

Ode On The Lungi Literary Device

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Figures of Speech

Personification

- **Definition:** Personification is a device in which non-living objects, ideas, or abstract things are given human qualities or feelings.
- **Example:** "It's the subaltern speaking"
- **Explanation:** Here, the lungi is given a human ability, the power to "speak." A piece of clothing cannot literally talk, but the poet shows that the lungi carries the voice, pain, and protest of ordinary people.
- **Effect:** This device makes the lungi seem alive. It shows that the lungi is not just a garment; it symbolizes the identity and struggles of marginalized people.

Metaphor

- **Definition:** A metaphor compares two different things directly, without using as or like.
- **Example:** "The lungi is a complete wardrobe."
- **Explanation:** The poet compares the lungi to an entire wardrobe. It means that a lungi alone can serve many purposes: blanket, headgear, home cloth, quilt material, swimming cloth, and more.
- **Effect:** This metaphor strongly highlights the versatility and usefulness of the lungi.

Hyperbole

- **Definition:** Hyperbole is a figure of speech where something is exaggerated to emphasize its importance.
- **Example:** "more people in lungis / than the population of the USA"
- **Explanation:** The poet exaggerates by saying that at any moment, more people are wearing lungis than the entire population of the United States.
- **Effect:** This exaggeration creates a powerful impression of the lungi's widespread use and global presence.

Allusion

- **Definition:** An allusion is a reference to a person, book, event, or idea without mentioning it directly.
- **Example:** “I’m alluding to Beau Brummell”
- **Explanation:** Beau Brummell was a famous British fashion icon. By referring to him, the poet suggests that the history of fashion should also recognize the lungi.
- **Effect:** This device creates a cultural background in the poem and adds intelligence and humor to the poet’s voice.

Symbolism / Symbols

- **Definition:** Symbolism is a literary device in which an object, garment, scene, action, or idea expresses a deeper, hidden, or social meaning beyond its literal sense. In Ode On the Lungi, symbols like the lungi, the kilt, clothing inequality, and cultural attitudes represent larger ideas about society, identity, and struggle.
- **Lungi - A Symbol of Equality and the Identity of Common People:** In the poem, the lungi is the most important symbol. It is not just a garment; it represents the identity of millions of ordinary people. The poet shows that people wear the lungi every day with comfort, freedom, and natural ease. But society often looks down on it. Therefore, the lungi becomes a symbol of equality, cultural pride, and the voice of the marginalized. When the poet says, “It’s the subaltern speaking,” it means the lungi stands for those whose voices are usually ignored by society.
- **Kilt - A Symbol of Western Power and Cultural Superiority:** The kilt is also a skirt-like garment, yet it is considered respectable and elite in Western eyes. Although similar in structure, the kilt receives honor while the lungi faces disrespect. Thus, the kilt symbolizes Western dominance, racialized clothing standards, and cultural superiority. The poet shows how clothing creates divisions of “us” versus “them.”
- **White House - A Symbol of Power and Dress Discrimination:** The White House here is not just a political building but a symbol of global elite spaces. No one can enter wearing a lungi. But wearing a kilt is acceptable and even respectable. This shows how society uses clothing to define power and class. The White House symbolizes places where only Western norms are accepted.
- **Ivory Tower - A Symbol of Isolation and Criticism of Intellectuals:** The “Ivory Tower” refers to a place where someone stays away from real life and focuses only on theory, abstract ideas, and writing. When people accuse the poet of living in an Ivory Tower, it

implies that he is disconnected from everyday struggles. But when he declares himself a “Lungi Activist,” he rejects this isolation and stands with ordinary people. So the Ivory Tower symbolizes intellectual detachment.

- **Cox’s Bazar Beach - A Symbol of Freedom, Natural Living, and National Pride:**

Cox’s Bazar Beach is not just a place; it symbolizes Bangladesh’s pride. The poet shows that wearing a lungi is perfectly normal there. What is considered unacceptable in the West is everyday clothing in Bangladesh. Therefore, Cox’s Bazar represents freedom, comfort, unrestrained living, and cultural pride.

LxNotes