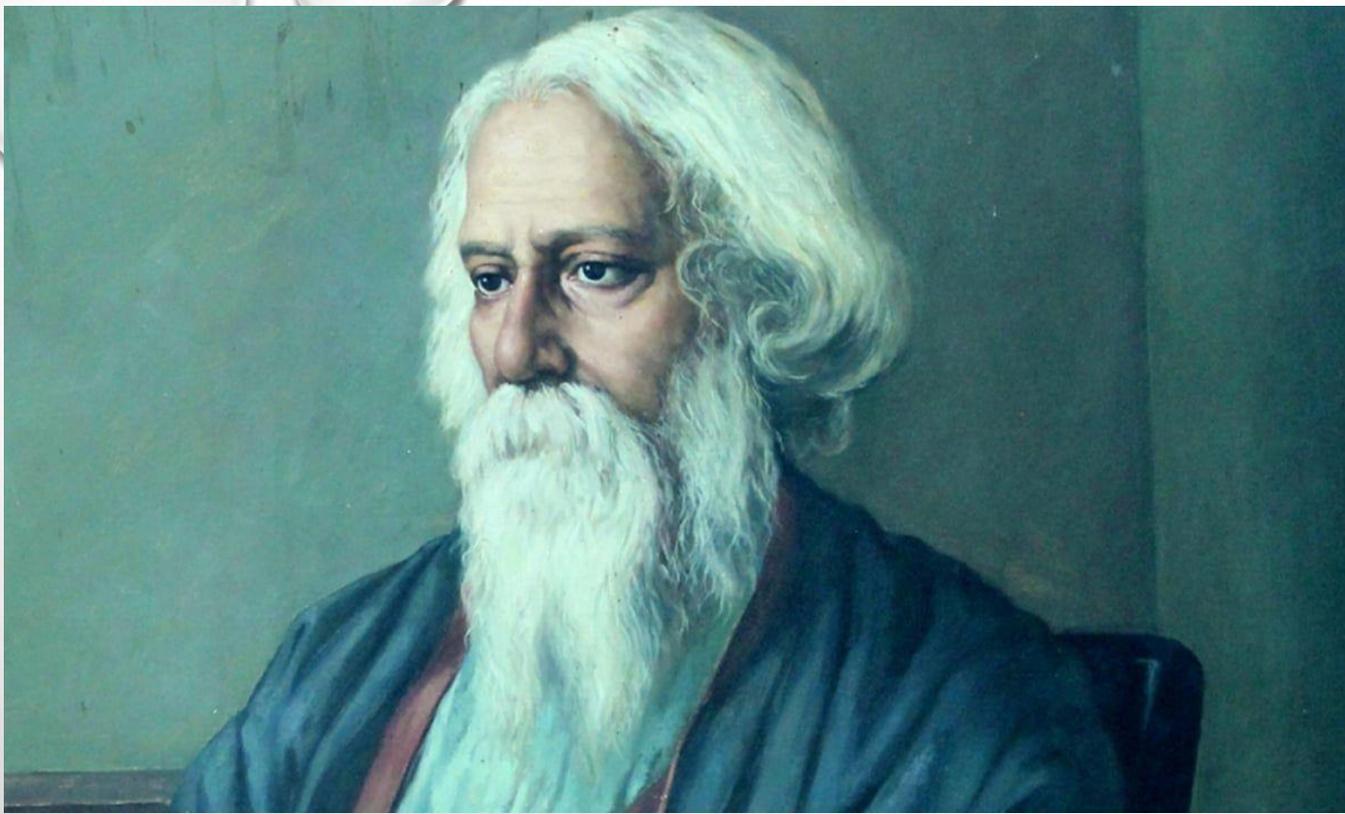
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WHERE THE MIND IS
WITHOUT FEAR

RABINDRANATH TAGORE



Rabindranath Tagore-(1861-1941)

He was a Bengali polymath-poet, writer, composer, philosopher and painter. The first Asian recipient, Rabindranath Tagore, was awarded the Literature Prize in 1913.

Gitanjali, a collection of poetry, the most famous work by Rabindranath Tagore, published in India in 1910.

About the poem

“Where the mind is Without Fear” by Rabindranath Tagore is one of his vastly read and discussed poems. It was originally composed in Bengali possibly in 1900 under the title “Prarthana”, meaning prayer. It appeared in the volume called ‘Naibedyā’ in 1901. Later in 1911 Tagore himself translated the Bengali poem into English and that translation appeared as poem 35 in his Nobel winning anthology “Gitanjali” (Song Offerings) published by the Indian Society, London in 1912.

So when the poem was written, India was under the British Rule and people were eagerly waiting to get their freedom from the British Rule. The poem is written in the form of a prayer to the God, the Almighty for a true freedom for his country. And thus Tagore reveals his own concept of freedom throughout the poem, Where the Mind is Without Fear.

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;***

In the very first line, the poet prays to the Almighty that his countrymen should be free from any fear of oppression or forced compulsion. He wishes that everyone in his country has his head held high in dignity. In other words, according to him, in a truly free country every person should be fearless and should have a sense of self dignity.

Where knowledge is free;

In the second line of Where the Mind is Without Fear the poet dreams of a nation where knowledge would be free. Education should not be restricted to the upper class only but everybody should be allowed to acquire knowledge. Not only that, the children should learn freely from the nature and the world around them. They should not be forced memorize some predetermined lessons. And this is Tagore's typical concept of education.

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

In the next two lines, the poet emphasizes the unity of not only of his countrymen but also of the entire world. He thinks there should be no division among people based on their caste, creed, color, religion or other baseless superstitions. In other words, prejudices and superstitions should not divide the people in groups and break their unity.

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

In line 5 of Where the Mind is Without Fear, Tagore wants a nation where people are truthful. They should not be superficial and words should come out from the depth of their hearts.

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

In the sixth line of the poem, the poet wants everyone to work hard to reach their goal, and in the long run to reach perfection. . He thinks they should not be tired by working. People should not be lazy and ignoring their work.

***Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habits;***

In this line ,the poet compares 'reason' or logical thinking to a "clear stream' and in the next line compares 'dead habits' or superstitious beliefs to a 'dreary desert'. He wants the stream of reason not to lose its way into the desert of prejudices. In short, people's thought should be monitored by rational thinking, not by superstition; logic should rule over old baseless beliefs.

***Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action;***

In this line the poet wishes his countrymen to be progressive and broad-minded. He wants that their minds are “led forward” to “ever-widening thought and action” by the Almighty. In short, we should be open-minded and do something unusual or extraordinary, overcoming the narrowness of mind.

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

In the final line of the poem, the poet addresses the God as ‘Father’. He asks him to awaken his country into such a ‘heaven of freedom’ where the above conditions meet.

To make it clear, the poet prays to the Almighty (my Father) to raise or lift (awake) his country to such heights where freedom would be realized at its best (a heaven of freedom). In turn, he is actually praying that God awakens his countrymen so that they come out from the darkness of ignorance, prejudices, disunity and all other evils.

“Where The Mind Is Without Fear” is a pre-independent poem in which the poet sincerely urges to God to awake his fellow beings for the realization that the essential need to live in a free and united country. He wants his countrymen to awake and enjoy the life of full dignity and honour.

His countrymen would not be superstitious or believers of blind faith rather than they would lead the life of enlightened and educated.

He wishes to the people, to be honest, open-minded and industrious. Then only they would stretch their ‘arms towards perfection’ and the nation can actually achieve the apex of success.

They need to use their reasons over their blind faiths and must be ready to accept new thoughts and ideas. He requests God to free his country from manipulation, corruption, and slavery. He yearns for an awakened country where there would be freedom of the mind and expression of ideas.

The poem invokes the deep patriotic feelings. Our country is subjugated by castes, creed, superstitious beliefs and biased ideas. Tagore earnestly appeals to God that a country would be where people’s ‘head is high’ and ‘knowledge is free’.

His country would not be divided and fragmented into pieces due to their narrow thoughts. They should express their words not from the mind but from 'the depth of truth' and heart.

He urges God to guide his countrymen for moral awakening to fight for their rights against British inhuman rules. Liberate them from the fear of oppression, repression, and subjugation. Unshackle the chains of fear and direct them to the paths of progress and prosperity.

They should be confident not confined. There would not be injustice and inequality in the country on the basis of caste, creed, and gender.

Countrymen should be unprejudiced and open-minded accepting the new challenges and changes. They should lead their lives of decency and dignity.

To conclude "Where The Mind Is Without Fear" is a poem in which Tagore reveals his personal quest for the Divine and characterized by a variety of original themes both in thought and expression.

Therefore, this poem is remarkable to a great extent which expresses the intensity of the feeling of freedom. His poem is universal in its appeal and envisions the 'heaven of freedom' and happier future for mankind.

Theme:

The poem was composed in the early 1900s when India was struggling for independence from the British rule. It is the poet's prayer to the Almighty, seeking his guidance and support to help the countrymen attain freedom. The poem is patriotic in nature. The poet expresses his love for his country and speaks about the vision he has for India and its people. Through his poem he gives us an idea about the kind of life people were living during the British rule. The stringent rules, policies, economical and political uncertainty were some of the factors that caused fear in the minds of Indians. They could not live a dignified and respectful life in their own country. Obtaining a proper education was restricted for various classes of the society, causing illiteracy among people and making them believe in superstitions. The British used the 'divide and rule policy' against the Indians to make them fight among themselves. There was discrimination based on caste, creed, race and religion.

It was during this struggle for independence, the poet says that he envisions a country where there is no fear in the minds of people and education is attained by all. The people are enlightened and do not create walls of discrimination. He wants his countrymen to be honest and thoughtful. He prays to God, seeking his guidance for attaining independence and awakening his countrymen into that beautiful heaven of freedom.

Figures of Speech

● A **figure of speech** occurs when a word or group of words have a meaning beyond the literal. In the case of Tagor's poem, figures of speech include the following **metaphors and personifications**:

1. Personification:

Personification is a poetic where animals, plants or even inanimate objects, are given human qualities.

"Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection":

Abstract concepts like striving don't literally have arms, but the **personified image** of stretching one's arms to reach a goal does seem to describe what striving feels like.

2. Metaphor: Metaphor is figure of speech that makes a comparison between two different things.

"the head is held high"

: This can literally mean that people are going around with their heads held high, but it stands as a [metaphor](#) for the idea of the Indian people regaining their pride and no longer being abject under British rule.

"Where the world has not been broken up into fragments

By narrow domestic walls"

: Obviously, walls don't literally break the world into fragments. This metaphor means that people must transcend their petty differences and think beyond the needs of themselves and their immediate family.

"Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way"

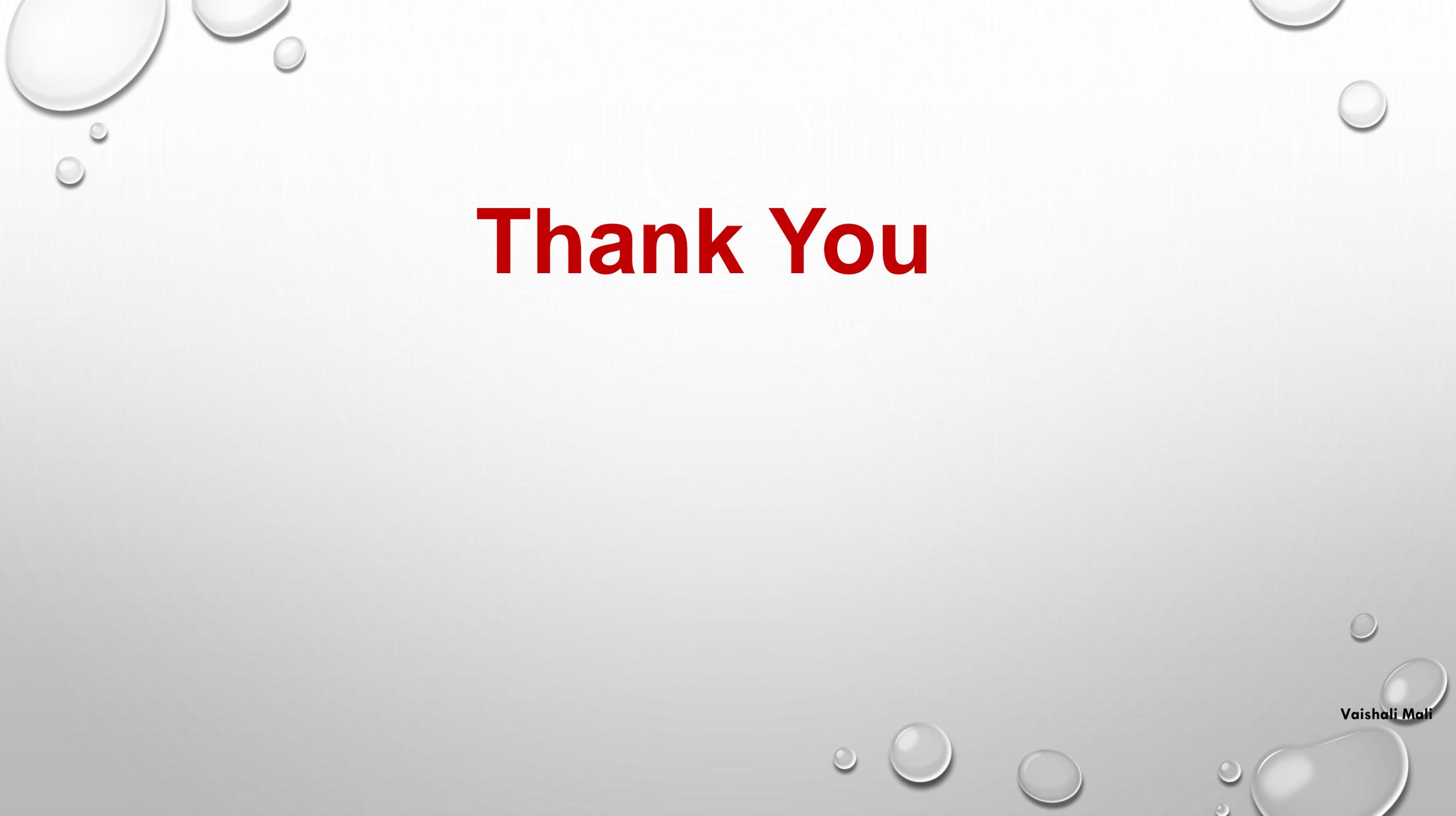
: Reason is not literally a clear stream, but the metaphor lets us visualize what it is like to think clearly. Just as a clear stream lets us see what is at the bottom of it, so does clear thinking get us to the bottom of a problem.

"Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit":

Habits don't literally die, especially not while we are still using them, so "dead" here stands as a metaphor for things we do repeatedly and unthinkingly. Habits are also not a desert, but a dreary desert of endless sands is an image of monotony and barrenness that suggests that unthinking habits get us nowhere and yield no harvest.

“Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake”:

freedom is not literally heaven, and God is not literally the poet's biological father, so the poet in both cases is speaking metaphorically. Countries can't literally awaken: the poet is personifying his country

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Thank You