

Chapter 1. Where the Mind is Without Fear [Poem]

Passage 1

Question 1

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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

What prayer does the poet make for his countrymen in the first line of the extract? Why?

Answer:

The poet prays that the people of his country may have no fear in their minds. He makes this prayer as this poem was written during the colonial rule in India when radical thoughts and free-spirited people were repressed.

Question 2

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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
What could be the dangers if knowledge is restricted?

Answer:

When knowledge is restricted, various blocks are imposed on the people trying to acquire knowledge. These restrictions are based on wealth, caste, class, gender, religion, etc.

Question 3

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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

What is meant by 'narrow domestic walls'? Explain how these 'walls' can be detrimental to the country's progress.

Answer:

The narrow domestic walls are those of caste, creed, religion, colour, and superstitions. If people get trapped within these 'walls' they will never become broad-minded and progress in life. As a result, the country's progress will be affected.

Question 4

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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

Do you agree with the poet when he states that we must always give importance to 'truth'?

Answer:

Yes, truth must be given a lot of importance. It is the truth that prevails in the end. No matter how bitter it is to experience, a single truth is better than thousand sugar coated lies.

Question 5

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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

How does the poet reflect the true meaning of freedom through the poem?

Answer:

In the poem, the poet has expressed a desire for his countrymen to be free not only from physical bondage but also from emotional barriers. He says that the characteristics of truth, fearlessness, clarity of thought and progressive thinking along with freedom from any kind of bondage is necessary for every human being.

Passage 2

Question 1

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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

What does 'from the depth of truth' refer to?

Answer:

The phrase 'from the depth of truth' refers to honesty. The poem was written during the time India was a British colony and Tagore used this phrase to urge Indians to be courageous and speak their hearts out before the world.

Question 2

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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

What does the phrase 'tireless striving' mean? What does the poet want people to achieve through tireless striving?

Answer:

The phrase 'tireless striving' is used by the poet to urge his countrymen to break free from sloth and inactivity and struggle hard constantly to achieve perfection in whatever they choose to do and thus make their country a free nation.

Question 3

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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

Name and explain the figure of speech in 'clear stream of reason'?

Answer:

The figure of speech is metaphor because reason has been compared to 'a clear stream'. A mind without reason and rationality is stagnated and unable to achieve its goal. On the other hand, a mind that thinks clearly will be able to achieve its goals.

Question 4

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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

What does 'dead habit' refer to? How does it affect a person?

Answer:

Dead habit' refers to mindless practicing of obsolete customs and traditions, old beliefs, superstitions and a narrow-minded attitudes. This habit corrodes the mind and renders it useless.

Question 5

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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

Give two examples of alliteration from the extract.

Answer:

- (i) Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
- (ii) Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit

Passage 3

Question 1

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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.

Whom does 'thee' in the above extract refer to?

Answer:

The 'thee' in the above extract refers to the Almighty God to whom the poem is dedicated.

Question 2

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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.

Whom does the poet ask the Almighty to lead?

Answer:

The poet asks the Almighty to lead and guide the minds of the people of India who are under the British rule.

Question 3

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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.

What is meant by 'ever widening thought and action'?

Answer:

The phrase 'ever widening thought and action' refers to a process where people break all obsolete rules, attain thoughtfulness and put those thoughts into action as they fight for freedom from colonial rule.

Question 4

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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.

Explain the phrase 'let my country awake'.

Answer:

The phrase 'let my country awake' is an indication of a prayer to the almighty to help the people of India fight for their freedom and break free from the bondages of British rule.

Question 5

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

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.

Why has the poet associated freedom with heaven?

Answer:

In the poem, the poet talks about freedom on two levels, the freedom of every individual and India's freedom from the British rule, which lasted from 1857 to 1947. After almost a century of bondage, misery and discrimination, the poet feels that it is natural for freedom to feel like heaven. Hence, he has associated freedom to heaven in the given extract.