



WOMEN'S OUTCRY AGAINST THE DUPLICITY OF PATRIARCHAL CULTURE IN REFERENCE TO TASLIMA NASRIN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT:

Woman defined, as the centre of culture, has actually always been imprisoned and shackled by tradition in the walls of the family. The women writers have raised their voice and expressed their feelings, their awareness about feminine problems through their autobiographies. Taslima Nasrin's autobiography is a voice of feminism against the patriarchal society bias against feminine. She opened a window to Bengali girls' condition through her autobiography *Amar Meyebela, My Girlhood*. Through her autobiography *My Girlhood* Nasrin reveals the fate of millions of girls and women living in society in which they are treated as second class citizens. She waged a courageous war against gender prejudice with honesty and integrity. This paper is the study of Nasrin's protests against the exploitation of women in contemporary patriarchal society. Women autobiographies somewhere unravel the hidden recesses of feminine psyche in Indian society.

KEYWORDS:

IMPRISONED, SHACKLED, AWARENESS, PATRIARCHAL, COURAGEOUS, INTEGRITY, EXPLOITATION, FEMININE PSYCHE.

INTRODUCTION

The ever-changing reality of women's life is inevitably reflected itself in literature so called the mirror of society. Women in pre independence era were not free to oppose the dictates of the males and had to obey the rules and regulations of society and caste, however educated they may be. Even today the position of women in society is no exception to this phenomenon. Woman defined, as the centre of culture, has actually always been imprisoned and shackled by tradition in the walls of the family. The women writers have raised their voice and expressed their feelings, their awareness about feminine problems through their sensibilities. In this male dominated society, which compels woman to choose her roles according to its convenience and she is in fact forced to act as either a slave or a puppet in patriarchal social setup. The way to stop harmful & abusive patterns of behaviour being handed down from generation to generation is to be assured for girls not to foster prejudice or stereotypes about gender. Physical, psychological and sexual violence against women, public and private, plagues all societies and classes and poses tremendous obstacles to the achievement of equality, development and peace. In fact, female gendered act that exposes the duplicity of patriarchy and the sub-human, subaltern status is accorded to women in male dominated societies. It is a journey of emotions covered with literary expressions. Each woman writer is influenced by the period of her era and socio-cultural conditions.

Taslima Nasrin is a Bengali, Bangladeshi author, feminist human rights activist and secular humanist. She was born in the middleclass Muslim family in North of Bangladesh in 1962, where she received liberal education. At the age of 23 she got the degree of medicine and as a doctor she started working in the poorer parts of her country. In the

beginning, when she came to the West's attention, she was writing extensively for periodicals She won many awards including **Ananda Puraskar**, the **Sakharov prize** for freedom of thought from the European Parliament, the **Kurt Tuckholsky** award from **Swedish PEN**: a human rights prize from the French government, and a **humanist Award** from International Humanist and Ethical Union. After living in exile for 18 years, Taslima Nasrin made a public appearance in Delhi. In an interview with The Hindu she said: "I want to feel safe in India. I get sympathy, solidarity and love from the people who believe in the freedom of expression and women's rights." G. Heilbrun says: "A world without evident power of control, women have been deprived of the narratives of text, plots for examples by which they might assume power over their own lives." Taslima has authored six novels, eight collections of poetry and four volumes of essays. Her books and columns have been censored by the publishers and editors. Ninety per cent of the publishers failed to pay her royalty. *Amar Meyebela*, *Utol Hawa* and *Exile:A Memoir* are her three volumes of autobiography.

Taslima Nasrin's autobiography is a voice of feminism against the patriarchal society bias against feminine. She opened a window to Bengali girls' condition through her autobiography *Amar Meyebela, Utol Hawa*. Through her autobiography *My Girlhood* Nasrin reveals the fate of millions of girls and women living in society in which they are treated as second class citizens. She waged a courageous war against gender prejudice with honesty and integrity. In her autobiography She reveals the agony of a girl child that how she is sexually abused even by relatives. She is not allowed to get medical education because she is a girl child and her brothers are encouraged

to opt for medical studies which they are unable to pass. A woman has to tolerate the extra marital relations of her husband as does her mother. Her autobiography orchestrates the subordination of the majority of women and attitude of men against them. Men consider them inferior in patriarchal society. Female equality is a day dream and violence and injustice against women defers the progress of half the population. Her writings focus on women's rights and also on the Islamic fundamentalists. She has been struggling for her right to freedom of expression. Taslima explored the horrible lives of many women of her country. She criticized the religion because it gave women a very marginal role in the society. Even if her husband tortures her, she has no right to say anything.

Nasrin protests against the exploitation of women in contemporary patriarchal society. She expressed pungently scorn for male's attitude towards women in society. Her early days were spent in a society where women and religion were realistic and critical. Taslima's views about men are that they are oppressors, chauvinistic and self-oppressed. Nasrin intends to erase the element of fundamentalism, communalism from the society and restore the respect to women which they deserve. She has expressed her experience, regarding violence, exploitation, oppression, subjugation and discrimination of women in the patriarchal society. Thus, she describes the position of girls in her community as subservient and also describes some conspiracy going inside joint family which leave the girls growth stunted. She delineates the traumatic impact of violence on the women as a child, as a young person, or as an elder woman by the agencies inner or outer. Her autobiography tried to make the people aware of the importance of giving due respect to the woman as a human being. Typically, Nasrin's writings attack the status quo, religion, and men as agents of oppression. A recurrent theme in her writing is sexual discrimination and violence prevalent against women in Bangladesh.

Taslima's life is a live example of male chauvinism. She married three times and got divorced because those men wanted to control her. She wanted to do things on her own but none of them allowed her to do so. Syed Shamsul Haq, her editor husband did not show much interest in publishing her works. He started giving her advice on what to write and what not to write. While gender oppressors are irreligious in Nasrin's autobiography, she seeks to ridicule and denigrate Islam for gender inequality, thus losing public help. She wrote that religion is such a destroyer, even when it is not believed; the people are bounded by it. It is almost like a cancer that cannot be treated. Women must wear a burqa, so that with their own self-respect, dignity, trust, separate identity, they cannot exist. Taslima eventually says that it means to cover a woman's head, cover her brain and make certain it does not work. If women's minds functioned properly, a religious and patriarchal system would have long ago thrown off these veils and burqas. It courageously communicates the message of protesting this injustice to

Islamic women. She had to write about religion when human rights are abused in the name of religion. She says religion is not her subject, and she is not an expert in religion.

Thus, we find that a deeper study of women's autobiographies somewhere unravels the hidden recesses of feminine psyche of Indian society. However, they have not shared the contemporary time of the history, the problems of patriarchal society, treatment women, broken marriages and the identity crises for the women remained similar. What numerous statistics and sociological studies on male violence against women strive to communicate is the pervasiveness and high frequency of this phenomenon that cuts across all categories of female victims and male abusers. As Francine Pickup remarks, "The violence to which women are subject is not random, or abnormal, or defined by specific circumstances alone. It is used as a weapon to punish women for stepping beyond the gendered boundaries set for them, and to instil in them the fear of even considering doing so. It is a systematic strategy to maintain women's subordination to men."

The status of women all over the world particularly in Asia has been undergoing a rapid change in recent times. Women writers have to resurrect and heal a self that has been mutilated by patriarchal constraints. In dealing with the chaos inflicted by society the woman writer glimpsed a power within her own psyche from a non-patriarchal, feminine point of view. In her newly sculpted feminine discourse, a woman is seen as a complete person, blessed with her creativity and rationality, unbounded by the conventional codes of sanctity, alone.

Women's unique perspective is a consciousness of alacrity that enables them to recognize the importance of the Other in the creation of selfhood. Women are the pillars of culture, but are imprisoned in the walls of the family and shackled by tradition. The Indian women writers have voiced their feelings through their sensibilities, their awareness about feminine problems. It is the male society, which compels her to choose her roles according to its convenience. She is forced to act as either a slave or an idol. The historical circumstances and the socio-cultural and political set up in India make women's issues different from Western feminist rhetoric. Carolyn G. Heilbronn says that a woman's life can be described in four ways: "The woman herself may tell it, in what she chooses to call an autobiography; she may tell it in what she chooses to call fiction; a biographer, woman or man, may write a biography, or the woman may write her own life in advance of living it, unconsciously and without realizing or naming the process."

A woman forms her identity in relation to others. The socio-cultural set-up to of the patriarchy intensifies her traits of rationality and finally she emerges not as an individual but as a person with collective identity constantly aware of the society's prescription for her female self. The basic difference between western women and the eastern counterpart is that of diversity in their

socio-economic and cultural background. Women present themselves as wives, mothers or daughters. They can never come out of their feelings of depression, humbleness, sexual relation, family life or the behaviour of male members in the society. Her own childhood is the central theme that the title shows. It is a kind of self-discovery and self-expression and denial to patriarchal authority. Through her own experience she is emphasizing other women's experiences of discrimination, exploitation and rejection. Her identity is concern and connected to the larger context of social relations.

The patriarchal system is based on racism, sexism, class exploitation and ecological destruction. The unhealthy patriarchal social system tends to be rigid and closed. Roles and rules are non-negotiable and determined by those at the top of the hierarchy. High value is placed on control and the exaggerated concept of rationality, even though, paradoxically, 'the system can only survive on irrational ideologies'. Militarism and welfare are constant features of a patriarchal society as they reflect and influence the patriarchal values of control and competition. The elite exercise 'illegitimate, inappropriate and inequitable power' over the subordinate groups leaving them with limited access to achieve self-determined ends and meet the basic needs. It results in overriding the concerns of the 'groups of women, children, people of colour, poor people, non-human animals and nature' leading to racism, sexism, class exploitation and ecological destruction as an important and deadly. As mentioned earlier, patriarchy is not only an individual way of thinking, speaking and behaving rather it is a closed circle of institutional setup rooted in patriarchal conceptual framework with an erroneous belief system. These patriarchal concepts lead to impaired thinking and language of domination—sexiest and naturist, which further leads to behaviours of domination, control, exploitation, violence, rape, murder, making life unmanageable for marginalized groups.

All the women writers have common family problems and circumstances but they could project Indian culture, its meaning and values. They have their limitations but the lamps of feminism provide many women organizations to undertake the issues of poor, weaker and orphan women of the society. Their fight against patriarchal society, strong confession and rituals they could bring to the notice of the people for a change. This may be considered that the attempts in various methods they have employed in eradicating the evil mind of the people will defiantly change our society.

Thus, Taslima explored the horrible lives of many women of the country. She criticised the religion because it gave women a very marginal role in the society. The outcry of the west has changed the mindset of the Indian subcontinent. They are demanding their rights, challenging male dominance and are working. They express their rage through their writing. A number of autobiographies written by women were published in 19th century. In India women's identity is defined either by the community

in which she is born, or by the status of the husband of the woman. Indian society is patriarchal. Thus, all the women writers are towering 20th century Asian women. They challenged the male dominance in society and braved the challenges put before them. They competed and defeated century old traditions and customs. Writing became a weapon for them, in which they poured all their pain, frustration, grief and despair. They recognized their own worth in the society.

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