



## **WHERE THE MIND IS WITHOUT FEAR THE STUDY OF POEM WITH A FEMINIST OUTLOOK**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Rabindra Nath Tagore, a noble laureate, beautifully pours out his overwhelmed heart in his much praised literary work "Where the mind is without fear" in which he exhibits his vision of a hassle free nation by bestowing his heartfelt reliance on the master of the Universe. From a Feminist point of view, this poem is appreciated as an inspiration for the woman race to improve their social status and economic status. Women of India need to come out of their narrow domestic walls by increased means of education and social justice. This thought provoking poem also conveys the idea of eliminating the dreary desert sand of dead habits like Sati System, Dowry, and Child Marriage etc from our Indian Culture to uplift our Indian Woman. Our Woman will actively support and participate in the nationalist movement and secured eminent positions and offices in administration and public life in free India. This research article aims at stimulating the country to raise the voice for the freedom of women. It channelizes the empowerment of women by directing their efforts towards perfection.*

**Key words:** Dreary desert, Stimulating, Empowerment, Inspiration.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Rabindranath Tagore's writing is deeply rooted in both Indian and Western learning traditions. Apart from fiction in the form of poetry, songs, stories, and dramas, his writings also includes portrayals of common people's lives, literary criticism, philosophy, and social issues.

*Prize motivation "because of his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West"<sup>1</sup>*

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Being a progressive thinker, his writings were often based on bold subjects that were far ahead of the time. He strongly believed in fighting for women's upliftment using his pen as a weapon. Focusing largely on emancipation, his writing campaigned for women's liberation, equality, freedom, justice, power and dignity and rights.

*Tagore was not only a poet and a lyricist-though he thought, perhaps rightly, that his poetry and his songs were his most lasting contribution- but he was also a thinker who impacted social and political thought trends in his times.*<sup>2</sup>

Tagore also laid the foundation of co-education by starting it at Santiniketan. Rabindranath Tagore was fully aware of women's role in the society. Almost all his female characters were plotted in traditional plots, but were yet very strong. His campaign for women's liberation was ahead of its time. So the portrayal of women in his work can be regarded as one of his most important contributions to the society.

*She is not in the world of the fairy tale where the fair woman sleeps for ages  
Until she is touched by the magic wand. . . .  
At last, the time has arrived when woman must step in and  
Impart her life rhythm to this reckless movement of power.*<sup>3</sup>

"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 'Naibedya' 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.

*What will be remembered forever about Tagore is his contribution to literary society and his attempt to create a world "where the mind is without fear and the head is held high".*<sup>4</sup>

Where the mind without fear poem describes the dream of Rabindranath Tagore where everyone in his country has head held high in dignity. The poet in his prose poem style uses imagery to take us to a country which is independent, where the people are free to express their thoughts, ideas, innovations and creations. Tagore is praying that God awakens his countrymen so that they come out from the darkness of ignorance, prejudices, disunity and all other evils.



*“Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake”<sup>5</sup>*

The most famous saying said by the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is “To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. In order to make the country fully developed country, women empowerment is an essential tool to get the goal of development. Empowering women is to make them independent in all aspects from mind, thought, rights, decisions, etc by leaving all the social and family limitations. It is to bring equality in the society for both male and female in all areas.

Through the Poem, the poet urges for the bright future of nation. A bright future of family, society and country is possible by empowering the women. Women need fresh and more capable environment so that they can take their own right decisions in every area whether for themselves, family, society or country.

The poet even wishes for the right of education for his countrymen..

*“Where knowledge is free...”*

Improving education for women helps raise their levels of health and nutrition and reduces fertility rates.<sup>[6]</sup> Education increases 'people's self- confidence and enables them to find better jobs, engage in public debate and make demands on government for health care, social security and other entitlements'.<sup>[6]</sup> In particular, education empowers women to make choices that improve their own and their children's health and chances of survival.<sup>[7][6]</sup> Education helps to prevent and contain disease, and is an essential element of efforts to reduce malnutrition. Further, education empowers women to make choices that improve their standard of living and welfare, including about their relationships and marriages, birth control, and having children, choices which were inaccessible to women in past generations.<sup>[8]</sup> Crucially, education also increases women's awareness of their human rights their confidence and their actual ability to assert those rights.<sup>[9]</sup>

The following lines written by Tagore has fascinated the heart of a feminist who cherishes her dream for the women in India the same way in which Tagore wanted his country to be. A feminist has a vision of seeing a woman who is free from all sorts of fear who can enjoy the life confidently by keeping the head high. Tagore’s vision is yet to be achieved as he thought of having a world which gets freedom and not fearsome. Freedom for Tagore was not just to get rid of British rule but also to uplift the people of society who are living in the shackles of old beliefs and thoughts.



The poet imagines a world where no countryman should live with fear in his mind at all times. Instead, they should hold their heads up intrepidly and have self-belief. Knowledge should be accessible for the entire populace. Tagore believes that his country should be free from all sorts of discrimination but still after freedom we still face dowry system, illiteracy, sexual harassment, inequality, Female feticides, domestic violence against women, rape, prostitution, illegal trafficking and other issues in India to empower women first should become aware of their rights and values:

*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<sup>10</sup>*

The following lines written by Tagore has fascinated the heart of a feminist who cherishes her dream for the women in India the same way in which Tagore wanted his country to be. A feminist has a vision of seeing a woman who is free from all sorts of fear who can enjoy the life confidently by keeping the head high. Tagore's vision is yet to be achieved as he thought of having a world which gets freedom and not fearsome. Freedom for Tagore was not just to get rid of British rule but also to uplift the people of society who are living in the shackles of old beliefs and thoughts. The poet imagines a world where no countryman should live with fear in his mind at all times. Instead, they should hold their heads up intrepidly and have self-belief. Knowledge should be accessible for the entire populace. Tagore believes that his country should be free from all sorts of discrimination but still after freedom we still face dowry system, illiteracy, sexual harassment, inequality. Female feticides, domestic violence against women, rape, prostitution, illegal trafficking and other issues in India to empower women first should become aware of their rights and values.

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The feminist took the following galvanizing lines in her way where the women will not be dominated and enslaved. The poet in his prose poem style uses imagery to take us to a country which is independent, where the women are free to express their thoughts, views, innovations and creations. Through the poem the poet creates a mood which is inspirational in nature for women. The world of women must be re-integrated; the narrow and parochial walls fragmenting their world are to be demolished for achieving the holistic unity among the genders. Their voice shall have to be liberated from the half truths and the lies of expediency.



The untiring efforts of the women should be directed towards the goal of perfection. The rights of women should not be swallowed by the outdated and irrelevant customs like sati system dowry system, child marriage, women feticide etc.

*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 <sup>11</sup>*

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. By the end of the poem it has become a poem for awakening – An awakening from the plight of women. The last stanza highlights fervent spiritual longing of woman seeking the grace of the Almighty to be awakened to a new spiritual consciousness and transform her life into a moral, intellectual freedom of women. This poem is remarkable as it creates a brainwave for women to improve their socio-economic grade.

*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 <sup>12</sup>*

## CONCLUSION:

The dream of the poet for his countrymen to think properly and act courageously is still applicable. Though the country is free from the shackles of British reign but the feminist has a different outlook which says independence is not in our charge because women is still lacking behind for which they need empowerment. In order to really bring women empowerment in the Indian society, it needs to understand and eliminate the main cause of ill practices against women which are patriarchal and male dominated system of society. It needs to be open-minded and change the old mind set against women together with the constitutional and other legal provisions.

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