

# I HAVE A DREAM

Martin Luther King, Jr.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (1929- 1968), a Baptist minister by training, became a civil rights activist early in his career, leading the Montgomery Bus Boycott and helping to found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

- Influenced by Gandhiji, his philosophy of non-violent resistance brought him worldwide attention. In 1964, King became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Prize
- for his efforts to end segregation and racial discrimination through civil disobedience and other non-violent ways. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. King's important works include *Strength to Love* (1953), *Stride toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (1958), *Why We Can't Wait* (1964), and *Where do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (1968). 'I have a Dream' is a speech he delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC on August 28, 1963. Here he



speaks about his dream of seeing Alabama as a developed state, free of racial distinction between the whites and the blacks. The speech had the huge impact in raising public consciousness for civil rights movement and in establishing King as one of the greatest orators in American history.

## A. Work in small groups and discuss the following:

- 1 Evils of caste system
- 2 Bihar of your dream

## I HAVE A DREAM

1. Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This **momentous decree** came as a great beacon

light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been **seared** in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

2. But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the **manacles** of **segregation** and chains of **discrimination**. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still **languishing** in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize an **appalling** condition.
3. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of colour are concerned. Instead of **honouring** this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad cheque which has come back marked 'insufficient funds'. But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of the nation. So we have come to cash this cheque – a cheque that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this **hallowed** spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.
4. It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This **sweltering** summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. Negro is **grated** his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.
5. But, there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.
6. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvellous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must

not lead us to distrust all white people, for many of our white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is **inextricably** bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

**B.1. Read the following sentences and write T for true and F for false statements:**

- a) The hopes of the Negro population were fulfilled by the signing of the emancipation Proclamation.
- b) The condition of the Negroes was appalling.
- c) The 'bank of justice' is bankrupt.
- d) The author prefers racial discrimination.
- e) The nation could overlook Negro problems.
- f) The Negroes of America had citizenship rights.
- g) The author hates the white Americans.
- h) He advocates non-violent struggle.

7 And as we walk, we make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, 'When will you be satisfied?' We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller **ghetto** to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like water and **righteousness** like a mighty stream.



8 I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and **tribulations**. Some of you have come fresh from narrow cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you **battered** by the storms of **persecution** and **staggered** by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is **redemptive**.

9. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not **wallow** in the valley of despair.
10. I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.
11. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed. 'We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal.'
12. I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.
13. I have a dream that one day even 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.
14. I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.
15. I have a dream today.
16. I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.
17. I have a dream today.
18. I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

**B.2. Answer the following questions briefly :**

1. What is the author trying to achieve through his speech?
  2. Do you think Martin Luther is a great orator? What, according to you, are qualities of a great orator? What does Martin Luther urge his people to do?
  3. What is their pledge?
  4. What are the 'trials and tribulations' the author talks about?
19. This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony

of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

20. This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, 'My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring.'
21. And if America is to be a great nation this must come true. So let freedom ring from the **prodigious** hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!
22. Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!
23. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!
24. But not only that; Let freedom ring from the Stone Mountain of Georgia!
25. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!
26. Let freedom ring from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.
27. When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every **hamlet**, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children – black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics – will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!'

**B.3. Answer the following questions briefly :**

- 1) 'This is our hope' (Paragraph 19). What is the hope?
- 2) If America is to be a great nation what must become true?
- 3) Why and when will they thank the Almighty?

### GLOSSARY AND NOTES

**momentous** (adj): very important

**decree** (n): pronouncement

**seared** (v): burnt

**manacles** (n): handcuffs, restricting freedom

**segregation** (n): the act of isolating people according to race, religion and sex

**discrimination** (n): unfair treatment to a person or a group

**languishing** (v): to fail to be successful or improve

**exile** (n): deportee, refugee

**appalling** (adj): shocking, extremely bad

**hallowed** ((adj): made holy

**sweltering** (adj): hot and perspiring

**inextricably** (adv): closely

**tribulations** (n): great trouble or suffering

**ghetto** (n): slum area densely populated by an isolated community

**battered** (adj): worn out, crushed, whacked

**persecution** (n): bad and cruel treatment

**staggered** (adj): reeling, dropped, fallen

**redemptive** (adj): giving salvation, releasing

**wallow** (v): reel, stumble

**oasis** (n): refuge, haven, safe place

**prodigious** (adj): very great in size

**hamlet** (n): a very small village

### C. 1. Long Answer Questions

1. 'The life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination.' Elaborate.
2. What would be fatal for the nation? Why? Explain.
3. What was the 'dream'? How many times 'I have a dream' appears in the lesson? Discuss the importance of this repetition.
4. What is the pledge? When will it be fulfilled?
5. Do you have a dream for your state? Narrate your dream in your own words.

### C. 2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in **groups** or **pairs**:

1. Racial discrimination.
2. Rights of a female child

### C. 3. COMPOSITION

Write a paragraph of about 100 words on each of the following:

1. Human rights
2. Secularism

### D. WORD STUDY

#### D.1. Dictionary Use

Ex. 1. Correct the spelling of the following words:

opportunity

begining

hatered

prodegeons

curvacous

antem

Ex. 2. Look up a dictionary and write two meanings of each of the following words – the one in which it is used in the lesson and the other which is more common:

exile                      decree                      stream                      despair                      ring

**D.2. Word-formation**

Read the following sentences carefully:

*I am not **unmindful** that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations.*

In the sentence given above the word '**unmindful**' is derived from '**mind**' adding a prefix '**un-**' and a suffix '**-ful**'. Find out the root words and the prefixes/suffixes added to in the following words:

momentous	segregation	discrimination	marvellous
righteousness	persecution	nullification	freedom
community	devotee	brotherhood	spiritual

**D.3. Word-meaning**

Ex. 1. Match the words given in **Column A** with their meanings in **Column B**

**Column A**

legitimate  
threshold  
inextricably  
staggered  
redemptive  
oppression  
tranquilizing  
molehill  
jangling  
emancipation

**Column B**

compensating for the faults  
cruelty  
in accordance with law  
small pile of earth  
freedom  
closely bound  
becoming calm  
the point just before a new situation  
walk or move unsteadily  
unpleasantly harsh

**D. 4. Phrases**

Ex.1. Read the lesson carefully and find out the sentences in which the following phrases have been used. Use these phrases in sentences of your own:

So far as	cooling off	seek to	instead of
blow off	bound to	stand up for	quest for

**E. GRAMMAR**

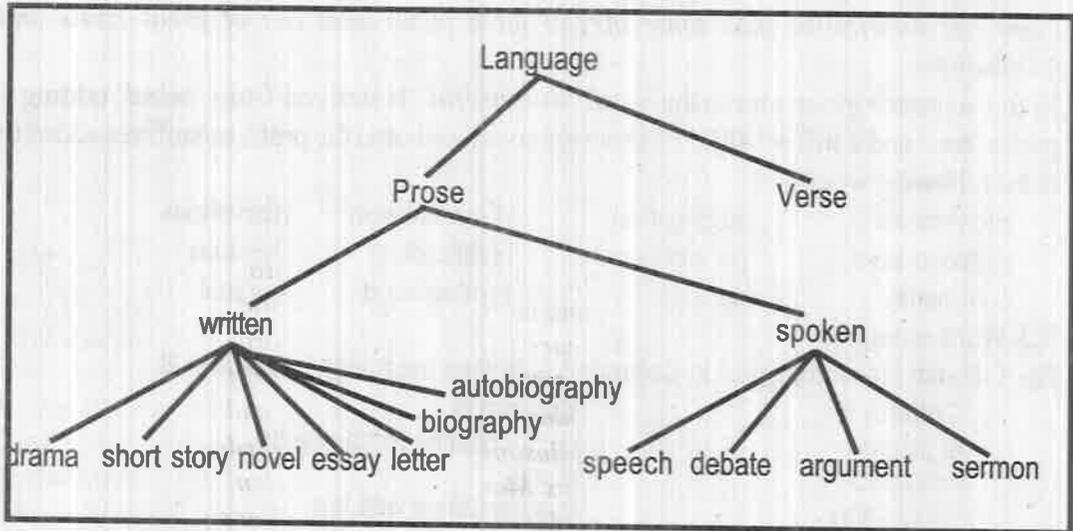
Ex.1. Put the correct form of verbs given in the brackets given and complete the sentences:

- The Negro still .....himself an exile in his own country. (find)
- People ..... to realise the plight of the Negroes. (come)
- We will not ..... until justice is done. (satisfy)

- d) Let freedom ..... from the mighty mountains of New York. (ring)
- e) Martin Luther..... America proud. (do)

**F. ACTIVITY**

**Ex. 1.** The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines prose as the written or spoken language that is not verse.



- a) Try to find out the various verse forms and make a list of them.
- b) Find out the definitions of the prose forms given in the box from a good dictionary and show to your teacher.

