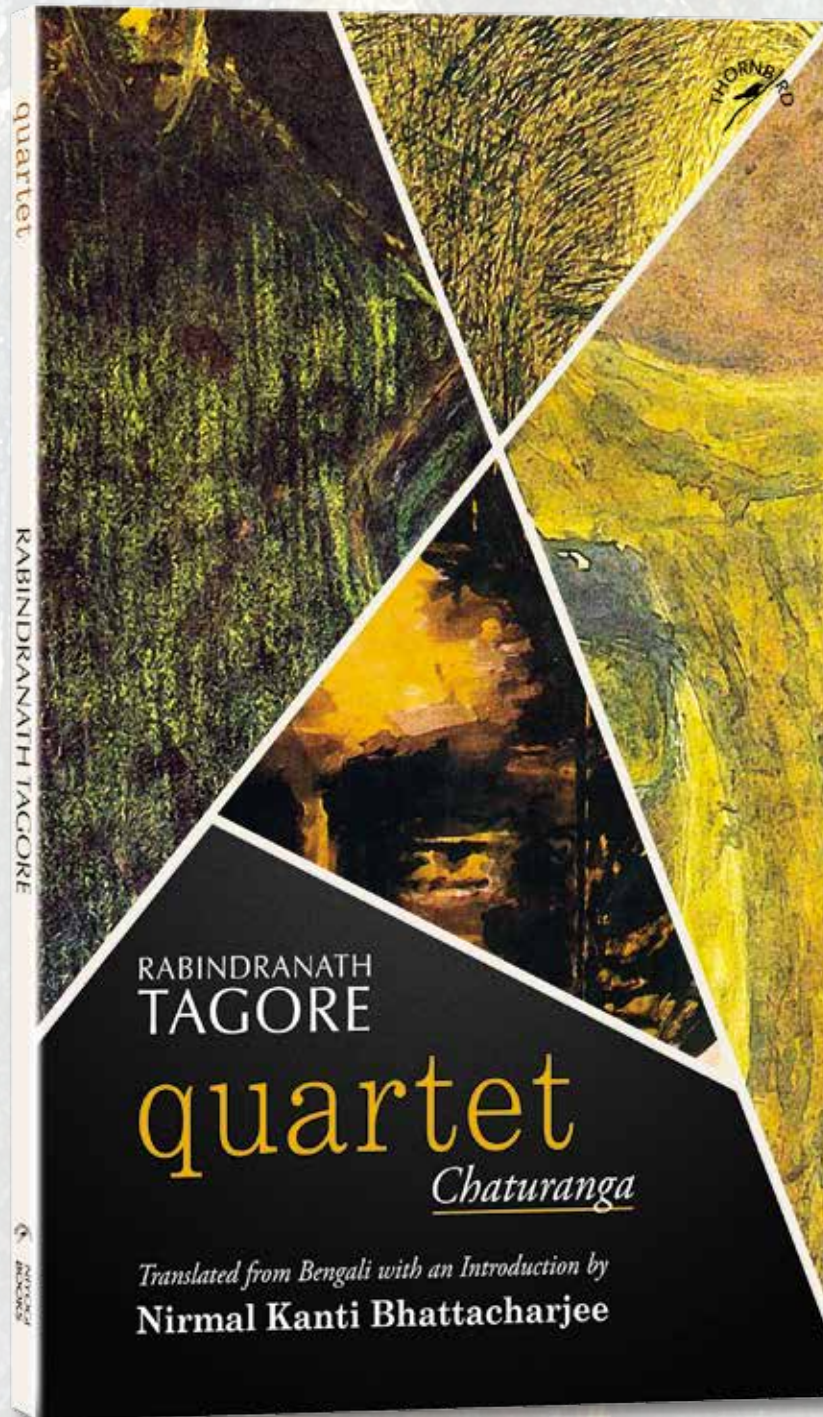


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quartet

Chaturanga

by
Rabindranath Tagore

Translated from Bengali with an
Introduction by
Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee

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Tagore's *Chaturanga* (*Quartet*) is a short novella set in 19th century Bengal. The philosophical questions which are raised in the course of the story make this one of his most complex and metaphorical works. A social novel centred on four characters, it raises pointed questions about religion and atheism, dabbling in the complex hues of the man-woman relationship. Published in 1916, this novel is considered a landmark in Bengali literature.

The story revolves around the four pivotal characters with just one woman in the midst of three males. And the protagonist Sachis—the most tormented soul—is torn between natural human longings and a forced imposition of spiritual emancipation. It is a struggle between the form and the formless. Subtle psychological interpretations of the minds of the characters lead relationships from the physical to the mystical and draw the reader to look beyond the apparent, deeper into the workings of the human mind.

Quartet, the present translation of *Chaturanga*, lends a contemporary flavour to the novel. It successfully brings out Tagore's profound understanding of the human subconscious, without sacrificing the underlying playfulness in the language and the unique style of the original work.

I felt a deep breath near my feet...I imagined it to be a strange reptile. It was more despicable because of its softness, that cluster of hunger.... I felt a heap of mane over my feet. Someone slunk away from the cave in the darkness. I thought I heard a sound.

Was it a suppressed cry?

Rabindranath Tagore, sobriquet *Gurudev*, was a Bengali polymath who reshaped Bengali literature and music, as well as Indian art with Contextual Modernism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Author of *Gitanjali* and its “profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse”, he became the first non European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913.



Former Director, National Book Trust, India, and former Director, K.K. Birla Foundation, New Delhi,

Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee was also the Editor of Sahitya Akademi's prestigious journal Indian Literature. Prof. Bhattacharjee was the Editorial Consultant of the Multi-volume Documentation Project of the Rashtrapati Bhavan from 2013 to 2016 and is an accomplished translator from Bengali to English and vice versa, his English translations of the writings of Mahasveta Devi, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Manik Bandyopadhyay and Sirshendu Mukhopadhyay have all been very well received.

Recipient of the best translator's award from IBBY Congress held in London in 2012, Prof. Bhattacharjee has edited a collection of stories of displacement from Assam (*Barbed Wire Fence*, Niyogi Books).