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### Speak Up

#### GANDHI'S NON-VIOLENCE AND JAINISM

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Jainism is one of the heterodox schools of Indian Philosophy. It is also a religion as the followers of Jina are called Jain. The word Jina is a Sanskrit word which means victor. According to Jainism, one gets victory when he can overcome the bondage of karma, and this happens only when he leads a nonviolent life. Over the ages, non-violence in its deepest form has inspired millions of people all over the world. This philosophy of ahimsa or non-violence of Jainism had the most significant influence on Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation. Ahimsa is not just the absence of physical violence but also the avoidance of any harm to all living beings, even through speech and thought. This principle deeply resonated with Gandhi, who adopted it as the foundation of his life's philosophy.

One pivotal moment in Gandhi's life occurred when he was 19 years old. He sought his mother Putalibai's permission to travel to England for further studies. His mother, a pious lady, played a crucial role in shaping his character. She emphasized the importance of ahimsa to him. Concerned about the dietary habits in foreign countries, she made him promise not to consume meat or alcohol. Gandhi assured her that he would uphold this promise, emphasizing his trustworthiness. However, she remained uncertain about what might happen in a distant land.

Putlibai then decided to see a Jain Sadhu, Swami Becharadasji, and seek his advice. Becharadasji, originally from the Bania caste, had later converted to Jainism. Gandhi's mother had great faith in him. Becharadasji assured her that he would ask Gandhi take a vow, and then there should be no problem. Gandhi took the oath before the Jain monk Becharadasji, promising to abstain from eating beef, drinking alcohol, and even engaging in dalliance with women. After this, she consented to his decision to go abroad. This was the first instance in his life when he came into contact with a Jain sadhu.



Gandhi, who led India in its freedom movement with the help of ahimsa in Jainism, was inspired by the Jain concepts of compassion and respect for all life forms. Gandhi demonstrated how non-violent resistance could be a powerful tool for social and political change. His commitment to non-violence was evident in various movements, including the Salt March, the Quit India movement, and Civil Disobedience campaigns. He encouraged Indians to resist British oppression through non-violent means, such as civil disobedience, fasting, and peaceful protests. Gandhi firmly believed in resolving conflicts and achieving social and political change through non-violent methods, even in the face of extreme adversity. This idea was deeply rooted in him due to his early exposure to the Jain teachings of compassion and the interconnectedness of all life.

