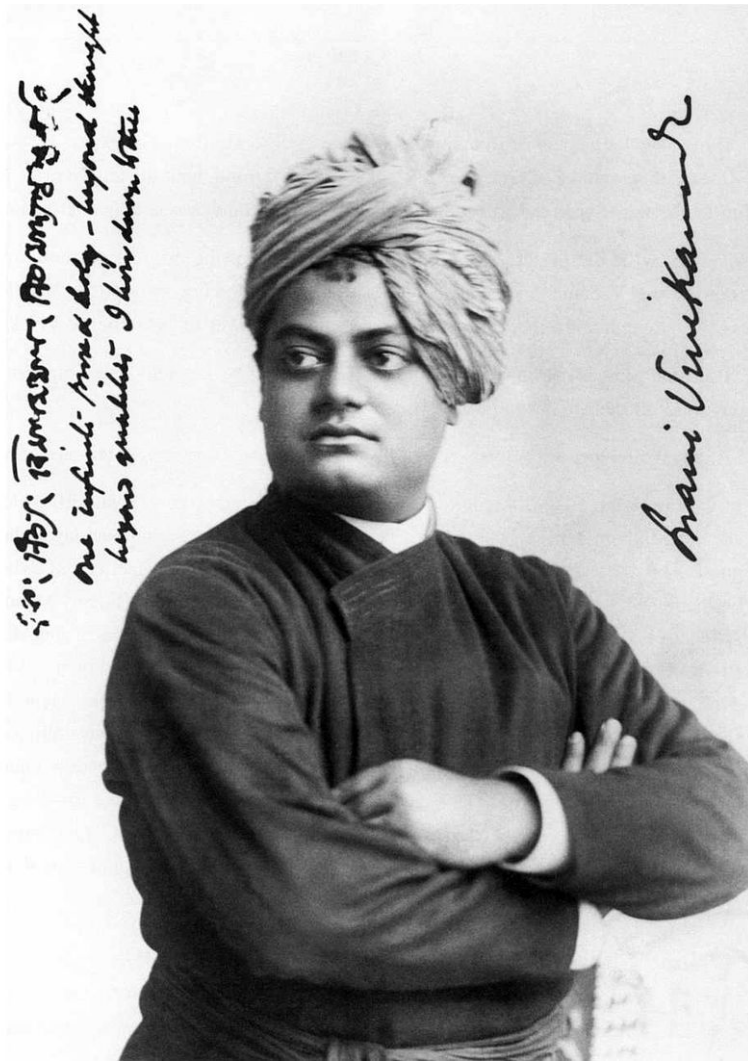
In 1912, he obtained his degree in political science from Bombay University. In 1913, he secured a scholarship to Columbia University where he completed his postgraduate education majoring in Economics. He worked as a Professor in Sydenham College of Commerce before working as a legal professional. He launched active movements against untouchability of which, the most notable was the burning of the ancient Hindu text,

Manusmriti. His books and papers became the centre of attention because of the detailed research and differing opinions. His 400-page tract titled 'Thoughts on Pakistan' determined the course of dialogues between the Muslim League and the INC and played an important role in paving the way for the Partition of India.

After India's independence, he became the first law minister of the country and on 29 August, 1947, he was appointed as the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee. The constitution was adopted on 26th January 1950 by the Constituent Assembly. It provided constitutional guarantees and protections for citizens' civil liberties. He also introduced the system of reservations in jobs, schools and colleges for the people from scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward castes.

Around 1950, he focused his attention to Buddhism. His final work was the book, "The Buddha and His Dhamma". During the finalisation of this book, he organised a formal public ceremony in Nagpur on 14th Oct 1956 and converted to Buddhism along with 50,000 supporters. He died on 6th December, 1956.

Swami Vivekananda



He was born Narendranath Datta in Calcutta (now Kolkata) on 12th January 1863. He was educated in a western-style institution and was primarily exposed to Western philosophy. As a Hindu spiritual leader, he tried to combine Indian spirituality with Western material progress. His major focus was on the social reformation and he joined Brahma Samaj which was dedicated to eliminate child marriage and illiteracy and spread education among women and lower castes.

He presented the vigour infused Hindu thought and spirituality to the West and played a key role in promoting 'Vedanta' philosophy in the US and England. A notable event from his life that put him on charts was the 'World Parliament of Religions' in Chicago in 1893. His speech, which began with "Sisters and brothers of America...", was so captivating that a newspaper account described him as "an orator by divine right and undoubtedly the greatest figure at the Parliament."

He founded the Ramakrishna Mission at the monastery of Belur Math on the Ganga river near Calcutta in 1897. It was based on the ideals of Karma yoga and was founded for social service. He had earlier inspired Jamshedji Tata to set up a research institute when they travelled together to Chicago. Tata founded the 'Research Institute of Science', now Indian

Institute of Science, and asked Vivekananda to be its head. Vivekananda politely declined citing conflict with his “spiritual interests”. On 4 July, 1902, he died at 9:20 pm while meditating. According to his disciples, Vivekananda attained mahasamadhi.

Dr. Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman



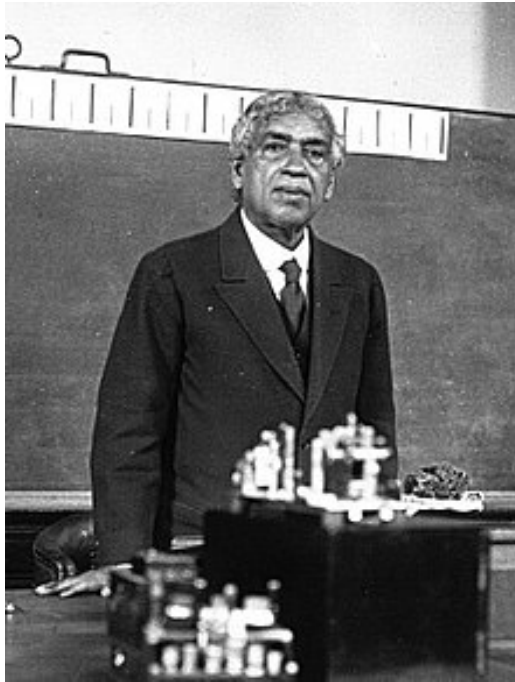
CV Raman was a physicist born in Trichinopoly (now Tiruchirappalli) on Nov 7, 1888. His work was influential in the growth of science in India. He won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1930 along with William Fowler, for his discovery that when light traverses a transparent material, some of the light that is deflected changes in wavelength. The scattering is known as ‘Raman scattering’ and the phenomenon is known as the Raman effect.

He completed his master’s degree from Presidency College, Madras (now Chennai) majoring in Physics. After working as an accountant in the finance department of the Indian government in the initial works, he became professor of Physics at the University of Calcutta in 1917. He worked on the scattering of light in various substances before his breakthrough discovery. He was knighted in 1929, and in 1933 he became the head of department of Physics at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

He was honoured with the Bharat Ratna in 1954; Franklin Medal in 1941 and numerous other awards. He was elected a ‘Fellow of Royal Society’ and was also awarded ‘Lenin Peace

Prize' in 1957. Indian celebrates 'National Science Day' on 28th February to commemorate the discovery of the Raman effect. He died on 21 November, 1970.

Jagadish Chandra Bose



J.C.Bose was born in Mymensingh, Bengal (now Bangladesh) on Nov 30, 1858. He was a physicist and plant physiologist who pioneered the investigation of radio and microwave optics. He made major contributions to plant science and development in the field of radio science. He invented highly sensitive instruments to detect the minute responses to external stimuli by living organisms. This enabled him to draw parallels between animal and plant tissues.

He completed his degree from the University of Cambridge in 1884 and worked as a professor of physical science at Presidency College, Calcutta. He founded Bose Research Institute (now Bose Institute) in Calcutta after leaving Presidency College. He constructed automatic recorders capable of registering slight movements to facilitate his research. These instruments produced some striking results, like the quivering of injured plants, which exemplified Bose's demonstration of an apparent power of feeling in plants.

Apart from being a dedicated scientist, he was also a writer who wrote on science fiction. He is known as the father of Bengali science fiction. He was knighted in 1917 and became of 'Fellow of the Royal Society' in 1920. A crater in the moon has been named in his honour. He died in Giridih (now in Jharkhand) on 23 November 1937 at the age of 78.

Dr Vikram Sarabhai



He was an Indian physicist born in Ahmedabad, Gujarat on August 12, 1919. He initiated the space research in the country and helped in the development of nuclear power in India. He founded the Physical Research Laboratory in 1947 and is regarded as the father of India's space programme.

He was born in a family of industrialists who were committed to the Indian independence movement. He studied at the Gujarat college in Ahmedabad but was later shifted to the University of Cambridge, where he took his Tripos in natural sciences. He had to return to India because of WWII. He founded the Physical Research Laboratory in Ahmedabad on his return to India. He undertook research in cosmic rays under the physicist Sir CV Raman at Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

In spite of his dedication towards scientific research, he took active interests in business, industry and development issues. He founded the 'Ahmedabad Textile Industry's Research Association' in 1947 and managed it until 1956. He also played an instrumental role in setting up the first Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad in 1962 after realising the need for professional management education in India.

He established the Indian National Committee for Space Research, now ISRO, in 1962. He also set up the Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station. He took over as the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission of India after the death of Dr. Homi Bhabha in 1966. He was dedicated to the use of science and technology as a 'lever of development' and initiated

programs to take education to remote places through satellite communication and initiated the idea of satellite-based remote sensing of natural resources.

He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1966 and Padma Vibhushan (posthumously) in 1972. He died at the age of 52 in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

M S Subbulakshmi



MS Subbulakshmi was a legendary vocalist of Carnatic music born in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, on 16 September, 1916. Her career covered classical and semi-classical songs with a short stint in films. She was born in a family of musicians: her mother was a veena player and her grandmother was a violinist.

She gave her first performance at Madras Music Academy when she was 13 years old. The performance was spellbinding and soon after she became one of the leading Carnatic vocalists. Her notable international musical performances were the Edinburgh International Festival in 1963 at the Carnegie Hall, New York; the UN General Assembly on UN Day in 1966.

She also acted in a few Tamil films and one Hindi film in her youth. She was the first musician ever to be awarded the Bharat Ratna and first Indian musician to be awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award. She died on 11th December 2004 in Chennai Tamil Nadu.

Srinivasa Ramanujan



Ramanujan was a mathematician born in Erode, Tamil Nadu, on Dec 22, 1887. He is known for his pioneering discoveries on the field of theory of numbers and properties of partition function. He had no formal education in pure mathematics but made breakthrough contributions in number theory, infinite series and mathematical analysis.

He obtained a copy of George Shoobridge Carr's *Synopsis of Elementary Results in Pure and Applied Mathematics*. This collection of thousands of theorems aroused his interest in mathematics. After verifying the results in Carr's book, he went beyond it, developing his own theorems and ideas.

His initial research was done in isolation and was soon recognised by Indian mathematicians. He began a postal partnership with G.H. Hardy, an English mathematician, who recognised the extraordinary work done by Ramanujan. Hardy arranged for Ramanujan to come to Cambridge for better collaboration and further research. Ramanujan spent nearly five years in Cambridge developing new theorems and published part of his findings there. On 13th October, 1918, he was the first Indian to be elected a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Suffering with health problems throughout his life, he contracted tuberculosis and severe vitamin deficiency in 1917 while in London. His conditions improved and allowed him to come back to India in 1919. He died soon after returning to India in 1920 at the age of 32.

Kalidasa



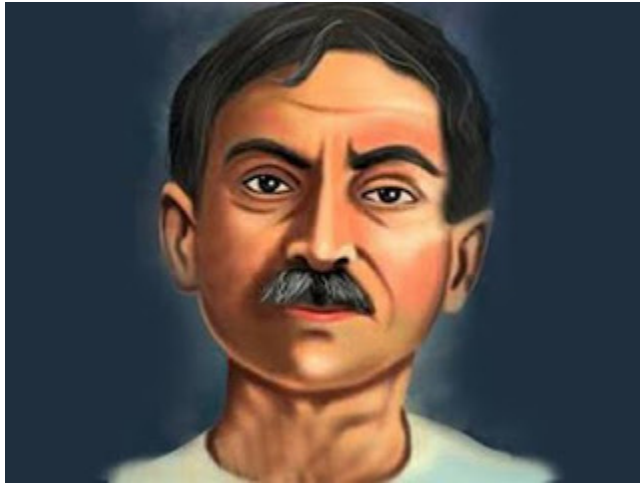
Kalidasa was a Sanskrit poet and dramatist during the 5th century AD. Widely regarded as the greatest in his field in India, his works were primarily based on the Vedas, the Mahabharata and the Puranas.

Speculations by scholars suggest that he may have lived near the Himalayas. According to folklore, Kalidasa was originally an unintelligent person, and married a princess. Challenged by his wife, he studied Puranas and other Indian literature and became a great poet. Another legend states that he visited Kumaradasa, the king of Sri Lanka formerly known as Ceylon and, because of some treachery, Kalidasa was murdered there.

Kalidasa wrote three plays: *Abhijnanashakuntalam* ("The Recognition of Shakuntala"), *Vikramorvasi* ("Urvashi Won by Valour"), and *Malavikagnimitra* ("Malavika and Agnimitra"). *Abhijnanashakuntalam* is considered to be a masterpiece and was among the first Sanskrit works to be translated into English, and subsequently into many languages.

He also penned the epic poems *Raghuvamsha* ("Dynasty of Raghu") and *Kumarasambhava* ("Birth of the War God"); and the lyric "*Meghadutam*" ("Cloud Messenger"). He had a great influence on Indian literature and writers, including Rabindranath Tagore, who adapted the romanticism of Kalidasa's '*Meghadutam*' in his poems on monsoons.

Munshi Premchand

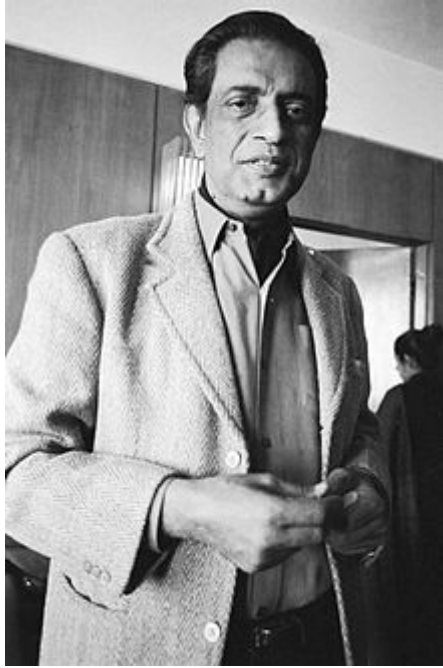


Born as Dhanpat Rai Srivastava in Lamati, UP, on July 31, 1880, Munshi Premchand was an author who was a pioneer of sorts, combining Indian themes and Western literary styles in his widely popular novels and short stories. Before joining Mahatma Gandhi in his non-cooperation movement in 1921, he worked as a teacher.

As a writer, he initially gained recognition for his Urdu-language novels and short stories. He did not gain fluency in Hindi until his middle years, after which he released his first major Hindi novel, *Sevasadana* in 1918. His novels majorly dealt with the social evils prevalent in Indian society, abuses by the British bureaucracy, and exploitation of rural peasants by moneylenders and officials. He adopted the pseudonym '*Premchand*' after British officials raided his house and found his "seditious" work against British. The pseudonym he was using earlier was "Nawab Rai"

His best work is to be found in his collection of 250 or so short stories in Hindi under the title of '*Manasarovar*'. His stories draw inspiration from the northern Indian life style for their subject matter. Some of his most famous works include '*Premshram*', '*Rangabhumi*', '*Ghaban*' and '*Godan*'. He died on 8 Oct, 1936, after several days of sickness.

Satyajit Ray



A Bengali director and writer, he was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata) on 2 May, 1921. He brought Indian cinema to the world through phenomenal works like '*Pather Panchali*', one of the films from the Apu Trilogy. He was known for his humanism and versatility that he brilliantly imbibed in his works through detailed control over them and their music.

Ray was brought up by his mother after his father died when he was barely 3 years old. After attending Presidency College in Calcutta, his mother persuaded him to join art school at Santiniketan. Having interests which were exclusively Western-oriented, he was exposed to Indian and other Eastern art in Santiniketan. With a deeper understanding of both the cultures, he perfectly blended them in his work.

He returned to Calcutta in 1943 and started working for a British-run advertising agency, D.J. Keymer, as a 'junior visualiser', but within a few years, he became its art director. Later, he worked with a publishing house where he worked as a commercial illustrator and became one of the leading typographers and book-jacket designers in India. He designed book covers for Jim Corbett's '*Maneaters of Kumaon*' and Jawaharlal Nehru's '*Discovery of India*'. But he was deeply influenced while working on the novel '*Pather Panchali*' by Bibhuti Bhushan Banerjee, and he started thinking about its cinematic possibilities and cofounded the Calcutta Film Society in 1947. He was encouraged in his cinematic ambitions by the French director Jean Renoir and after witnessing the success of Vittorio De Sica's '*The Bicycle Thief*' he was convinced that he should attempt to make '*Pather Panchali*'.

Some of his best films were based on the works of Rabindranath Tagore and most of them were in Bengali. His first Hindi film was '*Shatranj ke Khilari*' in 1977. He continued working as an illustrator and a writer parallelly, primarily for young people. He revived '*Sandesh*', a children's magazine started by his grandfather in 1913 and worked on it until his death. He also created two popular fictional characters- Feluda, a detective, and Professor Shonku, a scientist.

He was awarded 32 National Film Awards, Dadasaheb Phalke Award (1985), Padma Bhushan (1965) and Bharat Ratna (1992) by the Government of India and numerous awards internationally. He is the second film personality after Charles Chaplin to have been awarded an honorary doctorate by Oxford University. He was also awarded an Honorary Oscar in 1992 for Lifetime Achievement. Due to heart complications, his health deteriorated and he died on 23 April 1992 at the age of 71. His legacy and contribution can be understood in these lines by the Japanese director Akira Kurosawa, "Not to have seen the cinema of Ray means existing in the world without seeing the sun or the moon."

Dhyan Chand



He was born in Allahabad on 29 August, 1905. He was a field hockey player and is considered to be one of the greatest players of all time. During his active years, India was the most dominant team in hockey, winning gold medals in three consecutive Olympics (1928, 1932 and 1936). The influence remained even after his retirement with India winning gold medals in seven out of eight Olympics from 1928 to 1964.

His interest in hockey started with his father, who played hockey while in service with the British Indian Army. At the age of 16, Dhyan Chand joined the army, where he exclusively played army hockey tournaments and regimental games. He came to prominence with his performance in New Zealand in 1926. Eventually, when field hockey was reintroduced in the Olympics in 1928, Dhyan Chand was selected for India's Olympic team. One of the most memorable games was the final match against Germany in 1936 Olympics where India defeated Germany with the final score of 8-1, with Dhyan Chand scoring 3 of the 8 goals.

During the Indian team's world tour in 1932, he scored 133 goals. He was known as "The Wizard" for his superb control over the ball. With over 400 goals to his name, he retired after 22 years of professional hockey and played his final international match in 1948. He retired from army at the age of 51 with a rank of Major. He was honoured with Padma Bhushan, India's third highest civilian honour, in 1951 by the Government of India. He taught at coaching camps after retirement and spent his final days in his hometown Jhansi. He died on 3rd December, 1979.

Chand's birthday, 29th August, is celebrated as National Sports Day in India. An award was instituted in his name- the Dhyan Chand Award, and is awarded to sportspersons for lifetime achievement in sports.

Sarojini Naidu



Sarojini Naidu was born on 13th February 1879 in the city of Hyderabad. She was a freedom fighter, political activist, poet-writer and the first Indian woman to be President of the Indian National Congress and to be appointed an Indian state governor.

After completing her matriculation from University of Madras, she went to King's College London in 1895, and then to Girton College, Cambridge. After returning to India, she joined the independence movement and came in contact with Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. She worked extensively for women's empowerment and helped to establish the Women's Indian Association (WIA) in 1917. She was jailed along with Gandhiji and Nehru after the Dandi march; and played a key role in the Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement in 1942.

Naidu was also an active writer. She began writing at the age of twelve. Her first volume of poetry is called '*The Golden Threshold*' which she wrote in 1905, followed by '*The Bird of Time*' in 1942. She was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Naidu died of a

cardiac arrest on 2nd March 1949 in Lucknow. She was sometimes referred to as "*The Nightingale of India*" and is commemorated in the names of several educational and medical institutions across the country.