

TOPIC:-

Gender Equality: Myth or Reality

OUTLINE:-

A. Introduction

B. Gender Equality is Not a Reality but a Myth:

i) Gender discrimination in educational attainment

ii) Gender discrimination in representation in legislatures

iii) Low participation of women and other genders in voting processes

iv) Uneven employment opportunities for different genders

v) Disproportionate system of wages for jobs

vi) Unequal distribution in inheritance among different genders

vii) Menace of gender-based violence at all levels (private and public)

viii) Unequal participation of genders in sports

ix) Lack of integration of different

genders in development policies and processes

(x) Societal expectations and stereotypes about different genders

xi) Gender gaps in access to justice and legal aid

c. Conclusion

ESSAY:-

Gender Equality is one of the most debated and controversial topics of all times. From boardrooms to classrooms, voices everywhere advocate for a fair and level playing field ^{for all genders.} Despite progress in recent years, in the form of greater number of women in leadership roles, more workplace rights and increased awareness about gender bias, whether gender equality is a myth or reality remains debatable. It is because deep-rooted gender inequalities still persist, challenging the idea that world has reached the stage of gender equality. Gender Equality, for UNICEF, means that women, men, girls and boys must enjoy equal rights, resources, opportunities and protections. It implies that the interests, needs, and priorities of both men and women are taken into consideration. However, a cursory glance at the overall condition of ^{women and} ^(including LGBTQ+) different genders [↑] reveals that women and some other genders are still disad-

vantaged, discriminated and suppressed, owing to ^{deeply} different noted gender stereotypes.

Gender equality has still not taken the form of reality as discrimination exists in educational attainment. Also, this discrimination is visible in the context of representation in legislature. Moreover, there is a low participation of women and other genders in voting processes. Another aspect that shows gender inequality is the availability of uneven employment opportunities for all genders. Adding ^{insult} fuel to injury, the wages for jobs are also disproportionate for different genders. Additionally, the distribution in inheritance is unequal. Therefore, despite global efforts and progress towards gender equality, significant gender disparities persist. Due to this, gender equality is not a reality but a myth.

To begin with, gender equality is not a reality but a myth because of gender discrimination in educational attainment. Education is a fundamental human right, but in most developing

and under-developed countries, this right is not equally provided to all genders. Due to deep-rooted gender stereotypes, people favor the education of their sons over daughters because the latter are going to get married and leave the home. Also, women are generally equated with "honor of family" due to which families discourage sending them to schools. For instance, in a developing country like Pakistan, female literacy rate is 52%. lagging far behind men i.e., 72%, as stated by World Bank. Hence, gender equality is a myth due to unequal educational opportunities for different genders.

Apart from this, gender equality is a myth as there is gender discrimination in representation in legislatures. Due to the patriarchal mindset, women are not considered eligible of participating in politics and hold leadership positions. It is thought that women are "emotional beings" and cannot handle public affairs. Also, with exception of

a few North American and European countries, genders like Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) are almost invisible from political representation. Globally, representation of women in parliaments stands at 27 percent and parity is not expected to be achieved for another 39 years, as stated by U.N. Women. Hence, gender equality is not a reality but a myth due to the unequal representation of different genders in legislatures.

Moreover, the low participation of women and other genders in voting processes shows that gender equality is a myth. Right to vote is the fundamental right of every individual, but despite being entitled to this right, most women do not exercise it. It is because ^{of} lack of awareness about political rights and illiteracy among women and other neglected genders.

Due to patriarchy, most women are either not allowed to ^{cast} vote or forced to follow their husband's or father's

political inclination. According to International Growth Centre, social, cultural and economic factors have kept an estimated 3.5 million Pakistani women out of the voter rolls in February, 2024 General Elections. Thus, women and genders like transgender, gays and bisexual tend to vote at lower rates, which shows that gender equality is a myth.

Another aspect that shows gender equality is a myth is the uneven employment opportunities for different genders. In order to get better outputs, the input and contributions of both men and women ⁱⁿ the ^{workforce} ~~workplace~~ is needed. However, women have extremely limited work opportunities, and the "cult of domesticity" reinforces that women's place is supposed to be at home. Moreover, due to ^{societal} stigmatization LGBTQ+ individuals are not given jobs in both private and public sector.

According to World Bank, the global labor force participation rate for women

is just over 50%, compared to for men. Women are less likely to work in formal employment. Therefore, the disparities in employment opportunities reveals that gender equality is not a reality but a myth.

In addition, gender equality is a myth because of the disproportionate system of wages for different genders. Most commonly, women are paid less for the same job and amount of work as that of men.

Employers may, knowingly or unknowingly, offer women lower starting salaries or overlook them for high-paying roles. Despite progress, members of LGBTQ+ continue to face disparities in income and are paid less than the average worker. According to the PEW research report, women are paid twenty-five percent less than men for the same amount of work.

Hence, the disproportionate system of wages for different genders shows that gender equality is a myth.

Also, the unequal distribution of inheritance among different genders manifests that gender equality is a myth. This prevents them from enjoying their due share in their ancestors' wealth and property. In patriarchal societies, inheritance systems were designed in such a manner that men hold primary control over family assets. This was done to keep wealth within a single family line, passed from father to son. Even when laws grant women equal inheritance rights, they face family pressure and backlash for claiming their share. In fact, as per the Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18, 97% of women across Pakistan did not inherit land or a house. Thus, gender equality is not a reality but a myth as there is an inappropriate system for distribution of inheritance.

Apart from this, the menace of gender-based violence at all levels, private as well as public, shows that

gender equality is a myth. In all the corners of world, gender-based violence, which includes physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence, is prevalent. This violence is rooted in the unequal power relationship between different genders, more specifically, men and women. Further, not only women but transgenders, gays, and bisexuals are vulnerable to all forms of violence, both in private and public sphere. According to National Institute of Health (NIH), as many as one in four women are victims of domestic violence in America. Therefore, ^{even} a developed country like America is not free from the menace of gender-based violence.

Furthermore, the unequal participation of different genders in sports shows that gender equality is not a reality but a myth. Sports are generally perceived as masculine activities, leading to the belief that women are less suited for these activities.

LGBTQ+ athletes experience hostility in sports environment, where homophobic and transphobic attitudes are prevalent.

Also, women's sports receive less funding, media coverage and sponsorship as compared to men's sports. For instance, Mario Patino, an athlete, has female genitalia. However, her sex chromosomes (XY) are those of a man. She was barred from competing in sports. Therefore, the discrimination among genders in sports makes it clear that gender equality is a myth.

By the same token, lack of integration of different genders in development policies and process highlights that gender equality is a myth. Feminist critique on modernization theory ^{explains} that women's access to new productive opportunities and technologies remains constrained. In fact, modernization decreased economic opportunities for women, while enhancing them for ~~women~~ ^{men}. Also, the prejudice and preconceived notions about women

Continued to prevail despite modernization around the world. The U.N. Declaration that marks every 10 years of development stated that the first development decade was devoid of any specific reference to women. Hence, the exclusion and less emphasis of women in development policies and processes proves that gender equality is not a reality.

Similarly, societal expectations and stereotypes about different genders highlights that gender equality is a myth. Despite the modernization and advancement of world, all genders are subdued by societal traditions, cultures, norms and values. Women's sphere of influence is still limited to homes and families. On the other hand, men still have to fulfill their gender role as breadwinners of the family.

The Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI) Report (2023) by UNDP reveals that there is no improvement in biases against women in a decade, with

9 out of 10 men and women worldwide still holding such biases today. Thus, gender equality is a myth on account of prevailing stereotypes about different genders.

Last but not the least, gender gaps in access to justice and legal aid show that gender equality is a myth. There are various systematic barriers and biases that hinder all genders from obtaining fair treatment in legal systems. Cultural and social norms, family pressure, fear of stigmatization, financial constraints and lack of legal literacy prevents women from reporting crimes, specially domestic violence and sexual assault. Furthermore, if the perpetrator is a powerful person, victims face "victim-blaming", unnecessary delays and dismissal of cases. The Women's Budget Group (WBG) conducted a survey in 2023 revealing that 85 percent of respondents said vulnerable women are unable to access civil legal aid. Therefore, unequal access to justice

and legal aid by different genders reveals that gender equality is a myth.

In a nutshell, although efforts have been made worldwide to establish equality among all genders, it is still a distant dream. Hence gender equality is a myth. It has still taken the form of reality.

There exists gender discrimination in educational attainment and employment opportunities. Also, there are gender gaps in representation in legislature and participation in electoral processes.

Adding insult to injury, gender-based violence is prevalent in almost all parts of the world, be it sexual, physical, emotional or economic violence. Also, there is an equal

participation of different genders in sports. In the same manner, there is a lack of integration of different genders in development policies and processes. Despite modernization and advancement, societal expectations and stereotypes about different

Genders still remain unshaken and unchanged. Lastly, there are gender gaps in access to justice and legal aid. Although it seems that gender equality, even in the 21st century, is an elusive dream, it is not impossible and unachievable. Some gradual steps and measures taken in this regard are showing positive results, but more needs to be done in this regard.

In this way, the day will not be far when this world will benefit and honor all genders on equal scale.