

# I Have a Dream

(Martin Luther King)

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 jail cells. Some of you have come from the 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.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, 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.

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.

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."

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 the table of brotherhood.

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.

I have a dream that my four little 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.

I have a dream today.

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.

I have a dream today.

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 plains, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

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. This will be the day when all of us will be able to sing with new meaning.

My country, 'tis of thee,

Sweet land of liberty,

Of thee I sing:

Land where my fathers died,

Land of the pilgrims' pride,

From every mountain side

Let freedom ring.

(Note: It's a song in praise of one's country. My country is a sweet land of liberty. I sing for this land where my fathers died. It is a land of the pilgrims' pride and let the freedom ring from every side of it.)

And if America is to be a great nation this must become 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!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and Molehill of Mississippi. From every mountain side, let freedom ring.

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 us, black men and white men, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God, we are free at last!"

**Note:**

1. Rockies of Colorado, peaks of California, Stone Mountain of Georgia, Mountain of Tennessee and Mole-hill of Mississippi are the names of mountains of those states.
2. Negro spiritual is a religious song of a type originally sung by the Negro slaves in America. Words are as above.

**About the Author**

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929 - 1968) was the most charismatic leader of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s until his assassination in 1968. He led sit-ins and demonstrations throughout the South and was the President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference as well as Pastor of a large congregation in Atlanta. This speech, delivered in front of the Lincoln Memorial at a centennial celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation, moves us as deeply on paper today as it did when it was delivered with Martin Luther King's powerful skills of oratory. It points the way to a world free from the burden of racism.

## Theme

The emphasis is on the negation of racial segregation in the society. A nation cannot enjoy the glory of democracy without treating all the sections of community, rich and poor, high and low equally; and is judged not by the colour of their skin but by the contents of their character.

## Reading Notes

persecution	undeserved oppressions
veteran	a soldier of a great experience
redemptive	rescue from evil ways, serving to rescue
ghettos	sections of town for under-privileged classes
wallow	roll about (in mud, dirt, water)
frustrations	disappointments
interposition	making interruptions
hew out	cut out with great labour
prodigious	huge

## EXERCISES

### 1. Choose the correct answer.

- i. "You have come here out of great trials and tribulations" means that you have come here after
  - a) attending a fair.
  - b) facing great persecutions and grief.
  - c) great honour.
  - d) great travels.
- ii. "You have been the veterans of creative suffering" means that you have been the
  - a) experienced soldiers of intellectual suffering.
  - b) assets of a nation.
  - c) vanguard of a country.
  - d) army personnel.



- iii. This nation will live out the true meaning of its creed:
- Negroes will leave the country.
  - they will come up to the level of others.
  - they will prove their worth.
  - they will remain a minority.
- iv. What is the dream?
- equality of high and low
  - rule of the blacks
  - negation of whites
  - the practice of brotherhood
- v. Which one is a desert state sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression?
- Georgia
  - Mississippi
  - Alabama
  - Virginia
- vi. What does the governor of Alabama do?
- creates interferences
  - makes interruptions
  - uses sweet words
  - helps the blacks
- vii. What will be exalted?
- hill
  - mountain
  - valley
  - river
- viii. Every hill and mountain shall be made low means that
- all high and low will become equal.
  - hills and mountains will be leveled.
  - there will be no distinction of classes.
  - the low classes will rise up.
- ix. The glory of whom shall be revealed?
- President
  - Governor
  - Lord
  - Mayor
- x. What is the beautiful symphony of brotherhood?
- a violin
  - a guitar
  - the beautiful song of brotherhood
  - musical composition of brotherhood

**2. Mark the sentences true or false.**

- Some of you have come from the areas where you lived happily.
- Stop working with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.
- Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

- iv. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.
- v. Son of a slave will live with the son of a slave owner.
- vi. In future every hill and mountain shall be made low.
- vii. A stone of hope is a coal.
- viii. My country is a sweet land of liberty.
- ix. My country is not a pride of pilgrims.
- x. All the people, black and white, are treated equally.

**3. Answer the following questions.**

- i. What was the cause of Negroes' discontentment?
- ii. What are the qualities of the veterans of creative suffering?
- iii. What is the dream of Martin Luther King Jr.?
- iv. What should be the faith of Negroes?
- v. What was the necessity of pleading the case of the Negroes' freedom?
- vi. What should be the criterion of judgement for a person?
- vii. Do the Negroes enjoy liberty in all the parts of their country?
- viii. From which part of the country did the Negroes gather there?
- ix. Write down the song in your own words.
- x. What is the effect of the repetition of words?

**4. Answer the following questions in 100 - 150 words.**

- i. Write a note on the struggle of Martin Luther King Jr. for the Negroes.
- ii. What was the condition of the Negroes in his days?
- iii. Write ten lines on racial discrimination.
- iv. Write the summary of the speech.
- v. What are the measures you can take to ensure justice with all the sections of the society?

**5. Join the sentence in Column I with the relevant sentence in Column II.**

Column I	Column II
It came as a joyous day break	men would be guaranteed the rights.
The life of the Negroes is still	rightful place we must not do wrongs.
This note was a promise that all	fresh from narrow jail cells.
Now is the time to make	rooted in the American dream.
In the process of gaining our	to end the long night of captivity.



There are those who are asking	of the mountain of despair.
Some of you have come	will be able to join hands.
It is a dream deeply	sadly crippled.
We will be able to hew out	real the promise of democracy.
When all of us	the devotees of civil rights.

**6. Use the correct forms of the verbs given in brackets.**

- i. The architects of our republic (write) the magnificent words.
- ii. All men (guarantee) the unalienable rights of life.
- iii. We (come) to this hollow spot.
- iv. Continue (work) with the faith.
- v. Former slave owners (sit) down together.
- vi. Every valley (exalt) to see my dream (realize).
- vii. We (be) free one day.
- viii. Let freedom (ring) from the mighty mountains.
- ix. The black men and white men (join) hands.
- x. This selection (design) as an oration.

**7. Punctuate the following lines.**

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

**8. Use the following phrasal verbs in your sentences.**

- a) come out      b) come off  
c) come in      d) come down

**9. Read the passage and answer the questions given at the end.**

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.

- a) What is the faith with which he returns to the South?
- b) What will be the effect of the faith?
- c) What will they be able to do with this faith?