

POETRY

WHERE THE MIND IS WITHOUT FEAR

Rabindranath Tagore

RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861- 1941), the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, was one of the greatest lyric poets of the world. He was also a noted dramatist, novelist, short story writer, philosopher, humanist, nation-builder and founder of an international university at Shantiniketan. He wrote primarily in Bangla, but rendered a large number of his own works into English, and in the process wrote them anew. Such works include *Gitanjali*, *The Crescent Moon*, and *The Gardener*. His other important works include *Gora*, *The Wreck*, *The Post Office*, *Sadhana* and *The Home and the World*. 'Where the Mind is Without Fear', a lyric taken from *Gitanjali*, is one of his best-remembered patriotic poems. It is a prayer to God to awaken the country from darkness and slavery into a state of ideal freedom. The whole poem is a single complex sentence whose principal clause is the last line.



A. Work in small groups and discuss these questions:

1. Do you think birds and animals in cages are happy?
2. Would any of you like to live a life of slavery?
3. Would you like to live a life of freedom? Why?
4. How would you interpret the freedom of a nation?

WHERE THE MIND IS WITHOUT FEAR

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, let my country awake.

B. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. What do you think is special about the composition of the poem?
2. What does the poet pray to God with regard to the state of mind of the Indians?
3. What does 'narrow domestic walls' refer to in the poem? What do the walls do?
4. What sort of a place is the poet talking about in the first two lines?
5. How concerned is the poet about the nation's state of affairs?
6. How can perfection be achieved?
7. What does Tagore mean by 'dreary desert sand of dead habit'?

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

fragments (n): small pieces

narrow (adj): limited in outlook

domestic (adj): specific country or home or family

tireless (adj): working very hard without stopping

striving (v): making great effort to achieve something

stretches (v): extends, lengthens

dreary (adj): dull, boring

ever-widening: always extending



C.1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Narrate the gist of the poem in your own words.
2. What does the poet mean by 'heaven of freedom'? What are its constituents?
3. Does the title of the poem convey Tagore's vision of India? Explain.
4. How far does India of today resemble Tagore's vision of a free country?
5. Why does Tagore use 'where' seven times in the poem? Explain.
6. What is patriotism? Discuss 'Where the Mind is Without Fear' as a patriotic poem?

C. 2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in **groups or pairs**:

- a. Freedom is our birthright
- b. 'Narrow domestic walls' have to be done away with if we want to live amicably

C. 3. COMPOSITION

Write a paragraph in about 100 words on the following:

- a. India of our dream
- b. Importance of intellectual freedom

D. WORD STUDY

D.1. Dictionary Use

Ex. 1. Correct the spelling of the following words:

knowlege strech widning heven countrey

Ex. 2. Look up a dictionary and write two meanings of each of the following words – the one in which it is used in the lesson and the other which is more common:

fear mind free narrow desert forward

D.2. Word-formation

Ex. Read the following lines carefully:

Where words come out from the **depth** of truth;

Where **knowledge** is free;

In the above lines the word '**depth**' and '**knowledge**' are abstract nouns which have been derived from adjective 'deep' and verb 'know' respectively. Now, form abstract nouns from the verbs and adjectives given below:

high true free perfect think act lose

D.3. Word-meaning

Find from the lesson words the meanings of which have been given in **column A**. The last part of each word is given in **column B**:

Column A

range of information, understanding
part broken off, separated
to pull something to make it longer or wider
small in width or limited in outlook
the nation as a whole with territory

Column B

.....dge
.....ment
.....etch
.....row
.....try

Ex. 2. Fill in the blanks with suitable words given below:

mind fragments words country father

- (i) Several languages are spoken in our
- (ii) His..... was a minister.
- (iii) Arya was trying to put the of a broken vase together.
- (iv) Pragma has made up herto be a doctor.
- (v) When we speak we put our thoughts into

E. GRAMMAR

Ex. 1. Read the following sentences carefully:

*My father, let my country awake into that heaven of freedom **where** the mind is without fear.*

In the sentence given above '**where**' is a relative pronoun that joins two sentences (clauses): '*My father, let my country awake into that heaven of freedom*' and '*The mind is without fear in that heaven of freedom.*' Note also how the relative pronoun comes immediately after its antecedent, noun.

Join the following sentences using '**when**', '**whom**' and '**who**':

- (i) I knew the person. He had come to meet me.
- (ii) Amandeep liked that shop. He got everything there.
- (iii) Gyandeo came to my house in the evening. I was away that time.
- (iv) I met Amod on the road. He was coming from Indore.
- (v) Sujeet handled the situation wonderfully. I had given him timely advice.

F. ACTIVITIES

Read the following lines carefully and tell if you notice anything special about the sounds:

- a. 'Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;'
- b. 'Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;'
- c. 'the dreary desert sand of dead habit;'
- d. 'Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake'