Vikram’s English Academy (ICSE)

**Assignment: A Prayer**

**Answer the following :**

**1. What is meant by ‘head is held high’? Was it important to do it at that stage?**

Ans: 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 ruled over by

the British colonisers. The confidence of most of the Indians was at rock bottom.

**2. What does ‘knowledge is free’ mean?**

Ans: 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.

**3. What does ‘narrow domestic walls’ refer to? How have they broken up India?**

Ans: ‘Narrow domestic walls’ refer to the barriers which we have been 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 plays a major role. These divisions are the ‘narrow

domestic walls’ according to the poet.

**4. Do you think that we still live in a country which is broken up in fragments by**

**narrow domestic walls?**

Ans: Yes, we still live in a country that is broken up in fragments. Though India is one

country, there are many reasons like caste, creed, gender bias, discrimination, class,

superstitious thinking, etc. that divide the country by such narrow domestic walls.

**5. How can narrow domestic walls harm the nation?**

Ans: 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.

**6. Why does the poet feel that the words should ‘come out from the depth of truth’?**

Ans: 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.

**7. How can the countrymen strive for and achieve perfection?**

Ans: The poet says that countrymen will achieve perfection through rigorous and persistent

efforts and endless struggle. He knows that perfection is not easy to gain. However,

with tireless striving , one can hope to come near our destination of perfection.

**8. The clear stream of water is compared to what? And why?**

Ans: 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 thought is compared to the clarity

of water. Finally the productivity of positive thought is compared to the productivity that

can be achieved by water.

**9. What is meant by ‘dreary desert sand of dead habit’?**

Ans: ‘Dreary desert sand of dead habit’ refers to ritualistic behaviour and blind belief. They

are illogical and are like desert, unproductive. There can be no progress if do not follow

reason and logic and continue to move in the rut of old customs.

**10. Who is ‘thee’ in the poem? Why do you think the poet wants ‘thee’ to lead the**

**world?**

Ans: ‘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.

**11. What does the poet mean by ‘ever widening’ thought and action?**

Ans: Ever widening thought and action means broadmindedness and learning new things.

He requests God to inspire us for bigger thought and bigger action.

**12. When according to Tagore would there be a heaven of freedom?**

Ans: Our country would surely become a heaven of freedom, when people 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 as barriers. It would be an ideal country

where people would be free from age-old dead customs but attain moral, spiritual and

intellectual freedom.

**13. Define ‘heaven of freedom’.**

Ans: 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, united and blissful. These are the blessings which the poet wants God to shower upon the fellow Indians.

**14. What does the poet mean by ‘let my country awake’?**

Ans: The poet found that people are slaves of dead habits and they lived in fear. The poet

wants to people to rise from their slumber of ignorance, and try to be free from all kinds of

bondages and chains.

**15. Why does Rabindranath Tagore feel that Indians should not feel any kind of**

**fear?**

Ans: 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.

**16. What happens when the mind is without fear?**

Ans: 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 is be true equality in

the society.