

## THE HEAVEN OF FREEDOM

Where the mind is without fear and  
the head is held high;  
Where knowledge is free;  
Where the world has not been broken  
up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;  
Where words come out from the depth of truth;  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost  
its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;  
Where the mind is led forward by thee into  
ever-widening thought and action—  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,  
my country awake.

### About the Poem

'The Heaven of Freedom' is one of Tagore's most anthologized poems. It is an expression of the poet's reflective spirit and contains a simple prayer for his country, the India of pre-Independence times. But the prayer has a universal message which makes it immortal.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), who contributed immensely to giving modern India a place on the world literary scene, was a multi-faceted personality. He was a poet, dramatist, short-story writer and novelist. He was awarded Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 for his poetic collection - '*Geetanjali*'.

### GLOSSARY

Line 1. **where the head is held high**: refers to pride in one's freedom

Line 3. **where the world ... narrow domestic walls**: Tagore, who believed in the essential oneness of humanity, dreamt of a truly global society

Line 5. **truth**: the ultimate reality, the goal of great poets and philosophers

Line 6. **tireless striving**: a reference to the rule of reason

Line 7. **clear stream of reason**: a reference to the rule of reason

Line 7. **dead habit**: outdated practices

Line 8. **thought and action**:the two facets of a balanced personality

Line9. **let my country awake**:Tagore prays not just for territorial independence for his country, but also for its intellectual and spiritual freedom.

Line 9. **heaven of freedom**:a joyful abode which has freedom for the individual

### Comprehension Questions

- 1) What, according to Tagore, are some of the qualities that the land of freedom should have?
- 2) How does Tagore condemn sectarianism and communalism in the poem?
- 3) How does Tagore refer to the struggle for perfection and rationality?
- 4) Comment on the construction of the last line of the poem.
- 5) How does this poem achieve meaning in the context of the freedom struggle?
- 6) Is this the song of a patriot? Why?

### Creative Writing

- 1) Relate the theme of the poem to the background of the freedom struggle.  
(Hints: fear - head is held high - fragments and narrow domestic walls - depth of truth - dreary desert of dead habit - heaven of freedom - my Father - let my country awake)