

Where the Mind is Without Fear

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Learning about true freedom which is a mind without fear.
- Learning to understand how to strive for what is right and good.
- Reading and reciting the poem correctly with the rhythm and correct emphasis.
- Answering questions on the poem.
- Learning words, meanings, spellings, pronunciation, rhymes.
- **Outcome:** Learning the meaning of freedom and striving for the truth and freedom.
- Understanding the poem well.
- Learning to pronounce perfectly by reciting the poem.

Read and Understand

- This beautiful poem was written by Rabindranath Tagore first in Bengali and later translated by him into English in 1911 and included in his famous collection, 'Gitanjali', that brought him the Nobel Prize. It was written when India was ruled by the British and is a prayer for true freedom, the freedom of the mind. The mind is capable of moving beyond all the narrow shackles of boundaries and limits and reach the truth of our hearts and souls. This poem became one of his most famous poems during India's freedom struggle.
- The meaning of the poem must be explained line by line:
 - (i) The poet says that every person must have the freedom to think fearlessly and hold his head high with self-esteem and dignity, not be bowed under the rule of another, in this case, the British
 - (ii) He wishes knowledge to be freely available to everyone, not restricted to a few favoured groups or people.
 - (iii) He wishes to see the world as a unified whole - not broken into separate groups defined by caste, creed, colour, religion, etc.
 - (iv) He expects people to be honest and truthful, not cheating or lying.
 - (v) It is essential to work and to strive always for whatever one wishes to achieve in a perfect way, the poet says. One should not stop trying simply because one is tired.
 - (vi) In this line the poet uses a metaphor - habits are compared to a desert. Habits are as dead as the 'dreary desert sand' where nothing grows. Habits do not allow ideas and thought to grow. 'Reason' or rational thinking is compared to a 'clear stream', as they flow freely and cause new ideas and thoughts to grow. The poet warns the reader not to allow his habits to destroy his rational thinking, like a stream that vanishes into desert sands.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ (vii) The poet advises his countrymen to become broad-minded, leaving behind narrow thoughts and customs – he is looking at a wide horizon of thought. That is where he wishes his countrymen to be led. (viii) And they will be lead by the ‘Father’, God, to whom the poet prays. He prays that God may lead his country and its people into ‘the heaven of freedom’ that he has described in this poem. Serving under the British rule is the hell from which he asks for freedom, which is the heaven he looks forward to. The word ‘awake’ shows that he is seeking a new dawn when his countrymen will wake up from their present slumber and work to achieve freedom and truth. ➤ The poem is written without a rhyme scheme, but has the rhythm of a poem because each line starts with ‘where’. ➤ Read aloud and enjoy the rhythm, rhyme and meaning of the poem. ➤ Explain the poem clearly to the students so that they understand how the poet is expressing the longing for freedom, breaking the shackles of slavery and narrow-mindedness. ➤ Discuss the exercises and ask the students to answer them orally, before writing the answers down. ➤ Ask them to learn the poem and recite it correctly in turns in class. Correct them where necessary. 	
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