



Four Discourses, Four Subjects: Tracing Subjectivity and Desire in Tagore's *Chaturanga*

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Abstract

This paper examines the dynamics of subjectivity and desire in Rabindranath Tagore's *Chaturanga* through the theoretical framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Structured around four central figures, the novel presents four distinct ideological and existential positions that engage with questions of desire, knowledge, and authority. Drawing on Jacques Lacan's theory of the four discourses, this paper interprets these characters as embodying different configurations of subjectivity produced through specific discursive structures. Through a close reading of the text, the study explores how ideological authority, spiritual rebellion, rational mediation, and disruptive desire interact within the narrative to reveal the instability of any singular claim to truth. Along with ideological assertions, this paper closely focuses on moments of rupture that reveal the subjects as an excess of ideology. By situating *Chaturanga* within a Lacanian framework, the paper argues that Tagore's novella anticipates a modern understanding of subjectivity as fractured, relational, and constituted through precarity rather than apodictic stability.



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Introduction

The publication of Tagore's *Chaturanga* in 1916 marks a time of great socio-historical turbulence. With the advent of modernism in Europe, established notions about the human mind were largely being scrutinized and reinterpreted. This had a substantial effect on literature in particular. A radical transmutation of the ideological bedrock of 20th-century Europe had an unavoidable effect on the subsequent liquidation of traditional semblances of reality. Fredric Jameson repeatedly uses the term 'rationalization' to explain this phenomenon:

For the dynamic of rationalization - Weber's term, which Lukács will strategically retranslate as reification in *History and Class Consciousness* - is a complex one in which the traditional or "natural" [naturwüchsige] unities, social forms, human relations, cultural events, even religious systems, are systematically broken up in order to be reconstructed more efficiently, in the form of new post-natural processes or mechanisms (Jameson, 1983, pp. 47-48).

Although 20th-century Bengal was a landscape far away from continental unrest, philosophical ideas such as rationalism, positivism, and the Bengal Renaissance found profound expression through religious reforms and the formation of new Bengali intellectual cohorts. Tagore was well aware of these new emerging maxims. While answering a question regarding the novel *Chaturanga*, Tagore stated the following:

To the authors of yesteryears, life meant desire and frustration, union and separation, birth and death, and certain other similarly imprecise events [...] Since a few days now, our impression of our life has been changing—it seems we were so long loitering about the entrance—after a long time we seem to have discovered the way to the inner chambers for the first time. We are awake at the outer side of our consciousness—there we are consciously fighting battles, striking others and are being struck by others. But within these strikes and counterstrikes, these ups and downs, something is being created in our ignorance of it. The arena for that gigantic game of creation is our submerged consciousness. It is a new world, as if gradually coming into existence before us (Nag, as cited in Biswas, 2003, p. 718).

Tagore's reflection on creation as an effect of our submerged consciousness is a crucial insight that precipitates a broader psychoanalytic discussion regarding subjectivity and its complex relation with socio-ideological structures. Lacanian psychoanalysis, in particular, is rich with

complex theoretical ideas regarding ideology, society, and the problematic (im)possibility of the emergence of the subject. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the subject is “a being-of-language (parlêtre, to use Lacan's condensed writing). The subject is always fastened, pinned, to a signifier which represents him for the other, and through this pinning he is loaded with a symbolic mandate, he is given a place in the inter subjective network of symbolic relations” (Žižek, 2008, p.125). This inter subjective symbolic network of relations is purely “performative, it cannot be accounted for by reference to the 'real' properties and capacities of the subject” (Žižek, 2008, p.126). Initially, Lacan's idea of the subject and its relation to the symbolic network of causality resonates with the narrow determinism of Structuralism. For Structuralism, the subject has always existed as a meagre epiphenomenon of some structural discourse. Lacan's statement that the “signifier is what represents the subject to another signifier” (Lacan, 2006, p. 694) is not directed towards subsuming the subject within the mire of the Symbolic but to reinstate the true kernel of the subject to be decentred from the symbolic chain of causality itself. In his seminar XVII, titled *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan proposed a diagrammatic model of subjectivity and its relation to social structures through his model of the four discourses. Lacan describes the discourse as “a necessary structure that goes well beyond speech, which is always more or less occasional” (Lacan, 2007, p.12). The four “matheme(s)” of the structure are important for understanding the basic mechanisms of the four discourses. Firstly, S1 is the master-signifier or “the signifier function that the essence of the master relies upon” (Lacan, 2007, p. 21). In the dispersed chain of signifiers, the “point de capiton is the point through which the subject is 'sewn' to the signifier, and at the same time the point which interpellates individual into subject by addressing it with the call of a certain master-signifier[...]in a word, it is the point of the subjectivation of the signifier's chain” (Žižek, 2008, p. 112). So, it is not only the master but also the subject who relies on the master signifier for their ontological essence. It is through this subtle indication that Lacan implies that both the subject and the master of the symbolic network are marked by an inherent lack. The position of the ‘agent’ in the discourse structure is thus always marked by an intrinsic velleity. The matheme called knowledge (S2) is an *a priori* field of information that “arises at the moment at which S1 comes to represent something...” (Lacan, 2007, p. 12). Lacan also mentions that if “there is knowledge that is not known[...]it is instituted at the level of S2, which is the one I call the other signifier. This other signifier is not alone. The stomach of the Other, the big Other, is full of them” (Lacan, 2007, p. 33). The Lacanian notion of the big Other is the order of the signifier in the symbolic network. The big Other is the final support of the symbolic network as well as the guarantor of the subject's symbolic identity. Lacan, hereby, designates his famous duality of desire and jouissance. Desire is only possible

within the limits of the symbolic order itself. As far as the subject's desire is confined within the symbolic order of the big Other, it is easy to understand why Lacan said that desire is the desire of the Other. In Seminar XI, Lacan said: "The dialectic of the object of desire, in so far as it creates the link between the desire of the subject and the desire of the Other – I have been telling you a long time now that it is one and the same" (Lacan, 1981, p. 215). What is the nature of this 'object of desire'? Or, more importantly, what is the property of this object that connects the subject to the Other? The enigmatic property of this phantasmatic 'object of desire' is nothing but a cover of the lack in the Other. The 'object of desire' is produced as a cover of an inherent lack that characterises both the subject and the Other. The subject, in Lacanian discourse, is thus constitutively disjointed from the symbolic order itself. In this regard, the subject is always "constituted through a certain misrecognition: the process of ideological interpellation through which the subject 'recognizes' itself as the addressee in the calling up of the ideological cause implies necessarily a certain short circuit, an illusion of the type 'I was already there'..." (Žižek, 2008, p. xxv). Ideological interpellation is only a way for the subject "to misrecognize his radical dependence on the big Other, on the symbolic order as his decentred cause" (Žižek, 2008, p. 116). Along these lines, this paper shows how the four characters in Tagore's novel *Chaturanga* form distinct subjective positions within the intricate matrix of the narrative. Evaluating the individual positions of these characters, this paper will attempt to resolve the enigmatic nexus that binds them together in a restless conjugation of attraction and disillusionment.

Four Discourses, Four Subjects

Tagore's novel *Chaturanga* comprises four chapters that present four narratives about four characters and their inter-subjective involvement in events of crisis and resolution. The four main characters – Jyathamoshai, Sachish, Sribilas, and Damini – are embroiled in the socio-ideological tapestry of 20th-century Bengal. The character of Jyathamoshai (Jagmohan) is that of a rationalist. He believes in "no-God" (Tagore, 2005, p. 859). While Jyathamoshai (Jagmohan) is a staunch atheist, his brother Harimohan (Sachish's father) is a Brahmin. Tagore's delineation of the ideological rift between the two brothers extends far into the macrocosmic dimension of the narrative's social space. Jyathamoshai, known as "Bengal's Dr. Johnson" (Tagore, 2005, p. 861), is a purveyor of Western intellect.

Jagmohan's non-conformist position makes him an Other in his traditional Brahmin household. He increasingly attracts reprehension and public condemnation for his opinions and actions. The

growing antagonism between the two brothers culminates in Jagmohan's eviction from his own home. Harimohan's hegemonic infiltration of Jagmohan's private space must not be seen as intrasocial conflict. Hegemony is not only a forceful extension of ideological interest over the Other. It is also a way to hide the structural negativity of ideology itself. Žižek writes: "The key feature of the concept of hegemony lies in the contingent connection between intrasocial differences and the limit that separates society from non-society – the limit between social and its exteriority, the non-social can articulate itself only in the guise of a difference between elements of social space" (Žižek, 2000, p. 92). The figures of the Muslim tanners and the widowed Nonibala reflect the Other or the abject of ideology. It is through the exclusion of this 'non-society' that ideology generates the illusion of self-enclosing itself. Although this Otherness appears to be a radically different exteriority, it is actually the most intimate and disavowed part of the subject. Lacan posits this hostility as a reaction against our encounter with jouissance. Zupančič writes:

Jouissance is by its very definition "strange," "other," "dissimilar." However, the important point there is that I do not experience jouissance as "strange" and "dissimilar" because it is the jouissance of the Other, but, on the contrary, that it is because of this jouissance that I perceive my neighbor as (radically) Other and "strange." Moreover, it is not simply the jouissance of the neighbor, of the other, that is strange to me. The kernel of the problem is that I experience my own jouissance as strange, dissimilar, other, and hostile. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" compels me to love "that most neighborly of neighbors who is inside me," my jouissance (Zupančič, 1998, pp. 43-44).

Jouissance is that intimate part of the subject that cannot be integrated into the Symbolic space. It is a strange body inside the subject, but also points towards radical exteriority, for which Lacan coined a new term, "extimité" (Žižek, 2008, p. 204). To avoid the traumatic dimension of his own jouissance, the subject undergoes ideological interpellation and misrecognises himself within the wider chain of the big Other. Through this fantasy formation, "jouissance is domesticated, gentrified" (Žižek, 2008, pp. 138-39). Harimohan's feverish attempts (appealing in court against Jagmohan's atheism, depriving him of their family trusteeship, forcing him away from their ancestral home, denigrating his death as a punishment for sin) to condemn Jyathamoshai are expressions of anxiety and antagonism arising from the failure of gentrifying jouissance. Harimohan's strident proclivity also extends towards another key character of the novel –

Sachish. Despite being Harimohan's son, Sachish's character could not be more antithetical to him. Being tutored by Jagmohan, he harbours all the rational and atheistic maxims that also define Jyathamoshai's disposition. Sachish opposes Brahminical orthodoxy, empathises with the Muslim tanners, proposes to marry the widowed Nonibala, and is also said to be the favourite student of Professor Wilkins from his college. Many of his classmates scornfully assert that Sachish has beguiled their professor by "showing off his atheism" (Tagore, 2005, p. 858). However, Sachish's impression of being an autonomous and self-reflective intellectual imbued with Western progressive philosophy is shown to be heavily reductive. Far from being the purveyor of neutral knowledge, Sachish's existential disposition is framed within the complex rubric of an ideological matrix that problematises his character. The complexity of his psychic state transpires after the death of Jyathamoshai. "Just as the light of a lamp put out by a puff of breath vanishes instantly, after Jagmohan's death, Sachish disappeared – we didn't know where", Sribilas recounts (Tagore, 2005, p. 889). Sachish's apparent disappearance following Jagmohan's death marks a decisive moment within the structure of the narrative. What collapses here is not merely a personal relationship but the symbolic support that sustained Sachish's intellectual identity. Lacan's discourse of the University provides a useful framework to understand this crisis. In the University discourse, knowledge (S2) occupies the position of the agent – presenting itself as objective and autonomous – while its hidden truth remains the master-signifier (S1) that authorizes it. As explained in the introductory part of the essay, the subject's dependency on the big Other is structural, and his position in the chain of the signifiers is contingent. Sachish's intellectualism, shaped under the influence of Jagmohan, thus appears less as an expression of independent rational thought than as a discursive position sustained by a concealed master-signifier. With Jagmohan's death, this hidden support collapses, producing a moment of subjective destitution in which the symbolic coordinates that organized Sachish's identity begin to disintegrate. Lacan mentions his idea of 'subjective destitution' as a state where "the subject no longer presupposes himself as a subject [...] he assumes not the existence but the non-existence of the big Other, he accepts the Real in its utter, meaningless idiocy; he keeps open the gap between the Real and its symbolization" (Žižek, 2008, p. 263). Sachish maintains his dissociated state of existence through his restless oscillations between being 'destituted' and being under the aegis of a guru named Leelananda Swami. After his disappearance, Sribilas tries to find him and discovers that he is in Chittagong "dancing, singing, playing cymbals, and rousing whole neighbourhoods into a state of excitement" (Tagore, 2005, p. 891). Sachish's transition from rationalist to disciple of a Swami could not be more radical. Sribilas rightfully worries that he would lose face and that many would claim that they knew "there was no real

substance to Sachis; he was all empty theory” (Tagore, 2005, p. 891). All these accusations are factual and predictable; however, they are not in the right spectrum. Sachish exemplifies the fact that theories are indeed empty, as the substance that functions as their bulwark contains a fundamental lack. As explained in the introductory section, the subject and the substance coincide in the fundamental lack that runs through both. Thus, Sachish’s staunch disposition of being an atheist could not be sustained after the big Other’s (Jyathamoshai) liquidation, just as his initial state of destitution could not be sustained, and he had to move towards replacing the master figure of Jyathamoshai with that of Leelananda Swami. The Swami’s hectoring remarks to Sribilas concretise this fact. After learning that Sribilas has won the Premchand-Raychand scholarship, he says:

. . . the diver has to go down to the seabed to look for pearls, but it’s fatal to get stuck there, so he comes gasping to the surface to save his life. If you want salvation, you must leave the floor of the ocean of knowledge and come to the shore. You have won the Premchand-Raychand *scholarship*[emphasis added], now look to the Premchand-Raychand *renunciationship*! [emphasis added](Tagore, 2005, p. 894).

Sachish’s strange shift to the absolute obverse of his previous beliefs nauseates Sribilas. His disconcertion reaches its apogee when the Swami “stretched out his legs towards Sachish, who began slowly massaging them”(Tagore, 2005, p. 894). Sribilas fails to ratiocinate about his friend’s metamorphosis and gradually allows himself to get interpellated into the Symbolic structure of mysticism as well. After Sribilas finds himself inside the ideological matrix, the strangeness of jouissance finds its symbolisation, and he sees “Sachish assume an other-worldly form that could only be that of a *god* [emphasis added]” (Tagore, 2005, p. 897). In his seminar *Encore: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge* (1972–1973), Lacan creates an interesting topology that establishes a synergy between God and jouissance féminine. Reflections on that seminar become very pertinent to this line of discussion, as Sachish’s apparent ‘god-like’ disposition will disintegrate with the introduction of the feminine character of Damini.

Ideology, non-all and the jouissance féminine

Jacques Lacan, in his seminar *Encore*, introduces two key ideas – the notion of jouissance féminine and the fact that there is no sexual relationship. As has already been discussed, the subject is fundamentally castrated through his entry into the Symbolic chain of signifiers. As a

‘being of language’, he becomes utterly foreign to his own jouissance. “Castration means that jouissance must be refused so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder of the Law of desire”, Žižek writes (Žižek, 1994, p. 97). From his notion of castration, Lacan constructs his disquisition of the phallic signifier. He asserts that the phallic signifier is one of the master signifiers that sustains the Symbolic matrix. However, as has already been discussed, the Symbolic is thoroughly inconsistent, and the primary defense of every ideology is to evacuate or domesticate its disturbing excess called jouissance. Just as Sachish’s father attempted to evict Jyathamoshai, Nonibala, and the Muslim tanners from their property (metaphor for a space of ideological containment), Sachish would also attempt the same with the widowed Damini. However, unlike Nonibala, Damini is presented as a markedly assertive character who challenges and subverts the phallocentric nature of orthodox Brahminism. Sribilas narrates Damini’s subversive nature:

Damini didn’t dress like a widow; then, she would pointedly ignore the guru’s instructions; and finally she showed no hint of the radiance of *ascetic purity*[my emphasis] that lights up body and soul through being close to such a great man. Everybody voiced the same opinion: ‘Some creature indeed! We have seen a lot, but such a woman – never!’ (Tagore, 2005, p. 904).

Damini’s defiance of the Swami’s orders debilitates his position as the master, and Damini becomes a strange ‘creature’ who is foreign to their ideological rubric. Damini’s disposition is consolidated when she asserts her provision of being able to make her own decisions:

‘We have decided to pay for you to live with some female relative’, Sachish said.

‘*You* have decided?’

‘Yes’

‘*I haven’t* [my emphasis]’ (Tagore, 2005, p. 928)

Damini thus defies the masculine injunction of being the subservient widow, and here lies the enigma that disenchant both Sribilas and Sachish. However, there is also a spectral dimension of Damini that exists inside them. Feminine jouissance – the dark, disturbing limit of phallic ideology – is a radical negative that is irrevocable. Damini’s insistence on going along with Leelananda Swami, Sachish, and Sribilas consolidates this insight. In one episode, the Swami plans to go to a far-off place with Sachish and Sribilas without Damini. However, “Damini wasn’t to be put off; she came along” (Tagore, 2005, p. 908). After wandering all day, they came across a cave with ancient rock carvings. “Whether these were Hindu or Buddhist, whether the

figures were of Buddha or Krishna, whether their craftsmanship betrayed Greek influence, these were contentious issues among scholars”, Sribilas recounts (Tagore, 2005, p. 909). The confluence of different cultural constructs – at once familiar and at once ‘Greek’ – invokes the cave as an enigmatic problem of symbolic representation. They, too, consider the cave something out of the Symbolic and alien to civilisation. “We were supposed to return to human habitation after seeing the cave”, Sribilas asserts. One of the most striking facts of this episode is that Damini – despite accompanying them all along – is wholly absent from this part of the narrative. It is as if the ancient enigma of the cave has absorbed her in its mires. It is as if the cave becomes the agitating embodiment of her *jouissance féminine*. The following events with Sribilas concretise this insight. He describes the cave as “a black beast – its moist breath seemed to touch my skin. It seemed to me like the first animal to appear in the very first cycle of creation; it had no eyes, no ears, only a huge appetite” (Tagore, 2005, p. 910). Sribilas’s description of the cave bears an uncanny resemblance to the Lacanian notion of the presymbolic, amorphous essence of pure libido, called ‘lamella’. It is the most intimate part of the subject that is ‘in him more than himself,’ yet it is an “amorphous intruder of infinite plasticity, an undead alien monster, who can never be pinned down to a determinate form” (Žižek, 2016, p. 183). Freud also mentions this motif in Chapter 4 of *Beyond Pleasure Principle*, where he refers to the “little fragment of living substance [...] suspended in the middle of an external world charged with the most powerful energies”(Freud, 1961, p. 21). This ‘energy’ of *jouissance* puts Sribilas into a state of catatonia. He feels as if “the primordial beast had thrust me deep into its saliva-drenched maw [...] its saliva was acidic, it would corrode me” (Tagore, 2005, p. 912). Sribilas is “speechless with fear and loathing” (Tagore, 2005, p. 912). Deprived of speech, he feels powerless as he is unable to pin down *jouissance* with a signifier in language. The ‘creature’ holds on to his feet as he tries to kick it away. The feet are a fetishistic extension of the phallus qua the phallic signifier of the castrated subject. Thus, Sribilas’s feeling of being ‘corroded’ and powerless becomes pertinent. Although the creature is described as ‘hairless’, Sribilas finds a “mass of hair” (Tagore, 2005, p. 912) on his bed, which indubitably points towards the pubic hair, which acts as a fetishistic disavowal of the fact that women are beyond the phallic principle of sexuality. The mass of hair remains as a ‘little piece of the Real’ to announce the structural negativity at the heart of the Symbolic. The fact that Tagore decides to break the usual flow of the narration, where Sribilas recounts all events as the main narrator, exerts the sheer senseless intensity of the cave episode. This portion of the narrative remains as a suspended witness of *jouissance féminine* as the “ineffable ‘dark continent’ separated from (the male) discourse by a frontier that is impossible to traverse” (Žižek, 1994, p. 151).

Contingency: Between the Hysteric and the Transcendental

After returning from the cave, Damini's corporeal self also returns to the fabric of the narrative. Her disposition of being assertive and subversive also remains unchanged. However, it becomes increasingly more contingent and irregular. Damini develops a contorted relationship with both Sribilas and Sachish. She uses Sribilas to attract Sachish's attention. Sribilas is aware of it as he describes his relation with Damini as a reminder of "the day Guruji had asked Sachish in my presence to prepare the hookah" (Tagore, 2005, p. 922). Sribilas reduces his disposition as a conduit between Damini's hysterical contact with Sachish. The term 'hysterical' does not so much carry the same denigrating intonation in Lacanian psychoanalysis as it does in other fields of literary theory. In Lacan, the hysteric is a subject whose "very existence involves radical doubt and questioning" (Žižek, 1998, p. 81). Damini's attempt to provoke Sachish by her unwarranted solicitation of Sribilas is a very pertinent expression of it. Damini's actions confuse and disconcert both Sachish and Sribilas to the extent that Sachish asks Sribilas to sever his contact with Damini. When Sribilas refuses, Sachish leaves their dwelling. After Sachish's departure, Damini discards Sribilas. "Damini stopped asking me to read; nor did she need me for anything else", he recounts (Tagore, 2005, p. 935). Damini's provocation of Sachish qua masculine authority has to be seen as the hysteric's attempt to "provoke her Master in an ambiguous way which can also be read as the demand for a more authentic real Master" (Žižek, *Disparities*, 2016, p. 191). Damini's position of subversion is shown to have an obverse side that requires a master figure. Like Sachish, Damini also follows the ideological mandate to find a master figure for Symbolic anchorage. Thus, after the return of Sachish, Damini bows and touches his feet, saying "I am yours to command" (Tagore, 2005, p. 936). Damini's disposition of defiance only takes her from Leelananda Swami (old master) to Sachish (new master). Her insistent plea to Sachish concretises this insight: "I have got nothing from your guru. He hasn't been able to calm my restless mind even for a moment [...] Save me! If anybody can save me it's you" (Tagore, 2005, p. 942). Sachish – on the other hand – gradually grows out of his disposition of being the Swami's disciple. "The earth had girded up her loins to destroy the paradise of ecstasy in which Guruji had tried to keep us cloistered", Sribilas notes. The ideological rubric of the Guru's 'cloister' is liquidating while Sachish has become like "a kite whose string had just snapped" and despite showing no neglect to devotion, Sribilas knows that "inwardly he was faltering" (Tagore, 2005, p. 929). Eventually, Sachish and Sribilas leave with Damini – departing the Swami's devotional cohort. Since the death of Jyathamoshai, Sachish feels the pangs of subjective destitution for the first time again. He "had gathered himself in stillness, his mind could no

longer be kept in check. No more did he wallow in mystic contemplation of ecstatic union with the divine” (Tagore, 2005, p. 952). One day, he suddenly wanders off without any notice. Being perturbed, Damini ventures out and finds him seated by a sandbank. Tagore’s description of this scene concretises Sachish’s ‘destituted’ position:

Emptiness all around, no sign of life anywhere. The waves of sand were as pitiless as the sun – as if they were sentinels of emptiness, lying in ambush [...] Everything seemed to have dissolved into primal dry whiteness. There was nothing at her feet save a ‘No’ – no sound or motion, no trace of the red of blood, the green of plants, the blue of the sky or the brown of earth (Tagore, 2005, p. 955).

Sachish is viscerally transmuted and coalesced into this strange, atonal, and monochromatic world of emptiness. Devoid of his symbolic anchorage, Sachish is reduced to the radical negative of subjectivity that Hegel often referred to as the “night of the world” (Žižek, 2016, p. 336). In a very peculiar turn of events, Sachish acquires transcendence not through his submission to the master figure of a guru but by being absolved of it. It is through his ‘destitution’ that he acquires his true decenterment and becomes the empty/substanceless “transcendental subject” (Zupančič, 2000, p. ix). After Sachish, Sribilas, and Damini also consolidate their subjective disposition through the most socially recognisable act – marriage. Damini’s disruptive status and her uncanny figuration, which defined the cave episode, are largely subsumed under the canopy of desire. Sribilas proposes to marry Damini. Sribilas exerts his feeling as if “The line, ‘ At your footsteps the noose of love tightens round my soul’, was like a flame showering sparks in all directions”(Tagore, 2005, p. 971). Sribilas finds his Imaginary reconciliation through the symbolic act of ‘love,’ which is sublimation par excellence. By reducing Damini as an object of his desire, he domesticates the feminine jouissance and gives it meaning. Tagore does not discuss much about Sachish after the scene at the sandbank. The fact that Sachish finds himself dissociated from the Symbolic gives us an inkling as to why even Sribilas is also unable to find him and ends up referring to him as a “madcap” (Tagore, 2005, p. 973).

Conclusion

This paper has delineated the issue of subjectivity and its problematic association with ideology through the analysis of Rabindranath Tagore’s novel *Chaturanga*. With Lacanian psychoanalysis, major thematic portions have been exegetically evaluated to show that Tagore adumbrates the contours of his characters in a way that disrupts and problematizes any notion of apodictic

congruity with ideology. Rather than being enshrined in perfect homeostasis, the characters emerge as the point at which ideology qua interpellation fails. Despite sorting the inundation of ontological chaos through socially sanctioned acts, the subjects maintain their singular constancy to nothingness. It can thus be asserted, to end with Tagore's own words, that the "psyche has been created – perhaps as a jest – specially to deceive the psychologist" (Tagore, 2005, p. 970).

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