Politics Of Representation, Racialization And Marginalization In I Am Malala By Christina Lamb And Malala Yousafzai

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Abstract

The research aims to explore Malala Yousafzai's autobiography I Am Malala in terms of its politics of representation and marginalization. This autobiographical account is based on the events of the author's life in years spent in Pakistan, particularly the time when the Taliban had controlled Swat valley and the events which followed afterwards. She is of the view that life in Pakistan for women is very difficult due to which the author considers herself marginalized. The research intends to put this memoir in a postcolonial context where Taliban will be compared with the colonizers because Taliban wanted to take control of not just the Swat Valley, but the areas around as well. Similarly, colonial masters also used to do the same as British colonial masters came to the subcontinent to oppress the local inhabitants.

For this purpose, the theory of subalterns by Gayatri Spivak will be used. She is of the view that even if the subalterns speak their voice is not heard deliberately. They are not able to represent themselves. Malala's experience in Swat was not very pleasant, which in a way symbolizes marginalization of women under the sway of such oppressed forces. Within this perspective, marginalization of Malala serves as a symbol for all the people who were affected by the Talibanization in Swat. In a way, the research will shed light on the marginalization of women in Pakistan, since some people in Pakistan call it a myth. Moreover, the research aims to investigate whether or not her memoir is based on Western agenda as it is perceived that Malala wanted to pander to western conspiracies. There are serious question marks on Malala's representation. In this regard the theory of Subalternity by Spivak serves as a firm ground to substantiate the argument.

Keywords: Subaltern, Postcolonial, Feminism, Talibanization, Marginalisation

Introduction

Female oppression is the undercurrent of the work under scrutiny; unfortunately, people who raise voices of descent often have to face marginalization. Representation means to represent someone, to shape someone's identity according to your wishes. Representation means to

portray someone. Different segments of society are marginalized by the oppressors in modern times. Women being weak and frail creatures are a victim of bitter marginalization. Moreover, in third world countries oppression against women is common.

Women have a key role to play in the development and progress of any country; so the importance of women can't be denied. They play a pivotal role in different fields of life. According to Langston University Research gender discrimination means the poor treatment of society with any sex. Women are a main victim of this sort of discrimination. Sexual harassment is one of the major aspects of gender discrimination. According to Christophe Z. Guilmoto, gender discrimination has two kinds. In the first-place women are displaced in their early childhood where they are considered less than humans, so much so that they are sold for a few pennies. Secondly, when they grow up they are not given their due share in society and are marginalized in every field be it professional or domestic. Every citizen has a right to prosper but if one is denied of one's basic rights on the basis of their gender, it will be considered as gender discrimination. However, there are a few people who realize the importance of power and influence of women in society as Quaid-e-Azam was a strong advocate of the rights of women. Here one can argue that women have a key role in nation building. No nation can progress without the unifying force of women and men.

1.1 Research Questions:

The study intends to explore Malala Yousafzai's memoir I Am Malala. For this purpose, the research has been divided into three sub-questions.

- 1. Is female marginalization a myth or reality in Pakistan?
- 2. How are females represented in the modern lens of Pakistani society? Are they still gazed down upon by their male counterparts?

Literature Review

Racial discrimination started in the world with the advent of colonialism. European people decided to send their expeditions to different countries. Their major purpose is to do trade with other countries. The game plan of colonial powers was not very simple. European forefathers considered Eastern people as uncivilized. They established their footprints in other countries. Their apparent agenda was to colonize the people of other countries. For this purpose they established a new political order. According to Walia

Colonialism is accompanied by exploitation, annexation and conquest. Its hegemonic power rests on creating the binary opposition of self/other, white/black, good/evil, superior/inferior, and so on. Thus a part of the world was able to enjoy supremacy because it convinced the rest of the world about the white man's burden and his civilizing machine. (77)

The binary oppositions play a key role in creating a rift between white settlers and native people. Native elite joined hands with white settlers. The white settlers turned the

situation in their favor. They started ill-treating the native subalterns. The white masters acted upon the policy of divide and rule. Native elite gave full support to the white settlers in crushing the resistance of native subalterns. During this time the society was divided into various sects. In the —Preface to The Wretched of the Earthl, Sartre says:

The European elite undertook to manufacture a native elite. They picked out promising adolescents; they branded them, as with a red-hot iron, with the principles of western culture; they stuffed their mouths full with high-sounding phrases, grand glutinous words that stuck to the teeth. After a short stay in the mother country they were sent home, white-washed. (7)

This situation was very intense. The native elite considered it against their respect to stand with the native subalterns. Color and wealth were the basis of racial superiority. The subalterns were forced to admit that they belong to an inferior race. The white settlers were of the view that they belonged to a superior race. Violence was very common in those times. White settlers use force to implement their rule. During colonial times the relationship of white settlers with the native elite was that of a master and slave. The natives wanted to live peacefully. But they were not ready to surrender their rights. The situation was going against their desire. They were subjugated in their own areas. All this was happening due to racial discrimination. People belonging to Africa and India were given the name of subalterns. All this was happening in colonial times. The after effects of colonialism were not good. Western people started considering the Eastern people as people belonging to an inferior race. Eastern people were subjugated to Western Imperialism.

Research Methodology

The research is carried out on the principles of qualitative research. I have used feminist theory and relied heavily on the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The primary focus is on the essay —Can the Subaltern Speak and her understanding of contemporary feminism and capitalism. Textual analysis of the memoir I Am Malala by Malala Yousafzai has been carried out; moreover, this nonfictional text has been analyzed under the lens of feminist theory to unearth the excruciating journey of a woman whose true and sincere efforts towards the education of women became the victim of a scandal both perpetuated and proliferated by the extremist sections of the society. Numerous critics have been quoted throughout the research in order to equip this multifaceted research.

The data has been collected from multiple sources such as literary journals and articles. Furthermore, I will give my own findings after close reading of text. In the introductory portion I have discussed female marginalization in general. In the

Literature Review section I have discussed subaltern theory at length. Followed by this is an intense analysis which helped me to substantiate my claims and achieved the aims and objectives of this research. In the end I will conclude my work keeping in view the analysis portion.

Theoretical Framework:

Subaltern theory of Spivak has been applied for giving this discussion a new dimension. Spivak is regarded as one of the renowned postcolonial critics. Post Colonialism, Deconstructionism, Feminism and Marxism are the major concerns of her writings. Spivak works on the construction of truth. Oppressed people are the main focus of her writings. In her theory of Subalternity she has given a vivid description of the situation of women in Society. Spivak has treated women as subalterns. Subalterns are the people who belong to strata of society having no voice at all. Spivak talks about voicelessness of oppressed individuals in her essay Can Subalterns Speak. Addressal of marginalized segments of society is one of the key elements of her writings. She usually talks about third world women. Women of third world countries are usually considered as oppressed entities. In her essay —Can subalterns speak " Spivak has challenged the role of colonial powers. Her main agenda is to give voice to silent and marginal segments of society. Restoration of respect for women is one of the key themes of her writings. She has rejected the notion that European women are superior. Her major stress is on equality. In her theory of Subalternity Spivak states that Subalterns are those people who are doubly marginalized. Double marginalization can also be given the name of double colonization. Eurocentric attitudes of western world are being criticized by Spivak. Western world believes that they enjoy superiority over Eastern World. Western World has always manufactured and manipulated the reality of Eastern world according to their own suitability. She talks about the concept of -Worlding ". This concept involves the persuasion of local people to accept reality according to the will of European powers.

Theory of Subalterns states that the oppressed people are marginalized and victimized to a great extent. In the first place they have to face the mal treatment from their society. Secondly colonial powers tend to represent them. Colonial powers are of the view that people belonging to Eastern world are backward. So, they need representation. Representation of colonial powers is not favoring the natively marginalized entities. They are infected, raising their level of subalternity.

Spivak also argues that subalterns have no voice because their masters crush their dissenting voices. In her framework Spivak explores the relationship of gender, power and knowledge. She reiterates her point of view by arguing that Subaltern belongs to that class of society who are left out from power structure. Women are a major victim of Subalternity. In third world countries women are silenced by patriarchy and colonialism. Subalternity of women means that they are living in that society which is not fit for their wellbeing. Society had failed to provide conducive environment to women to prosper mentally and physically.

Marginalization and representation are the key elements of Subaltern framework. Marginalization means oppressing someone. Subalterns are those individuals who are targeted and cornered by powerful segments of society. Representation means to present someone in a particular way. Subalterns are not allowed to represent themselves in society. Colonial masters were of the view that their agenda is to give liberation to the oppressed sections of the people living in Sub-Continent. In reality their aim was to represent them and manipulate the situation in their own favor. Same history is repeating now a day. Now new Colonizers are trying to give representation to natively under-Privileged sections of society.

Analysis

I Am Malala is one of the masterpieces of Malala Yousafzai, co-authored by Christina Lam. This memoir throws light on the issues of marginalization of women. The issue seems more pertinent than ever due to the rampant discussions being held on the same problem. —I was a girl in a land 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 birth to children! (Yousafzai and Lam 9). One cannot help but notice the observation made by the author, which she has derived from her personal experience, which pertains the bleakness of female marginalization. Yousafzai is of the view that females are not accepted in Pakistani society, particularly the ones who belonged to the remote and underprivileged areas. They are not been welcomed in a way in which boys are welcomed. She, furthermore, argues that Pakhtoons consider the birth of a girl as an omen of bad luck; thus speaks volumes of marginalization of females.

In this memoir Yousafzai has talked about the rights of women. She has also given her viewpoint about the treatment of women in society. She gives an example of her cousin when he came to celebrate her birthday he brought a tree with himself which contains male lining (9). In my view Yousafzai is somewhat justified in holding this stance. In rural areas of Pakistan females are not treated in a manner they deserve. When a daughter is born some people consider them as a burden. We can observe this problem in those families where there are two to three female children. After having two or three daughters, the family desires to have a son. Son is considered as a dominant figure in our society. As Yousafzai is a sensitive soul, whatever she felt she wrote it down in her writing. The reason for her sensitivity is her age. When this memoir was published she was quite young. Yousafzai wants to change this custom. She dared to raise her voice against this marginalization. But societal norms were a hurdle in her cause. She was not heard by different segments of society, but she never kept quiet and this memoir is a solid proof. Arundhati Roy also believes that —silence is the loudest sound.

Yousafzai talks about the great poet named Malalai, who is a significant figure of Pakhtoon Literature. Pakhtoon children were told about her to inspire them and ignite a fire of passion among them (9). Yousafzai has exposed the hypocritical attitude of Pakhtoon society. As, on one Hand, they are telling the story of a female poet and on the other hand, they are not welcoming the birth of girls as a sign of blessing. This hypocrisy can be further translated to the fact that when Yousafzai tried to help her fellows in terms of education and awareness for their rights, she was marked as a transcender.

Malalai was considered as one of the renowned figure in Pakhtoon society. Afghani people named their schools on her name. On the other hand, Malala's grand father was not happy on giving her this name. He called this name as a gloomy name. He was of the view that this name is not appropriate for his grand daughter. (9-10)

This thing also symbolizes marginalization of females. Malala's grandfather was not allowing her to be recognized by the name of great Afghani poet. He was not allowing his son to name his daughter according to his will. Malalai being a poet symbolizes bravery. She played a magnificent role in inspiring Afghan army against British during second Anglo Afghan War in 1880 We can again witness the hypocritical attitude of Pakhtoon society. Yousafzai also felt marginalized due to this incident. To further suppress women, they were not allowed to leave their houses, as Yousafzai adds that even her mother was not allowed to leave her house. Yousafzai seems to be unequivocally criticizing this custom.

Yousafzai has talked about the societal constraints through which women were passing in her locality. She argues that women were not allowed to leave their houses without a male partner. She proves her view point by giving her own example that she and her mother were required to take the help of a male partner if they want to go out. According to Pakhtoon tradition they could accompany five year old boy for this purpose.Boys and men were allowed to move freely according to their will.

Role of girls was just to cook food for their fathers and brothers. (14)

Conclusion

This memoir throws light on the pertinent issues faced by women, as the importance of addressed issues can't be denied. The research has tried to explore whether female marginalization is a myth or reality. In our society there are conflicting points of views about female marginalization. There are people who call female marginalization a myth. They are of the view that there is no concept of female marginalization. According to them, if a female is living within the four walls of her house, then she is secure and nothing can hurt her. What they are unable to understand is that the security of women is not to be confused with confinement. This misunderstanding is stretched to the point that if any woman tries to speak for herself in a domestic setup, she is highly criticized as males feel that their authority is being challenged. However, there is another school of thought who believes that female marginalization is a reality, thus acknowledging the very existence of the problematic trope running parallel to the society. Moreover, female marginalization is a dominant theme of this memoir.

Malala had inculcated every aspect of female marginalization in her memoir. She states that in our country men are welcomed in a cheerful manner. Boys are usually considered as a support for the families. Birth of a boy is a symbol of protection for the family. Family calls the birthday of their son a red-letter day. If a family has two to three daughters, they consider it a gloomy sign. This usually happens in underdeveloped and rural areas where people believe in superstitious rituals.

Female marginalization not only exists on micro level it also exists on macro level. Selling of females is common in rural areas. In her memoir Malala talked about a female named Shahida whose father sold her to a person who was old but he wanted a young wife.

Custom of Sora also depicts the marginal attitude of society towards females. According to this custom, a female is handed over to a male person of the enemy tribe for the resolution of a feud. This custom refers to forced marriage. Forced marriages are very common in tribal and

rural areas of Pakistan. Girls are forced to marry at a young age. Their marriages take place without their consent. Forced marriages are playing a pivotal role in making women subaltern figures. Human rights organizations have failed to ensure equal rights for women. Malala had also faced hard times in her life.

Yousafzai also talked about the General Zia era. She argues that much legislation were made which were against basic rights of women. She refers to a thirteen-year girl who was raped. Later she was imprisoned on not presenting four witnesses to prove the crime. Even though we claim our society as a Muslim society but still there are incidents of rape. Protection of rape victim is not ensured. Victim shaming is very common. The perpetrators of these crimes are not brought to justice. This further adds fuel to fire to female's marginalization and subalternity. Recently we have witnessed an incident of victim blaming in Lahore when a woman was raped on the Motorway. This heinous act was condemned by every sane voice But Lahore police chief Umar Sheikh's statement aggravated the matter. He was of the view that females were not supposed to be on the road late at night. This statement enraged every respectable person because the police are responsible for the protection of the lives of people. If a police officer is issuing such statements which reflect his crude mentality, then it is obvious for the people to feel unprotected. Nowadays legislations are being made to ensure equal rights for women. Government has provided legal protection to the right of ownership for women. Latest legislation also safeguards other rights of women. Women have to face harassment in society. Laws are also made to end this menace. Despite these legislations the dire need is to implement these legislations in reality.

Females face problems in the journey of their education. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure equal education for its citizens. In Pakistan female education is not given its due importance. In this memoir Malala talks about her aunts. They were also deprived from going to school. Her mother also left school voluntarily. Her father didn't even ask her about the reason for leaving the school. Malala also faced bitter marginalization when she advocated for women's basic right of education. While living in Swat Malala faced terrible Taliban oppression. Taliban were daggers drones against those sane voices that were against them. Issue of female education was the major bone of contention between Taliban and

Malala. In her locality Taliban were acting like colonizers. We can't call them real colonizers but their role was of colonial powers. They considered dissenting voices as a threat to their dictatorial regime. Like colonizers, Taliban tend to subjugate local people by oppressing and representing them. Malala decided to give them a tough time. Her resistance can be given the name of subaltern resistance. She and her father were strongly condemning militancy but their voice was not heard by the Taliban. Fazlullah who was Taliban leader in Swat used to come on radio. He used to give his own interpretation about Islam. His major objective is to cultivate the minds of local people. He was quite successful in cultivating the minds of females. The major reason for the cultivation of females was lack of education. Act of Fazlullah was similar to that of a colonial master.

Double marginalization is one of the dominant themes of the theory of Subalterns.

Malala is also a doubly marginalized entity. In the first place, militants marginalized her. They were not letting her breathe in fresh air. Secondly, she was dragged into a corner by her country folks. They were calling her a Western product. In our country calling someone a Western product sells a lot. After the attack on Malala people in Pakistan called it a staged drama. This point of view further marginalized her. People in her homeland argued that

Malala wanted to go abroad. People who disagreed with her called her a Western agent. I believe that if our point of view is poles apart from another person then there should be a constructive argument.

Another reason for the bitter marginalization of Malala was Western intervention after the attack. West took a keen interest and called it a human right issue. She met with distinguished people including former American President, secretary General of UNO and former Prime Minister of UK. Western rulers and Western media manipulated the situation according to their own will. Their apparent aim was to help Malala. But in reality, they were trying to discredit Pakistani Society. They wanted to declare Pakistan as a failed state. This representation raised many question marks about Malala in Pakistan. Our people consider the West as enemies. They labeled her as a Western sponsored entity. I personally believe that we should support Malala's agenda. We should not make her agenda controversial. After observing the role of West in her portrayal further pushed her by the wall. She is still unable to break the shackles of marginalization. We can call her an individual who is marginalized from all sides. Spivak is of the view that the colonial period has not ended yet. Neo colonizers have failed to represent subalterns (Spivak 2014-15). There is a segment of society who have a strong belief that Malala hasn't herself written this memoir. There is someone else behind her. The purpose of writing this memoir is to malign Pakistan. Maria

Grazia Sindoni in her article states that —For example, Malala's speeches are today written by her robust team of media advisers, and some opponents, especially in the Muslim milieu, argue that they turned her into a puppet (275). —However, critics in her country contest that her voice is not her own, but that of Western mainstream media and of politicians that exploit her for their purposes (275).

In my point of view Malala is not herself playing in the hands of the West. She has a strong voice against terrorism. Even though her voice was not heard, she kept on emphasizing her point of view. All these things are becoming a major cause of her marginalization. Now the discussion is not going on her point of view about education and terrorism but the discussion is on her Western representation. The West has no idea about the situation of women in third world countries. So how can they represent an oppressed figure of a third world country?

After having a close reading of text and different articles, it is safely assumed that female marginalization is not a myth. Focus of society should be on protection of rights for every gender.

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