

SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

Manuscript info:

Received April 12, 2018., Accepted May 17, 2018., Published June 20, 2019.

MRINAL'S JOURNEY FROM "A DOLL'S HOUSE" TO THE WORLD OF EMANCIPATION IN RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S "STREER PATRA" (THE WIFE'S LETTER)

Mohammad Kaosar Ahmed, PhD

Associate Professor

Department of English Language and Literature
International Islamic University Chittagong



<http://dx.doi.org/10.26739/2573-5616-2019-6-5>

Abstract: Being a male person and a member of a dogmatic Hindu family, Tagore in "Streer Patra" seems very spontaneous in unearthing the suppressions that women are undergoing in the society which is unwilling to accept them as human. This article is a humble attempt to bring out why and how the protagonist, Mrinal starting her life as an ideal "Mejo Bou" defies and rejects patriarchal narratives, initiates her gender deconstruction and finally becomes emancipated. A typical Hindu society with its socio-culturally-conditioned values and beliefs about life at the end of the day instigates the protagonist, Mrinal to leave the "doll's house" unhesitatingly to forsake the shadow of a Lakshmi "Mejo Bou" and turning herself into Mrinaliny - a free woman.

‘ও তো মেয়েমানুষ বই তো নয়। ছেলে হোক-না পাগল।
(তা পুরুষ বটে।’ (Tagore, 1040)

“She’s nothing more than a woman. The groom
may be insane, but he’s a man”.¹

আমিও বাঁচব। আমি বাঁচবুম। (Tagore, 1045)

“I too will be saved. I am saved”.

Recommended citation: Mohammad Kaosar Ahmed. MRINAL'S JOURNEY FROM "A DOLL'S HOUSE" TO THE WORLD OF EMANCIPATION IN RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S "STREER PATRA" (THE WIFE'S LETTER). 5-6. American Journal of Research P. 54-68 (2019).

¹ Translations from Bengali are taken from Gupta, Prasenjit. “The Wife’s Letter”. *abaas Translation*. Parabaas, 2009. Web. 06 November 8, 2016.

Introduction

Tagore's "Streer Patra" (The Wife's Letter) written in 1913 is a unique literary piece just not because it is his first short story in colloquial Bangla, instead he, here, for the first time speaks clearly and boldly about a woman's individuation. In a letter written on 17th May 1941, Tagore wrote that "it's in my short story 'Streer Patra' that I supported the women's cause for the first time." (Das Gupta 122). Breaking his typical patriarchal narrative form, he makes a woman the narrator of the story. Mrinal, the protagonist, is a "doll wife" of an aristocratic family, a family that values patriarchy more than a religion. Mrinal lives with this family for fifteen years as an "Angel in the House," and now she has decided to go on a pilgrimage that will allow her to be free from the bondage of the patriarchal supermarket. Being a male person and a member of a dogmatic Hindu family, Tagore seems very spontaneous in unearthing the suppressions that women are undergoing in that society which is unwilling to accept women as human. Shockingly, like men, other women in the story also love to behave in the patriarchal mode of thinking and consider Mrinal, a misfit. Mrinal tries to continue living like others forming a sisterhood with Bindu, the ill-fated younger sister of her sister-in-law, but Bindu's tragic suicide teaches her a great lesson about "gender normativity," and she decides to resign her role as a "doll-wife".

Tagore and the Woman Question

Born in 1861, Tagore begins writing at the age of six and proceeds to wind up the first Indian as well as the first Asian to win the Nobel Prize for literature. In Tagore's initial works, women have two primary jobs - mother and sweetheart (Pal 237). Anandamoyee in Gora, Jatin's close relative in "Sheshar Ratri" (The Last Night) and Rasmoni in "Rasmonir Chele", are a couple of models of his depiction of the cherishing idea of a mother. Romantic love between a man and a woman is the premise of his accounts, for example, "Dalia" and "Delight Parajoy." Pramatha Nath Bishi is of the view that Tagore's works in the last period of his life progressively give calls for freedom of the individual:

He has repeatedly sent forth summons to free individuals from bondages overcoming hurdles. At one end of this invocation for women is the poem "Mukti" and at the other end are stories like "Haldar Goshthi" (The Haldar Clan), "Streer Patra," "Poila Number" (Number One), etc. The last such invocation is in the story "Laboratory." (236)

He emphatically trusted in battling for women's upliftment utilizing his writing. Concentrating to a great extent on liberation, similar to Raja Rammohan Roy and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, his composing crusaded for women's freedom, equity, opportunity, power and dignity, and rights. In the majority of his works, he has reflected the sore purposes of

contemporary public activity, especially the multitudinous occasions of social injustice to ladies. He additionally holds up, as Majumdar refers to "the ideal of self-reliant Indian women, fighting not only for their own rights but also for those subjugated nationality and the down-trodden humanity" (1). These women characters might be viewed as "models of modern Indian female subjectivity, instrumental in heralding the age in which we live and continuing to resonate toward a more egalitarian Indian society" (Chatterjee 147).

In "Swadesh O Samaj" (Our Country and Society), an accumulation of insightful expositions, he expounds on the lady question that:

"The similarities and differences that mark the two distinct identities of men and women are both equally weighty. Yet, it is the differences that stand out with heavy bias". (Rabindra Rachanabali, Vol. 13: 21)

He then avers that

"The discriminatory treatment of women had existed, complacently in our society for ages. Men must accept the responsibility for sustaining this discriminatory practice of the past". (Rabindra Rachanaboli, Vol. 13: 24)

His managing of the women issues can be seen, as Chatterjee has brought up, in "The Wreck" where Kamala endures the saddest loss of a setback in which two unmistakable watercrafts containing two marriage parties were devastated. While Hemnalini, an educated Brahmo,

is the precursor of the other current woman characters like Sucharita, Lolita, Labanya, and Ela of his later books, Brahmo and Hindu religious conflicts separate family associations, as by Kshemankari. Binodini in Chokher Bali isn't the young lady of a wealthy individual, yet a European Missionary woman is secured to train her. It plays out the skirmish of a young, superb widow for self-acknowledgment and selfhood in a social system that denies all degree for such undertakings. Sucharita and Lolita in Gora are extremely trained without being chosen in a school. The Home and the World records Bimala's change from her restricted life in a zenana to authoritative national issues. In Chaturanga, Damini spurns Hindu expectedness and Vaishnavism to proclaim her existence as a self-sufficient individual in the overall population. Sharmila in Two Sisters faces a crisis in her association with her significant other in light of her defensive love for him. Correspondingly, in The Garden, Niraja perseveres through enthusiastic distress and shortcoming when Sarala extends some help to her life partner amid Niraja's affliction. This anguish can be found in the mind of every life partner who feels that her marriage relationship has been undermined. Char Adhyay, or Four Chapters research Ela's unfulfilled love for Atindra, as a result of the plan of Indranath who saw her similarly as a dissent of sex and want (147).

He contributes to the women issues through his short stories, for instance, "Nashtoneer," "Streer Patra," "Aparichita," "Badnaam," and "Lab," and also in incredible verses, for instance, "Sabala" (in Mahua) and "Mukti" (in Palataka, 1918). Charulata in "Nashtoneer" gathers her very own existence. Her decision required both courage and the information to study the situation. In "Aparichita," Kalyani challenges racial embarrassment and rots offers of marriage. Henceforth Rabindranath gives ladies both the space and the peculiarity to express their considered points of view on veneration, male-driven direction over women, associations among individuals inside and without marriage, and fundamental administration control. An exhibition of his soul, he has made, Mrinal in "Streer Patra" who deserts her significant other and his family to challenge the foul play they have submitted against another lady. Having left home, going up against the new world, she gets herself and her potential.

"The Wife's Letter" ("Streer Patra")

"The Wife's Letter," a conversation in absentia, is the narrative of a woman concerning her personal and family life. The plot is straightforward: Mrinal, a phenomenally delightful and intelligent town young lady is hitched at twelve years old into a wealthy household. While applauded for her excellence she is required to conceal her knowledge. Nobody

realizes that she composes verse in mystery to keep her inventive flames land. She has a baby girl who dies at birth. Grieving and alone, Mrinal becomes a close acquaintance with by Bindu, a 'terrible,' deserted, a stranded adolescent. Bindu sticks to Mrinal with profound friendship, and Mrinal finds a mentorship job in showing the young lady family expressions. In any case, man-controlled society manages that Bindu is to be offered, and she is being provided to a spouse who is a rationally temperamental and savage man. She returns to Mrinal who, unfortunately, can't ensure her in spite of endeavoring some subversive strategies. Bindu, when compelled to return to the mad husband, sets herself on fire and dies. Society is not interested in the passing of this irrelevant lady. For Mrinal, the catastrophe brings home the last acknowledgment that she can't live under such abusive codes for ladies. She should outline her freedom. Saying that she is continuing on a journey to the blessed city of Puri, she can leave home and is determined never to go back.

"Write Yourself"- A Prerequisite of Emancipation

At the very outset of the letter, she makes it clear that in their fifteen years of married life, this is her first attempt to write to "শ্রীচরণকমলেবু" (To the Auspicious Lotus-Feet) (1028) of her husband. In making Mrinal the protagonist to portray her very own involvement in composing, as Charulathaa

asserts, Tagore has anticipated the new period of liberated women that was to develop in the following couple of decades (75). Mrinal's endeavor in composing this letter attracts her close to the perspective of Helen Cixous, the French Feminist, who, in *The Newly Born Women* exhorts women that

"She must write herself, because this is the invention of a new insurgent writing, which, when the

moment of liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history". (18)

The main force behind her motivation to write the letter is her tragic feminine life experience in a dogmatic Hindu family. Patriarchy with all its apparatuses forces her metamorphoses - a conversion that gives her the courage write in the way she feels:

আমি তোমাদের মেজোবউ। আজ পনেরো বছরের পরে এই সমুদ্রের ধারে দাঁড়িয়ে
জানতে পেরেছি, আমার জগৎ এবং জগদীশ্বরের সঙ্গে আমার অন্য সম্বন্ধও আছে। তাই
আজ সাহস করে এই চিঠিখানি লিখছি, এ তোমাদের মেজোবউয়ের চিঠি নয়।
(Tagore, 1028)

"I am Mejo-Bou, the second bride in your joint family. Today, fifteen years later, standing at the edge of the ocean, I understand that I also have other relationships, with the world and the World-Keeper. So I find the courage to write this letter. This is not a letter from your family's Mejo-Bou."

Charulathaa sees that Mrinal's hard-hitting writing in the letter on the major issues of man centric persecution in its diverse structures like settlement, denigration of womenfolk, barbaric treatment in giving convenience, forswearing of ladies' instruction, the loss of character, and lower confidence endeavors to influence men to comprehend the sufferings of ladies (78). In Helen Cixous' empowering words, "Write yourself. Your body must be heard. It is time for women to start scoring their feats in writing

and oral language" (*The Newly Born ladies* 23). Tagore's account empowers a woman to recount and think of her tale about the way of life of the occasions and to unwind the narrative of sexual orientation connections. Mrinal is a New Woman imagined by Tagore who challenges the male centric persecution and gets freed from the equivalent. Notwithstanding, this does not occur out of the blue (Charulathaa 78).

Parade towards "A Doll's House"

Mrinal's narrative starts with how she came to be the "mejo bou" of this doll's house. Still she remembers the day when guests from the groom's house went to their house with a patriarchal display and enthusiasm. Mrinal was beautiful; still her parents were confused whether Mrinal would be chosen by the visitors:

বাবার বুক দুই দুই করতে লাগল, মা দুর্গানাম জপ করতে লাগলেন। শহরের দেবতাকে পাড়গাঁয়ের পুজারি কী দিয়ে সন্তুষ্ট করবে। মেয়ের রূপের উপর ভরসা; কিন্তু, সেই রূপের গুমর তো মেয়ের মধ্যে নেই, যে ব্যক্তি দেখতে এসেছে সে তাকে যে-দামই দেবে সেই তার দাম। তাই তো হাজার রূপে গুণে মেয়েমানুষের সংকোচ কিছুতে ঘোচে না। (Tagore, 1029)

"Father's heart began to pound. Mother started repeating Durga's name. With what offering could a country priest satisfy a city god? All they could rely upon was their girl's appearance. But the girl herself had no vanity; whoever came to see her, whatever price they offered for her, that would be her price. So even with the greatest beauty, the most perfect virtues, a woman's self-doubt can never be dispelled."

Mrinal still remembers the psychological torture that she had to experience on that day. She could not protest this cruel patriarchal parade as she was only 12-year old, but starting her letter with this anecdote, she intends to remind her husband, as a patriarchal agent, that she has not forgotten that insult and the traumatic experience that every woman of her society has to undergo. Her narrative finds those expressions in this way:

সমস্ত বাড়ির, এমন-কি সমস্ত পাড়ার এই আভঙ্ক আমার বৃকের মধ্যে পাথরের মতো চেপে বসল। সেদিনকার আকাশের যত আলো এবং জগতের সকল শক্তি যেন বারো বছরের একটি পাড়গাঁয়ে মেয়েকে দুইজন পরীক্ষকের দুইজোড়া চোখের সামনে শক্ত করে তুলে ধরবার জন্যে পেয়াদাগিরি করছিল— আমার কোথাও লুকোবার আয়ত্তা ছিল না। (Tagore, 1029)

"The terror of the entire household, even the entire neighborhood, settled like a stone in my chest. It was as if the day's sky, its suffusing light, all the powers of the universe were bailiffs to those two examiners, seizing a twelve-year-old village girl and holding her up to the stern scrutiny of those two pairs of eyes. I had no place to hide."

"I had no place to hide" is the echo that haunts Mrinal throughout her life. She wanted to hide because she is a woman. When a girl baby is born, the society becomes busy to make her "marketable" in the patriarchal shopping mall. She is trained to be an "angel in the house". But the case is different with boys.

They need not sit for any "qualification test" in front of the prospective brides. They go and select girls as victors and if the girl is not chosen, she is considered defected and defeated.

When the "wedding flutes wailed, setting the skies to mourn"; Mrinal came to live in a new house. At great length the women "tabulated all [her] shortcomings but allowed that, by and large, I might be reckoned a beauty"; and when her sister-in-law "heard this, her face grew solemn. But she wonders "what the need was for beauty; your family didn't love me for it". With a pinching sarcasm she avers that "had my beauty been molded by some ancient sage from

holy Ganga clay, then it might have been loved; but the Creator had molded it only for His own pleasure, and so it had no value in your pious family"

(রূপ-জিনিসটাকে যদি কোনো সেকেলে পন্ডিত গঙ্গামৃতিকা দিয়ে গড়তেন তা হলে ওর আপনার থাকত; কিন্তু ওটা যে কেবল বিধাতা নিজের আনন্দে গড়েছেন, তাই তোমাদের ধর্মের সংসারে ওর দাম নেই।)

(1029)

Poetry: A Space of her Own

As a culturally conditioned woman Mrinal enters into her husband's household where he finds two other socio-culturally conditioned women. As she represents herself, Mrinal additionally speaks to the aggravating inconsequentiality of Boro Bou, Mrinal's senior sister-in-law and her young sister Bindu. Mrinal's intense perception, her adroitness, her autonomous soul are scripted in each line of this letter of intensity that "interrogates, destabilizes and finally rejects the oppressive and callous citadel of patriarchy" (Das Gupta 122). Among the soonest recollections that she has of the spouse's home, the one that rings a bell is of their cowshed. Ideal by the stairway paving the way to the internal rooms is where the dairy animals are kept. They used to meander before the little yard. A mud trough for their grain remained in one corner of the patio. Toward the beginning of the day the hirelings had numerous activities; throughout the morning the destitute dairy animals would lick at the edges of the trough, nibble at it, and remove pieces from it. She writes:

আমার প্রাণ কাঁদত। আমি পাড়গাঁয়ের মেয়ে— তোমাদের বাড়িতে যেদিন নতুন এলুম
সেদিন সেই দুটি গোরু এবং তিনটি বাছুরই সমস্ত শহরের মধ্যে আমার চিরপরিচিত
আত্মীয়ের মতো আমার চোখে ঠেকল। যতদিন নতুন বউ ছিলাম নিজে না খেয়ে লুকিয়ে
ওদের খাওয়াতুম; যখন বড়ো হলুম তখন গোরুর প্রতি আমার প্রকাশ্য মমতা লক্ষ করে
আমার ঠাট্টার সম্পর্কীয়েরা আমার গোত্র সম্বন্ধে সন্দেহ প্রকাশ করতে লাগলেন।

(Tagore, 1030)

"My heart cried for them. I was a village girl: when I first arrived at your house, those two cows and three calves struck me as being the only friends I had in the entire city. When I was a new bride, I would give my food to them; when I grew older, bantering acquaintances, observing the attention I show the cows, would express their suspicions about my family and ancestral occupation: all cowherds, they said."

So, cows and calves have become her close relatives here. She finds many hostilities around her, but the most important one is her husband's "indifference". To free herself from this suffocation, she has tried to create a "room of her own" by writing poems.

আমি লুকিয়ে কবিতা লিখতুম। সে ছাইপাঁশ যাই হোক-না, সেখানে তোমাদের
অন্দরমহলের পাঁচিল ওঠে নি। সেইখানে আমার মুক্তি; সেইখানে আমি আমি।
আমার মধ্যে যা-কিছু তোমাদের মেজোবউকে ছাড়িয়ে রয়েছে, সে তোমরা পছন্দ
কর নি, চিনতেও পার নি; আমি যে কবি সে এই পনেরো বছরেও তোমাদের কাছে
ধরা পড়ে নি।

(Tagore, 1030)

"Secretly I wrote poems. No matter if it was all rubbish, at least there the boundary wall of the inner compound could not stop me. There lay my freedom, there I could be myself. Whatever it was in me that kept your Mejo-Bou detached from your family, you didn't like it, didn't even recognize it; in all these fifteen years none of you ever found out that I was a poet."

Writing is a private activity and woman's role in the home seems "to preclude her using this space for any but household activities" (Azim and Zaman xiv). That is why Virginia Woolf stresses of a room of one's own, a private space away from household chores which would be completely her own. Writing poetry provide Mrinal that space "where the surreal nature of our plight and our inferior positioning in everyday life confronts our consciousness and vision with a sharpness that is bound to wound our complacency and slash open the fence that seals the private terrain of intimacy, of marriage, of family, and of home" (Huq 21).

Though she terms her writing endeavor as her "freedom", the patriarchal society does not have much time to entertain her creativity. The traditional patriarchal discourse enslaves her in set routine where she is expected to do household duties smartly instead of any sort of intellectual display. Mrinal terms the people of her husband's family as "disable" as they are incapable of judging her creativeness and intelligence - something that she "must have lain deep within me, for it lingered in spite of the many years I spent merely keeping house for you". Her mother "was always very troubled by my intelligence"; since she knows that for "a woman it's an affliction". Her social deconditioning is instigated by her comprehension that "if she whose life is guided by boundaries seeks a life guided by intelligence, she'll run into so many walls that she'll shatter her forehead and her future". She sarcastically remarks that what can she do with the fact that "the intellect that the other wives in the house lacked, the Lord in a careless moment had bestowed upon me; now whom could I return the excess to?" She thinks back how consistently they all used to reprimand her:

মেয়ে-জ্যারী বলে দুবেলা গাল দিয়েছে। কটু কথাই হচ্ছে অক্ষমের সান্ধনা; অতএব সে
আমি ক্ষমা করলুম।

(Tagore, 1030)

"Precocious, impertinent girl! A bitter remark is the consolation of the inept; I forgive all your remarks."

These oppressive codes make her rebellious. Instead of being frustrated for being neglected by the gender-biased society, she shows indifference to the society's neglect towards women saying that

অনাদর-জিনিসটাই ছাইয়ের মতো, সে ছাই আগুনকে হয়তো ভিতরে ভিতরে জমিয়ে
রাখে কিন্তু বাহিরে থেকে তার তাপটাকে বুঝতে দেয় না। আল্লাসন্ধান যখন কন্ঠে যায়
তখন অনাদরকে তো অন্যান্য বলে মনে হয় না। সেইজন্যে তার বেদনা নেই। তাই তো
মেয়েমানুষ দুঃখ বোধ করতেই লজ্জা পায়। আমি তাই বলি, মেয়েমানুষকে দুঃখ পেতেই
হবে এইটে যদি তোমাদের ব্যবস্থা হয়, তা হলে যতদূর সম্ভব তাকে অনাদরে রেখে
দেওয়াই ভালো; আদরে দুঃখে ব্যাথাটা কেবল বেড়ে ওঠে।

(Tagore, 1031)

"Neglect is like ashes, ashes that keep the fire hidden within but do not let the warmth die out. When self-respect ebbs, a lack of attention does not seem unjust. So it causes no pain. And that's why women are ashamed to experience grief. So I say: if this be your arrangement, that women will suffer, then it is best to keep them in neglect, as far as possible; with attention and love, suffering only grows worse."

"Woman - Identified Woman": Beginning of Mrinal's Gender Deconstruction

Denied scholarly pursuits and creative writing, Mrinal turns to mentoring the hapless girl-woman Bindu - an 'ugly', abandoned, orphaned teenager related to another member of the family who does not want her - bringing about one of Tagore's numerous representations of a nurturing sisterhood. Bindu clings to Mrinal with deep affection and Mrinal finds a mentorship role in teaching the young woman household arts. Mrinal's intelligent comprehension of Bindu's tragedy of dependence becomes Tagore's agency for critiquing the patriarchal mind set.

Bindu's fascination for Mrinal encourages her to rediscover her distinction and declare her autonomy. Betty Friedan, a famous women's activist and author called this as, "Woman - Identified Woman" (Walters 107). Later Bindu is married to an insane man. Tagore differentiates between the status of people in male centric culture. A lady is empty in the event that she needs magnificence or riches, though regardless of whether the man is a maniac the capability of taking care of business is all that anyone could need to be married.

Bindu's sister, Boro Bou, Mrinal's senior sister-in law is a phenomenal case of a lady who is prepared to consent any male centric inclinations with the end goal to fulfill her better half's family. Out of extraordinary

sympathy she has brought her sister Bindu in, yet when she has seen her better half's disturbance "she began to pretend that Bindu's presence was an unbearable imposition on her too, and she'd be relieved to be rid of her". She couldn't assemble up the bravery to express her warmth openly for her stranded sister. Watching her quandary, Mrinal turns out to be considerably more bothered. Considering Bidhu's landing her "weight" and "wrongdoing", Boro Bou connects with Bindu into family unit tasks in such a path as though Bindu replaces one of the cleaning specialist workers of the house. Boro Bou is on edge to demonstrate to everybody that the family is blessed to have "Bindu's services at bargain rates. The girl would work tirelessly, and the cost was minimal". This inferiority complex of Boro Bou and its consequences make Mrinal ashamed. She forms a gender sorority with her, but patriarchy dictates that Bindu is to be married off. As it turns out, her husband is a mentally unstable and violent man. She returns back to Mrinal who, unfortunately, is unable to shield her despite endeavoring some insurrectionary maneuvers.

Mrinal's gender deconstruction starts with her experience of Bindu's humiliation by the male-biased society. Discovering that Bindu is married off with someone who is clinically mad, Mrinal, so far "a doll" in the "doll's house" revolts. She burns from disdain and outrage and shouts, "A marriage based on such a deception is not a marriage at all. Bindu, stay with me the way you did before, let's see who dares to take you away." (Tagore, 1039)

At this point of her journey she confronts something more horrifying: women has no compassion for women (মেয়েমানুষকে মেয়েমানুষ দয়া করে না) rather they "act[...] like a cruel patriarch" (Ahmed, "A Psychoanalytic" 37). The torment and tribulations incurred by a woman on a woman left a profound impact at the forefront of Tagore's thoughts. His sympathy for womenfolk is reflected through Mrinal's inclination that a lady demonstrates no benevolence to another lady. In *The Laugh of Medusa* (1975), Helen Cixous likewise sends a hard-hitting message to womenfolk ". . . don't denigrate woman, don't make of her what men have made of you" (339). Tagore's reasoning was fundamentally the same as the later day women's activist belief system and it uncovers his women's activist cognizance. Though biologically female, these women always bear masculine social conditioning. Bindu's mother-in-law, for example, argues that

তার ছেলে তো ওকে খেয়ে ফেলছিল না। মন্দ স্বামীর দৃষ্টান্ত সংসারে দুর্লভ নয়, তাদের
সঙ্গে তুলনা করলে তার ছেলে যে সোনার চাঁদ।

(Tagore, 1040)

"Her son hadn't done anything to hurt Bindu. There were plenty of terrible husbands in the world. Compared to them her son was a jewel, a diamond."

Bindu's sister adds to that

তার ছেলে তো ওকে খেয়ে ফেলছিল না। মন্দ স্বামীর দুষ্টান্ত সংসারে দুর্লভ নয়, তাদের সঙ্গে ভুলনা করলে তার ছেলে যে সোনার চাঁদ।

(Tagore, 1040)

"She has an ill-fated forehead; how long can I grieve over it? He may be crazy, may be a fool, but he's her husband, after all!"

This gender normativity is quite disturbing for Mrinal. It reminds her impudence of the patriarchal discourse:

(Tagore, 1040-41)

কুটুমোগীকে কোলে করে তার স্ত্রী বেশ্যার বাড়িতে নিজে পৌছে দিয়েছে, সতীসাম্বন্ধী সেই দুষ্টান্ত তোমাদের মনে জাগছিল। জগতের মধ্যে অধমতম কাপুরুষতার এই গল্পটা প্রচার করে আসতে তোমাদের পুরুষের মনে আজ পর্যন্ত একটুও সংকোচবোধ হয় নি, সেইজন্যই মানবজন্ম নিয়েও বিন্দুর ব্যবহারে তোমরা রাগ করতে পেরেছ, তোমাদের মাথা হেঁটে হয় নি। বিন্দুর জন্য আমার বুক ফেটে গেল কিন্তু তোমাদের জন্য আমার লজ্জার সীমা ছিল না। আমি তো পাড়ার্গেয়ে মেয়ে, তার উপরে তোমাদের ঘরে পড়েছি, ভগবান কোন্ ফাঁক দিয়ে আমার মধ্যে এমন বুদ্ধি দিলেন। তোমাদের এই-সব ধর্মের কথা আমি যে কিছুতেই সহিতে পারলুম না।

"The image rose in your minds of the leper and his wife-oh devoted woman!-who herself carried him to the prostitute's house. You, with your male minds, did not ever hesitate to preach this story, a story of the world's vilest cowardice; and for the same reason-even though you'd been granted the dignity of human shape-you could be angry at Bindu without feeling the least discomfort. My heart burst for Bindu; for you I felt boundless shame. I was only a village girl, and on top of that I had lived so long in your house-I don't know through what chink in your vigilance God slipped me my brains. I just couldn't bear all your lofty sentiments about woman's duty."

Being a sensible lady, she can't endure every one of these tales of morality. Tagore, through Mrinal, disparages the preaching of moral values, which blesses ladies and makes them uninformed of their exploitation. Mrinal can never again live in that circumstance.

As a final attempt to rescue Bindu from the patriarchal prison cell, she with the help of her brother Sharat, has tried to take Bindu with her in her pilgrimage, but setting fire on her clothes, Bindu has killed herself. The only reaction that Mrinal shows is:

যাক, শান্তি হল।

"Oh. Peace at last."

Bindu's death completes Mrinal's gender deconstruction.

From "A Doll's House" to the World of Emancipation

Mrinal's defiance against the patriarchal marketplace is psychologically motivated. In her husband's world she has not suffered what people normally call grief. There is no lack of food or clothing; and she honestly confesses that unlike his elder brother's character, in her husband's character "there was nothing that I could complain of to the Lord, nothing I could call terrible". She is reluctant to "raise [her] head in complaint about you-this letter is not for that". But it is her female experience that has schooled her that she is a misfit in this typical patriarchy and Bindu's death gives her the wakeup call; consequently she finishes her deconstruction of her life, her identity and her role as a woman.

She is declaring unhesitatingly that

কিন্তু, আমি আর ভোমাদের সেই সাতাশ নম্বর মাখন বাড়ালের গলিতে ফিরব না। আমি
বিন্দুকে দেখেছি সংসারের মাঝখানে মেয়েমানুষের পরিচয়টা যে কী তা আমি পেয়েছি।
আর আমার দরকার নেই।

(Tagore, 1044)

"But I will not go back to your Number Twenty-Seven Makhon Boral Lane. I've seen Bindu. I've seen the worth of a woman in this world. I don't need any more."

Now she knows what it means to be a woman. She no more wants to define herself "in relation to men and hence seek identity and individuality in [her] own way". She simply turns subversive of the tradition of being submissive and conforming persons, "asserting [her] individuality and 'consciousness' which, according to the feminists, are pre-requisites for women's liberation" (Ahmed, "Living" 164).

Bindu's death instigates her to concentrate that through her death "Bindu has become great; she's not a mere Bengali girl anymore, no more just a female cousin of her father's nephews, no longer only a lunatic stranger's deceived wife". Now she is no more defined with any patriarchal relationship:

সেখানে সে অনন্ত।

(Tagore, 1044)

"Now she is without limits, without end."

The day that death's fluted has moaned through Bindu's spirit and Mrinal supposes she has heard those notes drift over the stream, and she can feel its touch inside her chest. She asks the Lord

জগতের মধ্যে যা-কিছু সব চেয়ে তুচ্ছ তাই সব চেয়ে কঠিন কেন? এই গল্পির মধ্যকার চারিদিকে-প্রাচীর-তোলা নিরানন্দের অতি সামান্য বৃদ্ধবৃদ্ধা এমন ভয়ংকর বাধা কেন। তোমার বিশ্বজগৎ তার ছয় ঋতুর সূক্ষপাত্র হাতে ক'রে যেমন করেই ডাক দিক-না, এক মুহূর্তের জন্যে কেন আমি এই অন্দরমহলটার এইটুকু মাত্র চৌকাঠ পেতে পারি নে। তোমার এমন ভুবনে আমার এমন জীবন নিয়ে কেন ঐ অতি তুচ্ছ ইটকাঠের আড়ালটার মধ্যেই আমাকে তিলে তিলে মরতেই হবে। কত তুচ্ছ আমার এই প্রতিদিনের জীবনযাত্রা; কত তুচ্ছ এর সমস্ত বাঁধা নিয়ম, বাঁধা অভ্যাস, বাঁধা বুলি, এর সমস্ত বাঁধা মার—কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত সেই দীনতার নাগপাশ বন্ধনেরই হবে জিত—আর হার হল তোমার নিজের সৃষ্টি ঐ আনন্দলোকের?

(Tagore, 1044)

"Why is it that whatever is the most insignificant obstacle in this world is also the hardest to surmount? Why was this tiny, most ordinary bubble of cheerlessness contained within four ramparts in this humdrum alley such a formidable barrier? No matter how pleadingly Your world called out to me, its nectar-cup made of the six elements borne aloft in its hands, I could not emerge even for an instant, could not cross the threshold of that inner compound. These skies of Yours, this life of mine: why must I—in the shadow of this most banal brick and woodwork—die one grain at a time? How trivial this daily life's journey; how trivial all its fixed rules, its fixed ways, its fixed phrases of rote, all its fixed defeats. In the end, must the victory go to this wretched world, to its snakes of habit that bind and coil and squeeze? Must the joyous universe, the world that You created Yourself, lose?"

She still seeks refuge in God and gets some sort of satisfaction that she will get unbiased treatment from the Lord:

আমার এই আনাদৃত রূপ যাঁর চোখে ভালো লেগেছে সেই সুন্দর সমস্ত আকাশ নিয়ে
আমাকে চেয়ে দেখছেন।

এইবার মরছে মেজোবউ।

(Tagore, 1045)

"He who smiles at this unloved face of mine is in front of me today, looking at me with the sublime expanse of His sky.

Now Mejo-Bou dies."

Though leaving "the doll's house" with immense dissatisfaction, she is not considering suicide an exit route from this unhygienic, male-dominated world. She cites the example of Meera-bai to convince the reader that her escape from this patriarchal setup is a form of "perseverance".

মীরাবাসীও তো আমারই মতো মেয়েমানুষ ছিল—তার শিকলও তো কম ভারী ছিল না, তাকে তো বাঁচবার জন্যে মরতে হয় নি। মীরাবাসী তার গানে বলেছিল, ‘ছাড়ুক বাপ, ছাড়ুক মা, ছাড়ুক যে যেখানে আছে, মীরা কিন্তু লেগেই রইল, প্রভু— তাতে তার যা হবার তা হোক।’

এই লেগে থাকাই তো বেঁচে থাক।

(Tagore, 1045)

"Meera-Bai, too, was a woman, like me; her chains, too, were no less heavy; and she didn't have to die to be saved. Meera-Bai said, in her song, "No matter if my father leaves, my mother too, let them all go; but Meera will persevere, Lord, whatever may come to pass."

And to persevere, after all, is to be saved."

Bindu's cruel demise has stirred her female sensibilities. It makes her to stand up for herself, and transforms her into a liberated lady. Following fifteen years of life as a spouse enduring interminable anguish and insult as a person, Mrinal at long last acknowledges she needs to "spare" herself and that her satisfaction can't be achieved as a wife however as a lady.

How the transformation of womanhood of Mrinal, from the status of a customary spouse to that of an opportunity looking for lady happens can splendidly be abridged by the manner in which she tends to her significant other in the letter, beginning with

শ্রীচরণকমলেষু

(Tagore, 1028)

"To Thine Auspicious Lotus-Foot:"

and ending with the resolution of her deconstructive journey:

তোমাদের চরণতলাপ্রায়ছিন্ন-

মৃগালা

(Tagore, 1045)

"Removed from the Shelter of Your Feet,
Mrinal"

Breaking shackles of the male-centric abuse she rises as a liberated lady. It is huge to note here that she signs the letter in her very own name (i.e. Mrinal) and not in the terminology ascribed to her as "Mejo Bou". By this, she reports the fulfillment of her deconstruction of her way of life as "Mejo Bou", the second girl in-law of the family. The obtaining of name is emblematic of her individuation. It is an infringement and disruption of social personality perpetrated upon her.

Conclusion

Mrinal is a successor to Nora of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. At the age of fifty-three, the developed Tagore, as a promoter for individual opportunity of woman made Mrinal. Mrinal is the primary woman character in Indian writing that defies the man-centric misuse of women through her incredible composition. She records her challenge against a wide range of male persecution fearlessly in her letter routed to her husband. Mrinal is the model of what Mary Wollstonecraft depicts in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*

in 1791. Mrinal stands up, discloses to her very own biography, explains her sentiments, and recognizes both her own expectations and her feeling of having been conned, in the way advanced by Mary Wollstonecraft. As the prestigious women's activist Betty Frieden has seen in *The Feminine Mystique*, the motivation for opportunity must originate from every individual lady who must locate her very own answers and her own involvement and techniques for freedom. Mrinal in "Streer Patra" follows up on her own for her freedom.

Works Cited

- Ahmed, Mohammad Kaosar. "Living in the Middle of A Whirlwind: A Study of The Gender Issues in the Major Novels of Doris Lessing". Diss. Islamic University, 2014. Print.
- "A Psychoanalytic-Feminist Reading of Martha's "Battle" with Mrs. Quest in Doris Lessing's *Martha Quest*". *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Volume - 3, No.-4, April, 2014. Print.
- Azim, Firdous and Zaman, Niaz ed. *Different Perspectives*. Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1998. Print.
- Bishi, Pramatha Nath. Rabindra Sarani. Calcutta: Mitra and Ghosh, 1967. Print. Chatterjee, Monali. "The Delineation of the Female Subject in Rabindranath Tagore's Novel *Farewell, My Friend*". *Rabindranath Tagore in the 21st Century*. Ed. Debashish Banerji. Los Angeles, CA: University of Philosophical Research, 2015. Print.
- Charulatha, H. "From Exploitation to Emancipation: The Metamorphosis of Womanhood in Rabindranath Tagore's Fiction". Diss. Annamalai University, 2014. Print.
- Cixous, Helen. *The Laugh of Medusa*. Manchester: Manchester University press, 1987. Print.
- The Newly Born Women*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987. Print.
- Das, Gupta, Sanjukta., Sudeshna Chakravarti., & Mary Mathew. *Radical Rabindranath: Nation, Family and Gender in Tagore's Fiction and Films*. New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2013. Print.
- Huq, Shireen. "Rights and the Women Movement". *Infinite Variety*. Ed. Firdous Azim and Niaz Zaman. Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1994. 15-21. Print.
- Majumdar, B. *Heroines of Tagore: A study in the transformation of the Indian Society. 1875-1941*. Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1968. Print.
- Mukhopadhyay, Prabhat Kumar. *Rabindra-Jeevoni O Sahitya Prabeshak*. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati Publications. 2 vols. 1377 B.E. (C.E. 1970). Print.
- Pal, Prashanto Kumar. *Rabi-Jeevoni*. 9 vols. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers, 2006. Print.
- Sarada, M. *Rabindranath Tagore: A study of women characters in his novels*. Khurja: Sterling Publishers Private Ltd, 1988. Print.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. *Galpasamagra*. Calcutta: Vishwabharati Press, 1938. Print.
- Rabindra Rachanabali. *Birth Centenary Edition*. Vols. 1, 7, 8, 10 & 13. Calcutta: Govt. of West Bengal, 1961. Print
- Walters, Margaret. *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Baltimore: Penguin, 1975. Print.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Harvest: Jovanon, 1989. Print.