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Topic: Pakistani women have the same chances as men.

Outline

1- Introduction

Thesis statement: Whether or not women in a society get same chances as men depends upon the measures taken by the state and the overall societal norms prevailing in the society. Having examined the efforts undertaken by the country, it is certainly said that women in Pakistan get the same chances as men. In order to get to the depth of the stance, a number of prevailing conditions in the country will be studied.

2- Pakistani men and women in the eyes of the state

⇒ Potential of both men and women was

realised by the founding father of the country even before the creation of Pakistan.

⇒ Demographic statistics urge the country to favour both the genders

3- How Pakistani women have the same chances as men

a- Pakistani women are protected by the Constitution of the country in the same

terms as those of women

→ Article 25(1) → Protection of both men and women of one of their fundamental rights

b- Pakistani women have a considerable voice in decision making in the country just like their men counterparts

→ the National Commission on the Status of Women → ensures women's involvement in policy-making

c- Various steps have been taken by the state to ensure the financial inclusion of women at par with the men segment of the country

→ National Financial Inclusion Strategy (2015)

→ Supreme Court's Banking on Equality Policy (2021)

d- Pakistani women have made significant strides in education in the country

→ UNESCO's report

Literacy rate of women → 35% in 2000
→ 57% in 2022

e- Pakistani women have got certain legal protections and initiatives in order to raise their status

→ Domestic Violence Act (2012)

→ Women in Distress and Destitute Ordinance (1987)

→ Protection of Women at Workplace Act (2010)

f- Pakistani women have same chances to join different institutions of the country.

(i) Armed forces → Lieutenant Nagar Johar

(ii) Judiciary → Justice Ayeshah Malik

(iii) Police → Sonia Shamroze (SP)

4- How Pakistani women are denied the same chances as men owing to cultural and societal norms

a- Pakistani women are discouraged when it comes to decision making in the country

→ Low or nonexistent representation of women in jirgas, panchayats, and religious matters.

b- Financial inclusion of Pakistani women is less as compared to men in the country.

→ Bank account holders

Men -

Women -

c- Pakistani women lag behind men when it comes to education.

⇒ HEC reports

⇒ UN ⇒ Girls make a bulk

of the 23 million out of school

children in the country

d- Pakistani women face problems in politics

whether as a candidate, as a voter, or as a

representative as compared to men in the country

e- Pakistani women have less voice or representation

in police, which exacerbates their plight, which

men have a considerable representation

⇒ United Nations Pakistan ⇒ less

than 2% of Pakistan's overall

police force consists of women.

5- In Pakistan, if there is a will and determination,

women will get same chances as men

a- Constitution, as a supreme document of

the states, ensures equal rights to women

⇒ Article 6 has been included

as high treason for those who do not

comply by it

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b- Efforts in the country have paved the path for the representation of women in politics and governance

→ Case studies of Fatima Jinnah and Benazir Bhutto

→ Representation of women as ministers in the previous cabinet (federal) of the country → Election Act 2017

c- The state has woken up to the reality that its economy will only flourish if both the genders are included in the system

→ International Labour Force's Report

→ Women participation has increased by 50 percent since 2000

→ Steps taken by the state for the financial inclusion of women

d- The literacy rate of women is increasing

→ Girls are encouraged to get education through conditional cash transfer programmes.

e- Women are free to join different services on both the open quota and their reserved quotas

→ Men → open quota

Women → Both open and reserved quota.

6- Conclusion

Essay

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"No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you," said the father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. As a man of observation and wisdom, the Quaid had in his mind both the teachings of Islam regarding women as well as the best practices of the prosperous world in the form of inclusion of their women in the national affairs and national institutions. It is also a depiction of the democratic thinking of the father of the nation.

The history of the country following the untimely demise of Quaid-e-Azam witnessed a number of developments when it comes to giving equal chances to both men and women. Today, after having examined the efforts undertaken by the country, it is certainly said that women in Pakistan get the same chances as men. In order to get to the depth of the stance, a number of prevailing conditions in the country will be studied.

To begin with, the Constitution of 1973 provides equal fundamental rights to both the genders. The women are given same chances of joining political decision-making processes. Also, various measures are there to formalise their share in the economy of the country. The literacy rate of Pakistan

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women has considerably improved in the recent decades, and they are on their way to catch up with their male counterparts. Catering to their complaint regarding gender-based violence, certain legal steps have also been undertaken. There are examples abound of Pakistani women in the key institutions (at key positions) of the country. ~~But,~~ according to certain segments of the state, the women are denied equal chances as men. It is the societal and cultural norms, which prevent them from making their way to decision making, financial inclusion, quality education, politics, and from joining the key institutions of the country. However, their claim does not stand tall as evidences show that the Pakistani women are properly represented in politics, economy, education, and the various institutions of the state.

Pakistan cannot afford neglecting the portion of population, in the form of women, who make almost half of the country. The potential and contribution of women, alongside the men, has been a hallmark of the country's history. How can one forget the role played by Muhtaram Fatima Jinnah who stood firmly with her brother in the noble cause of the creation of a Muslim

land. It was Ms. Jahan Begum, wife of the former prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan, who formed the All Pakistan Women Association (APWA) in order to ameliorate the plights of the refugee women at the time of the creation of Pakistan. Pakistan is also influenced by the best practices of other countries such as Bangladesh, that have arisen owing to the equal inclusion of their women in the machinery of the state. Hence, the advice of the founding father, the demographic reality, and the success stories of different countries have urged the state of Pakistan to value its women on equal footing as men.

As they say, only the realisation of a reality does not produce concrete outcomes. Keeping this in view, the country has taken various steps which show that Pakistani women get the same chances as men.

To begin with, the women as well as men are protected by the Constitution of 1973 of the country. The fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution apply equally to both the genders. As an example, Article 25(1) of the Constitution ensures free and compulsory early education for both the male and female segments.

This means that the women can perform any legal action as far as it is not contradictory with the principles set by the country. The lives and property of women are protected in their Constitution. Both men and women are free to express their feelings, to form associations, to move freely, to make assemblies, and so on. Whenever there is any issue, the Constitution comes into action and ensure free and fair settlement. Stringent actions are prescribed for those violating the principles. Hence, the Constitution gives sufficient chances to women and men to exercise their legal will in the state.

Similarly, Pakistani women have a considerable voice in decision making and politics in the country. The National Commission on the Status of Women ensures enough involvement of women in policy making. With this, the women have a huge say in the policy making and they are empowered to block any policy which is detrimental to their needs. Similarly, the women have been safeguarded and empowered by the state to take active part in politics. All the Constitutions, i.e., 1956, 1962, and 1973, have

given reserved seats to women in assemblies. According to the 1973 constitution, 60 seats have been reserved for women in the National Assembly of Pakistan. This is in addition to the fact that they can also contest election on general seats. With all these steps, the women are considered no more behind men in Pakistan.

Likewise, various steps have been taken by the state to ensure the fair financial inclusion of women at par with the men segment of the country. The National Financial Inclusion Strategy of 2015, and the Supreme Court's Banking on Equality Policy of 2021 are cases in point. The state has woken up to the grim reality that the financial inclusion of its citizens is already low. Very few hold their formal bank accounts. Their formal financial inclusion will enable the state to reap benefits from their presence. Historically, the women, especially those belonging to the rural areas, have always remained behind men in financial inclusion. They could not save their money properly

for educating their children and for other welfare projects. Now, the condition is improving with the introduction of the mentioned reforms.

When it comes to education, Pakistani women have made significant strides. Their literacy rate has considerably improved in the recent decades. According to a UNESCO's report, the literacy rate of women has improved from merely 35 percent in 2000 to 57 percent in 2022. All this has happened due to the magnificent opportunities provided to women. They have been constitutionally mandated to receive education. Also, with the rise of the modern technology, they have become self-aware and are on the quest of transforming themselves. According to some experts, even the access to mobile internet can be categorized among fundamental rights in modern times. Today, the women are excelling in various fields of education. Their secondary enrollment has also improved considerably. Hence, in today's Pakistan, women get the same chance as men in the field of modern education.

In another news, Pakistani women have got certain legal protection and initiatives in order to raise their status. If we look at history, there have been violence against women. Realising the grim situation, the government of Pakistan introduced Domestic Violence Bill or Act in 2009, Women in Distress and Destitute Ordinance in 1987, and Protection of Women at Workplace Act in 2010. All these measures have safeguarded them further from the encroachment of others in their affairs. They have also been given social roles, while traditionally they were limited only to domestic affairs. They share some social rights with men, which were otherwise improbable owing to the patriarchal nature of the country's society. Where men have physical or bodily power (to suppress women), the women have been provided with the power of the state in the form of the aforementioned acts. Hence, women get same protection as men in Pakistan.

In the same vein, Pakistani women have same chances to join different key institutions of the country, that too at key positions. There are examples abound of women serving in various positions in almost all the

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institutions of the country. A look at the armed forces reveals that a woman officer got promoted to the position of Lieutenant General, and the lady officer is no other than Nagar Johar. Similarly, when it comes to judiciary, Justice Ayesha Malik became the first woman justice of the Supreme Court. Recently, Justice Musarat Hilali of the Peshawar High Court got elevated to the Supreme Court of Pakistan. There are also officers in the police of Pakistan. SP Sonia Shamsoo (the DPO of Batagram) was recently nominated for a global police award. So all these things point to the fact that Pakistani women have got some chances as men.

However, according to certain segments of the country, the case is opposite. They argue that women are denied same chances as men. They justify their claims in the fact that they lag behind men in every sector.

In an order, their first claim is that Pakistani women are discouraged when it comes to decision or policy making in the country. Low or non-existent representation of women in jirgas, panchayats, etc, mutes their voices when it comes to their own

plights. The matters related to women are decided by men who do not actually know what the issues are. In some cultures prevailing in the country, the girls are transferred in order to settle disputes among rivals. With all this, they claim that they are always oppressed at the hands of men. They cannot materialize their dreams due to the patriarchal nature of the society. If they had enough decision- or policy-making voice, they would have gone away with their vulnerabilities.

Also, they claim that the financial inclusion of Pakistani women is less as compared to men in the country. They have not been brought into the formal financial system of the country. According to the

The women are not independent to run their own financial affairs. They do not have formal saving options in order to finance the needs of their children's education. Even the formally employed women do not have their own bank accounts. They are controlled and dominated

by their husbands, which is in contravention to the rights enshrined in the Constitution and various other acts enacted by the state.

Unless and until they are not fully included in formal finance, the women will keep on getting exploited at the hand of the men.

As long as the sector of education is concerned, they argue that Pakistani women lag behind men. It is manifested in various HEC reports, which point to the fact that women's participation in research is minimal. They also quote the reports of the United Nations that girls make a bulk of the 23 million out of school children in Pakistan. They criticize the system that discourages them from getting equal education as men. All these things are deeply rooted in the society, which discourages them from getting ample education in order to catch up with their male counterparts. As a result, the women are further exploited as they remain restricted to the four walls of their homes.

Similarly, according to them, Pakistani women do not get same chance as men. The women face challenges as a voter, as a candidate, and as a representative to voters, they have the issue of registering themselves. Most of the rural women do not have CNIC, to vote. As a candidate, the women face numerous challenges unique to men. They have economic and security issues for the campaigns. As a representative in the parliament, the women are not given same time to speak as given to men. The women are not allocated enough funds for development projects. After 9/11, the Mujahideen issued a risala or magazine in Miran Shah, North Waziristan, that threatened the women voters if they came out for the voting process. These and other related issues lead them to conclude that Pakistani women do not get same chances as men.

Least but not the least, they claim that Pakistani women have much less representation in politics, which exacerbates their plight. They argue that men have a considerable representation in politics. According to United Nations Pakistan, less than two

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percent of Pakistan overall police force consist of women. It is the women police officers who can do much effective communication to the women segment of the society. Women can easily share their concerns with a female officer than a male one. Researches show that women police officers are much effective when it comes to effective investigation. Hence their less participation mean they have less chance than men in such a service.

However, having said that, if there is a will and determination, women will get same chances as men. Various points are testament to the fact.

First and foremost, the Constitution, being the supreme document of the country, ensures equal rights to both men and women. Their rights are inviolable. They can refer to court of law in case of any violation of laws. It is evident by the fact that Article 6 has been included in high treason for those who do not comply by it. It mean if some one wants to suppress

women based on their genders, the courts of the country will ensure that the women are not the children of a lesser god. They have the same rights to do anything as long as it does not contradict with the principles laid out by the Constitution. Hence, the women have got the power of the Constitution or law, which is much powerful than any physical power.

Similarly, when it comes to the field of politics, efforts by the state have paved the path for the representation of women in politics and governance. Ms. Fatima Jinnah was an icon lady in initial politics of Pakistan. Subsequently, Ms. Benazir Bhutto became the first prime minister (lady) from any Islamic country. If that was not enough, Gender Concerns International is satisfied with the fact that the five ministers out of 34 in the previous cabinet of PM Shahbaz Sharif was a good omen for women in politics in Pakistan. Hence it is safely said that if there is a will, a woman will go a long way in discovering the new avenues of politics.

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Also in economic sectors the state has woken up to the reality that its economy will flourish if both the genders are included in the system. Acting upon the intention, significant improvement has been evident in the country. According to the International Labour Force Report, women participation has increased by 50% since 2000. Similarly, the country has consistently introduced various reforms in order to harness the true potential of the women in economic sector. The state can no more ignore its women's potential. Bangladesh has flourished due to the economic inclusion and empowerment of its women. They work side by side with the men. Pakistan is also progressing towards the same goal. Today, one can find a large number of women working in the sectors. However, there are certain challenges to be tackled by the government.

Most importantly, the literacy rate of women is increasing in the country. Girls are encouraged to get education. Article 25(A) of the Constitution binds both the boys and girls to get education and if

also binds the state to provide free education. Following this, a number of other initiatives have been taken by the country. The government has announced Conditional Cash Transfer Program to support children of lower class in their education. Ehsas program also caters to their needs and encourages them to get education. Owing to these steps, the women have got some chances in men's education, but the cultural and societal barrier should be done away with. Numerous examples point to the fact that there have been numerous girls from backward areas, which are excellent in education. Shazia Ishaq, a girl from the remote district of KPK, became the first ASP in police from Malakand Division after passing the CSS exam. All these facts show that women in Pakistan will flourish in education if they are hell bent to do so.

Last but not the least, women in Pakistan are free to join different services on both the open merit and seats reserved for them. This step encourage more and more girls to join the key

departments of the state. A case in point is that Special CSS examination was held recently by the Federal Public Service Commission to fill the vacant seats, mostly of the female candidates. The step was to bring the female on equal footing with male in almost all the sectors of the country. A large number of women are joining the armed forces, judiciary and police. A cursory look at the results announced by the various public service commissions of the country gives one pleasure, for women represent a considerable portion of the allocated candidates. All such things lead one to say that Pakistani women have got same chances as men when it comes to joining various services.

In summation, it is derived that Pakistan cannot afford ignoring any segment of the country, whether male or female. Pakistani women get same chances as men in almost all the sectors of the state. Pakistani women have gotten the power of the Constitution, which is much powerful than any physical power. Same is the case with politics where the women have opportunities to excel. In the economic sector, a considerable number of women are showing their presence. Also, the Pakistani

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woman's literacy rate has improved which is a testament to the fact that they are getting same chances in education as men. Last, but not the least, there is no dearth of Pakistani women in various prestigious services of the country.