

**Azad Hind Fouz Smriti Mahavidyalaya
Domjur, Howrah**

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AEC

(ABILITY ENHANCEMENT COURSE)

Compulsory English

Unit 1 : Poetry

Where the Mind is without Fear

Rabindranath Tagore

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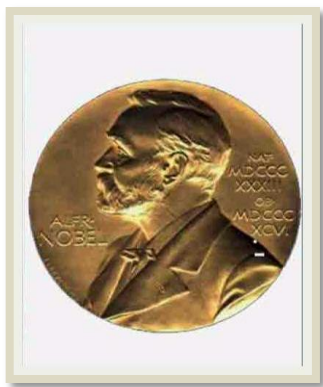
*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high**Where knowledge is free**Where the world has not been broken up into fragments**By narrow domestic walls**Where words come out from the depth of truth**Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection**Where the clear stream of reason 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.*

The Poet:

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was an Indian poet, writer, playwright, composer, philosopher, social reformer and painter. He influenced Bengali literature, music and Indian art with Modernism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Rabindranath Tagore was born in **Jorasanko**, Calcutta, on 7 May 1861 to Debendranath Tagore and Sarada Devi. The name Tagore is the anglicized transliteration of **Thakur**. The Thakur family belonged to the class of Pirali Brahmin and was Brahma by faith. Their ancestors were from Jessore (Bangladesh). Tagore started writing at an early age (8 years) and published several books of poetry influenced by both Indian and Western traditions. His songs were chosen as the national anthems of two countries: India's *Jana Gana Mana* and Bangladesh's *Amar Shonar Bangla*. Apart from poetry, songs, stories and dramas, he wrote literary criticism, philosophy and on social and political issues. He was an educator as well and founded an experimental school in **Shantiniketan**. Tagore travelled extensively in Europe, America and East-Asia and became a spokesperson for Indian independence from British colonial rule. When the Jallianwala Bagh massacre occurred in 1919, Tagore renounced the Knighthood he received in 1915 from the British Crown.

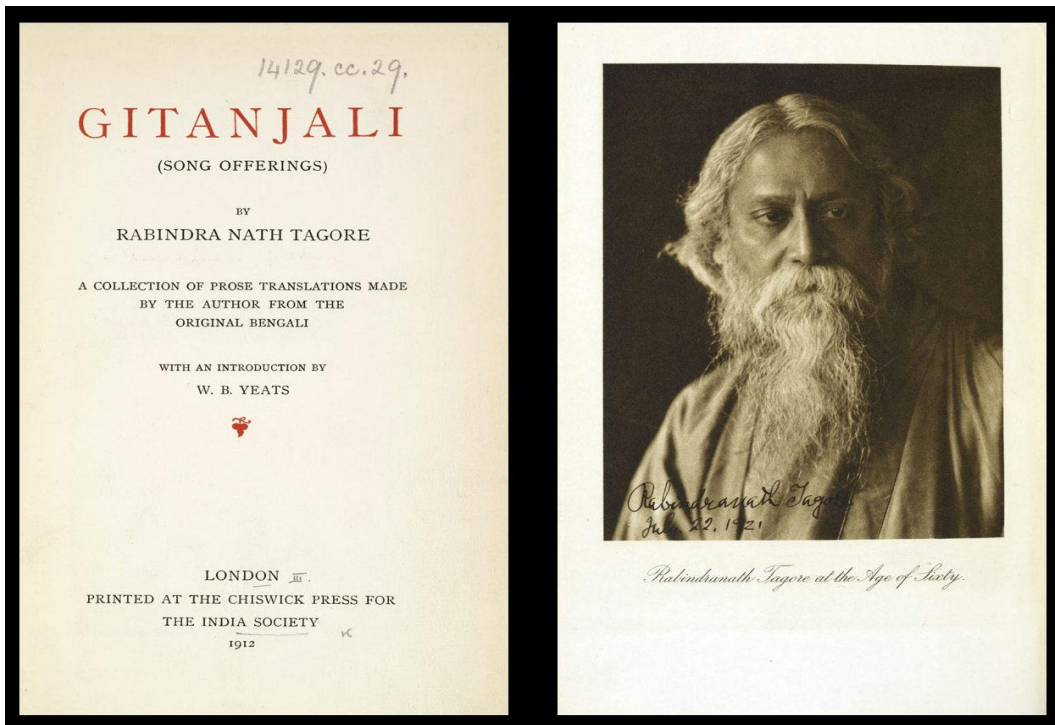
Tagore wrote in Bengali, but translated his poetry in English to reach a wider audience in the West. His poetry offered peace of the soul in harmony with nature to the Western readers. He became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. The evaluation of Tagore as a poet was based mainly on the *Song Offerings (Gitanjali)*.



Rabindranath Tagore' *Gitanjali*:

Gitanjali (গীতাঞ্জলি/ *Song Offerings*) is a collection of poems by Rabindranath Tagore. The theme of *Gitanjali* is 'devotion'. The central theme of the poem '*Where the mind is without fear*' is Tagore's vision of free India where Indians would live without any fear.

The original Bengali work of 157 poems was published on 4th August 1910. The English version of *Gitanjali* is known as *Song Offerings*. It is a collection of 103 English prose-poems which were translated into English by Tagore himself. It was first published in November 1912 by the India Society in London. The English *Song Offerings* became very popular in the West and Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913. Eight years after the Nobel Prize was awarded, Rabindranath went to Sweden in 1921 to give his acceptance speech.



The Poem:

Where the mind is without fear is the English translation of the poem *Chitto Jetta bhoyshunyo*. The poem was published in 1910 as a part of Tagore's *Gitanjali* as poem No. 35. At a meeting of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta in 1917, Tagore read out the English translation, which was then known as "*Indian Prayer*". It is a patriotic poem that presents the poet's ideal vision of India. The poet wants Indians to live in a free country with dignity and without any fear. He believed freedom can be achieved only when the mind is fearless and the head is held high.

Next, he says, knowledge should be available to all Indians irrespective of caste, creed, status and religion. The poet refers to the evils of the British rule – the policy of "divide and rule" which created divisions among Indians. The poet wants all Indians to unite and fight against the common enemies of the country, the British. The poet also wants Indians to discard superstitious beliefs and adopt reason. Finally, the poet prays to God asking Him to guide the Indians so that they can transform India into a heaven of freedom.

চিত্ত যেথা ভয়শূন্য, উচ্চ যেথা শির,
 জ্ঞান যেথা মুক্ত, যেথা গৃহের প্রাচীর
 আপন প্রাঙ্গণতলে দিবসশর্বরী
 বসুধারে রাখে নাই খন্ড ক্ষুদ্র করি,
 যেথা বাক্য হৃদয়ের উৎসমুখ হতে
 উচ্ছ্বসিয়া উঠে, যেথা নির্বারিত স্রোতে
 দেশে দেশে দিশে দিশে কর্মধারা ধায়
 অজস্র সহস্রবিধ চরিতার্থতায়--
 যেথা তুচ্ছ আচারের মরুবালুরাশি
 বিচারের স্রোতঃপথ ফেলে নাই গ্রাসি,
 পৌরুষেরে করে নি শতধা; নিত্য যেথা
 তুমি সর্ব কর্ম চিন্তা আনন্দের নেতা--
 নিজ হস্তে নির্দয় আঘাত করি, পিতঃ,
 ভারতেরে সেই স্বর্গে করো জাগরিত।

Short Questions:

1. Who has written the poem, *Where the mind is without fear*?
Where the mind is without fear is written by Rabindranath Tagore.
2. Name the book which has the poem '*Where the mind is without fear*'?
The poem, '*Where the mind is without fear*' is taken from Tagore's *Gitanjali* (Poem 35).
3. Where was Rabindranath Tagore born?
Rabindranath Tagore was born in Jorasanko, Calcutta, in 1861.
4. When was Rabindranath Tagore awarded the Nobel Prize?
Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913.
5. Name the book for which Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize?
Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for *Gitanjali* (*Song Offerings*).
6. In which language did Rabindranath Tagore write *Gitanjali*?
Rabindranath Tagore wrote *Gitanjali* in Bengali.
7. Name the English translation of *Gitanjali*?
The English translation of *Gitanjali* is *Song Offerings*.
8. Who translated *Gitanjali* into *Song Offerings*?
Rabindranath Tagore translated *Gitanjali* into *Song Offerings*.
9. How many poems are there in *Gitanjali*? How many poems are there in *Song Offerings*?
There are 157 poems in *Gitanjali*. There are 103 poems in *Song Offerings*.
10. Who is addressed in the poem '*Where the mind is without fear*'?
'*Where the mind is without fear*' is addressed to God.
11. What should the mind be free of, according to Tagore?
According to Tagore, the mind should be free of fear.
12. What is meant by '*Where the mind is without fear*'?
'*Where the mind is without fear*' refers to free India where Indians can live without fear.
13. What is meant by '*head is held high*'?
The phrase '*head is held high*' means having a 'sense of pride and self-respect'.

14. What is meant by '*Where knowledge is free*'?
'*Where knowledge is free*' refers to free India where education will be free for all citizens.
15. What does Tagore mean by '*narrow domestic walls*'?
By '*narrow domestic walls*' Tagore means prejudices which creates divisions of caste, creed, religion and social status in Indian society.
16. What does Tagore compare his country to?
Tagore compares his country India to a house with walls.
17. What does Tagore mean by '*depth of truth*'?
'Depth of truth' means 'deep devotion to truth' – Tagore wants Indians to be truthful.
18. What does Tagore mean by '*tireless striving*'?
'*Tireless striving*' means 'continuous efforts' to achieve perfection – an ideal India.
19. To what does Tagore compare a '*clear stream*'?
Tagore compares a '*clear stream*' to 'reason'.
20. To what does Tagore compare '*dreary desert sand*'?
Tagore compares '*dreary desert sand*' to 'habit'.
21. What has happened to the '*clear stream of reason*'?
The '*clear stream of reason*' has been lost – it has dried up in the desert sand of dead habit.
22. What has happened to 'reason' in Tagore's country?
Tagore says 'reason' is lost as Indians are irrational by nature which is a bad 'habit'.
23. What is meant by '*dead habit*' in Tagore's poem?
In Tagore's poem '*dead habit*' refers to superstitions and prejudices of Indian people.
24. Who is referred to as 'thee' in '*Where the mind is led forward by thee*'?
'*Thee*' refers to God.
25. Who is referred to as '*Father*' in Tagore's poem?
'*Father*' refers to God in Tagore's poem.
26. How does Tagore describe free India?
Tagore describes free India as a 'heaven of freedom'.

27. What is the theme of ‘*Where the mind is without fear*’?
The theme of ‘*Where the mind is without fear*’ is Tagore’s vision of ideal India where Indians would live with dignity and without fear.
28. Which country is referred to as ‘*my country*’ by Rabindranath Tagore?
Rabindranath Tagore refers to India as ‘*my country*’.
29. What kind of poem is ‘*Where the mind is without fear*’?
‘*Where the mind is without fear*’ is a patriotic poem.
30. What was the condition of India when Tagore composed ‘*Where the mind is without fear*’?
India was under British rule when Tagore composed ‘*Where the mind is without fear*’.

