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PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE SELECT POEMS OF TASLIMA NASRIN

MAHALAKSHMI. N

I M.A. English Literature, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women

Gender equality means that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that men and women have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality is a goal but gender equity is a practice and way of reaching the goal. It is an equal representation, strongly tied to Women's rights. UNICEF says gender equality means that "women and men, and boys and girls, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. As of 2017, gender equality is the fifth of seventeen sustainable goals of the United Nations.

Gender inequality in India refers to health, education, economic and political inequalities between men and women in India. It is a multifaceted issue that concerns both men and women. However when India's population is examined as a whole, women are at disadvantage in several important ways. Although the constitution of India grants equal rights, gender inequality prevail in the society. Research shows that gender discrimination is done mostly in favour of men which affects many aspects in the lives of women from career development and progress to mental health disorders. While Indian laws on rape, dowry and adultery have women's safety at heart, these highly discriminating practices are still taking place at an alarming rate, affecting the lives of women today.

Women have always been dominated by men in the Patriarchal society where men are the head of the household and rule makers. It is not that women have not fought for their rights but the fact is that nobody is there to listen to their voices. The propensity of male domination is deeply rooted in the society and women have always been humiliated, tortured and less valued by the men. Men are supposed to be the head of the family and women are confined within the four walls of the house. Even today, men are decision makers and women are made to follow them. Lastly, it won't be unfair to mention that we still live in a Patriarchal society where men are the culprits and women are the victims.

Taslina Nasrin is a very famous poet, novelist and physician who mainly wrote about humanism, rationalism and feminism. She has written more than thirty books of poetry, essays, novels, short stories and memoirs, and her books have been translated into twenty different languages. Her own experience of sexual abuse during adolescence and her work as a gynecologist influenced her a great deal in writing about the alleged treatment of women in Islam and against religion in general. She has won the Human Rights Award from France, Feminist Press Award in USA, Edict of Nantes Prize from France. She was hated by the people of Bangladesh and she fled away from Bangladesh. She has been prevented by the authorities from returning to her country since 1994, and to West Bengal since 2007.

Nasrin highlights that women were spending their lives under male domination in her poem *Another Life*. She said that women would be slaves to men squatting on the porch and taking care of the babies. All the day women were forced to do only the household chores and taking care of their babies. They were not allowed to come out of their house. They were also thrashed and humiliated by men of their house. Women were ill-treated and would not even have the right to speak out their thoughts. Women in this poem were compared to crows as they had to wake up early morning to blow the fire for cooking. They were locked up in

the house and their talents were also locked up. Women were not given rest as the men as they start their chores early morning and continue the whole day till their sleep. Their five fingers which should be used for winning the world were winnowing the rice. The brave women were picking stones instead of achieving milestones. As women were capable of doing anything, men suppress them and raise against them. The kindheart of women are turned into stones which bear all the pain caused by men physically and mentally. Women lose their identity in this poem. Nasrin shows how badly women are treated in this patriarchal society.

Nasrin's other poem *You Go Girl* portrays how women should break the hurdles caused by men and the society and fight for their identity in life. It is said that men would command women and keep them as their slaves. They would not be allowed to speak up their thoughts and would be locked up by men's harsh behaviour and would not be allowed to keep their heads straight. But the brave hearted women should act against them; should stand for their rights, hold their heads straight and speak aloud to the world.

"You should stand up now
Should stand right up
Hold your back straight
Hold your head high" (Nasrin9-12)

Women should realize that their voices are powerful and shout out for their rights in response to the society so that the men would be shocked on seeing the courage. Men would criticize women as shameless creatures for the behaviour but women should laugh for that and continue to fight for their rights. When the men call them as loose characters, women should laugh even louder and ignore the men. When the men think that the women are fit for nothing, women should show the world how they can do anything that the men also could do. On seeing women grow equal to men, heartless men would thrash and criticize them as the whore. But women should act as deaf and give a smile in response. The weak men who only know to criticize women would be shocked and furious. The other women would get the courage to stand against inequality and Nasrin advises women to fight for equality and identity against the society and become the queens of the society. One must not be a woman like slaves portrayed in *Another Life* but be like a brave lady as portrayed in *You Go Girl*.

Gender inequality occurs mainly because of tradition and lack of education. One must understand that education is the reason affecting gender inequality. The women's family role and poverty are the main reasons. The Women's Rights Movement has made enormous gains in the game of rights as giving women legal standing, respect in society, visibility and voices. But the fact is that opposition of women still continues and they are not fully given equal rights. Women should be given equal rights and responsibilities so that a nation would be successful. The above poems depict that women should not be slaves but should fight for their identity and achieve success.

Work Cited

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