

RESEARCH ARTICLE**Tagore's Mrinal in *Streer Patra* – An Encounter with His Vision of the Woman Arriving**

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Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore's short story *Streer Patra* (1914), translated as "The Wife's Letter," stands as a landmark in feminist writing in colonial India. The protagonist, Mrinal, voices her protest against patriarchal oppression in the form of a farewell letter to her husband's household. This paper explores Mrinal as Tagore's vision of the "woman arriving"—a figure who resists confinement, asserts her individuality, and embraces a new subjectivity that transcends domestic bondage. While Tagore's poetry, plays, and essays have received extensive attention, this story demands fresh scrutiny in light of contemporary feminist theory, decolonial readings, and post-NEP 2020 pedagogical frameworks. The scope of this study is threefold: first, to situate Mrinal in the socio-historical matrix of early twentieth-century Bengal; second, to engage with the theoretical debates around women's agency, autonomy, and resistance; and third, to examine the continued pedagogical relevance of *Streer Patra* in classroom contexts where literature intersects with questions of gender justice and citizenship. The research highlights how Tagore simultaneously critiques patriarchy and anticipates later feminist formulations of liberation, thereby allowing Mrinal to emerge as a precursor to modern articulations of women's freedom.

Keywords: Tagore, Mrinal, *Streer Patra*, women's emancipation, feminist pedagogy**I. Introduction: Tagore and the Question of Women**

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), India's Nobel Laureate in Literature, consistently placed women at the center of his creative and intellectual imagination. While celebrated primarily as a poet and philosopher, Tagore was also a social thinker whose essays, lectures, and fiction reveal a deep concern with women's position in society. Unlike many reformist contemporaries in the Bengal Renaissance, Tagore did not see women merely as beneficiaries of benevolent reform but as autonomous subjects whose voices could and must redefine the cultural order (Tagore, 1921/2009).

In his essay *Stri Shiksha (On Women's Education)*, published in *Sadhana* (1917), Tagore argued that education for women should not simply replicate the system designed for men. He insisted that it must cultivate imagination, empathy, and the freedom to think beyond domestic duties (Tagore, 1917/2005). This conviction also found expression in his speeches at Santiniketan, where he frequently linked women's emancipation with the ideals of freedom and creativity that underpinned his educational philosophy (Tagore, 1929/2012). For Tagore, a society that silenced its women forfeited its claim to cultural vitality.

Personal experience sharpened this conviction. In his letters, Tagore reflected on the tragedy of Kadambari Devi, his sister-in-law and confidante, whose suicide haunted him throughout his life (Tagore, 1884/2014). He saw in her fate an indictment of the oppressive structures of extended households where

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talented women were rendered voiceless. These experiences shaped his empathetic portrayals of women, who often emerge in his fiction not as submissive figures but as thinkers and seekers of freedom.

Characters such as Charulata in *Nastanirh (The Broken Nest)*, Bimala in *Ghare Baire (The Home and the World)*, and especially Mrinal in *Streer Patra (The Wife's Letter)* exemplify this concern. Unlike heroines in contemporary nationalist discourse, who were idealized as symbols of cultural purity, Tagore's women articulate dissatisfaction with their assigned roles and imagine alternative futures (Chakravarty, 2008; Lal, 2011). *Streer Patra* is arguably his most radical story, since it abandons romantic entanglement altogether and focuses instead on Mrinal's refusal to remain silent in a patriarchal household.

Theoretical frameworks help illuminate this radicalism. Simone de Beauvoir's (1949/2011) thesis that woman is historically constituted as "the Other" resonates with Mrinal's condition, yet her epistolary revolt embodies the process of becoming a subject. Julia Kristeva's notion of "becoming" and the unfinalizable subject (1986) further explains Mrinal's departure for Puri as a threshold moment of liberation. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1988) question—"Can the subaltern speak?"—finds an anticipatory answer in Mrinal's voice, which refuses subaltern silencing by inscribing dissent in a written letter. Martha Nussbaum's (2010) argument that literature cultivates ethical imagination underscores the continuing pedagogical relevance of *Streer Patra*, especially in the NEP-2020 context where gender justice and critical thinking are prioritized.

Why would Tagore think so? His philosophical humanism, rooted in the Upanishadic idea of unity and dignity of all beings, combined with his cosmopolitan exposure to Western liberal and feminist thought, informed his vision. Yet it was his lived observation of women's struggles in colonial Bengal that made him recognize that true social progress demanded their emancipation. By giving Mrinal a voice of refusal, Tagore not only critiqued patriarchy but also foreshadowed feminist articulations of autonomy and subjectivity.

Literature Review

Rabindranath Tagore's short story *Streer Patra (The Wife's Letter, 1914)* has attracted sustained scholarly interest for its radical reimagining of the female subject in colonial Bengal. The story is frequently cited as a pioneering feminist text, one that anticipates later debates about women's voice, agency, and autonomy. This literature review surveys key strands of scholarship on *Streer Patra*, tracing critical approaches that emphasize historical context, feminist interpretation, and pedagogical relevance.

Early critical responses to Tagore's treatment of women were ambivalent. Edward Thompson (1948), in his biography of Tagore, praised the author's sympathy for women but simultaneously saw his portrayals as constrained by the contradictions of a male reformer. These initial assessments cast Tagore as progressive yet paternalistic, framing his female characters as simultaneously liberated and limited by his own vantage point. Later feminist scholarship, however, reclaimed *Streer Patra* as a landmark in women's writing. Radha Chakravarty (2008) argues that Mrinal's act of writing a farewell letter transforms private dissent into a public voice, effectively rupturing patriarchal silences. Malashri Lal (2011) similarly foregrounds the epistolary form as a strategy that allows Mrinal to bypass conventional narration and speak in her own terms. Both critics highlight how the letter destabilizes the authority of the husband's household and establishes a discursive space for female subjectivity.

Other scholars place the story within the broader socio-cultural movements of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Bengal. Partha Chatterjee (1993) and Tanika Sarkar (2001) point out that while reformers advanced causes like female education and widow remarriage, the nationalist imagination continued to idealize women as guardians of tradition rather than as individuals with rights. Against this backdrop, Tagore's portrayal of Mrinal emerges as an incisive critique: she refuses to embody the "bhadramahila" (respectable

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woman) stereotype, choosing instead to abandon the home altogether.

In postcolonial feminist readings, *Streer Patra* has been aligned with the problematics of subaltern speech. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) famously asked whether the subaltern can speak, drawing attention to the structural silencing of women within both colonial and indigenous patriarchy. Mrinal's letter demonstrates one possible mode of speech: she not only narrates her experiences but inscribes them in a form that survives beyond oral protest. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) underscores that such agency must be understood in context, warning against reducing Mrinal's act to a Western model of feminism. These theoretical engagements suggest that the story is both specific to its cultural milieu and resonant with global feminist discourses.

Recent pedagogical readings emphasize the continued relevance of *Streer Patra* in twenty-first century classrooms. Martha Nussbaum (2010) stresses the role of literature in cultivating ethical imagination, while Krishna Kumar (2020) argues for literature's capacity to foster critical citizenship. Applied to Tagore's story, these frameworks highlight Mrinal's refusal as not only a personal act of rebellion but also a didactic resource for promoting gender sensitivity, empathy, and reflective thinking among students. In alignment with NEP-2020, the story becomes an instrument for discussing justice, autonomy, and the reimagining of women's roles in society.

Overall, the critical literature converges on three claims: that *Streer Patra* articulates one of the earliest Indian feminist voices in fiction; that it disrupts both colonial reformist and nationalist idealizations of women; and that it continues to hold pedagogical significance as a narrative of resistance. The scholarly debate affirms that Mrinal's letter, far from being a private act, represents a public intervention into the cultural imagination of modern India.

Research Questions

The present paper seeks to answer the following important questions: How does *Streer Patra* articulate a vision of female subjectivity that anticipates modern feminist discourse? In what ways does Mrinal's letter operate as resistance to patriarchal silencing? How does the story engage with the reformist and nationalist discourses of colonial Bengal? What relevance does *Streer Patra* hold for contemporary debates on gender justice and NEP-2020 pedagogy?

The following sections are an effort to find answers to the questions raised with regard to positioning the story within a broader theoretical frame (Beauvoir, Kristeva, Spivak, etc.), justifying the analysis around the epistolary form as resistance, situating Mrinal within the **colonial Bengal reformist/nationalist context** to keep the historical perspective clear, and bringing the discussion into the **NEP-2020 framework**, extending the story's significance to **contemporary pedagogy, gender justice, and citizenship education**

II. The Story of Mrinal in *Streer Patra*: A Narrative Outline:

Rabindranath Tagore's short story *Streer Patra* (*The Wife's Letter*, 1914) is written in the form of a farewell letter by Mrinal, a young woman married into an affluent household in colonial Bengal. For fifteen years, she has lived in her husband's family home, enduring the subtle humiliations and restrictions imposed on her as a daughter-in-law. Despite her intelligence and literary inclination, she is consistently denied recognition and confined to domestic duties.

The turning point in her life comes with the tragic fate of Bindu, an orphaned girl taken in by the family. Treated as an unwanted burden, Bindu eventually dies by suicide, unable to withstand the cruelty of the household. This event awakens Mrinal's suppressed sense of injustice and compels her to confront the hypocrisy and inhumanity of her environment.

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In her letter, addressed to her husband and his family, Mrinal declares her decision never to return. She critiques the patriarchal structures that reduced her to invisibility, articulates her right to selfhood, and asserts that she has finally recognized her worth beyond domestic subjugation. The act of writing itself becomes a radical gesture: a woman inscribing her refusal to remain silent.

The story closes with Mrinal's voice strong and unapologetic, embracing a new horizon of freedom as she sets out for Puri. Her departure symbolizes both a personal emancipation and a broader vision of women's awakening in a society caught between reformist rhetoric and entrenched patriarchy.

Tagore's *Streer Patra (The Wife's Letter)* unfolds through the intimate form of a farewell letter, written by Mrinal, a woman married for fifteen years into a wealthy Calcutta household. The epistolary structure invests the narrative with immediacy and subjectivity: it is Mrinal's story, told in her own words, without mediation. From the outset, she positions herself as more than a dutiful wife, noting, "From my earliest days I had a mind of my own" (Tagore, 2006, p. 142). Yet despite her intelligence and literary inclinations, her identity is continually suppressed within the household, where efficiency in domestic tasks is valued over creativity or thought.

The turning point comes with the figure of Bindu, an orphaned girl taken into the family, who becomes Mrinal's companion and emotional refuge. Bindu's mistreatment—her humiliation, forced marriage, and eventual suicide—serves as a catalyst for Mrinal's awakening. Reflecting on Bindu's death, she writes bitterly, "She had no place in your world, so you pushed her out of it" (Tagore, 2006, p. 147). This recognition of systemic cruelty compels Mrinal to refuse complicity.

Her farewell letter thus becomes an act of rupture. She announces, "I am not coming back" (Tagore, 2006, p. 150), a declaration that is neither confession nor plea, but assertion. The open-endedness of her departure—choosing to go to Puri without detailing her future—emphasizes the radical nature of her refusal. As she insists, "I want to breathe freely, I want to live" (Tagore, 2006, p. 151). This articulation transforms the story from a chronicle of endurance into a manifesto of liberation. By granting Mrinal the authority to narrate her own break from patriarchal confinement, Tagore anticipates modern feminist insistence on women's right to autonomy.

Mrinal's Voice as Counter-Discourse

Mrinal's letter constitutes a counter-discourse that destabilizes patriarchal authority both within the household and within literary tradition. In a society where women's speech was restricted to the private, oral domain, her decision to write is itself radical. The permanence of writing ensures that her voice cannot be dismissed: "This letter is not for your consolation—it is for my own freedom" (Tagore, 2006, p. 149). In this way, Mrinal's words transcend personal grievance, challenging the cultural script that defines women as silent and subordinate.

By recounting Bindu's fate, Mrinal directly indicts the cruelty embedded in the household. She observes, "You crushed her tender heart as if it were nothing" (Tagore, 2006, p. 148), exposing the systemic violence masked by notions of respectability. This testimonial quality transforms her letter into what Foucault might term a discourse of resistance: a refusal to reproduce the silences imposed by power.

Her act resonates with later feminist theory. Spivak's (1988) question, "Can the subaltern speak?" finds a prescient answer here. Mrinal not only speaks, she writes herself into permanence. She refuses to be the "Other" that Beauvoir (1949/2011) describes, insisting instead on the possibility of becoming. As she declares near the close, "I am leaving behind the walls that stifled me" (Tagore, 2006, p. 151).

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The letter is not a lament but a manifesto. Its affective force lies in its uncompromising refusal: “I will never again return to your house” (Tagore, 2006, p. 150). By rejecting the domestic space as the sole site of female identity, Mrinal articulates a new horizon of freedom. Her epistolary voice thus emerges as a literary and political rupture, anticipating feminist assertions of subjectivity and agency in Indian literature.

III. The Socio-Historical Context: Bengal Renaissance and Reform

To understand the radicalism of Mrinal’s voice in *Streer Patra*, it is essential to situate the story within the socio-historical context of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Bengal. This period, often described as the Bengal Renaissance, was marked by a surge of intellectual, cultural, and social reform movements that sought to modernize Indian society under colonial rule. Reformers such as Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and later social activists pushed for the abolition of sati, widow remarriage, and the promotion of women’s education (Sarkar, 2001; Kopf, 1979). These interventions were, however, uneven and often shaped by patriarchal assumptions about the role of women.

While reformist discourse foregrounded the upliftment of women, it frequently cast them as symbols rather than as agents. Partha Chatterjee (1993) argues that the nationalist project divided the world into the “material” and the “spiritual”: the material was identified with the outside world of colonial modernity, while the spiritual was located in the home, entrusted to women. Thus, women became the custodians of cultural authenticity, embodying the values of chastity, sacrifice, and devotion. This ideology paradoxically both valorized and restricted women. In Tagore’s story, Mrinal resists precisely this construction, refusing to embody the idealized wife or spiritual guardian of tradition.

At the same time, the everyday reality of many women in *bhadralok* households was marked by confinement, silencing, and subordination. Tanika Sarkar (2001) demonstrates how reform narratives rarely addressed women’s inner lives or their psychological suffering, instead emphasizing their utility within family and nation. Tagore, by dramatizing Mrinal’s inner voice and her refusal to return to her husband’s home, broke with this pattern. He depicted not only the external reforms but also the deeper existential yearning for freedom.

The tragedy of Bindu in *Streer Patra* must be read against this background. Orphaned and treated as a burden, Bindu embodies the vulnerability of women left unprotected by reformist legislation. Her suicide is not merely a personal catastrophe but a critique of the inadequacy of social reform to address entrenched hierarchies of class, gender, and power. Mrinal’s departure after Bindu’s death becomes an indictment of both patriarchal domesticity and the limitations of reformist discourse.

Thus, *Streer Patra* exposes the contradictions of the Bengal Renaissance: while celebrating ideals of modernity and progress, it often left intact the structures that constrained women’s agency. Tagore’s narrative insists on moving beyond symbolic elevation of women to recognizing their right to selfhood and autonomy, making Mrinal’s voice a radical intervention in the reformist debates of his time.

IV. Mrinal as “The Woman Arriving”

In *Streer Patra*, Mrinal is not merely a character breaking away from her marital home but a symbolic representation of the “woman arriving”—a subject stepping into autonomy after centuries of confinement. The phrase captures Tagore’s vision of women not as static ideals but as evolving agents of change. By writing her farewell letter, Mrinal embodies the transition from silence to speech, from subjugation to selfhood.

Tagore himself, in his essays on women’s education, emphasized that women should not be reduced to custodians of tradition. In *Stri Shiksha (On Women’s Education)*, he warned against treating them as “decorative dolls” and instead urged recognition of their intellectual and creative potential (Tagore,

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1917/2005). This resonates with Mrinal's assertion: "From my earliest days I had a mind of my own" (Tagore, 1914/2006, p. 142). Her departure for Puri is not an escape but a conscious act of reclaiming that mind, refusing to remain the Other.

The idea of the "arriving woman" also situates Mrinal within the reformist discourse of her time. Raja Rammohan Roy, a century earlier, had argued for the abolition of sati, insisting that women's lives held intrinsic value (Roy, 1820/1975). Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar championed widow remarriage and female education, asserting that "to deny education to women is to deny education to half of humanity" (Vidyasagar, 1855/1978). Yet, as Partha Chatterjee (1993) has shown, nationalist ideology continued to idealize women as guardians of the spiritual home, limiting their actual agency. Against this backdrop, Mrinal's refusal to return is radical: she not only critiques the hypocrisy of her household but also symbolically rejects the nationalist script that bound women to domestic sanctity.

Theoretical frameworks illuminate her significance. Simone de Beauvoir's (1949/2011) argument that woman is made "the Other" resonates here; Mrinal resists this construction by declaring, "I am not coming back" (Tagore, 1914/2006, p. 150). Julia Kristeva's (1986) notion of the subject-in-process helps interpret her journey to Puri as an act of becoming, a movement into uncharted freedom. Martha Nussbaum (2010) reminds us that literature can cultivate the ethical imagination necessary for justice, and Mrinal's testimony exemplifies this by compelling readers to inhabit the consciousness of a woman breaking free.

Mrinal is thus not merely a fictional protagonist but a herald of new subjectivity in Indian literature. She is the "arriving woman" who refuses symbolic elevation without substantive freedom, who speaks in her own name, and who gestures toward futures where women can breathe, think, and live as autonomous beings.

V. Literary Form and Aesthetic Strategy

One of the most striking aspects of *Streer Patra* is its use of the epistolary form, which departs from Tagore's more conventional narrative strategies and invests the story with unusual immediacy. The letter form allows Mrinal to speak without an intrusive narrator, foregrounding her own voice as both subject and author. In doing so, Tagore subverts the literary convention of mediated female representation, replacing it with unfiltered self-articulation. Mrinal's statement, "This letter is not for your consolation—it is for my freedom" (Tagore, 1914/2006, p. 149), captures this formal radicalism.

The epistolary mode has historically been a powerful medium for marginalized voices, enabling women to articulate dissent within the private yet transgressive act of writing. As Janet Gurkin Altman (1982) notes in her foundational work on epistolary fiction, the letter destabilizes hierarchies of authority by collapsing the distance between the private and the public, the personal and the political. Mrinal's farewell letter exemplifies this function: though addressed to her husband's household, its rhetorical weight speaks to broader structures of patriarchal domination.

From the perspective of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, the form generates polyphony: the household's unspoken authority is implicitly present in the addressee, while Mrinal's voice actively resists it (Bakhtin, 1981). This unfinalizable dialogue is crucial to the story's power. The letter form denies narrative closure—Mrinal does not describe her future, only her refusal to return—thus leaving the text open-ended and generative. In Bakhtinian terms, the narrative resists monologic resolution and instead sustains a horizon of possibility.

Aesthetically, the story's restraint enhances its force. The narrative does not rely on melodrama; instead, it accumulates quiet intensity through understatement. The suicide of Bindu, for instance, is recounted not with sensationalism but with stark finality: "She had no place in your world, so you pushed her out of it"

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(Tagore, 1914/2006, p. 147). Such economy of expression underscores the brutality of social conventions while amplifying Mrinal's decision to reject them.

The absence of a third-person narrator is also significant. By giving Mrinal exclusive control of the narrative, Tagore cedes interpretive authority to her. This choice contrasts sharply with many contemporaneous stories where female characters are filtered through a male narrator's gaze. Here, the act of narration itself becomes an aesthetic strategy of liberation.

Thus, the literary form of *Streer Patra* is inseparable from its feminist politics. The epistolary mode, dialogic structure, and minimalist aesthetic combine to foreground a voice breaking patriarchal silence. Tagore's innovation lies not only in thematizing resistance but in inscribing it into the very texture of the narrative.

VI. Pedagogical Relevance: *Streer Patra* in the NEP-2020 Era

Tagore's *Streer Patra* is not only a literary landmark but also a valuable pedagogical tool in the context of India's National Education Policy (NEP-2020). The policy emphasizes critical thinking, value-based education, and gender sensitivity across curricula, particularly at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Mrinal's letter, with its emphatic declaration of independence—"I am not coming back" (Tagore, 1914/2006, p. 150)—serves as an ideal text through which to explore these objectives.

First, the story aligns with NEP-2020's call for **holistic and multidisciplinary education**. By combining literary study with history, philosophy, and gender studies, *Streer Patra* enables students to examine the intersections of colonial reform movements, feminist theory, and contemporary questions of justice. Such an approach exemplifies NEP-2020's emphasis on breaking disciplinary silos and encouraging integrated learning (NEP, 2020, p. 12).

Second, the narrative fosters **critical thinking and ethical reasoning**. Mrinal's decision to leave her husband's household invites students to interrogate patriarchal norms, question inherited traditions, and reflect on ethical choices in oppressive contexts. Nussbaum (2010) argues that literature cultivates the "narrative imagination," enabling readers to enter unfamiliar perspectives and develop empathy. In classroom discussions, Mrinal's testimony can serve as a case study in analyzing how personal voice transforms into social critique.

Third, the story speaks directly to NEP-2020's concern with **gender inclusion and equality**. The policy emphasizes eliminating gender bias and promoting gender justice through curricular content (NEP, 2020, p. 14). By centering the story of a woman who asserts her right to autonomy, teachers can facilitate debates on women's rights in historical and contemporary settings. Comparative modules may also be developed, juxtaposing *Streer Patra* with voices from contemporary feminist writings or narratives of marginalized women, reinforcing NEP's vision of inclusive classrooms.

Finally, the story enables **value-based education and citizenship training**. Mrinal's refusal is not framed as selfish rebellion but as a moral stand against cruelty and injustice. Her insistence, "I want to breathe freely, I want to live" (Tagore, 1914/2006, p. 151), can be read as an ethical claim for dignity that resonates with constitutional values of equality and freedom. In student projects, role-plays, reflective essays, or classroom debates, the text can become a medium for practicing deliberation, empathy, and civic responsibility—precisely the skills NEP-2020 identifies as critical for preparing responsible citizens (NEP, 2020, p. 6).

Thus, *Streer Patra* is not only a pioneering feminist narrative but also an exemplary curricular text for advancing NEP-2020's goals of cultivating critical, empathetic, and justice-oriented learners.

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Although written in 1914, *Streer Patra* continues to resonate powerfully in the contemporary world, where struggles for gender justice remain urgent. Mrinal's refusal to return to her husband's household echoes the experiences of countless women who still confront structural inequalities within family, workplace, and society. Her declaration, "I am not coming back" (Tagore, 1914/2006, p. 150), retains its radical edge in a context where women are often pressured to endure domestic violence, unequal labor burdens, or economic dependence in silence.

Modern feminist movements, such as #MeToo in India and beyond, have amplified women's voices against harassment and oppression, much like Mrinal's letter amplifies dissent against patriarchy. The persistence of debates over marital rights, dowry deaths, or workplace discrimination underscores the unfinished nature of the struggle Mrinal began symbolically in her letter. In this sense, *Streer Patra* speaks not only as a historical text but also as a continuing call to conscience.

Cultural retellings further confirm its relevance. The story has been adapted into films, plays, and television productions, where Mrinal's act of writing acquires fresh urgency in the age of social media. Just as her epistolary voice functioned as a manifesto in Tagore's time, today's women often use digital platforms to narrate experiences of marginalization, creating new counter-publics for resistance.

From a pedagogical perspective, the story resonates with contemporary education's concern for cultivating critical citizenship. NEP-2020 emphasizes gender sensitivity and ethical imagination, and Mrinal's testimony offers a concrete narrative through which students can explore these values. By analyzing her act of resistance, learners are encouraged to reflect on broader questions of justice, dignity, and equality in their own lives.

Thus, the enduring power of *Streer Patra* lies in its capacity to transcend its historical moment and continue to illuminate the ongoing struggles and aspirations of women seeking freedom in the twenty-first century.

VIII. Conclusion

Rabindranath Tagore's *Streer Patra (The Wife's Letter)* remains one of the most compelling articulations of women's autonomy in modern Indian literature. By giving Mrinal the power of authorship, Tagore shifts narrative control from patriarchal authority to the voice of the woman herself. This act was revolutionary in early twentieth-century Bengal, a society deeply enmeshed in reformist and nationalist debates that often idealized women as symbolic figures of purity while denying them subjectivity (Chatterjee, 1993; Sarkar, 2001). Mrinal's insistence—"I am not coming back" (Tagore, 1914/2006, p. 150)—functions as both an intimate declaration and a broader cultural intervention, signaling the emergence of "the woman arriving" in Indian fiction.

Historically, the story can be read as Tagore's critique of the contradictions within the Bengal Renaissance. While reformers like Rammohan Roy and Vidyasagar argued for the abolition of sati and widow remarriage, women continued to suffer confinement and silencing within the domestic sphere. Mrinal's farewell letter dramatizes this paradox: reform had altered laws but had not transformed the lived experience of women trapped in hierarchical households. Her departure thus becomes not only personal emancipation but also a rebuke to the inadequacies of reformist discourse.

Theoretically, the story anticipates and resonates with global feminist insights. Simone de Beauvoir's (1949/2011) concept of woman as "the Other" is directly challenged by Mrinal's refusal to accept passive domesticity. Gayatri Spivak's (1988) concerns about the subaltern woman's speech find an anticipatory

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answer in Mrinal's decision to write, securing her voice against erasure. Julia Kristeva's (1986) notion of the subject-in-process illuminates her journey to Puri as a symbolic act of becoming, a refusal of closure that gestures toward open horizons. Martha Nussbaum's (2010) emphasis on the ethical imagination of literature underscores the enduring value of Mrinal's testimony, which compels readers to inhabit her consciousness and confront the moral urgency of her resistance.

Pedagogically, *Streer Patra* remains a vital text for NEP-2020 classrooms. The policy stresses holistic education, value formation, and gender sensitivity. Mrinal's story embodies these aims: it encourages critical questioning of tradition, cultivates empathy for marginalized voices, and foregrounds justice as a civic value. In structured classroom discussions, role-play, or reflective writing, the story can help students link literary analysis with ethical reasoning, exemplifying how literature fosters citizenship education.

In contemporary times, the story's resonances are profound. Women across the world continue to battle silencing, unequal domestic labor, and systemic violence. Movements like #MeToo testify to the continuing need for women to inscribe their truths, just as Mrinal inscribed hers. The epistolary form that once carried her protest has now expanded into digital spaces, where women's voices circulate as acts of collective resistance.

Ultimately, *Streer Patra* endures because it bridges past and present, literature and life, individual testimony and universal struggle. Tagore, through Mrinal, envisioned not an idealized figure of sacrifice but a woman who breathes, thinks, and lives for herself. In doing so, he left Indian literature a radical legacy: a story that continues to inspire feminist thought, inform pedagogical practice, and illuminate the unfinished journey of women arriving into freedom.

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