



VIVEKOTSAV

Inculcating The Spirit Of Vivekananda

**On the Occasion of
Swami Vivekananda's Birth Anniversary
51st Inter-School Elocution Competition - 2025**

ENGLISH



**RAMAKRISHNA MATH
&
RAMAKRISHNA MISSION**

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For Juniors (Std. V to VII)

Note :

1. Time Allotted : 3 minutes.
2. Please confine to the prescribed text.
3. Evaluation by the judges :
 - (a) Content: 30 marks. (b) Clarity: 10 marks. (c) Impact: 10 marks.

1. NAREN'S INFORMAL EDUCATION

The first education is always at the knee of the mother, and immense was Bhuvaneshwari's eagerness to educate her son well. It was in her lap that Narendranath first became aware of the glory of the gods and goddesses, the greatness of the sages of India; and that of his ancestors, among whom was his grandfather, the sannyasi Durgaprasad. It was also from his mother that he first heard the tales of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. At the Datta home these epics were read everyday at noon. One elderly lady – sometimes Bhuvaneshwari herself – would read aloud, and the ladies of the family, who for the time being had finished their duties, would sit around her. In this small congregation, turbulent Naren would be found sitting quietly throughout the reading and listening with rapt attention. There can be no doubt that the stories from the epics exerted a great influence on his mind.

Naren also learnt many things from his maternal grandmother and her mother. One of his younger brothers, Mahendranath, later wrote that their maternal grandmother's mother belonged to the Vaishnava sect and knew many teachings and anecdotes from the epics, the Bhagavatam and from Vaishnava lore. The maternal grandmother told many anecdotes of the Bhagavatam. Indeed, most of the stories that Swami Vivekananda later told to his Western audiences, he had heard in his childhood from these two elderly ladies.

Even the singers in the streets contributed to young Naren's education. Fascinating are those singers. Sometimes they come in large parties – perhaps as a family in strained circumstances, but they are always joyous. Some carry with them an image of the Divine Mother; or it may be that a father will come with his son dressed as Sri Krishna: the boy's silver anklets ringing as he dances, while the father sings in a deep basso, beating time on his tom-tom. From house to house the singers go, joyously singing of the Lord or telling sacred stories in song. Beggars though they are, in the ecstasy they arouse, they are givers, enhancing the spiritual sense of the people. Often they would come to Naren's house, and for her son's sake, his mother always made them welcome, for she realized that the more often and intimately a child is exposed to the national culture, the better and truer man does he become.

But schools are places where one is apt to meet with all sorts of comrades, and within few days Naren had acquired a vocabulary which quite upset his family's sense of propriety. Never again, determined the entire household, should he go to school. Instead, a private tutor was engaged, who conducted classes in the family worship-hall for Naren and other boys – some of whom were his cousins, and others the sons of his father's friends.

Soon Naren was noticed for his exceptional intelligence. He learned to read and write, while other boys were wrestling with the alphabet. His memory was prodigious. He had a peculiar way of his own, closing his eyes and sitting motionless or lying down when attending the classes. The private tutor who had been engaged did not understand this peculiarity in his charge at first, and at last he became quite provoked. He caught hold of his pupil, shaking him rudely, to rouse him from his seeming sleepiness. Naren opened his eyes in wounded surprise. He listened to the angry words of the

tutor. Then, in self-defence, he recited word-for-word the whole text that had been read in the preceding hour. Ever afterwards, the tutor regarded this pupil with admiration; for in his long acquaintance with boys, never had he found such a remarkable memory.

Though Naren's schooling started in this way, his learning at his mother's knee did not stop. As to book-learning, he learned from his mother the Bengali alphabet and the 'First Book of English' by Pyaricharan Sarkar. It was from his mother again that he learned how to hold aloft his moral standards, even while struggling in the eddies of the world, and how to take refuge at the feet of God, knowing Him to be the best support in life.

The mother also taught Naren, "Remain pure all your life; guard your own honour and never transgress the honour of others. Be very tranquil, but when necessary, harden your heart." Throughout his life Narendranath loved his mother with all his heart and remembered her precepts. He used to say, "He who cannot literally worship his mother can never become great." On many occasions he proudly declared, "I am indebted to my mother for the efflorescence of my knowledge."

Other members of the household also contributed to Naren's education. At night he slept under the protecting presence of an old relative - Nrisimha Datta, the father of Ramachandra Datta, who was to become a lay devotee of Shri Ramakrishna. This man, who was very learned in Sanskrit lore, thought that the best way of training a youth in mind and character was to get him to memorize difficult intellectual subjects. At night, therefore, he taught the boy the aphorisms of the Sanskrit grammar Mugdhabodha, the genealogy of his family, hymns to gods and goddesses, as well as passages of great length from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Thus in a year's time Naren had acquired considerable grounding in Sanskrit, and

certainly this training in early boyhood constituted one of the formative elements in the passion for Sanskrit learning which he possessed in later years.

Naren's father also played a significant part in his son's education. It was he who insisted that the boy should study music, for he looked upon it as a source of much innocent joy. Perhaps the deep attraction of his family for music helped turn Narendranath into an accomplished singer.

In his attitude towards his children, Vishwanath showed considerable wisdom. He believed in inspiring them to develop self-respect and politeness. If any of them misbehaved, he did not reprimand him, but in order to produce the required reform, exposed him to the ridicule of his friends. To cite an instance: one day Naren behaved very rudely with his mother. The father, instead of scolding the boy, wrote on the door of the room where Naren received his friends: Naren Babu said these words today to his mother – followed by the words actually said. Every time Naren or his friends entered that room, they were confronted with this statement. It was not long before Naren showed signs of repentance.

There used to come to Naren's house many of his father's clients. They would sit together chatting until their turn for consultation came. They were of various castes and each was provided with his own hookah. There was even a Mohammedan, with whom Naren was particularly friendly. Caste was a mystery to the boy. Why should not a member of one caste eat with a member of another or smoke his hookah? What would happen if one did? Would the roof fall in on him? Would he suddenly die? He decided to see for himself. Boldly he went round the hookahs and took a whiff from each and every one. No, he was not dead! Just then his father entered. "What are you doing, my boy?" he questioned. "Oh, father! Why, I

was trying to see what would happen if I broke caste! Nothing has happened!" The father laughed heartily and with a knowing look on his face walked into his private study.

Those who are to change the thought of the world as did Plato and Aristotle, or alter its destinies as did Alexander and Caesar, are from their childhood conscious of their power; they are instinctively aware of the greatness which is to come. Narendranath, too, felt the spirit of greatness within him; he saw things to which others of his age were blind, and he felt already in the feeble and yet certain way of a child, the struggle which was to be his, in giving expression to his vision.

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For Juniors (Std. V to VII)

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2. CARING NAREN

A characteristic of Narendranath was his solicitude for others. To those who he loved among his fellows, he was kindness itself. Should anyone become hurt or ill in a party he had taken for a boyish excursion, he would give up the prospect of fun to attend on him. For instance, one day he went with twenty or more boys to see the Calcutta Fort. One of the party complained of pain, and stayed back while others laughed at the sick boy's expense, and went ahead. Left alone, the boy sat down on the ground, his pain growing worse. Naren had gone with the party but suddenly he turned and said, "It may be that he is seriously ill. You boys carry on. One of us must go back to him; so I will go." He retraced his steps just in time. The boy had been overtaken with fever. Naren assisted him, half carrying him to a carriage nearby and took him home.

Naren and his friends were members of the gymnasium of Shri Navagopal Mitra, who had practically left its management in their hands. One day, while they were trying to set up a very heavy trapeze, a crowd gathered to watch. Amongst them was an English sailor, whom Naren asked for help. But as the obliging sailor was lifting the trapeze to help the boys, it fell and knocked him unconscious. Nearly everyone but Naren and one or two of his friends disappeared from the scene, thinking that the sailor had been killed. Immediately, Naren tore a piece of his dhoti, bandaged the wound, sprinkled the sailor's face with water, and fanned him gently. When the sailor regained consciousness, Naren and his friends lifted

him and took him to a neighbouring schoolhouse. A doctor was sent for, and Navagopal Mitra was informed. After a week's nursing the sailor recovered, and Naren presented him with a modest purse, which he had collected from his friends.

Even as a child, Naren had a great fancy for wandering monks; whenever a sadhu came to the door, the boy was delighted and rushed towards him. One day a monk came and asked for alms. All that Naren had was a hand-embroidered dhoti wrapped around his waist. He was proud of his new cloth, for it was his first garment making his passage out of infancy, but straightaway he gave it to the sadhu, who tied it around his head and went away blessing the boy. When asked what had become of the cloth, the boy replied, "the sadhu begged for alms and I gave it to him". Many sadhus came to the house knowing that they were always welcome there. Vishwanath Datta (Naren's father) was very hospitable and there was with him the memory of his own father, who had become a monk. But after the above incident, a close guard was kept on Naren. Whenever any sadhu put in an appearance, Naren was kept locked up until the wanderer had left. Still that did not disconcert the child; he would throw out of the window, to the caller, anything the room contained, as an offering. He would have his way - and then he would dance with glee.

Naren had a number of pet animals, whom he loved playing with - a monkey, a goat, a peacock, pigeons and two or three guinea-pigs. He was also especially fond of the family cow, and would join his sisters on festive occasions when they adorned the mother-cow with garlands, put a vermilion mark on her forehead and bowed down to her. He would pat her with his little hands and talk to her sweetly.

It was customary in those days for the General Assembly's Institution to help those who, for lack of funds, could not pay the required fees; there was also provision for exemption from college

dues in special cases. But the need of an applicant for funds or for exemption had to be substantiated before his name could be put on the free list. Rajkumar, a senior clerk, was in charge of making decisions in such matters. Now, it so happened that Haridas Chattopadhyaya, a classmate of Narendranath, was in great financial difficulty before the examination. He could not pay the accumulated college dues, nor was it easy for him to pay the examination fees. Narendranath assured his friend that he would see what could be done.

After one or two days, when a crowd of students had assembled at the counter in Rajkumar's office to deposit dues and fees, Narendranath made his way through the crowd and said to Rajkumar, "Sir, Haridas is incapable of paying his dues. Will you kindly exempt him? If you send him for the examination he will pass with credit; otherwise he will be undone". "Your presumptuous recommendation is uncalled for," said Rajkumar, "You had better oil your own machine! I won't send him unless he pays his dues". Thus rebuffed, Narendranath left the place, and his friend was naturally disappointed. But Narendranath consoled him saying, "Why are you giving way to despair? The old man is in the habit of giving such rebuffs. I tell you, I shall find a way out for you; so be at rest."

After college hours, instead of returning home, Narendranath searched out the opium-smoking den to which Rajkumar usually went. As the darkness of the evening gathered, sure enough, Rajkumar was espied stealthily advancing towards the den. With surprising suddenness, Narendranath presented himself before the old man and stood in his way. Rajkumar, though puzzled at the sight of Narendranath at such a place and time, kept his nerve and said as calmly as he could, "What's the matter, Datta? You here!" Narendranath again presented his plea on behalf of Haridas, and added that, if the request was ignored, he would publicize in the college, Rajkumar's frequenting the opium smoking den. "Well, my

dear, why are you so angry?" said the old man: "What you want will be done. Can I ever ignore your request?" and he conceded that the arrears of the college dues of Haridas would be remitted, but he would be required to pay the examination fees. Narendranath agreed to this and took leave of him.

Early next morning, before sunrise, Narendranath went to Haridas's house and after knocking at the door said to Haridas, "Come, be of good cheer, your work is done. You will not have to pay the college dues." And he narrated the incident of the previous evening with all his mimicry and dramatic skill and raised a storm of laughter.

In his later years, Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) demonstrated how one should show sympathy to the poor. Once when Swamiji was travelling by train, a poor Muslim hawker selling boiled gram boarded his compartment. As soon as Swamiji saw him, he started speaking with the brahmachari accompanying him about eating gram. "You see", Swamiji said, "Gram makes you strong". And then pointing at the vendor, he said to the brahmachari, "How about having some?" The brahmachari knew Swamiji's nature well. He readily understood that what Swamiji wanted was to help the poor man and not to eat his gram. So, the brahmachari bought gram worth one paisa but paid the man four annas. Swamiji was very sharp-eyed. He asked the brahmachari how much he had paid. "Four annas", replied the brahmachari. Then Swamiji said to him affectionately, "My child, that is too little! He has a wife and children at home. Give him a rupee". The brahmachari followed Swamiji's instruction.

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For Juniors (Std. V to VII)

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3. NAREN – A BORN LEADER

Even at an early age, Naren asserted himself as leader among his fellows. Whenever occasion offered, he put himself at their head. One such occasion came on the Makara Sankranti day, when boys worship Mother Ganga, and everyone thinks it most auspicious to bathe in the sacred waters. Naren had insisted that this festival should be celebrated, and obtained permission from his father, together with the necessary expenses. Then he gathered together a group of boys, and his father instructed the private tutor, or the Guru Mahashay, as he was called, to teach them songs to Mother Ganga. On the appointed day, the procession of little fellows headed by Naren set out from the Datta home. Marching with flying flags and garlands of flowers in their hands, they went through the streets to the Ganga, singing all the while. When they reached the river, they burst into that song which all Hindu children in Bengal know so well – “Worship the Mother Ganga” – and they then threw their garlands upon the flowing waters. That evening they again went to the river, and after making toy boats out of sheaths of banana stems, they fastened at their prows the lights of reverence. What a pretty sight! All along the river floated these toy boats. Naren’s party was only one of many; for miles Mother Ganga’s waters were lighted by the love of the children.

Acknowledged as leader wherever he went in the course of his life, peerless among his contemporaries in early manhood; the

prince of the disciples who sat at the feet of his Master, unmatched in intellect, East or West, Naren was also king among his playmates. He was the all-in-all of their world. "I am the Samrat, the King of kings," Naren would shout as he scampered up the stairs that led from the ground floor of the courtyard to the verandah of the Pujahall and would sit himself down as the lord of men. Pointing to the steps below, he would tell two of his fellows to stand before him as prime minister and commander-in-chief. Lower on the stairs he bade five others stand as tributary princes. To his courtiers he gave the privilege of sitting one step lower than the princes. He would then formally open his durbar. One by one, the princes, the higher officials of state and the courtiers would prostrate themselves in proper oriental fashion before the Imperial Presence, addressing him as Son of Solar Splendours, the Lord of Lands and Seas, and the Protector of Dharma. The ceremony over, the King would ask about the welfare of his realm and listen to the grievances of his subjects. A criminal was perhaps then brought before him, and the grave accusations against him being proved, His Majesty would exclaim, "Off with his head! Ho, guards!" and then ten guards would spring upon the offender. So went Naren's favourite game of "King and the Court", in which he administered justice with royal dignity and put down the slightest insubordination by a disapproving frown.

We have already mentioned that Naren was the leader among his fellows. Indeed, leadership was innate in him, and very early in life he demonstrated the truth that leadership means self-sacrifice. One day when he was about six years old, he went with a younger relative to a Charhak fair at which Lord Shiva is worshipped. He purchased some doll-images of Shiva at the fair, and as the two boys were returning home in the dusk, they became slightly separated in the crowd. At that moment a carriage came dashing along. Naren, who thought his companion was immediately behind him, turned

at the noise and to his horror saw that it was a question of life and death for the little lad, who stood terrified in the middle of the road, about to be run over. Putting his dolls underneath his left arm, Naren rushed to the lad's help, heedless of his own safety, and grabbing him with his right hand, pulled him almost from under the horses' hooves. Those closeby were wonderstruck. The danger had appeared so suddenly that there was little chance for another to have run to the small boy's assistance. Some patted Naren on the back, while others blessed him; and when, on his return home, his mother heard the story, she wept with joy and said, "Always be a man, my son!"

It was this spirit of self-sacrifice in Naren that made him the idol of his fellows, and so deep was the impression he made upon most of them that later on in their college days, they followed his lead even in matters of grave importance.

With his class fellows Naren mingled intimately. Whenever there was leisure at school, he either played with them, told stories, sang songs, or made them laugh with his expert mimicry. Often he teased his friends or played pranks on them, but he never harmed anyone, and through it all he would draw everyone to him, making them his own. In few minutes he could win anyone over. He could outwit anyone in talk, and none could outwit him. He had a wonderful presence of mind and seemingly endless capacity to extemporize. And never would Naren be morose. He knew very well how to make others laugh, and he kept all his class-mates charmed.

Often Naren took his friends to various interesting places in Calcutta. Sometimes it was a garden, another time the Ochterlony Monument, or again the Museum. One day, he set out with a party by way of the Ganga for the Nawab's Zoological Gardens at Metiaburz, a suburb of Calcutta. When they were returning, one of the boys became sick and vomitted in the boat. The boatmen were annoyed

and insisted that they should immediately clean up the boat. The boys refused to do so, offering instead to pay double. The offer was rejected. On reaching the ghat, the men would not allow the boys to land and threatened them. While the boatmen were abusing the boys, Naren jumped ashore and asked two British soldiers walking nearby for help. In broken English he told his tale of woe. Slipping his small hands into theirs, he led them to the scene. The soldiers understood the situation, and ordered the boatmen to release the boys. Terrified at the sight of the soldiers, the boatmen set the boys free without a word. Fascinated with Naren, the soldiers invited him to go with them to the theatre. But he declined and took leave after thanking them for their kindness.

Another delightful story is told of him when he was about eleven years old. A British Warship, the *Syraxis*, visited the port of Calcutta when the Emperor Edward VII came to India as the Prince of Wales. Naren's friends urged him to try and secure a pass for them all to see the ship. For this, it was necessary to see an English official. When Naren made his appearance, application in hand, the attendant at the door, thinking him too young, refused him entry. As Naren stood aside wondering what to do, he noticed that applicants who passed the porter proceeded to a room on the first floor. Realizing that it must be the room where permits were issued, he set about to find another entrance. In the rear was a staircase. Stealthily he made his way to the top, pushed aside a curtain, and found himself in the room. He took his place in the line and when his turn came, the application was signed without question. As he passed the door-keeper on his way out, the latter said in amazement, "How did you get in?" "Oh, I am a magician", Naren answered.

Another occasion which revealed the boy as the man in the making was when Naren, about fourteen years of age, saved a

theatrical performance from disruption. The drama was progressing nicely, when suddenly, right in the midst of the performance, a bailiff came onto the stage with a warrant to arrest one of the leading actors on some charge. He advanced to the actor, saying, "I arrest you in the name of law!" That very moment a voice called out, "Get off the stage! Wait until the end of the performance! What do you mean by disturbing the audience like this?" It was a shrill voice with an unmistakable tone of command in it – and it was the voice of Naren. Immediately a score of voices burst out in support: "Get off the stage! Get off the stage!" And the bailiff retreated in bewilderment. Those about Naren patted him on the back saying, "Well done! Well done! We would not have had our money's worth, but for you."

Naren's bold, generous, compassionate nature shines out from these and similar incidents, together with his presence of mind, incredible energy and love of fun and adventure – it was such qualities as these that made him the leader of his companions.

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For Seniors (Std. VIII to X)

Note :

1. Time Allotted : 3 minutes.
2. Please confine to the prescribed text.
3. Evaluation by the judges :
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1. THE ALL – LOVING MOTHER

Birth: 22-12-1853 Place of Birth: Jayrambati

Bankura Dist. West Bengal, Life: 1853-1920

Born to poor parents, lived in a simple country atmosphere, was married to Shri Ramakrishna at the early age of six, such was Sri Sarada Devi, who is venerated as Holy Mother all over the world. She was worshipped by Sri Ramakrishna as the Divine Mother and after his passing away she became the guide and mentor of thousands of spiritual seekers, both sannyasins and householders, all over the world.

He who has a pure mind sees everything pure. In her life was found a wonderful mixture of the human and the divine. Apart from her spiritual powers, the mere human aspect of her life was enough to make her an exemplary character in the eyes of the world. She was indeed the final word in the perfection of Indian womanhood. Her actions always showed the highest dignity and greatest magnanimity. Not even through mistake could she associate herself with anything small or narrow. Even in her ordinary dealings, she was head and shoulders above all others in refinement and broadness of outlook. Her life was always a model for others to follow, and it was difficult to find the least trace of imperfection in her actions and behavior.

But the most dominant trait in her character, over-shadowing every other feature, was her motherly love. She might be anything else, but everybody found in her a mother – only her love was

stronger than that of one's own mother. Many young men who had lost their mothers early in life, and did not know what a mother's love was, had their loss more than compensated when they came in touch with her. Many, after finding a mother in her, did not hanker after anything else in this life or in the life to come. Her love was enough to give them security here and salvation hereafter. They did not even care to know of her spiritual powers. They did not even care to see the highest of the Himalayan peaks when they felt themselves sufficiently blessed by touching the foot of that great mountain.

There was something in her attitude which soon disarmed all fear and awe. While she was giving initiation, perhaps the disciple was struck with awe and overwhelmed with a feeling of reverence; but once the initiation was over, when she would feed him with sweets just like his own mother, he would at once be just as free with her as he was at his own home. There were instances when she gave her own clothes or blankets to young disciples for their use. Perhaps these disciples would think it sacrilegious to use things which the Mother had used. But her spontaneous motherly attitude would at once remove any such feelings. Does a son hesitate to use anything which his mother gives him?

At Jayrambati she would cook for the devotees, wash their plates and cleanse the place where they ate. Devotees would sometimes come from a distance, and after staying only two or three days with her would feel so much drawn to her that they would shed tears while leaving the place. Sometimes as they departed, the Mother would watch them, as far as they could be seen, with eyes moistened with the tears of a mother's love. Once a young monk who stayed with her went out on some business. It was almost evening when he returned. But the Mother would not take her meal before he came. How could a mother take her food when the son had not had

his! When the disciple saw this, he was overwhelmed with emotion. Even one's own mother is not always so considerate! She was the mother of all. Every soul born of the womb of a woman would find in her a mother. Her love knew no distinction of caste, creed or geographical boundaries. People from the East and West, from the South and North would come to her to receive her blessings. She might not even be able to speak their language, but the unspoken language of her love was more than enough for them – they would feel blessed.

When Sister Nivedita came to India, Swami Vivekananda was a bit anxious about how to make a place for her in the Hindu society. But the Holy Mother accommodated her in her own room. It took tremendous courage and extreme broad-mindedness on the part of Mother, for if the news reached her relations she might have had to face social persecution. Was it not remarkable, even for herself, that although she belonged to an orthodox Brahmin family and lacked modern education, she could allow a European lady to stay with her? And that too, in the last century, at a time, when Hindu society was uncompromising in its rigidity as regards social rules!

Though she belonged to an old world, as it were, hers was an extremely modern mind. Seeing this trait in her, Sister Nivedita very aptly remarked, "Is she the last of an old order or the beginning of a new?" Many a non-Bengali or non-Indian devotee would go to the Holy Mother, but so great was the breadth of her innate culture that everyone would feel quite at home with her. Once while listening to Easter music at Sister Nivedita's place, she became so absorbed that one wondered how, without knowing any Western language, she could enter so much into the spirit of the resurrection hymns.

Her mental penetration was so keen and her common sense so strong that even in things supposedly outside her sphere, she could

give a very sound opinion. During the first World War, a disciple told the Mother how President Wilson was trying to ensure the peace of the whole world and prevent war in the future. The Mother's quiet remark was, "They all speak through the lips and not from the heart." Once a disciple was telling her of the many facilities of life which the British rule had given to India. Her reply, however, was, "But is it not a fact that the poverty of the people is increasing more and more?"

Sometimes people belonging to inferior castes would come to her at Jayrambati, but her same-sighted attitude towards them would always be unchanged. Only, she would see that they observed the usual caste restrictions in the presence of others, as otherwise there could be a sensation in the village where orthodoxy prevailed.

A coolie-woman came to her one evening with some vegetables sent by a devotee, and had to stop for the night at the house. The woman had fever at night and vomitted. Next morning before others awakened, the Holy Mother washed the soiled bedding so that the poor woman might not be scolded by anyone.

A Mohammedan, engaged as a labourer, was one day taking a meal in her house. He sat on the verandah of the house. Nalini, a niece of the Mother, was serving him. Owing to caste prejudice, Nalini remained at a distance and began to throw the food on the plate of the man. At this Holy Mother reprimanded her niece and herself served him the meal. After he had finished, the Mother washed his plate and cleansed the spot where he had taken his food. Nalini was shocked and exclaimed: "What are you doing? Will you not lose caste by this!"

Instances are not uncommon when people of extremely low caste received initiation from her and afterwards sat for their meals in her own room and Mother herself washed their plates. According

to social customs it would be considered sinful for them to receive such services from a Brahmin. Under ordinary circumstances they themselves would not have stood that. But they felt that she was their very own mother, and so what harm if she rendered them such services! It was but natural.

She felt very intensely the poverty and suffering of people in general. She would take great interest in the social service activities of the Ramakrishna Mission. If a monk came to her with a complaint that such work interfered with his meditative life, she would pay no attention to him. "This is also the Master's work," she would say. While at Jayrambati she would take a sympathetic interest in the affairs of all the neighbours and was a source of great strength to them. Her compassion and timely help would lighten their burden of sufferings.

Even persons who had gone astray did not fail to receive her love and blessings, sometimes even inspite of the meek protests of other devotees. Once she bluntly said, "If my son rolls in the dust, even then he is my child." On another occasion she said, "I am as much the mother of the good as of the bad." Once a woman who felt guilty of moral mis-conduct came to see her in Calcutta but dared not enter her room. The Mother understood the whole thing. She herself brought her into her room, caressed her and gave her initiation. "What if you have done anything wrong? When you are repentant your guilt has been washed away," said the Mother to give her courage and consolation. The life of the woman was afterwards transformed.

Although many erring persons received a mother's love from her, her love would not give them the freedom to err. The slightest error in conduct would receive her notice. She might not always express it, but if it was needed, the delinquent was sure to get a

reprimand from her. The sannyasin who developed pride because of his ochre robe, or the householder who showed scant courtesy to a monk because he was much younger in age, would equally get a warning from her about the dangers that lay ahead. If necessary, she could be very stern too. If a person thought that taking shelter under her love, he could afford to do anything he liked, he was mistaken. Occasion would come when she would even order such a person to leave the place immediately. Of course, such occasions were very very rare.

A disciple might feel that her love was a sufficient guarantee against the ills of the present and the future life. But how much the Mother had to think for those whose responsibility she had taken! Even in her old age and even in her illness, she would be found to devote much time to prayer and meditation. When asked what was the necessity for her to do any spiritual practice, she would reply that she was doing it on behalf of those who had taken refuge in her. She herself once said to a woman disciple in reply to her question as to how she should look upon her, "It is enough if you think of me as your mother." Sometimes her motherly heart could not bear that a disciple should undergo much physical suffering in practising hard tapasya. She would always warn the young aspirant against excess in such things. But at the same time she knew how to rouse to activity an indolent person who had imagined that spiritual progress was compatible with a life of ease.

Earlier, Saradamani's mother had felt sad that her daughter had been given in marriage to one who was half mad, as it were, and who did not lead a worldly life, so that her Sarada would not know what it was to be called 'mother' by her children. At this, Sri Ramakrishna told her: "Dear mother-in-law, you need not feel sorry. Your daughter will have so many children that afterwards she will

be tired of being called mother.” His prophetic words came to be so true! We do not know whether the Holy Mother was ever tired of her children. But it is a fact that no mother under the sun had so many children as she had to address her as mother. And how great was their affection for her! A devotee actually said to her one day, “You have got many sons like me, but I have got no mother like you.”

Swami Vivekananda highlighted the Holy Mother’s mission thus --- “Without Shakti (power), there is no regeneration for the world. Why is our country the weakest and the most backward of all countries? Because Shakti is held in dishonour here. Holy Mother Sarada has been born to revive that wonderful Shakti in India, and making her the nucleus, once more will Gargis and Maitreyis be born into this world.”

We find in our Puranas and history, great women excelling as ideal teachers or as eminent mothers and wives. But the combination of all these aspects is seen only in Shri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother.

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For Seniors (Std. VIII to X)

Note :

1. Time Allotted : 3 minutes.
2. Please confine to the prescribed text.
3. Evaluation by the judges :
(a) Content: 30 marks. (b) Clarity: 10 marks. (c) Impact: 10 marks.

2. REJUVENATION OF INDIA

A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the downtrodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land preaching the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising-up, the gospel of equality.

Despair not; remember the Lord says in the Gita "To work you have the right, but not to the result." Gird up your loins, my boys. I am called by the Lord for this. I have been dragged through a whole life full of crosses and tortures, I have seen the nearest and dearest die, almost of starvation; I have been ridiculed, distrusted, and have suffered for my sympathy for the very men who scoff and scorn. Well, my boys, this is the school of misery, which is also the school for great souls and prophets for the cultivation of sympathy, of patience, and, above all, of an indomitable iron will which quakes not even if the universe be pulverized at our feet.

I pity them, the great in society. It is not their fault. They are children, yea, veritable children, though they be great and high in society. Their eyes see nothing beyond their little horizon of a few yards --- the routine work --- eating, drinking, earning, and begetting, following each other in mathematical precision. They know nothing beyond --- happy little souls! Their sleep is never disturbed, their

nice little brown studies of lives never rudely shocked by the wail of woe, of misery, of degradation, and poverty, that has filled the Indian atmosphere – the result of centuries of oppression. They little dream of the ages of tyranny, mental, moral, and physical, that has reduced the image of God to a mere beast of burden; the emblem of the Divine Mother, to a slave to bear children; and life itself, a curse. But there are others who see, feel, and shed tears of blood in their hearts, who think that there is a remedy for it, and who are ready to apply this remedy at any cost, even to the giving up of life. And ‘of such is the kingdom of Heavens.’

Trust not the so-called rich, they are more dead than alive. The hope lies in you – in the meek, the lowly, but the faithful. Have faith in the Lord; no policy, it is nothing. Feel for the miserable and look up for help – it shall come. I have travelled twelve years with this load in my heart and this idea in my head. I have gone from door-to-door of the so-called rich and great. With a bleeding heart, I have crossed half the world to this strange Western land, seeking for help. The Lord is great. I know He will help me. I may perish of cold or hunger in this land, but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. Go now this minute to the temple of Parthasarathi, and bow before Him who was friend to the poor and lowly cowherds of Gokula, who never shrank to embrace the Pariah Guhaka, who accepted the invitation of a prostitute in preference to that of the nobles and saved her in His incarnation as Buddha. Down on your faces before them, for whom He comes from time to time, whom He loves above all, the poor, the lowly, the oppressed. Vow then, to devote your whole lives to the cause of the redemption of these three hundred millions, going down and down every day.

It is not the work of a day, and the path is full of the most

deadly thorns. But Parthasarathi is ready to be our Sarathi - we know that. And in His name and with eternal faith in Him, set fire to the mountain of misery that has been heaped upon India for ages - and it shall be burned down. Come then, look it in the face, brethren, it is a grand task, and we are so low. But we are the sons of Light and children of God. Glory unto the Lord, we will succeed. Hundreds will fall in the struggle; hundreds will be ready to take it up. You know the disease; you know the remedy, only have faith. Do not look up to the so-called rich and great; do not care for the heartless intellectual writers, and their cold-blooded newspaper articles. Faith, sympathy - fiery faith and fiery sympathy! Life is nothing, death is nothing, hunger nothing, cold nothing. Glory unto the Lord - March on, the Lord is our General. Do not look back to see who falls - forward - onwards! Thus and thus we shall go on, brethren. One falls, and another takes up the work.

Every man born in the West knows that he is a man. Every man born in India knows that he is a slave of society, Now, freedom is the only condition of growth; take that off, the result is degeneration. With the introduction of modern competition, see how caste is disappearing fast! No religion is now necessary to kill it. The Brahmana shopkeeper, shoemaker, and wine-distiller are common in Northern India. And why? Because of competition. No man is prohibited from doing anything he pleases for his livelihood and the result is neck to neck competition, and thus thousands are seeking and finding the highest level they were born for, instead of vegetating at the bottom.

Day by day I am feeling that the Lord is with me, and I am trying to follow His direction. His Will be done... We will do great things, for the world, and that for the sake of doing good and not for name and fame.

“Ours not to reason why, ours but to do and die.” Be of good cheer and believe that we are selected by the Lord to do great things, and we will do them. Hold yourself in readiness, i.e. be pure and holy, and love for love’s sake. Love the poor, the miserable, the downtrodden, and the Lord will bless you.

See the Raja of Ramnad and others from time to time and urge them to sympathise with the masses of India. Tell them how they are standing on the neck of the poor, and that they are not fit to be called men if they do not try to raise them up. Be fearless, the Lord is with you, and He will yet raise the striving and ignorant millions of India.

Act on the educated young men, bring them together, and organize them. Great things can be done by great sacrifices only. No selfishness, no name, no fame, yours or mine, nor my Master’s even! Work, work the idea, the plan, my boys, my brave, noble, good souls. To the wheel, to the wheel put your shoulders! Stop not to look back for name, or fame, or any such nonsense. Throw self overboard and work. **‘तृणैर्गुणत्वमापनैः बध्यन्ते मत्तदन्तिनः’** Remember, “The grass when made into a rope by being joined together can even chain a mad elephant.” The Lord’s blessings on you all! His power be in you all – as I believe it is already. **उत्तिष्ठतः जाग्रतः प्राप्य वरान्निबोधतः** “Wake up, stop not until the goal is reached,” say the Vedas. Up, up, the long night is passing, the day is approaching, the wave has risen, nothing will be able to resist its tidal fury. The spirit, my boys, the spirit, the love, my children, the faith, the belief. And fear not! The greatest sin is fear.

My blessings on all. Tell all the noble souls who have helped our cause that I send them my eternal love and gratitude, but I beg of them not to slacken. Throw the idea broadcast. Do not be proud; do not insist upon anything dogmatic; do not go against anything –

ours is to put the chemicals together, the Lord knows how and when the crystals will form. Above all, be not inflated with my success or yours. Great works are to be done; what is this small success in comparison with what is to come? Believe, believe, the decree has gone forth, the fiat of the Lord has gone forth – India must rise, the masses and the poor are to be made happy. Rejoice that you are the chosen instruments in His hands. The flood of spirituality has risen. I see it is rolling over the land resistless, boundless, all-absorbing. Every man to the fore, every good will be added to its forces, every hand will smooth its way, and glory be unto the Lord!.....

I do not require any help. Try to set up a fund, buy some magic-lanterns, maps, globes, etc. and some chemicals. Get every evening a crowd of the poor and low, even the pariahs, and lecture to them about ethics first, and then teach them through the magic lantern and other thing, astronomy, geography etc., in the dialect of the people. Train up a band of fiery young men. Put your fire in them and gradually increase the organization, letting it widen and widen its circle. Do the best you can, do not wait to cross the river when the water has all run down. Printing magazines, papers, etc. is good, no doubt, but actual work, my boys even if infinitesimal, is better than eternal scribbling and talking.

Do not be afraid of a small beginning, great things come afterwards. Be courageous. Do not try to lead your brethren but serve them. The brutal mania for leading has sunk many a great ship in the waters of life. Take care especially of that, i.e. be unselfish even unto death, and work.

Go to work, my boys, the fire will come to you! The faculty of organization is entirely absent in our nature, but this has to be infused. The great secret is – absence of jealousy. Be always ready to

concede to the opinions of your brethren and try always to conciliate.
That is the whole secret. Fight on bravely! Life is short! Give it up to a
great cause !

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For Seniors (Std. VIII to X)

Note :

1. Time Allotted : 3 minutes.
2. Please confine to the prescribed text.
3. Evaluation by the judges :
 - (a) Content: 30 marks. (b) Clarity: 10 marks. (c) Impact: 10 marks.

3. EDUCATION FOR CHARACTER

The character of any man is but the aggregate of his tendencies, the sum total of the bent of his mind. As pleasure and pain pass before his soul, they leave upon it different pictures, and the result of these combined impressions is what is called a man's character. We are what our thoughts have made us. Each thought is a little hammer-blow on the lumps of iron which our bodies are, manufacturing out of it what we want it to be. Words are secondary. Thoughts live; they travel far. And so, take care of what you think.

Good and evil have an equal share in moulding character and in some cases misery is a greater teacher than happiness. In studying the great characters the world has produced, I daresay, in the vast majority of cases, it would be found that it was misery that taught more than happiness, it was poverty that taught more than wealth, and it was blows that brought out their inner fire more than praise. Brought up in the lap of luxury, lying on a bed of roses and never shedding a tear, who has become great? When there comes affliction in the heart, when the storm of sorrow blows all around, and it seems as if light will soon be no more, when hope and courage are almost gone, it is then, in the midst of this great spiritual tempest, that the light within gleams.

Using the simile of a lake for the mind, every ripple, every wave that rises in the mind, when it subsides, does not die out entirely, but leaves a mark and future possibility of that mark coming out

again... Every work that we do, every movement of the body, every thought that we think, leaves such an impression on the mind-stuff, and even when such impressions are not obvious on the surface, they are sufficiently strong to work beneath the surface, sub-consciously. What we are every moment is determined by the sum total of these impressions on the mind... Each man's character is determined by the sum total of these impressions. If good impressions prevail, the character becomes good, if bad, it becomes bad. If a man continuously hears bad words, thinks bad thoughts, does bad actions, his mind will be full of bad impressions; and they will influence his thoughts and work without his being conscious of the fact. In fact, these bad impressions are always working. The sum total of these impressions in him will create the strong motive power for doing bad actions. He will be like a machine in the hands of his impressions.

Similarly, if a man thinks good thoughts and does good work, the sum total of these impressions will be good and they in a similar manner will force him to do good inspite of himself. When a man has done so much good work and thought so many good thoughts, there is an irresistible tendency in him to do good. Even if he wishes to do evil, his mind, as the sum total of their tendencies, will not allow him to do so. He is completely under the influence of the good tendencies. When such is the case, a man's good character is said to be established. If you really want to judge the character of a man, look not at his great performances. Watch a man do his most common actions; those are indeed the things which will tell you the real character of the great man. Great occasions rouse even the lowest of human beings to some kind of greatness, but he alone is really great whose character is great always – the same wherever he be.

When a large number of these impressions is left on the mind they coalesce and become a habit. It is said 'Habit is second nature.' It

is first nature also and the whole nature of man. Everything that we are is the result of habit... That gives us consolation because, if it is only habit, we can make it and unmake it any time. The only remedy for bad habits is counter habits. All the bad habits can be controlled by good habits. Go on doing good, thinking holy thoughts continuously. That is the only way to suppress base impressions. Never say any man is hopeless, because he only represents a character, a bundle of habits, which can be checked by new and better ones. Character is repeated habits and repeated habits alone can reform character.

The cause of all apparent evil is in ourselves. Do not blame any supernatural being. Neither be hopeless or despondent, nor think that we are in a place from which we can never escape unless someone comes and gives a helping hand. We are like silkworms. We make the thread of our own substance and spin the cocoon, and in course of time are imprisoned inside. We have woven around ourselves the network of Karma. And in our ignorance we feel as if we are bound, and weep and wail for help. But help does not come from without; it comes from within ourselves. Cry to all the gods of the Universe. I cried for years and in the end I found that I was helped. But help came from within. And I had to undo what I had done by mistake. I had to cut the net which I had thrown round myself. I have committed many mistakes in my life. But mark you, without those mistakes, I should not be what I am today. I do not mean that you are to go home and willfully commit mistakes; do not misunderstand me in that way. But do not mope because of the mistakes you have committed.

We commit mistakes because we are weak; and we are weak because we are ignorant. Who makes us ignorant? We ourselves. We put our hands over our eyes and weep that it is dark. Take the hands away and there is light. The light exists always for us, the self-effulgent

nature of the human soul. Do you not hear what modern scientific men say? What is the cause of evolution? Desire. The animal wants to do something but does not find the environment favourable, and therefore develops a new body. Who develops it? The animal itself: its will. Continue to exercise your will and it will take you higher. The will is almighty. If it is almighty, you may say: why cannot I do everything? But you are thinking only of your little self. Look back on yourself from the state of the amoeba to the human being; who made all that? Your own will. Can you deny that it is almighty? That which has made you come up so high, can make you go higher still. What you want is character, strengthening of the will.

Great work requires great and persistent effort for a long time. Neither need we trouble ourselves if a few fail. It is in the nature of things that many should fall, that troubles should come, that tremendous difficulties should arise, that selfishness and all other devils in the human heart should struggle hard when they are about to be driven out by the fire of spirituality. The road to the Good is the roughest and steepest in the Universe. It is a wonder that so many succeed, no wonder that so many fail. Character has to be established through a thousand stumbles.

Purify yourself, and the world is bound to be purified. This one thing requires to be taught now more than ever before. We are becoming more and more busy about our neighbours, and less and less about ourselves. The world will change if we change; if we are pure, the world will become pure. The question is – why should I see evil in others? I cannot see evil unless I be evil. I cannot be miserable unless I am weak.

Thus the man that has practised control over himself cannot be acted upon by anything outside; there is no more slavery for him. His mind has become free. Such a man alone is fit to live well in

the world. We generally find men holding two opinions regarding the world. Some are pessimists and say, "How horrible this world is, how wicked!" Some others are optimists and say, "How beautiful this world is, how wonderful!" To those who have not controlled their own minds, the world is either full of evil or at best a mixture of good and evil. This very world will become to us an optimistic world when we become masters of our own minds. Nothing will then work upon us as good or evil; we shall find everthing to be in its proper place, to be harmonious.

The more we grow in love and virtue and holiness, the more we see love and virtue and holiness outside. All condemnation of others really condemns ourselves.

Every step that has been really gained in the world has been gained by love; criticising can never do any good, it has been tried for thousands of years. Condemnation accomplishes nothing.

If you go home and sit in sack-cloth and ashes, and weep your lives out because you took certain false steps, it will not help you, but will weaken you all the more. If this room is full of darkness for thousands of years and you come in and begin to weep and wail, will the darkness vanish? Strike a match and light comes in a moment. What good will it do to you to think all your lives, 'Oh, I have done evil; I have made many mistakes'? It required no ghost to tell us that. Bring in the light and evil goes in a moment. Built up your character and manifest your real nature, the Effulgent, the Resplendent, the Ever-Pure and call it up in everyone you see.

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