

Malala Yousafzai: A Struggle for Women Education and Conservative Bias of Urdu Media

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Abstract

This study aims at analyzing the critical views of Urdu media in Pakistan regarding Malala Yousafzai and the role that she has been playing for promoting the cause of female education. The young school girl, Malala, transformed her personal struggle for education during the Taliban regime in Swat, Pakistan, into a global movement for girls' right to education. She survived the Taliban's assassination attempt of October 2012 and now advocates for girls and women rights, particularly those in the conflict zones. The 2014 Nobel Peace Prize winner, the youngest in history, has been viewed with skepticism, mainly in the conservative Urdu print and electronic media in her home country. The influence of Urdu media is considerably large in forming and shaping public opinion, that's why it is important to study the role of media in promoting or the hindering the cause of women rights. Discourse analysis was conducted while using secondary sources, such as blogs, biography, speeches of Malala and the articles of Dr. Sultan Rome, Ansar Abbasi and Orya Maqbool Jan published in Urdu media forms the basis of this study. The findings of this research reflect the conservative and patriarchal bias of Urdu media regarding the aforementioned case.

Keywords: Malala Yousafzai, Taliban, Girls' education, Feminism, Urdu media

Introduction

The Army Public School, Peshawar attack and the attack on Charsadda's Bacha Khan University has brought the issue of Taliban's targeted campaign against education to the fore. Education has been on the hit-list of Taliban for a long time now and it's not a recent phenomenon. Rather, the frequency and the destruction of such attacks have multiplied and reached to the cities which were previously limited to the areas under the Taliban's de facto rule. The atrocities of the Taliban and other religiously motivated militants have badly affected all aspects of life in Pakistan and particularly in the areas populated by Pakhtuns. In the post 9/11 terrorism and the war on terror era,

education has remained continuously affected. For the last decade, the Pakistani Taliban have employed such tactics as bombing of schools, the threat of bombing schools, kidnapping school staff and students, and assassination of advocates of education to discourage and destroy the education system in place. Mass killings and shootings are a more recent additions to the Taliban's campaign against education.

Women have been suffering a lot at the hands of these religiously motivated militants. According to their fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, women don't have equal rights and, therefore, must always remain at home and under the supervision of their male relatives at all times. The threats posed by militants to women rights and their liberty are many. Public whippings of women, honor killings, forced marriages, using women as covers and as sex slaves during war, recruiting women as suicide bombers and fighters are some of the barbarous acts being committed by these militants. These Islamic militants, on the other hand, have been on their mission to exclude women from public life by putting a ban on their free movement and education. Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, IS in the Middle East and Boko Haram in Western Africa are Islamic fundamentalist militant groups and are challenge to women rights- the ideal of feminism.

Going to school is a part of normal daily life, but in areas which comes under the control of Islamic militants, it becomes a life risky job to attend school. For girls, it is even more dangerous to get education. Malala Yousafzai, a teenage girl from Swat, Pakistan, was shot in the head by the Taliban militants in October 2012 for publicly defying their ban on girls' education. In recognition of her sacrifice and her struggle for girls' right to education, she was awarded the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize. She has, since then, become a global icon of hope for girls and an advocate of girl's education in conflict-ridden areas.

Malala has been celebrated and praised by people from across the world, yet in Pakistan, she has been subjected to criticism and conspiracy theories. Much of the criticism comes from the Urdu language media. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and Urdu print and electronic media is followed by large public audience and thus its influence on public opinion is considerably great. Historically, Urdu media has remained conservative and more so in the case of women rights. The skepticism and criticism that comes from Urdu media is no surprise, yet it is, nonetheless, very important to study and analyze the writings of some of the critics of Malala and its influence on the public opinion about Malala Yousafzai. This paper attempts to study how Malala has been represented (or misrepresented) in the Urdu media. For this purpose, it is important to take into account her writings, speeches and her struggle for girls' right to education and then critically evaluate the views of those authors who have criticized Malala. The aim of the research is to understand the importance of girls' education in the

backdrop of Talibanisation in district Swat and the response of conservative Urdu media to the rise of Malala Yousafzai.

The struggle of Malala Yousafzai for promoting gender equality through girls' education played a role in making her an iconic face of feminism despite the otherwise claims of the conservative Urdu media.

The criticism which mainly appeared in Urdu print media came from various conservative authors. An article in a local newspaper in Swat, criticized Malala Yousafzai severely and the writer questioned her credentials, courage and bravery which got her the fame (Rome, 2012). The writer argues that Malala has achieved nothing in the field of girls' education and that it is the American and the West sponsored media campaign that has projected Malala as a champion of girls' education so that she could be used to defame Pakistan and Islam. Rome's criticism comes from the belief that Malala should have built schools and should have done more on the ground than to raise her voice for girls' right to education. Malala's fame and recognition is because of her advocacy for girls' education and speaking up against the militants. She neither promised nor claimed to build schools, on which the writer's article is based.

Orya Maqbool Jan, in his various articles, attacked Malala and her campaign for girls' right to education: by questioning the credibility of the Nobel Peace Prize citing the example of the same prize also being awarded to Barack Obama; dubbing her as an American agent; and that Malala's claim of gender discrimination and women oppression in Pakistan isn't reality based (Jan, 2013a, 2013b, 2015). Jan, a conservative Urdu media political commentator, does not quote Malala in his articles to support his claims and his arguments are flawed because he contradicts himself in different articles.

In the widely read Urdu daily newspaper, the Jang, Abbasi wrote a series of critical articles on Malala issue (Abbasi 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). Quoting from 'I am Malala' Abbasi accuses Malala of crossing limits by discussing controversial and religiously sensitive issues like Blasphemy law, the Satanic Verses, and the equality of genders in Islam. Rejecting the views of Malala Yousafzai on the equality of men and women, Abbasi quotes several Islamic injunctions to disprove her. Abbasi has not only misquoted but exaggeratedly presented some of the points raised by Malala out of context to defame her.

Among the writings of Malala, the BBC Urdu diary that she chronicled during the Taliban's de facto rule in Swat has been widely read and thus is important to study. Writing under the pseudonym, Gul Makai, Malala recorded her daily struggle as a girl student to get education in the backdrop of the Taliban's ban on girls' education. Following Anne Frank, Malala used her diary to let people know about the various atrocities that have been unleashed by the Taliban. That how difficult it has become to go to school amid the life threats. Her blog attracted attention from across the world. Halima Mansour in the English newspaper the Guardian called Malala as the

young "Pakistani heroine" for her bravery and her bold voice. The Daily Telegraph's correspondent Rob Crilly wrote "She did it anonymously - to do otherwise would have brought immediate death. But her blog for the BBC Urdu Service detailing the abuses meant no one could pretend an accommodation with the terrorists was anything other than a deal with the devil" (Crilly 2012).

'I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and was Shot by the Taliban' is the biography

of Malala Yousafzai, co-authored with Christian Lamb. In her biography, she not only narrates her life story but she also describes people, events and ideas that influenced her and transformed her into a symbol of hope and learning for girls from across the world (Yousafzai and Lamb 2013, ch.1). Born in a conservative Pakhtun society, Malala was destined to live the commonplace gender discrimination and deeply rooted patriarchy. Yet, her father Zia Uddin taught her otherwise and help her understand the systemic persecution of women and he also gave her the courage to stand up and speak up for her rights. She had luckily an uncommon father, Malala notes, who discussed with her everything; from politics to fashion. 'I am Malala' is a detailed account of a girl who got shot by the Taliban because she wanted to go school and get education. Malala writes that the women's oppression is rooted in the patriarchal, puritanical and fundamentalist interpretation of Islam and Pakhtunwali (code of life of the ethnic Pakhtuns) and that the Taliban have only added terror and militancy to that oppression. To establish a gender segregated society, the Taliban have put a ban on the free mobility and education of women and girls in Swat; the state either has colluded with these militants or has failed to provide security to its people, notes Malala. The memoirs published by Malala Yousafzai has added a women perspective to the counter terrorism narrative and it is a reflection of a school girl who has to deal with the multiple forms of persecution: the Islamic militants' women-specific violence; and the widespread patriarchy which hinders women from becoming their full selves. It is an inspirational story of a girl who transformed her personal struggle to get education into a worldwide campaign for girls' right to education and thus became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner in history.

Conceptual Framework

The persecution of women living under the oppressive regimes of Islamic fundamentalists across the world has attracted much attention in the recent decades. Women, including girls, have been facing the brunt of religious extremism in various forms and shapes. Among the multiple challenges being faced by women in these areas, education has been largely affected. Feminists, from almost all schools of thought, agree to and recognize the importance of education as an effective tool to achieve gender equality. Liberal feminism, a dominant academic and political discourse, puts

emphasis on female education. Liberal feminists believe that it is education which leads to economic, social and political freedom and hence educated women would be in a better position to achieve and secure their rights and liberty. The prevalent gender disparity is attributed to the gender bias in the education system and its access (Gamble 2001, 27-29). To get to the power structure, women needs to be educated- well.

Democracy, a liberal political system, and the global economic structure that it stands on is education oriented and thus education lies at the heart of liberal feminism. Media plays a key role in modern day politics and same is true for women rights' issues. The influence of media on forming and shaping public opinion and public policy has grown considerably. The role of media in promoting (or otherwise) the cause of women rights needs makes an important part of the study of women rights and feminism (Segal 1999, 68-73).

Research Methodology

Primarily, this research is based on discourse analysis using secondary data. Texts are summarized and critically evaluated for analysis in this research (Kothari 1990, 5). Most of the data has been acquired from journalistic sources. The blogs and biography of Malala Yousafzai, the Urdu newspaper articles by various critics of Malala Yousafzai comprises the texts of the study which are summarized and critically analyzed.

Profile of Malala Yousafzai

Malala Yousafzai born on July 12, 1997 in Swat, the North West district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, is an activist and now a global icon for girls' education. She is the youngest person ever in the history to receive the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize. She started her mission for female education and women rights at odd times when the local Taliban, a militant group, banned girl's education in Swat valley in 2009 (Yousafzai and Lamb 2013, Ch.3-9). Along with participation in the local campaign to protest the ban on girls' education, Malala used to write blogs under the pseudonym, Gul Makai, for BBC Urdu, portraying the life under the regime of Taliban. It was through this blog that she got famous for her struggle for girl's right to education.

In the afternoon of October 9, 2012, she was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman while coming back home from school, but she escaped death miraculously. The Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) issued statements taking responsibility for the assassination attempt and vowed to attack her again in future. Leaders and people from across the world condemned this barbaric attack on Malala and showed support for her stance for the women's right to education. Since she was seriously injured, she was shifted to England and admitted in Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham for extensive care and proper rehabilitation. The Time magazine placed her in the list of twenty most influential people in the world. She is also the first Pakistani who won the country's first National Youth Peace Prize in December 2011, now

renamed as National Malala Peace Prize in recognition of her courage (Yousafzai and Lamb 2013, Ch. 17-20). Moreover, she has been awarded with many awards and honors for advocating girls' education throughout the world. Malala Fund has been established to promote and advocate education of children, particularly girls. Malala has shown an increasing interest in issues being faced by girls around the globe. She hopes to achieve her goal of gender equality through education.

Malala was born in a middle-class family. Among her parents, her father is educated and her mother look after the house and is not educated. Belonging to Sunni sect of Islam and Pashtun ethnicity, she grew up in Mingora, the capital city of Swat, with her two brothers and parents. To a great extent, she received her education from her father, Zia Uddin, who is a poet and used to be the administrator of a private school, namely Khushal Public school. Malala also studied there. Malala credits her father for instilling in her courage and knowledge, she said that she is lucky to have a supportive father like him who believed in gender equality and women's education. The young, school going Malala was caught in highly unfavorable circumstances where she and other girls were deprived of their right to go to school. She started speaking for women's right and girl's education in early September 2008 when she spoke at Peshawar press club for the first time, along with her father. She asked the Taliban that they cannot take their basic right of education of girls (Yousafzai and Lamb 2013, Ch.1).

BBC Urdu Blogs

Inspired by the historical wartime diarist, Annie Frank, in late 2008, BBC Urdu was trying to reach a girl who could tell the world about life in Swat, under the terror regime of the Taliban through her stories in the form of a diary. Though it was too dangerous for everyone, but Zia Uddin asked his daughter Malala Yousafzai for this task. By that time the Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) had put ban on keeping Television at home, music, girl's education, shopping and free movement of women. Malala started writing for BBC under the pseudonym, Gul Makai, writing about her life and how everything has changed for the worst, under the regime of militants. She wrote how her school attendance and the number of students decreased due to the fear of Taliban, and finally her school has to be closed down after the Taliban's ban on girls' education coupled with serious threats of blowing up girls' schools, in January 2009.

My three best friends had to move from Swat to other parts of the country due the growing militancy and life threats, she wrote for the BBC Urdu. After the ban, Taliban started bombing girls' schools, but Malala continued to study for her upcoming school exam, hoping that school would reopen. After a few months, the Taliban uplifted the ban on primary education of girls and permitted them to attend school but with veils. At times, they had to fake their age to be able to attend school, added Malala Yousafzai in her blog.

Malala's Campaign for Girls' Education before October, 2012

After the BBC Urdu diary, Malala disclosed her identity and started speaking on public forums to promote her cause - peace and girls' education in Swat. She along with her father were filmed by a New York Times reporter for a documentary. After the military operation, the government took back control of Swat and people returned to their homes from the IDP camps in other parts of the country. Malala and her family also came back and resettled in their hometown, Mingora. Since Zia Uddin Yousafzai and his daughter Malala Yousafzai were very vocal against the Taliban and they also used to criticize government authorities for their incompetency, he received many death threats, warning him and Malala to stop their campaign for peace and education. Malala was interviewed by a Pashto language channel AVT Khyber, the Urdu language daily Aaj and English language Canada's Toronto Star. In her interviews, she spoke against the Taliban and accused them for being the oppressor of women's right, and raised her voice for women's right and girl's education. She became a famous face inside Pakistan and the international media also gave her coverage. She became more popular when she was awarded the first National Youth Peace Prize by Yousaf Raza Gilani, the Prime Minister of Pakistan in December, 2011. In a speech at that very day, she pledged to have her own national party which would promote education and that she would also established Malala education fund which would help the poor girls to go to school (Yousafzai and Lamb 2013, Ch.9).

Assassination Attempt

On her way back home from school and after being identified in a bus, Malala was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman, on October 09, 2012. She survived the attack but was critically injured. The bullet went through her head towards neck and ended in her shoulder. Two others friends of Malala were also wounded in the incident. It was turning point in Malala's life. On one hand Malala was fighting for life and on the other hand there was an outpouring of support from around the world for her bravery and courage. After the attempted assassination, she was shifted to Peshawar and later on to Rawalpindi for treatment where doctors successfully removed the bullet out of her shoulder, near the spinal cord. She had to be flown to the United Kingdom for better treatment, and was admitted in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham with enhanced health facilities. After being advised by her doctors, she was discharged from the hospital. She now lives with her family in an apartment in the UK.

Malala's Education Campaign after October, 2012

Numerous protests were staged in solidarity with Malala, and people praised her stance for women's rights and education for girl. Leaders and politicians from Pakistan and all around the world condemned the brutal attack on her and spoke in support of her campaign for education. Barack Obama, along

with his wife and daughter met Malala in his Oval office in October, 2013 where she asked him to work for world peace and universal education, as reported by Phillip Rucker in Washington Post. Gordon Brown, the United Nation's envoy for education, started a petition in honor of Malala, Yousafzai named "I am Malala" which advocated for education for all children.

Yousafzai spoke before the UN General Assembly in July, 2013. In September, she spoke to the Harvard University. Interestingly, in her October 2013 meeting with Obama she requested Barack Obama to stop drone strikes in the tribal areas of Pakistan because it promotes terrorism. This bold demand of Malala from Barack Obama has been ignored by her critics in Pakistan but Malala proved that she stands for peace. She also addressed the Oxford Union and gave a lecture on the importance of women education. Malala, as a part of her campaign to work for building schools for girls in conflict zones announced to rebuild sixty five schools in Gaza, Palestine through Malala Fund.

Malala Day

July 12 has been has dubbed as Malala Day. On July 12, 2013, on her birthday, Malala spoke to the UN General Assembly for worldwide and free access to education. Malala said that she was not against anyone or any group of people and that all she wants is education- education for all, even for the children of those who tried to kill her. She added that Malala Day is not only her day but a day of every woman and girl who raise their voices for their rights, particularly their right to education.

Establishment of the Malala Fund

Realizing her dream, Malala Yousafzai has established Malala Fund. Malala Fund is a non-profit and non-governmental organization which aims at the empowerment of girls through quality education. Led and inspired by the young Malala Yousafzai, the Malala Fund is focused on helping and supporting girls to go to school and raise their voice for their rights. Since its inception, Malala Fund has been working around the world for universal education. It has been working for female education in areas such as Nigeria, Pakistan and Palestine, affected by wars and terrorism.

Awards and Honors

The list of awards and honors conferred on Malala Yousafzai is growing day by day. Apart from being the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner, Malala has much more to her credit. The bravery and stance of Malala against terrorism and militancy is earning Pakistan and herself a good name and fame throughout the world. Some of the notable honors that Malala received include: Nobel Peace Prize 2014, International Children's Peace Prize 2013, and Philadelphia Liberty Medal 2014.

Girls' Education in Swat under the Taliban

The Army Public School, Peshawar attack on December 16, 2014 which claimed the lives of more than 141 school children at the hands of terrorists,

was perhaps the deadliest terror attack on any school but it was not the first one. Bacha Khan University, Charsadda, has recently been attacked in the same fashion by the Taliban, suggesting that the war of the Taliban against Education continues. Educational institutes have remained a target of the attacks of the Taliban militants in the north-west of Pakistan for a very long time now. The militancy hit tribal areas presented a dismal picture of schools under the Taliban. When the militants moved to the settled areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the education sector suffered too. The Taliban bombed schools and terrorized school going children and thus affected education drastically.

Swat, an administrative district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, had become a strong hold of the Taliban after 2006. By establishing their terror regime, the Taliban turned the previously tourist attraction of Swat into a parallel state system, governed by the Taliban's fundamentalist Shariah law. Thousands of people died, others were driven out of their homes because of the Taliban insurgency in Swat which started after 2006. The education sector suffered a lot because of the said insurgency, hundreds of schools were destroyed and many students have suffered academically. Although, the Taliban targeted both boys and girls' school during the insurgency in Swat, it was the girls' education which was a particular target of the militants. It was only after the 2012 shooting of Malala Yousafzai that the rest of the world came to know about girls' education being suffered at the hands of the militants in Swat, *Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack* reported (Richmond 2014, 168-173).

According to their orthodox and puritanical interpretation of Islam, the Taliban considers girls' education as a secular western idea and hence un-Islamic. The fundamentalist Taliban are of the view that women and girls belong to home and they should not seek education or jobs, arguing that Islam does not allow the free movement of females and their mixing with males in an Islamic society. They believe that men are superior to women and it is men who would take care of the females in their families and hence women are dependent on their men, a patriarchic male dominated society is what the Taliban consider as an Islamic society. Premising on these extremist religious beliefs, the Taliban took upon themselves to stop girls from going to school in Swat. Being a militant force, the Taliban use violence and the threat of violence to achieve their goals. Education, girls' education in particular, was targeted using these strategic tactics (Yousafzai and Lamb 2013 Ch. 1-9).

However, in an open letter to Malala Yousafzai, Adnan Rashid, a Taliban commander, gave other reasons for blowing up school buildings. He wrote that the Taliban are not against education but only western education which is un-Islamic, he argued in his letter. Defending the bombing of schools by the Taliban, he further argues that it is a part of their military strategy and

since the army use these school buildings as barracks and bases for military purposes in the military operation against the Taliban, so the Taliban blow them up keeping in view the strategic importance of school buildings.

The Taliban used different strategies to stop girls from going to school. They first discouraged girls' education and termed it un-Islamic, advising people to stop sending their females to schools through their FM Radio sermons. Later on, they started bombing schools and finally the Taliban announced a complete ban on girls' education in Swat starting January 15, 2009. A short-lived peace deal between the government and militants provided for a temporary and conditional restoration of education for girls. The schools only re-opened when the Taliban were ousted from the region following a lengthy military operation by Pakistan Army in late 2009 (Yousafzai and Lamb 2013, Ch. 13).

When the Taliban announced a complete ban on girls' education in Swat in January 2009, it affected female education drastically. It forced around 900 schools to close down and 120,000 girls and 8,000 women teachers stopped going to school. More than 400 schools, most of them providing education to girls, were attacked between 2007 and 2011, Hashim reports in Aljazeera. These numbers show the status of girls' education in Swat under the Taliban.

Malala Yousafzai and Girls' Education

The education campaign started by Malala Yousafzai to claim her own right to education in the face of the ban imposed by the Taliban on girls' school in Swat, Pakistan has turned into international movement. The youngest Nobel Laureate, Malala Yousafzai has become a symbol of hope for girls around the world in their struggle for education. Malala Fund, led and established by Malala Yousafzai, has been working for advocacy of girls' right to education.

Though, Malala became a global icon of female education after she was shot by the Taliban in October, 2012, yet her struggle has begun much earlier in her native area of Swat. Malala's campaign for girls' education mainly comprises of her advocacy at public forums. She has established an education fund named Malala Fund, which promotes and supports girls' education in many parts of the world.

Advocacy for Girls' Education

Malala Yousafzai writes in detail her story of defiance of the Taliban' ban on education in her memoir, 'I am Malala'. The emergence of the Taliban in Swat had badly impacted the lives of women of the area in general and girls' education in particular. Malala's personal struggle to get education turned into a worldwide campaign for girls' right to education.

Her first public appearance can be traced back to September 2008 when she spoke at Peshawar Press Club about the plight of girls' education in Swat under the Taliban. The event was widely covered by regional media. It was in January 2009 that she started writing her blog for BBC Urdu using the

pseudonym Gul Makai. In her blog she criticized the Taliban's ban on girls' education and described the difficulties that a girl has to go through in Swat under the Taliban's rule. The BBC Blog has attracted a large number of audience. Soon after disclosing her identity as the BBC Blogger, Malala Yousafzai started appearing on television voicing her cry for her right to education. She was interviewed by AVT Khyber, Ajj TV, Geo TV and many other Pakistani channels. In these interviews she spoke up against the Taliban and their harsh treatment of women. In international media, Canada's Toronto Star also interviewed Malala. Adam B. Ellick, a journalist of the famous New York Times filmed a documentary featuring Malala Yousafzai. After being displaced from Swat in the wake of military operation, Malala met Richard Halbrook, US envoy, to support her cause for education. At the award ceremony of National Youth Peace Prize in 2011 Malala Yousafzai suggested Yousaf Raza Gillani, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, to focus on girl's education and invest more money on the development of education facilities for women in the country (Yousafzai and Lamb 2013, Ch. 1-10).

After the assassination attempt in October 2012 and the following medical treatment, she spoke at the UN General Assembly on July 12, 2013. In an inspirational speech which received a standing ovation, Malala told the world she is speaking for children's right to education and that the world leaders must come together to work for this cause.

'I am Malala', a UN petition demanding education for all children and particularly girls education was launched in honor of Malala Yousafzai by Gordon Brown, the UN Special envoy for education. The petition was signed by more than three million people from across the globe and it asked UN to commit itself to universal primary education for all children included in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In recognition of her efforts and struggle against the suppression of children and the right of children to education, Malala Yousafzai was awarded the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize. In her reception speech, Malala called on world leaders to invest in education instead of arms to promote peace. Books not bullets became a slogan of the global campaign for education, following Malala's speech. Apart from these major public speeches and media appearances, Malala Yousafzai has been very vocally speaking on the issue of children education at various forums. She is being invited to seminars, award ceremonies, universities and schools to promote her cause.

Malala Yousafzai is the face of the movement for girl's education and she has been advocating for this cause through her speeches and interviews. She represents the children who are oppressed and have been denied the right to education for one reason or another. Malala's advocacy for girls' right to education through public speaking has attracted people from around the world and that's how she has impacted a large number of people to work for girls' education.

The Malala Fund

Malala Yousafzai has established Malala Fund, a non-profit and non-governmental charity fund led and inspired by the young Malala Yousafzai herself. The Malala Fund believes that every girl deserves a chance to get education and for this purpose the Fund aspires to empower local communities to develop solutions to increase female literacy. To create a better tomorrow for girls, education is necessary and it is the mission of the Malala Fund to act decisively to educate girls.

To ensure that tangible outcomes are achieved in the fight for access to education along with advocacy campaign, The Malala Fund was established in 2013. Since then, Malala Fund has donated money to help rebuild sixty five schools in Gaza, Palestine. On her 18th birthday on July 12, 2015, Malala Yousafzai inaugurated a school for Syrian refugee girls in Lebanon. The school funded by the Malala Fund offers education and training to girls living in the refugee camp established. The activities of the Malala Fund continues with a focus on the children affected by war, terrorism and conflicts.

Impacts of Malala Yousafzai's struggle for girls' education

Malala Yousafzai has caused the UN to once again commit to its goal 2 of Millennium Development Goals which states that "by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling." After Malala's UN speech, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon told the General Assembly that the UN is committed to providing education to all children through its Global Education First Initiative and would work beyond 2015 to achieve the goal of universal primary education. 'I am Malala' campaign also inspired Pakistan's first Right to Education (RTE) bill. The act passed by the parliament provides for the provision of free and compulsory education for all children aged 5-16. Under the said bill, all children, regardless of sex, religion or race shall have a fundamental right to free education. The bill has been celebrated among the education activists community as a major success for the cause of education.

Malala Yousafzai has become a champion for the cause of girls' education and she has been running a successful advocacy campaign for girls' right to education which is evident from the works of the Malala Fund, the commitment of UN to universal and free education, and Pakistan's first Right to Education bill being inspired by Malala Yousafzai.

Conclusion

The writings and speeches of Malala Yousafzai along with the opinions being expressed in various articles by critics deals with education of young girls and women rights. A thorough analysis of the texts of Malala suggests that she has associated her life, particularly after the assassination attempt, with education of girls. The diary and her memoir are the reflections of a girl who faced gender discrimination at an early age in a conservative

community. Challenging gender inequality that she witnessed throughout her life in many forms and shapes, Malala Yousafzai goes on to campaign for promoting gender equality through education. This research reveals that she has dedicated most of her writings and speeches to the issue of women rights. Though many of her critics opine that she has not accomplished concrete milestones in girls' education on the ground, yet it is pertinent to mention that she responds to most of the criticisms and defends herself as an advocate for girls' education and hence women rights. The global recognition that she got makes her an iconic symbol of girl's rights in the coteremporary world. Malala Yousafzai's significant role in promoting gender equality through education can be deduced by studying and analyzing it in the context of liberal feminism. Liberal feminism puts emphasis on the importance of education in the economic and political empowerment of women in the industrial world. Given the complexity of its nature, the dynamics and scope of women rights and feminism have been changing through times at different places. Notwithstanding the opinion of her critics in the Urdu media, Malala Yousafzai's struggle for her own education in the wake of the Taliban's ban on girls' education in Swat followed by her global campaign for universal primary education for all children, demonstrates the relevance and importance of girls' education in promoting gender equality in the developing world. The arguments of her critics in the Urdu media are based on the puritanical and fundamentalist interpretation of Islam which do not support the notions of gender equality and girls' education. Furthermore, Malala has been accused of defaming Islam and Pakistan without presenting a shred of evidence. The critics have rarely used any reference and when used, it was presented with exaggeration and out of context in order to support their claims. Instead of facts and evidences, these journalists have manipulated the hyper religious and nationalistic sentiments prevalent in Pakistan to defame Malala. Anti- Americanism, xenophobia, and rejection of modernism on the pretext of it being Western and thus essentially anti-Islam and Pakistan drives the conservative Urdu media. Malala Yousafzai is no exception. The fact that she supports modern education and women rights and that she has been celebrated and awarded by the west are enough reasons for the Urdu media to be critical and skeptical of Malala Yousafzai. The public opinion thus formed has, too, remained critical and skeptical of Malala Yousafzai. Hiding behind the slogans of protecting Islam and Pakistan, the critics of Malala have supported the Taliban's shooting of Malala Yousafzai. She and her campaign for girls' education is challenged not only by the Taliban but, also, by the conservative writers of the Urdu media in Pakistan. These writers are reluctant to agree to the demand of gender equality- which only could be brought by girls' education, as championed by Malala Yousafzai.

Further research can be conducted to study: the contradictory responses of international and Pakistani media on Malala issue; the conspiracy theories

that surrounds the shooting of Malala Yousafzai; the impacts of Malala Yousafzai's campaign on girls' education in Swat; the perception of the local community of Swat about Malala Yousafzai; the dissent of public opinion on Malala issue in Pakistan; the politics of Nobel Peace Prize and Malala Yousafzai in the context of US global war on terror; and the persecution of women in Swat under the Taliban.

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