

IMPRESSION OF THE NASREEN'S LAJJA, ON THE POLITICS OF BANGLADESH

LAXMIKANT KAPGATE

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

SHIVPRASAD SADANAND JAISWAL COLLEGE

ARJUNI MORGAON, GONDIA, INDIA.

Abstract

This paper aims at understanding the various dimensions of separate Telangana Statehood Movement continued from 1969 to 2014 in India and finally succeeded in achieving the separate state. The main focus is on the Linguistic, Literary and Cultural dimensions and related issues caused for the separate state movement in the region. Various incidents occurred in the movement and impact of the movement on the people vice versa in various socio-economic conditions. An attempt is made to identify certain issues in the movement related to Language, Literature and Culture based on the social conditions of the Telangana people. The emphasis is on the Linguistic Discrimination among the same language speaking society resulted in literary and cultural disparities and inequalities in employment. This paper is intended to reveal how the separate Telangana Movement started, grown up and finally succeeded.

Keywords: *Telangana State, Discrimination, Safeguards, Peasant Revolt, SRC*

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It was released just the three month after the razing of the Babri mosque in India that touched off a wave of violence against Hindus in Bangladesh. As she stated in a preface to the English-language edition of the novel that she wrote the book in seven days after the demolition of the mosque because "I detest fundamentalism and communalism....The riot that took place in 1992 in Bangladesh are the responsibility of us all, and we are to blame. Lajja is a document of our collective defeat."

This paper seeks to examine the enumerated position and status of women in Bangladesh in relation to the interplay of religion and politics. After a period of political oblivion, the religious right in Bangladesh has not only made electoral gains in the early 1990s but also successfully engaged in political alliances which allowed it to campaign virtually unopposed for an Islamic state where women could step outdoors only at their own peril. Their many-speared campaign included attacks on development organisations which empowered women through offering, loans, skills training and employment opportunities. They have argued that female emancipation is not part of God's plan. Therefore, schools for girls have not remained unscathed. Women who dared to challenge existing social discourse, alongside those who did not have, are equally victims of violence and moral censure. These activities were at odds with the development objectives of the state. Yet, at times the role of the state was an ambivalent one. Where decisive action could have stemmed the tide, none was forthcoming.

Women's subordination is also ensured by the policies of the patriarchal post-colonial state of Bangladesh which is not fully committed to female equality. On the contrary, it has endorsed violence and injustices against women, both in the private and public spheres, through its failure to enact and implement appropriate measures of deterrence. The existing legal system was bypassed by the *fatwa* courts which pronounced verdicts of death on the writer, Taslima Nasreen and others, whereas, in fact these institutions have no legal authority to do so under the constitution.

'There is no utterance without relation to other utterance, and that is essential'.

An interesting novel '*Lajja*' was published in Bengali language in February 1993 by a gynaecologist, physician, poet, journalist and a novelist, Taslima Nasreen. An uncompromising critic of patriarchal religious traditions that she sees as oppressive to women. She protested religious intolerance and increasing incident of violence against women by local *Salish* or Islamic village councils. It was released just the three month after the razing of the

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The novel traces the events of 13 days in the life of a fictional family, the Duttas-Sudhamoy, Datta, a physician, his wife, Kironmoyee, and their grown children, Suranjan and Maya. *Lajja* is a poignant and unrelenting account of the suffering of minorities. Millions of people the world over wonder whether they should stay or leave an oppressive homeland. Some stay and suffer, as the Duttas do, others leave to find that the world is simply not large enough for their rights. It is also a fantastic manifesto of Hindu complaints of a persistent violation of their rights. Sudhamoy, an atheist who fought for the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan, believes with a naïve mix of optimism and idealism that his country will not let him down. Unconstitutionally, Suranjan recalls, Islam became the national religion of Bangladesh. "Why don't we work to free all states policies from their infiltration of religion? He asks. "If we want the introduction of secularism, it does not necessarily mean that Gita must be recited as often as the Quran is on Radio and TV. In school, colleges and universities of all religious functions, prayers, the teaching of religious text and glorifying the lives of religious personae, should be banned."

Suranjan catalogs the hundreds of violent incidents representing the heavy toll that communalism-chauvinism and prejudice based on religious identity. He remembers the looting and burning in Hindu communities in October 1990. Women were abducted and raped, people were beaten and thrown out of their houses and property was confiscated. Suranjan is critical failure of the government to protect Hindus.

During the six month after its publication, novel was declared as political tact by some critics. After protest by Islamic fundamentalists, the Bangladeshi government banned *Lajja* on the basis that it had "created misunderstanding among communities." A fatwa or death decree, had been issued by a mullah, of the Council of Soldiers of Islam. Numbers of Muslim protesters attended mass rallies and marched through the streets of Dhaka.

The International PEN Women Writers Committee organized a campaign on Nasreen's behalf, enlisting the support of human rights and women organization around the world. It called on Bangladesh's government to protect Nasrin, prosecute those who sought her death, lift the ban on her book and restore her passport. The government of Sweden, France and Germany lodged official protest. Sweden and Norway ultimately threatened to cut off all economic assistance. Almost overnight, Nasrin, who was unknown outside Bangladesh and India, became a symbol in the Western world of expression and women's right. In April 1994, after the return of her passport, Nasrin travelled to France, where she spoke at a meeting marking International Press Freedom Day. She gave an interview to the English-language daily, the *Calcutta Statesman*, which quoted her saying,

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'The Kuran should be revised thoroughly.' In an open to the Bangladeshi and Indian Press, Nasrin wrote that "the Kuran, The Vedas, the Bible and all such religious texts" were "out of place and out of time.'

Both in her writing, and in numerous interviews, Nasrin has iterated over and over again that she is not against Islam, but against any kind of religious fundamentalism. This is not clear in Lajja, where she downplays Hindu fundamentalism to magnify the horrors of Islamic fundamentalism. 'Lajja' shows Nasreen's feeling for secularism. Many critics and authorities rejected her views and ideas. As a true patriotic figure, she writes "It is my duty to try to protect my beautiful country."

The problem is the intolerance of the fundamentalist. Her voice is the voice of anger and outrage, the voice of protest, and it carries the weight and power of any struggle for justice. She obviously touches a nerve that threatens Islamic patriarchy, or the mullahs would not have reacted the way they have and largely male processions would not take place demanding her life. But it's important to realize that, with all its importance, Nasreen's voice is inextricably bound within the fabric of Bangladeshi society. She is no Rushdie, no lone atom orbiting outside international boundaries in the realms of thought and sophisticated social analysis. Nasrin is simply a local activist and quite unprepared for the fate that has launched her into the international scene.

The paper has attempted to examine the interplay of religion and politics in relation to its impact on the position and status of women. It demonstrates that the forces of religious "fundamentalism" do not endorse the concept of female equality and that an alliance between these forces and a weak state is particularly problematic for female emancipation. The patriarchal state is unable to play an effective role as a mediator between these forces and the women who are often their victims, because it effectively becomes a party to the perpetration of injustices against them.

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