

MEMOIR BY MALALA: A JOURNEY FROM DISHARMONY TO HARMONY

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Abstract

The memoir “I am Malala” by Malala Yousafzai is a layered document, which talks about the alarming issues concerning the society. It takes the base of ‘education’ and builds up further on the complex notions such as women’s education, gender equality, political reformation, religious conflicts, and societal transformation. These issues, if dealt in such literary works; create a deeper impact in educating the youth. ‘Gender’ is a social concept; its cultural differences often become discriminatory and unjust towards women. A memoir which professes women’s education, written by a Nobel laureate, human-rights’ activist teen-age girl; was banned in her own country. The same provides a crucial analytical approach to this paper.

Key-words: Education, Harmony, Fundamentalism, Gender, Human Rights.



Introduction

“I am Malala” is a 2013 autobiography by Yousafzai, co-written with Christina Lamb, a British journalist and author. It’s a courageous journey of a young girl, taking a firm step for education at a primary level; alongside it’s a powerful profess of ‘harmony’ which she desires for the society at large. Malala Yousafzai, at the age of fifteen, miraculously survived the assassination attempt by the Taliban in 2012; she was fatally shot because she denounced the Taliban’s prohibition of girls attending school, she continued to propagandize education in the Swat Valley through radio and TV channels; inspite of the threats by the Taliban. Yousafzai was transferred to the UK hospital for treatment and recuperation. By the time she came back to life, her story of indomitable spirit had come into the international limelight. In 2014, she delivered a speech on the importance of education in the UN; and was also awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her endeavour towards education and peace.

Implication of the Title

The title of the autobiography, “I am Malala” is in itself a reinforcing of her name and identity, which reiterates her prowess against the anti-social forces. “The Story of the Girl who stood up for Education and was shot by the Taliban” is the subtitle which consists of expression for sufficient societal consideration. The word ‘story’ refers to the non-fiction narrative by a teen-age girl Malala Yousafzai; ‘girl’ refers to the identification of one’s being a female, a woman, on whom subjugation and suppression is a commonly practiced norm; ‘education’ refers to the dilapidated state of literacy and basic education in the society; ‘taliban’ refers to the fundametalist organization, vehemently opposing formal education in their territory. The backdrop in this work is of peculiar Pakistani culture, repulsive circumstances in Swat Valley, terrorism by the Taliban, complete ban on education of girls, etc. but it is indeed at large, a scenario appealing to the many developing and under-developed societies of the globe. The story may be about an ordinary Pakistani girl with an extra-ordinary love, determination, and commitment for education; but its appeal is universal; referring to one, basic right to education, two, proclaiming the ethics of peace and humanity.

Education as a Human Right

‘Education’ is an acquisition of general knowledge, which aids the faculties of reasoning and judgement, and also prepares one for the intellectually



mature life. Literacy is fundamental to education, and education is fundamental to the human development. To take the *Constitution of the Republic of Italy* (1948) as a model; it demonstrates some of the vital acts which are beneficiary for all the nations and societies. The Constitution with its theoretical and practical implications is taught at the school level; so that it creates national awareness among the students for becoming the rightful citizens recognizing the worldwide goal of 'humanity' in future. To study the two relevant acts mentioned in the discussed Constitution; Article 3 states that, "All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic and social nature, which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organization of the country." Article 8 accentuates that, "All religious denominations are equally free before the law." (Sandra Chistolini, 2017, p.47) This model, if studied, implemented and practiced by every nation; has the potential to diminish the discriminations, injustices, and in turn the rise of anti-social organizations. The grass-root level concern is not the framing of the laws; rather it's about bringing it into the purview of each and every citizen, right from the primary education.

Furthermore, Article 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* reads: "(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (emphasis added)." (Ibid) It can be derived that education plays a key role in the construction of tolerant mindset. Tolerance is required, not towards the deprivation of basic human rights; but towards the economically and socially privileged groups. Intolerance often times is directed in an erroneous way, giving rise to the anti-human and anti-social activities. However, to eradicate intolerance; education and empathy are the two vital factors. This can be understood



when Mazzolari wrote that tolerance, which “could also be called ‘the effort to think good thoughts’, as Pascal put it, is the condition for living together” (2013, p.58). It can be derived that inequality or disparity in race, nation, culture, religion, rituals, caste, gender, thoughts, and personality; cannot be the basis of dignity and respect.

Conclusion

Yousafzai has provided the readers with the first-hand narrative which shows the urgency to re-instate these laws in the society. Malala notes that when she was born, it was a gloomy day for her community. The Pashtuns of Swat Valley consider the birth of a daughter to be inauspicious; on Malala’s birth, the village commiserated with her mother and nobody congratulated her father. On the birth of a son, rifles are fired in the celebration and daughters are hidden behind the curtains. Their role in life; according to their society is simply limited to prepare food and give birth to children. This long borne patriarchal attitude of the society can be changed through education. Harmony in the society can only be established when there are no discriminations of any sort. Injustices, suppression, or even dominance based on the categories of caste, creed, nationality, religion, politics, gender, should be eradicated. This change can be seen in effect only when education is provided in such a way that it creates the values of secularism and oneness rather than the fundamentalist and hateful attitude. Malala Yousafzai’s memoir professes ‘harmony’ in all the possible ways. The epilogue in the memoir is “One Child, One Teacher, One Book, One Pen...” (2013, p.150), emphasizes the inevitability of education for harmony in the society and world at large.

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