

For Juniors (Std. V to VII)

Note:

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

1. BRILLIANT NAREN AND HIS WONDERFUL TEACHER

Naren was in his element at Dakshineswar. All his boyish enthusiasm was let loose there. He was like a young lion sporting joyously in the presence of a strong but indulgent parent. All his pent-up energy of mind and heart which had brought on anguish and tempest when it had partially revealed itself before, was now free to express itself fully. It manifested as a torrent of spiritual energy. Shri Ramakrishna understood and was delighted beyond words. The flights of Naren's soul were visible to him. Like a king grown venerable in long years of spiritual experience, was the older man; and Naren was like a young prince and heir, full of fire and vigour because of his spiritual inheritance. The Master let Naren's mind work under the pressure of its intrinsic force; he allowed it to become its own Guru. He said, "Do not accept anything because I have said so; but test everything for yourself. It is not in assent or dissent that the goal is to be attained, but in actual and concrete realization." And this Naren did, though often it called for extraordinary patience on the part of the Master and involved him in much suffering.

It is true to say that only Narendranath, amongst the disciples, understood the greatness of Shri Ramakrishna. He alone dared to doubt. He alone had an ascertained conviction with regard to the Master, which came of having weighed the Master's words

in the balance and transcended doubt. The others hung with rapt attention on every word that fell from his lips. They were Bhaktas (devotees), they loved the Master; theirs was the conviction which comes of love. They knew Shri Ramakrishna only through their burning love for him. But Naren would question him, would smile at his statements and criticize them. Naren, too, had love for the Master, love such as no other disciple had, and it was this love which made him revere and adore him. But he was not satisfied until he had completely satisfied himself of the truth of Shri Ramakrishna's teachings.

It was Naren's power, partly intellectual and partly spiritual, of searching out and arriving at truth, which filled the Master with respect for Naren. Yes, this was the "Shiva-nature" or the "Shiva-power" in Naren, as Shri Ramakrishna used to call it. On a certain occasion the Master said to the disciples present, pointing to Narendranath, "Behold! Here is Naren. See! Oh what power of insight he has! It is like the shoreless sea of radiant knowledge!" Then he prayed that the Mother might dim that radiance in order that Naren might be able to work. "O Mother," he prayed, "put a little of Thy Maya into Narendra!" For otherwise, by the natural tendency of his soul, he would be concerned only with the highest reaches of personal realization; he would be immersed in eternal meditation and be mindful only of the Supreme Reality. He would thus be lost to the world.

The other disciples accepted Shri Ramakrishna's valuation of Naren as indisputable. Had he not gauged the depths of their own natures also? Had he not told everyone of them his hidden tendencies! By mere touch he had imparted powers and realizations to them! Who were they to doubt when he said of Naren, "He has eighteen extraordinary powers, one or two of

which are sufficient to make a man famous in the world”; or “He is a burning, roaring fire consuming all impurities to ashes.”

Wonderful was Shri Ramakrishna’s method of teaching. He would seldom enter into the argument of his disciples. With a word, a glance or a song, he would teach, and the teaching was always: “Realization is the only goal. When realization comes into the heart, all arguments cease and divine knowledge shines forth.” One day Naren and other disciples were engaged in a heated argument: “Is God Personal or Impersonal? Does God become incarnate or is divine Incarnation a myth?” On and on the argument raged, until it covered all points of theological inquiry. Naren was the victor. He had overwhelmed all their positions.

Shri Ramakrishna approached the gathering, and they heard these opening notes of a song come from his lips:

O my mind, what avail thy efforts to realize that Being!

Groping about, as thou dost, like a madman in a dark room?

The song continued:

Go to the six schools of philosophy:

There that Being thou shalt not find;

Neither in the Tantras, nor in the Vedas.

That Being is fond of the sweet essence of love.

The disputatious disciples sat silent and ecstatic. Yes, here was the answer to all their questionings. Indeed, Shri Ramakrishna was a teacher who spoke only in the language of realization. He was not a metaphysician. He had seen; he had actually seen the Truth. So, what need of splitting hairs over questions that must remain for ever debatable to the human mind? Like the Buddha of old, Shri Ramakrishna had little use for logic. Spirituality is not the capacity to put fine theories into words. It is realization. It

is character. It is the conquest of lust and gold. Shri Ramakrishna took the concern with realization from the plane of discussion into the sphere of personal striving, of austerities, and of a realistic endeavour for vision. Whenever the discussion grew heated, he became impatient of “much talk”. Often he would compare the argumentative scholars who soared on the wings of discussion to vultures which, whilst soaring high, kept their eyes on the carrion beneath. The minds of these scholars were likewise fixed on the carrion of name and fame, lust and gold.

The Master did not normally interfere, however high the matter discussed. He let them talk. They would learn better, he would say: and sometimes he enjoyed the discussion. By it he sensed the spiritual insight of his disciples. Truly the Master’s company was a grand school for the soul. It was a stimulus to personal growth. Everyone was free to discover and realize his own potentialities. But there were certain occasions when Shri Ramakrishna did intervene; for example, when Naren’s towering thought overwhelmed the limited vision of another. There was that instance when Naren attacked faith as a means to liberation. He spoke of “blind faith”. The Master said, “Naren, what do you mean by ‘blind faith’? Faith is always blind. Has faith an ‘eye’? Why say ‘blind faith’? Either simply say ‘faith’ or say ‘Jnana’ [knowledge]. What do you mean by classifying faith—one kind having an eye, the other being blind?”

Slowly but surely Naren came to understand that it was realization that was true religion: man must see God. Thinking of Reality was good, but better was the vision of it—to attain which took time and much loving patience. But in time Naren discovered that the silence of insight was Shri Ramakrishna’s most eloquent teaching. Sometimes, during conversations, Shri

Ramakrishna would hold forth in soul-stirring utterances. At other times he would leave the disciples to themselves and their argumentative moods. Discussion ended, they would find him in deep Samadhi. This, they came to know after a time, was his way of protesting against their heated discussion. His character and the spiritual radiance of his personal life were the power behind his teaching. The man who preached universal love and toleration lived it. Shri Ramakrishna did not attack any social custom. He did not preach against caste. Himself a Brahmin, he had love for the downtrodden millions who were lowest in the social scale. By performing the most menial of all services, which even the lowest of the outcastes would shrink from doing, he revealed his utter humility.

What were Shri Ramakrishna's answers to questions pertaining to God-vision and methods of realization? How to pray? "Pray in any way," he would say, "for the Lord hears even the footfall of an ant." How to find God? "By the conquest of lust and gold." Sincerity was the main theme of his teaching. Without sincerity nothing was possible; with sincerity all was possible. He would say to Naren and others that if they carried out but one-sixteenth of what he had done to realize God, they would be blessed for ever. God assumes any form for the pleasure of His devotee. He is inexpressible... He is not to be found between the covers of a book or within the walls of a temple." Is image-worship right or wrong? Such a question, to Shri Ramakrishna, was an idle one. Worship of anything which helped one to see God was right. Intense longing was the one thing needful.

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2. At The Chicago Parliament Of Religions --- 1893

When Swami Vivekananda reached Chicago at the end of July 1893, to attend the Parliament of Religions, he was shocked to learn from the Information Bureau that the event would not commence until September and that no delegate would be admitted without proper credentials from a bona fide organization. His disciples in Madras, in their unbounded enthusiasm and faith, had taken it for granted that he had only to appear and he would be given a chance. The Swami too did not foresee the difficulties in the way, as he was sure that he was moving towards the fulfilment of a divine mission.

Swamiji found that living in Chicago was very costly. As he did not have enough money, he left for Boston, where things were cheaper. On the way, a wealthy traveller in the train, Miss Catherine Abbot Sanborn, was attracted by his noble bearing and charming conversation. She became more interested when she learnt the purpose of his visit to America. She invited him to come to her home to stay. The invitation was a God-send for Swamiji, who readily consented and went to live in her village home near Boston.

Through Miss Sanborn, Swamiji became acquainted with Mr. J. H. Wright, a Professor of Greek at Harvard University. After a four hour conversation with Swamiji, the Professor

was so impressed by his learning and wisdom that he took it upon himself to arrange for his admission to the Parliament of Religions as a delegate. “This is the only way you can be introduced to the nation at large”, he told Swamiji. Swamiji had explained his difficulties and had said that he had no credentials. Thereupon Prof. Wright had exclaimed, “To ask you Swami for credentials, is like asking the Sun to state its right to shine.” He immediately wrote to the Chairman of the Committee for the Selection of Delegates: “Here is a man who is more learned than all our professors put together.” He also gave Swamiji letters of introduction to the Committee that looked after Oriental delegates, and bought him a ticket to Chicago.

Unfortunately, when Swamiji arrived in Chicago on 9th September, he found to his dismay that he had mislaid the address of the Committee. He made enquiries of passers-by, but since it was the north-east side of the city where mostly Germans lived, they could not understand him. The chilly nights of September were coming on. Swamiji found no other alternative than to take shelter in an empty boxcar in the railroad freight yard. He soon freed himself from all anxieties and slept there, trusting in the guidance of the Lord.

In the morning Swamiji set out to find his way. He soon came to one of the rich quarters of the city. Extremely tired and hungry, he sought help from house to house as a sannyasin in India would. Seeing his soiled clothes and worn out appearance, the servants in the houses treated him rudely, sometimes slamming the door in his face. After a while, exhausted and resigning himself to the Will of the Lord, he sat down on the roadside.

As Swamiji sat by the roadside, the door of a fashionable

residence opposite him opened and a lady of regal appearance came out and spoke to him in a soft voice, “Sir, are you a delegate to the Parliament of Religions?” Swamiji told her of his difficulties. At once she invited him into her house and attended to his immediate needs. Later, when Swamiji had taken food and rested, she took him to the office of the Parliament of Religions. He was gladly accepted as a delegate and lodged with the other Oriental guests. His savior was Mrs. George W. Hale. She and her children became Swamiji’s warmest friends.

A new spirit now took over Swamiji. He was convinced beyond doubt that the Lord was with him. His days were spent in prayer and meditation and in the earnest longing that he might be made a true instrument of the Lord, a true spokesman of Hinduism, a true bearer of his Master’s message.

The Parliament of Religions was an adjunct of the World’s Columbian Exposition, which was held in Chicago in 1893 to celebrate the Four Hundredth Anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. Some of the declared objectives of the Parliament were to present the important truths held and taught in common by different religions of the world and to bring the nations of the earth into a more friendly relationship. But many thought and hoped that the Parliament would prove the superiority of their own religion over others. However, through Divine dispensation as it were, the validity of all religions ultimately became the keynote of the Parliament and Swami Vivekananda became the most impressive and eloquent mouthpiece of that central theme.

The first session of the Parliament was held on Monday, 11th September 1893, in the spacious hall of the Art Institute. Its huge galleries were packed with more than 4,000 people men

and women representing the best culture of the United States. Representatives of all organized religions ----- Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Jainism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Shintoism, Theism, (Brahmo Samaj) and Zoroastrianism were there. And among them was Swami Vivekananda, rapt in silent prayer, attracting the attention of the audience by his commanding presence.

The Parliament opened with a prayer, after which the Chairman, Reverend J. H. Barrows, introduced the delegates one by one, who then read their prepared speeches. But Swamiji had no such written speech with him and he had never before addressed such a huge assembly. He did not speak in the morning session but went on postponing the summons from the Chair.

In the afternoon, when he could no longer put off his turn, Swamiji stepped up to the rostrum, his face glowing like fire. Inwardly bowing down to Devi Saraswati, the Goddess of Knowledge, he began to speak. No sooner had he addressed the assembly as 'Sisters and Brothers of America', a great wave of enthusiasm went through the audience. They rose to their feet with shouts of applause, as if they had gone mad. Everyone was cheering, cheering, and cheering!!! Swamiji was bewildered. For two full minutes he attempted to speak, but the wild enthusiasm of the audience would not allow it. Others had addressed them in the customary manner but Swamiji had touched the deepest chord of their heart by discarding formality and stressing upon the kinship of people. After the applause had subsided, he made a brief speech.

When Swamiji had finished and sat down, exhausted with emotion, there was another round of tremendous ovation. The next day all the newspapers lionized him as the greatest figure

and the best speaker of the Parliament. The unknown young monk became known throughout the United States of America. His life-size portraits were posted on the roadside in Chicago with his name written beneath it, and many showed reverence to it with bowed heads.

In his speeches at the Parliament thereafter, Swami Vivekananda stressed again and again upon the idea of validity of all religions and their harmony. He appealed to every person to preserve his or her own individuality and at the same time to learn and assimilate the good points, the spirit of others' religions. In his address at the Final Session of the Parliament on 27th September 1893, Swamiji thanked and congratulated the organizers for successfully hosting such a noble and magnificent event to foster world peace and unity. He also thanked the audience for their kind and overwhelming support.

Swami Vivekananda concluded thus...

If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance:

**‘Help and not Fight’, ‘Assimilation and not Destruction’,
‘Harmony and Peace and not Dissension’.**

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3. REAL WORSHIP

When Swami Vivekananda paid a visit to the Rameshwaram Temple, he was asked to address a few words to the people who had assembled there. This he did in the following terms:

It is in love that religion exists and not in ceremony, in the pure and sincere love in the heart. Unless a man is pure in body and mind, his coming into a temple and worshipping Shiva is useless. The prayers of those that are pure in mind and body will be answered by Shiva, and those that are impure and yet try to teach religion to others will fail in the end. External worship is only a symbol of internal worship; but internal worship and purity are the real things. Without them, external worship would be of no avail. Therefore, you must all try to remember this.

People have become so degraded in this Kali Yuga that they think they can do anything, and then they can go to a holy place, and their sins will be forgiven. If a man goes with an impure mind into a temple, he adds to the sins that he has already, and goes home a worse man than when he left it. Tirtha (place of pilgrimage) is a place which is full of holy things and holy men. But if holy people live in a certain place, and if there is no temple there, even that is a Tirtha. If unholy people live in

a place where there may be a hundred temples, the Tirtha has vanished from that place. And it is most difficult to live in a Tirtha; for if sin is committed in any ordinary place it can easily be removed, but sin committed in a Tirtha cannot be removed.

This is the gist of all worship—to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Shiva in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples.

On several other occasions while speaking on the topic of, 'Service to God in Man', Swamiji said.

Why should we do good to the world? Apparently to help the world, but really to help ourselves... Do not stand on a high pedestal and take five cents in your hand and say, 'Here, my poor man,' but be grateful that the poor man is there, so that by making a gift to him you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed, but it is the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world, and thus become pure and perfect.

The watchword of all well-being, of all moral good is not 'I' but 'Thou'. Who cares whether there is a heaven or a hell, who cares if there is a soul or not, who cares if there is an unchangeable or not? Here is the world, and it is full of misery. Go out into it as Buddha did, and struggle to lessen it or die in the attempt. Forget yourselves; this is the first lesson to be learnt, whether you are a theist or an atheist, whether you are an

agnostic or a Vedāntist, a Christian or a Mohammedan.

Buddha is the only prophet who said, 'I do not care to know your various theories about God. What is the use of discussing all the subtle doctrines about the soul? Do good and be good. ...He works best who works without any motive, neither for money, nor for fame, nor for anything else.

Selfishness is the chief sin, thinking of ourselves first. He who thinks, 'I will eat first, I will have more money than others, and I will possess everything,' he who thinks, 'I will get to heaven before others, I will get mukti before others', is the selfish man. The unselfish man says, 'I will be last, I do not care to go to heaven, I will even go to hell if by doing so I can help my brothers.' This un-selfishness is the test of religion. He who has more of this unselfishness is more spiritual and nearer to Śiva.

You cannot help anyone, you can only serve: serve the children of the Lord, serve the Lord Himself, if you have the privilege. If the Lord grants that you can help any one of His children, blessed you are; do not think too much of yourselves. Blessed you are that that privilege was given to you when others had it not. Do it only as a worship.

Blessed are we that we are given the privilege of working for Him, not of helping Him. Cut out this word 'help' from your mind. You cannot help; it is blasphemy. You are here yourself at His pleasure. Do you mean to say, you help Him? You worship. When you give a morsel of food to the dog, you worship the dog as God. God is in that dog. He is the dog. He is all and in all.

If in this hell of a world one can bring a little joy and peace even for a day into the heart of a single person, that much alone is true; this I have learnt after suffering all my life; all else is mere moonshine.

This is the gist of all worship—to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Śiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Śiva; and if he sees Śiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary.

The good live for others alone. The wise man should sacrifice himself for others'. I can secure my own good only by doing you good. There is no other way, none whatsoever.

Go from village to village, do good to humanity and to the world at large. Go to hell yourself to buy salvation for others. 'When death is so certain, it is better to die for a good cause.

Throughout the history of the world you find great men make great sacrifices and the mass of mankind enjoy the benefit. If you want to give up everything for your own salvation, it is nothing. Do you want to forgo even your own salvation for the good of the world?

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 salvation, the gospel of service, the gospel of social raising-up the gospel of equality.

Throw open all the doors and windows of your room. In your quarter there are lots of poor people sunk in degradation

and misery. You will have to go to them and serve them with your zeal and enthusiasm. Arrange to distribute medicines to those who are sick, and nurse them with all care, supply food to him who is starving, teach with as much as lies in you the ignorant; and if you begin to serve your brethren in this way, you will surely get peace and consolation.

Trust not the so-called rich. 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 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.... Vow, then, to devote your whole lives to the cause of the redemption of these three hundred millions, going down and down every day.

Let this body go in the service of others and then I shall know you have not come to me in vain. After so much tapasya, austerity, I have known that the highest truth is this - He is present in all beings. These are all the manifested forms of Him. There is no other God to seek for! He alone is worshipping God, who serves all beings.

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For Seniors (Std. VIII to X)

Note:

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

4. SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND HIS MISSION BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

In our country a teacher is a most highly venerated person, he is regarded as God Himself. We have not even the same respect for our father and mother. Father and mother give us our body, but the teacher shows us the way to salvation. We are his children, we are born in the spiritual line of the teacher. All Hindus come to pay respect to an extraordinary teacher, they crowd around him. And here was such a teacher, my Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

The teacher had no thought whether he was to be respected or not, he had not the least idea that he was a great teacher, he thought that it was the Divine Mother who was doing everything and not he. He always said, “If any good comes from my lips, it is the Mother who speaks; what have I to do with it?” That was his one idea about his work, and to the day of his death he never gave it up. This man sought no one. His principle was, first form character, first earn spirituality and results will come of themselves. His favourite illustration was, “When the lotus opens, Then the bees come of their own accord to seek the honey; so let the lotus of your character be full-blown, and the results will follow.” This is a great lesson to learn. My Master

taught me this lesson hundreds of times, yet I often forget it. Few understand the power of thought. If a man goes into a cave, shuts himself in, and thinks one really great thought and dies, that thought will penetrate the walls of that cave, vibrate through space, and at last permeate the whole human race. Such is the power of thought; be in no hurry therefore to give your thoughts to others. First have something to give. He alone teaches who has something to give, for teaching is not talking, teaching is not imparting doctrines, it is communicating.

Therefore first make character—that is the highest duty you can perform. Know Truth for yourself, and there will be many to whom you can teach it afterwards; they will all come. This was the attitude of my Master. He criticised no one. For years I lived with that man, but never did I hear those lips utter one word of Condemnation for any sect. He had the same sympathy for all sects; he had found the harmony between them. A man may be intellectual, or devotional, or mystic, or active; the various religions represent one or the other of these types. Yet it is possible to combine all the four in one man, and this is what future humanity is going to do. That was his idea. He condemned no one, but saw the good in all.

People came by thousands to see and hear this wonderful man who spoke in a dialect every word of which was forceful and full of light. For it is not what is spoken, much less the language in which it is spoken, but it is the personality of the speaker which dwells in everything he says that carries weight. Every one of us feels this at times. We hear most splendid orations, most wonderfully reasoned-out discourses, and we go home and forget them all. At other times we hear a few words in

the simplest language, and they enter into our lives, become part and parcel of ourselves and produce lasting results. The words of a man who can put his personality into them take effect, but he must have tremendous personality.

I heard of this man, and I went to hear him. He looked just like an ordinary man, with nothing remarkable about him. He used the most simple language, and I thought “Can this man be a great teacher?” —I crept near to him and asked him the question which I had been asking others all my life: “Sir, have you seen God?” “Yes”, he replied. “Can you prove it, Sir?” “Yes”. “How?” “Because I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense.” That impressed me at once. For the first time I found a man who dared to say that he saw God. I began to go to that man, day after day.

I have read about Buddha and Christ and Mohammed. about all those different luminaries of ancient times, how they would stand up and say, “Be thou whole”, and the man became whole. I now found it to be true, and when I myself saw this man, all scepticism was brushed aside. It could be done.

Religion is not talk, or doctrines, or theories; nor is it sectarianism. Religion cannot live in sects and societies. It is the relation between the soul and God; how can it be made into a society? It would then degenerate into business, and wherever there are business and business principles in religion, spirituality dies.

The second idea that I learnt from my Master, and which is perhaps the most vital, is the wonderful truth that the religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic.

They are but various phases of one eternal religion. That one eternal religion is applicable to different planes of existence, is applied to the opinions of various minds and various races. There never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion; there never existed many religions, there is only the one. One infinite religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist, and this religion is expressing itself in various countries in various ways. Therefore we must respect all religions and we must try to accept them all as far as we can.

Religions manifest themselves not only according to race and geographical position, but according to individual powers. In one man, religion is manifesting itself as intense activity, as work. In another, it is manifesting itself as intense devotion, in yet another, as mysticism, in others as philosophy, and so forth. It is wrong when we say to others, "Your methods are not right."

Do not try to disturb the faith of any man. If you can, give him something better; if you can, get hold of a man where he stands and give him a push upwards; do so, but do not destroy what he has. The only true teacher is he who can convert himself, as it were, into a thousand persons at a moment's notice. The only true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the student's soul and see through the student's eyes and hear through his ears and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can really teach and none else. All these negative, breaking-down, destructive teachers that are in the world can never do any good.

In the presence of my Master I found out that man could be perfect, even in this body. Those lips never cursed anyone, never

even criticised anyone. Those eyes were beyond the possibility of seeing evil, that mind had lost the power of thinking evil. He saw nothing but good. That tremendous purity, that tremendous renunciation is the one secret of spirituality.

“Neither through wealth nor through progeny, but through renunciation alone, is immortality to be reached”, say the Vedas. “Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and follow me,” says the Christ. So all great saints and Prophets have expressed it, and have carried it out in their lives. How can great spirituality come without that renunciation? Renunciation is the background of all religious thought wherever it be, and you will always find that as this idea of renunciation lessens, the more will the senses creep into the field of religion, and spirituality will decrease in the same ratio.

That man was the embodiment of renunciation. In our country it is necessary for a man who becomes a Sannyasin to give up all worldly wealth and position, and this my Master carried out literally. There were many who would have felt themselves blessed if he would only have accepted a present from their hands, who would gladly have given him thousands of rupees if he would have taken them, but these were the only men from whom he would turn away. He was a triumphant example, a living realisation of the complete conquest of lust and of desire for money. He was beyond all ideas of either, and such men are necessary for this century.

Such renunciation is necessary in these days when men have begun to think that they cannot live a moment without what they call their “necessities”, and which they are increasing

out of all proportion. It is necessary in a time like this that a man should arise to demonstrate to the sceptics of the world that there yet breathes a man who does not care a straw for all the gold or all the fame that is in the universe. Yet, there are such men.

The other idea of his life was intense love for others. The first part of my Master's life was spent in acquiring spirituality, and the remaining years in distributing it.

So men came in crowds to hear him, and he would talk twenty hours in the twenty-four, and that not for one day, but for months and months until at last the body broke down under the pressure of this tremendous strain. His intense love for mankind would not let him refuse to help even the humblest of the thousands who sought his aid. Gradually, there developed a vital throat disorder, and yet he could not be persuaded to refrain from these exertions. As soon as he heard that people were asking to see him, he would insist upon having them admitted, and would answer all their questions. When expostulated with, he replied, "I do not care. I will give up twenty thousand such bodies to help one man. It is glorious to help even one man." There was no rest for him.

Once a man asked him. "Sir, you are a great Yogi. Why do you not put your mind a little on your body and cure your disease?" At first he did not answer, but when the question had been repeated, he gently said, "My friend, I thought you were a sage, but you talk like other men of the world. This mind has been given to the Lord. Do you mean to say that I should take it back and put it upon the body which is but a mere cage of the

soul?”

Today the name of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa is known all over India to its millions of people. Nay, the power of that man has spread beyond India; and if there has ever been a word of truth, a word of spirituality, that I have spoken anywhere in the world, I owe it to my Master, only the mistakes are mine.

This is the message of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world: “Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality, and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticise no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realisation. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light.”

The more such men are produced in a country, the more that country will be raised; and that country where such men absolutely do not exist is simply doomed, nothing can save it. Therefore my Master’s message to mankind is: “Be spiritual and realise truth for yourself.” He would have you give up everything for the sake of your fellow-beings. He would have you cease talking about love for your brother, and set to work to prove your words. The time has come for renunciation, for realisation; and then you will see the harmony in all the religions

of the world. You will know that there is no need of any quarrel. And then only will you be ready to help humanity.

To proclaim and make clear the fundamental unity underlying all religions was the mission of my Master. Other teachers have taught special religions which bear their names, but this great teacher of the nineteenth century made no claim for himself. He left every religion undisturbed because he had realised that in reality they are all part and parcel of the one eternal religion

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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.

5. SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S FIRST PUBLIC LECTURE IN THE EAST

There was a time when at the sound of the march of big Greek battalions the earth trembled. Vanished from the face of the earth, with not even a tale left behind to tell, gone is that ancient land of the Greeks. There was a time when the Roman Eagle floated over everything worth having in this world; everywhere Rome's power was felt and pressed on the head of humanity, the earth trembled at the name of Rome. But the Capitoline Hill is a mass of ruins, the spider weaves its web where the Caesars ruled. There have been other nations equally glorious that have come and gone, living a few hours of exultant and exuberant dominance and of a wicked national life, and then vanishing like ripples on the face of the waters. Thus have these nations made their mark on the face of humanity.

Civilisations have arisen in other parts of the world. In ancient times and in modern times, great ideas have emanated from strong and great races. In ancient and in modern times, wonderful ideas have been carried forward from one race to another. In ancient and in modern times, seeds of great truth and power have been cast abroad by the advancing tides of national life; but mark you, my friends, it has been always with the blast

of war trumpets and with the march of embattled cohorts. Each idea had to be soaked in a deluge of blood. Each idea had to wade through the blood of millions of our fellow-beings. Each word of power had to be followed by the groans of millions, by the wails of orphans, by the tears of widows. This in the main, other nations have taught; but India has for thousands of years peacefully existed.

In India 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 and peace before it. We, of all nations of the world, have never been a conquering race, and that blessing is on our head, and therefore we live.

In India the same laws are here, laws adjusted and thought out through thousands and thousands of years; customs, the outcome of the acumen of ages and the experience of centuries, that seem to be eternal; and as the days go by, as blow after blow of misfortune has been delivered upon them, such blows seem to have served one purpose only, that of making them stronger. And to find the centre of all this, the heart from which the blood flows, the mainspring of the national life, believe me when I say after my experience of the world, that it is here.

To the other nations of the world, religion is one among the many occupations of life. There is politics, there are the enjoyments of social life, there is all that wealth can buy or

power can bring, there is all that the senses can enjoy; and among all these various occupations of life and all this searching after something which can give yet a little more whetting to the cloyed senses-among all these, there is perhaps a little bit of religion. But here, in India, religion is the one and the only occupation of life.

Individuals have each their own peculiarities, and each man has his own method of growth, his own life marked out for him by the infinite past life, by all his past Karma as we Indians say. Into this world he comes with all the past on him, the infinite past ushers the present, and the way in which we use the present is going to make the future. Thus everyone born into this world has a bent, a direction towards which he must go, through which he must live, and what is true of the individual is equally true of the race. Each race, similarly, has a peculiar bent, each race has a peculiar *raison d'être*, each race has a peculiar mission to fulfil in the life of the world. Each race has to make its own result, to fulfil its own mission.

Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race; it never was, and mark my words, it never will be. But there has been the other mission given to us, which is to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate, as it were, into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race and that concentrated energy is to pour forth in a deluge on the world whenever circumstances are propitious. Let the Persian or the Greek, the Roman, the Arab, or the Englishman march his battalions, conquer the world, and link the different nations together, and the philosophy and spirituality of India is ever ready to flow along the new-made channels into the veins of the nations of the world. The Indian's

calm brain must pour out its own quota to give to the sum total of human progress. India's gift to the world is the light spiritual.

Thus, in the past, we read in history that whenever there arose a great conquering nation uniting the different races of the world, binding India with the other races, taking her out, as it were, from her loneliness and from her aloofness from the rest of the world in which she again and again cast herself, that whenever such a state has been brought about, the result has been the flooding of the world with Indian spiritual ideas.

Those who keep their eyes open, those who understand the workings in the minds of different nations of the West, those who are thinkers and study the different nations, will find the immense change that has been produced in the tone, the procedure, in the methods, and in the literature of the world by this slow, never-ceasing permeation of Indian thought.

But there is another peculiarity, as I have already hinted to you. We never preached our thoughts with fire and sword. If there is one word in the English language to represent the gift of India, to the world, if there is one word in the English language to express the effect which the literature of India produces upon mankind, it is this one word, "fascination". It is the opposite of anything that takes you suddenly; it throws on you, as it were, a charm imperceptibly.

To many, Indian thought, Indian manners, Indian customs, Indian philosophy, Indian literature are repulsive at first sight; but let them persevere, let them read, let them become familiar with the great principles underlying these ideas, and it is ninety-nine to one that the charm will come over them, and fascination

will be the result. Slow and silent as the gentle dew that falls in the morning, unseen and unheard, yet producing a most tremendous result, has been the work of the calm, patient all-suffering spiritual race upon the world of thought.

In India alone man has not stood up to fight for a little tribal God, saying "My God is true and yours is not true; let us have a good fight over it." It was only here that such ideas did not occur as fighting for little gods. These great underlying principles, being based upon the eternal nature of man, are as potent today for working for the good of the human race as they were thousands of years ago, and they will remain so.

The whole history of India you may read in these few words; 'एकं सद्दिग्वा बहुधा वदन्ति' - That which exists is One, sages call it by various names. The whole history has been a repetition in massive language, with tremendous power, of that one central doctrine. It was repeated in the land till it had entered into the blood of the nation, till it began to tingle with every drop of blood that flowed in its veins, till it became one with the life, and thus the land was transmuted into the most wonderful land of tolerance, giving the right to welcome the various religions as well as all sects into the old mother-country. And herein is the explanation of the most remarkable phenomenon that is only witnessed here-all the various sects, apparently hopelessly contradictory, yet living in such harmony.

Even the most educated people of other countries turn up their noses at an angle of forty-five degrees and call our religion idolatry. I have seen that; and they never stopped to think what a mass of superstition there was in their own heads. It is still so everywhere, this tremendous sectarianism, the low narrowness

of the mind. The thing which a man has is the only thing worth having; the only life worth living is his own little life of dollar-worship and mammon-worship; the only little possession worth having is his own property, and nothing else. If he can manufacture a little clay nonsense or invent a machine, that is to be admired beyond the greatest possessions. That is the case over the whole world in spite of education and learning. But education has yet to be in the world, and civilisation-civilisation has begun nowhere yet.

Ninety-nine decimal nine per cent of human races are more or less savages even now. We may read of these things in books, and we hear of toleration in religion and all that, but very little of it is there yet in the world; take my experience for that. Ninety-nine per cent do not even think of it. There is tremendous religious persecution yet in every country in which I have been, and the same old objections are raised against learning anything new. The little toleration that is in the world, the little sympathy that is yet in the world for religious thought, is practically here in the land of the Aryas, and nowhere else.

The one great lesson, therefore, that the world wants most, that the world has yet to learn from India, is the idea not only of toleration, but of sympathy. Well has it been said in the *Shiva Mahima stotra*: “As the different rivers, taking their start from different mountains, running straight or crooked, at last come unto the ocean, so, O Shiva, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead unto Thee.” Though they may take various roads, all are on the way. Some may run a little crooked, others may run straight, but at last they will all come unto the

Lord, the One. Then and then alone, is your Bhakti of Shiva complete when you not only see Him in the Linga, but you see Him everywhere. He is the sage, he is the lover of Hari who sees Hari in everything and in everyone. If you are a real lover of Shiva, you must see Him in everything and in everyone.

It is impossible that all difference can cease; it must exist; without variation life will cease. It is this clash, the differentiation of thought that makes for light, for motion, for everything. Differentiation, infinitely contradictory, must remain, but it is not necessary that we should hate each other therefore; it is not necessary therefore that we should fight each other.

Therefore we have again to learn the one central truth that was preached only here in our Motherland, and that has to be preached once more from India. Why? Because not only is it in our books, but it runs through every phase of our national literature and is in the national life. Here and here alone is it practised every day, and any man whose eyes are open can see that it is practised here and here alone.

The lessons of mildness, gentleness, forbearance, toleration, sympathy, and brotherhood, everyone may learn, whether man, woman, or child, learned or unlearned, without respect of race, caste or creed. **“They call Thee by various names; Thou art One.”**

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For Seniors (Std. VIII to X)

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1. Time Allotted: 3 minutes.
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(a) Content: 30 marks. (b) Clarity: 10 marks. (c) Impact: 10 marks.

6. FAITH AND STRENGTH

He is an atheist who does not believe in himself.

The old religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself.

The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man or a nation loses faith, death comes.

Faith, faith, faith in ourselves, faith, faith in God-this is the secret of greatness. If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods, and in all the gods which foreigners have now and again introduced into your midst, and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you.

Never think there is anything impossible for the soul. It is the greatest heresy to think so. If there is sin, this is the only sin—to say that you are weak, or others are weak.

Whatever you think, that you will be. If you think

yourselves weak, weak you will be; if you think yourselves strong, strong you will be.

Be free; hope for nothing from anyone. I am sure if you look back upon your lives you will find that you were always vainly trying to get help from others which never came. All the help that has come was from within yourselves.

Never say, 'No', never say, 'I cannot', for you are infinite. Even time and space are as nothing compared with your nature. You can do anything and everything, you are almighty.

Ye are the Children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blessed and eternal.

Never mind the struggles, the mistakes. I never heard a cow tell a lie, but it is only a cow—never a man. So never mind these failures, these little backslidings; hold the ideal a thousand times, and if you fail a thousand times, make the attempt once more.

The remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness, but thinking of strength. Teach men of the strength that is already within them.

If there is one word that you find coming out like a bomb from the Upaniṣads, bursting like a bomb-shell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word *fearlessness*.

If you look, you will find that I have never quoted anything

but the Upaniṣads. And of the Upaniṣads, it is only that one idea *strength*. The quintessence of the Vedas and Vedānta and all lies in that one word.

Be strong, my young friends; that is my advice to you.

This is the one question I put to every man... Are you strong? Do you feel strength?- for I know it is truth alone that gives strength. ...Strength is the medicine for the world's disease.

This is the great fact: Strength is life, weakness is death. Strength is felicity, life eternal, immortal; weakness is constant strain and misery, weakness is death.

To succeed, you must have tremendous perseverance, tremendous will. 'I will drink the ocean,' says the persevering soul, 'at my will mountains will crumble up.' Have that sort of energy, that sort of will, work hard, and you will reach the goal.

Men, men, these are wanted: everything else will be ready, but strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone, are wanted. A hundred such and the world will become revolutionized.

Death is better than a vegetating ignorant life; it is better to die on the battle-field than to live a life of defeat.

Come, do something heroic! Brother, what if you do not attain *mukti*, what if you suffer damnation a few times?

No need of looking behind. FOR-WARD! We want infinite energy, infinite zeal, infinite courage, and infinite patience, then only will great things be achieved.

Be not in despair; the way is very difficult, like walking on the edge of a razor; yet despair not, arise, awake, and find the ideal, the goal.

Why weepest thou, brother? There is neither death nor disease for thee. Why weepest thou, brother? There is neither misery. nor misfortune for thee. Why weepest thou, brother? Neither change nor death was predicted of thee. Thou art Existence Absolute. Be your own Self.

Let people say whatever they like, stick to your own convictions, and rest assured, the world will be at your feet. They say, 'Have faith in this fellow or that fellow', but I say, 'Have faith in yourself first', that's the way. Have faith in yourself—all power is in you—be conscious and bring it out. Say, 'I can do everything.' 'Even the poison of a snake is powerless if you can firmly deny it.'

Once when I was in Varanasi, I was passing through a place where there was a large tank of water on one side and a high wall on the other. It was in the grounds where there were many monkeys. The monkeys of Varanasi are huge brutes and are sometimes surly. They now took it into their heads not to allow me to pass through their street, so they howled and shrieked and clutched at my feet as I passed. As they pressed closer, I began to run, but the faster I ran, the faster came the monkeys and they began to bite at me. It seemed impossible to escape, but just then I met a stranger who called out to me, 'Face the brutes'. I turned and faced the monkeys, and they fell back and finally fled. That is a lesson for all life-face the terrible, face it boldly.

Stand up and fight! Not one step back, that is the idea. Fight it out, whatever comes. Let the stars move from the sphere! Let the whole world stand against us! Death means only a change of garment. What of it? Thus fight! You gain nothing by becoming cowards. Taking a step backward, you do not avoid any misfortune. You are infinite, deathless, birthless. Because you are infinite spirit, it does not befit you to be a slave. Arise! Awake! Stand up and fight!

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