

Revolutionary Echoes: Marxist Insights into The Social Class and Economic Conditions in Rabindranath Tagore's

Subha

Trijit Mukherjee

Independent Scholar

M. A. in English

Bhairab Ganguly College

Kolkata, West Bengal, India

trijitmukherjee04@gmail.com

Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore, a renowned literary figure and a futuristic, has written the short story *Subha*, a work that transcends its romantic narrative to offer a broader critique of power structures and societal ideologies. If someone is a woman, her situation is going to be worse; if she is physically challenged, her situation is going to take a nightmare - this is how the late nineteenth-century society used to treat women, painted by Tagore. The protagonist *Subha* is a woman who is physically challenged and her relationship with *Amal*, who belongs to the upper class, changes their relationship quo and causes one of the reasons for the plot's trajectory. Applying Althusserian lenses to this exploration, the research scrutinizes the manifestations of the Ideological State Apparatuses within the narrative. The central research questions guide the inquiry, emphasizing an in-depth analysis of the operationalization of the *Ideological State Apparatus* in delineating social class distinctions. This paper maintained in a qualitative methodology involves a meticulous examination of the text and discerns the nuanced portrayal of social class within *Subha*. Drawing on Althusser's Marxism theory, the study, moreover, investigates how the *Ideological State Apparatus* influences characters'

relationships, exploring the intersections of personal desires and societal expectations. However, the research findings aim to contribute to the understanding of how ideology shapes literary narratives, shedding light on the intricate dynamics between characters, social class, and plot trajectories. In a broader context, this study underscores the enduring relevance of Marxist theory in literary analysis, offering insights into the mechanisms through which ideological forces operate in shaping the sociocultural landscape depicted in Tagore's *Subha*.

Keywords: Ideology; Marxism; Society; Trajectory; Hegemony

Introduction

The short story *Subha* (1893) by Rabindranath Tagore is a poetic tapestry containing THEMES of social conventions, love, and class. The story and its characters are shaped by a complex interplay of ideological forces that lurk behind the surface of romance and social critique. Subhashini, the female protagonist, represents his strong character and integrity despite being dumb from birth. This paper tries to shed insight into the social class distinctions of that era by examining the difficulties Subha experienced.

1.1 Research Subject

The strict social rules and laws that characterized post-nineteenth-century civilization made it noteworthy.

Renowned Indian poet, polymath, and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore made a significant contribution to Indian literature and his own *Subha*. With his *reification*¹, Tagore was able to show India in the wake of the nineteenth century and how women were subjugated by the patriarchy. 'Tagore poignantly points out how Subha's inability to hear and speak lends her an invisibility of existence in society' (Nair). In the end, as Tagore suggested, this paper highlights the importance of ideology as a tool for comprehending social class and economic realities.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This paper uses literature and a particular female character as its main sources, and Althusser's Marxism - specifically, the *Ideological State Apparatus* - as its secondary source to support the text.

1.3 Methodology

The paper highlights Louis Althusser's Marxist perspective's theoretical framework while maintaining the qualitative technique. The objective of this research is to examine how the *Ideological State Apparatus* quietly

1.4 Research Questions

This paper examines a selected work from the post-nineteenth century that provides insight into Bengal's past under patriarchal rule. The chosen passage effectively illustrates the long-lasting effects of terrible luck, especially emphasizing the predicament of a female victim who is the subject of this paper. The analysis looks closely at the text to shed light on the complex relationship that exists between ideology and social reality.

This paper will investigate the following questions:

1. How does the *Ideological State Apparatus* operate in the portrayal of social class distinctions in Tagore's *Subha*?
2. How do these ideological mechanisms shape characters' relationships and contribute to the plot's trajectory?

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¹ Althusser modifies the way societal structures are portrayed, affects character interactions, and contributes to the overall plot trajectory of the story - all of these serve as the modus operandi of this paper.

The ISA and The Social Class Distinctions

Early in life and continuing throughout his life, Tagore was exposed to a wider world beyond his native region. As a result, the relationship between his political beliefs and his worldview presents an interesting but challenging problem. According to Sobhanlal Datta Gupta,

Viewed in this light, Tagore's engagement with both the West and the East was a dialectical process, endorsing some points and rejecting others, weighing the positive against the negative (Gupta 280).

According to Louis Althusser's theory of *Ideological State Apparatuses*, establishments like schools, churches, and the media function as ideological machinery that covertly maintain the prevailing ideology of the ruling class in addition to the *Repressive State Apparatus*. These systems of belief, rituals, and representations serve as tools for these apparatuses, normalizing the existing social order and its ingrained inequality. The *Ideological State Apparatus*, stated by Althusser in his *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*,

I shall call Ideological State Apparatuses a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institution (Althusser 143).

In addition to revealing the stages of personal development, the narrative's examination of the social strata via the *Ideological State Apparatus* illuminates the larger socioeconomic institutions that Tagore created.

Even though Subha is the female protagonist of the novel, Tagore quietly presents Amal as well. Amal enjoys the perks of inherited money and a carefree lifestyle as a member of the wealthy elite. Expensive marriages, complex ceremonies, and a blind acceptance of societal hierarchies characterize his existence. By painstakingly capturing

Amal's way of life, Tagore gently reinforces the aristocracy's firmly established position of power and influence while also portraying the *Ideological State Apparatus* in action. While Amal enjoys the benefits of his social status, Tagore introduces us to Subha, who comes from a less privileged background. The financial difficulties that Subha's family faces highlight the stark contrast between the luxury of the nobility and the hard circumstances that the working class faces. The central element of the short narrative where the ideological conflicts arise is the relationship between Amal and Subha. Amal is drawn to attributes that contradict his sheltered life and is first enthralled by Subha's unique spirit and depth of intelligence. However, the enormous gap between their socioeconomic classes turns out to be an impassable obstacle. Amal is constantly reminded of the *Ideological State Apparatus* of family and society's expectations to uphold his class standing and follow the customs of getting married within his social group. Amal's psychological struggle, in which his sincere love for Subha collides with the deeply embedded ideological training of his background, is the perfect example of this dilemma.

Interplay of The ISA in The Characters' Relationships and The Plot Trajectory

Ideology serves as a framework for individual differentiation, enabling an individual to plant the seeds of ideology in a community. The sown ideological seeds help to change a society's viewpoint through this variety. Philip Goldstein defines ideology as,

Ideology is a system (possessing its logic and proper rigour) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts according to the case) endowed with an existence and an historical role at the heart of a given society (Goldstein 23).

Althusser argues that individuals are 'interpellated' into ideology, meaning they are positioned within the social structure through specific roles and identities. This exact procedure causes Amal to struggle with an internal conflict where he is divided between his desires and what his class expects of him. Subha, on the other hand, represents a subversion

of the prevailing ideology. Her independence and disobedience of social conventions undermine the existing hierarchies of power. But there's a cost associated with this resistance. Subha experiences societal disapproval and exclusion, highlighting the methods of ideological control used by the *Ideological State Apparatuses* to stifle dissent.

The tragic end of Amal and Subha's love is a recurring theme throughout *Subha's* story. Even while their love is genuine, it is ultimately destroyed by the powerful effect of cultural norms and the ideological machinery of the *Ideological State Apparatuses*. Through this terrible series of events, Tagore exposes the brutal reality of a society run by rigid class divisions and repressive ideologies. The lovers' tragic relationship serves as a powerful critique of the ability of *Ideological State Apparatuses* to suppress personal wants and maintain the status quo in society.

Moreover, Althusser emphasizes the significance of the *Ideological State Apparatus*, with *the family* being a key source. Tagore's exploration of *interpellation*² and *hegemony*³ in the short story *Subha* is intricately woven into the narrative fabric, emanating prominently from the protagonist Subha's family and influencing the trajectory of the

² Althusser

³ Gramsci plot. Subha's family serves as a microcosm where *interpellation*, the hailing of individuals into predefined social roles, is vividly illustrated. The family becomes a conduit for the transmission of hegemonic ideologies, shaping Subha's perceptions and reinforcing societal norms. The plot's trajectory unfolds against this backdrop of *hegemony*, where Subha grapples with the internal conflict of conforming to or resisting the imposed ideologies. The tension between individual agency and societal expectations becomes palpable as Subha navigates a path that challenges the established norms, highlighting Tagore's nuanced exploration of *interpellation* and *hegemony* within the dynamics of Subha's family and the overarching plot.

Conclusion

Nobody understood Indian women better than Tagore in Literature. Tagore portrayed the everyday agonies of the women rather than questioning the wider question of feminism (Nair).

In addition to being perceptive, Rabindranath Tagore's political beliefs also demonstrated a futuristic outlook.

Though he lived in the late nineteenth century, some of his observations are relevant to some situations in the twenty-first century, where sadly, discrimination against women still exists. Gupta directly states on Tagore,

Tagore's view of politics was certainly futuristic if not utopian. Consequently, he was misunderstood by his own countrymen as well as the Western intelligentsia (Gupta 289).

The mentions of religious rituals in the narrative can be construed as ideological tools employed to validate the prevailing social structure and rationalize the disparities experienced by the lower classes. Likewise, the stress on female seclusion and the societal expectations imposed on women can be viewed as strategies utilized by the *Ideological State Apparatus* to uphold patriarchy and strengthen gendered power dynamics.

Subha goes beyond its romantic storyline to provide a nuanced analysis of power structures and ideological influence. Viewed through an Althusserian perspective, it can be observed the functioning of the *Ideological State Apparatuses* within the short story, molding the representation of social class distinctions and ultimately, the trajectory of the protagonists' relationship. Tagore's masterpiece serves as a warning, underscoring the subtle and pervasive nature of ideology and its capacity to curtail individual freedom while sustaining social injustices.

Conflict of Interest: The corresponding author, on behalf of second author, confirms that there are

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