

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Exploration of Cultural and Gender Trauma in Taslima Nasrin's *Lajja*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Ms. Sarita Khadka has completed her thesis entitled “Exploration of Cultural and Gender Trauma in Taslima Nasrin's *Lajja*” under my supervision. She carried out her research from December, 2016 to February, 2018 and completed it successfully. I hereby recommend her thesis be submitted for the final viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Exploration of Cultural and Gender Trauma in Taslima Nasrin's *Lajja* ”, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Ms. Sarita Khadka, has been approved by the undersigned member of Research Committee.

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Abstract

This present research focuses on the exploration of cultural and gender trauma in Taslima Nasrin's *Lajja*. It depicts the experiences of pathetic, depressed, helpless and traumatic Hindu females in Bangladesh after the incident of destruction of Babri Masjid in India on 6 December 1992. The girl Maya is raped by Muslim boys only being the Hindu female. In this regard, the novel exposes how the Hindu females have to face the cultural and psychological torture in their own motherland being distinct religious background and identity. It shows the antagonistic relationship between Hindus and Muslims. Therefore, revealing out the issue of torture against the Hindu females in particular and Hindus in general in Bangladesh that creates cultural and gender trauma to the many characters throughout the novel is the main significance of the study. In order to analyze the text, gender and cultural trauma by Kali Tal, Crauth, Dominick LaCapra etc has been used as the theoretical tool in this research. By using the gender and cultural traumatic theory, the researcher explores the message that the psychological and cultural torture given to somebody only for having different sex and religion is inhuman, brutal and wild act.

Exploration of Cultural and Gender Trauma in Nasrin's *Lajja*

The project entitled cultural and gender trauma in Nasrin's *Lajja* deals with the issue of cultural and gender trauma endured by the character Maya in particular and the Hindu Dutta family in general being the Hindus in Bangladesh. Throughout their struggles, Maya and her family goes through the long period of traumatic suffering. Her family is continuously tortured and dominated in Bangladesh. They are haunted and tortured psychologically being Hindus. One brother sees another brother as enemy because of the religious riots in India. The torture and pain given by one majority group to another minority group due to their cultural root shows that human beings do not see right and wrong but they blindly support their orthodox religion, custom and tradition. The cultural torture to Hindus Dutta family shows that they lament for their cultural root and struggles a lot in the Muslim country. Even the girl Maya is given physical torture by the Muslim boys. They tease, chase and make sexual assault upon her only being Hindus. The Muslims think Hindus as their enemy from their birth which is wrong social concept. The novel is critically analyzed from the perspective of cultural and gender trauma related to the theory of Kali Tal, Dominick LaCapra, Cathy Crauth and Urvaasi Butalila. The objective of the research is to show how the cultural root is the obstacle to the minority Hindus in Pakistan and how females are even physically and mentally tortured by the Muslim males. The Hindu females are doubly tortured and victimized. One for being Hindu and other for being female. The Hindu female's traumatic and problematic condition is no other than the suffocated condition in the Muslim nation. They even struggle for their existence collecting the small amount of strength.

On December 6, 1992 Hindus destroy the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in India and due to this event there comes tension between Hindus and Muslims in

Bangladesh. Whenever Muslims see Hindus, they chase them, give physical torture and warn them to leave the place. Maya and her family's effort to preserve their self-dignity and distinct personality in their own nation is repeatedly hindered by setbacks and obstacles created by racist practices and sexual assault on her. They are thought to be outsiders and the enemy in their own nation due to their religion. This brings a traumatic condition to them. During the War of Liberation both Hindus and Muslims fought against the oppressive rule of Pakistan but one religious riot in India breaks their mutuality, brotherhood and understanding. This shows that how culture is deeply rooted in the psychology of a person and creates a conflict in the society. The torture, assault and pain given to the Dutta family create the cultural trauma whereas the double victimization to Maya being Hindu female creates a gender trauma to her. The Dutta family- Sudhamoy, Kironmoyee and their two children Suranjan and Maya have lived in Bangladesh all their lives in the small Hindu community. They were terrorized by Muslim fundamentalists. The armies around on the street catch and kill Hindus in 1947. At the same time, Dutta family leaves the country due to fear of death. Kironmoyee and their children stay in faji's village home in Phulpur. The army is not supporting the Hindu out to the streets and only Bangladeshi lived safe. Many Hindus had deserted their homeland in East Pakistan for India. People who react violent on the CNN television report to begin religious and cultural riot as CNN had show in vivid detail the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992.

Taslima Nasrin in her novel *Lajja* presents the Character Maya and her family in traumatic situation due to religious riot, physical assault and psychological torture in Muslim community in Bangladesh. The domination, oppression and exploitation of Hindus by Muslims bring mental restlessness to minority Hindu family and particular to Maya. The lines, "Twenty-five temples were burnt down, also

the Hindus houses in Bokjhuri village. And Deben Shor's daughter Saraswati was dragged out of her house by a gang of eight or ten men and raped (56), shows how pathetic situation the females have to face only for belonging to different religious principles. Maya and other female characters are doubly victimized in the Muslim society being Hindu and being female. The clash of religious doctrine puts forward a cultural tension between the Hindus and the Muslims. As a result the minority Hindus are given physical torture gazed as outsider and even called the conspirators in their own nation. In Bangladesh, the Muslim radical fundamentalists with vested interests took it as a prospect to wipe out the Hindu community and hence started inflicting violence at the Hindu community which ended into a situation where a Hindu family was given few choices of seeking refuge in a Muslim household or to board a train to leave Bangladesh or to face or resist to the communal assault. It was not an easy decision to make overnight which is not just taking a new identity altogether but the real crisis is to disassociate from the erstwhile identity that one is born with and then accommodate your identity vis-a-vis a completely new spatio-temporal framework. Nasrin has done a praiseworthy job in attempting to raise the voice against the violence; which is not against a particular community but against the idea of communal harmony and the humanity in general. In the words of Sudhamoy, Nasrin defines riots as "Riots are not like floods that you can simple be rescued and given some more to survive on temporarily. Nor are they like fires that can be quenched to bring about relief. When a riot is in progress, human beings keep their humanity in check. The worst and the most poisonous aspect of man surfaces during a riot are inhumanity and brutality. Riots are not natural calamities, nor disasters, so to speak. They are simply a perversion of humanity?"

The research work presents the issue of how minority Hindus are overlooked through the spectacle of other due to their religion in their own nation and given physical and psychological torture and pain. The Dutta family is tortured time and again by the Muslims. They are humiliated, oppressed and suppressed for being Hindus. The daughter Maya is raped by Muslim boys. It shows the antagonist relationship between Hindus and Muslims. Being Muslim too the writer has challenged the torture and trauma given by Muslims to Hindus presenting Maya as the radical character who struggles for their identity and position. Hence, the research focuses on the egalitarian society where none gives pain, torture and mental restlessness to others in the name of color, caste and religion.

During the war of liberation in Bangladesh both the Hindus and the Muslims fought against the oppressive rule of Pakistan which reflects their brotherhood. But the questions arise: What sorts of seeds are thrown between the Hindus and the Muslims to create psychological and cultural tension? Why does one brother give torture, pain and assault to another brother? Why are the same citizens of the nation put into minority and majority group? Why the minority group and females are doubly oppressed, suppressed and psychologically tortured in the society? It shows that the minority group is given pain and torture by the majority only for pleasure and fun. They don't have human sentiments and feelings.

Taslima Nasrin, the author of *Lajja* is physician, born in Bangladesh to orthodox parents. In 1980s she became to poet, columnist and a strong feminist. She revived global attention by the end of the 20th century owing to her essays and novels with feminist perspective and severe criticism of Islam. Her novel was not only banned in her own homeland but a *fatwa*, a religious sentence to death, was issued against her. Further, she was side to Salman Rushdie and had to seek political asylum

in France to save her life. Taslima was extremely bold to face all the accusations and humiliation; she remained untrammelled by all these and kept writing on similar lines and beliefs. When reached to Sweden Nasrin, on various occasions, argued that her writings have nothing to do with religion but are all about politics and gender issues. Some of the important and popularly known writing of Taslima includes her poetical work. Taslima attack is consistently directed against the middle class, the professional and the power elites. She points out that we can no longer relegate the problem of polygamy and abandonment of women to the religious leaders or farmers who inhabit a rather subordinate rank in the chain of patriarchy. Her works appeared in the critical and transitional period for Bangladesh.

The major thrust of this research is to examine how Hindu females are traumatized, dominated, tortured, exploited and gazed as the puppet, object and outsider by the Muslims in their own nation primarily. It also presents how minority Hindus are entitled as enemy, conspirator and second class citizen giving them psychological torture due to their cultural root. Hence, it focuses on the peace, fraternity and brotherhood between Hindus and Muslims. The novel *Lajja* has a hitting title –*Shame* – a feeling of disgrace and remorse brought upon an individual, a family through external forces around. It raises a basic question of identity of an individual and family, significance of nativity, religion and nationality in formation of that identity. The story proves how there is no space where class creed and cultural ideology cannot be the norm for human interaction. In the preface of the book the writer makes it clear, “I detest fundamentalism and communalism. This was the reason I wrote *Lajja* soon after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6th December 1992.” The narrative deals with persecution of Hindus, a religious minority in post-partition Bangladesh. The Babree Masjid demolition saga caused a strong

religious socio-political upheaval of responses and reactions. In her interview, Taslima stated, “The sacrifice of martyrs of freedom will be betrayed if we allow ourselves to be ruled by religious extremism.” And further, “the disease of religious fundamentalism is not restricted to Bangladesh alone.” The life-experience of Taslima is sprinkled in her poems, essays and stories so delicately that one can only understand her plight as a woman in the world of man. She is a freethinker, with satanic daring to rebel against the Male-god in domestic heavens: I don’t believe in God / Caught at arms by the social politics “Every house is full of religious devotees / who create classes, secretly, distinguish woman and man / Divide human existence. Gandhi’s proclamation of Non-violence has ever been the compulsion for and the fate of women since the earlier times and the glorification of feminine virtues like patience, devotion, sacrifice, surrender and chastity has ever been the share of a woman’s personality. Irony an anger of Kamala Das echoes in Taslima’s confessional tones while she writes:

Remember well that you are a girl
 People will glance at you
 When you cross the doors,
 They will follow you
 When you move in lanes,
 They will whistle and shout at you
 When you reach the main roads.... (13)

Taslima’s experience of incomplete existence is rooted in her haunting ideas of the old womanhood, so that she feels divided, distanced from man on account of the socio-cultural inequality. It means female are suppressed and oppressed in patriarchal society and even they are doubly victimized in the Muslims nation. The character

Maya is tortured and even given psychological torture by the Muslims males. Is it justice to torture the female having different cultural root. The demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on 6th Dec 1992, by a mob of Hindu fundamentalists, created large scale devastation in various parts of India. The riots that followed claimed a large number of lives. The world condemned the incident, but its fallout was felt most acutely in Bangladesh, where Muslim mobs began to seek out and attack the Hindus. It is against this political background that the novel *Lajja* (1994) is set. The book very accurately portrays the anguish and pain of the Hindus, who were victims of these riots. It describes how difficult it was for them to even step outside their houses, and how the families could not breathe easy if a member of their family actually did venture out on the streets. Constantly dark and frightening, the novel exposes the mindless bloodthirstiness of fundamentalism and brilliantly captures the insanity of violence in our time. This creates a psychological disturbance in the live of Hindus. They are tortured, oppressed and given mental pain. If they are shown outside in the street they are either beaten by stones or chased away. It is not because of any reason but because of the incident of India.

Taslima Nasrin in her text *Lajja* presents the Character Maya and her Family in traumatic situation due to religious riot, physical assault and psychological torture in Muslim community in Bangladesh. The domination, oppression and exploitation of Hindus by Muslims bring mental restlessness to minority Hindus family and particular to Maya. Maya is doubly victimized in the Muslim society being Hindu female. The line, "Sudhamoy Dutta had been forced to sell his house. Maya, all of six years old had got lost while she was returning from school. She could not be found anywhere in the city. She was not with any of their relatives. That was indeed a time of great stress" shows that the life of Hindus in their own nation is not secure (21).

They are oppressed and forced to sell their houses. Even when the girl child did not return home safely, the parents have a kind of stress in their mind either the daughter is safe or not. The clash of religious doctrine puts forward a cultural tension between Hindus and Muslims. As a result the minority Hindus are given physical torture gazed as outsiders and even called the conspirators in their own nation. In Bangladesh, the Muslim radical fundamentalists with vested interests took it as a prospect to wipe out the Hindu community and hence started inflicting violence at the Hindu community which ended into a situation where a Hindu family was given few choices of seeking refuge in a Muslim household or to board a train to leave Bangladesh or to face or resist to the communal assault. It was not an easy decision to make overnight which is not just taking a new identity altogether but the real crisis is to disassociate from the erstwhile identity that one is born with and then accommodate your identity vis-a-vis a completely new spatio-temporal framework. Nasrin has done a praiseworthy job in attempting to raise the voice against the violence; which is not against a particular community but against the idea of communal harmony and the humanity in general. In the words of Sudhamoy, Nasrin defines riots as, "Riots are not like floods that you can simple be rescued and given some more to survive on temporarily. Nor are they like fires that can be quenched to bring about relief. When a riot is in progress, human beings keep their humanity in check. The worst and the most poisonous aspect of man surfaces during a riot are inhumanity and brutality. Riots are not natural calamities, nor disasters, so to speak. They are simply a perversion of humanity.

However, numerous critics have examined *Lajja* from perspective of feminism, historical cultural, family issue, transnational's and communal view points. The gender and cultural traumatic reading of the novel has not been done in an appropriate way. The critic Gayatri Devi opines:

Bengalis cannot be called a race by any stretch of the imagination. It can only be a regional distinction. Nasrin's use of the construct of race to claim a separate, unique identity and status for Bengalis vis-à-vis the rest of the population of the Indian subcontinent (to whom the novel is, ironically enough, dedicated), however mistakenly or unconsciously is a pertinent example of the "false conscious" that runs through *Lajja*.

Here the critic opines that here is religious division among and between Hindus and Muslims in *Lajja* which shows the antagonistic relationship between them. The writer has tried to show the division because of continuous struggle for their identity. The sense of love, peace has been lost.

Another expert S.M. Shamsol Alam comments this text from historical and political view point as: "I seek to explain Nasrin's writing as a possible gendered subaltern narrative within the context of debate between Islamic fundamentalism and modernity " (430).

He also deals with position of human in Islam by using feminism " most contemporary interpretation of women in Islamic societies argue two sides. First conservatives and fundamentalists, by using Quran, hadith, and life histories of the Muslim women in early Islam, confirm and legitimize women's subordination and subjugation. (433)

He explores the long from feminism perspective. He also criticizes Quran and Hadith because female are marginalized. In Muslim community the exploitation of Muslim females is more than other communities. They are doubly victimized.

Another critic Robert A. Rose Stone, talks as family issue of Nasrin. He deals the experience of Nasrin Marriages in his article "*My Wife the Muslim*". In the essay a Muslim and Jews want to get married to each other. The marriage brings a great tussle

between them. He opines, “ I 'm not talking theory here. I mean Nasrin and I were in California where everybody marriages everybody art with starting frequency, this is not common occurrence” (234). It means in Bangladesh it was very difficult to marry from one religion to other. The marriage system is rigid.

Similarly, another critic, Fedwa Malti- Dougal talks about '*Lajja*' as a study of transnationism. He says: “I should like us to embark on a gender voyage that will transports across continents and leads us among theory pathways that will hopefully engage us invasions about global feminism(5)’. It means the text has awareness to the global female. Writer has made some feminist concern in the text. She tries to show that even female can change the world.

In this regard it becomes clear that the text has been analyzed from different perspective by various critics, the issue of cultural and gender trauma has not been explored, so there exists a strong need to carry out research on this novel from this perspective. Therefore, this research explores how cultural and gender trauma is an appropriate tool to show the subjugation, oppression, suppression and psychological torture to minority Hindus by the majority Muslims in Bangladesh and gazed them from the spectacle of outsiders. Thus, this research explores the rationale behind traumatic condition of the characters and how cultural and gender torture create a problem in the society to an individual and as a whole to the community.

Derived from the Greek language, the word “trauma” means wound. The wound might be of physical, psychological, cultural, political or economical. Due to any reason the individual may suffer a lot and unable to handle the situation. The traumatic condition of the individual cannot be overcome within one night but if the sufferers are given chance to express their agony or feelings in front of other person or they express through the medium of creative writing it can be lessen somehow.

Doctors usually use it to mean a serious external or internal damage of the body not necessarily a piercing by an object. Psychologists use it with reference to a condition called PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) by which they mean a kind of emotional or psychological blow landed on the victim by an injurious and/or a life-threatening event. The blow generates such a magnitude of shock which breaks through the protective shield of the mind to keep intruding into the consciousness even much after the occurrence of the event. Psychologists attribute the outbreak to such risk factors as assault, domestic abuse, prison stay, rape, riot, terrorism, and war.

Trauma is a personal, unique experience that can and must not be generalized. Trauma as it refers to an emotional wound or shock that creates substantial, lasting damage to the psychological development of a person, often leading to neurosis. It is series of events or context that is emotionally overwhelming and depressing. In this case trauma refers to a psychological rather than a physical wound. It overwhelms an individual's ability to use normal coping mechanism to adapt to a situation. It disrupts a personal frame of reference i.e. beliefs about themselves and the world. Disruptive behaviors of the characters are presented as the results of shocking events in their lives. Death and loss of their nearest and dearest due to war, violence, terrorism, and so on are the primary causes of trauma. Traumatic people loss the normal pace of their life and show abnormal activities which are not accepted to the standard and established norms and values of the society. Pioneers of Trauma theory are Cathy Caruth, Felman, Dominick Lacapra, Jeffrey Alexandra, Van Der Kolk, Van der Hart, Kali Tal and Harold Bloom. Moreover, trauma is generalized as:

... trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations

and other intrusive phenomena. The experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him, for example, who suffers this sight in a numbed state, only to relive it later on in repeated nightmares, is a central and recurring image of trauma in our century. (Caruth 181)

Trauma is resulted from the sudden and unexpected adversary events that threaten the psychic condition of people. The understanding of trauma has frequently been dominated by interpretations rooted in psychoanalytic tradition. The word 'trauma' is used to describe experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing and that overwhelm people's ability to cope, leaving them powerless. Trauma has sometimes been defined in reference to circumstances outside the normal human experience. But, this definition does not always hold truth. For some groups of people, trauma can occur frequently and become the part of common human experience. In the novel, the character Maya also suffers the traumatic condition being the Hindu female in Pakistan. In this sense the torture is both physical and cultural that affect the psychology of an individual. The Hindu Dutta Family also suffers a lot of problem due to their cultural root. They have to leave the place. The minority Hindus were given torture and pain. Even they were assault presented as inferior and weak.

According to Ron Eyerman, "Cultural trauma consists of collective memory which is extremely painful. It refers to a form of remembrance that grounded the identity formation of a people. There is a difference between as it affects individuals and as a cultural process" (9). As a cultural process, trauma is mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity and reworking of collective memory. Cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of

identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion” (61).

Kali Tal’s insight into the traumatization of women in the patriarchal society serves as the main methodological basis. Women are prone to various harsh forces like sexual molestation, harassment, exclusion and subjugation. Constant exposure to these hazards and pitfalls traumatize them in *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma*, Tal extensively concentrates on this aspect of women’s traumatization. Men who sexually abuse children are also virtually immune from prosecution. A significant part of the psychological establishment believes that young female children fantasize sexual interactions with their fathers or stepfathers. Such fantasies are part of normal development. Prosecution of abusive men is difficult or impossible without corroborating evidence. The motives of “wives or girlfriends who accuse their partners of sexually abusing their children are often questioned by civil courts, and their charges are looked upon with suspicion” (87). Incest is or rarely reported and prosecution is so rarely effective. Pornography obsessively focuses on “rape as a pleasurable experience for the male rapist, and often casts female children in the role of the seducer” (76). These views of Kali Tal are keys to the constitution of the methodological basis of this thesis. In the novel the female characters are raped, Hindus houses are destroyed and they are given the psychological torture. They are supposed to be the other in their own nation. The lines, "Twenty-five temples were burnt down, also the Hindus houses in Bokjhuri village. And Deben Shor's daughter Saraswati was dragged out of her house by a gang of eight or ten men and raped (56), shows that how pathetic situation the females have to face only for having distinct religious principles.

Dominick LaCapra, another major trauma theorist, distinguishes between acting out and working through. Acting out is pathological and repetitive and forces the victim to revisit the moment of the crisis. The routine of going back can be a mental process, which means that the survivor will re-experience his or her trauma in nightmares or in day time delusions and flashbacks. Maya's act of often remembering the inferior situation of minority Hindus in Pakistan due to the Babri Masjid incident can be interpreted as acting out. She is haunted by the scene of chasing, scolding and even murdering the Hindus. Even she is also physically tortured. Working through on the other hand is concerned with overcoming the post-traumatic effects. The traumatized victim needs to gain distance from his/her experience if he/she wants to be able to distinguish between past, present and future. LaCapra points out the acting out is intimately related to working through, and that working through does not mean that the victim will be able to heal or change completely.

Maya and her family applies different strategies to get rid of her traumas, such as trying to live in the same place establishing their status, struggling with major Muslims and locating an addressee, engaging in a daily routine in life or embarking on a quest for truth, but all her attempts seem to fail. The lines, " Apparently you can become a Muslim by chanting- Lailaha illallah muhammadur rasullah – I'll do that, and call myself Fiveroja Begum, ' she replied in an unwavering tone (18), proves how the Hindus females have to change their cultural identity to adjust in Bangladesh and to be saved from vulture eyes of Muslims. Moreover, LaCapra opines trauma as:

There are two very broad ways of coming to terms with transference, or with one's transferenceal implication in the object of study: acting out; and working- through. Acting-out is related to repetition, and even the repetition –compulsion- the tendency to repeat something

compulsively. This is very clear in the case of people who undergo a trauma. They have a tendency to relive the past, to exist in the present as if they were still fully in the past, with no distance from it. They tend to relive occurrences, or at least find that those occurrences intrude on their present existence, for example, in flashbacks; or in nightmares; or in words that are compulsively repeated. (2)

Trauma is a type of damage to the psyche that occurs as a result of a severely distressing event. When that trauma leads to post-traumatic stress disorder, damage may involve physical changes inside the brain and to brain chemistry, which enables the person to do the work as of normal situation. How the characters feel the traumatic situation and cultural trauma can be proved by these lines,

PICK UP HINDUS
 ONE OR TWO
 AND SNACK ON THEM
 WON'T YOU. (23)

It shows that the Muslims do not take Hindus as their brothers rather they want to kill them and take as enemies.

Subordination of women is a visible feature of most stages of recorded history, and is prevalent in large parts of the world. The extent and form of that subordination has been conditioned by the social, economic and cultural environment in which women have been placed. Through her book, Taslima Nasrin beautifully portrays the double disability imposed on women of minority communities. She has sharply exposed the differential impact of social exigencies on men and women. Menu Mehta, in her study *Looking through Identity Lens: A Cross Cultural Perspective with Special*

Reference to Taslima Nasrin's Lajja remarks: "The gender identity is so powerful and overriding that it canopies and hides everything else" (1).

Kironmoyee, wife of Sudhamoy Dutta, suffers as much as any other women during the freedom struggle of Bangladesh. In addition, she has to endure the ignominy of deleting her Hindu identity as the family goes on exile to escape from Pakistani persecutors. Maya, Sudhamoy's daughter, however pays the highest price of being a minority woman. Her double abduction, as a child and as a young woman of twenty one is testimony to this fact. Nasrin's device of Maya's ambiguous fate makes her vulnerability all the more fragile. She suffers more than the Muslim prostitute her brother rapes. That women suffer in times of crisis is a foregone conclusion.

In Bangladesh, as in any other Muslim majority society, Islamist forces have emphasized on the importance of women adopting traditional practices, such as wearing the veil, as a cultural symbol and a weapon in the movement of Islamization against western modernization. Modernization is imagined as 'immoral' and 'dangerous'. Some activists have also tried to reinvent the religion by adding some elements of modernity into Islamic tradition. In reaction to the image of commoditization of women's body in western modernity, the construct women wearing hijab in the public spaces as an image of 'modern Muslim women'. The character are even forced to take sleeping pills or they nearly go to the heart attack due to the cultural torture given by them. The lines, "It is a heart –attack; take him to the hospital immediately" (35) and "Is it hurting? Is the pain more than before? May be you should take your sleeping pills (51)? Shows that the Hindus in Bangladesh have to face lots of psychological and cultural pain and suffering. The females are raped. The males are tortured either to have sleeping pills or to die by the heart-attack. It means that the religious domination is more poisonous than the hemlock.

Kironmoyee, the wife of Sudhamoy Dutta, is a typical, sacrificing wife-mother who has never learnt to assert herself. Her primary concern is the well being of her family and she is willing to sacrifice anything to keep her family together. She keenly observes everyone at home but she has no voice to raise an argument. She is willing to accept her son's girl friend though she is a Muslim. She also happily cooks meat in her house when she is asked to do it by her husband. During the time of violence, Kironmoyee is forced to take up Muslim pseudo names. Kironmoyee had stopped using snider in the parting of her hair and *aloha* and *sankha* on her wrists as was expected of every married Hindu women. But she found it quite difficult to give up her bridal bangles and vermillion.

A woman has no religion and she belongs to no region. She has no language of her own. She is either a daughter of a Muslim or a wife of a Hindu. The language she speaks is in fact the language of the man who possesses her. The region she moves in is neither native nor foreign to her and she adjusts herself in the region she is located in as per the need and creed of the man who claims her as his possession. The statement that is intended by this paper is that facing fundamentalism of Partition and Post-Partition times, women had not only been traumatized physically and psychologically but they had to be in the very existentialist crisis positioned as an isolated, outsider, the other individual, the invisible, victim and the marginalized loser at all cost in their lives. The meaning of the intended statement in simple terms is, the discrimination via gender overpowers the other discrimination areas like religion and region, nationality and natives, class and caste, language and culture and so on.

Lajja is a story of a Hindus family in Bangladesh in particular and the agony of Hindus families and females in general who have to face different traumatic

condition due to the religious riots, physical assault and psychological torture in Muslims community. The lines, " The Muslims fundamentalists of Bangladesh avenged the destruction of the Babri Masjid by attacking the blameless Hindus of Bangladesh, burning their houses, destroying their temples and shrines, raping Hindus women" (ix) shows how inhuman and brutal behaviors the Muslims show to the innocent Hindus males and females and creates a lot of cultural torture and pain. It shows that the nation has no sense of humanity and brotherhood. "Could the events of 1990 be called riots? Riots mean fights- a conflict between one community and another is called riot. But we could not call these riots- these were attacks by one community on another Torture, Persecution". (8) This event also shows that how the majority cultural group tries to give cultural pain and stress to another minority cultural group. Though they are innocent, their properties are destroyed, people are killed and even Hindus Temples and shrines are destroyed only for the revenge ful thought. People of Hindu Religion and their belongings are destroyed. The Females are given physical and psychological torture. They don't feel safe outside from their house. Is it social justice? Is it the work of humanity? Where is the sense of brotherhood and fraternity? All are gone. People are blind folded in the addiction of religious doctrines and try to harm the cultural groups not belonging to them.

In this text there is no single trauma but traumas- historical trauma, gender trauma, individual trauma, psychic trauma, national trauma and so on. The researcher's particular focus is on gender and cultural trauma. Gender trauma refers to a traumatic lose of identity, prestige, power and meaning to the females due to the extreme domination and violation by the males in the society. Kali Tal states, " Gender Trauma acknowledges the existence of ongoing campaign of sexual violence and operation waged by men against the women "(4). The same experienced has been

faced by many Hindus females in the novel. The girl Maya, Reenu and Rina are tortured in the story. The lines proved the exploitation to the females not only by the males but by the system of government. Even the system is against the Hindu women. There is no law and order. There is only injustice, exploitation and suppression to the Hindus female only being the Hindus:

On 16 June, eight or ten policemen caught hold of fifteen or sixteen Hindu men including Gourango Mandal, Amulyo Mandal, Subodh Mandal, Sudhir Mandal, Hirendronat Mandal, Johar Deuri of Atghor village in the Sorupkathi sub-district of Pirojpur and began beating them up in the courtyard of Gourango Mandal's house. Gourango Mandal's wife Renu went to stop them but the policemen pounced on her. When other women went to stop them the police insulted them as well. Sonaton Mandal's daughter Reena was taken away by force and raped. She was abducted after this and since then there has been no news of her. (61-62)

The domination over all the Hindus collective shows the cultural trauma given to them. Similarly, the physical domination, suppression, punching and raping to the Hindus females brought the gender trauma to them. All the Hindus female live in fear. They are haunted by the domination of the Muslims over them. They don't have happy face. They are in the dark psychology. They think that when they will be raped or tortured by the Muslims inside their house in front of their family members. The police are supposed to be maintaining peace and order but even they are capturing the innocent Hindus and putting them into the jail. The domination over the innocent by the system of government shows that the government also does not treat its citizen equally but it makes bias on the basis of religion and caste. It focuses the problems

like hollowness, darkness, fragmentation, physical and sexual abuses and haunting memories of females to depict how they have a terrific, fearful tortures and panic life under the shadow of Muslim dominated society.

According to Helen Moglen, gender trauma is a literary device or a theory that is connected in the mental illness which is caused by the opposite sex and gender discrimination. Moglen's overall theory is that the novel is a 'biomodal narrative form' (quoted in Dhaka, 2012: 17). Helen's theorization of gender trauma is represented in the novel through the domination of males to the females in the novel. The trauma of gender depicts how the women are historically subordinated till now. She opines:

No longer understand to be a variant of the males, as it had been since the work of Galen in the Second country, a women's body was perceived as a fundamentally different from a man's. Nowhere was that essential zed difference, more remarkable than in the redefined areas of her sexual and reproductive functioning. Although female sexuality had been thought throughout the renaissance not only to have mirrored man's but to have been more intense than his more voracious and demanding the eighteen century through her desire more subject to the self-discipline of a female character that was naturally mature and morally developed. (19)

Here, Helen argues that in case of women's domination her biological or physical body is the prime factor. The males put their vulture eyes in the body of females for sexual thirst. They want to fulfill their desire by dominating and exploiting them. They don't think about the humanity. In the novel the small girl Maya is raped by the Muslims boy and she has been lost for many days. The news of the rape of Maya

spread everywhere. When Maya's brother and father heard this sad news they were suffocated and their heart broke into pieces. The news came that there was a dead body under the bridge. The lines, "Suranjan stayed in his room all day-lying in bed. He did not feel like going out anywhere. He did not even feel like talking to pass the time of day. Should he go and look under the bridge for Maya's rotting, bloated body? No, he was not going anywhere today" (308) and "Suranjan felt suffocated. It felt like his room was an iron case he was unable to unlock it and get out" (312) show that the family members are in trauma after listening the murder of Maya. The brother, Suranjan could not take breathe easily when he heard the heart-rending news. He even could not believe is eyes. He did not find safe to go outside because of the cultural riots. The mother, Kironmoyee also weeps like a rain in the painful moment. The lines, "He found Kironmoyee crying with her head against the wall but did not dare to try and stop her. These tears were not likely to stop, they would flow, they had collected over many days and many nights and now the river of tears within her was brimming over and could not be dammed" (31-313) show the suffering of mother when she loses her daughter. Her tears flow like a river. She remembers her daughter and she moves her head against the wall in the pain.

Kali Tal`s notion of trauma is also applicable in the text. When the females are tortured by the Muslim males or when all the Hindus houses are burnt in the riots, the characters go through different tortures and pain. The domination over the female and causing them mental and psychological stress to them is gender trauma whereas ill treatment to the minority Hindus and burning their houses and property thinking them the enemy because of having different religious doctrine is cultural trauma. Defining trauma as Kali Tal`s opines:

Trauma is direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by family member or other close associate. The person's response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness or horror.

(87)

The factors such as assault, domestic abuse, sexual encounter, riot, terrorism, unprecedented happening and loss of loved one cause psychological problem and tension on each individual. Similarly in the novel, the female characters are given extreme torture and pain by the Muslim boys as well as police. They rape the innocent females rudely and severely in a group. They don't have the sense of humanity. They think Hindus as enemy not as their own brother and sister. The line, "The police raped his daughter and took away many valuable things from the house" (64) shows that even the people are not safe from the people who are given the responsibility of maintaining peace and security. Similarly, the lines " They destroyed the crops of Hindus in fields on either side of Bastukathi River. They caught hold of all the people who were at work in the fields and let them go only in exchange for large sums of money" (65) shows the inhuman, cruel and corrupted nature of Muslims. The Muslims give a lot of tension and torture to the minority Hindus and they want to chase them from Bangladesh. This event tortures females in particular and Hindus collectively and hinders to do anything. In this sense trauma is deadly dangerous than the poison. Poison attacks people directly but it attacks people time to time and does not let them live peacefully. The Hindus are living the life of fear, pain

and sufferings. Their daughters, wives and sisters are not safe. It is very difficult for them to go out. Even the police don't register the case. The Hindus are thought to be the main enemies because of the incident of devastation of Babri Masjid in India by some Hindus. The work of one Hindu made other Hindus to suffer a lot of pain and tortures.

Regarding gender and cultural trauma, Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin showing the relation between violence and religion and ethnic communities argue that:

The violence that women were subjected both at the hands of men of the other community and within their own families, to demonstrate how these diverse, yet linked kinds of violence. Formed part of a continuum . . . the traumatic episodes of violence against women during communal riots bring to the surface, savagely and explicitly, familiar forms of sexual violence- now charged with a symbolic meaning that serves as an indicator of the place that women's sexuality occupies in all- males patriarchal arrangements of gender relations between and within religious and ethnic communities. (Menon and Bhasin, 2012: 20-21)

The male dominant society always imposes the females putting them in the subordinating position. The males impose their power by creating a fearful, terrific, torturous, repressive and panic environment to intensify the traumatic feeling of females. When in the name of religion and culture the innocent females are victimized, they have to pass through different tortures and pain. The main character Maya became the victim of the religious riots happened in Bangladesh. Though she was innocent and has no role in harming the Muslims. She was raped in the group and

later her dead body was under the bridge. Maya is a representative character. In the novel many females are raped by the Muslim boys and police. In this regard Kali Tal states, "When an individual is traumatized by a life –threatening event that displaces his or her preconceived notion about the world. Trauma is enacted in a liminal state, outside of the bounds of the 'normal' human experiences, and the subject is radically ungrounded" (21). Women who are haunted by their traumatic past go beyond the normal human experience by memorizing their bitter reality of their panic life. The lines, "He found Kironmoyee crying with her head against the wall but did not dare to try and stop her. These tears were not likely to stop, they would flow, they had collected over many days and many nights and now the river of tears within her was brimming over and could not be dammed" (31-313) shows that because of the death of her daughter Kironmoyee shows different abnormal behavior. She hits her own head on the wall in the tension mood. She could not endure the pain. She behaves beyond normal situation. She is painful and shattered. She could not stop herself from weeping and stopping her tears. This is the real traumatic situation when a mother has to miss her innocent child for forever. The tears of Kironmoyee is not only the tears of a single mother but it is the tears of all those Hindus females who have missed their daughters in the a vengeful riots. When an individual is victimized by the environment of trauma, s/he enters into the chaotic world and lives in a terrific life which is extremely unpleasant, dark and gloomy. An individual does not see the way out rather s/he indulges in the pain and make himself /herself weak.

The novel ends with the gloomy and sad setting where because of the death of Maya all family members are in extreme tension. They still think that their Maya is around them. The mother is punishing herself hitting her head against the wall. The brother is suffocated and is unable to see the dead body of his lovely sister. The father

Sudhamoy decided to go back to India. Because of the cultural and religious torture in Bangladesh, the Dutta family and other Hindus family are deciding to go to India at the end of the story. The decision of the family is represented through these lines:

There was a silent question in Suronjon's beating heart. Dawn was breaking. Light streamed in trough cracks in the window.

Let's go away,' said Sudhamoy.

'Where shall we go?'' asked Suranjan in surprise.

'India,' said Sudhamoy.

Sudhamoy was ashamed to say it, his voice trembled, yet he spoke of going away because the strong mountain that he had built inside him had gradually begun to crumble. (320-321)

At the beginning the father did not like to leave Bangladesh. When other Hindus were migrating to India he used to say that Bangladesh is his own native land where he has grown-up his lives. He has true love towards his nation. But when his daughter is raped and murdered by the Muslim boys and even the police did not register the case he thought he was wrong at that time. Because of his love towards his nation he loses his daughter and many physical properties. In the novel the Dutta family is the representative family. Because of the incident of devastation of Babri Masjid in India many innocent Hindu families were given torture and sufferings in their own nation by their own brothers because of religious difference. The domination of the innocent minority groups by the majority group showing inhuman, wild, brutal and savage behaviors is not endured by the Hindus and finally they decided to leave their own country. The torture and pain given to the Hindus only having different religious doctrines is no other than cultural trauma and the scene of rape, physical assault, mental torture and murdering to the innocent females is no other than gender trauma.

Hence this text is the representation of both cultural and gender trauma that the characters undergo with.

Concluding, the text *Lajja* by Nasrin represents the traumatic condition of the main character Maya in particular as a gender trauma and traumatic condition of Hindus Dutta family in general as a cultural trauma. Maya is the representative characters that represent the whole Hindus females in Bangladesh exploited and dominated physically and psychologically. Similarly, the decision of the Dutta family to leave Bangladesh and return back to India shows that the people are exploited in terms of different cultural root and religious background in their own nation viewed as enemy. Being the Muslim citizen of Bangladesh, the writer criticizes the unfair and injustice from the side of Muslims and wishes for the brotherhood, humanity, cooperation and mutuality among the Hindus and the Muslims. The incident of one nation causing religious riots in another nation is no other than blind religious faiths. The blind faith breaks the long relation between Hindus and Muslims who had been living in a harmonious society changing as each other's enemy. This kind of act is supposed to be a shameful act in the history of human society which is indicated by the title of the book *Lajja*. So, this kind of shameful act should be avoided by the people leaving by the people leaving the narrow mind in the global village and think for the prosperity, success and development of the whole world and humanity

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