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Assertion of Women's Identity in Taslima Nasrin's *French Lover*

Tribhuvan University

Assertion of Women's Identity in Taslima Nasrin's *French Lover*

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**Approval Letter**

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## **Abstract**

The central protagonist in Taslima Nasrin's *French Lover* faces with problems of identity crisis as she suffers from the oppressive mechanism of patriarchal norms and rigid social conventions in every aspects of her life. Because of male dominated society, women face many hindrances and obstacles to get their dream of freedom and independence. The patriarchal social structure raises many problems in their lives, defying all their attempts to adjust in that very society. Finally, Nasrin's protagonist chooses an unsteady exploration into a new culture. Her willingness to see faults everywhere is appealing but her refusal to see anything positive in subcontinental culture is because of patriarchal social structure.

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## I: INTRODUCTION

In Taslima Nasrin's *French Lover*, Nilanjana Mandal (Nila) the central character's identity is in crisis because she is nowhere understood by any of the characters found in this novel. *French Lover* presents a true account of women's socio-economic position, and unidentified women's position in the patriarchal woven structure of society. Here Nilanjana Mandal finds her life in India as a dominated woman who lives her life as a dominated daughter; and again in France she is humiliated and frustrated wife and betrayed woman by all the people everywhere.

Nasrin, here, presents an impression of a girl in Indian culture. The girl has a very limited space where she cannot find anything deserving and identifying. As a child, she has lost all her wishes unfulfilled and distorted because she was a female child she remembers that she could not have the love and attention of her parents as her brothers. She could not go any distance to play in the largest playgrounds in the city. In this way, she suffered during her childhood as Nila suffered as a daughter. Later her suffering remains still because she was a girl. She could never walk alone carefree, on the streets, in the parks, sit on the bank of a river or sand for a while near the sea. It is all because their parents are insecure about their daughter. Nasrin claims that it is because this world is man's. No creature is as insecure as a woman. The state and its laws, society and its codes, are not adequate for the security of any girl. Some people might reply there is little security for men, too. Nevertheless, the inadequacy of security faced by woman is million times more than what men face, because they were born as girls. Nowhere else in the animal kingdom, does the female species face the ignominy that the human world inflicts its women.

This society teaches both men and women right from childhood that male is more human than female. Women are physically and mentally weak. They are not fit

for emancipation. They cannot be repeatedly indoctrinated with such teaching, the self-confidence of women get crushed. They do not unite, protest, oppose as western women do. Women not remain silent against this anti-female society, there are women who actually hold it in high esteem and celebrate it. But Taslima Nasrin raises her voice against the men, 'Why should women have to survive tolerating the injustice done to them?' (22). Those men, who recognize that there is social disparity between men and women, think it is the women's problem, not their's, and therefore, it is the responsibility of women alone to launch movements against their subversion.

Therefore, Taslima Nasrin in her society revolts against such practices through her novels, poetry and articles. She is blamed as 'Fatwa' because she has written against the religion and society. At present, she as well as her characters in her novels, here Nila, is not following the rules and society because society has discriminatory rules. Women are treated inhumanely. They have never understood. Their desire to be free and independent are always haunted by the patriarchal system. Nilanjana also suffers those patriarchal rules in her husband's house which she can no longer resist rather revolt against them by leaving her husband and moves her own way to find dignity and freedom.

Nilanjana, a woman from Kolkata has a reason for moving to Paris. She does not want to waste time waiting for a suitable match in her hometown where she finds that women are unnecessarily dominated by the patriarchal culture. So Kishanlal the rich restaurateur from Paris is the one whom she weds. But in Paris, living with Kishanlal who is in any case a better businessman than husband, Nilanjana sees herself encaged in a gilded cage, friendless and unfulfilled. After her marriage with Kishanlal, she moves to France with a dream of freedom and independence but her life remains the same as in India. Her husband cannot understand her dream and

expectation rather he forces her to behave as an Indian housewife even in France. Her dreams are betrayed by him. Then, she decides to leave her husband so that she can see the world herself independently. Later, she explores the streets, the cafe, people and their way of life and so many other things which fascinate her very much. Then she decided to struggle in the city where people can live their life very independently and freely.

She could never find the freedom and individual dignity in India and with Indians who do not allow women to participate in any work as men. So she points out Kolkata as a country of 'drab and dirt' (Nasrin 82). Realizing all these drawbacks of Indian society, she discovers that it is extremely difficult for women to get their identity in such socio-cultural values. Even her dream for freedom, life, liberty and pursuit of happiness could not be achieved even in the west by her India husband.

The French society, as embodied by the French people who come Nila's way, is not very appealing. Her Lesbian lover Danielle is rootless and distanced from her own family, though she is unaccountably passionate about Nila's affection, Nila could weave no dreams around Danielle. After Danielle, she meets her dream of a French man, Benoit Dupont but she finds him very selfish who is concerned with himself first then the woman he loves. In this way, her need for the French man ends. But her road to self-discovery has just begun when she manages to unravel, at a personal, human level, the streets, the cafes and art galleries of Paris. That she manages all this in spite of being totally alien to the culture. The result is her mature introspection where the reader wonders Taslima Nasrin's protagonist for looking a path not taken.

Different critics have given opinion and written about *French Lover* from their perspectives. Nyle Daud, commenting on this novel, presents racial and identical



hierarchy in terms of third world citizens and shows how French men expose sexuality of racism. In this respect Nyle Daud remarks:

Opening on a directly racist note at the Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris, as newly wed Nilanjana is given the rough ride due all third world citizens entering the hallowed portals of the west, French lover smacks of an extended racism all along. Only this time round, its author Taslima Nasrin who capitalizes on the sexuality of racism, exposing all its gory details through the practices and perceptions of her heroine. (3)

Susan Chacko comments not only the racism of the west but also the male hegemony through the world and position of Bengali expatriate in the west. Analyzing all these Susan Chacko comments on the text: "over the course of book she is exposed to European racism, Indian male chauvinism, lesbian and French lover, Kolkatta from a Paris- returned perspective and various aspect of Bengali expatriate society" (145).

Different from above mentioned two critics, Sreejita Guha represents the central character as an idol of female identify in the west who wants to struggle and discovers a place in the west to fulfill her dream as female dream in reality but she cannot. In this respect she comments this novel "as bold in concept and powerful in execution *French lover* is a fascinating glimpse into the working of a women's mind as she struggles to come to terms with her identify in a hostile world.

Far from interpreting the novel from racial perspective or from third world projection, Sudipta Datta sees this novel from a feminists perspective. And he finds that:

all the men in the book are scoundrels, the women are victims of a patriarchal society, so much so that the propagandist Nila is moved to conclude at the end: Do I have a land of my own? If your own land spells shelter, security, place and joy, India is not my own land. Do women ever have a land of their own or a motherland I really don't think so. (The Hindu 11)

Taslima, in *French Lover* best describes the problems of female in the west as well as in the east and tries to show the treatment of males to the women in terms of freedom, and identify in two different cultures and places. Therefore, it describes female struggle and problems caused by the culture made by male chauvanist through the central character of this novel. Above all it is a woman's search for her dream fulfillment and independency even in a strange city which she could not achieve in her own native place.

In this way this research gives an account of identical problem of women in two cultures. Though, Nila, the central character, wants to achieve her identify in a strange culture far away from her own.

Taslima Narsrin wrote many novels. *Lajja*, *Amar Meyebela*, *Dwikhandito*, *Shame*, *French Lover*, *Sodh* are some of her very widely known novels. Among them *Amar Meyebela*, *Dweikhandito*, *Sodh*, *French Lover* present powerful critiques of the patriarchal oppression that she sees in her cultural and religious background. Taslima takes a humanistic position by insisting on a rational and moral examination of all social, cultural, religious, political dogmas that stifle the human spirit and promote injustice, hatred and violence.

Her *Dwikhandito* was banned in Bengal and Bangladesh because of its allegedly offensive references to her "relations" with some important political figures.

This book portrays her fight against the fundamentalists and tells of her confrontation with the patriarchal society where, as a woman, she suffered considerably. She honestly told the truth about her sufferings as well as how she was exploited and how she freed herself from the social rules that she found nonsensical. She did not hesitate to say that she had had a relationship with a man to whom she was not married.

In *Shodh* unlike her other novels, Taslima Nasrin seeks to revolutionize the concept of love and marriage in the so-called elite yet tradition-bound societies. She effects this through a transformation of roles assigned to women-as lover, wife, mother and daughter-in-law. The story is Jhumur's marriage to Haroon, therefore, goes beyond the study of a marriage or the fate of a person and raises issues such as: Is love possible without self-respect; what is the relationship among love, desire and marriage, in what way can the established familial relationships be redefined. In this novel, as much as in her other non-fictional works, Nasrin's personal experience breathes life into the narrative.

### **Taslima Nasrin and Socio-cultural Position of Woman in Bangladesh**

Critics and reviewers sympathetic to Taslima have observed that the pain and anger of Taslima's writings are unique in the history of the literature of Bangladesh. These critics have equally emphasized that while Taslima's articulation is unique her pain is representative of countless other women's lives in Bangladesh. Meer Nurul Islam, in his review, focuses on Taslima's rage as a crucial necessity to transform society. He argues:

Within the bounds of our closed society, darkness reigns so strongly, that there is no fissure to let in light or air. If one cannot make a chink through a needle or a nail on that wall of darkness, one can only use a spade, or an axe, or a hammer and a chisel to bore holes for light. (26)

The metaphors of enlightenment used by Islam are problematic. By defining darkness as negative and light as positive, he participates, either willingly or inadvertently, in inferiorizing the people of color. One of the major concerns of both postcolonial and postmodern discourses has been to foreground the failure of the project of enlightenment. Critics of enlightenment argue that in Western history, reason (which brings enlightenment) has functioned as a tool in the hands of the powerful against the disempowered. For example, colonizers have often justified their colonizing agenda by arguing that it will civilize the natives.

Within the above context, the rhetoric of Islam's review is problematic. However, it is important to take into account his positive contribution. He does point out that the crucial gender problem in Bangladesh is that women are constantly objectified and sexualized. According to him, Taslima is sailing against the tide with extraordinary boldness--the boldness that most people lack:

In the controversy surrounding Taslima, critics who are unsympathetic to her argue that Taslima is anti-Islamic, anti-male, and that she is too vulgar and commercial a writer in her representation of sex. Some have labelled her as "unscrupulous and market-oriented" (25).

While critics, opposed to Taslima, bring charges of obscenity, immodesty and anti-religious sentiments against her; her supporters praise the openness and honesty of the unvarnished mode of her representations. Her opponents cry foul and moral chaos when Taslima wants to shake the entire structure of patriarchy; her supporters praise her courage and honesty and welcome the tremor which causes cracks in the patriarchal defence. Underneath it all, what comes across is that one group considers gender inequality a given, the other sees it as a construction and calls for its deconstruction.

How Taslima's writings have drawn so much popular attention is one of the intriguing questions that poses itself for scrutiny. In his analysis of the Taslima controversy, Ali Riaz has aptly pointed out that "She [Taslima] earned a 'notoriety' for stirring debate and creating controversy often for raising issues which are considered 'explosive' by Bangladeshi society, and at times for her provocative style of writin” (23). The issues Taslima raises and the way she presents them call for our attention.

Taslima, at least initially, and on a superficial level, seems to be assimilable by Bangladeshi tradition. It is important to note that the system of veil and dowry and other socio-cultural practices subjugating women have been targets of attack in various writings long before Taslima's emergence. In that sense, one response of Bangladeshi readership has been to acknowledge Taslima and allow her the voice of protest. Yet she is too troubling for many readers' sensibility. She defies assimilation into the Bangladeshi discourse of social criticism through her strangeness, so to speak, to the tradition of that discourse at least in two ways: by her provocative assertion of female sexuality leading to female empowerment, and through her uniquely aggressive style which is employed to celebrate the transgression of her writings. She writes:

I adore proclaiming that I am a fallen woman in the eyes of this society [. . .]. The first condition for purification of a woman is to become 'fallen' (in the eyes of this society). Unless a woman becomes 'fallen,' there is no way she can liberate herself from the clutch of this society. She is the real sane and admirable person, whom people call 'fallen.' (Nasrin 21)

By declaring herself "nastya" or "fallen" Taslima calls into question the patriarchal formulation of the categories of good and bad woman. Taslima builds an

alliance with the downtrodden by giving herself the title fallen. A fallen woman in Taslima's economy is the one who initiates the agenda of claiming her rights (no matter how "immodest" it is), of defining herself and her sexual desire in her own terms as a subject, of rejecting male protection as oppressive and exploitative, of transforming society for her own emancipation. By the same token, a woman who upholds the notion of "purification" only contributes to her own subordination and self-effacement. Taslima makes it clear that it is self-deceiving to claim "purity" and maintain the facade of a "happy" family life when a woman knows that it is based on the ashes of her dreams. Taslima believes in pushing the prescribed parameters of modesty to reappropriate power from the Bangladeshi male.

Although no extensive study of Taslima's stories has been published in the existing literature, at least one of the critics, Ranajit Das, has offered an interesting analysis. Das concedes that Taslima has largely been successful in identifying the problems of gender discrimination in Bangladeshi society. But simultaneously, he argues and cautions that the nature of the resolution of these problems as demonstrated by the heroines of Taslima's novels is unethical and morally degrading. In his critique of *Aparpokkho*, he contends that Jamuna, the central female character of the novel, through her choice of having a child outside the marital bond with her husband, violates the ethics of the family. Her ethical responsibility is towards her husband. Das argues that Taslima's female characters fail to uplift the reader's moral sense through their failure to follow the ideology of 'ethical motherhood.' What Das fails to acknowledge, along with other critics, is that ethical motherhood and morality defined by patriarchy are pillars to perpetuate female subjugation. While he agrees that there are some problems of gender inequality, he ignores that these problems are

systematic. One cannot bring about changes by moving around some bricks and leaving the structure alone.

According to the patriarchal view of morality, women have to live a spiritual life and give over the material world for men to negotiate. Within this moral economy, women's suffering is considered to be the foundation of family life and She departs from such a moral criticism of Taslima's work and engage in an analysis from a different set of concerns. It is the politics of power-deprivation of the female embedded in ethical motherhood which will propel her inquiry, and as a result her empathy is with Taslima's heroines.

The practicability of what Nilanjana and Molim, the two heroines of her stories, do with their bodies may be problematic, but the study concentrates on the measure of challenge such heroines propose through their lives. Fatima Mernissi has aptly noted, "Curbing active female sexuality, preventing female sexual self-determination, is the basis of many of Islam's family institutions"(26). The pivotal importance of Taslima's novels is the heroine's ability to reclaim the power over her body, tearing apart the ethical cover-up of the subordinating practices of Indian sub-continental patriarchy.

Therefore, she realizes that she is a part of the tradition but also that she is being oppressed the same as other women. She realizes that whether women are poor or rich, beautiful or ugly, have blue or black or brown eyes, have white, black or brown skin, are unmarried or married, illiterate or literate, clever or stupid - all are oppressed. Everywhere women are oppressed. And all because of male- devised patriarchy, religion, tradition, culture, and customs.

## **II: THEORETICAL MODALITY**

### **Feminist Perspective**

Though there exists centuries of struggle for women's rights, behind it, feminism and feminist criticism did not emerge as a self aware movement until 1960. Working in the society dominated by male values and ideologies, females have always had to sail upstream. Feminists feel that females are in fact made inferior not by nature, but by social mechanism. Most thinkers, philosophers, scientists, leaders and prophets including gods being male, they have given undue advantage to males over females.

The term "feminism" was first used by the French dramatist Alexandre Dumas in 1872 in a pamphlet 'L', to designate the emerging movement of women rights. It gradually emerged as a world-wide cultural movement to secure a complete equality for women with men in the enjoyment of all human rights: moral, religious, social, political, educational, legal, economic and so forth. This is the core of all feminist theories, which is also referred as 'core feminism' or core feminist theory'.

Feminism questions such long-standing dominant, male, phallogocentric ideologies, patriarchal attitudes and male oppression. It attacks the male notions of value and criticism. In other words, feminism is an expression of resentment at the unjust treatment performed to women. Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the earlier feminists took cudgels for the women of the discrimination shown against them. Another noted critic Sarah Grand attacked the 'bawling brotherhood' for their preference to cow-women. Feminism voices the new women's objection to be treated as a doormat or a piece of furniture meant for the convenience of man. The new woman refuses to be under oppressive restrictions. Feminism intends to rebel against the hostile environment in which a woman is living. It is a struggle against the hardship, neglect



and dual moral standards to which women are subjected. The new woman's demand for her rightful place, recognition and respect due to her is promotion by an inner urge to make her existence a meaningful one.

Moreover, all feminist activities including feminist theory and literary criticism have their ultimate goal to change the world by prompting gender equality. Thus all feminist activity can be seen as a form of activism. The activism campaigns on issues such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, discrimination and sexual violence. Themes explored in feminism include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification (especially sexual objectification), oppression, and patriarchy.

The basis of feminist ideology is that rights privilege, status and obligations should not be determined by gender. Feminist activism, however, is a grass root movement which crosses class and race boundaries. It is culturally specific and addresses the issues relevant to women of that corresponding society.

Feminism focuses on physically equal and is opposed to gender roles stereotypes and discrimination against women based on assumptions that woman are passive, weak and physically helpless. It rejects the idea that certain characteristics or interests are inherently masculine (or feminine).

There are many branches of feminism dealing with different issues of women along spatio-temporal situation. Cultural Feminism supports the notion that there are biological differences between men and women. For examples, women are kinder and gentler than men, leading to the mentality that if woman ruled the world there would be no wars. Cultural Feminism is the theory that wants to overcome sexism by celebrating woman's experiences after believing that the "woman's way" is the better way.

In the same way, The Material Feminism, the another branch of feminism, arises to liberate women by improving their material condition in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This movement revolves around taking the 'burden' of women in regards to housework, cooking and other traditional female domestic jobs.

Liberal Feminism is a moderate mainstream face of modernism that explains women's position in society. It addresses the problems of unequal rights or artificial barriers to women's participation in the public world – behind the family and household. It shows a critical concern with the value of individual autonomy and freedom from supposedly unwanted restrictions by others. Public citizenship and attainment of equality with men in the public arena are central to liberal feminism. By presuming the sameness between men and women, it reflects the concept of a fundamentally and sexually great as men do. Liberal feminists do not perceive the sexes to be at war or dismiss that which has been associated with men. Unlike radical feminists, they emphasize reform of society rather than revolutionary changes. Naomi Wolf who represents this school who directly "rejects strategies which might be less acceptable to main stream women and men and dismiss critical and revolutionary agendas" (27). Liberal feminism draws on 'welfare liberalism', though it started as a form of liberal political thought influenced by writers such as J.S. Mill. They put forward their main agendas as collective responsibility for the formation and development of liberal society, which support equal opportunity between sexes. They do not want to either prove women as superior to men folk or raise voice against men they believe in reform not revolution.

The next branch, radical feminism is the source breeding ground for many of the ideas arising from feminism. This group views the oppression of women as the most fundamental form of oppression, one that cuts across boundaries of race, culture

and economic class. This is a movement on social change, change of rather revolutionary proportions. The Radical Feminism also questions why women must adopt certain roles based on their biology. Just as it questions that men adopt certain other roles based on their biology. It attempts to draw line between biologically determined behaviour and culturally determined behaviour in order to free both men and women as much as possible their narrow gender roles.

In the 70s, feminism came to be perceived as simply anti-family, anti-marriage, anti-children, even anti-religious, not to mention anti-men. Most early feminists certainly regarded marriage and family so burdensome as to approach slavery. Feminism presented the family as a kind of prison, with a working career on the outside as a kind of liberation. Therefore, feminists lament that women often give up years, or all, of their careers in order to have children; even men with hopes of a fulfilling career traditionally have often had to give up those hopes if they suddenly were responsible for a family.

It appeared in Elaine Showalters reinterpretation of gender studies and nourished by her followers. It has been established as a feminists literary criticism, an extreme religious stream which appears hostile to patriarchy unlike liberal feminism. It offers a real challenge to and rejection of the liberal orientation towards the public world of men. It gives a positive value to womanhood rather than supporting a notion of assimilating into the activity associated with men. They arrogantly focus on women's oppression as in a social order dominated by men. The notion of sexual oppression is intimately connected with a strong emphasis on the sisterhood of women. Chris Beasley reports Johnson as defining it as "one of the basic tenets of radical feminism is that any woman [. . .] has more in common with any other women-regardless of class, race, age, ethnic group, nationality than any woman has

with any man" (Baseley 54). It encourages some degree of separation from men because it recommends putting women first making them a primary concern. This approach is inclusion to accord lesbianism an honored place as a form of natural recognition between woman. Radical feminists demand in literature an expression of female sexuality which will burst through the bonds of male logic with a poetic power that defines the tyranny of logocentric meaning. Besides sexual oppression, radical feminists often view other forms of power for example, unequal power relations within capitalism as derived from patriarchy. Radical Feminism describes sexual at least as a fundamental form of oppression and the primary oppression for women.

They most strongly state of feminist traditions that men as a group are the main enemy. This approach wants to bring about radical changes in the social configuration in which the position of women is not only redefined but also reestablished as a respectable and important, commonly suggesting that the position of man be in a position of power relative to all women, and possibly some men. They have a strong interest in recovering or discovering positive elements in feminist asserting in essence that it is good to be a woman and to form bonds with other women. Elizabeth Grosz calls it "a feminism of difference between men and women" (55). This theory generally advocates a revolutionary model of social changes. The agenda of radical feminist writings is to counter women's supposedly natural, biological inferiority and subordination within patriarchal society by asserting their equal (or superior) status in relation to men. A Crucial aspect of that agenda is for women to gain control over their own bodies, biology and to value and celebrate it.

Therefore, Taslima Nasrin falls under the category of radical feminist. Her character in her novels are found as the woman who, with whatever strength remains

in her body and mind, stands up without anyone's help, truns away form all shelter, trying to be her own self once, she refuses to renounce and retreat from the world that had deceived and rejected her and a woman who refuses to heed people's faunts and sneers and a woman who refuses to obey society's dictates, its rituals and traditions. One whose constant stumbling, falling, being thrown taught her to stand strong whose stumbling, steps taught her to walk, whose wandering showed her way. Slowly, gradually she witnesses the growth of a new consciousness within her, a simple thought took hold of her that this life is her own and noone else's and she is the one who can rule over it, noone else.

### **Women as the Other : Socio-cultural Construct**

The very word "woman" (old English: wifmann), etymologically means a wife or the female of the species. To sum up the Encyclopedia Britannica writes "A long history of dependence and subordination."

Since time immemorial women have been regulated to the position of 'other' dominated by forms of patriarchal practices. Thus they share with colonized races and cultures in intimate experience of the politics of oppression and repression.

In patriarchal society, woman is the other; she is marginalized and defined only by her difference from male norms and values. This means defined by what she lacks that men have. Therefore, women who behave as a woman is not her own instinctual behavior rather she had been taught to do so. Even some feminists believe that all the traits that are associated with masculine and feminine behaviour are learned – not inborn.

In the long history of humanity and its development, in the propagation of the human race and in the social economy of the world, women have been as important factor as men, yet, she is always looked down upon as an inferior creature.

The most ancient history known to us is an undying witness of the fact that woman has always been kept in sub-ordination and has always been treated as inferior to man in rights and privileges "such" Gibbon says:

was the stern and naughty spirit of the ancient law that women were condemned to the perpetual tutelage of priests, husbands, or guardians, a sex created to please and to obey was never supposed to have attained the age of reason and experience. (34)

In Roman laws, a woman was completely dependent. As an unmarried girl she was under the perpetual tutelage of her father during his life and after his death of her nearest one by blood or adoption. When married, she and her whole property would pass into the power and possession of her husband. In fact, she herself was treated as a property by her husband and had no more right than a purchased slave. Roman did not allow women to exercise any civil or public office. In fact, a woman could not adopt nor could she be adopted, she could not be a surety or a tutor, she had no personal property independent of her husband; She could not make a will nor a contract. She acquired and inherited for the sole profit of her lord and master (the husband), and so clearly was woman defined. Not as person, but as a thing, that, if the original title was deficient, she might be claimed like 'Other' .

The condition of woman in different civilized nations and countries of old was no better than it was in Rome. Hindu laws and customs were extremely unfavorable to woman. She was treated as very inferior to man. The great law giver Manu says, "Day and night must woman be held by their protectors in the status of subjection" (45). Thus the woman is under the subjection of her father until she gets married- as her identification is *parayadhan* means "Other's property" (67). After she gets married she

is held under her husband; after her husband under her sons, and if she has no sons then to her agnatic relations, because there is no woman who is fit to be independent.

Women are taken as that of 'ill luck,' 'storm', 'death', 'hell', 'prison', 'other creature' and so forth. Therefore, women's position is so dreadful and vicious in the Hindu society. It is true that after sometimes life-interest in the property was given to them under the name of *stridhan*, but because the custom of *suttee* came into practice that right was of no practical value. In *suttee* custom "a widow burnt herself alive with the dead body of her husband and that horrible custom was the most gloomy picture of the position that women held in the social economy of the Hindu life" (68). A father is never expected to eat at her husband's house, and so on, not because of privileged benefits but the concepts of 'otherness' that has been lingered in the society. So, the identity of women in the society is 'other' as other creature in the earth.

The wise and intellectual men of China have offered free advice for the benefit of husbands in their words saying to listen to the counsel of their wife, but act against it. The old men of Russia have said that there is only one soul among ten women. The Spaniards say that we shall save ourselves from wicked women, and should never be captivated by any that have good looks. The Italians go a step further and pronounce that a horse, whether good or bad, requires spurs, so a woman whether good or bad requires thrashing. So, in every part of the world, women's position is bestowed upon the construction of males' norms and values that determine the socio-identity of the women in the society'.

As far as the Arabs themselves were concerned they treated women as bad as any other creature in the world. They buried daughters alive. It was considered to be an inauspicious omen if a girl was born to anybody. A woman, after the death of her husband, was treated just like another property and her own son inherited her as a

wife. Innocent girl was offered as a sacrifice to the idols. Orphans were forced to marry their guardians.

To sum up, the position and identity of woman in general and especially Indian women in particular has been paradoxical. That is, she has been the key position-still, to some extent we can say i.e. the master figure in the family and yet she has lived the life of slavery, subjugation, suffering and suppression as a whole in the family and in the society too. Therefore, it's difficult for the women in general to create her identity independently under the repressed position in the patriarchal society where women are taken as 'other' social being.

### **Women's Search for Identity**

It is believed that the emancipation of women and searching of their identity have started from the nineteenth century onwards, which is vividly stated in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, when Helmer says, "Before all the else you're a wife and a mother." Nora say, "I don't believe in that anymore. I believe that, before all else I'm a human being, no less than you-or anyway.....you are" (592). So the voice of Nora is the voice that has been raised by the women of the nineteenth century for liberation and salvation from the patriarchal norms and values, and search for their own self and identity.

As the calendar changed from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, women were faced with two very different images, called 'True Woman and New Woman', to which they were expected to conform. The true woman represents the ideal woman, a domestic wife and mother who found her identity and voice through her husband. The new woman symbolized an independent woman and self-supporting woman uninterested in domestic life or family, reflecting her belief in the importance of a woman developing her own identity and voice.



Modern time is the transition between two ends of a spectrum - with each woman attempting to find where she fits as a person along the line, as well as developing as individual voice. The women in this struggle, finding their own place, in society proves to be a difficult endeavor since the majority of people are highly skeptical of a woman with her own voice. On the contrary, the deeper look at the destructiveness of the 'illusions' of a traditional society, not completely ready to construct those hierarchical allegiances that deeply shaped the relationships between men and woman, on the women, who seek to destroy those illusions. As a result of the restrictions of society, women struggle to create identity that conform to the true or new woman image. The developing voice had long been suppressed or ignored. A person's voice provides her medium for expressing herself, without which she must resort to some women who are believed to gain their identities and voices from the men in their lives as daughters, sisters or wives. In the early and middle nineteenth century, women writers, heavily influenced by the cult of domesticity, often created domestic, pious, pure, submissive and silent female characters. The cult of domesticity was based primarily on the belief that the woman's sphere was the home, while the man's was public life. If a woman's voice was unruly and not submissive, her life was believed to have the same characteristics, making her unwomanly. In much of the literature during this period, women are portrayed as finding their identities by caring for others, as well as pursuing relational, internal, and selfless goals. This identity for women in literature mirrors the true woman mold. A woman was expected to embody and maintain social stability through nurturing womanhood, her family, and her sense of virtue and to provide a haven of beauty, grace, and refuge for the makers of this new world: her men. Since she essentially represented 'an extension of

her husband' (Freedman 37), the true woman needed no voice of her own, because his voice spoke for them both.

Around 1890, a new mold began to gain appeal with women, casting shadows upon the true woman ideal. The new woman, an image that developed as an interchange between literature and art and ordinary women who resisted expectations, defied many of the foundational concepts of the true woman observing these rather drastic images of the new woman in literature and art, in addition, famous women of achievement ordinary women began to develop a new sense of independence, by developing and raising their individual identities and voices. Real life models such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony provided encouragement for women to begin breaking out of the often repressed True Woman Mold. Freedom and individuality came as a result of the wide variety of attributes attached to the new woman picture. Due to the lack of a clearly defined set of virtues characterizing this image, women could pick those attributes that supported a self-defined voice and identity which allowed them to find personal, sexual or social freedom as their individual lives called for. The new woman ideology revealed to the real woman that she no longer needed to find her identity through a man: she saw a utilized opportunities to become educated, to support herself, to think and to be an independent new woman to free from the domestic realm, uttering into the public arena previously occupied only by men. Women entered institutions of higher education, worked in more jobs outside of the home with increased wages, as well as continued the movement towards gaining the right to vote.

With this liberation, women began searching for a new voice. Previously, the general female voice was defined by those of husbands and fathers; now women began to find their own. Yet almost before women could begin to let their new found

voice be heard in the public realm, they were being criticized. The new woman image and her voice frightened society because it was different common belief said that if "woman adopted the new woman's voice unrest would come upon society; the new woman's voice was not to be trusted" (Moi 41).

Whenever in the history of the Muslim world, in times of darkness, a woman stands up against patriarchy, speaks about emancipation, tries to break free from her chains, woman gets called a fallen woman. Many years ago, in the preface of Nasrin's book, a fallen woman's fallen prose, she wrote that she was delighted in calling herself a fallen woman. It is because she knows that whenever she has become aware of her rights, society has called her a whore. She believes that in this world, for a woman to be pure, to be true to herself, she has to become a fallen woman. Only when a woman is called a whore, can she know that she is free from the coils of society's dictates. The fallen woman is really a pure and pristine human being. She truly believe that if a woman wants to earn her freedom, be a human, she has to earn this label. "Isn't the truth very simple for women? It is just this: if you don't compromise with a patriarchal society, you will find yourself at the center of a storm?" (Nasrin, 27). Being a feminist, she claims that the title coming from a fallen, degenerate society is nothing for her and other woman. This is how Muslim society points out the revolutionary woman like Nasrin. Nasrin is the one who revolts against the Muslim religion and the culture which don't accept woman freedom and dignity.

### **Cross-cultural Interaction**

The term "culture" has by now acquired a certain aura of ill-repute in social anthropological circles because of the multiplicity of its referents and the studied vagueness with which it has all too often been invoked. In any case, the culture concept to which this research will refer to has neither multiple referents nor any

unusual ambiguity. It will denote to historically transmitted pattern of meaning codified in symbols. This system of inherited conceptions is expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life. Culture is fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their actions. Such actions then take the forms of social structure, the actually existing network of social relations. Culture and social structure are then different abstractions from the same phenomena.

The idea of culture as people's 'whole way of life' first arose in the late 19th century. Culture for Arnold was the best that has been 'thought and known' in the world. Along Arnold in an line, E.B. Tylor defines culture ethnographically way. Tylor sounds more original in his definition of culture. For Tylor, "Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor 1).

By the mid twentieth century such ethnographic definition/concept of culture has under gone massive change. Raymond Williams contrasts this anthropological meaning of culture , denoting the whole way of living of a people, with the normative meaning of culture. In normative usage, culture still claims to represent the organic voice of people. Out of this conflict between culture in the anthropological sense and culture in the normative sense, there emerged third way of using the term, "one that refers neither to a people's organic way of life nor to the normative values preached by leading intellectuals but to battleground of social conflicts and contradictions" (Graff and Bruce 421). From the theoretical perspective one cannot assume a single, central culture that renders individual experience coherent and meaningful, for it is inescapably different, divisive and dissonant.

The emergence and dissemination of postcolonial criticism and the postcolonial theory of discourse have made culture a most contested space. Culture by now borrows the terminologies of other fields of criticism. Often cited terminologies, these days, in the study of culture are, Foucauldian notion of 'Power' and 'discourse' and Gramsci's concept of 'Hegemony'. Postcolonial perspectives emerged from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of 'minorities' within the geopolitical divisions of east and west, north and south. They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the 'rationalizations' of modernity. Postcolonial criticism bears witness to these unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. It forces us to engage with culture as an uneven incomplete production of meaning and value often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival. Culture reaches out to create a symbolic textuality to give the alienating everyday an aura of selfhood, a promise of pleasure. As Bhabha rightly observes:

Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of culture displacement [ . . . ]. It is translational because such spatial histories of displacement...make the question of how culture signifies. or what is signified by culture, a rather complex issue. (Bhabha 438)

The transnational dimension of cultural transformation-migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation-makes the process of culture translation a complex form of significant. It is from this hybrid location of cultured value-the transnational as the

translational – that the postcolonial intellectual attempts to elaborate a historical and literary project.

Edward W. Said is interested in studying the relationship between the East and West, which is governed by discourse, from the cultural dimension standing in a position of a cultural critic rather than a radical political theorist. On the one hand, he sees the 'scope of orientalism' as matching with 'the scope of empire', on the other hand, he focuses on culture representing as well as functioning as a form of hegemony. Said in this connection finds Mathew Arnold using culture as powerful means of differentiation. Culture is an ideal of Arnold but Said argues, " Culture with its superior position has the power to authorize, to dominate, to legitimate , denote, interdict and validate; in short i.e. the power of culture to be an agent of and perhaps the main agency of powerful differentiation within its domain and beyond it too" (Said 9). Culture, for Said, is not only the positive doctrine of the best that is thought and known but also a differentially negative doctrine of all that is not best. This double faceted view of culture makes one aspect of culture more powerful than the other. Culture, thus, becomes a powerful means of domination and appropriation.

Thus it can be said that culture is a concept that includes refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Mathew Arnold put it in the 1860s. In time, culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the state, which differentiates 'us' from 'them', almost always with some degree of 'xenophobia'. Culture in this sense, is a source of identity, and a rather combative entity. Culture is a sort of theater where various political and ideological causes engage one another. Far from being a placid realm of 'Apollonian gentility', culture can even be a battleground on which causes expose themselves to the light of day and contend with one another.

This research studies the women along with two culture; sub-continental culture and western culture. In Indian sub-continental culture, women are made inferior, weak, shy, dependent and domestic not because of nature but by social mechanism. But, in the western culture, women have their freedom and independence in the surface level but beneath it they too are subordinated and positioned by male. Therefore, we can find the women of the world fight not only against patriarchal society but also against the prevailing cultures throughout the world.

### III: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

#### **Feminist Reading of *French Lover***

The feminist reading of *French Lover* puts an eagle eyes on the social evils and cultural dissimilarities in terms of freedom, education, job and so many other things. It also describes the women's revolt against her family, society and men who have become obstacles in their natural and instinctual desire and dream fulfillment. Above all, it is a woman's search for love and independence in a strange city far away from home which she could never feel at her own place.

The novel deals with the problem of woman in general and Nilanjana in particular who is the graduate and loves film, literature and poetry, while her husband is looking for someone to run his house and share his bed. She does not like to be a living dead doing everything to fulfill the wishes of her husband, Kishanlal. She tries several times to convince him that she has not been educated to just sit at home. To refuse her desire of job he reacts, "Job? why on earth? Am I not earning enough?" (55). But her concern is not his job behaving like a rational Indian wife but talks of freedom and independency. He does not allow her to do thing according to her wishes but according to the way he desires and limits. When she keeps on arguing about her desire to work, he reacts again and says, "Oh Nila, you have quite a way with words. Where did you learn to talk like that ? Indian wives can't talk like this." Nila said, "Which Indian wife doesn't speak like this your grand mothers, right?" (55).

The stereotypical notion carried by Kishanlal about woman is very mean because a woman even should not speak and discuss like a man. Here, Nasrin points out an impression of traditional dominance of male over female. But Nilanjana, her wife appears differently because she is no more a liberal and traditional woman like



her own mother. That is the reason why she is suppressing her independence and other rights. Later she speaks slowly and succinctly,

You should have married a dumb girl who silently do the household and never protest at anything, who doesn't have a soul to call her own and cannot read or write, who didn't have her wits about her and didn't dream a single dream. (56)

This makes her husband restless. He shouted at her and commanded her to quit such pointless ego. Now she is not in a position to follow the steps of her husband rather she needs her right not as a woman but as a human being. She experiences the worst condition of her mother who has suffered for years and years being a dedicated and honest wife to her father. After all, she was not responded even during the worst time of her life.

As long as she remembers, Nila has never seen Anirban (her father) and Molina (her mother) share a bed. Molina makes her husband's bed with great care. He comes back from his hours' fun with Swati, the woman whom her father was having relationship, and critiqued every item that was put on the table, crashed on his neatly made bed and shored the night away. That was Molina's life. She spends her years in that household by keeping her wishes collared and chained. So, at her home her mother is never loved by Anirban. She has been treated inhumanly because she is a weak creature, a woman. Her position of 'other' was reflected because she has nothing of her own but she is everything to fulfill the wishes of other. Therefore, she can not make a will nor a contract. She acquires and inherits nothing but the soul profit of her master (her husband) to whom she was nothing. Not as a person, but as a thing, that she is being treated as 'other'.

Therefore, the position of Molina is gruesome but she does not complain anyone for her position. She neither speaks out any of dream nor can be understood by anyone. She is really a woman who serves everything to her man but kept nothing. It is the social identity of a woman. Woman does not have a right to enjoy. Social identity of a woman is male construct. Her rights to everything are managed according to the wishes of her man or male members. It's the reason why woman are identified as *Parayadhana* and *Suttee, Parayadhan* meaning 'others' property. After she gets married she is held under her husband, after her husband under her sons, and if she has no sons then to her agnatic relations, because there is no woman who is fit to be independent. Though suttee does not have any practical value. But in the past a widow used to burn herself alive with the dead body of her husband and that horrible custom was the most gloomy picture of the position that women held in the social economy of the Hindu life. Molina's sacrifice and dedication truly pictures the religious and traditional dogmas made for the suffering and domination under male masters.

After the death of Molina, who was suffering from cancer, she discusses with her father all about her mother and his dedication and sacrifice to her mother. It is all because of male chauvinism and dominance over female.

### **Assertion of Nila's Identity**

Time has changed a lot which has affected the situation of female as well. In the past days, there used to be male dominant over female because women were completely dependent. They were kept inside and their participation in any of the social activities were not granted. They didn't have their individuality. They lived their life according to men. Their desires, their dreams, their works and almost everything were shaped by men. But modern women are no more in a position to

follow or go back to men. They are revolting throughout the world. In *French Lover*, Nasrin voices against men and their power which has been put on females through the central character whose dream of freedom and independence seized by her husband at her husband's house for the first time; secondly her dreams shattered at her own houses and thirdly she destroyed by the French Lover whom she devoted herself, money, faith and almost everything. And only then, she understands her position in India and France, and decides to revolt against the social systems, male domination and etc.

From the nineteenth century, women were faced with two different images, called true woman and new woman. The true woman represents the ideal woman, a domestic wife and mother who finds her identity and voice through her husband. Nasrin's character is not that of the true woman, she tries to be the new woman symbolized as an independent woman and self-supporting woman, uninterested in domestic life or family and reflecting her belief in the importance of a woman developing her own identity and voice. Here we can find that Nilanjana, who represents female has understood the society, the people and social values which are no way anything for woman. That's the reason why she suffers at her husband's house initially where she was being treated as a slave. She should not have her own desire or any individualism. When she claimed that, "I haven't been educated to just sit home. If I found myself a job"(55). She was suggested that it is useless. He can earn enough to survive and live a happy life. Her dream of job and earning could not be understood by her husband, Kishanlal.

Next time, when she invites two French women for dinner, she cooks non-vegetarian items in the vegetarian kitchen which was not liked by him. He reacted Nilanjana very badly and told her "Never dare to do so in the future" (69). That time too,

she can not realize her self in her husband's place. She is always treated as a doormat or a place of furniture meant for the convenience of the man in the house. On the contrary she understood her position under husband and destroyed the hierarchy of being regular suppressed, depressed and frustrated without her self. As a result the restrictions of her domestic life ends and starts new life independently as a new woman. She has the freedom which has long been suppressed. Thereafter, she does not think that a woman needs a person's voice to provide her expression. Without her husband, she can reassert her self and identity. She does not think as her mother who destroyed her life by becoming a traditional Indian lady. She got nothing. Even at her death, she was not responded by any passionate feeling or attachment of her husband to whom she had finished all her desires, dreams and the rest. She believes that she is guided by the system made by the males to rule female in all situation. Therefore, she finds herself by caring her irrational husband having selfless goal.

But Nila is a real life models. She is Nasrin's Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B Anthony who provides encouragement for women the often repressed true woman to become new woman. So, she disregarded her father because that person didn't have a sense of feeling for her mother. He appeared as a male chauvanist. Later she left her husband who became selfish, and didn't regard her dream. Finally, she had her relationship with the Frenchman, her lover Benoir Dupont who found to be very individual and didn't have respect for her. His priority is himself and not the woman he loves. So in that hopeless and confused condition her relationship with that *French Lover*, she crosses all her limits too but she failed to achieve the real trust and happiness with him. And finally, she decides to abort the child, she is bearing and stopped the relationship with him. After that she does not want to be mother and wife to be dominated by some other men in different places.

She, then, understands that she should not follow the steps of patriarchy. Realizing the patriarchal oppression once her friend said:

Time has changed, you must admit. Just think of the condition of women once in Europe- the church used to burn them alive, didn't it? Things have changed only in the surface, beneath it all, everything is the same as always: men still exploits woman and the framework of exploitation haven't changed at all. (92)

But women are not in a position to accept all the doctrines and paths made for them rather they want their thoughts themselves. As they are familiar about the remote past of woman, none can burn them alive and should not exploit any way a man wishes/desires. These days, society has women like Nilanjana and Narsin. They raise voice against male powerfully and dominantly to get their dream true. They do not accept social norms if they cannot serve them. Therefore, Nilanjana avoids the traditional limitation and move further for her dream and liberation from male tiement and domination. Once she had said to her neighbours:

I had lived with many men and find it infinitely more satisfying to stay with pets. Trust in a big thing. Men break your trust, but dogs don't. Do you have any pets. In this universe, man lives on a planet in one solar system is one galaxy among many others. Your's like a dot, even smaller. Can you feel your existence anywhere in this vast system? That mud-eating tortoise lives longer than man. That is nature and we can not conquer it. We come and we go; thus we float away. man's life in over in a blink of an eye. Just think, for billians of years so many things live and die on this planet. Once the dinosaurs ruled, and now they are not more. One day man will no longer exist; man's history will

vanish in the deep dark whole of the past. We are nothing, nobody on the face of this vastness. (152)

So at present women are not in a position to accept what men wish. They claim that everything turns and time approaches to them where men will be nothing who used to be the most powerful and who reserved everything according to their happiness. They never care about the dream of women. So, they go for their dream and individualism by refuting and revolting against the patriarchal values.

After all, Nila knows that there are thousands of hurdles for a female to cross to live a life. Firstly, women should suffer in their parents house because they are given less freedom, opportunity in terms of education and other rights. Secondly, when they get married to someone, they happen to indulge in all sorts of household affairs and kill themselves from the outer world. Thirdly, they are exploited in the place where they go for job. Apart from all these: "If a woman is dark, it becomes a curse to her but Nila experiences, it does not matter if the man is dark, ugly, grotesque, corrupt, a lout, a rascal, a monster or a debuchee" (272).

Nasrin's heroine in this novel is a radical feminist because she points out the follies of male dominated society and comments that males are never considered bad because they shape everything what they wish. That's why Nila is violent and she seeks her identity not in the hostilities of male but in the absence of such male who always became obstacles in females lives. They do not even understand their mother, sisters, wives, and other people's dreams and desire which remain unfulfilled throughout their life. She also finds that 'men of whichever whatever society, are all the same' (291). Nila does not think that she has her own land anywhere.

When she leaves everyman and other selfish people, her French friend, Danielle, once asked "where do you go?"(290). As she does not have anywhere to go,

she replies, "Do I have a land of my own" (291). If your land spells shelter, security peace and joy. India is not my own land. Danielle, do women ever have a land of their own or a mother land? I really don't think so?" (292). So, she has understood in those days that women neither had their own land nor experiences the real feeling of her own self, anywhere with anyone.

In this way, Nila chooses her own way to fulfill her dream and realies her self which she can never understand with her husband or with her French Lover.

### **Cultural Differences between the East and the West**

Culture reflects what a person is from various perspectives. In other words it is a whole way of life. Culture, for Arnold, is the best that has been 'thought and known' in the world. For Tyler, "Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, in that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor 1). "In *French Lover*, Taslima Nasrin depicts two different cultures and the position of women in those cultures on the one hand and she seems to be fascinated by the western culture (especially French in this novel) where freedom and individualism are not the problem on the other. People can live their life in the way they wish. They can enjoy their lives. There, she finds that people can achieve their dream fulfilled. Therefore, her character, Nila, says that France is a "city of freedom" (84) and a land of equality, everyone is the same. Some has better jobs and some does not but everyone had their human dignity. Nila realizes herself: that's how it should be. She had always thought she didn't believe in class distinction.

When she was in India, she had seen there were so many things in the Indian societies which should have been removed. She didn't like the narrow societies and stereotypical notion of domination. Later she goes to France, she has a great zeal of a

true life in the new place. She has weaved a stream of dreams in the wider and better space where people can have their own choices. In the beginning, everything which comes around her amazes her very much and at the same times people used to explain her the freedom and individualism of the society. Everyone goes their way; none cares her or any other people. French society is exactly different than India. Nila thought of her own life she can never do what she wanted to. If she ever tried to go out in trousers, Anirban would bear down upon her. She would always have to change into something more feminine. But while she is walking. She sees some young girls has pierced their brows lips and tongue whereas some other with their hair dyed and raised high and stiff. Though she finds it unusual in the beginning. She knows that they wanted it, so they did. In this way, she finds France, such as lovely, healthy society with so many admirable rules where people have their own wishes, and they do accordingly. They don't care what do people say and what they think as India. Therefore, in that amazing city of freedom, Nila realizes that she never needs to do anything in secret. In the city, she is known, it is wrong not to drink; people think you are uncultured and uncivilized but in India if someone drinks then he should be regarded an ill-repute. It is the culture and people's way of life which determines these things.

In the city of freedom, Nilanjana sees herself engaged in a gilded cage, friendless and unfulfilled with Kishanlal who is in any case a better businessman than husband. Then, she leaves her husband to live in the culture. Thereafter, she weaves a dizzy pattern of life with French women, in belief that it is how she could keep boredom and depression at bay. Those women were lesbians and they are rootless and distanced from their won family. Though Nila's life was not appealing she learns and becomes familiar with lots of things and everywhere she tries to distinguish her native



culture, people and the way of life with the French. Wherever she has visited with her naïve and open mind and find it very fascinating. Comparatively she get her own homeland, India, as small and narrow whereas France is a beautiful city where life is free. She knows that even girl can stay with their boy friends without marrying them but in India if a girls talks to boys she is regarded as an ill reputed and a bad girl. She shows that there is not much difference between men's and women's clothes. But in Calcutta the differences between men's and women's clothes and shoes are many:

Saris, salwars and slippers were for women and dhotis, shirts, t-shirts, trousers, ties were for men. The difference was apparent. In France, men and women wear same kinds of clothes and it was hard to tell the differences. The bottoms would be on different sides, the chest a bit narrower one had to look very hard to be able to tell them apart. (51)

Nilu found the buses were crammed full, it was sickly and hot and you got dust in your eyes and face in Calcutta. Here the buses are air-conditioned with lots of windows and no dust at all.

Therefore, she cannot get her dreams fulfilled in her own cultural root and she moves to a new culture. She faces a sense of regular betrayal everywhere by every men. She is not in a position to get back to her home town where an Indian woman should work hard at her home to serve her husband, and kills herself. So, she crosses her culture and tries to find a way to get her freedom and identity so that she can get herself independent and free. Nilu, at last, realizes that Indian culture can not give her true justice because it has created no any sense of dignity, identity and freedom. That's the reason, she wants to struggle in the strange city far away from her home.

#### IV: CONCLUSION

In patriarchal society like India, the position of woman is very deplorable because they don't have any identity. They are always subordinated in terms of their desire and expectation. So, women struggle for their dream of freedom and identity. They want to be free and independent from physical, emotional, cultural and other restraints. They want to be in the state where they can do what they wish or desire. But because of the socio-cultural hierarchy created by their male counterpart, they cannot struggle firmly against them. But modern women have understood their position and now they do not want to abort their wishes to maintain the socio-cultural position. They fight for their freedom and independence as men do to get their dream fulfilled. They find their dream more important than their men. Therefore, Taslima Nasrin's protagonist in *French lover* leaves her husband first and then French lover to achieve her identity.

In *French Lover*, Taslima Nasrin presents woman character as the protagonist to reflect the position of woman in Indian sub-continent as well as in the west, especially France. Nilanjana, the protagonist, moves to France to meet her husband with a dream of freedom and independence so that she can have a sense of her education which she could not achieve at her own home. She begins her journey of life in India where she gets birth and grows up experiencing Indian culture, customs, traditions, patriarchal system, female identity and as a daughter who should stay inside house and cannot take any participation in any outward social activities. So, she is not able to determine her individuality, position, freedom, identity in the society. Due to the patriarchal social structure she goes to France, an alien culture and custom, having a dream of freedom and identity to her husband Kishanlal. She steps into a new culture with a hope to find her dream fulfilled. Comparatively she finds French

society a free society where she can achieve her dream which has betrayed her again. Finally, she understands that nowhere men can help woman for independence and freedom. Her dreams are everywhere betrayed. But self assertion for individual freedom is made at the end.

In conclusion, Nasrin's *French Lover* is a fascinating glimpse into the workings of a woman's mind who struggles to come to terms with her identity in a hostile world where Nila's struggle is an unsteady exploration into a new culture. Though, she tries to achieve her position in the society; however fails to establish it. Therefore, she revolts against such society and leaves everyone to achieve her identity all alone. Her willingness to see faults everywhere is appealing, but her refusal to see anything positive in subcontinental cultures is because of patriarchy prevailing in Indian society.

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