

**Ms. Deepika Tiwari**

Assistant Professor

Patna Women's College

Email ID – [dtdeepikatiwari@gmail.com](mailto:dtdeepikatiwari@gmail.com)

**GE II, (Semester - IV)**

**Paper code - GE404**

**Paper Name – Language, Literature and Culture**

**Topic – I Have A Dream by Dr Martin Luther King**

**Introduction:**

**I Have A Dream** is a speech delivered by Dr Martin Luther King Jr. on January 1, 1963, during a ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C, to commemorate the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation. His aim was deliberative: to emphasize that – one hundred years after the signing of this historic document – black Americans are still not free, and to inspire people to rectify this gross injustice.

**The Emancipation Proclamation by Abraham Lincoln:**

President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, as the nation approached its third year of bloody civil war. The proclamation declared “that all persons held as slaves” within the rebellious states “are, and henceforward shall be free”.

**About the Speaker; Dr Martin Luther King:**

Martin Luther King Jr., -minister, speaker and renowned civil rights leader whose Philosophy of peaceful resistance captured the hearts and minds of millions during turbulent

sixties, is perhaps best remembered for his eloquent speech, "I Have a Dream" in which he expressed his deep desire for peace and racial harmony.

Martin Luther King, Jr., (January 15, 1929-April 4, 1968) was born Michael Luther King, Jr., but later had his name changed to Martin. Martin Luther attended segregated public schools in Georgia. He received the B. A. degree in 1948 from Morehouse College, a distinguished Negro institution of Atlanta from which both his father and grandfather had graduated. With a fellowship won at Crozer, he enrolled in graduate studies at Boston University, completing his residence for the doctorate in 1953 and receiving the degree in 1955. In Boston he met and married Coretta Scott, a young woman of uncommon intellectual and artistic attainments.

In 1954, Martin Luther King became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. Always a strong worker for civil rights for members of his race, King was, by this time, a member of the executive committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, the leading organization of its kind in the nation. In December, 1955, he led the first great Negro nonviolent demonstration in United states for the discrimination in buses based on skin colour. The boycott lasted 382 days. On December 21, 1956, after the Supreme Court of the United States had declared unconstitutional the laws requiring segregation on buses, Negroes and whites rode the buses as equals. During the days of boycott, King was arrested, his home was bombed, he was subjected to personal abuse, but at the same time he emerged as a Negro leader of the first rank.

In 1957 he was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization formed to provide new leadership for the now burgeoning civil rights movement. The ideals for this organization he took from Christianity; its operational techniques from Gandhi. In the eleven-year period between 1957 and 1968, King travelled over six million miles and spoke over twenty-five hundred times, appearing wherever there

was injustice, protest, and action; and meanwhile he wrote five books as well as numerous articles. In these years, he led a massive protest in Birmingham, Alabama, that caught the attention of the entire world, providing what he called a coalition of conscience and inspiring his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”, a manifesto of the Negro revolution; he planned the drives in Alabama for the registration of Negroes as voters; he directed the peaceful march on Washington, D.C., of 250,000 people to whom he delivered his address, “I Have a Dream”, he conferred with President John F. Kennedy and campaigned for President Lyndon B. Johnson; he was arrested twenty times and assaulted at least four times; he was awarded five honorary degrees; was named Man of the Year by *Time* magazine in 1963; and became not only the symbolic leader of American blacks but also a world figure.

At the age of thirty-five, Martin Luther King, Jr., was the youngest man to have received the Nobel Peace Prize. When notified of his selection, he announced that he would turn over the prize money of \$54,123 to the furtherance of the civil rights movement.

On the evening of April 4, 1968, while standing on the balcony of his motel room in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was to lead a protest march in sympathy with striking garbage workers of that city, he was assassinated.

### **Analysis of the Speech:**

Addressing to thousands of people in Lincoln Memorial hall, Martin Luther King starts his speech by referring to Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, which was a call to end slavery. Although the proclamation and subsequent end to slavery were key steps towards freedom for black Americans, Martin Luther contends there is still much work to do. Segregation and discrimination have forced black people at the society’s margins. Hence, the

work that was started by Abraham Lincoln should be continued through Civil Rights Movement.

Again, referring to the past, Dr King mentions that the Declaration of Independence in America was a promissory note to all future Americans, guaranteeing them the right to 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'. But Unfortunately, Blacks could never benefit from the lofty ideals of their founding fathers. They were kept devoid of their rights. However, Dr King is optimist, he believes there is room for everyone to receive and enjoy these rights in America. He and all the black people, are ready to finally cash and enjoy the freedom and justice that is due to them.

He emphasizes the importance of the present and alludes to a revolution for which he urges the nation not to undervalue the urgency of the cause. African-Americans will not be appeased. The movement will not die down until the blacks are finally granted equal rights. However, he insists this revolution must not ever devolve into bitterness, hatred and violence. He urges his fellow African-American to take high road in their struggle against injustice. He also recognizes the fact that many white people stand united with blacks in the fight for civil rights.

Dr King seeks basic rights for blacks that includes freedom of movement, right to vote and equal treatment with whites. This journey may be difficult but not impossible. He acknowledges the suffering of those fighting for justice, he encourages them to continue their fight and stay positive.

As the speech nears its end, Martin Luther King becomes less an orator and more a pastor, speaking in poetic cadence as he repeatedly invokes the nation of his dream. A beautiful one – one in which America finally lives up to the promises of its forefathers. A dream in which

blacks and whites can sit down and break bread together as brothers and sisters. A dream where his own children won't be judged by their skin colour but for the character they exhibit. He closes his speech with the words of old negro spiritual, looking towards the day when people of every creed and colour may join hands and sing: "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!".