

## WOMEN AS SECOND SEX: INTERPRETING TASLIMA NASRIN'S POETRIES FROM FEMINISM AND POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES

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**ABSTRACT:** In the last three decades, innumerable literary corpus has been published on Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin (25 August 1962-). These narratives mainly exhibit the subaltern, marginalization, suppression, oppression and desubjectivization of non-existent women in the male-dominated Bangladeshi society which allows no autonomy, status, agency as well as identity of females. As far as the research works conducted on Taslima Nasrin are concerned, we can notice that her novels, interviews and religious stance have been explored to a great extent but her poems lack in-depth analysis. I study her sixteen poems critically, applying feminist and postcolonial theories. In this regard, I have used Bengali writer Taslima Nasrin's poems from her book *All About Women* (2005) in order to study how women of Bangladesh are suffering under patriarchy. How her poems elucidate the concepts of colonizer, colonized, Eurocentrism, subaltern, and othering as the colonizer (men) control on women who act as the second subsidiary gender is researched in this article in succinct details. Thus, the first chapter begins with the different approaches towards Nasrin's writings followed by the second one which studies Feminism and Postcolonialism as Theoretical Framework on whose light her poems are analyzed in the next section and the concluding section focuses on the women as other dehumanized abused peripheral sections of South Asian country Bangladesh.

**KEYWORDS:** patriarchy, othering, second, subaltern, colonizer, colonized, postcolonialism, marginalized, Bangladesh, feminism

### **Introduction**

Feminism which focuses on the empowerment of females speeded in Bangladesh by the writings of Rokeya Shakhawat Hossain (9 December 1880 – 9 December 1932) who spoke for female education amidst the patriarchy prevalent during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. 100 years later Bangladesh saw one of the most controversial feminist writers in its history who is living in exile from the year 1994 in various countries like Sweden, Canada, Europe as well as India as religious fundamentalists of Bangladesh demanded her death sentence as she vehemently opposes Islamic thoughts. The focal aspect of this research is on this author Taslima Nasrin (25 August 1962-) who worked as a physician in Mymensingh and later at Mitford hospital, Dhaka where she experienced mistreatment of women by rape and preference of male offspring (Banashankari, 2015, p. 42). She wrote several columns, books and poems to describe the secondary status of women by tracing issues like marital slavery, dowry, unequal pay between sexes and preference for male sons in her writings in explicit manner. The publication of the novel *Lajja* (1993) dealing with the traumatizing mistreatment of the Hindu minorities of Bangladesh post the 16<sup>th</sup> century Babri Mosque demolition in India sparked severe religious upheaval in Bangladesh compelling her expulsion from this country forever. Zaman (1999) points out that the book *Lajja* was used as a spawn by the Hindu centred parties like Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) to oppress the Muslims residing in India whereby they even deleted the parts of the novel where BJP were shown as culprits (p. 50). Riaz (1995) also highlights that BJP circulated unlicensed translation of *Lajja* (1993) all over India to propagate their cause leading to the issue of fatwa of death sentence and a bounty of 50,000 taka on Nasrin by Shahaba Sainik Parishad (which was later retracted) and the ban on all her books due to blasphemy charges (p. 23). ZAFAR (2005) points out that as secularism in Bangladesh deteriorated in 1977 due to islamization by the first BNP government and in 1988 Islam became the state religion, voices against religious dogmas curtailed (p. 413). Riaz (1995) claims that Nasrin's interview where she told that progress will occur if we move beyond the religious texts like the Koran, the Vedas and the Bible and take up humanity as our new faith (p. 23) was used by the government to remove people's interest from the opposition alliance Awami League (AL) with muslim party called Jaamat-i-Islami (p. 24). ZAFAR (2005) locates that her writing was different from other feminists due to discussion of taboo topics like female body, sexuality which she calls as freedom of uterus and women role in Islam (p. 414).

Additionally, Riaz (2019) quotes Nasrin’s opinion whereby she examines the religious texts. She specifies several Hadiths like “if a man asks his wife to have sex, the wife should respond immediately, even if she is busy cooking” and “the woman may not shun her husband’s bed, and if she denies herself to her husband and he is angry at her because of it, the angels curse her until dawn” (as cited in Riaz, 2019, p. 27) to highlight the subservient role of women in Islam. She says that old men aged 60/70 marry young girls due to the enlargement of the prostate gland rising their sexual desire (as cited in Riaz, 1995, p. 25).

As far as religion is concerned, I noticed that she is very vocal in addressing her thoughts. She mentions that she will support the right to practice religions, only if they don’t practise violence (as cited in Duttgupta, 2016, p.1). As all religions are against women’s rights by making women inherit no property from their fathers or multiple marriages of husbands (Hinduism) and women inherit less property from their fathers or four marriages of husbands (Islam), Nasrin remains a spokesman against fundamentalists (as cited in Duttgupta, 2016, p. 2). Nasrin (1992) expounds that in crowd men seek for an opportunity to touch female breast and hips (p. 9). She slanders hijab-clad Iranian women (Selected Columns, 2006, p. 173). As per Nasrin (2003a), Islam as a black cobra which should be swept with a broom (p.173) and wicked scoundrel Muslim Mollahs backbite, kill, and they rape and beat their wives (p.174). To add, she states that she is misquoted in 1994 by a newspaper in Calcutta where she said that the Sharia which is a sacred law of Islam should be abolished but the newspaper miswrote that “the Qur’an should be revised thoroughly.”

Nasrin states that the Quran cannot be positively interpreted as it dictates that men are superior to women and they can marry four wives and beat women, contrariwise, women are not equal with men in case of inheritance, and the testimony of women in a court of law is worth half that of men. Therefore, she considers Saudi Arabia women as slaves, second class citizens (“They wanted to kill me”, 1997, n. p). In the view of Hasan (2010) the west has a much better free speech culture than Bangladesh (p. 550). All these thoughts led to the Islamic fundamentalists issue fatwa against her for blasphemy and insults to Islam and thus the Islamic fundamentalists called her “an apostate appointed by imperial force to vilify Islam” (Banashankari, 2015, pp. 42-43). They also set a bounty on her head and made her live in exile (Pandhi, 2015, p. 3) from 1994 to various countries like Sweden, Canada, America, Europe as well as India.

Comparison among female Bangladeshi writers is conducted by Hasan (2016) who thinks that while others avoided sexual portrayals and religion, Nasrin is the first Bangladeshi feminist writer who explicitly talks about sexuality (p.169). He is absolutely correct because in *My Childhood* (1999) where her father is a woman seducer and her uncles Aman and Sharaf want to climb over her (p. 91) and in *Utal Hawa* (2002a) Nasrin portrays her abusive first husband the poet Rudra Muhammad Shahidullah (1956-91) having physical affairs with his maternal uncle’s wife’s sister. Zaman (1999) focuses on Nasrin’s columns where she says that a lucky man’s wife dies but an unlucky man’s cattle dies as he can remarry with a bride who will bring cash but to buy a cattle money will be needed (p. 44). Regarding the war of 1971, Nasrin states that her maternal uncles were accepted from Pakistani captivity but her aunt who was raped died out of shame as the society disrespected rape victims (p. 44). Hasan (2016) mentions that unlike her predecessor Begum Rokeya who fought in Bengal for women education and the strict purdah or veil culture and considered Prophet to be the liberator of women’s rights, Nasrin attacked Islam vehemently (pp. 177-178) and she lacks knowledge on how Muslim intellectuals have criticized the local Mullahs (p.174). In addition, Hasan (2016) finds that many hijabi women also disliked her antireligious sentiments (p.180). Upadhyay (2018) calls her an agnostic who rejects religious beliefs (p. 721).

Giri (2023) accolades Nasrin for her brave attempt to portray the depressed condition of marginalized Hindu living in Bangladesh under fear of rape, displacement and trauma of communal riots executed for political power. Paudyal (2021) sheds light on the Hindu father and son Sudhamoy and Suranjan respectively who do not listen to Kironmoyee, the mother and the daughter, Maya as they want to leave Bangladesh immediately after demolition of the masjid (p. 29). This results in the heinous rape and murder of Maya. Paudyal (2021) points out that Suranjan later rapes a Muslim girl only to take revenge. Shockingly, women are oppressed and subjugated though they have no interlink with the destruction of the 16<sup>th</sup> century build Babri Mosque or the Hindu Muslim conflict. Chandran (2016) calls Nasrin as “Female Rushdie” (p. 98) and asserts that *Lajja* literally means shame and human beings, after reading the book, should be ashamed of the religious fanaticism that exist today in various parts

of the world (p. 98). Farooq (2022) depicts the suffering of the Hindu minority of Bangladesh. Sudhamoy faces sheer sorrow due to the Kidnap and rape of his sister Nila and daughter Maya during the blood-curdling monstrosity of communal riots of 1992. In the same article, Kalyani who has to flee from Bangladesh during this strife and leave her love Badal and motherland is displayed in *Phera*. Her husband used to dislike her as malfunctioning (p. 297) for not bearing a male heir to his family leading to her acute distress. Pathos is also prominent in *Forashi Premik* where Nila faces mistreatment by Anil's rape, her husband dwarfs her and confines her to the kitchen and Mithu's suicide due to poverty and dark-colour prejudice. Kumar and Karnik (2023) study the novel *French Lover* whereby they state that Nasrin wants to display liberated females from their subordinate status (p. 5) as limned by Nila who seeks identity as she breaks free from her caged marriage with Kishanlal and later develops an immoral love affair with a Frenchman called Benoir Dupont only to realize that he loves only himself. They also study *Shodh* (1992) with the revenge of Jhumur who becomes pregnant by her extramarital affair with Afzal and bores a son called Ananda to avenge her husband Haroon who disbelieves her when she conceives a baby within her 6 weeks of marriage. She feels contented as Haroon unaware of the truth cuddles Ananda as his own son. Gain (2024) looks at the diasporic displacement of Kalyani who misses her root Bangladesh while living in India. Returning after 30 years, she is now an outsider who is no longer a part of her own motherland Bangladesh. Besides, her love poems are scrutinized by Arora (2022) where she expertly paints the fusion of both spiritual as well as physical shade of love (p. 34).

While many scholars dissected the novels and poems of Nasrin, Paudyal (2022) explicates the dialogues of the author. In this regard, the researcher expounds the use of ethos which is the speaker's authority or honesty (p. 36), pathos or the emotional appeal and logos or the use of reason and intellect (p. 37) in Nasrin's words. Paudyal (2022) concludes that Nasrin focuses on the protection of the marginalized in her literary pursuit. All in all, she mentions in her interview with *The Daily Star* that "I am a strong advocate of women's rights, freedom of thought, and human rights. What better causes are there to write about? ("I have every right to return to my country", 2025, n. p). As far as the research works conducted on Taslima Nasrin are concerned, we can notice that her novels, interviews and religious stance have been explored to a great extent but her poems have not yet been examined by the lens of any theory. To fill in this gap, this paper attempts to study Bengali writer Taslima Nasrin's poems from postcolonial and feminist angles. For this paper, I have used 16 poems from her book *All About Women* (2005) namely "Garment Girls", "Mokka Modina" "The Women Breaking Bricks", "Bad Omen", "Female Goods", "The Prostitutes of Amsterdam", "The Game in Reverse" "At the Back of Progress", "Character", "The Dowry" "The Female", "Border", "Phoolan Devi", "Masturbation", "Bibi Khadija" and "Happy Marriage".

### **Feminism and Postcolonialism as Theoretical Framework**

The first wave of feminism, in the 19th and 20th centuries, began in the US and the UK best recalled as the suffragette movement (Waugh, 2006, p. 319) where women seek for right to vote and property. Next, the second wave of Feminists in the 1960s and 1970s talk in terms of liberation from the oppressiveness of a patriarchally defined society (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004, p. 144). In this phrase, we can find Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1997). Why women are, the second sex and why women have no existence remain the pivotal aspect of her book. The French society during the 1940s was so conservative that legal birth control was denied up to 1967 and legal abortion until 1975 (Thurman, 2010, p. 1). Thus, the emergence of this book acts as a revolution in the feminist perspective. She examines that women are the other who lack transcendence. Immanence remains the condition of disadvantaged unfulfilled females who emulate the social norms imposed on her from the childhood. While playing the feminine role, they forget their identity and subjectivity, which in turn makes them the object, the subaltern. At every stage of her life, she accepts passivity as she is deprived of equal acceptance from the society. Beauvoir identifies women's incompleteness as she works as a mother, a wife, a girl and an old woman. The text mainly focuses on the mistreatment of women all around the world.

Beauvoir (1997) writes on the childhood of a girl and the value of female virginity in the male centric world. With the belief that "one is not born a woman; rather, one becomes a woman" (p. 295), she claims that although there is no difference in the attitudes of girls and boys during the first three or four years (p. 297) but as the boys grow up, they are taught that pride in their manhood (p. 299).

On the contrary, there is double standard in the world as women are taught to make herself an object (p. 308), a live doll and is refused liberty (p. 308). She is not allowed to fight (p. 309). The little girl seeks activity and independence (p. 321) and they begin to believe that men are surely masters of the world (p. 352). Hence, women prefer to have sons, the hero, soldier and creator (p. 531). She is the other while the men are the one subject absolute essential (p. 16). In addition, Beauvoir expresses that parents and grandparents may barely conceal the fact that they would have preferred male offspring to female (p. 313). She argues that when woman becomes man's property, he wants her to be virgin (p. 114) and virginity is valued so highly that to lose it outside legitimate marriage is a disaster (p. 400) leading to suicide of the mother and infanticide of the illegitimate child (p. 407).

Concerning marriage, Beauvoir (1997) thinks that women become inessential, passive, and docile in the hands of a new master, that is, her husband, as the society imposes marriage on her (p. 352). Women give herself, man pays her and takes her (p. 396). In marriage women need to satisfy male's sexual needs and to take care of his household for which their husbands present her gifts, support her and write a marriage settlement (p. 447). In the process, she takes his name, religion, class, circle and she became his half (pp. 449, 487). This implies that the first guardian of a woman is her father and then after marriage, her husband becomes her guardian (p. 123). He wants her to be home-bodies (p. 499). If she divorces him, she will be assessed as a selfish, self-centered woman (p. 38). The busy woman forgets her own existence (p. 471). Her home duties are not directly useful to society and so it gives her no autonomy leading to her being a subordinate, secondary and a parasite after her marriage (p. 475). Older and better educated husbands do not give any weight to their wives' opinions (p. 482). A woman understands that she is inferior as well as dependent in the men-dominated world (p. 609). Even she does not aim too high in her profession as she has entrusted her lot on a man (p. 709) because she is a woman.

The third wave of feminism, according to Rampton (2015), began in mid-90s where lip-stick, high-heels, and cleavage proudly exposed by low cut necklines were used by feminists to counter patriarchy (p. 2). Also, being part of feminism's third wave means realizing one's own politics through the mass media and popular culture (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004, p. 171).

The 21<sup>st</sup> century fourth phase, as described by Rampton (2015), is part of a larger consciousness of oppression along with racism, ageism, classism, ableism, and sexual orientation (p. 4). 21<sup>st</sup> century feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (15 September 1977-) in *Dear Ijeawele or a Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* (2017) provides fifteen suggestions to her childhood friend Ijeawele who seeks the advice of the writer regarding how to raise her baby girl Chizalum Adaora up a feminist. A timeline for the twentieth-century feminist would be as follows:

1830-1920: first-wave suffragette movement, civil rights movement

1960s: second-wave-networking of women's groups deeper engagement with political debates

1980s: Post-feminism-cyberfeminism, ecofeminism and the emergence of a postcolonial start to feminist theory. (Nayar, 2010, p. 83)

Turning to the theory of postcolonialism, it can be noticed that it was the resources of Africa for which Europeans plundered it (O'Reilly, 2001, p. 30). According to O'Reilly (2001) the European powers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was in a competition to take the palm oil, cotton and other assets of Africa. The 1885 Berlin Conference divided Africa among the European powers (p. 30). As African labourers were cheaply bought and sold, white traders took it as a profitable trade too (p. 30). Mainly, the West got benefits from the exploitation of the East. It can be noticed that there is a marked contrast between postcolonialism and post-colonialism. Innes (2007) notes that the nonhyphenated one discusses the cultural, political, economic repercussions of colonialism, whereas the hyphenated one studies the historical period after the independence of a colonized nation (p. 239). Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who are known as the Holy Trinity are indispensable tenets of the postcolonial theory. To begin with, Edward W. Said (1978) in his book *Orientalism Western Conceptions of the Orient* claims that Africa is actually the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, the other (p. 1).

This is a warped distorted misrepresentation of non-Whites occidental gaze. Hence, the colonized is the secondary subaltern class. Furthermore, Occident and Orient power dichotomy addresses a complex hegemony (p. 5) by paralleling rational, virtuous, mature, normal (p. 40) European with irrational, depraved (fallen) childlike (p. 40) Oriental backwardness (p. 7). In Albert Memmi's (1965)

opinion, colonized is hardly a ‘‘human being’’ (p. 130) as far as the western gaze is concerned. Mimicry and hybridity are discussed by Indian theorist Homi K. Bhabha who believes that Africans emulate the white skinned human beings as education, religion and social structures of Whites are present everywhere in their social, economic and cultural realm. This leads to struggle of the hybridized native (as cited in Nayar, 2010, p. 170) as that individual is amidst two cultures whereby he neither can cannot fully accept the colonial authority nor return to his root or country. This creates the third space with the fragmented, split, decentered, unstable colonized (as cited in Nayar, 2010, p.171). The Subaltern studies is another conspicuous thought of postcolonialism. This term refers to a low ranking officer in a military hierarchy as per the Marxist Italian communist scholar Antonio Gramsci in the early 1930s (as cited in Döring, 2008, p. 59). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 21st century Indian postcolonial writer takes this idea in her essay ‘‘Can the Subaltern Speak’’ (1994). She examines the sati widows of India who killed themselves in the fire of her deceased husband (p. 93). To her, the sati women are the symbol of subalterns as they have no voice to fight their oppressors. This silence represents their dehumanized powerless objectification in the society.

### Discussion

‘‘The Female’’ reveals that only humans consider the birth of a female as undesirable. All the other animals of this world do not have partialized preference for any offspring like human beings. So, our society does not welcome the birth of a girl in their families. Girls are supposed to stay in an obscure corner of her home as outsiders. She must keep her hair in a tight knot, and hide her swelling breasts as she needs to be kept in chains and move only in her home (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 9). In a similar vein, the African colonized were also not given any freedom while they worked in cotton or sugar plantations. They hardly had any rights to earn their emancipation from the curse of slavery during colonialism. Moreover, the colonizers considered the Africans as undesired thing which they used only for labour. This sheds light on the hypocrisy apparent in colonialism and Bangladeshi culture. As men look for fresh virgins (p. 60) only to maul and tear them on the plea of love or marriage, their negative mindset is revealed as they might not be themselves pure or virgin, but they always crave for girls who had no physical relationships before their marriage. Shama (2024) says that the Europeans chained, raped, killed, and snatched from the Africans their linguistic craft, family and their country (p. 197). African women were raped during colonialism as reflected in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) and here Bangladeshi females are physically abused on the pretext of marriage. Savagery on women bodies remain common in both contexts.

‘‘Bad Omen’’ addresses the traumatizing rape victim wounded (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 3) Kalyani whose family neither accepts her nor her perpetrators get punished. Ironically, this physically assaulted girl will be considered a bad omen or luck and the society will deem her as impious. In a similar vein, ‘‘Mokka Modina’’ focuses on the unjust whipping of two raped sisters Mokka and Madina who are violated by their polygamous religious Muslim teacher Matbor Ali, the preacher of the covering of female bodies (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 36). Tyson (2006) says that the promotion of culturally constructed traditional gender roles privilege men and women are oppressed reflecting them as inferior, submissive, nurturing and emotional whereas males are referred as strong, decisive, strong and rational (p. 81). ‘‘Female Goods’’ satires the qualities of bride such as fair skinned, tall, slim waist, no fat, no wrinkles and long hair, firm and sharply figure, virgin, a good cook, shy and modest which are sought by the bridegroom so that like a commodity, men can chain her feet, hands and divorce her (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 44). This sexual division of labour is not supported by Nasrin. Likewise, African women were used not only as products to satiate lust of the White men but also they were unpaid plantation workers.

‘‘Character’’ shows that men will look, whistle, follow and call loose woman but if a girl protests, she has no modest character and if she avoids such abusive words, she has moral character (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 12). The boys feel that the girls who come out of their home premises are characterless. Any resistance from the girl also indicates that she is unchaste. Just like the colonizers who wrongly asserts the colonized as primitive, the boys feel that the girls who come out of their home premises are characterless. Any resistance from the girl also indicates that she is unchaste. However, shockingly men buy meat market (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 42) of female prostitutes in America, Europe, Africa and Asia as portrayed in the ‘‘The Prostitutes of Amsterdam’’ poem. Conversely, Nasrin also wants to buy a man in ‘‘The Game in Reverse’’ at Ramna Park of Dhaka. However, I do not support the trade of

flesh market as this is sheer discrimination of both sexes. “Happy Marriage” compares the life of a married woman with a sandbar taken over by a monster man who wants the body of his wife under his control. Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1986) wrote in *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* that the African land, language, culture, individuality, resources and psyche were ravaged by the conquerors and here the master husband can spit in her face, slap her face, pinch her rear and also rob her of her clothes. Thus, the husband can chain her feet, chop her hands and fingers, sprinkle salt in her open wound and throw ground-up black pepper in her eyes (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 14). These images point out the social manacle of slavery imposed on women through marriage. Just like a land, she is conquered by her husband, the symbol of the West atrocity. Additionally, a dagger can slash her thigh and she can be hanged in order to control her heart as well connote the physical as well as psychological turmoil of a bride. In order to dominate women, men develop the false distorted idea that a bride groom can be polygamous but chastity of wives is important. Married women will commit suicide in a fit of ecstasy by loving their husbands because they have been instructed to be submissive to their husband from childhood. “Fire” she unravels that husbands are the chief, lord, master with authority over their wives (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 45). All these lead to identity crisis of Bangladeshi women who are also representing the marginalized subaltern of the world. Ironically, if woman have big money, religious man like the Prophet (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 39) even will be her devoted lover as shown in “Bibi Khadija”. The shackle of marriage (husband blocking the door) and motherhood (child pulling the sari-end) hinder the swim (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 18) of a woman in “Border”. The poem ends with the tone of hope as the protagonist decides to go or leave her family affairs behind to seek emancipation from all traditional duties of a wife and a mother. This reminds me of Henrik Ibsen (1879) who wrote *A Doll’s House* where the protagonist Nora also suffers between her role as a wife and her transcendence from societal obligations where she chooses to be liberated. Also, Eveline in the short story “Eveline” of James Joyce (1914) decides to continue her abusive family rather than flee with her lover Frank. Similarly, the manumission of African colonized also took place and they got salvation from the imperialistic settlers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

“The Dowry” expresses the detrimental dowry prevalent in the Hindu society. Samiran Mandal sells his field’s crops and his house for his daughter’s dowry but all this is not enough. The bride is cursed, slapped and kicked every day just like the forced labour, intimidation, pressure and rape as mentioned by Césaire (2010) which Africans suffered by the Whites (p. 42) during colonialism. The flowers in her garden wither and fall and only thorns blossom there. (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 29) denoting her psychological turmoil. The bridegroom beats the bride to death because of her father’s delay in giving the dowry. After marriage women become a slave and possession of her husband, totally under her control. He can spit in her face in contempt, beat her, wound her and even kill her. By the same token, the colonized were thrashed physically and killed what Aimé Césaire (2010) calls as “thing-ification” (p. 142) or commodification of the colonized by the Europeans. “At the Back of Progress” depicts the men beating his wives over trivial mistakes like the over-ironed handkerchief or shirt collar, bar of soap and pneumonia of the baby. Looking at women with lustful eyes and after sexual intercourses at hotels indulging in gossips and movies, he shows a false distorted self by speaking softly in offices (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 6). Ironically, this is the patriarchal man who uses women for money and craves for a son to bring his lineage further. The poet points out that no one knows that he divorced his first wife for her sterility, his second for giving birth to a daughter, his third for not bringing a sufficient dowry and now, with wife number four, he again is set to beat over a green chili or a handful of rice. (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 6).

Men, being the powerful ones in Bangladeshi society, always exploit the females, the secondary class. “Garment Girls” discusses the girls who works in garments and thus play vital role in the economic upliftment of their family as well as the nation. Ansari (2024) locates the theme of resilience and solidarity among these girls (p. 212). Using the simile of a “bird” (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 24), the author connotes their independent status as they eat food and wear clothes by their own income. However, men often grab their bodies as their mouth become watery and they grab their money at midnight. Still, women walk on to their job sectors. As for me, Frantz Fanon’s “literature of combat” (*Wretched of the Earth*, 1963, p.193) aptly describes her writings. This liberation of females is also prescribed by Bangladeshi author Humayun Azad (1992) in the text *Nari*.

“The Colour” critiques the craving for white skin among the Bangladeshi inhabitants. The poet sternly castigates the Europeans as fade robbers who robbed black’s wealth and raped black women (*All*

*About Women*, 2005, p. 34). This is a direct reference to colonial barbarity. The psychic disorientation occurs as people prefer white colour or lactification (p. 29) as shown by Frantz Fanon (2008) in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Toni Morrison (1970) through her novel *The Bluest Eye* displays the fragmented identity crisis of Pecola and all those who crave for white skin to get admittance in the white world. Thus, Nasrin also thinks that it is wrong to want fairness like the postcolonial writers Frantz Fanon and Toni Morrison. “The Women Breaking Bricks” exposes that impoverished Bangladeshi women get less paid than their male coworkers. While she gets 10 takas, wage disparity makes the man get twice as her and he sits under an umbrella. She is the mother of seven children at the age of 21 which displays her early marriage. (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 23). This is sheer economic exploitation and gender segregation which mirrors Africans who hardly got any payment of their acute labour too. That is why, author Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1905) in “Sultana’s Dream” advocates for female independence which can be obtained by education and marriage of women not before the age of 21.

With the idea that women need no men to satiate their sexual desires, she advises females to masturbate in “Masturbation”. Nasrin appreciates Dalit caste discrimination survivor Phoolan Devi in “Phoolan Devi” for killing her rapists while many victims commit suicide (*All About Women*, 2005, p. 31). By the same token, Indian author Kalyani Thakur Charal (2024) focuses on the mistreatment of the Dalit, the lower sections of the Indian community and here Nasrin also advocates for an equal classless society.

### Conclusion

Taslima Nasrin is reclaiming the voice of the females as a feminist author. In the first chapter the numerous academic works on Nasrin’s writings are analyzed. The focus has always been on her controversial seminal novel *Lajja* (1993) followed by the male-female dichotomy as delineated in other novels *Fera* (2018), *Shodh* (2003b) and *French Lover* (2002b). It is always her religious thoughts discussed in interviews which various critics have studied. In the realm of poetry, her love poems are studied. As I have located that her poems have not been probed in detailed, I have evaluated them. In order to do so, I have applied feminism and postcolonialism with her 16 poems which are studied in my second chapter. My discussion focuses on how her poems limns these theories. Restricted childhood, preference for male offspring, virginity, marital slavery is predominant among the South Asian Bangladeshi women. So, it becomes clear that women are made subaltern, the other by the male-dominated societies. It is notable that in spite of the fact that post colonialism is a theory depicting the encounter between the colonizer and the colonized and Nasrin is a Bengali writer, both are dealing with the subordination of women issues like slavery, unpaid labour, dominance, prejudiced belief of master race, no identity, confinement, physical abuse and no freedom. In this case, men are behaving like the Whites by raping, beating and crushing the rights of females who are only valued for their physical beauty. So, it becomes clear that post colonialism and feminism are visible in all her poems. Thus, women are made subaltern, the other by the male-dominated societies. To cap it all, I think that there is the scope of adding other theories with her novels, poems and her interviews in the future endeavours as Nasrin’s literature is still unearthed to a great extent.

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