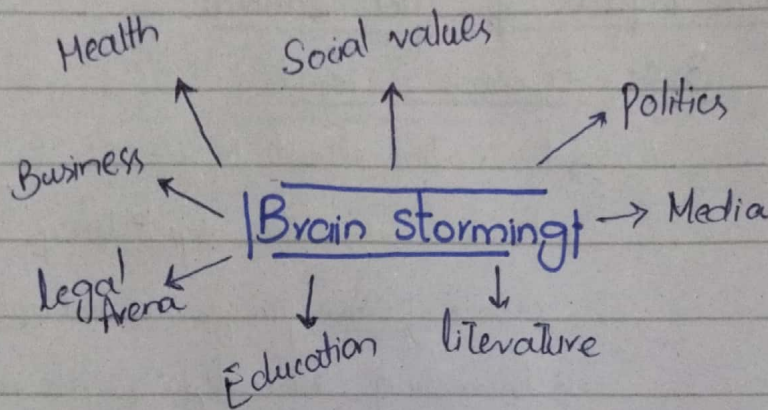


Essay:

The Ambitious Journey towards gender equality



Outlines

1. Introduction:

1.1: Attention grabber

1.2: what is gender equality?

1.3: Thesis statement: Despite many efforts being made by the government, Pakistan's journey towards achieving gender equality still seems a distant dream.

2. Journey towards gender equality:

2.1: Educational Sector: Learning and teaching jobs at each level.

2.2: Health Sector: Medical field and careers, psychologists and social workers

2.3: Legal Sector: Female lawyers and judges

2.4: Politics: Right to vote, Contest elections  
Female leaders like Maryam Nawaz Sharif,  
Benazir Bhutto

### 3: Gender Equality Still a Dream:

3.1: Educational Sector: Limited opportunities in rural areas

3.2: Health Sector: Limited empowerment in Medical and Teaching. Majority of them leave their professions (BBC report 2015 and 2017)

3.3: Legal Sector: Few female lawyer and judges

3.4: Politics: Limited empowerment.

A case study of Pakistan by DH Saiyid, Role of women in politics., A Case study by ~~journey~~<sup>journal</sup> of international affairs

3.5: Almost zero empowerment in Business, Sports and literary world.

3.6: Secondary status in house and Society.  
Child marriages, Vani, Honour Killing

3.7: Armed Forces of Pakistan

### 4: Conclusion:

## The Essay:

"There are two powers in the world; one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a great competition and rivalry between the two. There is a third power stronger than both, that of the Women."

(Excerpt from Jinnah's speech)

It was assumed that Germany would win the second World War because of its mighty army and advanced weaponry. Despite their zeal and zest, Germany lost the war. Their fall was evident when they restricted the role of women in the outside world. On the other hand, even Queen Elizabeth II contributed in the automobile industry to utilize the potential of their human source. The result was clear; Great Britain won and Germany ultimately lost. Therefore, without gender equality no nation can guarantee success and prosperity. Gender equality is considered the provision of same rights and opportunities to both men and women. Government of Pakistan

is making many efforts to provide equal rights to women but still there are many sectors like education, health, politics, legal arena, business and sports where this gender equality still seems a distant dream.

The first section of this essay would discuss the fields where women are getting their due rights, whereas, the second section would counter the arguments given in the favour of gender equality. If Pakistan has to excel in these areas, then it must bridge the gap between men and women, without this Pakistan can neither develop nor it can gain respect in the world.

First comes the education sector, where one can find plenty of women getting education and serving the teaching positions. They are excelling at primary, secondary, tertiary and even university level. The number of female teachers in Pakistan is more than the male teachers. Similarly, girls won more seats in medical every year. Now despite of living in some backward areas, the people are fond of girls's education. The trend has been changed. The head of various departments are women, they are excelling in the field of education.

Besides educational sector, health department is another realm where gender equality is achieving. A per WHO, women account for 67% of the global health and social care workforce. Pakistan's policymakers in the late 1980's devised a policy - that outreach to women in villages across the country had to be flexible and mobile, reaching within households, rather than waiting for women to travel often long distances over arduous terrain to reach a basic health unit. As part of Benazir Bhutto's package of social reforms, experts on her team came up with a community health outreach initiative that brought basic health services to women.

In addition to health sector, legal field is another area where gender equality seems realistic. There is a number of female lawyers and judges in Pakistan's courts like Fahmida Naz who is known as one of the best female lawyers. Hina Jilani is a well-known lawyer and human right activist in Pakistan.

Finally politics in another area where gender equality is progressing. Pakistani women has right to vote. Women can contest elections freely. There are many influential female leaders like Fatima Jinnah.

In 1988, Pakistan became the first country in the Muslim world which was led by a female prime minister- Benazir Bhutto. Now, Maryam Nawaz Sharif is the first female chief minister of Punjab. Seats are reserved for women in Pakistan's constituent assemblies.

So far this essay had shed light on those areas where gender equality is progressing in Pakistan. Now this essay would present the other side of the picture to refute the premise that gender equality is achieving.

First comes the educational sector where the participation of women is under question. Despite their enrollment in school, college and university, it is not the true picture of reality when it comes to rural areas, which is 70% of Pakistan, their number drops drastically. Female literacy rate stands at 38%. More than 12m girls are deprived of education in Pakistan. Since the rural areas are patriarchal societies they discourage women seeking better education. Girls' education has never been a priority for the decision makers. Lack of girls' schools is one of the reason for the rise in girls' dropout

rate which is 49% in primary classes, only 68% of girls aged 15-23 years can read and write, compared to 83% of boys of the same age. Girls make up only 42% of secondary school students and only 10% of them complete secondary education. Many areas in Pakistan lack secondary schools for girls.

The second field is health sector, women can be seen as doctors, nurses, dentists, and paramedics. But this is just a fraction in urban areas as compared to the rural ones. Serious medical cases are found when it comes to child birth and critical care of the patient. Many women lose their lives during travelling to major cities for treatment. Rest are on the mercy of awacks. In addition to this, social norms and cultural barriers limit women's mobility and employment's opportunities, for those who somehow manage to get a piece of degree of MBBS, rendering it difficult for them to pursue careers in certain regions or specialists. This gender bias discourage many female doctors from actively seeking employment. The "doctor-bahu" Syndrome is prevalent. As per BBC report 2015-2017, the vice chancellor of the prestigious Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto medical university, Dr Javed Akram, says;

"I know hundreds of female students who have qualified as a doctor or a dentist but they never touched a patient. students are more keen on catching a husband than on pursuing a career." Finally there are taboos in medical professions as well. as nurses are not given due respect they deserve in our society. Many leave Pakistan for better opportunities due to this gender inequality.

"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and inhumane."

(Martin Luther King)

Third comes the politics, decades after Pakistan became the first Muslim country to elect a female prime minister, women's electoral participation in its testosterone-driven political landscape still represent their unappreciated place in society. Women's right to engage in politics has generally been restricted and disregarded in Pakistan despite a lot of rhetoric surrounding the matter. Women's participation in voters list is <sup>also</sup> low. In contrast to 32.6% of men only 18.2% of women



cast their ballots in the 2018 election. There are several reasons for their low participation such as lack of awareness in rural areas where women are not aware of their vote's significance. In media, women are often discussed in terms of their personality and physical appearance rather than policy, capability and vision. The portrayal of women in media which lacks potential agency makes them less likely to be re-elected. Moreover, their male counterparts do not respect them and makes it more complicated and difficult for them to pass legislation of their will and requirements. (Role of women in politics: A study of political participation in Pakistan.)

In terms of women's participation in country's legislative business, we find out that out of 342 seats in National Assembly of Pakistan, only 60 have been reserved for women - not a single one of the third gender.

Another claim was made in legal arena. As a patriarchal society, Pakistan's legal profession is a male-dominated profession. The female lawyers in Pakistan are facing discriminations in terms of resistance from society and colleagues.

The substantial challenges they face in daily professional life are gender bias behavior from their male colleagues, low income and implicit harassment. The stereotype of women in the society makes it difficult for women to acquire status in the legal profession. The power structure is male driven and they have set the hierarchies according to them. (A case study: Women lawyers in Pakistan; Navigating a male dominated field). In its 76 years history, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has never seen a female justice president.

"Some women take up the law and become lawyers, other women lay down the law and become wives."  
(Joan Rivers)

In business concerns, the situation is appalling. In this sector males are offered more salaries than the female counterparts. Mostly females are offered a job to work as a showpiece while sitting on the front desk of the office. They are mostly given jobs as Telephone operator or personal secretary. It is another form of discrimination.

In sports, women athletes

face many challenges. They can range from struggling with identity in a society built on gender stereotypes to protecting themselves from harassment at the hands of male coaches. Meanwhile, the lack of opportunities to showcase their talent is frustrating. Similarly, in literary world, there are no big renowned big female figures. The patriarchal society hardly accept such women.

In Pakistan, we often read news about the instances of *vani*, an ugly tradition where young women are traded between families in resolution of a dispute; *swara*, a deplorable practice under which minors girls are given away in marriage to the enemy's family as a symbol of "lasting and effective peace" between two disputing parties, which means girls are treated like a commodity. Similarly, the case of honour killing and child marriage has also been rampant in Pakistan. About 900,000 women are annually killed in Pakistan in the name of honour.

When it comes to the Armed Forces of Pakistan, there are only 4000 women among 617,000 active personnel. Their number is really scant. The Global Gender Gap report 2015, ranked Pakistan at 144<sup>th</sup> position among 145 countries.

## Conclusion:

In a nutshell, gender inequality is prevalent in Pakistan in all spheres of life. Women lag far behind men in all fields of life including education, politics, health, legal arena, sports, business and literary world. Women in Pakistan are struggling for equal opportunities and rights in the country. The government of Pakistan must take decisive steps to encourage women. The environment must be friendly and safer for them and give them their equal representation in every field of life. When women participation is encouraged, the progress of country will also be quick. It is opportune to conclude the above discussion in the words of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan who once said, "Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance."

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