

**"Only the educated are free"-
Epictetus**

Anybody who hasn't heard of Malala Yousafzai? The sixteen year old school girl from Pakistan? Why is she so remarkable?

Well, to put it in shorthand, in the year 2014 Malala was recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. By that time, she had been flown to Birmingham after the Taliban shot her point-blank on 9th October 2012 and bruised her head. She was re-

Now, wasn't that serious business? For a mere school girl?

Teenagers stereotypically spend their time in fun and frolic and in what adults call silly stuff. They are full changing their profiles in Facebook and social media. They ogle at boys and want to risk involvement with them. They read stories of romance and vampires and hover around comics. But some persons see far ahead what others of their genre don't see. They dream a dream that drives them forward. Malala was one such rare teenager.



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unique strategy to change the world had never been spelt out by anyone before. She said she will change the world through education. More schools and more teaching. Towards this end, she started the not-for-profit fund called the Malala Fund that helps lots of backward communities in a community-led education development program.

This is visionary insight indeed. Particularly so for a teenager. A broad education can endow children with critical skills, comprehension, breadth of view, and skills-all crucial for a country's development. The path to the breakdown of poverty is education. The path to creating a critical electorate is education and the path to transparency of public life are the watchful demands of an educated electorate. In Pakistan 60 per cent of the population have no education. In most countries, girls are the most marginalised in terms of education. In many Muslim countries girls on reaching puberty become disconnected from education and trapped into domestic chores. Disabled people have no access to education in most parts of the world and there some 6 billion disabled people around the world. In our own Sri Lanka that boasts of literacy, about 60 per cent become dropouts from higher education. Parents are so poor that they cannot support kids for long enough to complete a school; education. Literacy is not education; it is only a path to that goal.

THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS TEENAGER

turning home in her school bus when the Taliban entered the bus, asked for her by name and shot her. A world-wide uproar erupted.

Recovering from the brain injury, Malala was settled in a school in England. One day in 2014, the head teacher called for her. Malala was a bit scared wondering if she had done anything wrong. To her amazement, the head teacher told her that she has achieved global fame by being nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize! She eventually became the youngest Nobel Prize laureate ever. Before that, Malala had won the National Peace Prize in Pakistan. Time Magazine voted her as one of the 100 most influential persons in the world.

I will tell you another remarkable thing Malala did. She once told Barack Obama to his face that sending drones to Pakistan was not simply done.

In her days in Pakistan, Malala fearlessly criticised the Taliban and publicly spoke of their horrors. She wrote to a BBC Blog in Urdu under a pseudonym about the plight of Muslim girls in the Swat Valley where she lived. Since then, the Taliban was stalking her; even now they say they will kill her anytime. Malala would have, presumably, been seen as threat by the Taliban warriors. Mind you, a teeny tiny teenager! Taliban would have spotted some unusual danger in Malala's steely aura.

After the shooting Malala was flown into

Birmingham Hospital which had specialised in brain surgery. Although she recovered, her left side of the face is sort of paralysed and her ear is dead-forever. "I blink in my left eye every time I talk," she said. Yet, the resilient Malala fights on. On International Women's Day 2015 Malala addressed a big audience in London's Royal Festival Hall and announced that she wants to change the world forever. She had originally desired to be a doctor but at the festival hall she said that she wants to go to politics because thereby she can give effect to her ambition to change a whole country. The scope of a Doctor's impact is so much more narrower. She plans to return to Pakistan after her education, Taliban notwithstanding.

Malala is remarkable in yet another way. Her

AC Grayling, contemporary British philosopher, puts it eloquently. He says, "education, especially 'liberal education,' is what makes civil society possible." This emphasis tallies with Malala's aspirations and it differs from the thinking of ordinary persons and politicians who value education only for its contribution to the economy. The very possibility of civil society is at stake when education levels are ignored. Grayling defines a liberal education as education that includes literature, history, and the appreciation of the arts, and gives them equal weight with scientific and practical subjects.

Malala has published her memoirs under the title: "I am Malala."

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