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REG NO. - 1554476

DATE - 30-08-2023

ESSAY TEST CODE - 2321

IF YOU DESIRE TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD,
YOU MUST BE DIFFERENT
FROM THE WORLD.

From around 1945-1990s,
the entire world gradually divided
itself into 2 rival blocs. This was the
era of cold war. It was said that
an iron curtain separated the
Eastern and the western half of
~~of~~ the world. The two blocs led by
two superpowers - USA and USSR
made a devastating nuclear war
seem probable. But in this scenario,
a third faction emerged to say
they will remain non-aligned.
Instead of choosing one of the
two blocs, they chose the side
of peace, disarmament and
development.

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The non-aligned movement showed the world that they would not like to paint themselves in the same colours like others. They decided to make a difference and thereby saved the world from complete bipolarisation and a probable nuclear war. This is a classic example of how those who seek to make a difference in the world, are different from the world.

In this spirit, this essay will analyse what it means to be different from the world, how the world has been made different by many, what is the cost of not being different and what is the ultimate "sutra" to be different from the world.

Firstly, let us understand, WHAT IT MEANS TO BE DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD?
Being different actually means

being original. It implies that we analyse situations and ideas with objectivity and reason and do what is right. This is different from simply doing things because the entire world is doing the same. Being different is about having the courage to resist societal pressure and work in the interest of righteousness, justice ^{and} truth. When one is able to think beyond what the general society/world does, only then can the person be an agent of change in the world.

Now, let us supplement our theoretical understanding with some iconic examples to understand how great people made a difference in the world by first choosing to be ^{themselves,} different from the world.

The design and course of Indian freedom movement witnessed remarkable change with the coming of Mahatma Gandhi. While all

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saw British as the evil enemy to be defeated, Gandhi made a difference. He practised non-violence, satyagraha and said "hate the sin, not the sinner". He chose to be different from all other freedom fighters and therefore, he made a difference in our world. Till today, we cherish his ideals of non-violence, love, and satyagraha.

Similarly, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar made a difference in our social set up. Some justified caste system, some tried to modify it but Dr. Ambedkar outrightly called for "annihilation of caste". He came to be recognised as the liberator of oppressed classes only because he had the courage to be different from others.

Like the oppressed classes, women of our world have also been subjected to myriad inequalities, deprivations and pains. Who do you think can change their world?

- The women themselves. The great women like RashsundariDebi, Sarojini Naidu, Eita Gopinath, Jacinda Ardern, etc. are examples of how being different from the patriarchal world, enabled these women to reach the heights of success. The world said - "WOMEN CAN'T" But they showed - "WOMEN CAN!"

If we look at Indian administration, challenges like red tapism, corruption and politicisation are common and rampant. In fact, most people today believe this is how the system works and therefore, cannot be changed. But the moment we hear the name of sir T.N. Seshan, we realise that yes, our administration can be different. He revolutionised our electoral system by being different from the rest.

On the similar note, let us also see how our environment

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has changed with the contribution of people like Balbix singh sechawal. Everybody thinks cleaning of rivers, sanitation, water management, etc. are the works of government. Why should we care about all this? But Balbix singh is different. He thinks environment is our common responsibility. And it is because of this spirit, he has been able to clean an entire 160 km stretch of Beas river, mobilising many supporters.

Now, as we have seen that the world can be changed by people who choose to be different from the world. Let us also see the flip side of the argument. WHAT

IF NOBODY WANTS TO BE DIFFERENT? Usually, most people wish to be like others. There is a sense of ease and comfort in being one among the masses. Moreover, the most common excuse for not doing something is that no one else has done it so far.

But WHAT IS THE COST OF BEING LIKE OTHERS? On an individual level, you lose your originality, freedom of thinking and action. And on a larger level, this can be detrimental. Like during the Holocaust, no country, no german official ardently opposed Hitler. The result was genocide of 6 million Jews.

Similarly, in Mahabharata, no side wanted to step back from war. The desire to rule over Hastinapur was common for both Kauravas and Pandavas. Since nobody made a difference, the result was destruction of the entire race.

Therefore, it is important to be different - be original. Only then you can differentiate between good and bad, light and dark, ethical and unethical, and make the right choice. If you just go with the flow, you will be

rendered indistinguishable from the herd.

Now, since we understand the importance of being different from the world to bring about a meaningful change, let us also know the 4-point sutra to enable ourselves to be the change-makers.

First step is to think for oneself. Do not follow any person or book blindly. Be a "light unto yourself" like the great Buddha. This will enable you to know your original self.

Secondly, have a critical view of everything. Look at things from rational point of view. This will enable you to overcome prejudices and preferences and make the right choice.

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Thirdly, have the courage to resist the pressure. When one person makes a different choice from the rest, he/she is likely to face opposition and criticism.

But have the courage to be different like Raja Ram Mohan Roy who did not succumb to societal pressure in arguing against sati.

Fourthly, make efforts to make the world different. Live the ideas that you believe in like Gandhi became the change he wished to see in the world. ~~Make~~ Be different, this will inspire others and gradually you will see the world is undergoing a difference.

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Like the journey of a thousand miles starts from a single step, a larger change in the world must be preceded with the first step of making ourselves different.

Be different from the world so that you can be an inspiration for the world to change and have the good fortune of saying, like Robert Frost did,

"Two roads diverged in the wood and I took the one less travelled by - - - and that has made all the DIFFERENCE".

IF YOUR SHIP DOESN'T COME
IN, SWIM OUT TO MEET IT.

Lake Bharati is a middle aged farm labourer who lives in a small village of Andhra Pradesh. She was born in a family of landless labourers and spent her childhood in extreme poverty and deprivation. Even today she lives in a small house in the village. But she is known as a role model to many women because of her resilience and hard work. While working on the farm and taking care of her young siblings, she kept studying. Even after marriage and the addition of greater responsibilities, she never left her efforts to study regularly. And recently, she has been awarded a Ph.D degree by the state university. She fulfilled her dream, despite all hardships.

What do we learn from her?

That achievements do not come to knock at your doors on their own, you have to traverse the path of hardwork and challenges, to reach your desired destination. That is why it is said, "when the ship doesn't come in, swim out to meet it." The "ship" is your destiny and if you do not swim out to meet it, you will be left standing at the shore, waiting forever, with your dreams, desires and goals unfulfilled.

But how would you know WHICH ONE IS YOUR SHIP? The first step towards accomplishing the purpose of your life is to know the purpose. And that requires introspection, self evaluation and self-awareness. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Know your passions and desires. More importantly, know your capabilities. Once you know, what the

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destination is, journey can begin. Just like Sachin Tendulkar. He knew that cricket is what he is meant for. He worked on it and became the "god of cricket". That is how you recognise your ship, swim towards it and enjoy your journey on the ship thereafter.

However, remember that recognition is just the beginning. Consistent efforts to swim towards the ship are what will take you to your destination. Things do not fall in place on their own, you are responsible to ensure that they do.

It is said history has answers to all our questions and dilemmas. So let us see how history conveys us this message. Imagine the time of the great French revolution of 1789. The people of France desired "liberty, equality

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and fraternity". But the monarch was not willing to grant them the same. Did freedom come to them on its own? No. They revolted, protested, petitioned, many even lost lives and then came freedom. This is how we should move towards our goals, with fearlessness and perseverance until we reach them.

Our society has been plagued with the malaise of casteism and patriarchy since centuries. People like Raja Rammohan Roy, Pandita Ramabai, Jyotiba Phule, etc. made immense efforts to oppose these evils. Even today our struggle is continuing. We know that the final destination is one of Equality, dignity and justice for all. That is the reason we have been making efforts to reach there. But what is important to note is that struggle and efforts are what shape desires into reality. The ship doesn't come in easily, you have to pull it towards yourself.

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Similar is the case with our economy. Boom - bust, recession - depression are common cyclical features of our economy. But we know that the ~~test~~ fundamental purpose, the telos of our economy is equilibrium. That is why whenever inflation becomes unbearable or there are problems of shortage, price crash, etc., our government takes active steps to correct it. The equilibrium does not come on its own, it requires alert and active measures to bring it

Our agriculture has been suffering with many problems. It is the prime pulse of our economy and its growth is essential for our food security. However, infertility of soil, fragmented landholdings, erratic monsoons, etc. made it a debt trap for our farmers. According to NCRB, 28 farmer suicides (on average) were reported in the year 2019. Agriculture's

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Ship was not coming in. So the government came up with PM-KISAN for income support, agriculture infrastructure fund, credit card scheme, etc. so that somehow our agricultural sector could be revived and promoted.

Recently, the Chandrayaan-3 was successfully launched by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). Our last mission was not a success. Infact, efforts for successful landing on moon are being made since almost a decade. How do you think we reached the moon?

We reached it with our patience and resilience. The task was not easy but ISRO did it. Similarly, when we meet failures or when our vision becomes hazy, we need to make efforts with extra zeal to reach the end.

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But what if you keep standing at the shore, waiting that one day your destiny will come to meet you on its own? Does that happen? Not really.

Take a look at the Sri-Lankan crisis. When Covid happened and economic downturns occurred, Sri Lanka had nothing to fall back on. The government kept on spending money for irrational populist policies with no care for the future. Inflation, shortages, etc. occurred but no significant efforts were made. What was the result? A massive breakdown with people protesting and engaging in violence on the streets.

Same is the case with our environment. Climate change, geo-hydrological disasters, global

warming, etc. are looming large over our future. Yet climate finance continues to be inadequate. The countries are more interested in putting responsibilities on each other rather than making efforts. The damage that we have caused to our environment will not be repaired on its own. It demands efforts towards decarbonisation, mitigation and adaptation. If we still do not wake up to the call, the ship is bound to sink.

If you do not want your ship to sink in or go another way, before you reach it, START NOW. SWIM TOWARDS IT. And GET ONTO YOUR SHIP.

But what next? what should you do after you reach your destination? Use it for the best interests of all. Take

inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi. He was the one who made India reach its ship of freedom and gave the timeless values of peace, non-violence, satyagraha. Till today, we cherish these values as the categorical imperatives so that the ship of India sails forward uninterrupted.

Same is the case with Sake Bharati, the woman whose story we encountered at the beginning of the essay. She has achieved her dream to become a Ph.D. scholar and today she is working as a teacher to inspire, motivate and nurture other young minds. She even teaches other women working on the farm, some basic reading and writing skills. Therefore, she is the perfect example of one

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who recognised her ship, moved towards it and ensured that the ship keeps sailing in the right direction.

Therefore, realise your potential. Identify your final purpose and keep moving towards it relentlessly. Sooner or later, you will reach it. But don't let the ship sink in. Once it's gone, all you will be left with is regret. So, "carpe-diem", seize everyday, every step in order to meet your best self.