

## FEMINISTIC APPROACHES IN TASLIMA NASREEN'S SELECTED WORKS

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### Abstract

*It is said that the beginning of women's writings in South Asian literature was started from the many decade particularly in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan and there were many writers who wrote on female subjects but their works were largely constructed in male writing's structure where female always is portrayed sensible, romantic, and passive and introvert by nature. Contemporary South Asian feminist writers broke this stereotypical image of women portrayed in earlier writings and represent woman as a protagonist, strong in nature, resistive, defiant, and independent, educated and freedom love. The novels of Shobha De, Arundhati Nair and other women writers are the major instances whose works largely described such kind of female characters. It is also true that European feminist movements and female writers as well widely inspire the educated women of the world and the writers from South Asian region were also result of these movements in much extent. Taslima Nasreen, a Bangladesh eminent author, is mainly known for her decisive and firebrand feministic personality in South Asian literature. Her writings mostly revolve around feminine problems and she also paved some hope and direction to sort out the social, political, traditional and conventional problems which predominantly weakens women identity.*

**Keywords:** Feminism, Pre independence women writings, Nasreen, themes, approaches and society.

Feminism is a concept that seeks women emancipation from social injustice and discrimination and it demands equal position for matriarchal community in society. Many female writers like Shobha De, Taslima Nasreen, Monica Ai and Arundhati Roy strongly influenced by these feministic approaches and it could also be seen in their writings. Though there were some intellectual women before pre independence in India like Sarojini Naidu, Vijay Laxmi Pandit, Fatima Bhutto and many others. Contemporary erudite women raise

feminist issues in different forms. Among them some chose writing to express the inner conflicts and pathetic situation of the women which is the result of patriarchal social structure. Taslima Nasreen is a female writer, campaigner, activist and critic belong to Bangladesh. She is regarded one of the major feminist author in contemporary Asian literature. She lives in exile earlier in Canada, India now in Europe because of her controversial remarks as labelled by her country government and agencies. She has been accused for defaming Islamic religion image for her interest. Though she remain the target of fundamentalists but she didn't lay down her voice and continued to raise voice for the rights of women and their emancipation from dogmatic and conservative male dominated society.

I will not be silenced. Everywhere I look I see women being mistreated, and their oppression justified in the name of religion. Is it not my moral responsibility to protest? Some men would keep women in chains-veiled, illiterate, and in the kitchen. There are sixty million women in my country; not more than percent of them can read and write. How can Bangladesh become a modem country and find its place in the world when it is dragged backward by reactionary attitudes toward half its people. (Nasreen)

The eminent postcolonial author Salman Rushdie, who is also accused for hurting religious sentiments of religion followers, expresses his views over the defiant and strong opinion and arguments of Nasreen and admires her fervent attitude.

I am sorry my name has been hung around your neck, but please know that there are many people in many countries to make sure that such sloganizing does not obscure your identity, the unique features of your situation and the importance of fighting to defend you and your rights against those who would cheerfully see you dead. (Rushdie, p. 3)

Taslima Nasreen is mainly known for writing the novels. Besides she produces poetry collection, essays and prose works extensively. Her first novel Lajja revolves around the theme of religious fundamentalism and the subordination of women and their oppression socially, physically, politically, economically, culturally and in other forms. Another novel Shodh appeared in 2003 talks about the struggling and pathetic experience of a simple woman in a patriarchal society. This novel present a deep study of male dominated society where female were treated harshly who left everything earlier for love later to make her marriage life healthy and perfect but all goes in vein. In the introductory chapter of the novel writer sketches the societal picture that subjugates matriarchal community on the name social dogmas, religion and other traditional and cultural modes:

In Shodh unlike her other novels, Taslima Nasrin seeks to revolutionize the concept of love and marriage in the so-called elite yet tradition-bound societies. She effects this through a transformation of roles assigned to a woman- as lover, wife, mother and daughter-in-law. The story of Jhumur's marriage to Haroon, therefore, goes beyond the study of a marriage or the fate

of a person and raises issues such as: Is love possible without self-respect, What is the relationship among love desire and marriage, In what way can the established familial relationships be redefined...In this novel, as much as in other non-fictional works, Nasrin's personal experience breathes life into the narrative. (Nasrin)

*French Lover* is another novel by Nasreen which deals with the subjects of marriage, sexuality, men-women relationship, lesbian relationship and other pertinent feminist issues. It describes a woman life journey from a daughter to wife and lastly as an individual. Nila, the protagonist is depicted as assertive, influential, vital, occasionally livid and emotive but a proficient individual who didn't give up before patriarchy norms like Jhumur, in Shodh, and strongly confronts obstacles that comes in her way. The major work of feminism in her basket is her autobiography titled *No Country for Women* where she argues, opines and expresses her views on diverse aspects on women identity which are remarkable. Here she speaks about different social institution where women do not find equal status and treated partially. Moreover she criticizes marriage institution because women suffer mostly in this relationship rather than getting love, security emotional, financial and physical. The cause of this suffering is the mindset of male which is occupied with patriarchy old fashioned ideas and notions who from the beginning portray woman as a weaker in sex and in other aspects of life.

Personally, as I am unwilling to accept the male dominance, I live alone. If a woman is not willing to hurt herself, she is a feminist. If she is a feminist, she will obviously need a home of her own. ...The western women have managed their own homes. Society can no longer scare them. But Indian women still go pale as they face the blood-shot eyes of the society. They are so much frightened that they cannot speak against the oppressive, tyrannical, uncivilized, shameless, ruthless men. Forget about pushing them off from this vicinity, the women treat these men like their loved ones, give them indulgence throughout their lives. (*No Country for women*, p. 111)

Another notion that Nasreen finds is the role of beauty in a woman life. She defies the beauty notion which generate inferiority complex in female and also criticizes those women who endorses such kind of things in the society. She comments that:

Women are a commodity in this patriarchal society. Commodity for consumption of men. Whether one agrees or not, this is true. Women should appear exactly the way that arouses the men. So the commodity called women should have such appearance that will make men happy physically and mentally. Whatever the women do in their entire life are all for the sake of men and the patriarchal society. Her chastity, her motherhood, polite character, everything is for serving the men. Men must be able to use women as their property and as slaves. (*No Country*, p. 22)

Hence it can be said that Nasreen has tried perfectly to ascertain the female problems by her writings. Her novels embedded with the feministic themes and subjects such as problems in relation to domestic and public issues such as marriage, motherhood, working women problems, and domestic violence etcetera. Besides other themes that remain vital part of her writings are women's emancipation, freedom, identity crisis, independency, religious extremism, male dominance, women subordination and social illness and dogmas like virginity, modesty and others. However all these things exhibit her feministic zeal and bold nature where she didn't undermine herself being a woman or as a writer. Therefore, Nasreen's fictional characterization effectively renders pitiful and docile conditions of the matriarchal community and somehow she poses questions before the society for their silence and neutral nature against injustice of women.

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