

SPECIAL FEATURES

Jainism, Ahimsā, and Nonviolence

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*Samyak: An Undergraduate Journal of Jain Studies*Vol. 1, Issue 1, 2025

The greatest threats to humanity are not sudden disasters, but slow erosions of peace and stability. In a world grappling with war, political unrest, and continuous environmental devastation, the Jain principle of ahimsā offers a radical, yet timeless solution. Rooted in philosophy, ahimsā extends far beyond mere pacifism, encompassing both human and natural relationships. It has shaped an ethical framework demanding non-violence through thoughts, words, and actions—acting as more than a moral aspiration, but a necessary tool in securing a habitable future.

The same forces that drive human conflict—greed, exploitation, and disregard for consequences—also fuel the deterioration of the environment. Climate change is not merely an environmental crisis but an ethical dilemma deeply intertwined with human behavior. Jain philosophies, with their emphasis on ahimsā, uniquely address the root causes of ecological harm: overconsumption and unsustainable lifestyles. On the macro level, ahimsā's call towards non-violent business practices is a driving force in the move towards ethical sourcing, sustainable production, and waste reduction. Policies that discourage deforestation and exploitative labor practices align with Jain teachings on the interconnectedness of life. The success of environmental movements rooted in non-violence, such as the Chipko movement, where villagers practiced peaceful resistance to protect forests, demonstrated the power of ahimsā in ecological conservation. On the micro level, non-possessiveness directly clashes with the sprawl of unchecked consumerism and resulting carbon footprints within the developing world. Animal agriculture as one of the largest contributors to climate change is directly combatted by the non-violent relationship with food ahimsā begets. This vital consciousness shift to mindful consumption by resisting unnecessary desires is the first step in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Ahimsā's philosophies challenge destructive tendencies through its emphasis on peace in dialogue and leadership. The Satyāgraha Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and the fight against apartheid in South Africa differentiated ahimsā from passive submission and an active force to dismantle systematic injustices. More importantly, they fostered long-term peace over temporary resolutions through force. Racial and caste-based discrimination, gender inequality, and economic exploitation all stem from a culture of violence—one that thrives on division and domination. In a world where reactionary violence often escalates tensions rather than resolving them, ahimsā's path of diplomacy rooted in empathy and shared humanity

redefines strength from domination to restraint and understanding. These principles work to break the cycle of violence governing the political atmosphere in the status quo.

The urgency of a societal change demands solutions that extend beyond technology and policy—it requires a shift in consciousness. From inspiring non-violent resistance movements to promoting minimalistic lifestyles that minimize ecological harm, the practicality of this doctrine has spread far beyond an idealistic mindset. Its applications in diplomacy, social justice, and environmental sustainability have the potential to reshape global concerns and address society’s most pressing crises.

Published: September 01, 2025 CDT.



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