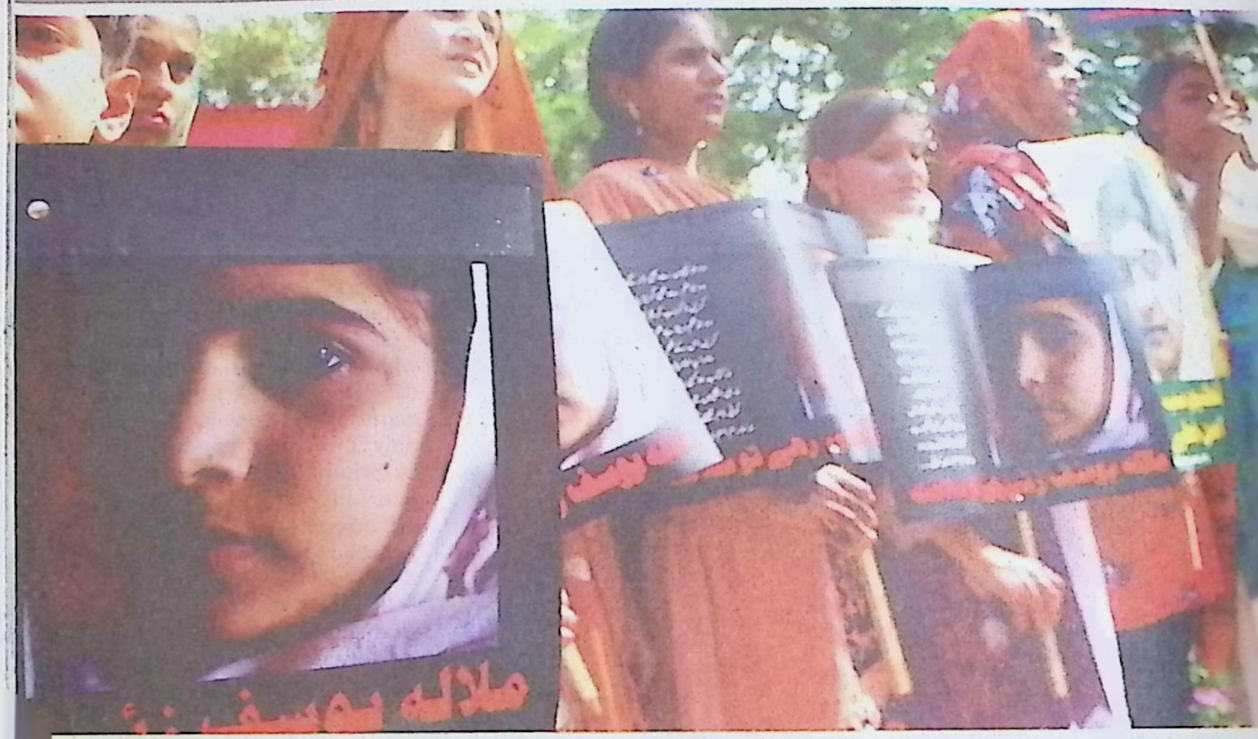


MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

AMRITA TALUKDER

Some nights before, I had a terrible nightmare. I saw a woman standing in front of a building located in the middle of an uninhabited deserted landscape. From her face, she looked frightened as if something ominous was about to happen. Before she could grasp the meaning of this, I witnessed a group of men with sharp weapons in their hands, running towards her, attempting to kill her. She ran for her life, perhaps let out a few screams too. But before I could analyse what would happen next, I was awakened by sheer terror of this dreadful dream in the middle of the night.

While still struggling to resolve the vision, an incident which I had read about before struck my mind. It was the attack on Malala Yousafzai, about how a Taliban gunman had shot her in the head, and wounded two of her friends too while she was going home from school, injuring all the three girls in a bus in October 9th 2012. The gunman shouted, "Which one of you is Malala? Speak up, otherwise I will shoot you all." She was immediately shot in the head, the bullet pierced through her neck and shoulders, lodging near her spine. She had undergone intensive care initially at a hospital in Peshawar, and later on was flown to Birmingham, UK for further treatment. The details of the attack were provided by the other two girls, Kainat and Shazia, after their medical conditions improved. Why did the assassin do this? Because Malala Yousafzai spoke up for the rights and education of women, not only in Pakistan but all over the world? Or is it because of the Taliban's nasty, meaningless, pathological misogyny?

Malala Yousafzai is a sixteen-year-old girl, from the town of Mingora, in the Swat District of Pakistan's northwestern province, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. She is well known as a blogger and also for her education and women's rights activism in the Swat Valley where the Taliban had at times banned girls from attending school. I ask again: Why? On her sixteenth birthday, July 12th 2013, Malala delivered a defiant speech in the United Nations Headquarters in New York. She said, "I am not against anyone. Neither am I here to speak in terms of revenge against the Taliban or any other terrorist group. I'm here to speak up for the right of