

A dream of equality and social justice



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It's a given that most speeches delivered by today's leaders are ghost-written. They are pepped up by rhetorically rapturous diction with the intention of magnifying self-image and garnering self-glory. Galore are the global organizations mainly in the business of preparing ready-made speeches catering for the various kinds of leaders. The money spent on this exercise is fabulous.

Even dress rehearsals are conducted to train the speakers in all respects; how to stand at the podium; what costumes to wear; where to make pauses in speeches and what gestures and body language to be adopted. The organizations themselves plant their own persons in the midst of the audience to clap hands and make resounding applauses to cheer up the speakers concerned.

But the fact is that such speeches ring hollow, having no grain of truth at all. They are just like paper flowers. When read in print, they feel like water scooped up in a sieve and trickling down.

Historic speech

An edifying and energetic speech is one which goes directly to the hearts of the listeners, setting off changes in their attitude and action.

The speech delivered by Martin Luther King Jr. at Lincoln Memorial in Washington before the two lakh-strong audience way back in 1963 was such a sublime speech unparalleled and unmatched. Thanks to the Internet, even now we can hear the speech. Seeing the surging crowd of listeners, one can understand how important the event was.

Martin Luther's voice was majestic and mesmeric. His speech felt more like an argument in a court of justice rather than just a lecture formally prepared.

Martin Luther comes across as an orator driving home the voice of justice. The speech had already been prepared as a text. But he delivered it from the depths of his heart. Through his voice, the history of America, the woes of the Blacks and the need for struggle found a powerful expression.

Dream of Freedom

Martin Luther's proclamation, "I have a dream," gave an impetus and served as a beacon of hope to not only the African-Americans but also to all the oppressed all over the world. It hit home powerfully the energy and edifying nature of Truth.

In the speech, Martin Luther referred to his dream eight times. He dwelt at length at the dream whose pages he had browsed. It can be said that he just reminded the people of how an eternal dream, conceived of in him at some point of time, kept developing. He

narrated his dream not only to the whole American society but also to all those possessed of apartheid.

That was the dream of equality; that was the dream of social justice and that was the dream dreamt long by an oppressed community for liberation!

Pure love's clarion call

Martin Luther had understood that struggle is the only solution and the only way-out for the people to get back their rights and to treat all people equally regardless of colour and race. Only an eternal struggle would fetch justice. He did not bother about the repressive nature of power. His voice clearly conveyed the message that he was the representative of his time.

Though a call to struggle, his speech had no trace of hatred and was no invitation for confrontation. It felt more like pure love's clarion call.

His words, "We could not walk alone and nor could we go back," are absolutely true. It was an ideal slogan suitable eternally for all kinds of warriors stationed on the battlefield.

Martin Luther majestically said the following words: "When the architects of our great republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed to the inalienable rights of life - liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of colour are concerned. Instead of honouring this sacred obligation, America has given its colored people a bad check, a check that has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So, we have come to cash this check, a

check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and security of justice.”

In this passage, Martin Luther used a very simple but powerful metaphor of ‘cheque’ (‘check’ in American English), which directly touched the hearts of the Americans that cut across colour and race.

His speech exhorted all Blacks and Whites to join hands in an expression of camaraderie and solid solidarity.

Notably the event witnessed participation of about 60,000 Whites.

Martin Luther said, “I say to you, my friends, we have the difficulties of today and tomorrow. I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed.”

His words of hope broke out from his faith rooted in his dream.

This applies not only to America but also to India.

We not only need a dream for change but also leaders who carry the dream; who convey the dream and who make the dream a reality.

All progress we have so far achieved and all rights we have so far got are the fruits of dreams sustained by great stalwarts.

We are living in an age engulfed by the dark shadows against which we have to hold aloft lamps of justice.

Sixty years on, Martin Luther’s speech still assumes significance because it spreads the light of justice around even now.

Read the speech: <https://bit.ly/MLKSpeechText>

Watch the speech: https://bit.ly/MLK_Speech

August 28 marks the 60th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech, "I have a dream."

Translated by V. Mariappan.