

Is Gender Equality a Myth?

I What is Gender Equality

History of Gender Equality

II Gender Equality is a Myth

- i) Financial Dependence of women
- ii) Limited Job Opportunities for women
- iii) Government's Failure to curtail Domestic Violence
- iv) Failure of Governments' Policies to Achieve Gender Equality
- v) Less Investment in Women Empowerment
- vi) Low Enrollment at Girl's schools
- vii) Less women's representation in Decision Making Bodies
- viii) Gender Disparity in Technology
- ix) Patriarchal trends of society
- x) cultural Practices as Obstacle to Gender Equality
- xi) Wrong Interpretation of Religion

III Gender Equality is a Fact

- i) Women empowerment in west
- ii) Increasing Women Representation in Politics

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iii) Article 25(2) of Constitution of

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Persons known Gender Equality

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iv) Gender Equality is still nothing more than a Dream

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i) Women are better off - but still

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still far from being equal with men

ii) Women are still lagging behind in Politics

iii) Article 25(2) exists in Theory, but not in Practice

v) Conclusion

Nelson Mandela said, "Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all kinds of oppression." Since ancient times, women have been sidelined in society. They are considered as inferior creature. Women have faced oppression in different forms throughout human history. To break the chain of oppression, women have struggled hard. Even in modern times, women are unable to stand equal to men in every field of life. Many factors are preventing gender equality to be fully achieved. Lack of efforts on Government side and financial dependence of women are obstacles to gender equality. Failure of Government's policies and less investment in women empowerment are widening gender gap. Gender gap is also increasing owing to less women representation in decision making bodies. Those who believe that gender equality is a fact

cite the women empowerment in west and increasing women representation in Politics. The reality is ~~women~~ gender equality is still a myth. Today women are in better condition, but ^{in west} still far from competing with men.

In Politics, women are far behind than men. Hence, it is obvious that Gender Equality is still a myth.

Financial dependence of women is a big challenge to gender equality. Women make more than half of world's population. Gender equality cannot be achieved without women participation. In Pakistan majority of women do not work out of home. Most of them are financially dependent on male members of family. According to data released by UN women, women and girls aged 10+ spend 18.8% of their time on unpaid domestic

Date: / /20

Day: _____

work, compared to 1.8% spend by men. This proves that gender equality is a myth.

Limited opportunities for women in work force results in gender inequality. Women participation is crucial for gender equality.

In Pakistan, there are less opportunities for women as well as they are not encouraged to find work outside.

Gender gap is widening in every sphere of life. According to Economic participation 2020 report, women's participation in the labor force stands at 24.9% compared to 75.1% for men. This data proves that gender equality is still a myth.

Domestic violence is an obstacle in the way of gender equality.

Presence of domestic violence indicates vulnerability of women. Most of the women are unable to report

Such cases due to family pressure. Domestic violence is prevalent in society in the form of early marriages, honor killing and physical assault. According to Human Rights Watch, approximately 1000 women are killed every year in the name of honor in Pakistan. Hence it can be said that gender equality is a myth.

Another cause of gender inequality is failure of government's policies. Government of Pakistan is unable to implement devised policies effectively. There is negligence on the part of decision making bodies. Gender Gap Index 2021 shows Pakistan ranked 153 out of 156 countries, women are far behind men in social, economic and political circle. Women's share of total income is 18.2% compared to 81.7% for men.

This data reveals that Government of Pakistan policies are un-effective to achieve gender equality. It shows that gender equality is still a myth.

Another hindrance to achieve gender equality is less investment in women empowerment. Without empowering women, gender equality will remain a dream. The Government of Pakistan has launched several initiative to empower women, including the National Policy of Development and Empowerment in 2002. The aim of this initiative was to empower women socially, economically and politically. Despite these efforts, the country ^{still} ranks low in term of women empowerment.

There is a lack of investment from Government. Hence, it can be said that gender equality is a myth.

Low enrollment in girls' educational institute is another obstacle to achieve gender equality. Women in Pakistan face many problems in term of education. These problems include lack of infrastructure, unsafe routes, distant educational institutes as well as many cultural barriers. Women with ~~(Most of w)~~ restricted access to education are unable to compete with men. Girl's enrollment in primary education is 74.4%, compared to 75.1% for men. It proves, gender equality is still non-existent.

Women are less represented in decision making bodies. Women have very little say in the Government. They are far behind in politics than man. Owing to this, most of of women are voiceless even in modern society. More than half of world's population

Date: 1/20

Day: _____

is women. These women are governed by men. "Out of 193 countries, only 15 countries head of state are women". Hence, it can be said that gender equality is a myth.

Gender disparity in Technology is another reason of gender inequality. Most of the women in third world countries do not have access to android mobiles, women are away from modern technology, so they are unable to learn new skills. Global market is changing with each passing day. These un-skilled women are unable to find any job. In Amazon, women account for 27% of managers worldwide. Hence, it can be said that gender equality is a myth.

Patriarchal Society leads to gender inequality.

Patriarchy is a deep-rooted disease in modern society. This prevents progress of women. Modern societies have inherited patriarchal trends from the ancient forefathers. As Aristotle said, the relation of male to female is by nature a relation of superior to inferior and ruler to ruled. These patriarchal thoughts prove gender equality as a myth.

Wrong cultural practices are also an obstacle to gender equality. Many wrong norms are prevalent in our society including son preference, gender discrimination, restricted women's mobility and restrictions on the choice of clothing, marriage and education. Owing to these norms, women face many problems. Those who challenge these norms are often stigmatized. They have to face social exclusion and violence. A 2020 report by the Asia Foundation noted that 70% of

Women reported facing restrictions on their choice of clothing, marriage and education due to cultural norms. Hence it can be said that gender equality is a myth.

Gender inequality is also the result of wrong interpretation of religion. Wrong interpretation of religion is used by oppressors to harm others. Religion is used as a cover to hide the wrong doings of perpetrators. Women in our society are easy victim to such cruel behaviors. A 2019 study by the National Commission on the status of women found that religious interpretations are used to justify restrictions on women's mobility, education and employment. It proves that gender equality is a myth.

On the contrary, those who believe that gender equality is a fact suggest women empowerment in the west. The west has made significant efforts in empowering women. Women in west were granted right to vote in early 20th century. They are able to participate in political process. Women in west were granted right to education, health, workplace equality, legal protections, reproductive rights and right to divorce. Laws and policies are designed to empower women. This indicates that gender equality is a fact.

The second argument cited in favour of gender equality is women representation in politics. Women representation in decision making bodies is increasing. Women leaders are promoting the slogan of gender equality. Women are able to get higher positions.

Date: / / 20

Day:

at executive and other senior-level. Political leaders like Angela Merkel, Kamala Harris and Jacinda Ardern, Business leaders like Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors and Sheryl Sandberg, CEO of Facebook demonstrate women empowerment.

Article 25(2)

of the Pakistan Constitution ensures gender equality. This article provides equal rights to women in all aspects of life. Article 25(2) ensures women's protection from all kind of exploitation including domestic violence, sexual harassment, trafficking and protection from discrimination.

The state is required to take effective measures to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. It aims to enable women to participate fully in social, economic and political spheres.

Although effective measures are taken to empower women and gender equality, but gender equality in true sense is still a dream. Women are in better condition ^{in most} today.

They are far from being equal with men. Women still earn less than men and face discrimination as well as harassment at work place. In the EU, women earn 14.1% less than men on average (Eurostat, 2022). Western societies are still biased about women. In the US, 63% of women have experienced gender bias at work. This proves that gender equality is a myth.

Gender equality is a myth is also proved by underrepresentation of women in politics. Women are far behind in politics than men. Most of the senior positions are occupied by men. Owing to underrepresentation

Date: / /20

Day:

women's voice is less heard. In the US, women hold 27% of seats in Congress (Center for American Women and Politics, 2022). Most of the men are biased about women leadership.

A 2021 survey by the Pew research center found that 55% of Pakistani men believe that men are better political leader than women. This shows the fancy of gender equality.

Although article

25(2) ensures equal right to women but it lacks in practical implementation.

The government of Pakistan is failed to take effective steps in this regard. Women are still sidelined in Pakistani society. There are many stereotypes associated with women. They are far behind in social, political and economic sphere. Gender based violence, discrimination against women, economic disparities, cultural and religious misconceptions

have widened gap between both genders.

To sum up, it can be concluded that gender equality is a myth. Although, those who believe in the existence of gender equality suggest the empowered women of west as a case study. They are of view that increasing women representation and article 25(2) of the constitution of Pakistan are sign of women empowerment. In reality this is not true. As a matter of fact, women are still unequal to men in developed societies. They are lagging behind in politics, with few women as a head of state out of 193 countries. The Government of Pakistan also failed to implement article 25(2) in true sense. Gender equality still remains a myth owing to underrepresentation of women. Patriarchal trends and

Date: ___/___/20

Day: _____

wrong cultural norms are preventing women from achieving gender equality.

In Pakistani society wrong interpretation of religion also hinders progress of women. All these factors proves gender equality to be a myth.

To achieve gender equality is a challenge for modern societies. By implementing policies effectively this dream can be fulfilled.