

2016 ESSAY

FRILITY, thy name is woman

OUTLINE

1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1. Hook Statement: When Malala Yousafzai survived the assassin's bullet and stood before the UN to advocate girls education, she shattered the centuries old stereotype that women are fragile beings. Her story questions the notion captured by Shakespeare's "Frility, thy name is woman."

1.2. General Statement

1.3. THESIS STATEMENT: While history and literature portrays women as symbol of weakness, but reality demonstrates that women are a symbol of courage, resilience and strength equal to or greater than men.

2. MAIN BODY:

2.1. Why women are considered frail?

2.1.1. Literary Reason:

Women are portrayed delicate & literature

2.1.2- Biological Reason

Physical differences and lesser muscular strength is often exaggerated as symbol of weakness.

2.1.3- Social Reason

Patriarchal mindset of society is pushing women to subservient roles.

2.1.4- Cultural and Religious misinterpretation

Cultural and religious misinterpretation reinforcing stereotypes.

2.2. Women's Reality of Strength

2.2.1- Women's Role in Politics

Women played a crucial role in politics.

Example: Fatima Jinnah, Begum Rana, Liaquat Ali, Benazir Bhutto and Maryam Nawaz.

2.2.2- Women as Administrators and Bureaucrats.

Women in civil services showing competence, policy-making and decision making skills.

Example: Maleeha Lodhi and Asf Sher Bano Nigri.

2.2.3 - Women in Literature

Women are using power of words to make their name

Example: Bano Qudsia, Umera Ahmed and Parveen Shakir.

2.2.4 - Women in Science

Women are proving themselves in field of science and invention

Example: Marie Curie, Pierre Curie and Arfa Karim.

2.2.5 - Women in Sports

Women going beyond in fields

Example: Sara Mir, Sania Mirza, Serena Williams and Sharapova.

2.2.6 - Women in Armed forces:

Women are working alongside men in armed forces

Example: Lt. General Nigal Johr, and Maryam Mulethal

2.2.7 - Women in Judiciary

Women played a crucial role in judiciary and law interpretation areas, traditionally dominated by men

Example: Tahira Safdar, Justice Ayesha Malik, and Majida Rizvi

2.3- WAY FORWARDS

- 2.3.1 By providing education and awareness
- 2.3.2 By breaking gender stereotypes.
- 2.3.3 By breaking silence on biased attitude
- 2.3.4 By encouraging men's role in supporting women
- 2.3.5 By helping marginalized women become financially independent.

3- Conclusion

3.1- Thesis restated

When Malala Yousafzai survived the assassin's bullet and stood before the United Nations to advocate for girls education, she shattered the centuries old stereotype that women are fragile beings. Her story questions the notion captured by Shakespeare: "Frailty, thy name is woman." Undoubtedly, life owes the colour because of woman. As a mothers, sisters, wives and daughters, they are makers and breakers of the society. The proponents of the statement that women are frail, failed to answer, how a woman bears the pain of a childbirth. They have so much importance that it would be wrong to regard them as weak and fragile. The history and literature portrays women as weak, delicate and frail, but the reality demonstrates that women are the symbol of courage, resilience and strength equal to or greater than men. In 21st century women are proving their mettle in every

field.

Firstly, the basic reason behind why women are considered frail is that they have been portrayed weak, delicate, ignorant and submissive in literature. As a result, women are considered more as accessories to men than as people or spiritual creatures.

The vast majority of the writers carried on with the false belief that women were inherently inferior to males. In Urdu literature, like ghazals, women are showcased fragile and just a symbol of beauty with no voice. In English literature, Cinderella Fairytale is a classical example which shows women depend on men to achieve a happy life. Such portrayals, however, were literary constructs rather than reflections of women's true capabilities.

Secondly, physical differences and lesser muscular strength of women are often exaggerated as a symbol of weakness.

and fragility. For instance, men generally have higher muscle strength, stronger bones and higher stamina, while women undergo menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth which may sometimes affect their physical strength and emotional stability. These natural biological functions are frequently presented as limitations, reinforcing the stereotype that women are physically and emotionally weaker than men. However, these biological factors are sometimes overstated or wrongly equated with weakness, overlooking the strength and endurance women demonstrate through them.

Thirdly, patriarchal mindset of society is pushing women to subservient role. Still, in today's world women are treated inferior to men. They are just confined to homes. They are not allowed to give opinion even in the matters connected to themselves. The social restrictions have deprived women

of education, opportunities and leadership roles. Consequently, women were showcased as dependent on men, financially insecure and socially vulnerable. Such conditions reinforced the notion that women are fragile incapable of leading responsibilities beyond household. The patriarchal mindset further contribute to misconception of women frailty.

Lastly, cultural and religious and religious misinterpretations also reinforce stereotypes. In many societies cultural norms restricts women mobility especially in Pakhtoon and Baluch culture. They are also not allowed to participate in public life. Similarly, selective interpretation of religious texts have been employed to justify their subordination. These cultural and religious distortions reinforced the idea that women are inherently dependent, fragile and submissive. So, in addition to social barriers cultural norms

Undoubtedly, the above arguments shed light on why many consider women frail. Yet, these views only represent one side of reality. When analyzed critically, they appeal more as social constructs and cultural exaggerations, than as inherited truths. Therefore, it becomes necessary to explore the other side of the argument, which reveals women's resilience, strength and undeniable contributions in every sphere of life.

Firstly, if we see the reality of women's strength, we can witness that women played a crucial role in political sphere.

If we look into the history of Ms Fatima Jinnah, Mother of the Nation, not only a political leader, but also a symbol of integrity and strength for women. She supported her brother Quaid-e-Azam during the struggle for Pakistan and stood by him throughout the time. She was the one who raised her voice for democracy and stood against dictatorship during Ayub Khan's era.

Similarly, Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan, the wife of Liaquat Ali Khan played an active part in politics. She was the founder of All Pakistan Women's Association, 1949 to mobilize women socially, politically and economically. Another example is Ms Benazir Bhutto who broke global stereotypes by becoming first female head of government in an Islamic country. In present times, Maryam Nawaz serving as Chief Minister Punjab, faced strong opposition, ~~role~~ and accountability trials but still continued her political struggle. This shows that women are no less than men.

Secondly, we can see women are proving their mettle in leadership roles in the government administrative department. They are breaking the myth that women can't take a leadership role. Women in civil services are showing competence, policy-making and decision-making skills. Pakistan can witness a shining example of Maleeha Lodhi. She served as the

Pakistan's permanent representative to the United Nations, twice, representing the country at highest international forum. She was one of the first women to hold such a prestigious diplomatic position in Pakistan. She was also acknowledged as one of the most influential women diplomats in South Asia. Similarly, ASP Shes Bano Naqui, who gained nationwide respect when she courageously handled a violent mob in Lahore (Ichhra incident, 2024) and rescued a woman. As a young female police officer, she challenged the notion that women cannot serve in law enforcement or face high-risk situations. These women set a role model for Pakistan's women that they can be protectors, policy-makers, decision-makers and leaders in crisis.

Thirdly, women are not only making their name in administration and politics but also in literature. Women are using their words to make their name. The most

renowned examples are Bano Qudsia who wrote Raja Githi, Aake Boast, Hasil-e-Ghori and many others. Another example is Umera Ahmed who wrote Peer-e-Kamil and Aab-e-Hayat. Parveen Shakir's most notable writings include Khusbu, Sad-barg and Mah-e-Tamam. This clearly demonstrates that in history where women were portrayed weak in literature but now women themselves are making name in literature.

Not only have women made a name in literature but also they have earned accolades in the world of science. The ever growing area of science and technology could not progress at the current pace without women efforts and input. A shining example of such a woman is Marie Curie, the scientist who discovered the elements Radium and Polonium while working with her husband, Pierre Curie, she is the only person to have won a Nobel Prize in two fields. Arfa Karim who became the world youngest

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Microsoft certified Professional in 2004
This shows that women have
excelled in science, technology
and invention fields and are
standing side-by-side men.

Besides science and technology,
women have also made it into
esteemed sports arenas worldwide.
They have gone beyond the ordinary
and tested their limits in the fields
that were earlier considered the
fields of men. For example, Serena
Williams and Maria Sharapova are
world renowned tennis champions
who won many sports medals.
Sana Mir, who served as the captain
of Pakistan women's cricket team -
Sana Mirza, an Indian former professional
tennis player. She won six major
titles. These medals and recognitions
awards are not merely praised
for the athletes but an honour
for all the women today. Sports
have not remained a men-only
ground and females have also
proved themselves in this area.

Women's value has been under-recognized for far too long.

(Cher, Actor and women
Right Activist).

Moreover, women have worked to the top of the armed forces hierarchy. They have broken the misconception about them, being delicate and have done so gracefully as seen in the examples of Lt. General Nigal Johal, Tamgha-e-Imtiaz - Pakistan's first female Lt. General. Maryam Muneer, Pakistan Airforce fighter pilot, first female pilot who embraced martyrdom while saving lives of civilians. These women have proved that no matter how hard the field is, whether at home or outside women can handle it with great courage and grace. Moreover, such women have definitely opened new doorways for their fellow females by endorsing them and taking the first steps. Last but not the least, women have made remarkable names in judiciary, breaking long-held

gender barriers and contributing to a more inclusive justice system. Justice Majida Raut set the precedent by becoming the first female Judge of Sindh High Court in 1994. Later, Justice Tahirah Safdar achieved a historic milestone as the first woman Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court. The most groundbreaking advancement came in 2022 when Justice Ayeshah Malik was elevated to Supreme Court of Pakistan, a first in the nation's history. These examples demonstrate that women are not merely confined to home but are serving at prestigious positions.

Even though women have endured a fair share of pains to get equal recognition as men in various parts of the world, there remains a considerable gap between how the two genders are treated, especially in less developed nations. The first and foremost reason is women's lack of education and awareness. So to break the myth

of women frailty, the masses need to be aware and educate. The education will broaden people's horizons and they would be able to appreciate and respect women's work. Next to it gender stereotypes need to be broken in workplaces by allowing women to lead non-traditional projects like fieldwork. Another important step is to break silence. No matter what the gender is, while living in society every human being should look out for every other, especially for women; sexist remarks, biased behaviours, or any such act should be called out publically. As much as general awareness and collective actions are important, men's supporting role for women around them is equally critical. Thus, if all men stand up to back the women of their household, the backlash from the patriarchal society against women's empowerment would be greatly reduced. Finally, women can help other women by providing them financial support. When women with strong personalities and power

come forth to help the marginalized.
It would create a huge impact, when
the women of a country will be
financially independent.

"We cannot all succeed when half
of us are held back."

~ Malala Yousafzai

In a nutshell, women have been
regarded weak for most recorded
history, with several mentions in
literature and art. Misconceptions
about bodily and mental strength and
persistence are unfamiliar to none.
Nevertheless, they have not let such
criticism be the force that stops
them from pursuing what they want
to. They have achieved everything
men have and even more so by
striking a perfect balance between
their roles as mothers, homemakers
and working women. Though a
general lack of education, deeply
entrenched gender biases, and a
patriarchal mindset slow down
their progress, women's empowerment
could be brought about by increasing
awareness about their roles, breaking

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gender stereotypes at workplaces and pushing men to give a helping hand for the cause. And it is imperative to do so because women make up half the world's population, with the whole of humanity owing its existence to their presence.

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