

Essay

Universal Human Equality is Utopic

Outline

I. Introduction

Universal human equality does not exist. Various social, economic, political and religious parameters create a divide that renders one unequal to another.

II. Understanding Universal Human Equality

III. Universal Human Equality Does Not Exist

A. The concept of superiority is deeply engraved in many places

Example: 'Bhadari' system, clan

superiority in parts of South Asia

(Anatol Lieven's view on Pakistan)

B. The subaltern ethnic minorities and the question of universal human equality

Example: Inuits of Denmark

C. Gender equality is a myth

: case study: It will take

another 150 years to close

the global gender gap

(Oxford University report)

case study: Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan

D. A part of the world wastes

food, another sleeps hungry

Evidence: 1.3 billion tonnes

of food is wasted annually,

735 million go hungry (WEF)

E. The astounding economic divide

between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'

Evidence: 1% of world

population owns 50% of

global wealth

F. Not everyone can become a

~~politician~~ politician: the constraints

of campaigning

G. The direct link between high

Human Development Index and

development of countries

Evidence: HDI of Pakistan is

0.54 while that of US is 0.927 (UNDP)

H. The subjugated religious minorities and their deferred rights

case study: Gaza Muslims

case study: Rohingya Muslims

I. The divisions within a religion

refuses many ^{people} human equality

case study: The Untouchable Hindus

case study: Orthodox versus Protestant Christians

IV. Theorists Explaining Universal Human Inequality

A. The World System Theory

propose that inequality is organic and good for the world

proponent: Wallerstein

B. The inequality is an artificial construct, maintained by the

wealthy: A Marxist perspective

proponent: Karl Marx

V. Will Universal Human Equality Ever Be A Reality?

VI. Conclusion

As the Gazans look at the rubble where once their houses stood, as the son of a labourer watches parents drop their children to school, as a Dalit Hindu prays far from the temple yearning to go there in another life, and as a homeless scavenges through the garbage in hopes of finding some food, universal human equality appears far from reality. The stark contrast between social, economic, political and religious statuses of various groups and people among these groups create a gulf between humans. This divide testifies that humans are not equal everywhere. Socially, the concept of sytration and racism runs deep in various parts of the world. Ethnic minorities and the subaltern genders face persistent discrimination. The economic differences also make people unequal. Where many waste food and lead an extravagant life, many others struggle to make ends meet. The contrast between wealth possession and limited access to politics is a testimony but universal human

equality is a myth. Similarly, inter- and intrareligious differences allocate differing positions for different people. These divisions have been explained by theorists. Where ones like Wallestein contend that the division is organic, Karl Marx puts that the divide is intentional. Nonetheless, the equality is utopic for time being at least. The intersectionality of social, economic, political and religious parameters create a divide that clearly testifies that universal human equality does not exist.

The concept of human equality has been theorised by various social, religious and legal entities. It postulates and humans around the world are equal. No discrimination based on gender, caste, creed, religion or any other factor is to be done. Anyone capable of a position must get their. Jean Jacques Rousseau in his 'The Social Contract' proposes the idea of political equality. Most of the religions, Islam in particular sternly

propose that no man is superior over another. Modern constitutions including that of Pakistan elucidate human equality through equal opportunities. Nonetheless, as valid as the need of human equality may be, practice says otherwise. Universal human equality should exist, but it does not.

Beginning with the social aspect of human inequality, the concept of stratification is highly prevalent in many parts of the world. Where many believe the differences based on castes, creed and race are long gone, their practice in many regions, particularly in the developing regions is strongly present. The caste system or 'biradari' system as in South Asia creates a divide within a single community. As Anand Lian in his book 'Pakistan: A Hard Country' notes, the division is deeply engraved in Pakistani society. The bond creates not only solidarity

but also inclination towards one's own clan. Thus, begins a series of differences that culminates into tribal hierarchies creating differences among and within different communities.

In the same vein, the existence of subaltern ethnic minorities question the existence of universal human equality. Both history and present global setup brim with instances where the minorities are subjugated. As the smaller segments they suffer in the hands of the majority which various philosophers and scientists of thought call tyranny of the majority. Instances of minority subjugation are multiple. They face discrimination in the hands of the larger segment of society. In this respect, the Inuits of Denmark who reside in Greenland often face intolerance in the hands of Danish Authority. They are forced to assimilate with the modern European culture and asked to give away to multiple Inuit

practices. The inequality of one community defers the idea of universal human equality.

Gender inequality is another area that undermines this concept of global equality. The discrimination that one faces due to one's gender is deemed as gender inequality. This practice is prevalent not only in the underdeveloped or developing countries but also in highly advanced states. No state, as the Global Gender Gap Index of 2024 showed that women are equal to men.

Similarly, the gender apartheid in Afghanistan is another concerning issue regarding human equality. The women in the Taliban-ruled country are refused even the basic right to education. Their presence is barred from public spaces and they are limited to their homes only. When the women who comprise half of the global population, when are refused equality, how can global

human equality be a reality?

Building on this, the world does not have people with equal or even equitable economic resources.

Where a part of the world wastes food and lead an extravagant life, another struggles to sleep with hunger.

As a report by World Economic Forum highlighted that about 1.3 billion tonnes of food is wasted annually. Simultaneously, 735 million go hungry. The food that is wasted can feed 1.3 meals a day to half of Africa.

Such a contrast in the status of people is heartbreaking. The gulf between those who have access to basic amenities and those who do not is wide. The difference, thus, testifies that humans around the world are anything but equal.

Additionally, the access to political arena, around the world is also limited. Rooted in economic grounds

again, not everyone can afford to reach to those quarters. "The history of mankind is ~~hence~~ the history of class struggle," said Karl Marx. Thus, in the same line, if one cannot afford to contest elections, that is, the take up the cost of campaigning, one will be unable to contest in short. This constraint is further aggravated by caste system in many parochial societies.

Additionally, the Global North-South divide is a clear illustration of human inequality. The Global North, which comprises developed countries of Europe and North America have better Human Development Index (HDI) as compared to the Global South. Human Development Index refers to the cumulative living standard of a particular country. The index as proposed by Dr Mahbub ul Haq along with United Nations, varies from country to country. For

Instance, The HDI of United States is 0.927 while that of Pakistan is 0.54. This contrast is not just quantitative; it is a qualitative analysis of the living standards of these countries. Thus, as the indices indicate difference of people as one traverses from North to South, thereby exposing the global human inequality.

Human inequality extends to religious domain as well. Like the ethnic subalterns, religious minorities also face biasness due to the belief system. They are often persecuted and even killed only for believing in the god that they do. of the recent examples are the Muslims of Gaza. The Truce of January 19, 2025 comes after years of persecution and over ~~4000~~ days of direct assault. With over 47,000 Palestinians dead by the time of writing, the number of only tells the appalling story of human expression. Moreover, the

Rohingyan Muslims, the Muslims of Chechnya, and even Bosnia tell the miseries of humans due to few brutal leaders. Were humans equal, one would not have been weaker and another stronger.

Intra-religious disparity is another testimony to human differences around the world. Either caste or sectarian divide manifest this discrimination.

The idea of lower caste within religions like Hinduism are still alive. The Untouchables or the Dalit as they say are limited to their small shell. They cannot eat in the same dish as other caste, sit at the same level or even enter the temple, the very place where they call their gods. Similarly, sectarian divide within a religion gives more inequality. For instance, the Orthodox Christians believe that they are on the right way. This has culminated into various sectarian wars in the history. This difference,

which exists till date negates the notion of human equality around the world.

As prevalent as the practice of inequality is, theorists have tried to explain this divide. The World System Theory as proposed by Wallerstein postulates that the global divide is natural and organic. The world which is divided betw. among core, periphery and semi-periphery junctions due to the coexistence and correlation between the blocs. The core comprises the wealthy and developed nations. These countries have a high Human Development Index and the people live with a high living standard. The semi-periphery are relatively less developed, but are with higher HDI than periphery. The core depends on the others for raw materials and labour, the other two look forward in hopes of manufactured goods. This divide maintains a balance, for if everyone was equal, who would do

the to labour.

Karl Marx, although acknowledged the prevailing inequalities, proposed that the inequality was an artificial construct. The theory by the marxist scientist suggests that this divide has been intentionally constructed and maintained by the bourgeoisie or the 'haves' against the worker class or the 'have-nots'. The wealthy segment of the society exploits the proletariat in order to increase their wealth. This divide, the marx says, keeps on growing with the 'haves' greedy of increasing their economic position at the cost of further subjugation of the working class. Although the cycle of exploitation keeps on repeating, he believes it will end one day that would mark the end of history that is class struggle. The end has not come, thereby, the economic divide continues to exist.

With the universal human equality continuing to remain a elusive dream, a question arises whether this dream will ever become a reality? The answer to this may not be that simple. Humans are a complex and an unpredictable creatures. They have, in past, gone against all odds and achieved the unimaginable. Who ^{would have} thought the the world voyage that took months and even years about one and a half century ago can now be completed in a matter of minutes. Similarly, the actions of people have surprised many around the world either through barbarism like Netanyahu or idealism of many others. ~~At~~ In the same vein, achieving human equality is not completely beyond reach. People have ended various unfavorable trends, ending inequality may also follow the lead.

To conclude, universal human inequality is indeed utopic. Instances of

social, economic, political and religious divide substantiate the existence of human inequality and not the other way around. From the inclination of people to a particular clan to forced assimilation of ethnic minorities, from gender inequality to economic disparities, and from political bias to religious discrimination, universal human equality is something but true. As Wallerstein and Marx try to explain why the differences exist, people around the world receive differing treatment based on their socio-economic status resulting from their social, economic, political and religious inclinations. Universal human equality may become reality someday; however, at present, it is nothing more than an inaccessible dream.