

Literary Background of India

- Indian poetry and Indian literature in general, has a long history dating back to Vedic times.
- Poetry in foreign languages such as Persian and English also has a strong influence on Indian poetry.
- The poetry reflects diverse spiritual traditions within India. In particular, many Indian poets have been inspired by mystical experiences.
- Poetry is the oldest form of literature and has a rich written and oral tradition.

Where the Mind is without Fear

Rabindranath Tagore

(May 7, 1861 – August 7, 1941)

Rabindranath Tagore



- He was born at Calcutta, Bengal Presidency, British India.
- He is the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913.
- Tagore introduced new prose and verse forms and the use of colloquial language into Bengali literature.

- He wrote over one thousand poems;
- Eight volumes of short stories;
- Almost two dozen plays and play-lets;
- Eight novels;
- And many books and essays on philosophy, religion, education and social topics

About the Poem

- It is a prayer to a universal father-figure, that is, the God Almighty.
- The poem, with its inspiring lines, elaborates Tagore's vision of a new, enlightened India.

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

Imagery

- The poet draws a picture of free India.
- He dreamt of a country with no boundaries.
- He prays for the welfare of the country.

Theme

- The poet desires peace and prosperity among his countrymen and prays that his country might attain overall welfare and self-reliance.

Alliteration

- the **h**ead is **h**eld **h**igh

Assonance

- tireless striving stretches...

Repetition of “s” sound.

- dreary desert sand of dead habit

Repetition of “d” sound.

- freedom, my Father

Repetition of “f” sound.

Line by Line interpretation

Lines 1-2

- The poet pledges to the Almighty that his country should be free from any fear of domination 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.

Line 3

- The author wishes for a world which is not 'fragmented' (isolated) by prejudices based on caste, creed, color, religion or other baseless superstitions.

Line 4

- Prejudices and superstitions should not divide the people in groups and break their unity.

Line 5

- He wants a nation where people are truthful, not superficial and words should come out from the depth of their hearts.

Line 6

- The author talks about desire for a country where people would strive without getting tired to reach perfection leaving behind prejudices and old traditions.

Lines 7-9

- The author 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.

Lines 10-12

- The author asks the 'Father', presumably God to awaken his country into such a heaven of freedom.

Implication

- Like the author Rabindranath Tagore we should always aim for freedom; freedom of mind, speech, thought, belief, practice & behavior, because these are the things that will mold us.