

INDIA: OUR MOTHERLAND

Shall India die? Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct, all moral perfection will be extinct, all sweet-souled sympathy for religion will be extinct, all ideality will be extinct; and in its place will reign the duality of lust and luxury as the male and female deities, with money as its priest; fraud, force, and competition its ceremonies; and the human soul its sacrifice. Such a thing can never be.... Will she die? This old Mother of all that is noble or moral or spiritual, the land which the sages trod, the land in which Godlike men still live and breathe? I will borrow the lantern of the Athenian sage and follow you, my brother, through the cities and villages, plains and forests, of this broad world—show me such men in other lands if you can.

The debt which the world owes to our Motherland is immense. Taking country with country, there is not one race on this earth to which the world owes so much as to the patient Hindu, the mild Hindu.... Here activity prevailed when even Greece did not exist, when Rome was not thought of, when the very fathers of the modern Europeans lived in the forests and painted themselves blue. Even earlier, when history has no record, and tradition dares not peer into the gloom of that intense past, even from then until now, ideas after ideas have marched out from her, but every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it, and peace before it.

Can you adduce any reason why India should lie in the ebb tide of the Aryan nations? Is she inferior in intellect? Is she inferior in dexterity? Can you look at her art, at her mathematics, at her philosophy, and answer 'yes'? All that is needed is that she should de-hypnotise herself and wake up from her age-long sleep to take her true rank in the hierarchy of nations.... The national ideals of India are RENUNCIATION and SERVICE. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.

This national ship of ours, ye children of the Immortals, my countrymen, has been plying for ages, carrying civilization and enriching the whole world with its inestimable treasures. For scores of shining centuries, this national ship of ours has been ferrying across the ocean of life, and has taken millions of souls to the other shore, beyond all misery. But today, it may have sprung a leak and got damaged, through your own fault or whatever cause it matters not. What would you, who have placed yourselves in it, do now? Would you go about cursing it and quarrelling among yourselves! Would you not all unite together and put your best efforts to stop the holes? Let us all gladly give our hearts' blood to do it; and if we fail in the attempt, let us all sink and die together, with blessings and not curses on our lips.

Now you understand clearly where the soul of this ogress is: it is in religion. Because no one was able to destroy that, therefore the Hindu nation is still living,

having survived so many troubles and tribulations. Well, one Indian scholar asks, 'What is the use of keeping the soul of the nation in religion? Why not keep it in social or political independence, as is the case with other nations?' It is very easy to talk like that.... The fact is: that the river has come down a thousand miles from its source in the mountains; does it, or can it, go back to its source? If it ever tries to trace back its course, it will simply dry up by being dissipated in all directions. Anyhow the river is sure to fall into the ocean, sooner or later, either by passing through open and beautiful plains or struggling through grimy soil. If our national life of these ten thousand years has been a mistake, then there is no help for it; and if we try now to form a new character, the inevitable result will be that we shall die.

Hidden under the ashes of apparent death, the fire of our national life is yet smouldering and that the life of this nation is religion, its language religion, and its idea religion; and your politics, society, municipality, plague-prevention work, and famine-relief work—all these things will be done as they have been done all along here, viz. only through religion; otherwise all your frantic yelling and bewailing will end in nothing, my friend!

In every country, the means is the same after all, that is, whatever only a handful of powerful men dictate, becomes the *fait accompli*; the rest of the men only follow like flock of sheep, that's all. I have seen your Parliament, your Senate, your vote, majority, ballot; it is the same thing everywhere, my friend.... Now the question is this, who are these men of power in India?—they who are giants in religion. It is they who lead our society; and it is they again who change our social laws and usages when necessity demands; and we listen to them silently and do what they command.

First of all, try to understand this: does man make laws, or do laws make man? Does man make money, or does money make man? Does man make name and fame, or name and fame make man? Be a man first, my friend, and you will see how all those things and the rest will follow of themselves after you. Give up that hateful malice, that dog-like bickering and barking at one another, and take your stand on good purpose, right means, righteous courage, and be brave. When you are born a man, leave some indelible mark behind you.

None will be able to resist truth and love and sincerity. Are you sincere? unselfish even unto death? and loving? Then fear not, not even death. Onward, my lads! The whole world requires Light. It is expectant! India alone has that Light, not in magic mummeries, and charlatanism, but in the teaching of the glories of the spirit of real religion—of the highest spiritual truth. That is why the Lord has preserved the race through all its vicissitudes unto the present day. Now the time has come. Have faith that you are all, my brave lads, born to do great things! Let not the barks of puppies frighten you—no, not even the thunderbolts of heaven—but stand up and work!

India will be raised, not with the power of the flesh, but with the power of the spirit; not with the flag of destruction, but with the flag of peace of love.... One vision

I see clear as life before me, that the ancient Mother has awakened once more, sitting on Her throne—rejuvenated, more glorious than ever. Proclaim Her to all the world with the voice of peace and benediction.

Let New India arise—out of the peasants' cottage, grasping the plough; out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests, from hills and mountains.

We Indians suffer from a great defect, viz. we cannot make a permanent organization—and the reason is that we never like to share power with others and never think of what will come after we are gone.

An English friend of mine, named General Strong, was in India during the Sepoy Mutiny. He used to tell many stories about it. One day, in the course of conversation, I asked him how it was that the sepoys who had enough of guns, ammunition, and provisions at their disposal, and were also trained veterans, came to suffer such a defeat. He replied that the leaders among them, instead of advancing forward, only kept shouting from a safe position in the rear, 'Fight on, brave lads,' and so forth; but unless the commanding officer goes ahead and faces death, the rank and file will never fight with heart. 'A captain must sacrifice his head.' If you can lay down your life for a cause, then only you can be a leader. But we all want to be leaders without making the necessary sacrifice. And the result is zero—nobody listens to us!

Learn obedience first. Among these western nations, with such a high spirit of independence, the spirit of obedience is equally strong. We are all of us self-important, which never produces any work. Great enterprise, boundless courage, tremendous energy, and above all, perfect obedience—these are the only traits that lead to individual and national regeneration. These traits are altogether lacking in us.

Jealousy is the bane of our national character, natural to slaves. Even the Lord with all His power could do nothing on account of this jealousy. Think of me as one who has done all his duty and is now dead and gone. Think that the whole work is upon your shoulders. Think that you, young men of our motherland, are destined to do this. Put yourselves to the task.

I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others.... Give and take is the law; and if India wants to raise herself once more, it is absolutely necessary that she brings out her treasures and throws them broadcast among the nations of the earth, and in return be ready to receive what others have to give her. Expansion is life, contraction is death. Love is life, and hatred is death. We commenced to die the day we began to hate other races; and nothing can prevent our death unless we come back to expansion, which is life.

I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail, until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for. They pay for our education, they build our temples, but in return, they get kicks. They are practically our slaves. If we want to regenerate India, we must work for them.

The more, therefore, the Hindus study the past, the more glorious will be their future, and whoever tries to bring the past to the door of everyone, is a great benefactor to his nation. The degeneration of India came not because the laws and customs of the ancients were bad, but because they were not allowed to be carried to their legitimate conclusions.

There are many things to be done, but means are wanting in this country. We have brains, but no hands. We have the doctrine of Vedanta, but we have not the power to reduce it into practice. In our books, there is the doctrine of universal equality, but in work we make great distinctions. It was in India that unselfish and disinterested work of the most exalted type was preached, but in practice we are awfully cruel, awfully heartless—unable to think of anything besides our own mass-of-flesh bodies.... I too believe that India will awake again, if anyone could love with all his heart the people of the country—bereft of the grace of affluence, of blasted fortune, their discretion totally lost, downtrodden, ever-starved, quarrelsome, and envious. Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women, giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen who are gradually sinking lower and lower in the vortex of destitution and ignorance.

The one thing that is at the root of all evils in India is the condition of the poor. The poor in the West are devils; compared to them, ours are angels, and it is therefore so much the easier to raise our poor. The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education, *to develop their lost individuality*.

For the last three-quarters of a century, India has been bubbling over with reform societies and reformers. But, alas, every one of them has proved a failure. They did not know the secret. They had not learned the great lesson to be learned. In their haste, they laid all the evils in our society at the door of religion; and, like the man in the story, wanting to kill the mosquito that sat on a friend's forehead, they were trying to deal such heavy blows as would have killed man and mosquito together. But in this case, fortunately, they only dashed themselves against immovable rocks, and were crushed out of existence in the shock of recoil. Glory unto those noble and unselfish souls who have struggled and failed in their misdirected attempts. Those galvanic shocks of reformatory zeal were necessary to rouse the sleeping leviathan. But they were entirely destructive, and not constructive, and as such, they were mortal, and therefore died. Let us bless them and profit by their experience....

But mark you, if you give up that spirituality, leaving it aside to go after the materializing civilization of the West, the result will be that in three generations you will be an extinct race; because the backbone of the nation will be broken, the foundation upon which the national edifice has been built will be undermined, and the result will be annihilation all round.

Let us all work hard, my brethren; this is no time for sleep. On our work depends the coming of the India of the future. She is there ready waiting. She is only sleeping. Arise and awake, and see her seated here, on her eternal throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than she ever was—this motherland of ours.

Utter no words of condemnation. Close your lips, and let your hearts open. Work out the salvation of this land and of the whole world, each of you thinking that the entire burden is on your shoulders. Carry the light and the life of the Vedanta to every door, and rouse up the divinity that is hidden within every soul.

Make your nerves strong. What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough. No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men.

Be steady, and above all, be pure and sincere to the backbone. Have faith in your destiny.... It depends upon you who have no money; because you are poor, therefore you will work. Because you have nothing, therefore you will be sincere. Because you are sincere, you will be ready to renounce all. That is what I am just now telling you.

Feel, my children, feel; feel for the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden; feel till the heart stops and the brain reels and you think you will go mad; then pour the soul out at the feet of the Lord, and then will come power, help, and indomitable energy. Struggle, struggle, was my motto for the last ten years. Struggle, still say I. When it was all dark, I used to say, struggle; when light is breaking in, I still say, struggle. Be not afraid, my children.

Have fire and spread all over. Work, work. Be the servant while leading. Be unselfish, and *never listen to one friend in private accusing another*. Have infinite patience, and success is yours... Take care! Beware of everything that is untrue: stick to truth, and we shall succeed, may be slowly, but surely. Work as if on each of you depended the whole work. Fifty centuries are looking on you, the future of India depends on you. Work on.

My faith is in the younger generation, the modern generation—out of them will come my workers. They will work out the whole problem, like lions. I have formulated the idea and have given my life to it.... They will spread from centre to centre, until we have covered the whole of India.

What we want are some young men who will renounce everything and sacrifice their lives for their country's sake. We should first form their lives and then some real work can be expected.

Even the least work done for others awakens the power within; even thinking the least good of others gradually instils into the heart the strength of a lion. I love you all ever so much, but I wish you all to die working for others—I should rather be glad to see you do that! Get up, and put your shoulders to the wheel—how long is this life for? As you have come into this world, leave some mark behind. Otherwise, where is the difference between you and the trees and stones?

We now mostly need the ideal of a hero with the tremendous spirit of rajas thrilling through his veins from head to foot—the hero who will dare and die to know the Truth—the hero whose armour is renunciation, whose sword is wisdom. We want now the spirit the brave warrior in the battlefield of life, and not of the wooing lover who looks upon life as a pleasure-garden!

Have faith in yourself. You people were once the Vedic rishis. Only, you have come in different forms, that's all. I see it clear as daylight that you all have infinite power in you. Rouse that up; arise, arise—apply yourselves heart and soul, gird up your loins. What will you do with wealth and fame that are so transitory? Do you know what I think?—I don't care for *mukti* and all that. My mission is to arouse within you all such ideas; I am ready to undergo a hundred thousand rebirths to train up a single man.

My boy, when death is inevitable, is it not better to die like heroes than as stocks and stones? And what is the use of living a day or two more in this transitory world? It is better to wear out than to rust out—specially for the sake of doing the least good to others.

With no strength in the body, no enthusiasm at heart, and no originality in the brain, what will they do—these lumps of dead matter! By stimulating them, I want to bring life into them—to this, I have dedicated my life. I will rouse them through the infallible power of Vedic mantras. I am born to proclaim to them that fearless message—'Arise, Awake!' Be you my helpers in this work!

Numbers do not count, nor does wealth or poverty; a handful of men can throw the world off its hinges, provided they are united in thought, word, and deed—never forget this conviction. The more opposition there is, the better. Does a river acquire velocity unless there is resistance? The newer and better a thing is, the more opposition it will meet with at the outset. It is opposition which foretells success.

But appreciation or no appreciation, I am born to organise these young men; nay, hundreds more in every city are ready to join me; and I want to send them rolling like irresistible waves over India, bringing comfort, morality, religion, education to the doors of the meanest and the most downtrodden. And this, I will do or die.

If you are really my children, you will fear nothing, stop at nothing. You will be like lions. We must rouse India and the whole world.... My children must be ready to jump into fire, if needed, to accomplish their work.

O India! Forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti; forget not that the God thou worshippest is the great Ascetic of ascetics, the all-renouncing Sankara, the Lord of Uma; forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasure, are not for thy individual personal happiness; forgot not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar;... forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers.

Go, all of you, wherever there is an outbreak of plague or famine, or wherever the people are in distress, and mitigate their sufferings. At the most, you may die in the attempt—what of that? How many like you are being born and dying like worms every day? What difference does that make to the world at large? Die you must, but have a great ideal to die for, and it is better to die with a great ideal in life.

You must not depend on *any foreign help*. Nations, like individuals, must help themselves. This is real patriotism. If a nation cannot do that, its time has not yet come. It must wait.

Work unto death—I am with you, and when I am gone, my spirit will work with you. This life comes and goes—wealth, fame, enjoyments are only of a few days. It is better, far better to die on the field of duty, preaching the truth, than to die like a worldly worm. Advance!

- **Swami Vivekananda**

About the Lesson

In this essay, Vivekananda dwells on the past glory and the present miserable state of India. Reminding his readers that India's greatness lies in her spiritual ideas, he makes an impassioned plea to Indians, and in particular to the younger generation, to work for their motherland, so that India might once again occupy her pride of place among the nations of the world.

The essay was written by Swami Vivekananda, an exponent of Vedantic Philosophy. He travelled extensively and enthralled the audience in the Conference of Religions held in Chicago in 1893.

GLOSSARY

adduce : put forward as proof or an example
renunciation : the act of giving up the claim on or connection with something
faith accompli : (*French*) a thing already accomplished, and hence not a matter for

	argument
light	: spirituality in a metaphorical sense
mummeries	: foolish or unnecessary ceremonies
charlatanism	: the claim to have more skill, ability or knowledge than one really has
vicissitude	: change in one's fortunes or conditions of life
vortex	: whirlpool
galvanic shocks	: sudden and violent shocks as in those produced by an electric current
Leviathan	: a mythical sea-animal of enormous size
mukti	: ultimate salvation, freedom from the bondage of matter
mitigate	: alleviate

Activity 1: COMPREHENSION

A. Tick the correct alternative:

1. According to Swami Vivekananda, the two national ideals of India are-
 - (a) renunciation and service
 - (b) truth and non-violence
 - (c) service and commitment
 - (d) honesty and service
2. The soul of India, says Swami Vivekananda, lies in-
 - (a) Religion
 - (b) Politics
 - (c) Constitution
 - (d) Judiciary
3. is the base of our national character.
 - (a) Jealousy
 - (b) Politics
 - (c) Religion
 - (d) Technology

B. Answer to the following questions should not exceed 10-15 words each:

1. "Shall India die?" Why, says Swami Vivekananda, cannot India die?
2. What are the national ideals of India?
3. What, according to Swami Vivekananda is real patriotism?
4. "Numbers do not count." What, according to Swami Vivekananda, does count?

C. Answer to the following questions should not-exceed 30-40 words each:

1. What, according to Swami Vivekananda, is the life of India as a nation?
2. How can, according to Swami Vivekananda, India be raised?
3. What, according to Swami Vivekananda, is the root of all evils in India?

D. Answer to the following questions should not exceed 60-80 words each:

1. How, according to Vivekananda, does the world owe an immense debt to India?
2. What, according to Vivekananda, has kept India alive?
3. What, according to Vivekananda, does India lack in?

E. Say whether the following are True or False. Write T for True and F for False in the bracket:

1. Swami Vivekananda says that love is life and hatred is death. []
2. India, according to Vivekananda, can be raised with the power of the flesh. []
3. Swami Vivekananda appreciates the Western Nations for their strong spirit of obedience. []
4. By Light, Swami Vivekananda means spirituality. []
5. The great national sin, says Vivekananda, is the neglect of the masses. []

Activity 2: VOCABULARY

A. Find out a word each for the phrases given below-

1. The quality of being concerned with religion or the human spirit
2. Foolish or unnecessary ceremonies
3. Change in one's fortune
4. The claim to have more skill or ability than one really has
5. The act of giving up the claim on or connection with something

B. Change the following into Nouns by adding appropriate affix-

Spiritual, Condemn, Annihilate, Civilize, Renounce, Resist

C. Match the Synonyms given below-

(A)	(B)
Alien	Foreign
Worldly	Gradually
Slowly	Generation
Very great or huge	Tremendous
Progeny	Materialistic
Resistance	Opposition

Activity 3: GRAMMAR

The Present Perfect and the Simple Past

Look at the following sentences:

- A.** I saw him last month.
She went to the U.K. in 2002.
She studied there for two years.

- B.** I have seen her.
 He has lived in the U.K.
 He has lived in the U.K. for many years.
 He has lived there since 1970.

The verb groups in **A** are in the Simple Past Tense. The verb group in **B** are in the Present Perfect. Look at the form of the verb group in **B**: 'have seen', 'has lived'. 'Have' or 'has' is the helping verb and it is followed by the third form of the verb. They belong to the Present Perfect.

The Simple Past differs from the Present Perfect. A specific time expression that denotes the past may be used in sentences that are in the Simple Past, but with the present perfect no specific past time expression can be used :

I saw him on Monday.

*I have seen him yesterday evening. (not acceptable)

I have seen him.

Time expressions with the preposition 'for' can be used both with the Simple Past and the Present Perfect but the meaning is different.

He lived in the United States for four years: 'for four years' in this sentences means for four years 'some time ago in the past'.

He has lived there for four years.

Here the adverbial denotes a period of time leading up to the present and the sentence may mean 'he is still there' or 'he has just left'.

He has studied there *since* 1970 / *since* he was a child.

'Since' shows a point of time : since 1970, since March, since Monday, since five o'clock.etc. Such expressions are used only with the Present Perfect and not with the Simple Past.

So the Present Perfect shows something that 'has happened' at an indefinite past.

I have seen the Hawa Mahal.
 I have seen Jaipur.

The Simple Past as well as the Present Perfect shows an act done in the past. But in the Simple Past the stress is on the time of the activity and the time adverbial answers the question 'When?':

When did you see the Hawa Mahal?

I saw it in 1960.

The Present Perfect does not denote a definite time; the focus is on the completion of the action and its results:

I have written the letter. (= The letter is ready.)

I have moved into a new house. (= I am in a new house.)

The Present Perfect Tense is used to show something that began in the past and 'has continued' up to the time of speaking or writing. There is a link between the past and the present. In such cases, the expressions with 'since' or 'for' are used:

I have worked since seven o'clock.

I have worked for two hours.

The Present Perfect Tense is also used for something that 'has just happened':

I have just met my friend in the corridor.

He has just begun the work.

Exercise

Fill in the blanks with the Past Simple or the Present Perfect form of the verbs given in brackets:

- i. He to China last year. (go)
- ii. I him twice since ten o'clock. (see)
- iii. He in films for fifteen years now. (sing)
- iv. They the door last year. (paint)
- v. he the house last year? (build)
- vi. you our assignment yet? (read)
- vii. The water not yet. (boil)
- viii. I to him several times already. (talk)

Activity 4: SPEECH ACTIVITY

Swami Vivekananda was a disciple of Ramkrishna. Ramkrishna helped Vivekananda clear his doubts about the existence of God. Organize a Symposium and discuss Ramkrishna's contribution towards Narendranath's evolution into Swami Vivekananda.

Activity 5: COMPOSITION

A. Attempt an essay on-

1. Relevance of Vivekananda's Thoughts in Modern India
2. Vivekananda's Thoughts on Patriotism