



Celebration of the 150th Birth Date of Rabindranath Tagore
Bengali Writer and Nobel Literature Prize Winner in 1913

Tagore Renounces Knighthood

Suggested Grades: 6 to 8



In 1919, six years after receiving the Nobel Prize of Literature, Rabindranath Tagore rejected his title of knighthood that was bestowed on him by King of England. Tagore's gesture was prompted by the tragic events that took place in Punjab in April 1919 known as the Jalianwallahbag massacre.

Research Project # 1

Jalianwallahbag Bagh Massacre



The events that took place in the northern Indian city of Amritsar where, on April 13, 1919 were the trigger that prompted Tagore to reject the title of knighthood given to him by British king.

Do some research to discover:

- *What were the events*
- *What was the relationship between India and Britain at the time of the events*

In your opinion what do you think of Tagore's action and reaction?

Research Project # 2

Knighthood



Do some research to understand knighthood:

- *Who can get it*
- *How do you get it*
- *Can it be revoked, how and why*
- *How do we address people that have knighthood*

What is your impression about knighthood, should this tradition be continued nowadays?



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Research Project # 3

Colonialism: British Rule in India

Britain was one of the main empires in history. Britain has colonized many countries around the world.

Do some further research to discover:

- *What is the definition of the word colonialization*
- *Which countries did Britain colonise*
- *What is the function of a Viceroy*
- *Who and how was India liberated from colonialism*
- *What was Tagore's opinion and position about colonialism*
- *How was he involved in the anti-colonial movement*

What is your opinion about colonialism? What do you think about Tagore's actions and positions?



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<http://www.calcuttaweb.com/tagore/knighthoodrej.shtml>

The Poet's Letter to Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, repudiating his Knighthood in protest
for Jalianwallahbag mass killing.

(The letter was published in The Statesman, June 3, 1919)

Your Excellency,

The enormity of the measures taken by the Government in the Punjab for quelling some local disturbances has, with a rude shock, revealed to our minds the helplessness of our position as British subjects in India. The disproportionate severity of the punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people and the methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilized governments, barring some conspicuous exceptions, recent and remote. Considering that such treatment has been meted out to a population, disarmed and resourceless, by a power which has the most terribly efficient organization for destruction of human lives, we must strongly assert that it can claim no political expediency, far less moral justification. The accounts of the insults and sufferings by our brothers in Punjab have trickled through the gagged silence, reaching every corner of India, and the universal agony of indignation roused in the hearts of our people has been ignored by our rulers—possibly congratulating themselves for imparting what they imagine as salutary lessons. This callousness has been praised by most of the Anglo-Indian papers, which have in some cases gone to the brutal length of making fun of our sufferings, without receiving the least check from the same authority, relentlessly careful in something every cry of pain of judgment from the organs representing the sufferers. Knowing that our appeals have been in vain and that the passion of vengeance is building the noble vision of statesmanship in our Government, which could so easily afford to be magnanimous, as befitting its physical strength and normal tradition, the very least that I can do for my country is to take all consequences upon myself in giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen, surprised into a dumb anguish of terror. The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part, wish to stand, shorn, of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who, for their so called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings. And these are the reasons which have compelled me to ask Your Excellency, with due reference and regret, to relieve me of my title of knighthood, which I had the honour to accept from His Majesty the King at the hands of your predecessor, for whose nobleness of heart I still entertain great admiration.

Yours faithfully,

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Calcutta,
6, Dwarkanath Tagore Lane,
May 30, 1919