

## Shame, Sadness and Falsehood of Mankind in Taslima Nasrin's Lajja

<sup>a</sup>C. Raghavendra, <sup>a</sup>P Sreenivasulu Reddy

<sup>a</sup>Asst. Professor of English GITAM University Visakhapatnam Andhra Pradesh India

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### Abstract

Taslima Nasrin's novel *Lajja* reveals her concern about the weaker sections like women, minorities etc. In fighting against religion, her motto is 'let another name for religion be humanism'. This is clearly shown in her novel *Lajja*. It is apt to say that *Lajja* is a revelation of shame, sadness and falsehood of mankind. Nasrin tries to explore falsehood of human mind in the name of religion. It was written based on the incident 'demolition of Babri Masjid' in 1992 at Ayodhya, a place in India which is believed that Lord Rama was born according to Hindu mythology. Babri Masjid was demolished by Hindus. As a consequence many agitations happened in India. Even in Bangladesh which is far away from India, Hindu minorities face the brunt of communal rioting erupts.

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Taslima Nasrin, who was born in Bangladesh, took her MBBS degree and practiced as a doctor for a few years. When she observed the woes of the people, specifically women, she gave up her profession of doctor and began new career as a writer. She might think that pen is mightier than the profession of doctor to fight against the woes of people. As a writer she uses her pen against injustice, suffering of women like mighty warriors used their sword. Her novel *Lajja* reveals how minority Hindu family suffered during the agitations. Nasrin depicts the bitter consequences minorities faced after the purely religious incident 'demolition of Babri Masjid'.

Nasrin exposes the torture and trauma of Dutta's family within a period of thirteen days soon after the demolition. Nasrin has made thorough study of the disturbances recorded in leading national and international papers, journals and documents. She conveniently takes-off to provide a rather lengthy treatise on legal and constitutional provisions, the statistics of attacks and the atrocities on Hindu families, homes, shops and places of worship. The novel seems like a compilation of press clippings and a docu-fiction.

Sudhamoy Datta, the protagonist of the novel, a doctor by profession completed his medicine in Mymensing medical college and started practicing in Mymensing. Kiranmayee, wife of Sudhamayee Dattais an ideal wife. She always thinks about the well being of her husband and two children. As a faithful wife she always supports her husband's views and opinions. The couple has two children, Suranjan, their son, doesn't like to shoulder the household responsibilities towards his family members. Nilanjana, their daughter who is called

Maya, is, on the contrary, a responsible girl. The story of *Lajja* revolves round the suffering and hurt feelings of these four characters.

*Lajja* explores hatred which lies in the veins, blood and mind of the over religious people. Nasrin writes about Muslims and Hindus of Bangladesh because she belongs to Bangladesh. Sudhamoy is a patriot, freedom fighter who has faith in his people and country. He believes that Bangladesh earned its independence at the cost of three million Bengali lives and religion cannot be the basis of his national identity. He has participated actively in the freedom movement of Bangladesh. He has hoped that in the independent and secular state of Bangladesh, Hindus will enjoy the same political, economic, cultural and religious privileges that Muslims enjoy. The country slowly has lost its religious impartiality and has become a Muslim country. At the time of independence Sudhamoy, being a Hindu, stops his relatives who are migrating to India. He advises many of his Hindu friends that they should not lose faith in their mother land. It's the place where he was born and brought up. It's the place where he is working as a doctor. It's the place where he is leading a contented life and it's the place with which his sentiments are tied strongly. He has great faith in his motherland and decides that he will never leave it.

Maya, Sudhamoy's daughter, is lost on her way home from school when she is six. Sudhamoy can't find her anywhere in the town. He searches in all the houses of the relatives, friends and acquaintances. Maya comes after two days. Sudhamoy understands that Maya was kidnapped. Even after two months of this incident Maya behaves strangely screaming in the mid night and having fear to meet people. Sudhamoy receives anonymous letters that unless a ransom is paid, Maya will be kidnapped again. He comes to know that the police and the neighbours will not do any help. He faces another problem from his neighbour who has encroached his property. Even though he files a case he senses that he has to lose the case as his opponent is a Muslim. Keeping all the things in mind he sells his entire property worth a million takas, only for two hundred thousand takas. He cries bitterly to leave the house because he has planted the saplings in the house. Mango, Jamun, Guava and Coconut trees are watered and nurtured by him. He has strong love towards his house. They recall the days they spent in their ancestral house and weep a lot. The feeling that he is an alienated self in his own country makes him take a decision to leave his country and take refuge in India.

Having known that they are considered by Muslims as minorities, he stops wearing Pyjama and his wife stops sining, wearing 'Sindura' and 'Loha' and 'Sanka'. Despite his ability and experience he can't get promotion in his profession and retires just as an assistant professor. He realizes on the day of his retirement when his friend Madav Chandra pal murmurs "don't expect too many benefits in a Muslim country. what we are getting is more than enough."

Suranjan, Sudhamoy's son, is regarded as an irresponsible person. But his thoughts are idealistic. He says that Bengalis should not restrict to any communal distinctions. He did not face any problem with his friends when he was a boy. After grown up he comes to know that he is a Hindu by religion. He says that he is a human being first and then a Bengali by race. He wants his fellow people live together peacefully in harmony.

He gets uncomfortable when he observes unity among the people of the same religion even if they belong to different countries. It's a pathetic tendency that certain sections of the

people of the same nation are considered as outsiders or opponents in the same country. Nasrin tries to exhibit this kind of suffering of Hindus in Bangladesh. Another side of this coin is also portrayed clearly. Suranjan's Muslim friends accept him as their close friend. When his father is ill they help him admit in a hospital, they make all the arrangements. Belal speaks to the doctor to take special care on Suranjan's father. He gives Suranjan five thousand takas in an enveloped cover saying not to think of his friends as strangers. But friendship, care and concern is only when there are no agitations.

The riots against the Hindus in Bengal still continuing even two days after the demolition of Babri Masjid in India. When Suranjan is ready to go out fearlessly, to know how the things are, his mother who already in tension about her daughter Maya, who has gone to a Muslim friend to take shelter, tells her son that it is dangerous to go out. Paying deaf ear to his mother he walks out. None of his Muslim friends show concern about his safety and they do not provide shelter to him. Shops, temples of Hindus are rocked down to earth.

When he is on the street he hears 'catch him, he is a Hindu'. He quickly walks to another street, not out of fear but of shame. Really it's a shame to humanity and it's a stain to humankind. The situation becomes very critical. Suranjan understands that a group of Muslims enter any Hindu house at any moment to plunder.

Nasrin Expresses how brutal it is to make Suranjan flee off only because he is 'Suranjan' not 'Haider' or 'Belal'. She wonderfully portrays how the act of demolition damaged the Hindu community. Her aim is not only to criticize the attitude of Muslims but also the other people who are over religious and harm others in the name of religion. She courageously criticizes the cruel tendencies of the mankind, ill treatment towards women in the name of religion. Taslima Nasrin's message is loud and clear - 'let us forget our religious differences and come together to build a new nation in the environment of Bengali culture'. (Kumar 144)

Even though Nasrin seems to be denouncing religion ceaselessly, her actual endeavour is to explore the possibilities of having religious free and peaceful society. She may appear to have hurt the feelings and sentiments of the people who believe in Islam. She boldly questions the ruthlessness of religion, culture, customs and tradition. In her address Nasrin said - "It was Bengali culture which unified the Muslims and the Hindus of the land and gave them their real identity." (292)

## References

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