

Where The Mind Is Without Fear

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Topics to be Covered

- About the Poet
- About the Poem
- Full Text
- Stanza Explanation
- Critical Analysis
- Literary Devices
- Form & Style
- The central theme
- Contemporary Relevance
- Questions
- Resources to be consulted:

<https://englicist.com/notes/summary-where-the-mind-is-without-fear-rabindranath-tagore>

The Poet

- Rabindranath Tagore was a poet, short-story writer, song composer, playwright, essayist, and painter.
- He introduced new prose and verse forms and the use of colloquial language into Bengali literature, thereby freeing it from traditional models based on classical Sanskrit.
- He was highly influential in introducing Indian culture to the West and vice versa, and he is generally regarded as the outstanding creative artist of early 20th-century India.
- In 1913 he became the first non-European to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The Poem

- The poem is a prayer to God.
- The poem was written by Rabindranath Tagore during the time when India was under the British Rule and people were eagerly waiting to get their freedom from the British Rule.
- This poem had given a lot of strength to the people who were struggling for India's independence. It is a prayer to the Almighty for a hassle free nation free from any kind of manipulative or corrupted powers.

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.*

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free*

Tagore sketches a moving picture of the nation; he would like India to be. In these lines, the poet pledges to the Almighty that his country should be free from any fear of oppression or forced compulsion. He wants that everyone in his country should be free to hold their heads high in dignity.

He dreams of a nation where knowledge or education would be free that is education should not be restricted to the upper class only but everybody should be free to acquire knowledge. There should not be any caste distinctions or gender distinction when it comes to education



*Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls*

Tagore, wishes for a world which is not ‘fragmented’ by prejudices based on caste, creed, color, religion or other baseless superstitions. Prejudices and superstitions should not divide the people in groups and break their unity

*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*

He wants a nation where people are truthful, not superficial and words should come out from the depth of their hearts. The next line talks about the poet yearning for a country where people would strive without getting tired to reach perfection leaving behind prejudices and old traditions. In the next line, Tagore wants the power of reason to dominate the minds of his countrymen, he does not want the 'stream of reason' to be lost amongst outdated customs and traditions and only that can direct the mind towards selfless thoughts and everlasting action.



Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

In the final line of the poem, Tagore asks the 'Father', presumably God to awaken his country into such a heaven of freedom.

Critical analysis

- Where the Mind is without Fear consists of eleven lines and somewhat resembles **the style of a sonnet**. In a sonnet, the first eight lines usually present an idea, are argumentative, put a proposal or a problem. If we look at the first eight lines of Where the Mind is without Fear, we find that the lines are a form of a prayer and it does present an idea.
- The first few lines have the repetition of the word ‘where’ which denotes a particular place but it not revealed then and there. We get to know about the place in the last line of the poem. The place is described as a place full of positive qualities, such as, fearlessness, knowledge, unity, truth, reason, perfection etc. in the last line the poet reveals the place as ‘that heaven of freedom’ and asks God to allow his country to reach there.
- The poem is composed in lucid language, simplified diction, images and other poetical devices.

Literary Devices

- **ALLITERATION:**

Tagore has used alliteration in his poem, Where the Mind is without Fear. **Alliteration is the repeated use of the same consonant sound at the beginning of each word in a line of verse.** In this poem, the examples of alliteration are as follows,-
'head held high', 'where the world', 'dreary desert sand of dead habit' and 'where words.'

- **METAPHOR:**

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a **word or phrase is applied to an object or action that does not literally denote in order to imply a resemblance.** In simpler words, comparing two words but not clearly stating. Examples of metaphor in the poem,-
'clear stream of reason' and 'dreary desert sand of dead habit'.

- **PERSONIFICATION:**

"a tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection" is an example of fine personification in the poem. **Personification refers to attribution of human qualities to inanimate ideas.** Here the 'tireless striving' has been personified like a human being stretching his arms to reach his goal through perfection.

Form & Style

- **FORM**

The verse form of the poem is free verse, having no metrical patterns or rhymes. He was credited for having discovered this new form of composing poems, called prose poems.

- **STYLE:**

The original poem bears the title ‘Prarthana’ meaning prayer. The poem is a prayer to God. The poem is a form of a prayer to the universal father-figure, presumably God. Tagore prays to the father-figure for a country where the people should be free from fears, where knowledge would be free to all individuals and the people from all religions should be united. He wants India to awake in such a heavenly state.

Freedom: The Central Theme

Where the Mind is without Fear was written when India was under the British Rule. Tagore wanted his motherland to attain freedom from all levels- religious, political, moral and intellectual. The following are the kind of freedom Tagore insisted upon.

- Freedom from oppression
- Freedom of thought and expression
- Freedom to acquire knowledge
- Freedom to speak truth
- Freedom of mind
- Freedom to attain perfection

Key learning & contemporary relevance

- The qualities that the poet has talked about in the poem are universal.
- Unless you are knowledgeable, rational, truthful, broad-minded, hardworking and fearless, you cannot get success in life and live a happy life.
- Tagore's concept of true freedom holds truth even today.
- The feeling of ideal freedom is yet to be felt.
- We have achieved only political freedom, but we haven't been able to realize that freedom fully. Still there are the curses of superstitions, caste system, disunity, illiteracy and so on.
- The divisions based on religions, caste systems, social and economic positions and even different colours and languages are all domestic walls still present not only in our country, but all over the world.

Questions:

- **Which narrow walls is the poet talking about?**
- **What does the speaker mean by ‘where tireless striving stretches its arm towards perfection’?**
- **What kind of freedom does the poet desire for his country?**
- **Why are habits compared to desert sand?**
- **Do you agree with the poet that our minds should be fearless and free? Give reasons for your answer.**

References

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