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# Living in a Lungi

Dawn Brown

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## Living in a Lungi

Dawn Brown – GAI

Grade Level (Req.): 5th-12th grade	Content Area (Req.): Geography	Unit (Opt.):
Connections to Other Disciplines (Opt.):		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>		
Time Frame (Req.): 1 class period	Goal (Req.): Students will identify aspects of Bangladeshi culture.	
	Objective (Req.): Students will be able to describe, make, and wear traditional Bangladeshi male attire. Students will be able to sew French stitches on cotton fabric.	
Materials Needed (Req.):	New Vocabulary (Opt.):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-1/3 yards of 44"-45" wide plaid cotton for each lungi and coordinating thread to match fabric</li> <li>• Sewing machine and skills to straight stitch</li> <li>• "Lungi Sewing Instructions" and "Lungi Tying Instructions"</li> <li>• PowerPoint of men and boys in lungis and/or photos</li> <li>• "Living in a Lungi" student handout</li> <li>• "Ode on a Lungi" student handout, optional</li> <li>• "Ode on a Lungi" vocabulary words defined, optional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	
Anticipatory Set/Introduction [Inquiry Question is required] (Req.): What is the traditional male attire in Bangladesh, how does one make it, and how comfortable and useful is it?		
Instructional Sequence/Procedure (Req.):		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As a class, look at a handful of pictures of Bangladeshi men and boys.</li> <li>2. Ask students to describe the common attire for Bangladeshi men and boys.</li> <li>3. Display a lungi and offer background information on the lungi ("Living in a Lungi" handout).</li> <li>4. Ask a student volunteer to don the lungi. Can he or she tie it?</li> <li>5. Walk the student through the lungi-tying process ("Lungi Tying Instructions").</li> <li>6. Those students who have brought fabric may stitch their own lungis with straight stitching skills (this step can be skipped if no sewing machine or skills are available).</li> <li>7. Practice tying lungis.</li> <li>8. Practice tying lungis as shorts.</li> <li>9. Take pictures of students in lungis and display in classroom, use for promotional purposes.</li> <li>10. Optional Enrichment: Read chorally "Ode on a Lungi" by Kaiser Huq; students may wear a lungi while reading their parts. Research the convenience of wearing a lungi in Bangladesh while conducting rural activities. Investigate traditional Bangladeshi women's wear – salwar kameez and sari. Sew a woman's outfit. Prepare a cultural fashion show with traditional male and female costumes from various countries.</li> </ol>		

11. Remediation: Skip the sewing project; provide lungis for classroom use. Require students to work in pairs and to practice repeated tying of the lungis until task is learned.

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Formative Evaluation (Req.): Class participation

Assessment (Req.): Students will stitch lungis with French seams that successfully hide the raw edges of fabric. Students will tie lungis successfully in half-knots; lungis will not fall down.

Iowa Core Curriculum Standards Used (Req.):

- Geography, grade 9-12: Understand how physical and human processes shape the Earth's surface and major ecosystems.
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Common Core Curriculum Standards Used (Opt.):

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NGS Standards Used (Req.):

- The physical and human characteristics of places.
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Five Themes of Geography Used (Req.):

- Place
- Region
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School District Standards and Benchmarks (Opt.):

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21 <sup>st</sup> Century Universal Constructs (Opt.): Collaboration, Flexibility and Adaptability	
Other Disciplinary Standards (Opt.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>	
Other Essential Information (Opt.): Video demonstration of how to tie a lungi: <a href="http://www.uni.edu/gai/Bangladesh/Videoand PowerPoints/HowToTieALungi.wmv">http://www.uni.edu/gai/Bangladesh/Videoand PowerPoints/HowToTieALungi.wmv</a>	
Other Resources (Opt.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="http://www.bangla-online.info/BanglaLanguage/DressHabits.htm">http://www.bangla-online.info/BanglaLanguage/DressHabits.htm</a></li><li>• <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lungi">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lungi</a></li><li>• <a href="http://www.virtualbangladesh.com/bd_tour_wear.html">http://www.virtualbangladesh.com/bd_tour_wear.html</a></li><li>• <a href="http://sturtevant.com/sturtevant/longyi.html">http://sturtevant.com/sturtevant/longyi.html</a>;</li><li>• <a href="http://www.sewneau.com/how.to/french.seam.html">http://www.sewneau.com/how.to/french.seam.html</a></li></ul>	

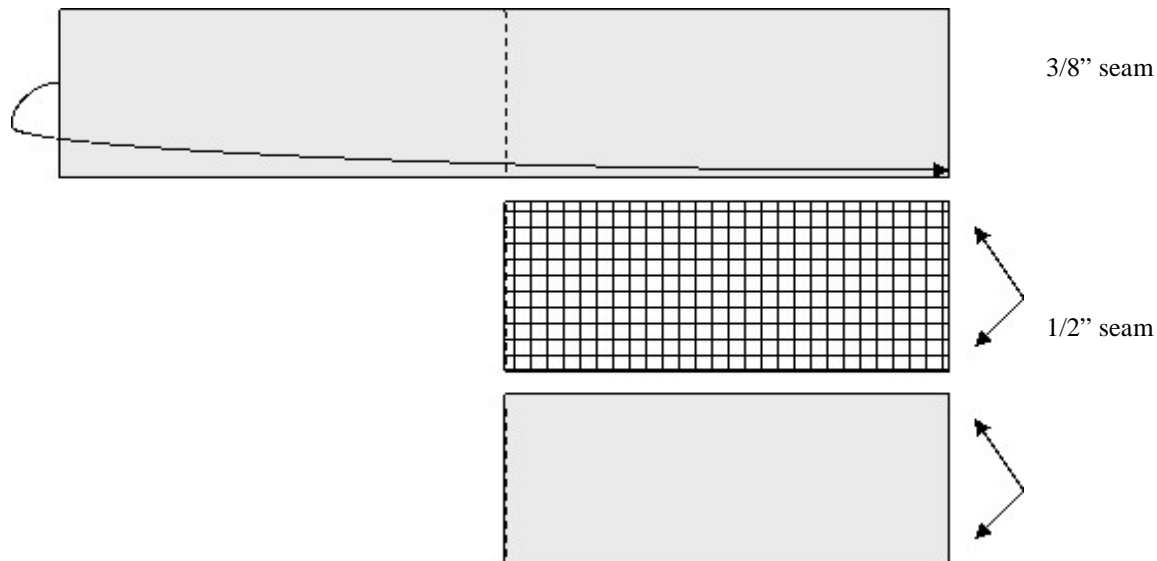
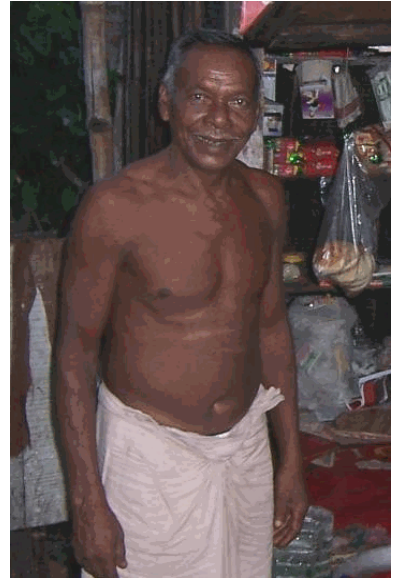
# Lungi Sewing Instructions

## Materials:

- 2-1/3 yards of 44"-45" wide plaid cotton for each lungi
- Coordinating thread to match fabric
- Sewing machine and skills to straight stitch

## Procedure For Sewing A Lungi:

1. Lay out rectangle of fabric, right side down.
2. Fold fabric in half width-wise.



3. With right sides out, pin raw ends together and stitch with a 3/8" seam allowance along the entire length of the edge pinned.
4. Remove pins. Press the entire length of seam to one side. Turn garment so that wrong sides of fabric are out.
5. Fold garment along newly stitched seam. Press the entire length of seam flat with wrong sides out. Pin the seam. Stitch a 1/2" seam allowance along the entire length of the edge pinned. [The first seam's raw edges will now be hidden.]
6. Remove pins and press seam to one side. Pin the seam in place. On the outside of the garment, topstitch the French seam 3/8" from the seam. Knot the threads on each end of the seam or backstitch to keep from fraying.
7. Hooray for you—You have made a lungi!

# Living in a Lungi

What is the traditional male attire in Bangladesh, and how comfortable and useful is it?

## Background Information:

Rural Bangladeshi men and boys commonly wear the lungi, a rectangular piece of fabric stitched into a cylindrical shape, most often made from cotton. The male drops the cylinder of fabric over his head (or steps into it), and pulls the top edge of the fabric cylinder around his waist, where he ties the lungi in a half-knot of sorts just under his navel, tucking in the ends at the center of his abdomen. The lungi drapes from his waist to his ankles, taking on the appearance of a skirt.

The lungi is considered an efficient piece of clothing [often worn without underwear, one can squat easily to urinate or defecate in public modestly, experiencing some privacy by the garment's cover]. To make instant "shorts," one can fold the lungi up to his knees, twist the excess fabric, and pull the wad of fabric back between his legs to tuck the end into his waist. The lungi is especially comfortable and convenient to wear in the high heat and humidity of the region. Lungis are easily hand-washed, often while bathing in public. The cotton fabric dries very quickly.



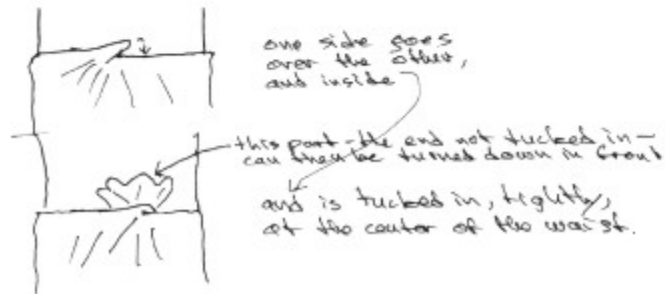
The lungi is popular and is seen worn by men all over the country. Although urban and educated men of Bangladesh, who are choosing more and more to dress western, consider the lungi too informal and thus inappropriate, many are still wearing the lungi in the privacy of their homes and on the beaches. Men wear lungis as sleepwear and as we might wear sweatpants. Men in neighboring countries are also wearing similar garments.

As is with our cotton in the United States, the prices and quality of the cotton in lungis varies greatly. They can be purchased for as low as 100 Taka, about \$1.50 U. S. Dollars.

Women in Bangladesh do not wear lungis, although women in some non-Bengali cultures may wear similar garments.

# Lungi Tying Instructions

1. Standing inside the lungi with hands to sides, holding lungi waist high, grab the excess fabric on either side of the hip, pull the two pieces together tightly while sucking in your abdomen, and then twist them together once or twice in front of your navel.
2. Tuck the ends in under the top edge of the garment with the knot remaining outside the garment, just below your navel.





# Ode on the Lungi

Kaiser Haq

Grandpa Walt, allow me to share my thoughts with you, if only because every time I read “Passage to India” and come across the phrase “passage to more than India” I fancy, anachronistically, that you wanted to overshoot the target by a shadow line and land in Bangladesh.

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about sartorial equality. How far we are from this democratic ideal! And how hypocritical! “All clothes have equal rights”—this nobody will deny and yet, some obviously are more equal than others.

No, I'm not complaining about the jacket and tie required in certain places—that, like fancy dress parties, is in the spirit of a game. I'm talking of something more fundamental. Hundreds of millions from East Africa to Indonesia wear the lungi, also known variously as the sarong, munda, htamain, saaram, ma'awaiis, kitenge, kanga, kaiki. They wear it day in day out, indoors and out.

Just think—at any one moment, there are more people in lungis than the population of the USA. Now try wearing one to a White House appointment—not even you, Grandpa Walt, laureate of democracy, will make it in. You would if you affected a kilt – but a lungi? No way.

But why? This is the question I ask all to ponder. Is it a clash of civilizations? The sheer illogicality of it—the kilt is with “us” but the lungi is with “them”!

Think too of neo-imperialism and sartorial hegemony, how brown and yellow sahibs in natty suits crinkle their noses at compatriots (even relations) in modest lungis, the sole exception being Myanmar, where political honchos queue up in lungis to receive visiting dignitaries. But then, Myanmar dozes behind a cane curtain, a half pariah among nations. Wait ‘til it's globalized. Savile Row will acquire a fresh crop of patrons.

Hegemony invades private space as well. My cousin in America would get home from work and lounge in a lungi—‘til his son grew ashamed of dad and started hiding the “ridiculous ethnic attire”. It's all too depressing. But I won't leave it at that. The situation is desperate. Something needs to be done.

I've decided not to take it lying down. The next time someone insinuates that I live in an Ivory Tower, I'll proudly proclaim, I AM A LUNGI ACTIVIST!

Friends and fellow lungi lovers, let us organize lungi parties and lungi parades, let us lobby Hallmark and Archies to introduce an International Lungi Day when the UN Chief will wear a lungi and address the world.

Grandpa Walt, I celebrate my lungi, and sing my lungi, and what I wear you shall wear. It's time you finally made your passage to more than India – to Bangladesh –and lounging in a lungi in a

cottage on Cox's Bazar beach (the longest in the world, we proudly claim) watched 28 young men in lungis bathing in the sea.

But what is this thing (my learned friends, I'm alluding to Beau Brummell) I repeat, what is this thing I'm going on about?

A rectangular cloth, white or coloured or plaid, roughly 45X80 inches, halved lengthwise and stitched to make a tube you can get into and fasten in a slipknot around the waist. When you are out of it, the lungi can be folded up like a scarf. Or you can let your imagination play with the textile tube to illustrate the superstrings of the "Theory of Everything" (see the book of this title by the venerable Stephen Hawking).

Coming back to basics, the lungi is an elaborate fig-leaf, the foundation of propriety in ordinary mortals. Most of the year, when barebodied is cool you can lead a decent life with only a couple of lungis, dipping in pond or river or swimming in a lungi abbreviated into a G-string, then changing into the other one. Under the hot sun, a lungi can become Arab-style headgear. Come chilly weather, the spare lungi can be an improvised shawl. The lungi as G-string can be worn to wrestle or play kabaddi, but on football or cricket field or wading through the monsoon it's folded vertically and kilted at the knee.

In short, the lungi is a complete wardrobe for anyone interested: an emblem of egalitarianism, symbol of global left-outs. Raised and flapped amidst laughter it's the subaltern speaking. And more. When romance strikes, the lungi is a sleeping bag for two: a book of poems, a bottle of hooch and your beloved inside your lungi—there's paradise for you. If your luck runs out, and the monsoon turns into a biblical deluge, just get in the water and hand-pump air to balloon up your lungi—now your humble ark. When you find shelter on a treetop, take it off, rinse it, wave it at the useless stars. You might then say: in this wretched world, it's the flag of your indisposition.

*The Daily Star*. Published On: 2007-09-01

**Kaiser Haq is professor of English at Dhaka University**

## Ode on a Lungi Vocabulary

**Grandpa Walt**—a reference to Walt Whitman (1819–1892) and his poem, “Passage to India ”

**Anachronistically**—a person or a thing that is chronologically out of place

**Sartorial**—of clothing or dress, esp. men's

**Neo-imperialism/Neo-colonialism**—the term describing international economic arrangements wherein former colonial powers maintained control of colonies and dependencies after World War II

**Hegemony**—the dominance or leadership of one social group or nation over others

**Sahib**—formerly a term of respect for important white Europeans in colonial India

**Seville Row**—a shopping street in Mayfair , central London , famous for its traditional men's tailoring

**Beau Brummell**—credited with introducing and establishing as fashion the modern man's suit, worn with a tie

**Subaltern**—a term used in postcolonial theory to refer to marginalized groups and the lower classes