

# **Migration, Neo-slavery and the Female Being in Yousafzai's I Am Malala**

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## **Abstract**

This paper discusses the nature of migration especially when it becomes inevitable and indispensable within the context of a society surged over with uncertainties. Malala Yousafzai's memoir *I Am Malala* brings one face to face with the vicissitudes of daily living, particularly in a largely conservative environment like Pakistan, and with how radical and extreme Islamic tenets inhibit the potentials of the female heroine, thereby creating some sort of neo-slavery. Applying the analytical approach with an explication through the lens of Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis, this paper foregrounds the effects of migration on the psyche of its victims, especially the female being. Although migrating is usually a conscious decision towards economic empowerment and self-development, this paper however, approaches the phenomenon from a nonconventional perspective where migration can become inevitable and the only choice for not just the salvation of one's life, but also a transition from slavery to freedom.

**Keywords:** Migration, Context, Islamic Tenets, Psychoanalysis, Neo-Slavery

## Introduction

Migration involves the movement of people from one place to another with the intention of settling, permanently or temporarily, at a new location. According to the World Migration Report, the movement often occurs over long-distances and from one country to another, but internal migration (within a single country) is also possible. Migrants who migrate have to consider the geographic location, social situation of the place that they are migrating to. They also have to consider the issue of how to integrate into the society they are migrating to. According to Nwiyi and Udoette, 'a number of scholars, anthropologists like Russell King, Jan Lucas- sen, Leo Lucassen and Patrick Manning have written on the geographic and social nature of migration, the motivation and the rather complex significance of relocating to a new/alien society' (251).

In more specific terms, migration is a demographic event that has both temporal and spatial dimensions (Bilsborrow et al.; Fussel et al). The International Organization of Migration defines migration as follows:

Migration is the movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border, or within a state. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification.

Lee also defines migration 'as a change in permanent or semi-permanent residence; something that involves an origin, a destination and intervening obstacles' (49). Migration impacts on both the place left behind, and on the place where migrants settle. According to Caves, 'there are four major forms of migration: invasion, conquest, colonization and emigration/immigration' (461). People have many reasons why they want to move one from place to another. These reasons may be economic, social, political or environmental. For migration to take place, there are usually push factors and pull factors at work. Push factors are the reasons that make someone decide to move. Often, push factors are the negative things such as unemployment, crop failure, war, concerns about high crime rates, droughts, flood, poor education opportunities or poor services and amenities, a lack of services or amenities, poor safety and security.

Pull factors, on the other hand, are the expectations which attract people to the new place. They are usually positive things such as job opportunities, a better

standard of living, better education or healthcare, low crime rates, political security and fertile land. Many people choose to migrate. They are voluntary migrants. Many are economic migrants. However, many people have no choice and are forced to leave their homes. These are involuntary migrants. Their lives and homes may be in danger due to a war or a natural disaster. These people are also called refugees. There are different types of migration such as, counter-urbanization, emigration, immigration, internal migration, international migration and rural-urban migration. The important factors which motivate people to move can be classified into five categories. They are economic, demographic factors,, socio-cultural, political and miscellaneous factors.

Most of the studies indicate that migration is primarily motivated by economic factors. In developing countries, low agricultural income, agricultural unemployment and underemployment are considered basic factors pushing the migrants towards developed areas with greater job opportunities. Thus, almost all studies concur that most migrants move in search of better economic opportunities. The basic economic factors which motivate migration may be further classified as push factors and pull factors. Demographic factors showing the differences in the population growth rates of the different regions of a nation have been found to be a determinant in the internal migration. Fertility and the natural increase in population are generally higher in rural areas which drift the population towards the city. Another important demographic factor in internal migration is marriage because females are used to following their spouses, as some males also relocate to be nearer to their spouses.

Social and cultural factors are also important in migration. Sometimes, family conflicts, the quest for independence, also cause migration especially, of those in the younger generation. Improved communication facilities, such as, transportation, impact of television, good network of communication cinema, the urban oriented education and resultant change in attitudes and values also promote migration. In miscellaneous factors, other factors such as the presence of relatives and friends in urban areas, desire to receive education which is available only in urban areas are factors responsible for migration. Closeness of cultural contacts, cultural diversity, great vitality, individual attitudes are also associated with migration.

Neo-Slavery is also known as contemporary or modern slavery. Neo-Slavery connotes a new type of slavery. It is institutional slavery that continues to occur in

present-day societies. According to Kevin Bales, modern or neo-slavery occurs —when a person is under the control of another person who applies violence and force to maintain that control, and the good of that control is exploitation. Modern slavery or neo-slavery is often seen as a by-product of poverty. In countries, that lack education and the rule of law, anarchy and poor societal structure can create an environment that fosters the acceptance and propagation of slavery. Modern slavery or neo-slavery takes many forms. The most common are; human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, forced or servile marriage, and child slavery.

According to Gulnara Shahinian, contemporary slavery often occurs in hard to reach areas of the country or what is perceived as the private realm, such as in the case of domestic servitude. In today's world, neo-slavery takes many different forms, namely, human trafficking, forced labour, bonded labour, and servitude. These people are controlled and forced to work against their will and their dignity and rights are denied. The International Labour Organization (ILO) considers forced labour or compulsory labour as any—work or service extracted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself voluntarily. Common forms of forced labour can be found in under-regulated or regular-intensive industries, such as agriculture and fisheries, construction, manufacturing, domestic work and the sex industry.

Debt bondage is the most common form of neo-slavery. According to Anti-Slavery International, a person becomes a bonded labourer when their labour is demanded as a means of repayment for a loan. The person is then tricked or trapped into working for very little or no pay, often for seven days a week. The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, through the threat or use of force or other means of coercion – for the purpose of exploitation. Forced or servile marriage occurs when an individual does not enter into a marriage with free and full consent. The 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery considers illegal any practice where a woman, without the right to refusal, is promised or given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or in kind to her parents, guardian family or any other person or group of persons. Transfer of a woman by her husband in return for payment, as well as inheritance of a woman following the death of her husband is outlawed. While the definition only applies to women and girls (who mainly bear the brunt of forced marriages), there have been calls for it to cover boys and men.

Child slavery and exploitation, including the use of children in armed conflict is another form of contemporary slavery. The worst forms of child labour defined by International Labour Organization (ILO) include the sale and trafficking of children; compulsory labour, serfdom, and the compulsory use of children in armed conflict. The novel, *I am Malala* will be used to interrogate the issue of Migration, Neo-Slavery and the Female Being.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Psychoanalysis as a theoretical and practical model was elaborated by Sigmund Freud (1856- 1939) in the late nineteenth century. However, many psychologists had existed before him, but Freud's fame lies in the fact that he refined the previous psychoanalytic theories and made them popular in an unprecedented way. Some of the influential psychoanalysts prior to Freud were Franz Anton Mesmer, Philippe Pinel, Jean-Martin Charcot, Johann Friedrich Herbart, Schopenhauer, Karl Eduard von Hartmann, Eugen Bleuler, Alois Alzheimer and Joseph Breuer; Freud's mentor. The psychological process based on Freudian theory suggests that human experience is driven by three internal forces which also build our personalities. The first stage in our lives is of infancy which is the dependency on the parents for the satisfaction of instinctive needs such as food, clothing, shelter and so on. At this stage, our nervous system works like the Id or Superego. This is known as the pleasure principle, that is, immediate satisfaction of the basic needs. Later, when we reach at early childhood these changes into the Id or the Ego. This is known as the reality principle, awareness of oneself.

Our ego tells us what is right and what is not, according to the social and cultural environment provided to us with all its values and restrictions. But along with the ego, our minds also develop a sense of conscience or the Superego, which reminds the ego to behave appropriately and remain within the set principles of morality of our society and culture. It thus, generates the feelings of shame, pride, guilt and so on. Freud's theory of psychoanalysis manifests the importance of the unconscious over the conscious.

Freud proposes that a person's apparent personality is not the reality of his true self, in fact whatever he hides reveals more about his true self; this is the working of the unconscious which he or she hides. He believes that the ideas and psychical constructs of the nervous system are not situated in the organic parts, for they are to be found between them where resistances and desires correlate with one another.

He explains that whatever a person is aware of is contained in his/her conscious mind and whatever they don't seem to remember is stored up in their unconscious mind (Freud, 306 ). This unconsciousness takes up the largest portion of our mind and is a collection of resentful past memories, repressed desires, traumatic experiences, conflicting thoughts and impressions of almost every undesirable event that had ever occurred in our lives. In fact, the unconscious becomes so assertive with time that it motivates and directs our every action and thought, unless it is not clinically cured. For example, if a young adult girl had had a troubled relationship with her uncaring and detached father, she would likely be attracted to emotionless and arrogant men in the hope of trying to make them love her the way she wanted from her father. But this wish is unconscious which means that she is not aware of this repressed desire in a conscious manner.

Hence, the point is that the girl is not able to understand the reason of her desiring such a rude man because she does not know exactly what she wants. Freud explains that when people are not willing to give in to their conscious wishes, which can be the result of their superego, their unconscious stores up all those desires. This can also be the result of refusal for changing their harmful personality traits because their personalities have been formed and shaped that way. In order to avoid confrontation or exposure of their weaknesses, their minds tend to form some Defense Mechanisms to avoid pain and trouble. He holds the view that the ego usually gets stuck between the craving of the Id and the resistance of the super-ego. While juggling both extremes, if the ego somehow breaks down or accepts its failure, then it causes moral and neurotic anxiety. This state of Anxiety or guilt eventually helps to reveal the Core Issues behind them.

### **Neo-Slavery and the Female Being in I Am Malala**

Malala Yousafzai in her novel, I am Malala shows how religion is used in manipulating and interpreting the extreme philosophy of a religious sect, the Taliban in Pakistan. She also shows how the misrepresentation of religion and its devices affect the female being. In a society, where a female is seen as an Other, Malala portrays how the female being thrives in a neo-slavish society, how she acts to 'decentre' this new form of slavery and how this affects her as a female being. Karl Marx, wrote in the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right about religion that:*

Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is, indeed, the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won

through to himself, or has already lost himself again. But man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man-state, society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion. Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opinion of the people. (263)

Religion has been used as a basis by the more powerful men in society for the domination of the less powerful ones. Religion has been used as a pretext to carry out illicit acts in the name of holiness and truth. Pakistan is dominantly an Islamic country which is, expectedly, rooted in Islamic beliefs. Islam is a religion that professes peace but instances and social situations in the text will beg the question of peace and love therein. Islam is expressed, lived, interpreted and manipulated to meet the extremist activities of the Taliban sect in Pakistan. Religious extremism represents a typical or outlying behavior outside the norm of religious beliefs. Because of cultural and political circumstances, some communities like the Taliban have interpreted women religious practices in unusual ways that have suppressed human rights, especially the rights of women in Pakistan. The Taliban is a religious sect that interprets the Qu'ran in extreme ways. They approve of the near-total exclusion of women from public life (including employment and education). They see education as a medium to Westernization and stipulate that only the religious schools, popularly referred to as Madrassa should be allowed to exist. In that country, only boys can go to school. They prohibit music and insist that women are to be constantly veiled. One of most crucial rights for people is education because education shapes the world and the people in it. Cole states that:

Everyone has the right to education. (It) shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory... (and) 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 (1).

In Pakistan, the status of a female being is lower than that of a man. The rights of women are suppressed and taken away. From birth, their roles, destinies have been decided. Girls in the Swat Valley do not go to school because it is forbidden for them. They stay at home. This situation is expressed in the following excerpt: “as in most families, the girls stayed at home while the boys went to school. The girls were just waiting to be married” (Yousafzai, 20).

Mandell states that women are normally defined by their roles as daughters, wives and mothers. They are given the task of looking after children, handling of household matters, or to be seasoning for men’s life. Women are believed to belong in the kitchen as they are fully tasked with the responsibility of handling domestic matters (54). The roles of women in *I am Malala* are clearly defined. Women stay at home, make food for the family and give birth to children. This is expounded in the excerpts below:

My parents’ first child was stillborn, but I popped screaming. 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 is simply to prepare food and give birth to children (13). The women spent their days looking after the children and preparing food to serve to the men in hujra upstairs (58).

In a country where women are seen as lesser beings, Malala’s father loves and cherishes her so much that he says that Malala will be free as a bird. Girls and women in Pakistan must be in *Purdah*. That is, they must cover themselves with a veil. The role of women also is not just as a daughter or wife, but also they can be sold to other people. Women can also be exchanged as commodities in certain cases.

In the novel, neo-slavery is seen in the extremist tendencies exhibited by the Islamic sect, the Taliban which is led by Maulana Fazlullah. They ask people to stop listening to music, watching movies and dancing. Fazlullah’s broadcasts are aimed at women. He will say that women are meant to fulfill their responsibilities at home. Only in emergencies can they go outside, but they must wear the veil. He

also preaches against education and insists that those who go to school would also go to hell. Fazlullah misinterprets the Qu‘ran and different sections of the Hadith in order to exploit the people’s ignorance. In line with the original Arabic, the Fazlullah says that watching movies and dancing are sinful acts and within six months, people got rid of their TVs, DVDs and CDs. Malala and her family had to move their TV into a cupboard. Also, people who thrived by selling CDs were compensated by the Taliban. The Taliban appeared as reformers to the people. People gave them gifts such as money and gold. They [Taliban] proceeded to holding a Shura, a kind of local court where aggrieved people presented their situations with heavy hearts hoping for justice to prevail. The Taliban even closed beauty parlours. They insisted that every man should grow a beard. As such, barbing salons were closed down and there was no work for barbers.

Soon after, they turned their attention to schools and women. And thereafter, they began killing people. On Eid, where goats and sheep were usually sacrificed, Fazlullah said —on this Eid, two- legged animals will be sacrificed. The Taliban killed khans and political activists from secular and nationalist policies. At the gate of the Khushal school, owned by Malala’s father, a note was left containing the excerpt below:

Sir, the school you are running is Western and infidel. You teach girls and have a uniform that is 'unislamic'. Stop this or you will be in trouble and your children will weep and cry for you. It was signed. Fedayeen of Islam (64).

Malala’s father changed the boys uniform from shirt and trousers to a baggy-like-pyjama trousers and a long shirt. The Taliban also destroyed religious relics such as Buddha statues. They prohibited painting and saw it as sinful. Also, under the watch of the Taliban, girls of the Red Mosque madrasa raided houses they claimed were used as massage centres, they kidnapped women they said were prostitutes. Benazir, a female political leader was killed for speaking against the inhumanity of the militants. She even offered to help the search for Bin Laden inside Pakistani borders. In order to justify her murder, the Taliban said, it was a very good job she was killed. When she was alive, she was useless. She was not following Islam properly. If she had lived there would have been anarchy. In the midst of all these injustices, extremity and inhumanity meted out by the Taliban, Malala stands firm and speaks against the Taliban. She says, —how dare the Taliban, take away my basic right to education? During Ramadan, Muslims

can't eat or drink in the day. The Taliban destroyed the power station, as a result of this, there was no light. Pipelines were blasted and there was no gas. Malala's father provides water for the people of the Swat Valley and the people's reaction is seen in the excerpt below: If the Taliban find out you're giving water in the month of Ramadan, they will bomb us (76).

People were murdered, and their bodies, left bare in broad daylight. Corpses of people were left with tags with rules prescribing when, how the corpses should be buried. In an interview, Malala said, —they are abusing our religion. Malala and her father campaigned against the injustices meted out by the Taliban. Malala wrote her experiences under the Taliban with the pseudonym, Gul Makai.

### **Migration and the Female Being in I Am Malala**

Migration has been described variously as the action of moving from one geographical terrain to another. Some of the causes of migration, it must be stated, include economic and financial pursuits, personal development and empowerment, and social and cultural reasons. However, these factors come off inconsequential and do not present the principal reason for Malala's migration. In the memoir, even though there is considerable tranquility in Swat Valley, Malala's abode, her first wave of migration was soon to come as the terrorist attacks become more lethal. This makes Malala distraught, especially as she and her family become Internally Displaced Persons, moving out of their homestead along with the uncertainty of what lies ahead. In her words:

Leaving the valley was harder than anything I had done before. I remembered the *tapa* my grandmother used to recite: No Pashtun leaves his land of his own sweet will. Either he leaves from poverty or he leaves for love. 'Now we were being driven out for a third reason the *tapa* writer had never imagined – the Taliban. Leaving our home felt like having my heart ripped out. I wanted to cry because I felt in my heart I might never see my home again (19).

Here, we find the reason which facilitated Malala's movement — terrorism, perpetrated by the Taliban. This factor is quite apart from the conventional factors of migration. The insecurity surrounding the Pakistani environment served as the major catalyst for migration. On the other hand, we get to realize the agony which this sudden movement has on Malala. For her, it is as though her heart was 'ripped apart'. Malala is concerned about the ton of inconvenience she faces thereafter not

just as a result of the bombings around her, but also the action of having to move away from her comfort. At this point, we see the effects of 'imposed' migration. Here too, migration is utilized differently as a means of escape and seeking refuge. Perhaps, the most crucial migration in *I Am Malala* comes at the end of the story where Malala's survival and life depend solely on her moving out of her country this time. In the midst of surging terrorist activities, Malala falls victim. And at the brink of death, her only life-ball becomes migration. Regarding the indispensable nature of this movement, Malala narrates:

I was shot on a Tuesday at lunchtime. By Thursday morning my father was so convinced that I would die that he told my uncle Faiz Mohammad that the village should start preparing for my funeral. I had been put into an induced coma, my vital signs were deteriorating, my face and body were swollen and my kidneys and lungs failing. Although my condition had stabilized, it was felt that I needed to be moved within forty-eight hours [to Birmingham] (130-132).

Because of Malala's deteriorating health condition, she has to be flown to Birmingham to receive extensive medical care, for the preservation of her life. This is the aspect of migration which involves the impromptu movement from one place to another, not in search of greener pastures or schooling, or business, but to save a life.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has examined the different perspectives of the concept of migration away from the conventional approach. It has given a fresh outlook on the way migration serves the function of a life-saver, especially in a society like Pakistan where women are treated as lesser mortals, and the life of a 'female being', considered largely insignificant. Migration in Yousafzai's *I Am Malala* therefore constitutes a deviation in the fact that it is used as a lifeline to save the life of the female being. Currently in Birmingham with a promising life ahead of her, and having bagged the Peace Prize Award, Malala reaps the benefit of migration, and by so doing breaks free from the inhibiting forces of her previous society into a life of freedom and tranquility.

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