Vikram’s English Academy (ICSE)

Assignment: Where the Mind is Without Fear

1. The word ‘Where’ refers to a condition. By repeating the word, the poet tries to paint an idealistic picture of India that he wants to see. He is trying to increase the intensity before making a mention of ‘heaven of freedom’.
2. Head held high means to be self-respecting, brave and to be confident about oneself. It was important at that stage to have high self-esteem because Indians were subjugated by the British colonisers. The confidence of most of the Indians was at rock bottom.
3. By the words ‘Where the knowledge is free’, the poet wants to say that in his country everyone should have the freedom to acquire knowledge without any restrictions. The restrictions imposed on the spread of knowledge include the prejudices based on wealth, caste and religion. Knowledge was a monopoly only of the higher castes and the elite.
4. ‘Narrow domestic walls’ refers to the barriers which we have created because of the narrow beliefs or narrow-mindedness in the behaviour or thoughts. Narrow-mindedness pertaining to the caste, class or gender discrimination, the superstitions, orthodox beliefs and practices have broken India into small fragments. Also the criteria of religion, region, language and political boundaries play a major role. These divisions are the ‘narrow domestic walls’ according to the poet.
5. Yes, we still live in a country that is broken up in fragments. Though India is one country but there are many reasons like caste, creed, gender bias, discrimination, class, superstitious thinking, etc. that divide the country by such narrow domestic walls.
6. The narrow domestic walls can harm the nation by creating divisions among people and destroying the unity and integrity of the nation. If these walls exist then our focus would be on sorting out these differences rather than on our progress. These walls should be destroyed or dismantled as keeping these walls will divide the nation and weaken it.
7. The poet feels that the words should ‘come from the depth of truth’ as we should be honest in our dealings. For progress, it is essential that we should speak the truth otherwise we shall be hypocrites and will be trying to cheat one another. In such a scenario, we will reach a dead end.
8. The poet says that countrymen will achieve perfection through rigorous and persistent efforts and interminable struggle. He knows that perfection is not easy to gain. However, with tireless striving one can hope to come near our destination of perfection.
9. The clear stream of water is compared to logical thinking or reasoning. The flow of thoughts is compared to the flow of water. The clarity of thoughts is compared to the clarity of water. Finally the productivity of positive thought is compared to the productivity that can be achieved by water.
10. ‘Dreary desert sand of dead habit’ refers to ritualistic behaviour and blind beliefs. They are illogical and are like desert, unproductive. There can be no progress if one does not follow reason and logic and continue to move in the rut of old customs.
11. ‘Thee’ refers to God. He wants God, the Father or the Almighty to lead the people so that people don’t get stuck in their old traditions and thoughts. If they do, the poet says, Indians will not be able to progress and because of this the country will also not progress.
12. Ever widening thought and action means broad-mindedness and learning new things. He requests God to inspire us for bigger thought and bigger action.
13. Our country would surely become a heaven of freedom, when people would live with dignity, self-respect and with the head held high. The first step of reaching heaven would be achieved, when they respect and imbibe the qualities of honesty, hard-work and truthfulness. The poets envisages our India to be a country without fear, where knowledge is available to everyone and people would be proud of the heritage. There would be no political or geographical segments that would pose barriers. It would be an ideal country where people would be free from age-old dead customs and attain moral, spiritual and intellectual freedom.
14. The phrase ‘heaven of freedom’ means an ideal state and a place where people would live a life of dignity. They would be free from prejudices, always progressive and forward-looking, united and blissful. These are the blessings and finally the poet turns to God to shower such blessings on the fellow Indians.
15. The poet found that people are slaves of dead habits and they lived in fear. The poet wants the people to rise from their slumber of ignorance, and try to be free from all kinds of bondages and chains.
16. Rabindranath Tagore, the poet, feels that the Indians have been exploited and robbed of their self-pride. So he dreams of a free nation where people would not fear oppression and exploitation from British, rich people or any other oppressor.
17. When the mind is without fear, people will fight for justice and truth. When people are fearless they will speak what they think to be right and just. So there will be true equality in the society.
18. Yes, the poet has a religious outlook. The whole poem refers to the Father in the heaven, God. He also uses ‘thee’ to address the God. This shows that he is a religious man and a firm believer in God.
19. The poet wants his countrymen to be fearless and free from prejudices. They should rise above considerations of caste, colour, creed, etc. which have kept India divided and in chains of slavery.
20. Yes, the dream of the poet is realized to some extent but not completely. People are getting rid of old and outdated beliefs, knowledge has spread, social prejudices have broken down though in some parts they still prevail. Women have come out and taken more active part in public life. But we are still haunted by the narrow domestic walls that we have created within the country. This regularly results in confrontations leading to breaking of the social fabric of India.
21. ‘Where the world has not been broken up’ (the starting sound ‘w’ is repeated), ‘where words come out from the depth of truth’ (the starting sound ‘w’ is repeated), ‘into the dreary desert’ (the starting sound ‘d’ is repeated), ‘where tireless striving stretches’ (the starting sound ‘s’ is repeated) are examples of Alliteration in the poem.
22. ‘Clear stream of reason’- Logical thinking is implicitly compared to a clear stream. ‘Dreary desert of dead habit’- Indirect comparison between ritualism and dreary desert.
23. ‘A tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection’- The human quality of stretching the arm is given to striving