

TASLEEMA NASREEN
A REBEL AGAINST CONVENTIONAL ETHICS

*In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF HISTORY

By

Shoaib Mohammed

(11506774)

*Under the Guidance of
Dr. Manu Sharma*



LOVELY
PROFESSIONAL
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND LANGUAGES
LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY
PUNJAB, INDIA-144401
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II

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IV

Acknowledgement

Foremost acknowledgment is the gratefulness to God for the guidance and generosity of carrying my process of work.

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V

ABSTRACT

Feminism and feminazi have been a quintessential question of our times, the irony of the thin line is been barred radically in literature. The puzzling nature is to justify the extent a bold writing amidst the cloudy shades of grays. Tasleema Nasreen's writing stems in her bold narratives from her experiences of her own and that in the halls of hospital waiting room. However often bold literature faces in its time a bad repute, and the mirror of society is often not acknowledged. A pen is said to be mightier than the sword, often comes at the cost of life hanging at the blades of it.

Keywords: *Feminism, feminazi, Tasleema Nasreen, literature*

VI GLOSSARY

- **Quran:** It is the central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be a revelation from God (Arabic, Allah). It is widely regarded as the finest piece of literature in the Arabic language.
- **Vedas:** religious books of Hinduism. Hindus consider the Vedas to be *apauruṣeya*, which means "not of a man, superhuman" and "impersonal, authorless".
- **Hijab:** A veil traditionally worn by Muslim women in the presence of adult males outside of their immediate family, which usually covers the head and chest.
- **Sharia** is the religious law governing the members of the Islamic faith. It is derived from the religious precepts of Islam, particularly the Quran and the Hadith. The term Sharia comes from the Arabic language Sharia, which means a body of moral and religious law derived from religious prophecy.
- **Huji : Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami** meaning "Islamic Jihad Movement", **Huji** which is an Islamic fundamentalist organization most active in South Asian countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh since the early 1990s. recognised as the terrorist group in Bangladesh
- **Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen:** or **AIMIM** (*All India Council of the Union of Muslims*) is a recognized state political party based in the Indian state of Telangana.
- **MAHR:** called a marriage gift which is represented to her by the husband to wife and it does not transfer to her husband or her father but it is actually a gift which symbolizes love and affection.
- **Quiwam:** means maintenance, safeguard, and protection, it does not mean superiority or to be a dictator but a protector.

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Chapter-I

1.1 Introduction

It is agonizing and pain to see in this advanced and civilized world where the physical barrier has vanished and the world has come too closer and cultures have amalgamated but gender-based gap and the gulf is still present. For the world community, it is a matter of concern that in some countries people follow bogus and superfluous orthodoxy which makes people of liberal thoughts complicated.

It is sad to even in international women day we still debate on the religious oppression of women. The reality is that the millions of women are suffering and are oppressed under rigid conventional ethics dominant in religions like Hinduism, Islam, and others. Islamic orthodoxy oppresses and discriminates women. In conventional ethics of Islam, women are declared as the property of men, having no command over men. In Islamic ethics, as specified in religious book QURAN those men have authority over women. It is also stated that if a women proved rebellious, she must be advised if she ignored then beat her. This is in verse 38 of QURAN. The conventional ethics of Islam is rigid that it is stated that women can prove dangerous to men both sexually and in other roles. So in conventional ethics of Islam, her role is confined to the reproduction of children, gratifying the lust of man and confined to domestics. In Islam, she is deprived of being a ruler of a nation or the head of the family as she is lacking mental ability. It is stated in Islamic ethics that a nation will not get any salvation if a woman is allowed to rule that nation. It reflects how her stature has been smashed by the rigid conventional ethics. The statistical graph according to United Nations study 30% of women in rural Bangladesh undergo forced sexual experience and sexual violence. The tragic part is that there is a physical spousal abuse of women during pregnancy in Bangladesh. A study in Pakistan rural access mobility study (PRAMS) data shows that perpetrators of abuse of women during pregnancy are husbands who have an ego in being supreme and having command over their women. India as a multi-religious country is engulfed with the same problem where women are mostly considered inferior and weak creature. In India, 70% of women suffer due to domestic violence, as per the research of junior minister of women and child development Renuka Chowdhury. According to national crime record bureau crime against women is done after every five minutes in India and most of the women victims suffer due to men whether it is domestic violence, rape or trafficking. It is actually the effect of patriarchy, religious laws and customs, and social obligations. There is no common civil Code for Indian women than can free them from the hard clutches of religion. The same ugly scenario of women harassment is dominant in Egypt. Iran as an Islamic state present the same problem of victimization of women under the rigid conventional ethics prevailing and the range of victimization of women has touched 60%. There are laws in an Islamic state to safeguard women from bondage but due to Socio-culture and political intervention such laws don't protect women, prosecute their abusers and protect service to victims, Now if we concentrate on the status of women under Hinduism it had become a general view that women have been greatly insulted in the Hindu

scriptures on negative perspective. Inequality and degradation of women are sanctified in the Hindu religion, Manu Smriti says don't trust women deeply. "Na Stree Swadantrya Marahati" means there is no liberty for women in the society. As per the Hindu holy book VEDA, it is written in [Satapatha-Brahmana] 14:1:1:31- says women are dumb. (Rigveda-8:33:17) it is clearly written that the mind of women brooks not discipline which indirectly means she is having less mind and little weight of intellect.

In general Hindu women contain no right to divorce her partner, no property rights, and widow should burn herself into ashes on her husband's death pyre termed as (**Sati**). Since today's law forbids Sati but society still punishes her through other religious ways like she can't remarry, even the widow is considered as a curse and must not be seen in public and cannot wear jewelry or beautiful colorful clothes. Another fact is that lower age and infant marriage is encouraged and choice of choosing a partner is limited.

Women have the patience to face such old age painful realities as they know there is no beam of hope to mitigate their pain and none to find a panacea for their problems. But some women could not resist the oppression and abuse and stood to challenge the basic tenants of ideology that makes them suffer beyond magnitude.

Tasleema Nasreen is one among them who raised her cry and concern through the medium of art (fiction) over what is happening to female folk under harsh conventional ethics in all religions, especially in Islam. Born on 25th Aug 1962 in East Pakistan present day Bangladesh, she is a poet cum gynecologist, novelist, and Islamic critic. She is a brave and intellectual woman and has received many awards in recognition of her substantial contribution towards the cause of freedom of expression. She was born to Rajab Ali who was himself a physician her father was not much orthodox about the Islamic beliefs and thoughts but at the mean time, he did not believe in religious criticism as his daughter Tasleema did. She attacked the conventional ethics of all the religions and Islam particularly believing that women have no status under religion, and argues "STOP saying Islam as a religion of peace", all religion are anti-women, Women under religion are lacking freedom of thought, freedom of expression and freedom to live. She believes that women under religion are treated as a rotten creature in the society where men are superior and women are considered weak and inferior. Now the question arises why Tasleema Nasreen adopted so many revolutionary thoughts against Islam and the Islamic teachings? To know all this it is necessary to look into the early life of Tasleema Nasreen. Tasleema has given a detail in her book that during her childhood her own relatives had harassed her sexually. But she may not have taken it seriously in childhood but later when she realized that whatever had happened to her was un-social, un-moral and irreligious. As a gynecologist working in the department of Dhaka Medical college hospital, while practicing and studying medicine Tasleema says that she saw girls who had been raped badly and harshly, she also heard women cry out

in hopelessness and pain in the delivery cabin if their baby was born as a girl. Such incidents traumatized her and made her feel restless. Nasreen says that she began to see Islam as an oppressive thing; she began to realize that women are being treated as a puppet in the hands of men and religion. She also faced some live cases where women were tortured and badly beaten by men folk on the basis of religion and religious customs. Tasleema says that those scratches and scars began unbearable for her who let her change her mind and follow the quality of humanism.

Another event that provoked her to be a rebel to conventional ethics is the forced wearing of HIJAB called as a veil. It exists in Christianity and in Judaism long ago but is a dominant compulsion in Islam. It is a barrier to physical boundary of the existence of women. Tasleema Nasreen rejects conventional ethics conveying that veil of women is a safeguard for the man from moral perversion. The conviction of a Muslim chauvinist is that unveiled women are no different from naked women and in Quran, in Surah24 verse no 31 says a woman without HIJAB in public is a shame on Islamic morality.

Another compulsive factor that made her rebel against the conventional ethics is sanctioned age of a girl to marry at the age of 9. It is another glaring example of sexual abuse. Misogamy is another factor to shock her female prestige. She also shared her personal life realities her own revealing posts on herself owned site like “NO COUNTRY FOR WOMEN” give a brief detail about her notable works and personal life also clarifies how Tasleema as a married woman was being tortured sexually by her own husband. Such incidents made her feel different she felt she was completely being used as a toy of no value and she began to see Islam as an oppressive way and something that did little to secure the rights of women.

Tasleema...

“Before I blamed the Islamic fundamentalists OR any other kind of religious fundamentalists because they are all against women, But now I will blame the system which made the people fundamentalists”.

Tasleema Nasreen raised her cry and concern through the medium of art over what is happening to female folk under harsh conventional ethics. She took a feminist approach in her writings to disclose the reality and facts. She wrote mostly poetry and published many collections of poetry till 1982-93 mostly with female oppression as a theme and started publishing novels in 1990. Tasleema published 4 collections of novels in 1993 she published an arguable and controversial novel namely ‘LAJJA’ which means “SHAME” changed the life of Tasleema Nasreen. Lajja contains a critical and controversial reality in which a Hindu family is fighting against Muslims who thought that nationalism will be stronger than communalism. Lajja was written after the demolition of **Babri Masjid** in India and was based on the barbarity and brutality on Hindu natives of Bangladesh by Muslim natives. It also depicts how Bangladeshi Muslims killed looted and raped in those times. This publication of LAJJA changed her sphere of life and career dramatically. The novel Lajja covers the

Hindu Dutta atheist family within fourteen days of the ruination of Babri Masjid and its effect in Bangladesh. The scene of action of the novel in the first few days is limited to the son named Suranjan, roaming the city and engaged in conversation with many Muslims and Hindus, which led Tasleema Nasreen to put forth various points of views which are typically related to dual portions of the conflict and detail about the destruction shaped upon the Hindu community. In Day seven the daughter Maya is abducted by a group of Muslim youths, and the rest of the novel is deeply emotional and split between the father and mother revealing what has occurred as Suranjan desperately searching for her. In the end, Maya the daughter does not return back, and it is rumored that she has been seen, drowned, and floating in the river water. What remains of the DUTTA family, after many years of refusing to live in Bangladesh and return back to India, which has got maximum Hindu population instead of Bangladesh's Hindu population, like most of their family and friends have finally decided that doing so is an action necessary to save and protect them.

Tasleema's Lajja was soon attacked by Islamic fundamentalists after its publication in Bangladesh. Soon after the publication of Lajja, there were protest and conflict in Bangladesh. People started to protest against Tasleema on roads and streets and a huge heap of tensions and disturbance were emerged in many parts of Bangladesh demanding a ban on Lajja. The demonstration was so effective that around **310,000** people came out on the streets and roads of Dhaka. Islamic fundamentalist groups demanded Tasleema Nasreen's execution, the secular, progressive, and also modern intellectuals, authors, and writers were equally dismissive of her writings. Without demanding Tasleema's death, they totally described Nasreen as immature rather disgust and politically corrupt "obsessed with sex," and an anti-male extremist. These violent incidents forced Bangladesh secular government to put a ban on Lajja all over the country and government filed a non-bail able case against her. Whatever was happening in Bangladesh on the writings of Tasleema Nasreen shocked her and changed her life in a confusing way. Bangladeshi Muslim people disliked a Muslim writer writing against them and their past deeds being so openly exposed via the book. Nasreen also faced physical attacks and public insults following the publication of Lajja. Soon Tasleema Nasreen came under the radar of orthodox Islamic fundamentalists. She was criticized by Islamic law giving institutions like **Sharia** and Council of Islamic Soldiers. Maulana Tauqeer Raza Khan a controversial Muslim cleric of Uttar Pradesh who issued FATWA against her. Within a short span of time, she became a villain forth entire Muslim community in Bangladesh. Later Islamic organizations, institutions, orthodox groups came out against her extremely. Such as **Khilafat Andolan** and **Sabha Sainik Parishad**, these two popular Islamic organizations of Bangladesh offered 50000 TAKA as a reward to beheading Tasleema Nasreen. Now it was very crucial for her to live openly in her own country, she went into hiding with the help of few secular individuals of Bangladesh. Country was totally paralyzed by strikes and protests, living under hiding for almost two months Tasleema felt suffocation and loneliness and wanted to flee from that place where she was hiding herself but it was not an easy task on the other side the writers and intellectuals outside of Bangladesh supported her wholeheartedly and demanded safety and security

for her by requesting government. After two months luckily she was granted bail by the high court on one chance, either she has to burn and destroy all her writings and anti-Islamic attitude or she has to leave her country for all times and never to come back again. Both the conditions were unexpected for her and unfortunately, she was forced to leave her country. Sweden being soft to Tasleema Nasreen provided safety and security to her officers rescued her safely from Bangladesh in the worst situation and managed a place for her in Sweden in 1994.

In Sweden, she started getting a lot of invitations from many countries to give human rights lectures and lectures on freedom of speech and expression. In 1995 she moved to Germany where she lived for one year. As a political refugee, she received the travel document of United Nations and started living in the USA. But she did not give up her Bangladeshi passport. Tasleema tried to return from the USA to stay with her ill mother in Bangladesh but she was not allowed by US passport authorities as her identity was marked as a political refugee in their records. She tried hard and returned the UN travel document (UTD) then she got her Bangladeshi passport back, still the Bangladeshi government denied to give her permission to visit the country on that passport. But despite getting no permission she entered into her country and stayed for three months as a physiognomic character, finally her identity and presence in her country were leaked and exposed and again there were chaos and confusion in Bangladesh. Government of Bangladesh issued a non-bailed arrest warrant on her and again she was being forced to ran away from her country and began to get threat messages and calls from terrorists and various Islamic groups not only this but she also became the number 1 target on the hit list of **Huji, as a result**, she left Bangladesh and moved to France in 1999. After six years of waiting she got her Visa to visit India, she first visited Calcutta and was invited to go to Mumbai for opening her book (**AMAR MAYABELA**) means my 'girlhood' in Mumbai but Islamic fundamentalists declared that they will burn her alive if she put her single step in Mumbai. Her book Amar Mayabela was totally banned by Bangladesh government on 13 august 1999 under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina as the prime minister of India declared her book as pornography, anti-Islamic and against Sharia which is called the base of Islam. She begged to Bangladeshi government to allow her to visit her country so that she could spend some days with her dying father but she was not allowed to come back for a single hour and sadly her father died.

In 2003 she moved to Calcutta on the basis of tourist Visa she was also about to give a lecture and release her new book (**Dwnhandito**) means "split into two". This book was banned by the communist government of west Bengal on the charges of hurting religious feelings of the people. It was the first time in her exile life that she tried to settle somewhere but again people, fundamentalist targeted her and showed their anger towards Tasleema. In 2004 she released her next book which was basically a Telegu translation of her book (**Shoudh**) and its Telegu translation was named (**Sei Sob Andhokar**) means "Those Dark Days" but here she went through another turning point of her life in Hyderabad press club conference she was attacked by the Muslim fundamentalist group **Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen** of Hyderabad. Tables, chairs, and shoes were thrown even Tasleema was slapped on her

face, humiliated and physically injured. The head of (MIM) showed his support and soft corner to those who tried to kill Tasleema and declared that Muslims can't tolerate blasphemy rest they can tolerate anything. They can't bear and forgive the one who insults their religion Meanwhile she was issued one more fatwa by a fundamentalist group, who also set a price of unlimited reward on her head declared in a public meeting in Calcutta. She was actually invited by Allahabad University as a speaker to deliver lecture but was attacked in Hyderabad on the way before visiting the university, so they cancelled her lecture meanwhile she was warned by west Bengal government to leave the state and was forced to live under house arrest in Calcutta as terrible protests were held in Calcutta by fundamentalist groups. The west Bengal government throw her out of Calcutta and she was sent to Jaipur but here also she was not accepted and allowed to stay, her life remains baseless and restless now she was kept in Delhi in a less known and undisclosed place and was forced to live under house arrest. Again she requested Bangladesh government to issue an official stamp or at least a tourist visa to visit Bangladesh on the basis of her European passport unluckily her request was rejected again. She has issued the extension of her residence permit on the condition that she must run away from India within few days. The world's biggest democracy said that Tasleema could get an extension of her residence permit to visit India on few conditions:-

That she would leave India on the day when the permit expires, that she must never visit Calcutta, she must stop interacting with media and must not remain in India before 30th of May until the general election are over. The government closed all the ways she had no other way left but to leave India calmly. She was invited by the mayor of Paris to stay for six months she tried to go back to Bangladesh but her attempt was unsuccessful. Returned to India in September to find out if she could live in Delhi if it was not possible to live in Calcutta but the Indian government rejected and ignored to give her permission to live anywhere in India at any cost. The foreign minister of Bangladesh named Dipu Moni said to media that the Bangladesh government has no issue to allow Tasleema to enter her country but in fact and in reality she was not allowed in real. In 2010 she entered India in the month of February as her residence permit was extended for six months. But this time she was warned by the government that her permit document date would not be extended onwards, India did not want to create chaos and confusion in the country because of her anti approach and voice and wanted to develop peace. This decision of government shocked her. But via an early statement in the Indian parliament announced in 2007, the minister of foreign affairs revealed that in history till now India never refused shelter for anybody especially for those who seek protection from us and such heritage of our civilization now called government policy will continue. On the basis of this statement, India will give shelter to Tasleema Nasreen.

In 2008 prime minister of India Dr. Man Mohan Singh wrote that whatever the hurdle will be, but India's golden tradition of welcoming people unbiased of caste, creed, color and Religion will continue. The Indian government issued that a minority group of people cannot change our heritage.

So Tasleema was given choice and was issued a permit to live in any state or any city she wants to live in India. But still Indians and Bangladeshi's are intolerant towards her especially orthodox religious groups, organizations which are stacked with their Fatwa against her and do no publisher or no media dares to publish her writings or any article both in Bangladesh and India. They believe that publishing her writings may result in communal riots and publishing media will be responsible for that, thus Tasleema has been boycotted by Indian and Bangladeshi media and publishing groups since her exile. Not only this, the **Anti-Tasleema Campaign** which was started in 1991 in Bangladesh is still continued.

Although she has Swedish citizenship but due to safety and security reasons she doesn't share her permanent address but she has been spotted participating in various international conferences all over the world and the controversial writer is still under exile saying No country belongs to women. She believes that people who support her and understand her are the one she lives for and calls them her world and her country. They are mostly writers and free thinkers of all over the world.

1.2 Scope of study

The comprehensive study about the personality of Tasleema Nasreen is of paramount importance. It will make the reader appraise how social-cultural values affect a human personality. It will create an understanding about how crude religious and cultural dogmas and orthodoxy make a human soul to live in a state of bondage, threat, and slavery in a society when religion is taken into the informal way, where a female is born free but finds herself in shackles in religious bigotry and cultural orthodoxy. The investigator will be scrutinizing that female victimization is not found only in Islamic culture where she is understood to be inferior in holy books but even in civilized societies, she suffers in one or other way. Molestation, Rape sexual abuse, trafficking, evil practices, the threat by fundamentalists and debarring her from legitimate right to have an education are the worst examples of women exploitation.

The question is not to be a mute spectator over her sufferings, but to awaken self-conscience and act to fight against gender oppression, exploitation; victimization so that a uniform egalitarian social order can prevail in the world and the world will turn beautiful.

To analyze the views and thoughts of Tasleema Nasreen on rigid conventional practices in many societies on the basis of Religion. And to through light upon legal rights of women folk and thinking of men folk towards women through Tasleema's ideas in contradiction with a religious perspective also. How men blame religion as a system that gives right to have command on their superiority and to put religious views forward which actually gives equal status for women in society and family also but sadly it is taken into negative sense hence discrimination with women starts. What makes men to think of their superiority complexes mostly seen in Muslim patriarchal societies is to be analyzed deeply with reference to Islam and Tasleema Nasreen's views and ideas in addition what should be

the remedy of such social violence scenes so that both religion and humanity could go parallel and never collide with each and be religion to be followed in a proper way but not by violent means.

evaluate Tasleema Nasreen's controversial book "LAJJA" that changed her life entirely and to expose its value from a historical perspective which actually provides a lot of information about religious riots that took place in Bangladesh after the demolition of the Babri masjid which led rape murder and riots at peak and Tasleema not being a mute spectator reveals the haunted situations through the story of Dutta family who suffered a lot during such crucial time. After demolishing Babri Masjid communal passions in Bangladesh got fomented and the family of Dutta views the rise of communal passions and communal frenzy in their own way. Also, other controversial works like 'Shoudh' to be analyzed in which story based on reality which exposes superiority of man over women where her love is blamed as false love and her body is assumed as a characterless creature.

To identify the problems faced by Tasleema Nasreen during her exile and to analyze her recent publication 'Exile A memoir' this is based on her own biography and those situations that she felt in those years of exile life. Secondly to evaluate Tasleema Nasreen's views, questions and answers about the problems faced by minority groups, causes behind social violence particular upon women folk and socio-political problems of many countries like India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan who still have patriarchal based rule in some societies and its result and remedy needs to be discussed via Tasleema Nasreen's ideology and views.

1.3 Research Methodology

This research study is based on the analysis of both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources examined briefly to get authentic information about the topic of the study. Books, autobiography, official website, personal interviews analyzed to understand Tasleema's views, thoughts and approach towards the conventional ethics of religion under which women suffers the most. To reveal the evil practices done in the name of religion in different parts of the world, various statistics, data and reports used as a tool and to justify the authenticity of religious beliefs, reference of major religious books like Quran and Vedas are used as primary source.

Some secondary sources such as newspaper reports, articles, and journals available in various libraries and archives analyzed to consolidate the future study. The motive behind considering the secondary sources to explain the response of the community on Tasleema's feminist approach and policies based on humanism.

1.4 Review of Literature

‘Lajja’ provides a brief explanation and justification of her controversial views and ideas on gender inequality faced by women under religion. Lajja has historical value as it depicts clearly about the anti-Hindu riots that emerged in Bangladesh after the demolition of Babri Masjid. It speaks about those violent acts faced by people on the basis of religion. Lajja contains controversial reality in which a Hindu family is fighting against Muslims, who were tortured and forced to leave the country because of their Hindu identity.

‘Amar Meyebela’ hits the patriarchal society below the belts. In this book, Tasleema Nasreen recalls her early years of life from her childhood to adolescence. It was the time when East Pakistan became part of Bangladesh. She wrote the scenes of violence and images of innocent pleasures of her childhood. The book mentions how the writer turned off from religion and religious books by watching injustice and suffering and oppression done on women folk. Meyebela gives an explanation about how a woman faces problems from her childhood to womanhood under society based on religious customs and conditions. The writer blames religion as a tool that can be used to fool women folk.

‘Shodh’ a masterpiece written by Tasleema Nasreen, which deals with a young woman whose name is Jammur. She marries the man whom she loves but being a bold and women she still indulged in domestic violence. The author tries to reform the real concept of love and marriage in such so-called elite otherwise traditional bound societies.

‘Holy Quran’ lays certain guidelines for treating women, though men are considered superior and are given command over the women. It is staunchly against any kind of injustice or biased opportunities for women, though certain conditions do apply that often are violated on various grounds. It gives equal and just educational rights to women irrespective of varied opinions that have been formed against Islam.

‘Manu Smriti’ justifies the oppression of women, making them the subject to tolerate violence. It deprives women of property or her right to education and confined to her household chores. Thus, women were treated as equal to an animal or a fool.

Chapter II

Tasleema Nasreen thoughts and views

Thoughts and views is a window of freedom of expression and the legitimate rights of women folk. Since her odyssey of creative writing and columns which range from fiction, short stories poems and newspaper columns which won repute to her. This medium of art she used to onslaught religion, orthodoxy, conservatism, old dogmas and men folk as the instruments of exploitation and oppression. The recurrent subject matter of her writings is subjugation of womenfolk, sexual discrimination and the torture and violence the womenfolk in the Muslim country Bangladesh undergo in particular and in other Muslim countries as well. In his famous book **Nirbachita**, she gives a shocking analogy as:-

“A lucky man’s spouse dies an unlucky man’s cattle dies- If your wife dies, you can get another. But if you lose your cattle you don’t get it for free“

so you have to pay on spot hard cash, whereas a new spouse brings hard cash. In such a situation you can reject and avoid your wife, but you never neglect your cattle”

The above analogy shows how infirm and weak social structure and family structure is operative which keeps the status of women above the cattle and dereliction of women folk as logistic rational.

2.1 The ground of Materialism

Nasreen in her writings blends personal and social issues basis on her own personal life and what she observes outside her life. What shocks her beyond magnitude is the atrocities Pakistani army during the war of liberation by the Bangladesh. People committed on the minds of women and their flesh which shook psyche of her and the female folk of Bangladesh.

She speaks of her aunt who was kept in captivity in a dark room and repeatedly raped, molested, abused by Pakistani soldiers. The irony of the fact is that male dominated society of Bangladesh is not proud of such aunts who for disrespect and shame have hanged herself. None was anxious to see the aunt come back. This is a reflection of polarization of shame and honor on gender lines in Muslim social structure. Her writings are not confined to her nation only but transcend national boundaries and reflect current feminist issues and problems and transnational issues. She finds bondage between the exploitation of women and socially sanctioned silence. She addresses many layers of the women folks suffering. Releasing the mind of women from bondage as well as freedom of their bodies. She in a sardonic tongue saying,

“Look men come to bite you, taste you, tear you and they come to drink you”

She says men are a replica of death and savagery for women and the lustful nature of man has been exposed by the writer.

She claims that men being lusty can display animalism by touching and kneading any part of women's body but are devoid of real sentiment of love as they are real beasts but women; the symbol of loyalty can not be resort to such animalism. In one of her poems "Enjoying women" she castigates men and expresses her chagrin in a bitter way.

"What all you will get in this beautiful body you will also get a full-time wife. Before you can spit on my body, I spit over your aberrant mind. Tasleema Nasreen justifies her disclaim and detest for the men. When she says that she can't keep her eyes blind and numb to what she saw. Being a doctor she saw the ruptured physical organs of women who have been raped. The six and seven tears old who have been molested by fathers, brothers, and uncles she can't be a mute spectator to the acute suffering of women in the backdrop of man's lustful aggression.

The encyclopedia Britannica provides us the legal status of women, the wife even in historic times was the purchased property of the husband. Her legal status was so diminishing that she could not move towards any civil office, neither be even witnessed, she could not adopt or to be adopted or she was even denied to make any will or contract. They were under tutelage whether married or not In an Islamic society the religion Islam is the midst light against darkness with a universal message. The message is in the sacred Book Quran which says 'O mankind, keep your duty* you are born from the soul and lord created its mate (of the same kind) and from them multitudes of men and women. The objective of creating a mate was that male could live with her in love. Quran says the creator of paradise and the planet earth has made for you in pairs from among yourself*. Quran does not elevate man and discriminate the women. It is categorical "every soul well be held in pledge for its deeds. Whoever works right weather man or women and has faith in the lord, he or she will be rewarded".

There is an element of justice for women, she has an advantage. She is free from daily prayers and free from fasting during her periods and also forty days after her childbirth. She can also avoid fasting during pregnancy. On marriage it is clear in Islam that marriage is sharing of two parts of the society and marriage between man and women is as spiritual harmony, women has been given the right of **MAHR** which is called a marriage gift which is represented to her by her hubby and it does not transfer to her hubby or her father but it is actually a gift which is symbolizing love and affection.

But one thing needs an elaboration where man has been designated one degree superior than women the holy book Quran reveals "and they (women) have got rights as similar to those of men but men have a small degree above them such a degree is called **Quiwam** meaning maintenance safeguard and protection, it implies no superiority of man over women in the spirit of Islamic law but man's role in the leadership in relations to his family which does not mean or imply dictatorship of man over his wife. Kind treatment and companionship are the core of Islamic philosophy about man and women. In Quran, it is categorically stated that consort the wives in kindness. If a man hates them, he hates the thing where God has placed much good. Prophet has declared that paradise is at the feet. Of mothers, there are no rules in Islam which forbids women from seeking employment especially in posts like

nursing, teaching, Islamic scholars, which has been clarified by Islamic scholars like Dr. Tabri and Hanifa. Allah in Quran (70:29) reveals oppression as “worse than murder” which puts rape among the worst sin and crimes committed by a human being in the sight of Allah. Islam treats both men and women equally and women being a victim of rape can’t be blamed for the crime happened to her. Nowhere in Quran is written or any indication where the victim of rape should be blamed or targeted instead of blaming the rapist. If such thing happens then it does not represent Islam and it does not represent Allah’s commands but it represents cultural understandings and manmade laws.

The tragedy that Bangladeshi women have faced during the war of independence in 1971 from military rulers of Pakistan and some orthodox militia is too horrible that up to four thousand women of Bangladesh were raped. The tragic part is that a Fatwa called as a religious verdict from the Islamic fundamentalist who declared that Bengali fighters were Hindus and the women of such freedom fighters could be taken as the booty of war. The fundamentalists publically declared them as Goniometry mall. So by giving religious color the fundamentalists supported rape at a massive scale and the result of such massive scale of rape resulted in thousands of pregnancies, the birth of war babies, abortions, the incidence of infanticides and suicide of women. The unfortunate part is that victims of rape lost social recognition and were seen as a symbol of social pollution and shame. They became socially unacceptable in an Islamic society and all that women got indulged into humiliation, dishonor, and hatred. Tasleema writes the tragic scenes of historical perspective in her controversial book Lajja.

2.2 Lajja

written by Tasleema Nasreen is about a Bengali family. The Dutta’s who is a Hindu by birth. The family of Dutta is purely atheists in belief and consists of members Sudhamoy, his wife Kiran more and two children Maya and Suranjan Even though the novel Lajja is written in 1992 in Bangladesh during the backdrop of demolishing of Babri Masjid in India. The novel also significantly mentions notable events in the political history of Bangladesh.

- In 1997 Bangladesh liberation fought with the military leadership of Pakistan which resulted in its freedom and becoming a secular nation called as Bangladesh. The whole event is conveyed through Sudhamoy experience as a young man.
- In 1990 conflict of Babri Masjid and subsequent demolition at Ajodhya and communal trouble in Bangladesh is covered inside Lajja.

Lajja reveals the story of Dutta family in 13 days following the demolition of the mosque at Ajodhya. While news channels create an atmosphere of aggressive riots in Bangladesh, Sudhamoy becomes reminiscent of the horrible and grim experience which he had undergone during the liberation war of 1971. He was tortured by the Pakistani army and his wife could not wear sindoor (vermilion) for fear

of being Hindu or identity as Hindu women but when Bangladesh became free from the bondage of Pakistan, Sudhamoy developed faith in the secular socio-structure of Bangladesh. But Sudhamoy is anguished and pained to find a country based on secular lines is now getting dominated by Islamic fundamentalism. The writer Tasleema Nasreen gives many examples of discrimination, Sudhamoy a medical practitioner is not promoted as a religion being a barrier. His son Suranjan is still idle and unemployed despite crossing 33 years of age, his wife is declared unchaste as she sings in public because Muslims are averse to music. Despite all these hardships and trials which they face Sudhamoy and Suranjan are reluctant to leave Bangladesh even though 10 million Hindu minorities had migrated to India for safety during the liberation war. After demolishing Babri Masjid communal passions in Bangladesh get fomented and the family of Dutta views the rise of communal passions and communal frenzy in their own way. Sudhamoy has full faith that Bangladesh is motherland which will never let him down. His wife supports his idea of patriotism for his country. Suranjan the son of Sudhamoy finds a distinctive dichotomy and contradiction between emerging communal forces and the secularism on which Bangladesh was established after the war of independence in 1971 and the disastrous event shatter the secular ideology and the disappointments becomes dominant and cast dark clouds and shadows. Lajja is actually a symbol of protest against hostility, violence and communal frenzy which are constantly going on in the world in the name of religion resulting in the destruction of human values and brotherhood. Nasreen believes that politics of religion is a big impediment in translating subcontinent into a civilized society and religion is like opium which intoxicates people to such an extent that the basic ethics of humanity is put in shambles. According to Tasleema Nasreen, this book basically is a gospel to the savagery of religion in the Indian sub-continent. She says that the evil of communalism has plagued the subcontinent but optimism is not dead it is alive. But despite strong optimism about Bangladesh as a country of a liberal outlook, the family is in fear and out of their homes just like thieves and hopeless as is shown in the novel.

Maya pleads, “let us stay alive and go somewhere” But Sudhamoy had firm faith that in secular Bangladesh he would enjoy political, economic, social and religious freedom but Maya had no such intention or faith in Bangladesh. She has not seen the partition of the riots of 1950 or 1964 or even war of liberation she had seen Bangladesh as a country with Islam as the state religion and her family a minority community who have to make compromises being in minority. She had seen the blazing fire of 1990 so she didn’t want to burn in those fires and would take any step to carry the living. The writer also throws light about the love elements of Muslim boys and girls with Hindu boys and girls and the romantic bond between Maya and Jahangir beyond the religious barrier. Parveen and Suranjan had a love affair though that could not materialize into marriage because of the religious barrier. What is shocking is that Maya is abducted by rioters when rioters enter in to demolish their house the scene is too shocking and heart-pinching. The violence continues and the family is optimistic that Maya will return and everything will be alright, so the Hindu family is beaten up but they don’t give up their hope and optimism about secular character of Bangladesh. The Muslim riots abduct his daughter

Maya and she never returns home, suranjan being shocked by the abduction of his sister abducts a Muslim prostitute and molests her out of revenge.

While exposing such a harsh reality through her controversial book Tasleema's Lajja was instantly attacked by Islamic fundamentalists immediately after its publication in Bangladesh. After the publication of book Lajja, there was massive violent protests and conflict seen in Bangladesh. Angry people started to protest against Tasleema on roads and streets and a huge heap of tensions and disturbance emerged in many parts of Bangladesh. The demonstration was so effective that around 310,000 people came out on the streets and roads of Dhaka. The reason behind all these protests and anger was demand for complete Ban on Lajja and Tasleema's execution same was the demand of fundamentalist groups wanted Tasleema's execution. By this Author, Tasleema Nasreen Ruined her life entirely in such a way that she was unknown towards the reality that by bringing up the reality in front and to expose harsh actions done during the time of partition will divert her life in another direction where only problems exist and she has to undergo life in exile.

But Nasreen writes with specific purpose and her purpose is to oppose and fight against injustice, oppression, and gender bias she becomes the voice of the marginalized and voice of the victims who try to survive in the cult of violence. Being the victim of patriarchal social structure she sees very closely how women are given the subordinate role where she can't assert or express her right to freedom, right to equality and right to healthy life violence against women is an act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual or psychological suffering of the woman such forms of violence are forced marriage, victims of rape, suspicion and early divorce of teenage girls. Tasleema Nasreen tries to build up the support of secular humanism and freedom of thought.

2.3 Shodh

Shodh Is another masterpiece of Tasleema Nasreen this novel deals with a young woman whose name is Jammur she marries the man whom she loves. She declares the news of being pregnant with her husband called Haroon. She expects her husband would become happy but instead her husband doubts her loyalty and accuses her of betraying and cheating. He suspects that his wife has illegal relation with someone before marriage and the child in the womb of his wife doesn't belong to him. Shocked by these allegations she decided to revenge herself. Despite being bold and educated she becomes a victim of domestic violence.

The independence and dreams of happiness in marriage and childbearing are shattered when her husband forces her to go for the abortion of her first child. This agony and allegations kill her spirit to live and shatter her preconceived ideas and notions of living in a happy state.

Through the character of Jammur in the novel, Tasleema Nasreen exposes the face of the sophisticated elites of the society. Jammur has no place now in her home as she has been declared disloyal being pregnant too early. So no belongingness can develop in her home where there is a lack

of love, harmony, mental solace and mutual existence. Nasreen wants to convey that Haroon and Jammur were perfect couples before marriage. But egocentric suspicious and chauvinistic male supersedes the love of Haroon.

Jammur, in order to average herself, gets very close to Afzal a paying guest in her house and finally gives birth to a male child. Haroon loves the child passionately and deeply considering the child as his own. When we pay attention towards the revenge of jhumur, a new face of women is exposed gives a response to her husband so calculatingly which is surely freezing. At the end the same cruel husband who got her aborted starts looking like a buffoon. She wants him to be a puppet in the hands cunning puzzles. Tasleema says in her writing 'I (Jammur) assured my mind to be pregnant with Afzal, for Haroon I didn't want my body to be ready for receiving his sperm but I expect him to sow his seed in barn land and to wait foolishly. I didn't have any shame or sense of guilty about it, I wasn't characterless and loose women, I wasn't betraying him or ditching him I was just paying him back.

This is the biggest irony. This is the purpose of Tasleema Nasreen. She is casting a shattering blow to the hegemonic patriarchal set off a Muslim society where the fidelity Of woman is questioned for no logical reasons it is distressing experience that in any conflict like, a war, civil strife, communal disharmony women become the target of violence During the partition of India, women were the worst sufferers so, Nasreen views are logically clear and lucid based an experience regarding violence, exploitation, oppression, subjugation and discrimination in the patriarchal society. Nasreen tries to create importance of love, cordiality, harmony which is essential for the progressive and co-existent life of human being. Tasleema reveals that one should not take the partner for granted even a partner should not be kept on toes, beyond the walls or in a worried state with no mental peace. It is due to such thoughts that she attained international attention and a champion of free thoughts and expression. Because of such ideas Salman Rushdie another controversial writer who is also living away from his home because of his controversial writings, calls Tasleema as an advocate of free love.

Chapter III

Conclusion

3.1 Life in exile

Tasleema Nasreen's anguish and cry over the sad miseries of the womenfolk at the hands of Islamists and religious fanatics is a point of concern for the civilized society and for such societies where liberal forces are overshadowed by the parochial forces and religious fundamentalists who are hell-bent to underestimate and trample the individuality of woman whose energy is vital and of paramount importance for a healthy and progressive society. The shock and anguish she has expressed is a natural outburst of a writer that too a female writer who feels the wounds and scars the woman in general and Bangladeshi women in particular.

Novels like “**Lajja**” and “**Shoudh**” are the mouth piece of her concern where the theme of the suffering of women is reverberating throughout her writings.

The demolishing of BABRI Masjid at Ayodhya and the backlash had effect on Hindu minority in Bangladesh which emerged in the form of rampage, loot, rape, oppression shows about how religion whose propagators claim that it is made for peace and kinship but in reality and ironically is a weapon of devastation to dismantle the fabric of kinship.

Her artistic creation has also made a post-mortem rather exposed the Islamic fundamentalist who considered women just a booty to be enjoyed sensually.

Tasleema Nasreen consolidates her firm conviction to support a humanist world and a world where freedom of an individual is the slogan to be followed. This slogan shall shatter man's gender superiority ego. She is giving a thumping blow to the patriarchal based Muslim society where the woman undergoes a traumatic experience of violence, exploitation, subjugation, bondage and slavery. The message of Tasleema Nasreen is deeply clear that for co-existence, harmony and veneration for the womenfolk is a solid base on which we can make strong pillars of a progressive society that would not be having the walls of discrimination.

There are shocking tales of pre-teen age marriages of Muslim girls and divorce in the same age. Another shocking affair is a marriage of the victim with the rapist. Besides polygamy which means to marry with many ladies seems another bad affair and disregard of the fair sex.

But it is also important to understand that like all other religions regard for woman has been also conveyed in Islam. Better is that religion needs to be understood in a broader perspective so that religious fundamentalists and religious bigots could be defeated and a fresh society could be given the path where human relation and bonding could flourish and progress. The religious fundamentalists must also understand that religious ethics has to undergo radical change and keeps pace with the changing time's otherwise negative religious tendency will force people to give up it and will seek refuge in a world which is religion free. because of such controversial ideas she got banned in Bangladesh for hurting religious feelings and sentiments of people and wandered here and there in

search of home finally she got the place to take rest in Bengal where she planted a lot of beautiful flowers on terrace portion and at night she smells them deeply which makes her remember her childhood days and after feeling the fragrance of such flowers she falls in good sleep just the way she falls asleep during her childhood. But this place was an illusion; it was all fake sense of security. The safer place and house in which she resided would shatter soon and will turn into unsafe and unwelcomed state and she would be harshly forced out from Kolkata, at first towards Rajasthan, then to New Delhi and gradually forced to stay out of India and where she finds no home to live and feels like a stranger in a strange world till now and wandering restlessly. The scenes and situations faced by the author Tasleema Nasreen during her exile life and what she had gone through in these years can be imagined in her new released book “**Exile a Memoir**” which was published recently on 16 October 2016 under the publishing authority of ‘Penguin House India’. In *Exile A memoir* Tasleema reveals about her hardships and struggles in seven months, starting from 2007 the time she felt that democratic India was almost behaving same like Bangladesh. She came to all this when she was invited to Hyderabad for the promotion of her book *Shoudh*. Islamic fundamentalists previously burnt those shops for selling her book *Lajja*. The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen badly attacked her during conference and police reached at the perfect time and then Nasreen quoted and questioned “did I become a writer only to fight for freedom of writing?” in spite of cruel religious fundamentalists Tasleema having a passion for writing also angered many other writers of Bengal. Actually the cause of their anger was Tasleema’s book *Dwikhandito* which also revealed about her affairs with many men, and the book was banned also because of the reason that it might involve communal tensions, as a result, she was forced to leave the place as soon as possible, government was watching her state of helplessness and irony. What has happened in those days of depression she wrote a diary when she was under forced house arrest can see and imagine the high level of stress by reading that diary as it exposes the scenes and situation of loneliness while residing in a lonely room full of silence she used to think about death she feels like death was in front of the window and as soon as she opens window they will come closer and face to face. By such controversies, she felt furious alone and totally helpless while fighting with the world. This diary now transformed in her book “*Exile A memoir*” which is full of heart throbbing feelings and situations felt by the writer. Being honest she reveals that many prominent writers stood by her side like Amlan Dutta who is an economist argued that Nasreen was told to stay careful and avoid saying things which may hurt feelings and offend someone, but then why such a good advice is not being shared with fundamentalists also. According to news of Financial Express Mr. Amlan Dutta also argued that author Tasleema Nasreen has developed her identity very high than her religious one so; let’s give her nothing but sympathy and warm welcome. Tasleema’s book *Exile A memoir* fully reflects the socio-political scenario of India and other countries viz Bangladesh, Pakistan, Russia, Turkey where writers and free thinkers, activists are being put on trial while questioning authority or religion

Although Tasleema Nasreen has been away from home Bangladesh for 22 years, in short, she has living life in exile from 1994 when she took out from Bangladesh. She decided to stay in Kolkata and

had a feeling to be nearer her home. But unluckily that was an illusion and not possible. According to the post of Financial Report says India disappointed Tasleema same as MF Husain was disappointed and Tasleema Nasreen's Memoir is a reality and result of what a writer or any human being or artist suffer if He or She thinks in a different way or has got experience in life to think differently.

During the recent promotion event for launching her new book Exile, A Memoir she was greeted by many writers like him and also questions were asked to her during the event of promotion.

She was asked whether the situation in Bangladesh is still same or it has been changed due to Lajja and many other works and by many others.

According to the video footage of the promotion event Tasleema answered that when Lajja was written after the demolition of Babri Masjid Muslims attacked Hindus community, they looted and destroyed their homes and temples and many Hindus decided to leave Bangladesh due to fear, I wrote mostly facts in Lajja and till now situation has not been changed. Still, in Bangladesh people suffer she said that a few weeks ago some Hindu houses were burnt down again so it is not possible to say that situation has been changed till now but at that time there were not so many writers and people who protested but now many writers protest and support. She also revealed that Hindu's have been leaving Bangladesh as it was 31% of Hindus in Bangladesh in 1997 but now it is only 7% of Hindus present in Bangladesh so for sure after twenty or fifty years there would be no Hindu in Bangladesh and that is so sad. In her words, she totally argued that government is responsible for these entire situations as the government does not take any action. But she protested and will protest always against such atrocities whether they are Muslims, Hindus or Christians and also agrees that many Muslim are also oppressed in many countries but she defends those Muslims and she also defends those Christians who are attacked in Pakistan. So if we believe in human rights, if we believe in freedom of expression and liberty, right to religion and right to live in their country then show it practically and behave like humans. Freedom of religious expression should be respected and they should also respect Atheists in return.

Another question asked to her was why there is violence against children, why there is violence against women and then violence upon minority? The question asked to her was actually about her experiences as being a doctor what she has diagnosed about such social violence among humans and what could be its remedy.

And Tasleema responded that there are so many reasons behind such violence it is because men are considered superior and women are considered down to them and inferior beings so women are used as sex objects, puppets, and slave of man. They can abuse women sexually and they don't even spare children also because they are also weak and unable to protest. Even children are sexually abused through child pornography which plays a vital role and that pornographer should be banned. Some men get impressed by watching child pornography and gradually they start to indulge into same with their children folk because it is easy to brainwash child mindset but if we have equal society and no

patriarchal based systems then there would be no violence at all but we have anti-women traditions even the law says that women should not be suppressed but on the other side anti-women customs, anti-women cultures are practiced in societies. She also pointed that we go to schools, colleges, and universities and become engineers, doctors, and scientists but we are not educated either we can assume that we are educated until we give respect and equal status to women. It is not a school that teaches inequality, superiority, or even inferiority but it is society's mindset and families who survive under the patriarchal rule where a mother, a daughter or a wife is suppressed and even beaten by their men folk while their children learn the same and follow the same.

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