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## “CHILD ACTIVIST MALALA –A CRUSADER OF GIRLS RIGHTS”

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*Submitted*

*To*

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**Theme.2:** Portrayal of Women in Media and its Impact on Society

**Sub-theme:** Women, Media and Human Rights

**Title of the Paper:** “Child Activist Malala –A Crusader of Girls Rights”



## ABSTRACT<sup>i</sup>

*The undaunted struggles of the young inspire millions all over the world. To focus on the realities is an attempt to explore the issue and create space for public policy makers. Social Scientists attempt to understand the delay and denial of sustainable million developmental goal v.i.z. Right to Education. Any empowerment tool for the child and the girls in specific dwells upon the fundamental question of accessibility, availability and equity. The paradigm of Capability Approach is adopted for the case study. Through, the secondary data information was culled out from various sources. Interviews, videos, blogs, articles, speeches and other sources were used. In an attempt to document certain limitations were found such as interconnectivity of the topic and narrative. In the Swat region torn between the military forces and army Malala pleads for the need to educate the girls. The beautiful valley turns out as a safe haven for the outlawed people.*

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### 1.0 Introduction

Across the globe basic norms about the dignity of life of an individual and well being in terms of Human Development Index are of major concerns. The Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) exhorts "every individual and every organ of society" to "strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms." The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) declares that a government "may not stand in the way of people learning about [their rights]."

#### **Article 26.of Universal Declaration on Human Rights declares the following**

- (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.
- (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

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## **1.1 Methodology -Capability approach**

The Capability Approach propagated by Social Scientists is useful in understanding the struggle of the Child Rights Activist Malala .Several philosophers adopted the approach. Prominent scholars include Aristotle, Adam Smith, Karl Marx and others. Prof Amartya Sen & Martha Nussbaum adopted this approach to study humanities and social sciences in recent times .

The capability approach is a theoretical framework that entails two core normative claims: first, the claim that the freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance, and second, that freedom to achieve well-being is to be understood in terms of people's capabilities, that is, their real opportunities to do and be what they have reason to value. The approach has been developed in a variety of more specific normative theories, such as (partial) theories of social justice or accounts of development ethics. It has also led to a new and highly interdisciplinary literature in the social sciences resulting in new statistics and social indicators, and to a new policy paradigm which is mainly used in development studies, the so-called 'human development approach'.**Footnote : 1**

## **1.2 Contemporary Relevance**

Education is an important indicator towards national development. It is also a part of nation building process. Gender justice and gender equity though a mirage has to be checked through public policy intervention in Third world Countries. This alone can act as an anti-dote for people's movements. Low level of literacy threatens the cohesive process of development. It leads to lopsided development thus leading to a low level of growth .

## **1.3 Contribution to knowledge**

It helps in exploring the subaltern struggle in a thematic manner led by Child Activist Malala . She broke the hegemony of the Taliban forces and channelized the movement towards the societal cause .Further she seeks the empowerment of girls and children. The role of Media and in specific Social Media is quite encouraging to disseminate the importance of education. She worked for the promotion of Right to Education as a basic right. She fought with the enemy through strong determination.

## **1.4 Clear and logical analysis**

The Paper constructs the facts that prevent a child/girl in attaining her basic human right towards development. Human rights violation paramount's to irrational development .As a child

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rights activist she was able to initiate the transformation by being bold and was an agent of change.

## 2.0 A Brief Sketch of Malala

A motivational leader Malala inspires the world and promotes activism. She seeks to spread her mission of education as children are imprisoned due to dogmatic ideology. In my study I had consulted the book with the title “ I am Malala: The Story of the Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban ”co authored by Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb .An interesting theme that attracts the attention of the reader relates to education. “I speak not for myself but for those without voice... those who have fought for their rights... their right to live in peace, their right to be their right to equality of opportunity, their right to be educated ”as said by Malala Yousafzai.

"Who is Malala?" the young gunman who stopped the Khushal school van asked. None of the girls answered. But everyone in the valley knew who Malala was. Ten years old when the Tehrik-eTaliban Pakistan came to the beautiful Swat Valley, once the home of ancient Buddhist kings, 11 years old by the time she had established herself as an international advocate for girls' education in Pakistan, Malala was targeted by the Taliban for "spreading secularism". In "I am Malala" the discourse of education and peace welcome us on the very title page, “The girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban.” (Yousafzai, 2013) Yet inside the book we come across that it is not only Malala who raised her voice as she herself claims at the end of the book “A Note On The Malala’s Fund” rather other voices explicitly and implicitly are prominent and beside education, directly or indirectly, many important institutions of Pakistan are discussed /criticized .[Footnote 2](#)

## 2.1 Historical Encounters

The Taliban forces took control of the Swat Valley in Pakistan by 2012 . Malala Yousafzai raised her voice to be silenced and fought for her right to education. At the age of fifteen, Malala had to face the wrath of the militants. She was shot in the head at point-blank range while riding the bus home from school and few expected her to survive. Instead, Malala's miraculous recovery has taken her on an extraordinary role as a human rights activist.[Footnote 3](#)

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## 2.2 Taliban Regime

On Oct. 9, 2012, a Taliban member nearly took Yousafzai's life when he shot her in the head on her way to home from school. Her progressive and liberal ideas for girls education were challenged by the militants. The defiant activist underwent numerous surgeries in the U.K., which included having her skull reconstructed. But throughout her ordeal, she refused to harbor ill will toward the terrorist group, and has advocated instead for a peaceful response on a number of occasions. To quote Malala " If you hit a Talib then there would be no difference between you and the Talib. Malala Yousafzai told Jon Stewart on "The Daily Show" , rendering the outspoken host speechless. "You must not treat others with cruelty ... You must fight others through peace and through dialogue and through education."

## 2.3 Human Rights Education:

“ Do remember one thing . Malala day is not my day. Today is the day of every woman, every boy and every girl who have raised their voice for their rights. ” –Malala Yousafzai .Malala has taken up the cause of educating girls after her own experience when growing up in Pakistan's Swat valley under the looming influence of the Taliban who 'shot' her to fame. Her strong advocacy and activism inspired the entire world.

## 2.4 Peace Activism

"The best way to fight terrorism," she told him, "is through education."A drone attack may kill two or three terrorists but it will not kill terrorism. If the drones continue terrorism will spread, Malala said while adding that America should support democracy in Pakistan and help it become a developed country. She advised the former US President Barack Obama to spend money on education instead of drone attacks.**Footnote : 4**

The terrorists thought they would change my aims and stop my ambitions, but nothing changed in my life except this: weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage were born. – Malala Yousafzai

## 3.0 -Issues in leadership

- Silent struggle by the children to realise their basic right to education.
- Demand for running the schools to learn.

- Campaign by the Taliban's and terrorist forces to ban education for girls.
- Strict enforcement of the order. Pakistan government failed to provide the necessary security to run the school/s.
- The only school to be functional for the propagation of female education which was attended by Malala.
- Until the attack the school was operational.
- The civilians were forced to quit the place.

As a youthful student she became interested in women's rights. She lived in the Swat town of Mingora in Pakistan's north-western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The Taliban were in power in the strategic valley after they took control over the region and imposed strict Islamic rules, including their opposition to women's education

### **3.1 Mobilization of school children:**

A teacher by profession and father Ziauddin Yousafzai of Malala played a pivot role in this region. Ziauddin Yousafzai has this advice for parents of girls around the world: "Trust your daughters, they are faithful. Honor your daughters, they are honorable. And educate your daughters, they are amazing. Malala Yousafzai attended a school that her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, had founded. After the Taliban began attacking girls' schools in Swat, Malala gave a speech in Peshawar, Pakistan, in September 2008. The title of her talk was, "How dare the Taliban take away my basic right to education?" The children and students like the uniform but they cannot use it. In no part of the world there is fear. But in Swat, we are afraid of Taliban. Samar Minallah a documentary film maker who has worked among Pashtun women comments, "She knew her voice was important, so she spoke up for the rights of children. Even adults didn't have a vision like hers."

Her miraculous fight with death during the post-Taliban attack influenced masses. From March 2013 she attended school in Birmingham. At this juncture she penned an autobiography, *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*, which was released in October 2013. The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded jointly to Kailash Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzai in 2014 "for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education". On receiving the Noble Peace Prize she opined that ,

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"It gives hope to many young children and many young people that their work is appreciated, and that what they are doing for the cause of education matters."

"Sometimes we think that we are children and that what we do will not have an impact. It shows that our work does have impact and it can bring about a great change."

The award, she said, "is for all those children who are voiceless and whose voices need to be heard".

She saw it as motivation to continue her campaign for equal rights to education. "I felt more powerful and more courageous because this award is not just a piece of metal or a medal you wear or an award you keep in your room. This is encouragement for me to go forward."

### **A few excerpts from her speech while receiving the Noble Peace Prize**

#### **Footnote 5....**

- Dear sisters and brothers, let us become the first generation to decide to be the last.
- The empty classrooms, the lost childhoods, wasted potential-let these things end with us.
- Let this be the last time that a boy or a girl spends their childhood in a factory.
- Let this be the last time that a girl gets forced into early child marriage.
- Let this be the last time that an innocent child loses their life in war.
- Let this be the last time that a classroom remains empty.
- Let this be the last time that a girl is told education is a crime and not a right.
- Let this be the last time that a child remains out of school.
- Let us begin this ending.
- Let this end with us.
- And let us build a better future right here, right now.

### **3.2 Opposing the Taliban forces**

The below statement of Malala Yousafzai is worth mentioning. "I don't want revenge on the Taliban, I want education for sons and daughters of the Taliban." Today, I also read the diary written for the BBC (in Urdu) and published in the newspaper. My mother liked my pen name 'Gul Makai' and said to my father 'why not change her name to Gul Makai?' I also like the name because my real name means 'grief stricken'.

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### 3.3 Diary of a Pakistani school girl

Private schools in Pakistan's troubled north-western Swat district have been ordered to close in a Taliban edict banning girls' education. Militants seeking to impose their austere interpretation of Sharia law have destroyed about 150 schools in the past year. Five more were blown up despite a government pledge to safeguard education, it was reported on Monday. Here a seventh grade schoolgirl from Swat chronicles how the ban has affected her and her classmates. The diary first appeared on BBC Urdu online. **Footnote 6 :**

### 3.4 Pen- name GulMakai :

Using the pseudonym Gul Makai, the name of a heroine from a Pashtun folk tale, she passionately expressed her desire to remain in education and documented her fear and those of her friends of being targeted by militants, and how they attended school in plain clothes rather than their uniforms to escape attention. In 2011 she was nominated for the international children's peace prize by the Kids Rights Foundation. **Footnote 7**

## 4.0 Claims for Right to Education as a basic Human Right

The struggle of Malala involved the support of her classmates and school mates to understand the importance of education . She recollects the names of her friends and brave sisters Shazia and Kainat Riaz , Kainat Somro who also succumbed to the bullets at Swat along with her . They suffered extreme violence and abuse, even her brother was killed, but she did not succumb.

In Developing Nations a girl child is more vulnerable and cannot afford to her basic dignity and learning process. It is a direct violation of Article 26 as provided in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. As she faced the bullet, "I told myself, Malala, you have already faced death. This is your second life. Don't be afraid – if you are afraid, you can't move forward." Further she encourages through her statement, "read thousands of books and I will power myself with knowledge. Pens and books are the weapons that defeat terrorism." To quote the former Secretary General of United Nations Organisation Ban Ki Moon, "Extremists have shown what frightens them the most: a girl with book".

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## 4.1 Role of Social Media

“ I Am Afraid” is a famous post of Mallala. She also wrote an anonymous blog. The responses from the international community during her struggle registered a strong protest. However criticism against her pro-western leanings are found back home . Though she battled for her life Malala was known as a conspirator due to the prevalence of misogyny culture in Pakistan society.

One famous commentator **Isabel Berwick** puts it as follows , "Ms. Yousafzai has single-handedly turned the issue of the right of girls--and all children--to be educated into headline news. And she is a figure worth hearing." While another **Nick Schifrin** describes "Not only has Malala Yousafzai become an international symbol of inspiration and bravery, but her survival instilled educators with courage-and is slowly helping make Pakistani schools safer."

## 4.2 Future perceptions

### Threat to her life

Malala knows the Taliban would still like to kill her, but she says she hopes to return to Pakistan one day. "First, I need to empower myself with knowledge, with education. I need to work hard," she says. "And when I [am] powerful, then I will go back to Pakistan, inshallah [God willing]."

## 4.3 Limitations

The following are the limitations of the study :

- Clarity on certain issues like number of children enrolled in schools could not be presented.
- Unable to produce data on teachers recruitment policy
- Civilians role in restoring confidence on the education is minimal.

## 4.4 Conclusion

The paper is an effort to understand the attitude of the society towards the girl child . Any effort for the realization of Universalisation of Education remains a distant goal. Poverty, civil strife, deprivation and low level of consciousness of the society paved the way for the non promotion of education. The paper registers the struggle of Malala. Y and her efforts to restore

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normalcy in the Swat region. Unlike, other factors it reminds us that children are more vulnerable than adults during the terrorist attack. She is a subaltern as spreads the movement to different parts of the world . She is an inspirational person and role model for the present day youth and children who neglect their studies.



Malala . Y at the UN General Assembly

#### Footnote

- 1 **Robeyns, Ingrid**, "The Capability Approach", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta
- 2 Journal of European Academic Research ISSN 2286-4822 Vol II, Issue 5/Aug 2014, "Interdiscursive events misinterpretation in I am Malala: A Critical Discourse Analysis" by Aalia Firdous, Tania Affzal, Sabaht Mushtaq, Riphah International University, Faisalabad Pakistan, [www.euaacademic.org](http://www.euaacademic.org)

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- 3 The Times of India , Reuters ,15/07/2014 1:31 AM ,Eleanor Goldberg ,The Huffington Post
  - 4 International Business Time, Malala Advises Obama to Fight Terror with Education Not Drones ,*By Jayalakshmi K,October 22, 2014 07:04 BST*
  - 5 India Today Magazine Full text of Malala Yousafzai's Nobel speech, December 10, 2014 | UPDATED 18:34 IS
  - 6 BBC News 19<sup>th</sup> January , 2009
  - 7 **Article** “ Malala Yousafzai: ‘Nobel award is for all the voiceless children”, The Guardian , date Friday 10 October 2014 19.06 BST :[Caroline Davies](#), and Saba Imtiaz in Karachi

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- Title of the Book “I Am Malala: The Story of the Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban” by Malala Yousafzai & Christina Lamb ,ISBN,0316322407 (ISBN13: 9780316322409)
- Edition Language,English,Hardcover, 327 pages, Published October 8th 2013 by Little, Brown and Company

## Videos

### Malala on youtube

**Title** - Malala Yousafzai - The right to learning should be given to any child

**Title** - Malala Yousafzai Tells World Leaders at Oslo: Books, Not Bullets

**Title** - Malala Yousafzai's POWERFUL Speech To The Canadian Parliament | 2017

**Title** - A Schoolgirl's Odyssey - Malala Yousafzai Story | The New York Times

**Title** - The Making of Malala Yousafzai: Story of Girl Shot in Taliban Attack | The New York Times

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Malala's story - BBC News

## News papers

### The Guardian &The New York Times

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