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## Book Review: I am Malala - The girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban

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### INTRODUCTION

The book - I AM MALALA has the potential to make one believe in the power of one person's voice to inspire change in the world. The symbols of peace and harmony, freedom and equality, passion and bravery have been spread across the world with this book.

### THE COVER PAGE

The cover page of the book portrays Malala, a Pakistani young girl who is not covering her entire face. She styles her scarf in a classic Pakistani way. She loosely drapes the scarf around her head, a bit of her hair left to peek in the front. The cover itself is a sign that depicts Malala's bravery as she goes against the Taliban's order of women covering their entire faces. Her eyes are full of glitters of passion, courage, and determination, as she is here to make a change- a change that would help many like her to live their lives with their rights.

### THE TITLE

The title of the book is simple but powerful. The 3-word title I AM MALALA in itself has the strength to attract and power to influence the world at large. The title holds in itself Malala's confidence. Malala has stated in the book that everything in the world has changed but she hasn't. She is not hiding from anyone and not even the Taliban. She bravely lets the world know that she is Malala.

## **AUTHOR**

The<sup>1</sup> book is an autobiography by Malala Yousufzai. It is co-written with Christiana Lamb. She is a veteran British journalist with having a passion for Pakistan and its relationship with the Swat valley.

## **THESIS**

The story of Malala is not just a vivid drama but it exerts the powerful message of the untapped power of a girl and her courage to stand for human rights. The book is a must-read for all sections of society, ranging from people from politics to drama. The youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner- Malala Yousufzai, is a Pakistani citizen and an activist who worked towards a basic dream, a social necessity of women's education. The activist was in return shot a shot by the Taliban for her efforts towards seeking basic rights i.e. education for women.

The<sup>2</sup> day the bullet passed caused injuries to Malala while she was in a bus, passing through the swat valley, Khyber Pakhtunkwa, Pakistan. It was just another day; she was returning home after an examination, no one knew that 9<sup>th</sup> October 2012 would mark a bloodstain on historical pages. Disguised as a journalist, the shooter entered the bus and demanded; "Who is Malala?" The girls in the bus stared towards the only girl with an uncovered face- Malala. At the spur of the moment, three shots one after the other from Clot 45 gun, first passed through 15-year-old Malala's left eye socket and out under her left ear, the next two hitting other two girls in the bus. Today Malala bravely, through her work, says to the world, "*I AM MALALA AND THIS IS MY STORY.*"

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<sup>1</sup> Malala Yousufzai & Christina Lamb, *I Am Malala* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson,2014)

<sup>2</sup> Malala Yousufzai & Christina Lamb, *I Am Malala* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson,2014) 01-06

The book begins with an overview of Malala's early life, ancestral background and with an interesting description of the beauty of the Swat Valley in Pakistan, where Malala and her family lived. It is followed by the introduction of her parents, their background, and stories of her family. This gives us, as readers a glimpse and an overview of the culture she comes from, the status of young women in Pakistan, the reaction of the society when a girl is born in the family, and similar other practices. And overall the odds, the positive, encouraging, and supportive attitude of Malala's father towards his daughter is clearly shown in the book. It makes us relate with her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, who is a political and social activist, worked for his community and fought for women's educational rights. Instead of hundreds of hurdles coming his way, he fights them all for his vocal support of girls' and boys' education. Ziauddin went against the Taliban's laws by running a private school that had girl students.

The<sup>3</sup> book progresses to a bad phase of the heightened emotional stage, where complexities arise. Various incidents take place; the teachers leave the job and resist teaching the girl students. The citizens get fed up with the courts and the empire that turns blindly to Taliban courts or 'shura'. There arise complexities in politics, military and the Taliban turns brutal. The war prevailing in northwest Pakistan, suicide bombers, bombing on the educational institutions where girls studied became common. Eventually, the book shows a slow scraping of women under the Talibani ideology that preferred men only. But despite all this, it is inspirational to see Malala striving hard towards her ambition of girls' education and her aim to become a politician. The shutting down of the school in 2009 is described. There is an account of the aftermaths of the Taliban, their harsh rules, Talibanisation, etc. The<sup>4</sup> next is the most painful description for the readers. It describes the re-opening of the school and how things follow. There are death threats to Malala that the Yousufzai family receives. The event that took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, 2012, Malala's assassination is described as "Three bullets, three girls". The assassin shouted "Who is Malala?" and shot three bullets.

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<sup>3</sup> Malala Yousufzai & Christina Lamb, *I Am Malala* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2014) 26-30

<sup>4</sup> Malala Yousufzai & Christina Lamb, *I Am Malala* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2014) 55-57

After<sup>5</sup> she was mercilessly shot by her assailant's gun, Malala was rushed to Peshawar, then Rawalpindi, and finally to Birmingham, England, where doctors reconstructed her damaged skull and knit back the shattered face. The events follow. She emerged and won the battle of her survival and never hid her face. Never did she do so, neither when the Taliban ordered nor from the world she ever ran. She stood before the members of the United Nations and delivered the message, louder and to a greater number of people from the greatest platform. The last part is a series of pain and joy for the readers. The pains, sufferings, operations take place, Malala survives. Her family supports her to stand up and rise again. Now she was not just a daughter of her parents but she was a daughter of the world. Her willpower, determination, stoicism, and resilience helped her to stand again. She stood to regain girls' future of the Swat Valley, raised her voice for their educational rights, and became a global figure. <sup>6</sup>She was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Peace. She holds the title of youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner. Today Malala is the Brand Ambassador of UN for Girls Education.

## ANALYSIS

Gender equality is basically what we as humans, our written laws and conventions speak about. Gender equality was made part of international human rights law by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations. Then why are we so indifferent towards the implementation of the same? Showcasing women to be as equal as men and not allowing women to educate, is that our definition of gender equality? Giving brutal pains, raping them, treating them as servants to serve the males just because of the sex they belong to, is that gender equality? Is this the same society that feels proud calling itself to be gender-neutral and unbiased, which in reality is blind towards the deprivation of even basic amenities to women under the Taliban rule? Despite the world progressing every day, women and girls still face several barriers based on gender in the equal enjoyment of the right to quality education.

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<sup>5</sup> Malala Yousufzai & Christina Lamb, *I Am Malala* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2014) 68-74

<sup>6</sup> Malala Yousufzai & Christina Lamb, *I Am Malala* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2014) 256

## **<sup>7</sup>TALIBAN AND THE PRESENT-DAY WOMEN CONDITIONS**

In<sup>8</sup> August 2021, major cities of Afghanistan were seized by the Taliban. They started re-imposing repressive laws which were defined during the 1996-2001 rule when they enforced their hardline version of the Sharia or the Islamic Law. Under the law, women were forced to cover themselves from head to foot and prevented from leaving their houses without a male companion. The following explains various international conventions that talk about the right to education and women's rights. Article 27 of the Geneva Convention reads “Women must be especially protected against any attack on their honor, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any other form of indecent assault.” The United Nations and other bodies must now act decisively towards the prevention of further atrocities against women. A true gender-neutral atmosphere shall be created where the dignity of any woman is not compromised.

UNESCO<sup>9</sup> Convention against Discrimination in Education, 1960 reaffirms that education is not a luxury, but a fundamental human right. It highlights States' obligations to ensure free and compulsory education, bans any form of discrimination, and promotes equality of educational opportunity. Talking about the Indian legal scenario with respect to women's education, the Indian Constitution comes first. <sup>10</sup>Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees Women the right to equality and <sup>11</sup>Article 15 (1) explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and Article 15 (3) provides for measures to the detriment of women by empowering the state to provide them with special provisions. Several other laws that protect women against rapes, domestic violence, workplace discrimination, etc. have been framed in order to ensure that basic human rights are not violated.

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<sup>7</sup> Anastasia Telesetsky, 'In the Shadows and Behind the Veil: Women in Afghanistan under the Taliban Rule' (*Berkeley Law*, 26 November 2019) <<https://lawcat.berkeley.edu/record/1116273?ln=en>> accessed 06 November 2021

<sup>8</sup>Kunal Gaurav, 'Taliban insists 'genuine Islamic system' only way to women rights. What does it mean?' (*Hindustan Times*, 20 June 2021) <<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/taliban-insists-islamic-system-only-way-to-women-rights-what-does-it-mean-101624181875381.html>> accessed 06 November 2021

<sup>9</sup> 'What you need to know about the Convention against Discrimination in Education' (*UNESCO*, 30 November 2020) <<https://en.unesco.org/news/what-you-need-know-about-convention-against-discrimination-education>> 06 November 2021

<sup>10</sup> Constitution of India, 1950, art 14

<sup>11</sup> Constitution of India, 1950, art 15

## **WAY FORWARD**

The world needs to come together to make the world a better place. The ones having the potential to raise their voice and take a stand through their knowledge and learning, i.e., the legal fraternity including lawyers, law students can stand up for the cause and make a difference. Not only in statutes and laws the gender equality should lay, but it should also be felt and seen clearly. The daughters of the world should be equally treated and respected as their male companions. Even after education, a female must be treated equally based on her work and qualification as her male counterparts.