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The voice of the ‘ Rising Youth’: A Biographical Reading of *I am Malala*

Title of the Book: *I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and was Shot by the Taliban*

Author: Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb

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Introduction

The book *I am Malala* is an autobiography of the seventeen year old girl Malala Yousafzai written combined with Christina Lamb. She is known as a girl whose indirect approach to politics without a party became a voice of force to gain rights and eradicate suppression from the worlds view. The book is the inner account of an ordinary girl brought up under extraordinarily extreme conditions. The political aspects portrayed in the book *I am Malala* are in synchronization with the personal life of Malala. Her political background that sets in with the discourse to the readers gives a crystal clear image of her history and thereby the history of the country she represents. Gender biasing in favor of men has been highlighted in the book, but it shows the varied governance and the changes brought about in it. The whole aspect of women suppression is dealt with among the Muslim dominated structural rule beyond the complexities of law or religion. The simplicity of analyzing a mountain-big problem via the eyes of a teenager who was born and brought up in the same society with just the difference of not having a suppressed voice from her family makes her life more politically inclined. Research has it clear that the gender biased society influences religion and that religion in turn influences politics. This factor is leading to the promotion of religious views which in turn is decreasing humanity as the religion followed is not in the original terms but on the literal interpretations done by fake scholars. The modernity's of urbanization, westernization, individualization and liberation of women in various perspectives have been banned literally unlike the other societies where the ban is only implied. Coming further to the cause mentioned, of the partition of India into Pakistan and Hindustan, the cause is seen to be strangled beyond emphasis as now it is time for Pakistan to be further split into various smaller countries. Muslim-feminism could be the term attached to the thought process of the young girl. But along with feminism, on closer

observation, a strong cultural background can be identified which acts as a source that healthily injects a balance of both freedom and culture. Malala Yousafzai turned a world celebrity when shot in the head and yet survived; this is a perfect example of the kind of people in the world who never join in the social movement towards justice and still is willing to propagate through words about a misfortune. Illiteracy could lead to the supply of prominence to the judgments on the society which would often be the hot headed and not the rational and intellectual decision further leading to derisive decisions in harm to the society.

Religion, education and the barrier in-between

Religion is the basis of mankind upon whose faith humans survive. It is said that faith is the necessary factor without which life would turn meaningless. In the book, Islam and Islamic traditions have been highlighted. But unlike other feminists that have arisen in the Middle-East, Malala is of the opinion that it is with the proper use of faith that Muslim women can attain the freedom they require. She states that Quran doesn't keep their women from gaining education but on the other hand it claims that the women race is so pure that they should be kept in a burqa. She also highlights the fact that the use of burqa is to be in the heart and not on the face. It seems to be a practical approach when feminists with age and experience are demanding the renunciation of their faith for liberation of women, Malala is claiming that Muslim women should hold steadfast to their religion and thereby travel in the path of righteousness till they earn respect and freedom.

Gender biasing against women in education

“When I was born, people in our village commiserated with my mother and nobody congratulated my father” is the opening line of the biography *I am Malala*. This in itself shows the absurdity of biased thought for gender in favor of men especially in the 21st century. “I was a girl in a land where rifles were fired in celebration of a son, while daughters are hidden away behind a curtain, their role in life simply to prepare food and give birth to children” she continues, thereby emphasizing her point as to the socio-political areas of the country she lived in. Women are birds locked in a golden cage and often the punch bags of the opposite sex. This is not a general view except in places where the rate of literacy is below 50 percent and where the cultural background hinders the growth of women. It is seen that her mother's life resembles the lives of women who are brought up with no role models which is why despite being given the option to study, she chose to stay back and play, viewing life without importance for education. “Pakistan doesn't have student loans.” The statement is living proof that the country spends \$2.2 billion on nuclear forces and yet is incapable of spending a penny on education aspirants. Writers like Kamala Markandaya depict how traditionally, women were kept illiterate deliberately so that they can spend their entire lives in the service of their family. This tradition is being carried out in countries where no one ever dares to believe that freedom is their birthright.

The attitude towards such inequality is based on the factors that firstly, people accept what has always been traditionally followed, secondly because of a particular leader's proclamation which could change your life and thirdly because it is written down as a law to be followed. The three factors are in sync with the culture of Muslim dominated countries. For instance, the stance of Fazlullah as a leader which gradually led to Talibanisation is the best example of how a society is demarginalized. "He began speaking against school administrators and congratulating girls by name who left school." Slow poisoning could be the exact words given to the treatment Fazlullah chose for Pakistan. It was perhaps the same cause he worked against, in the pretence of religion he had injected a fear in the hearts of the young damsels enough never to seek for knowledge again and be part of the submissive generations above them. This was perhaps also done to extinguish the spark of hope that Benazir Bhutto had provided to the local girls by being the first and only female prime minister and also the first elected head of an Islamic state's government. Therefore it can be finally said that education was the basic necessity deprived for women of all ages that hindered and still hinders the growth of the nation.

Political influence on structural life

Pakistan till date has experienced the various possible systems of rule under which the citizens have turned themselves into confused fellowmen wanting to believe either that their leader or their religion would pave the way towards development. Malala has matter-of-factly said that the biggest building in Swat was perhaps two or three storeyed. Though the place is culturally rich and has the highest Pashtun culture aboard, development has never been in demand. The particular leaders who rose with an aim of bringing some sort of change in the country was both falsely accused and brought down from their power, or assassinated as is seen in Malala's case. Raising one's voice politically or personally in the country is almost equal to a death wish. When around the world military rule brings contempt and degradation, Muhammad Zia Ul-Haq brought about changes culturally by allowing the usage of media and also allowing women to adorn positions of power. When change embraced the country with loving hands, the religious scholar, rather the pseudo religious scholar who promised a better life through the right practice of religion came up. But this highly influential 'radio mullah' as Malala acknowledges him, brought the country back to where they started from. Poverty stricken religiously spirited people of the country were forced to believe in Talibanisation till killings became a matter of routine. Politics rather than for the development of the society, was more focused on the personal lives of the politicians. Nuclear weapons and violence started being and still continues to be the most prominent aspect in the ages after they earned independence. Independence has thus been achieved in writing and yet not in the form of application whereby every man or woman can think freely and perform their duties without fret. "When we were IDP's I had thought about becoming a politician and now I knew that was the right choice. Our country had so many crises and no real leaders to tackle them". When around the world teenagers worry about clothes and hairstyles perhaps it is the need of the hour that makes the children of Pakistan dream of changing their nation and ruling it till it attains the state of Utopia. It is perhaps the rising voice

of the youth that is taking the situation to a higher level and Malala is setting an example to the youth by being herself.

The perspective inferred

The appearance of acceleration of growth in the field of women empowerment all through the world is clearly a picture of differing perspectives among the young girls. The thought process thereby highlighted is in the conception that women are not the stepping stones but the very root of development. Critically analyzing the biography, one cannot blame the country of Pakistan as the same situation prevails in many parts of the world. When in Pakistan rifles stop girls from attaining education, in other parts its marriage. The confinement is just more visible and hence is just a matter of fake protests because people are against massacre and not actually in favor of full freedom for women. The voice of Malala is one of conviction, of firm belief that age is not a barricade to be a part in a social cause. She proves that anywhere in the world a little girl with the support of her family can reach the heights she's dreamt of.

Conclusion

It can thus be concluded that young Malala retained the name of the legendary Malalai of Maiwind and further promoted it by standing for the rights of education. In pointing out the flaws of the country by raising her voice she is setting an example to the millions of girls her age, or rather of her generation, to seek out their dreams and never succumb to injustices despite the cause being against the political and religious ethics of the country. The biography portrays how age and sex cannot be a barrier and thus promotes the feminine cause of achieving freedom and education. Written in the backdrop of the present century especially under the political background of Pakistan, the biography throws light on the political aspects of the country only a native could, the fact that the World Economic Forum ranks the country as the least equitable in the Pacific region and Asia is of no prominence in the country where there is no knowledge as to such an organization actually exists. I have tried to show my analysis of the sufferings of the citizens due to improper governance and the patriarchal society that is unwilling to let loose the clutches of order even when the world has 'moved on'. Her dream of being a politician in the country she can't step foot into and was almost assassinated in is the highlight of dreams that make girls reach beyond limitations, despite obstacles in the path. Beyond all this, a thorough reading of the book gives the limitations offered to women in gifted packages whose seal cannot be ever broken. Malala's rightful choice in life is based on the statement her father makes. "I will protect your freedom, Malala. Carry on with your dreams." Malala's life is ample example that domination forks the society into two. One, the minority, the way of protest Malala chose. And the other being the path of the suppressed, who accepts downfalls without an act of defiance.

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