

The journey of a dissident writer

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Calcutta: A Bangladeshi author who made Bengal her home but was eventually driven out is set to return to the city she has often said still holds her heart.

Through her writings, Taslima Nasrin challenged orthodox beliefs and social conventions, emerging as a powerful voice that remained undeterred despite threats to her life.

A look at Taslima's life and literary journey:

Born: 1962, Mymensingh, in then East Pakistan.

Education: Studied medicine. Practised gynaecology in Bangladesh and wrote extensively. She took to full-time writing after being exiled from her own country.

First brush with fame: Taslima shot to prominence with

the publication of *Lajja* in 1993. The novel chronicled the persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh in the aftermath of the Babri Masjid demolition in India.

The book triggered a fierce backlash from Islamic fundamentalists, leading to widespread protests and death threats against the author. Forced into hiding for nearly two months, Taslima eventually fled Bangladesh and moved to Sweden in late 1994.

Popular reception: Taslima won the Ananda Puraskar twice — first in 1992 for *Nirbachito Column* and again in 2000 for her memoir *Amar Meyebela*.

She won the Sakharov



Taslima Nasrin

Prize for Freedom of Thought in 1994. The European Parliament awards the prize for human rights work. The first award went to Nelson Mandela in 1988.

Controversies:

Her book *Lajja* sparked anger among Islamic fundamentalists, leading to the announcement of a bounty for her death.

In August 2007, protesters led by three MLAs of the AIMIM stormed a book launch event in Hyderabad; they threw books, bags and bouquets at Taslima in an attempt to disrupt the event.

In November that year, protests and riot-like scenes triggered by Taslima's writ-

ings in Calcutta prompted the CPM government to call in the army.

She was soon forced to leave the city, a move widely criticised as capitulation to fundamentalist forces.

Time in Calcutta: Taslima moved to Calcutta in 2004 and was forced to leave following riots over her book *Dwikhondito* in November 2007.

During her time in the city, she wrote for newspapers and other publications. She professed her love for the city and called it her home. She subsequently returned to India briefly, but the then Bengal government allegedly refused her entry into the state.

Citizenship status: She holds a Swedish passport.

Last social media post: Taslima shared multiple media reports regarding her return to Calcutta on August 1.