

Letter to Lord Chelmsford Rejecting Knighthood Characters

Writer: Rabindranath Tagore | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Major Characters Rabindranath Tagore 🌟🌟🌟: The writer and central figure of the letter. He is not only a poet but also a humanist, philosopher, and moral voice of India. Tagore renounced the Knighthood title in 1919 as a protest against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

Major Characters

- **Rabindranath Tagore 🌟🌟🌟:** The writer and central figure of the letter. He is not only a poet but also a humanist, philosopher, and moral voice of India. Tagore renounced the Knighthood title in 1919 as a protest against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Through his words, he expressed the pain and humiliation of the Indian nation. In this letter, Tagore appears as a moral leader, declaring, "The badges of honour make our shame glaring." He symbolizes courage, truth, and humanity.
- **Lord Chelmsford:** The Viceroy of India was the recipient of the letter. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre took place during his administration. He represents the authority of British rule in India. In the letter, he is respectfully addressed as "Your Excellency." Although Tagore shows courtesy toward him, he firmly condemns the cruelty of the government. Lord Chelmsford symbolizes the British administration that tried to justify injustice in the name of order.
- **General Reginald Edward Harry Dyer:** General Dyer was a British Indian Army officer infamous for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre (13 April 1919). On that day, thousands of unarmed Indian men, women, and children had gathered in Amritsar's Jallianwala Bagh, many for a peaceful meeting, some for the Baisakhi fair. Without any warning, Dyer ordered his troops to open fire on the crowd. Around 379 people were killed, and over a thousand were injured (official count, though actual numbers were far higher). Though Tagore does not name him directly in the letter, Dyer's brutality is the moral center of Tagore's protest.
- **The People of Punjab:** Though not mentioned directly, they are among the key figures in the letter. They were the victims of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, unarmed, helpless, yet morally strong. Their suffering and spilled blood gave power to Tagore's words of protest. They represent the wounded soul of the Indian nation.
- **The British Government:** The British Government appears in the letter as an abstract yet powerful character. Its rule is portrayed as oppressive and cruel. The inhuman treatment of

the people of Punjab, as Tagore says, is “without parallel in the history of civilised governments.” The government stands as a symbol of arrogance, brutality, and moral blindness.

Minor Characters

- **Anglo-Indian Press:** Mentioned in the letter as those newspapers that mocked the suffering of Indians. They “made fun of our sufferings” instead of showing compassion. This character represents the moral decline of the colonial press, where humanity and empathy are absent.
- **The Indian People:** The silent heroes of the letter. They suffer in a “dumb anguish of terror.” Tagore speaks on their behalf. They symbolize the awakening national consciousness, moral strength, and unity of the Indian people.
- **His Majesty the King:** Tagore received the Knighthood title from King George V in 1915. In this letter, he renounces that honor to protest the absence of British justice. The King stands here as a symbolic figure, the source of political authority and titles, which shrink in value before moral truth.

Symbolic Characters

- **Knighthood:** The Knighthood title serves as a symbolic character representing power, prestige, and royal favor. However, in Tagore’s eyes, it becomes a symbol of shame and subjugation. He writes that these “badges of honour” have turned into marks of disgrace. Renouncing the title thus becomes an act of moral liberation and spiritual freedom.