



He was a man who
had a dream

Martin Luther King Jr & Ahimsa

Martin Luther King Jr Day

20 January 2025

**"It is no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence in this world;
it's nonviolence or nonexistence."**

**"Nonviolence is absolute commitment to the way of love. Love is not
emotional bash; it is not empty sentimentalism. It is the active outpouring
of one's whole being into the being of another."**

**"I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals
a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity,
equality, and freedom for their spirits."**

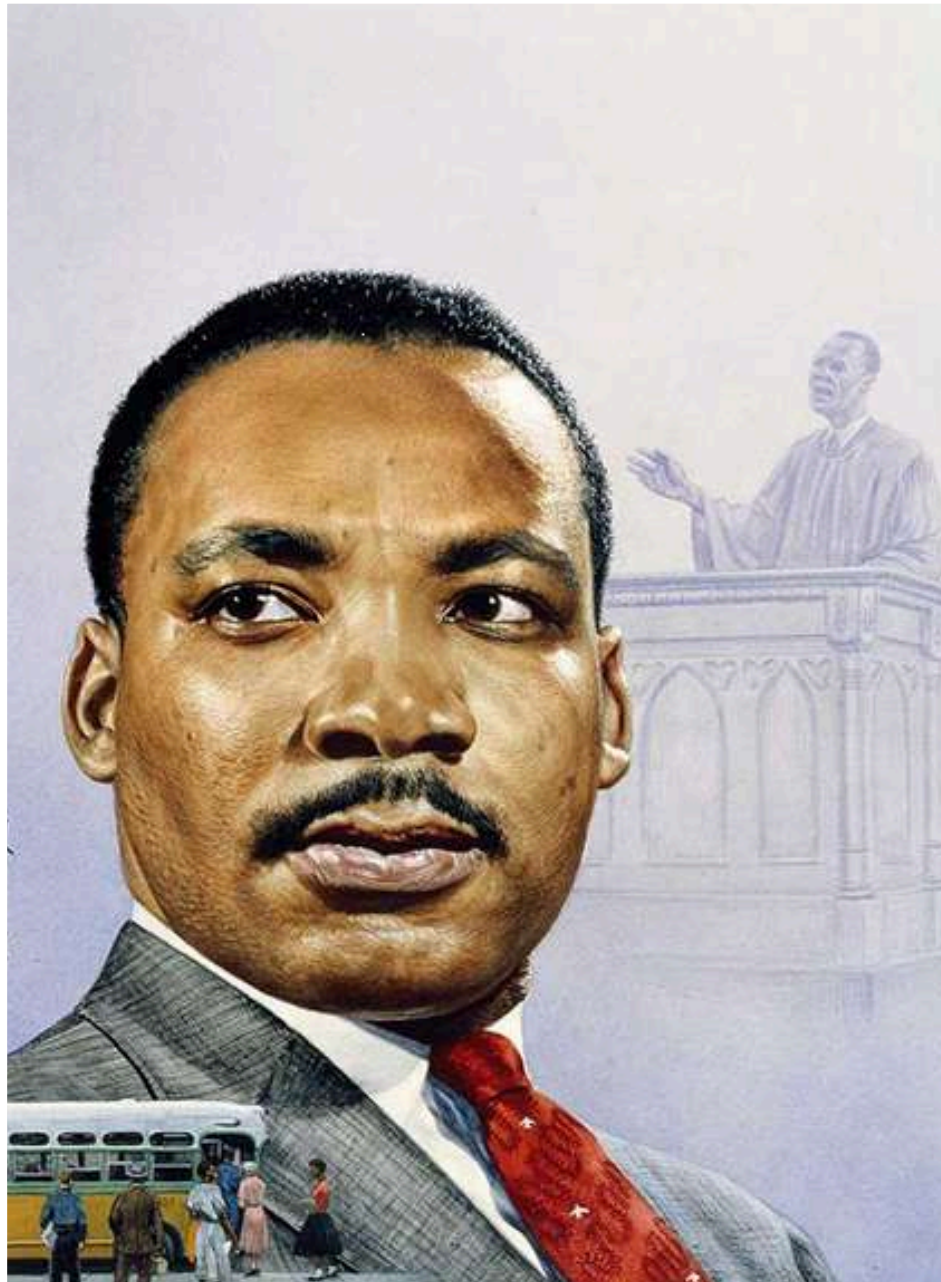


MARTIN LUTHER KING JR



In this modern age, as we analyse Jainism, we must try to see its lasting effects on the world. True Jainism deals with the self and how to free one's soul from the karmic cycle. In trying to promote good actions for oneself, one also brings good to others. The great people of our time become great by devotion to others. Mahavir, in his quest for nirvana, taught others along the way and showed them his insights. This is how religion has been passed down from generation to generation.

These special people who have influenced the lives of many have been rare in history, but their impact has been tremendous. Leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, the founder of the non-violent protest, transformed this simple idea into a vehicle for monumental change by bringing about the independence of India. Also, Mother Teresa, who cared for thousands of sick and hungry people through service for others. Similarly, another great leader of our time, the Reverend Dr Martin Luther King Jr, changed America society by fighting for equal rights for people of colour.



Martin Luther King Jr. by Boris Chaliapin (1904-1979)

The time when Martin Luther King lived, the 1960s, was a very turbulent time in the history of America. In the South, African American people did not enjoy the same rights as citizens of the white population. They could not attend the same schools, eat at the same restaurant, use the same toilets, even drink from the same drinking fountains. Blacks even had to give up seats on buses to the whites, simply because of the colour of their skin. The black population was blatantly being oppressed, and many were becoming fed up with the situation. In all of the turmoil, a young man rose up to defend his community. King became the leader of the national civil rights movement.

Although many were angry to fight back with fists, King urged his followers to follow Ghandiji's principle of nonviolent protest. He had also read about the Jain principle of Ahimsa. When crowds gathered, King urged his followers to fight with words. His lectures and remarks stirred the concern and sparked the conscience of a generation; the movement and marches he led



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brought significant changes in the fabric of American life; his courageous and selfless devotion gave direction to thirteen years of civil rights activities, his charismatic leadership inspired men in women, young and old, in the nation and abroad.

When we compare the principle of Jainism, to the ideals that King held, we see many in common. He preached non-violence worldwide. In Montgomery, Alabama, King and other leaders organised a boycott of buses by the black population Of the city in protest to the racist bus laws. He did not call on his followers to fight back, but rather told them to practise self-control, another pillar of Jain values. In the hardest of times, he asked people not to say any hateful words, or perform any actions of

anger. He also took part in sit-ins where students defiantly sat at lunch counters where only whites were allowed. He told the protesters not to even raise a finger, even while they were being beaten. Jain Teachings tell us that it is self-control we must use to hold back our urges, when we want something most - to strike someone who is hurting us, to steal when we are in need, to curse when we're being ridiculed - these are all actions we can only prevent through self-control.

King's quest for equality was portrayed in his famous speech during the March on Washington DC, show a protest to the nation of this racist law and segregation practises. **Many of King's ideas that All Souls are equal and love for all, are also told in Jain teachings.**

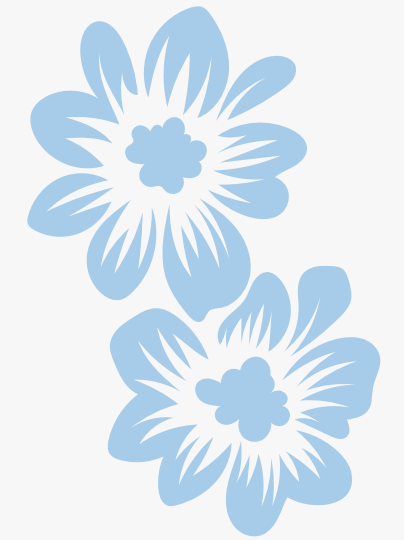
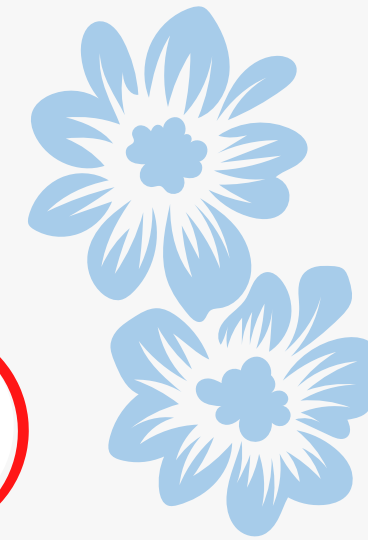
"I have a dream that one day, on the hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners, will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day in the state of Mississippi, a desert state sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an Oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will be not judged by the colour of this skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today."

*I have a dream speech delivered by King
in Washington DC August 28, 1963*



Perhaps the greatest relation between Dr King and Jainism, can be explained in the great Jain prayer "*Maitri Bhavanu*" by the Late Pujya Shree Chitrabhanuji

May the sacred stream of amity flow forever in my heart.

May the universe prosper, such is my cherished desire.

May my heart sing with ecstasy at the sight of the virtuous.

May my life be an offering at their feet.

May my heart bleed at the sight of the wretched, the cruel, the irreligious.

May tears of compassion flow from my eyes.

May I always be there to show the path to the pathless wanderers of life.

Yet if they should not hearken to me, May I bide in patience.

May the spirit of goodwill enter all our hearts.

May we all sing in chorus the immortal song of human concord.

This was King's dream, and this is what he lived his life for. His philosophy of nonviolent direct action and his strategies for rational and non-destructive social change galvanised the conscience of the American nation and reordered its priorities. His wisdom, his words, his action, his commitment, and his dreams for a new cast of life are intertwined with the American experience and the world at large. Although the struggle still continues unfortunately, King did much to make change.

Article Source: Courtesy of The University of Michigan (Jain Grp)
(With some additional material by the then Editor (Me))



M.L.K Quotes



"Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon. Indeed it is a weapon unique in history, which cuts without wounding and enables the man who wields it."



"Life's most persistent and urgent question, 'What are you doing for others?'"



"Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality."