



RELIGIOUS FANATICISM PAVES WOMEN SUBJUGATION: AN ANALYSIS OF TASLIMA NASRIN'S LAJJA

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Human beings are the best creation of God. Each and every individual has their own individuality. Nowadays, individuality is lacking in the name of social stratification. Society plays a vital role for the lack of individuality and spirituality. Society, a group of people, shares together and lives together. Do they mutually share and live? This is the question which evokes or speaks their inner thoughts.

According to New Historicism theory, even a small thing has its own history. Likewise, every individual has his/her own history, which is called as hereditary. Religion, caste and society too have its own history. If an individual searches for his society's history, he will come to know that, the many number of riots by class domination, the different divisions and stratification of society have ensued in ethnic divisions that cause subjugation of minority. This paper provokes the idea about a religious history which yields to an overpowering force in the recent scenario with reference to Taslima Nasrin's *Lajja*.

Taslima Nasrin is known both for her powerful write-ups and for the controversy she stirs up. Being a woman she has to express the oppression of women under religious pretext. She wrote *Lajja* soon after the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodha, way back in 1992. It deals with the persecution of Hindus, who is the religious minority in Bangladesh. *Lajja* is a documentation of riots that took place in Bangladesh against Hindus due to the destruction of Babri Masjid. By saying the truth through her writings, she had received much opposition. Many Islam organisation or fundamentalists want to kill her. But none of these things have shaken her determination to continue her writing against religious persecution, genocide and communalism.

Lajja is a savage indictment of religious extremity and a man's inhumanity to other man. The novel deals with Dutta's family. After the demolition of Babri Masjid, Muslim dominated countries start to ill-treat the minority Hindus in their country. Bangladesh is an Islam country which is bordered by India to its west, north and east. Sudhamoy, Kironmoyee and their son Suranjan and daughter Maya belong to a Hindu family in Bangladesh. The plot revolves around Suranjan. Taslima gives chronological event happened in Bangladesh after the demolition of the Masjid. Right from the next day of Babri Masjid destruction, the communal riots started taking place in Bangladesh. Being a part of native, Hindus are often terrorized at every opportunity by Muslim fundamentalists. The plight of Hindus, documented by Nasrin, is heart touching:

Almost 50,000 Hindus in no less than, 10,000 families have been finished off completely; mobs set fire to their homes, after looting and plundering everything they could find no value. At least 500 million takas worth of property has been lost, two people have died and two hundred have been hurt. People don't have clothes to wear and food to eat. Not a single house remains standing, and many hundred shops have been looted. At the Daasherahaat market, not a single Hindu shop has been spared. And the streets are full of homeless people who have to somehow cope with the cold and hunger. (71)

By seeing the eventual riots in their native and destruction of Babri Masjid in television, Suranjan's sister and his parents thought that he will take them to one of his Muslim friends' house. Even Suranjan's friend asks him to come to his home but the only thing Suranjan feels that: "I won't leave my home (country) whatever the circumstances" (82). Even Sudhamoy has his own house and lots of money; he is forced to leave his ancestral home just because he is a Hindu.

Islam fundamentalists set fire to the Hindu temples in Bangladesh. This oppression and domination do not start after the case of Masjid but had begun very earlier, from 1950s. Suranjan's father was ill-treated a lot by Muslim people even though he was a veterinary doctor. Further days, the riots become very terrible and arrogant. The houses of Hindus are looted in the name of religion. Islam teenagers start to rape the Hindu women in the name of religion. In addition to that they drastically handle gang rape. On hearing this information, he muttered his one of the favourite lines of Karl Marx:

Problems relating to religion are actually a manifestation of practical shortcomings, as also a protest against them. Religion is a sigh of the tortured and the persecuted, the heart of the heartless world, just as it is the soul of a soulless society. Religion is the opium of the masses. (133)

Once, the fundamentalist singles out the Suranjan's family in the absence of Suranjan. While Nilanjana alias Maya is preparing dhal rice for her paralysed father with love and care, six to eight Islam youth loot Suranjan's house and grab Maya with them for gang rape. When Suranjan comes to know that, he searches for her but he can't. Infuriated and frustrated he wants to demolish the Mosque in Bangladesh. Even though he is in

the peak of fury, his friends break the ice a bit. He could not tolerate the thought of Maya going through the torturous moments of a gang rape. Is she tolerating the pain? Lot of questions arise in Suranjan's mind.

At last he hears information about a girl's dead body in the shore of river. He refuses to see the corpse, because, if it is Maya he can't bare the loss. Even though Suranjan is a lover of humanity; he becomes a prey to all inhuman forces. Shamima Begum becomes the victim to Suranjan. Because, he wants to show that Hindus can also rape a Muslim woman. After all Shamima is a prostitute, but Suranjan treats her violently in the name of his loss of sister. She bears many wounds which are given by Suranjan. On behalf of Muslim young men, Shamima becomes the victim for Suranjan. He feels very happy by his way of revenge.

Maya becomes a victim for Muslim and Shamima becomes a victim for Hindu. What is the wrong done by these two women? Just because they are born as women in these religions, they are forced to undergo this tormentous pains caused by the communal fanatics. Does religion preach men to subjugate women? Every religion implies to feel harmony among its followers. But these fanatics and pitiless men sly like a snake among innocent people.

At last, on the thirteenth day, Suranjan approaches his father Sudhamoy that he plans to migrate to any other place or India by forgetting his native land Bangladesh. With hard mind Sudhamoy and Kironmoyee decides to migrate to India. Everyone has love and attachment towards their native. Many writers in literature write about the expatriate feelings for their native. Even though the characters in literature live in wealthy situation as an immigrant somehow or other they long for their native. The novel awakens the inactive human mind to the inhuman, cruel nature of the violence, and anxiety endangered on the Hindus by the Muslim fundamentalists.

In constant pain of dark and menacing, the novel exposes the mindless bloodthirstiness of fundamentalism and brilliantly captures the insanity of violence. Religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems and view on humanity in order to an existence.

Forefathers modeled religion and the principles in a way that the people could follow the life in a good manner. Each religion has its own principles. All religion utters one thing that, people should follow humanity. But people are doing heartless things in the name of religion. It is not only in the name of religion but also in caste-bias. There are multiple divisions in every religion. They too fight for their needs by means of caste. Especially in India, the Hindu-Muslim unity was started from the time of Mughals. But in deep sense, readers can see a lot of riots in India so far. Yes, there must be many things behind these riots. One cannot pinpoint on religion as the only medium among people to create divisions. Religion is only an opium for people and everyone should take the point that, "Man creates religion, religion does not create man." Similar to the religion, the most pity thing is that women are subjugated under classes and religion. According to V. Pala Prasad Rao,

The dominated motif of the novel (*Lajja*) is the consequences of religious fundamentalism on the hopeless minorities. Nasrin strives to show how communal violence has been generated by the lunatic fringe in all communities, how innocent persons are duped into serving the ulterior purpose of communalists, how extremist elements in the communities infuse tension and hatred for their own ends at the cost of inter-communal harmony. (IJES, 93)

In the recent years, we have seen lot of riots taking place. Every day in every corner of our India, people face communal struggle. It has become a trend for misguided youngsters to misuse religion and violence for meanest reasons. When will it stop? There is no answer for this question because, humanity is nowhere in the soul of human being.

To conclude, it would be apt to quote Nasrin's words at the beginning of *Lajja*, "Let another name for religion be humanism". But there is no humanity at all. So first, let all be a human and there will not be any violence. Here, one is reminded of the lines of Tagore in *Gitanjali*:

God give me a voice of thunder,
that I may hurt imprecation upon this cannibal
whose gruesome hunger spares
neither children nor women.(Gitanjali,102)

God gives the thunder as the strength in the form of writings to Taslima to rehabilitate the inhuman forces who take women as victims. We have to realize our humanity by creating ourselves beyond established expectations and ways of life to new goals through experiments in living, which we explore new ways of being human. Let freedom of human being is a foundation of our nation's being.

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