

IDENTITY CRISIS IN THE NOVEL MY NAME IS SALMA

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Abstract :- The present research paper deals with the issue of identity crisis in the novel My Name is Salma written by Fadia Faqir. Muslim women's identity is being crushed under the system of patriarchy, outdated traditions and various myths regarding the images of Muslim women. Muslim women are always measured by these fake norms. Modern feminist writers are trying to articulate the suppressed voices of Muslim women. Fadia Faqir is critical about the stereotype images of Muslim women.

The Islamic practices are shaped by region, sector and ethnicity. Many Muslims are strictly following traditional practices instead of Islamic values. Muslim women's identity is always constructed on the basis of a patriarchal and social norms. Women are expected to adopt the feminine virtues like submissiveness, devotion, chastity and to be passive. Islamic feminists are struggling hard to prove their identity with Islam. There are various Quranic verses which explore the equality between men and women but the patriarchal system has misinterpreted the laws of Shariya has given more freedom and space to the men, hence most female writer like Attia Hosain, Taslima Nasreen, Kamila Shamsie come forward to speak about their marginalization and suppression due to misinterpretation of Shariya.

Keywords :- Muslim women, suppression, identity, feminism.

Introduction :- Fadia Faqir, an Arab British author was born in Jordan in 1956. Her novel My Name is Salma was translated into 13 languages and published in 16 countries. She skillfully handles the issue of Third World women and their emotional upheavals. She works hard for the honour of human rights. She develops a strategy to raise voice against suppression.

"Women's right" is a burning issue in Third World countries. On such a background Arab women writers come forward to speak about their fundamental right and identity. Muslim women's identity is being crushed under the norms of patriarchy and gender related issues. Her identity is always measured by her relations with

family and society. If she fails to follow the socially sanctioned behavior she is considered as a bad woman.

My Name is Salma is the story of a young Bedouin unmarried woman. She belongs to a very conservative family. Her love with Hamdan shatters her happy life. She becomes pregnant out of wedlock. This brings dishonor to her family. To save her from honour killing she ran away from her family. She is taken into police custody and there gives birth to a baby girl Layla. But Layla is separated from Salma. Salma spent six years in prison then she flees to Lebanon then to England. There she strives hard to get a new identity with a new name Sally Asher. Salma's mind is torn between past and future. She has observed the feelings of alienation either in Hima or in England.

Carolyn Naidu defines identity as understood both in terms of a sameness that is shared within a given system and the differences that deviate from that sameness. In the 1980 and 1990 the focus of identity shift to its differences. Judith Butler (1990) argues that rethinking the category of identity lends itself to other configurations of genders, bodies and politics itself. Women's identity formation process can be understood with the help of 'self' formation. The concept of 'self' stands contradictory to the patriarchal norm. Feminists are trying to free women's identity from the patriarchal ideology. Patriarchal ideology expects a woman to be submissive and silent. It motivates women to suppress their vision and opinion.

Salma's life in England is the process of identity formation. Through the character of Salma, Fadia Faqir strongly attacks the system of patriarchy. Although Islamic principles doesn't allow honour killing, Islam becomes the chief source of threatening in the novel. Salma is compelled to leave her village due to her pregnancy outside of marriage and at last murdered by male relatives. Throughout her life she is obliged to protect herself from rigid social and religious norms. Other characters like her mother, Praveen and Salma's British landlady are also going through the crisis of Identity formation.

Salima's suffering is due to religious norms. She is deceived by her lover who is Muslim; her only brother who wants to kill her is Muslim. Here Islam cannot keep her safe from clutches of these cruel men. Islam stands as silent observer. Salma has experienced irrelevance of traditional ethics in Hima as well as in England. All over the county's, patriarchy aims to crush women's identity and allow her subordination.

Muslim women are always subordinated by man-made interpretations of religious scriptures. They are the symbols of suffering. Salma noticed, "my mother had nothing of her own, her brother took share of the farm, when husband died, Shahala was thrown out of her house so she come to live with us, and all I had was a daughter of my own, who cried and cried for me "(210). At first Salma has tried to adjust with the patriarchal monarchy but her brother's orthodox attitude becomes responsible to her miserable conditions. Hence, she is uprooted from her motherland now her local sufferings become global. She becomes friendly in creating good relations with English people. Liz, her landlady, always blames her as 'foreigner', 'aliens' and 'illegal immigrants' (26). In England while going through the process of identity formation she doesn't leave Islam. She only keeps aside the conservative lifestyle. Salma's life in England becomes a symbol of her self-confidence. She started her job as an assistant Taylor and has even worked part time in a bar. At the same time she enrolled herself to the study of English literature. In England she gets married with an English man and becomes a mother of his baby. It is to be noted that in England Islam is marginal and it plays supportive role in Salma's process of identity formation.

In England Salma remains sincere in following Islamic principles. Here her identity as a Muslim is more aggressive than her identity in her motherland. She becomes friendly with Islam. It is the psychology that if certain things are made compulsory on human beings they become critical to it. Salma enjoys freedom and feminism in England. Her life in Hima was full with burden and compulsions, but when she came to England she got freedom automatically. Here she practices Islam by her own choice and for the protection. She doesn't want to lose her identity as a Muslim. It shows that after getting freedom she willfully follows Islamic principles.

In Hima, her life was covered with outdated traditions. Her dress becomes the symbol of her community traditions. She is angry towards family control regarding

women's dress. The Hima women are banned from swimming but Salma loves to swim. Even her father always wants her to cover her breasts but her breasts were "the first things Hamdan had noticed "(13). Even her love with Hamdan is a kind of revolt against the restrictions. In England Salma understands the necessity of education to get identity. Her reading of *A Room of One's Own* helps her to understand women's status in society. With the reading of this book she becomes able to diagnose the root cause Muslim women suffering.

Salma always felt that her life was under the observation of the male relatives but her decision to return to the motherland marked the power of resistance.

Conclusion :- The novel *My Name is Salma* reflects Salma's process of identity formation. The novel analyses the do's and don'ts of Arab and British culture. The reading of *My Name Is Salma* from Islamic views underline Fadia Faqir's fight on the basis of feminism. Salma's journey from her motherland to England helps her to develop her attitude towards herself and her society. Thus, feminist Muslim women writer are fighting against patriarchal culture and misinterpretation of Shariya. They appeal to the rereading of the Quran. The novel exposes cross-language issue with the help of Salma. The language is the basic of communication. In England Salma feel alienated due to her language. Even her dislocation creates obstacle in the process of Identity formation. Throughout the novel Salma is divided between two identities and two locations. The novel stand as an assertion of Salma's Identity. Salma's journey of identity formation is a process of psychological immaturity to psychological development.

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