

Letter to Lord Chelmsford Rejecting Knighthood Literary Device

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Figures of Speech Imagery Definition: Words or expressions that create vivid pictures or sensory impressions in the reader's mind.

Figures of Speech

Imagery

- **Definition:** Words or expressions that create vivid pictures or sensory impressions in the reader's mind.
- **Example:** "The accounts of the insults and sufferings by our brothers in Punjab have trickled through the gagged silence."
- **Explanation:** In the phrase "trickled through the gagged silence," the word "trickled" creates the image of a slow, silent flow—like painful news seeping through barriers of censorship.
- **Effect:** This imagery shows how, despite strict British censorship, the sorrow and suffering of the people of Punjab gradually spread throughout India. It creates in the reader's mind a deep sense of pain and oppression.

Symbolism / Symbols

- **Definition:** A symbol is a word, image, or event that conveys a deeper meaning beyond its literal sense. In this letter, Tagore turns real historical events into moral and human symbols.
- **Badges of Honour:** This is the central symbol of the entire letter. The "badges of honour" refer to the titles and awards given by the British Government, such as the Knighthood. But Tagore shows that this so-called honor has now become a symbol of shame. What was once a mark of pride has turned into a mark of disgrace. This symbol exposes the hypocrisy of British rule and expresses the moral awakening of the Indian people.
- **Punjab:** In the letter, Punjab is not just a geographical location but a symbol of national suffering. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre that took place there shook the very soul of India.

Through this name, Tagore evokes the collective pain, humiliation, and protest of the entire nation.

- **Silence:** The phrase “gagged silence” is used symbolically to represent the British Government’s policy of oppression, where truth and protest were forcibly suppressed. Yet, through this silence, the pain of the people still spread across the country. This silence symbolizes the inner cry of India’s wounded conscience.
- **The Knighthood:** The Knighthood was originally a symbol of political loyalty to the British Crown. However, by rejecting it, Tagore transforms it into a symbol of moral freedom. It is no longer a royal honor but a weapon of protest. Through his renunciation, the Knighthood becomes a symbol of the awakening of human conscience and humanity.
- **The Brothers of Punjab:** The phrase “our brothers in Punjab” stands as a symbol of national unity and compassion. Through this expression, Tagore shows that the wound of injustice inflicted in one part of the country is felt throughout the entire nation.
- **The Relinquishment of Title:** Tagore’s act of renouncing his title gains the highest symbolic meaning in the letter. It is not merely a personal decision but a moral protest on behalf of the nation and an assertion of collective self-respect. His renunciation becomes the ultimate moral declaration of the letter, an act of conscience, courage, and dignity.