



Rabindranath Tagore's Where the Mind is Without Fear: A Poem with Genuine Concern for the Humanities

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Abstract: *Tagore's Where the Mind is Without Fear brings out a sincere and genuine concern of the sensitive poet who cherishes a sweet dream of 'Mother India' with free, united, rational and strong countrymen. He prays to the almighty to bless his country and make it prosperous in every sense. This research papers aims at bringing out the patriotic sentiments which have been laying latent in the modern countrymen of 'Free India'. It presents the sharp contrast between the resplendent past and ignominious present.*

Keywords: *Nationality, past and present, Humanities.*

Rabindranath Tagore, Nobel Laureate is chiefly remembered for his contribution in the field of poetry but he was also a major short story writer, dramatist, essayist, painter and educationist. His immortal work 'Gitanjali' brought him worldwide fame and a permanent place on the world literary map. He wrote mainly in Bengali but translated many of his Bengali poems and plays in to English. His English transcreations won him acclaim all over the world. Tagore's poetry covers a wide range of subjects like love, death, religion, nature etc. Besides a great literary artist, he was a great thinker whose ideas influenced the people of his time. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya rightly praises Tagore in the following words:

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. (4)

In this poem, he prays God to make his country prosperous in every respect. He was a visionary and aimed at making Mother India free, united, rational and strong. It is a sweet dream of a great nationalist who strived whole heartedly to shape cultural and intellectual identity of modern India. Like many other idealist political, social and religious leaders of his time, Tagore too was eager to see his country leading the rest of the world. The period of slavery was over and it was obvious that countrymen in free India began to cherish sweet dreams for bright future. It has been rightly commented:

Outwardly, the poem is a prayer. It expresses Rabindranath Tagore's magnitude of thought which demands his country's redemption. The poet expects that his countrymen should be fearless persons. They have to move in society with self-respect and confidence. In this country, education should not be the monopoly of the rich and the affluent. The world should not be divided on the basis of caste, class, colour, religion, creed, region, etc. The countrymen should be honest and truthful. They have to strive tirelessly to achieve perfection in all their undertakings. (Wadikar)

Tagore's genuine love for the country can be seen reflected in this poem. It is not a selfish, narrow minded politician's play of words to impress and befool countrymen. But here the readers meet a saintly poet whose voice appeals them for its sincerity and truthfulness. The poet cum preacher has a dialogue with God, an address to Him, an earnest request to Almighty to awaken dear country into an atmosphere of freedom, peace and harmony. It has been noted:

Tagore's love for his land was too great. Rabindranath Tagore was a great patriot who loved his country more than anything else. Unlike Sir Walter, Rabindranath was a great dreamer who dreamt of an ideal society in which there is tireless action, real freedom of action, absolute equality of classes and castes. Tagore expresses his deep sentiments... (Pradhan 51)

Tagore was a world poet who was above all types of petty, racial, regional or religious discriminations. He was a humanitarian at heart who loved his own country without hating any other country. The poet wished to see India free from fear. Fearlessness is the pre-requirement of growth and progress. The citizens of free mind should fear nothing. They should be able to maintain their self respect. Nothing should force them to keep their heads low. It has been attributed:



Tagore gave highest importance that people should be able to live and reason, in freedom. His attitudes towards politics and culture, nationalism and internationalism, tradition and modernity, can all be seen in the light of this belief he appealed to God to change the mindset of the people. Tagore prays to God to awake the people from their ignorance, mindedness, prejudice, jealousy. He appeals to God to lead the Country to the place of freedom which is heaven. People should be known where knowledge is free, which means equal opportunities to all without any discrimination like social status, caste, creed and gender. He strongly desires to see people directed by God towards continuous growth and action. (Veeraswamy)

Unfortunately, Indians have saddened the poet by failing miserably in shaping the country according to his dream. Even after six decades of independence, an average poor, illiterate, common man is not out of fear of politicians, bureaucrats, powerful persons who exploit him mercilessly. The poem exhibits Tagore's genuine concern for the inhabitants of India. He wishes that his country men should be free from all the bondages and only then freedom would be attained in a true sense. The poet gives clear indication that mental, physical and spiritual freedom can be accomplished only when knowledge will be free.

Tagore wanted knowledge to be free, to be accessible to all but now a days, it has become a thriving business. The doors of academic institutes are no longer open for the poor and the weak. It is a privilege of only a select few. The entire world is divided house. The short sighted politicians resort to divide and rule policy. They teach masses to think in terms of language and religion. The demand of separate state is increasing. The poet insisted on truth. The great father of the nation Gandhiji too explained the fellow countrymen the importance of truth. But in this turbulent period, there are very few takers of truth. The modern Indian countrymen sacrifice truth even for small gain. Tagore desired his countrymen to adhere to truth at any cost:

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

It is not easy to throw away age old beliefs and traditions so easily. It is but a sad reality that the Indians are not used to think rationally. Even so-called educated persons also lack courage to think and act rationally. The common flocks are under the spell of holy persons, gurus, tantriks, and allow themselves to be exploited foolishly. 'Dead habits', 'obsolete outdated ideas' 'inherited practices' are irrelevant and yet, irrespective of the status, the Indians feel gratified in maintaining them. The poet expresses his emotions in the following way,

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

Tagore wanted his countrymen to think properly and act fearlessly. But the tragedy lies in the fact that they are incapable of thinking on their own and entrusted others with job of thinking on their behalf. Consequently, they act as puppets dancing to the tune of others.

The fellow countrymen themselves are responsible for this sorry state of affairs. It is well said that to maintain is more difficult than to attain. The citizens of free India have been destined to have freedom without shedding blood but do pretty little to maintain it. The inaction, indolence, irrational behavior, divisive policies of the present India have kept Tagore's prayer unanswered. Tagore had immense faith in basic goodness of his fellow countrymen but he was hoping against hope. A day when his country will awake into the heaven of freedom is yet to come.

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