

Satyā and Ahimsa Activity for Students

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in 1869 in the seaside city of Porbandar in the state of Gujarat, Western India. As a young man, Gandhi earned his law degree in London, England and later moved to South Africa where he lived and practiced law for 21 years. It was in South Africa where Gandhi built the foundations of his Satyagraha movement in which he manifested the ideals of truth and love in a life committed to nonviolence and selfless service. Upon his return to India at age 45, Gandhi used these ideals to uplift the lives of countless Indians through constructive village programs, removing barriers of the mind and heart, awakening humanity to a noble ideal of mutual love and respect and Gandhi prepared a nation of people for swaraj, self-rule with the means to be self-sufficient. Though often referred to as “Bapu” (Father), he also came to be known as “Mahatma” (Great soul) for living a life of dedicated to living a life inspired by the highest spiritual ideals.

In this activity, students will learn about the twin concepts of “Satya” (truth) and “Ahimsa” (love), which Gandhi through a hands-on craft. By creating a visual representation of the ideas of Ahimsa and Satyā, students will learn that these two concepts fundamentally complement each other; love cannot exist without truth, and truth cannot exist without love. In this way, Ahimsa and Satya can be thought of as two sides of the same coin. As Gandhi beautifully states:

“Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which the reverse? Nevertheless, ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. When once we have grasped this point, final victory is beyond question.”

(Selection from Gandhi, by Nirmal Kumar Bose. Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, in 1948.)

Artwork courtesy of Caroline Livaditis

Activity

Materials: A small piece of cardboard, scissors, glue, a lead pencil, and a printer.
Optional: a drawing compass, colored pencils, crayons, or watercolors.

Step 1: Print this document.

Step 2: Choose one of the drawings below representing “Satyā,” and one representing “Ahimsa.” Or, choose two templates from below and color in your own drawings! Use your scissors to cut your drawings into circular shapes. If you are using a drawing compass, you can draw a light circle around the outside of the drawings at this point to create a path along which to cut. You can choose the exact size of each of your cutouts.

Step 3: Grab your cardboard, and your pencil. Use your pencil to lightly trace the outline of your circular cutouts onto your cardboard.

Step 4: Cut a circle out of your cardboard.

Step 5: Take each of your original cutouts (the drawings) and glue each one to either side of the cardboard.

Step 6: Voilà! You now have a “coin” with “Satyā” and “Ahimsā” on either side.

Step 7: You can also make up a game of “coin toss” with a friend—guess on which side the coin will land: truth or love (satya or ahimsa) and whoever guesses correctly can share an expression of how to live by that principle. You might also think of other games using these coins.







