

Topic:

Pakistani women have the same chances as men.

Outline:

1. Introduction

Thesis Statement: The Constitution of Pakistan entitles men and women with equal rights and opportunities. But due to the stereotypical social structure of Pakistani society, the women are not offered equal chances to thrive. These inequalities in rights and opportunities are evident in various aspects of life.

2. A cursory glance over the status of women in Pakistan

3. Pakistani women have less chances than men. ^(Thesis)

a) Least acceptance of girl child due to son preference.

b) No consent in marriage and family planning related decisions.

c) Unequal educational; health and ownership rights.

- d) Grim situation of employment opportunities and career progression
- e) Insufficient political prospects for women in Pakistan.

4. Pakistani women have same chances as men. ^(anti-thesis)

- a) Many Pakistani families welcome girl child wholeheartedly.
- b) Woman's consent is mandatory in marriage contract and family planning related decisions
- c) Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal educational, health and ownership rights.
- d) Pakistan has equal job prospects for women.
- e) Pakistani women enjoy equal political rights both as voters and as candidates.

5. Pakistani women have same chances as men ^{on paper} but in reality they lag behind. ^{on paper} (synthesis)

- a) Birth of girl child is perceived as a burden by most of the Pakistani families
- b) Forced and child marriages are widely practiced in Pakistan
- c) Policies and laws are not implemented when it comes to educational, health and ownership right of women.

d) Pakistani women encounter various hurdles when it comes to job opportunities.

e) Over the years the political participation of Pakistani women has not improved much.

6. Conclusion.

Essay:

There are two powers in the world; one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a great competition and rivalry between the two. There is third power stronger than both that of the 'women'. These are the words of the founder of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who considered women as the strongest power that could lead a nation on the path of prosperity and development. Unfortunately, in Pakistan women are neglected when it comes to rights and opportunities. The Constitution of Pakistan, entitles men and women with equal rights and opportunities. But, due to the stereotypical social structure of Pakistani society, the women are not offered equal chances to thrive. These inequalities in rights and opportunities are evident in various aspects of life. Pakistani women have less

chances than men i.e, they are not given equal opportunities to excel. A girl child is not accepted in Pakistani society due to son preference. In addition to this, the consent of women is often neglected when it comes to marriage and family planning related decisions. Women in Pakistan also suffer from inequality in educational, health and ownership rights. They ^{are} also ignored when it comes to job opportunities and political rights. However, many believe that female population of Pakistan enjoy equal chance as men do, as they are considered blessing by most of the Pakistani households. Moreover, when it comes to marriage and family planning related decision woman's say is given ^a due weightage.

Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the equal educational, health and ownership rights of the women. Also a Pakistani woman is entitled with equal employment prospects and political rights. All these aforementioned arguments that suggest that women have equal chances as men in Pakistani society, does not hold water

due to the fact that Pakistani women have same chances as men on paper but in reality they lag behind. The birth of a baby girl is perceived as a burden by most of the Pakistani families. This leads to forced and child marriages. Policies and laws are not implemented when it comes to educational, health and ownership rights of women. Likewise, women are neglected when it comes to job opportunities and political participation.

Article 25 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan ensures equality before the law and equal protection of the law and states that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone. But still the women in Pakistan do not have equal status as men that is predominantly due to the patriarchal hold over all aspects of life. The status of women in Pakistan is determined by various indicators i.e. class, religion, economics and rural-urban divide etc. The national and international surveys and reports suggest that the condition of women rights in Pakistan is abysmal and needs immediate consideration.

Pakistani women have less chances than men i.e they are considered least important even as a child. Birth of a girl child is often considered a bad omen, which leads to lack of acceptance for a girl child. This is also due a popular phenomenon is 'Son Preference' i.e a range of values and attitudes that accord a male child a status over female child. The idea of son preference is deeply rooted in Pakistani Society due to the prevalence of a patriarchal mindset. According to a survey conducted by National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), titled "Son Preference in Pakistan: A Myth or Reality", "there was a candid son preference among respondents"

This lack of acceptance as a child grows as a girl grows up. Society considers her a lesser being, hence discredit the importance of her consent in the most important decision of her life that is, marriage. In most of the Pakistani households it is elders and specifically men who decide the fate of a women when it comes to marriage. After marriage it is husband and in-laws who decide her code of

of conduct. In most crucial decisions like family planning in which ^{a woman} is directly affected, both physically and mentally, her voice is not heard. The consequence of this sheer injustice are evident in shape of high mortality rate in Pakistan as, World Population Report-2019 suggest that 178 women out of 100,000 die in Pakistan while giving birth.

In addition to this female population in Pakistan also suffers from unequal rights of education, health and ownership. Men are considered to be the breadwinners and the future of family, so more importance is given to male education and well-being in Pakistani households. Economic Survey of Pakistan 2022-23 suggests that "male-literacy rate in Pakistan is 72-percent whereas female-literacy rate is 51.8%". These statistics are alarming as women are more than half of the population in Pakistan. Another injustice faced by women is related to healthcare facilities. The condition of state run healthcare centers both in rural and urban area is grim, the THQs and DHQs are over-crowded and inaccessible for women due to household responsibilities and cultural constraints.

Ownerships rights of women are also neglected in Pakistan. Daughters are not given due share in family's inheritance which leads to dire economic conditions of women in our society.

Owing to the ^{perceived} secondary status of women in Pakistani society, they are often considered less fit for various jobs. Likewise most of the organizations, both public and private are ruled by male-dominated higher ups, hence they considered women to be least intellectually sound to cope with the responsibilities of professional life. For them the only job which women can perform well is doing household chores and child rearing. The report of by International Labour Organization (2023) suggests that gender disparities with respect to unemployment persist in Pakistan, with consistently higher rate of females without work, which could potentially rise to 1.1 percent. Moreover, women in Pakistan also fall prey to delayed career progression due to delayed promotions as men are prioritized when it comes to promotions.

One of the most significant institution

of society in which women are not considered equal is politics. World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (2023) suggests that "Pakistan's widest gap is on political empowerment i.e 15.2pc." Women in Pakistan primarily abide by the family's political association with any party, as they are compelled to do so. Societies in which women are politically empowered are considered to be more stable and developed as Madeleine Albright, the former United States Secretary of State asserted, "The reason I made women's issues central to American foreign policy, was not because I was feminist, but because we know that societies are more stable if women are politically and economically empowered."

On contrary, there are many who believe that Pakistani women have same chances as men. They argue that, there are many households in Pakistan ^{that} ~~which~~ welcome a girl child and consider her a blessing not a burden. There are families in Pakistan who give equal status to sons and daughters. They provide equal educational and other facilities to all the children, ^{irrespective} of their gender. Even the Pakistani culture and society are very respectful towards

women.

Being an Islamic state ~~women~~, Pakistan offers due rights to women when it comes to marriage. The consent of bride is given equal weightages as of groom. There are laws like the Muslim Family Law Ordinance that protect women against practices like regarding marriage, divorce, polygamy etc. With the increase in female literacy rate women in Pakistan are now more aware about the health, hence there say is considered most important in family planning related decision. Also the governmental and private organizations in Pakistan provide assistance and support to women in this regard.

In addition to this, the Constitution of Pakistan offers equal educational, health and ownership rights to women. In present day Pakistan female education is considered very important, so women have equal opportunities to excel in academics. Almost majority of villages and towns have educational institutes for women. ~~It~~ Over the years, Pakistan has made substantial progress in increasing the educational opportunities for women. The government has taken steps to promote girls' enrollment and retention in

educational institutes. Initiatives like the "Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Youth Development Program" and the Girls Stipend Program aimed to provide financial incentives for families to send their girls to school. As a result, female literacy rates in Pakistan are improving and more girls are pursuing higher education. Over the years, the condition of women's health in Pakistan is also improving. Programs like "National Program for Family Planning and Primary Healthcare" have contributed to making the healthcare system accessible and beneficial for women. Moreover, there are laws in Pakistan to protect women's inheritance and ownership rights. Islam has given women their rightful share in the property. Laws like Muslim Family Laws Ordinance (MFLO), 1961 and the Muslim Personal Law Shariat Application Act, 1962 protect these rights.

Women in Pakistan are also entitled to equal job opportunities and benefits. The quota system ensures the participation of women at all levels. The private sector also appreciates the participation of women in professional arenas. Due to this, the conditions

of women with respect to employment are improving as International Labour Organization states that women workforce in Pakistan has increased by 50% since 2000. Moreover, the NGOs like Kashf Foundation are helping and encouraging female entrepreneurship. To promote women participation in ~~Bank~~ banking and finance sector and to cater the special needs of women First Women Bank Limited (FWBL) was inaugurated in Karachi in 1988.

Furthermore, in Pakistan women have equal political rights as of men. The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal political rights for women both as voters and as candidates. Also the Election Act 2017 provides the power to ECP to declare a poll void, if the female voter turnout is less than 10% of the total votes polled in a constituency. Over the time, the political participation of women has increased in Pakistani politics and decision making. The number of women in National Assembly of Pakistan has increased from 12% in 2000 to 18% in 2022. This shows that today Pakistani women enjoy same political rights as men. In addition to this women in Pakistan have

served and are serving in top-notch positions when it comes to decision-making; Benazir Bhutto who served as Pakistan's first female Prime Minister remains an iconic figure in this regard.

All the aforementioned arguments that suggest that Pakistani women have same chances as men does not hold water, because in reality Pakistani women lag behind men when it comes to rights and opportunities. The birth of female child is perceived as burden by most of the Pakistani families. They are considered as a waste of money and waste of space. The major factors that leads to the rejects of a girl child are poverty and illiteracy. These are people who consider daughters as blessing but majority of families in Pakistan do not want daughters. In 2019, Edhi Foundation found 375 newborn babies buried in various parts of Karachi and most of them were girls, and the reason behind this act, is that people don't want daughters. This lack of acceptance in future leads to incidents of gender base violence including sexual abuse, honor killing, domestic abuse etc.

As females are considered burden

and a threat to family's honour, hence to get rid of them they are often married at very young age. The practice of forced and child marriages is still practiced in many areas of Pakistan especially in tribal and rural areas. Even though laws provide protection ^{to} women in this regard, but these laws are seldom implemented. According to UNICEF, Pakistan has nearly 19 million child brides. These alarming statistics prove that women in Pakistan are ^{not} given equal rights, in marriage related decision. ~~Also in decisions~~

Women in Pakistan also suffer from prejudices when it comes to their right to education, health and ownership. Even though government has taken many initiatives to improve the educational status of women but still the female literacy rate in Pakistan is very low; as UNESCO stated that Pakistan has one of the world's highest rates of out-of-school girls, with over 3.6 million girls not attending primary schools. Even in the present age of digitalization Pakistani women are kept behind men, as the report by Global System for Mobile

Communication (GSMA) asserts, "only 50% of Pakistan women own a mobile phone compared to 81% men. The situation of women healthcare in Pakistan is also dreadful where according to UN report 49% women have no say in health matters. Even though state has launched many programs to facilitate women but due to social barriers women cannot access these facilities. The other major aspect where the rights of women are violated frequently is "Ownership". Although the constitution of Pakistan provide due ownership rights to women but in reality it is not implemented as Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18 revealed that only 3% of surveyed women between the age of 15 to 49 years in Pakistan own a house while ~~men~~ 72% of men own a house in Pakistan.

Moreover, female population of Pakistan face discrimination when it comes to employment opportunities. Mao Zedong, the leader of Chinese Communist Party once said "Women hold up half the sky" which means that women have an equal role to play in society and that their contributions are just as important as

those of men. But in Pakistan, unfortunately women are not considered equally important for social development. This is primarily due to socio-cultural make up of society where women are not allowed and appreciated to work outside.

World Bank Report (2022) reveals that "female constitute only 20% of participation; this is because of the ~~senoal~~ 'as in our cult' as in our culture women take career break of two to three years while they raise their children. Another important concern for women is gender pay gap; as women are not paid equally for same work as men International Labour Organization's Global Wage Report (2022-23) suggests that "Gender-Pay Gap in Pakistan" is 34% i.e. women in Pakistan earn 66% of what men earn."

Likewise the condition of the political rights of women in Pakistan is awful. Though the law of Pakistan guarantees the due political rights of women, still women face discrimination in the political arena of the country. Women in Pakistan make up almost half of the population i.e. 49% yet they have a meager share in decision making. Most of the political parties pick women indirectly on reserved seats through

a gender quota system, hence women are largely expelled from active politics. The Inter-Parliamentary Union reveals that in 2018 general elections women accounted for a mere 20% of the members of National Assembly. In most of the areas of the country female candidates are discouraged and barred from conducting their election campaigns. Similarly, female voters are also not allowed to vote, and if allowed they have to vote as per the wish of their male family members. It was evident in 2018 general elections where male voter turnout exceed female voter turnout by 9.1%.

In a nutshell, women in Pakistan are given due rights constitutionally but practically they are far behind than men. They are considered lesser being since their birth. This attitudes grows over the time leading discriminatory treatment of women in all spheres of life ranging from their consent in marriage to their participation socio-economic development of society. The reports and statistics by both national and international think tanks reveal that even today women in Pakistan fall prey

to the stereotypical practices. There have been few notable improvements in the availability of equal chances to women as men but still there is a lot to be done in order to improve the socio-economic conditions of Pakistani society in general and women in particular. Hence, women in Pakistan require equal opportunities as men to thrive. Indian philosopher Swami Vivekananda asserted; "There is no chance for welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for the bird to fly on only one wing."
