

THE HEAVEN OF FREEDOM



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,
my country awake.

About the Poem

'The Heaven of Freedom' is one of Tagore's most anthologized poems. It is an expression of the poet's reflective spirit and contains a simple prayer for his country, the India of pre-Independence times. But the prayer has a universal message which makes it immortal.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), who contributed immensely to giving modern India a place on the world literary scene, was a multi-faceted personality. He was a poet, dramatist, short-story writer and novelist. He was awarded Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 for his poetic collection - '*Geetanjali*'.

GLOSSARY

Line 1. **where the head is held high**: refers to pride in one's freedom

Line 3. **where the world ... narrow domestic walls**: Tagore, who believed in the essential oneness of humanity, dreamt of a truly global society

Line 5. **truth**: the ultimate reality, the goal of great poets and philosophers

Line 6. **tireless striving**: a reference to the rule of reason

Line 7. **clear stream of reason**: a reference to the rule of reason

Line 7. **dead habit**: outdated practices

Line 8. **thought and action:**the two facets of a balanced personality

Line9. **let my country awake:**Tagore prays not just for territorial independence for his country, but also for its intellectual and spiritual freedom.

Line 9. **heaven of freedom:**a joyful abode which has freedom for the individual

Comprehension Questions

- 1) What, according to Tagore, are some of the qualities that the land of freedom should have?
- 2) How does Tagore condemn sectarianism and communalism in the poem?
- 3) How does Tagore refer to the struggle for perfection and rationality?
- 4) Comment on the construction of the last line of the poem.
- 5) How does this poem achieve meaning in the context of the freedom struggle?
- 6) Is this the song of a patriot? Why?

Creative Writing

- 1) Relate the theme of the poem to the background of the freedom struggle.
(Hints: fear - head is held high - fragments and narrow domestic walls - depth of truth - dreary desert of dead habit - heaven of freedom - my Father - let my country awake)