



The Crescent and the Pen: The Strange Journey of Taslima Nasreen

Hanifa Deen

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
Hanifa Deen

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This is a book about a writer, Islamic fundamentalism, mythmaking, and international literary politics. It is the story of Taslima Nasreen, a former medical doctor and protest writer who shot to international fame in 1993 at the age of thirty-four after she was accused of blasphemy by religious fanatics in Bangladesh and her book *Shame* was banned. In order to escape a warrant for her arrest, the controversial writer went underground and, as the official story has it, fled to the West where she became a human rights celebrity, a female version of Salman Rushdie. Taslima Nasreen's name almost became a household word in 1994, when she was awarded the Sakharov Prize by the European Parliament, and she was feted by presidents, chancellors, mayors, and famous writers and intellectuals around Europe for two years. She is still remembered and widely admired as a modern-day feminist icon who fought the bearded fundamentalists in her own country and whose life was in danger. This is the official story that most people are familiar with, and the one that is widely believed by Taslima supporters around the world. However, as *The Crescent and the Pen* reveals, in the style of a literary detective tale, the true story behind the international campaign to save Taslima has never been told until now.

Following on the trail of Taslima, Deen questions the reasoning behind the international crusade to save her, in the process debunking much of the current thinking that has shaped Islam into the new global enemy. She discovers that the story of what really happened to Taslima is a fascinating labyrinth where memory and myth have merged, the tale having acquired a life of its own with a hundred different authors.

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