

THEME OF SOCIAL PROTEST AS REFLECTED IN A BOOK

I AM MALALA

DR. PRAKASH A. PATIL

HEAD, DEPT. OF ENGLISH

MIRAJ MAHAVIDYALAYA, MIRAJ, INDIA.

Abstract

I Am Malala, is an autobiography of Malala Yousafzai, a sixteen year old teenage girl from Pakistan (Swat Valley) who become the victim of orthodox Taliban's violence. Through this book Malala shares her views with Christina Lamb, World's leading Foreign correspondents. On Tuesday, 9th October 2012 while she was returning home from school by a bus, she was targeted by the Taliban and seriously injured but she miraculously survived and hoisted the flag of education campaign for the girls. Recent years Pakistan is terribly and mercilessly surrounded by the orthodox Taliban forces and staunch communal forces from Pakistan too blindly supporting them. Most threatening thing of these Taliban terrorist is that they are looking education of the young girls from the radical and extreme fundamental point of view. Those who will challenge this fundamental trait of the Taliban, they will be on the aim of their guns. The present paper is an attempt to highlight Malala and her progressive campaign of education as the right of the young girls. As in the present seminar sub theme like 'Literature of Social Protest' is suggested, in the same perspective the present paper attempts to highlight Malala's struggle and fighting against the fundamentalist Taliban as a social protest. By showing her protest with the weapon of education, Malala came to public attention of the world by writing for BBC Urdu about life of Pakistanis under the Taliban threat. While fighting and protesting against staunch communal forces she truly emerged as an activist and as a source of motivation for young girls in Pakistan.

***Key words:** orthodox, campaign communal forces, fundamental, progressive, radical, terrorists.

THEME OF SOCIAL PROTEST AS REFLECTED IN A BOOK

I AM MALALA

-DR. PRAKASH A. PATIL

Education is our right ... just as it is our right to sing. Islam has given us this right and says that every girl and boy should go to school. The Quran says we should seek knowledge, study hard and learn the mysteries of our world (129).

These are the words of sixteen, years teenage girl Malala Yousafzai from Pakistan, (Swat Vally) her above assertion represents great relevance to the contemporary sheer anarchic scenario of Pakistan. The present article is an attempt to highlight Malala and her progressive campaign of education as the birthright of the young girls. Her struggle and fight against the fundamentalist Taliban shows her protest and her strife against orthodox, fundamental communal forces. The present book *I am Malala* is in the form of an autobiography, in which she shares her views, ideas, and dreams of life with Christina Lamb, World's leading foreign correspondents she came to public attention of the world by this book, in which she asserts her determination and shows her courage in her tender age against the terrorist force. While fighting and protesting against staunch communal forces she truly emerged as a young activist and she become an icon and source of motivation for the young girls not only in Pakistan but all over their world. In 2011 she was honoured as the recognition of her courage and advocacy with National Peace Prize by Pakistan as well as she was honoured with International Children Peace Prize in 2013. More over it is also notable that she is the youngest ever person who nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. She too was short listed for Times Magazine person of the year and has received numerous other prestigious awards.

Malala was named after the greatest heroine of Afghanistan Malalai of Maiwand, a teenage brave fighter girl who sacrificed her life on battlefield in the war against British army. Thus inspired by this gallant story, Malala was named after her by her father. The family of Malala Yousafzai belongs to the swat valley the most beautiful place in all over the world. The valley is like a heavenly kingdom of mountains, gushing waterfalls and crystal clear lakes. The family lived in Mingora, the biggest town in the valley, in fact only city. She was born in a poor family yet her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai a progressive minded, person who wanted to establish a school for the girls in Pakistan. There was such a poverty that even he do not have any money for the hospital or for a midwife. Malala also bitterly comments that the fundamental Pakistanis even do not like birth of female child. They represent their sheer discrimination for girls on many occasions. If a daughter is born in any family the Pashtuns considers it as a gloomy day Malala while a talking about this sheer discrimination she narrates her own birth occasion as :

THEME OF SOCIAL PROTEST AS REFLECTED IN A BOOK I AM MALALA
-DR. PRAKASH A. PATIL

I was a girl in a band where rifles are fired in celebration of a son, while daughters are hidden away behind a curtain, their role in life simply to prepare food and give to children.(9)

The above lines of sixteen years girl from Pakistan, shows that how the people in Pakistan still believing in irrational ideas, and their views are still more and more conservative and orthodox. This condition is to some extent is similar in India, but Indian girls are doing their best in the field of education. The wretched and poor status of education in Pakistan is so horrible that even schools too are targeted and destructed frequently by the militants. Malala also narrates one occasion of her mother's times that even how she failed to go to school. She narrates the occasion and draws attention of the readers towards poor state of education in Pakistan. She says:

My mother started school when she was six and stopped the same term. She was unusual in the village as she had a father and brother to go to school. She was the only girl in a class of boys. ...But everyday she would leave behind her girl cousins playing at home and she envied them. There seemed no point in going to school just to end up cooking, cleaning and bringing up children, so one day she sold her books for nine annas, spent the money on boiled sweets and never went back (32).

Further Malala also express her great confidence and admire towards her father, who on many occasion gives her examples through his social activities of fortitude, freedom of speech and role of education in human life. While reminding her father's own college days, she cites his one of the best of examples of freedom of speech. She narrates one of the occasions of her father's college time when a novel by Salman Rushdie *The Satanic Verses* was published and provoked so much outrage among all Muslims in the world. Even Ayatollah Khomeini the supreme leader of Iran, issued a fatwa of Rushdie's assassination. Malala cites this example of her father's time when he was studying in a college. She observes:

My father's college held a heated debate in a packed room. Many students argued that the book should be banned and burned and the fatwa upheld. My father also saw the book as offensive to Islam but believes strongly in freedom of speech. First, let's read the book and then why not respond with our own book...(37)

It is said that charity begins at home and it is closely associated to Malala. Because indirectly Malala in her childhood learnt many lessons of moral values and culture as well as ideologies from her father and mother. However, sometimes Malala also witnessed terrible plight of the women in her country, she narrated a sad and pathetic tale of Khalida, the woman who helped her mother in kitchen while cooking food. As if a property or estate item she was sold into marriage to an old man who used to beat her mercilessly so to rescue from his terrible torture and exploitation eventually she tries to escape with her three daughters. But she was so unfortunate that her family was not ready to take her because it is believed that a woman who has left her husband has brought shame on her family. It was very distressing and heartrending on the side of her daughters, that for their survival they too destined to collect rubbish. This incident shows Malala's social awareness and her keen observation of women in the society.

Though she is just of sixteen years old yet in her thought and social perspective she appears more mature.

It was Abdul HaiKakar, friend of Malala's father, a BBC radio correspondent based in Peshawar, who was in search of female teacher or school girls to write a diary about life under the Taliban. He would like to show the real human side of the catastrophe in Swat valley. So he contacted Malala on mobile. He has also taken precaution to protect Malala and her family by using his wife's phone because he fears that his own phone was bugged by the intelligence services. He would guide Malala, asking her questions about her day and motivated her to tell him small anecdotes or she should talk about her dreams. Then he framed these words and once a week they would appear on the BBC Urdu website. He also used to tell her about Anne Frank, a thirteen year old Jewish girl from the Nazis with her family in Amsterdam during the war he told her that Anne maintained a diary about their lives all cramped together about how they spent their days and about her own feelings. But unfortunately in the end the family was betrayed and arrested and Anne died in a concentration camp when she was just fifteen. Afterwards her diary was published and it became very powerful record. So it was motivation for Malala but he cautioned her it might be dangerous to use her real name. So gave her the pseudonym as GulMakai. Gul uses the Quran to teach her elders that war is bad and they eventually stop fighting.

It was very thrilling for her to see her words on the website. So Malala wrote a lot about school as that was the only hope and destination of hers and family. At her school people started talking about GulMakai's diary. Malala tempted to reveal the identity of Gul, that it was she herself, but BBC correspondent had warned not do that because it could be dangerous to her. The diary of Gul received attention of the people. Newspapers too widely published them in printed extracts. Thus Malala narrates this thrilling experience in her own words. She says:

The BBC even made a recording of it using another girl's voice and I began to see that the pen and words that come from it can much powerful than machine guns, tanks or helicopters. We were learning how to struggle. And we were learning how powerful we are when we speak (131).

However, Malala narrates that it has been so bureaucratic dictatorial anarchy by the Taliban's that some of her teachers ceased coming to school. So the people said that these teachers had seen a beheaded corpse on the way and could no longer take risk to their life by teaching. Many times people were under constant fear. Even the Taliban were instructing people to make it known to mosque, if their daughters were unmarried so they could be married off probably to militants. On most of the occasion Malala expresses her determination to fight terrorism, which shows its hideous face everywhere. But in her fighting with on one hand with these militants and on the other hand her terrible struggle with staunch fundamentalist she appears all alone except her parents. She expresses her determination of fighting against terrorism which appears a big boulder in her path of education well as for the peace in Swat valley. Thus she expresses her determination in the following lines she says:

THEME OF SOCIAL PROTEST AS REFLECTED IN A BOOK I AM MALALA
-DR. PRAKASH A. PATIL

All the other girls in my class wanted to be doctor, but I decided I wanted to be an inventor and make anti Taliban which would sniff them out and destroy their guns. But of course at school we were under threat too, and some of my friends dropped out (114).

In Malala's school when one day parents' day and prize distribution ceremony was arranged all the boys were motivated to make speeches and some of the girls also took part but not in public. These girls spoke on microphone from their classrooms and their voices were then projected into the main hall. But it was only Malala who dared to speak in public. She came out and in front of all the boys she recited some poem in which she praised the Prophet. This was a unique example of her courage that people in the audience also surprised and admired her. She was only a girl in her school, who would like to read copies of *Oliver Twist* and *Romeo and Juliet* and DVD of *Ugly Betty*.

Another example of the Taliban's cruelty narrated by Malala was also heart- rending and a curse for humanity. She narrated it as one day she saw her father and his friends watching a video on phone. In that shocking scene a teenage girl wearing black and red trousers was laying face down to the ground and she was flogged in broad daylight by a bearded man in a black turban. She begged in Pashto, screams and whimpers but nobody pitied on her. They hit repeatedly thirty four times. One of the relatives of that girl even volunteered to help hold her down. Further, Malala narrates that the ruthless Taliban destroyed the Buddhist statues and stupas in Swat valley. They believed any statue or painting was haram, sinful and therefore prohibited. One black day the Taliban force even dynamited the face of the Jehanabad Buddha, which was carved into a hillside. Thus the Taliban became also the enemy of fine arts, culture and history. Malala further narrated that they destroyed everything old and brought nothing new. The Taliban force took over the Emerald Mountain with its mine and began selling the beautiful stones to buy their ugly weapons. On the other hand Malala also narrated some other events in which Pakistani army too made victim target to innocent people, suspecting they have been helping the Taliban force. She narrated one more incident of army's torture victim. There was a teacher who was working in Malala's school and she lived very nearer to Malala's house. One day her brother was picked by the army, put in leg irons and tortured, later on kept him in a fridge until he died. After all he had no linkages with the Taliban. Later on the army apologized to that teacher for their misjudgment. Thus this incident also gives evidence that there is too much anarchy in Pakistan. According to Malala people in Pakistan are often cautious of the military, particularly those from Swat valley because army delayed to action against the Talibanis.

In October 2011 Malala's father had received an email, in which it was informed that Malala was one of five nominees for the international peace prize of Kid'sRight a children advocacy group based in Amsterdam. For this prize Malala's name was recommended by Archbishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa. But when she didn't win the prize her father was disappointed. But Malala comforts him by saying: "We didn't have an organization doing practical things like the award winners had". (179)

Later on Malala was honoured by Shahbaz Sharif; the Chief Minister of Punjab, with cheque of half a million rupee about \$ 4500 for her campaign of girl's rights. For the first time Malala dared to talk publicly about how they had defined the Taliban verdict and continued on going to school. She very boldly and courageously expresses her determination and fortitude by saying: "I know the importance of education." (179) So on many occasions Malala appears very progressive and more matured, in her tender teenage. On 20th December 2011, when she was awarded Pakistan's first ever national peace prize at the Prime Minister Gilani's official residence, she presented him, her long list of demands as like rebuilding of her school and girls university in swat etc. Thus Malala's this maturity appears very unique one as like lotus bloomed in mud. It is also honour and proud of matter for her that one of the schools was named after her. Even when she visited to the Sindh assembly with her family, she was applauded by all the members.

However, Malala's progressive minded father repeatedly threatened by the Taliban. Malala narrates that, people used to say both Zahid khan (the hotel owner) and her father were on Taliban radar and both might be killed. They only don't know that who will be first killed. But Malala's father who was very courageous refused the security offered by Pakistan police. Despite the dangers Malala's father and his friends continued to be very active and they organized protests and press conferences. Tuesday, 9th October 2012 the day proved ominous and black day for Malala and her family, ultimately evil Taliban force tried to cease the voice of teenage girl by their gun. Two young militants step out into the road and the school bus of Malala was stopped. They suddenly asked all the girls, who is Malala? But without waiting for the answer they started firing bullets. They fired three bullets by which Malala was seriously injured. She almost paid the ultimate price for her movement of education. Her condition was critical even at this juncture Malala shows her courage, she wanted to explain to the Taliban that: "why they should let us girls go to school as well as their own sisters and daughters." (203) But she couldn't get that chance due her serious injury.

Thus these orthodox militants have snatched a tender smile, her playfulness and bring her to the verge of death. They wanted to kill Malala but they never kill her voice and couldn't cease her campaign of education for the girls. Soon she was shifted from Pakistan to U.K. Birmingham, where she was miraculously recovered from lethal injury and survived neither for herself nor for parents, but for the girls, who are hindered from the stream of education. The United Nations announced 10th November, one month and a day after the shooting as Malala Day. On her sixteenth birthday Malala was in New York and it was a privilege for her to speak at the United Nations. While standing up to address an audience inside the hall, where world leaders have spoken before was daunting, but Malala determined to herself what she wanted to say. Through this opportunity Malala wanted to reach all people living in poverty, those children faced to work and those who suffer from terrorism or lack of education. After her speech she had received messages and support from all over the world, but not a single word she received from her own country Pakistan. But most surprising letter she got after her speech was from a Taliban commander who recently escaped from jail. His name was Adnan Rashid, who addressed in his letter to Malala that she was attacked not for her campaign for education

THEME OF SOCIAL PROTEST AS REFLECTED IN A BOOK I AM MALALA
-DR. PRAKASH A. PATIL

but because she become the boulder on their way to establish Islamic system. Further he asked her to forgive him and suggested her to wear a burqa and to go to a madrasa.

However, Malala narrates that in Pakistan still girls continues to be killed and even schools blown up. The most shocking attack was in June 2013 in the city of Quetta when a suicide bomber blew up a bus carrying forty pupils of college. In an another incident of the Taliban attack two girls of Malala's age were murdered in Gilgit, for posting a video online showing themselves dancing in the rain wearing traditional dress and head scarves. All of sudden they were shot down by their own step brother. Thus the condition in Pakistan for school and college going girls is not amicable and safety. Their breathing is controlled on the guns of the Taliban. Malala now is in London, but she expresses her words of gratitude to all the teachers of the Khushal School, who have kept the school alive even though clouds of terrorism hovering over their head and they tried to maintain it in her father's absence. Though the present book is titled as *I Am Malala*; actually it is her answer to those militants, who at the time of attack asking to girls "who is Malala?". She became global icon of peaceful protest and an activist. The present book also reflects Malala's quest for identity and her social protest against hideous global terrorism. Her strong will power and her education campaign really helped her to survive against adversity. She also expresses gratitude to God, Sometimes she asked God for one or two inches height, but she believes that He made her as tall as the sky, so high that she could not measure herself. Her only dream in the life is peace in every home, every street, every village every country. She too hopes that education for every boy and every girl in the World. In a very humble manner she says that: "My world has changed but I have not." (265) Thus Malala emerged as a remarkable girl who wanted to change the face of the World through education as her only weapon.

References:

- Lamb, Christina. *I Am Malala*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholsons, 2013. Print.

Websites:-

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malala_Yousafzai
- <http://www.biography.com/people/Malala-yousafzai-21362253#synopsis>
- <http://www.Malala-yousafzai.com/>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-23241937>
- <http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/Malaladay.html>