

Is Gender Equality a Myth?

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Men and women, originally mutually reinforcing binaries, have deteriorated into elements of a hostile competition. This competition clearly reflects signs of domination by men over women. Historically, gender roles complemented each other as it was essential for survival. Simultaneously, these roles did not exhibit rigidity. Men having the role of hunters did not stick to hunting only, ~~and~~ but also performed the function of gathering and child rearing. Similarly, women being predominately gatherers ^{and gathering} were capable of hunting. If hunting ^{and gathering} are correlated with securing food supply, a similar trend of mutual co-operation is reflected across the animal kingdom. As mankind evolved so did the gender roles and power dynamics. With agricultural revolution static societies emerged laying down the foundation of rigid gender roles. With further progress, the distinction between public and private grew further and so did the distinction between the rights of men and women. With

women confined to the private sphere, their asset ownership was also compromised. Lesser resource ownership translated into lesser agency in decision making. Biological differences further exacerbated this situation, greatly shifting power dynamics. The consciousness of power disparity led to a desire for power retention by men which led to establishment of system of patriarchy. Patriarchy extended into all domains of human life and produced a unique form of oppression against women. Only in last few centuries have a consciousness against patriarchy developed and called for gender equality. Multiple measures to achieve gender equality have been taken, however, they have been inadequate. The disparity in social status, resource ownership, nutritional availability, health apparatus availability, decision making, security and climate implications, and crime affectedness reflect a persistent gap in gender equality rendering it nothing more than a myth.

A persistent disparity exists in social status of men and women across globe. It initiates from

at the individual level i.e. consciousness of inferiority and vulnerability and extends upto higher levels of a society. These higher social levels further reinforce this disparity through the superstructure of patriarchy. Furthermore, contemporary social set-ups reflect social disparity through less inclusivity in decision making - of women - from nuclear family upto higher levels of social strata. Additionally, this trend reinforces women's status as a "second sex" across society, as identified by Simone de Beauvoir, a prominent Feminist scholar of twentieth century.

Social disparity is accompanied by economic disparity. Women across world show a significant lag in asset ownership. Furthermore, wage gap between men and women is also noticeable across multiple societies. Additionally the socially internalized notion of man being the breadwinner deals a blow to the decision making agency of women, even if she earns more than the man. According to the United Nations Developmental Program (UNDP), women work twice the working hours as men but earn a tenth of men. Furthermore, the asset ownership stands below a hundredth; this trend is global in scope.

and distributes the entire human population by half.

Economic ownership disparity is followed by nutritional disparity across both sexes. Asset ownership commands nutritional ownership and this is supplemented by power dynamics; Men being awarded higher social role claim higher share in food supply and biological differences supplement this notion. This trend has been visible from centuries. Barter and Russel in "History of Western Philosophy" has highlighted the difference in food allocated to Spartan men and women by nearly a half. In contemporary times this disparity is reflected in Women Empowerment Index (WEI). Nutritional parity - taken as an indicator of empowerment - between men and women: was visible across the world in ^a UNDP report (2023) which showed a stark ten per cent gap.

Nutritional disparity translates into health disparity. However, nutrition induced health issues in women are also accompanied by overall unavailability of health services across states such as Afghanistan, or inadequately available across most of the regions of the world. As far as nutritional imbalance

and its adverse affects on ~~mother~~ women is concerned, ^athirty percent of women across world suffer from anemia while the percentage of men suffering from anemia stands at around fifteen percent. Anemia is caused by iron deficiency. Similarly, lack of health services have also been quite visible across many states in under-developed world. Rooted in economic conditions ~~the~~ patriarchal norms women have suffered in child birth or in some accident. Recently, an Earthquake in Afghanistan left most of women affectees dead due to lack of female doctors, and subsequent reluctance of families to expose their women to male staff.

Technological uplift of the world has not benefitted women as it has men. A persistent inequality exists in availability of technology, ownership and usage between men and women. Rooted in socio-economic reasons, it encompasses the gadgets of daily usage such as kitchen appliances, vacuum cleaners and washing machines, and devices of communication as well. This technological disparity renders women dependant and sub-ordinate to men, ~~thereby~~ thus reinforcing

patriarchy. According to 2024 report of World Bank, ^{by women} percentage of technology ownership across the world remained as low as thirty four percent. Furthermore the tech-literacy remained to thirty percent. The trend varied across regions with global North showing a higher percentage and global South showing ~~the~~ quite a low score.

Another visible trend in gender inequality is the nature of jobs owing to social and economic reasons as well. Women across the world reflect a higher employment in pink collar jobs. This attitude is rooted in the perception of women being the care givers and nurturers. According to Project HOPE, the percentage of women in healthcare professions remained with highest being in nursing i.e. 77% and lowest being in surgery i.e. 6-11% where men stood upto ninety percent ^{surgical} of staff. On the otherhand the professions which command a perception of ruggedness and strength minimal women employment. Oil rigs in the north sea offer a handsome salary but have almost no woman employees.

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Another similar ~~disparity~~ disparity is visible in private institutions and enterprise. Not only women remain low at higher positions or at ownerships but also are limited to departments such as sales. Apart from this the private enterprise reflects exploitative trends from work place harassment to low wages. According to the data provided by Forbes (2015) there are only 406 female billionaires across the world out of 3028. Furthermore, percentage of CEOs across worlds remains as low as nineteen percent in 2024. This is a reflection of deep rooted gender norms, and stands a precursor to many other ~~more~~ systems of inequality and exploitation of women.

Educational disparity is not only a reflection of gender inequality but also leads to a number of dire consequences. The educational disparity is visible in educational availability comparison, enrollment percentage, effective utilization, relative contribution to episteme and distribution of female students across different fields. In most of the world opportunities of

education are differently available to both men and women. The former have a greater opportunity as compared to the latter, owing to a number of socio-cultural reasons. The percentage of ability¹ further declined with enrollment and dropout rates. The similar socio-cultural elements influence the enrollment in STEM fields as well as their employment. Furthermore, a relative absence of women from episteme is quite visible. Afghanistan under the Taliban regime shows such trend where women ~~are~~ are not only barred from education but also women writers are shamed, with their writing banned.

Women are mostly victims of crimes of coercion. These include honor killings, rapes, domestic violence and cyber harassment. Apart from this they are generally perceived as easy targets for theft, robbery and murder. As far as the threats of coercion are concerned, a notion of coercive patriarchy is the most significant. Honor killings, rapes, domestic violence and cyber-bullying are the acts of coercion perceived by ^{perpetrating} men as legitimate ways to keep the dissenting women in check. This dissene

may encompass a number of phenomenon ~~of~~ ranging from proposal rejection, career pursuit, marriage by choice or even a minor argument between the perpetrator and the victim. Globally, almost 5,000 women are murdered on the name of honor everyday worldwide - according to The UNFPA. Similarly, 370 million women ^{have} been raped globally according to a UNICEF report of 2024. The UNICEF has reported around 650 million cyber harassment incidents from bullying to revenge porn world wide. Other crimes include acid attacks and forced marriages. Crimes against women are further exacerbated by ^{a lag in} law enforcement and criminal justice system.

Another indicator of gender inequality is relative distribution of administrative roles. Across the world women inclusivity in administrative roles remains quite low. It increases in developed states and reduces in the underdeveloped world. Furthermore, hard areas of administration remain sufficiently short of women. If India and Pakistan are considered, the female officers from Pakistan Administrative Services (PAS), and Indian Administrative Services (IAS) are not appointed in

volatile regions of Balochistan and Indian illegally Occupied Kashmir (IIOK). Though, preventive and precautionary in nature, it has dire consequences for the general population of that region, as traditional conservative societies - which mostly inhabit regions of conflict - hesitate in approaching male staff in issues relating women.

Law enforcement structures and judiciary also reflects similar trends of gender disparity. Not only does the law enforcement agencies reflect a disparity in work force, but also remain ill equipped in dealing with gender specific issues. Globally ninety percent of rape cases remain unreported and ninety nine percent (99%) of rape cases remain short of conviction.

This is rooted in both internalized patriarchy within the institutions responsible for law enforcement as well as inadequate apparatus for evidence collection. Judiciary suffers from some issues, firstly there is less female staff secondly there is either lack of evidence or loopholes in the law in women specific crimes.

Conflicts also effect women differently. Female prisoners of war across the world had been treated as exploits of war. With men either mured in the war or after it, women were mostly taken as war captives and were subjected to sexual assault.

identifies post-conflict rapes and torture as state exhibiting co-ercive patriarchy. Aimed at eliminating a nation, rapes on a mass scale, as perpetrated by the government are mostly targetted at women. This has happened historically and continues till date.

According to Oxford Law Blog, 17,178 women were raped in Rohingya by forces of Myanmar in 2017 crisis. Similarly, around 109 women in ~~the~~ Palestine were sexually assaulted by ~~the~~ Israeli soldiers since 2023.

Apart from conflict, climate disasters also affect women differently. Aspects of conservatism may render them far from ~~the~~ basic medical attention as happened in the recent earthquake in Afghanistan. Furthermore, issues of sanitation, hygiene or child birth ~~may~~ exacerbate in ~~the~~ events of natural calamity. A prominent example is of floods in South

Punjab in 2022. In the aftermath of flood, among the flood affectees there were 6,50,000 ~~pregnant~~ pregnant woman. Without any medical assistance and post-partum care, this was a chief example, which reflected a difference in degree of tragedy between men and women, and reflected an agency of gender specific actions to minimize the magnitude of tragedy.

All the previously mentioned disparities culminate into a disparity between men and women at a wider political level. Political disparity also reinforces other forms of social, economic, legal and demographic exploitation of women. Political set-up across the world reflects not only a sharp decrease in both ^{women} legislators as well as ~~on~~ women specific legislations. According to The Gender Empowerment Index (GEI) global average score in case of political decision making stands at 22.5%. Furthermore, the women specific legislations across the world remain either incomprehensive or inadequately. An example is legislations regarding marital rape. Mechanism of conviction as well evidence collection in cases of marital rape

exhibit loopholes as well as exploitative in adequacies.

Absolutism, however, hinders the truth. Across the globe few societies have progressed quite well in terms of gender equality. Scandinavian state exhibit such a case where women are relatively empowered in domains of politics, education, health and economics. Furthermore, this inclusivity has arrived with multiple countries as well. Their economies have improved and an overall social stability is visible. Finland has a forty percent (40%) representation of women in parliament. Under Sanna Marin, the Prime Minister of Finland, around 3% economic growth was witnessed in 2022. Furthermore, Rwanda reflects another instance of political empowerment of women with percentage of women increasing from seventeen percent in 1994 to around sixty one percent in 2023.

Secondly, some regions have showed a clear distinctio in women specific crimes. This decrease has come in the aftermath of a number of structural, institutional and cultural reforms. Kingdom of Spain reflects as the best example in this regard. Legislation was

made comprehensive by the Spanish government and its implementation was made objective and rigid. With a reformed ~~to~~ law enforcement mechanism and judiciary the initial years i.e. 2003-5 reflected a high conviction rate, it was followed by a general decrease in violence against women ^{by 2024} by 25 percent.

Though gender equality has remained unachievable to the aspired standards, opportunities ~~to~~ of improvement still exist. However, this requires a dedicated effort at all levels of human interaction. Foremost step in this regard should be consciousness raising. Common people should be educated regarding a collective effort of gender equality. It should encompass both moral and practical aspects of life. Encompassing a revised, gender inclusive curriculum; gender inclusive pedagogy and encouragement of women contribution to episteme, this approach will provide a solid ~~basis~~ for gender equal. Example of Bangladesh, this regard is worth mentioning. An induction of "awareness raising" factor in their socio-political conduct. Education enrollment increased from 26% to 75% in 2023, among ~~the~~ Bengali women in around twenty years of educational reforms.

Educational campaign should follow an implementational campaign. This approach should encompass all major dimensions i.e. social, economic, and political ones. Starting with political dimensions, the political process should become more inclusive for women. The number of voters should increase along with induction of a system of women only seats. Women specific legislation should be made a prerogative of women body of legislature. Furthermore, the legislation should be subject to approval ~~by~~ women body of parliament to determine its implications for women. Followed by this should be a categorical implementation of the law.

The implementational campaign should ^{be} followed the sup. supervisory campaign at international level. This would reflect a global commitment to resolving the issue of gender disparity. Thus, international institutions should devise laws and treaties, mediate state matters, provide funds for women welfare programs, ~~or~~ supervise states in their conduct and provide punishment or rewards based on state's conduct with woman.

In conclusion, despite global efforts to curb gender inequality, the world still remains of gender equality due to a number of socio-political and socio-economic causes. This disparity between men and women extends from individual level to global level.

Prominent indicators of global gender inequalities are disparity in social status, less inclusivity of women in decision making, asset ownership disparity, ^{relative lack of} ^{content} nutritional and health service availability,

educational disparity, exclusion from governance and ~~more~~ women being more affected by coercive patriarchy. However states such as Finland and Rwanda have mitigated the gender gap, and neaped the countries of gender equality.

As there is always room for improvement, gender equality can be achieved by a systematic and dedicated effort.

This should feature awareness raising, reform and implementation by the government and supervision and regulation by international institutions.