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Gender Equality Need For Developing Nations Including Pakistan

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Abstract: *World is undergoing dazzling changes owing to human's triumph of scientific advancement. But the change in inequality being faced by women, almost half of homo-sapiens population is far from abandoning this world. The pace in bridging this gap between men and women is too slow to accomplish the task of gender equality; it will take decades and centuries. Although various steps has been taken and are being adopted across the globe yet gender discrimination of women is appalling in statistics e.g. in Baluchistan; a province of Pakistan literacy rate for girls is only 27%. Women in no way different or weak from men; she can play significant role in sociopolitical and economic contribution to the society, state or world. However, if appropriate steps are taken to provide due economic share in resources and expanded education program with legislative protection, and support; women better equipped to share the burden of poverty and luxury of scientific contribution.*

Key Words: Gender Equality, Pakistan, Developing Nations, Women, Economic Shares

Introduction

Gender equality is defines as freedom to take appropriate decision, property, and fertility of her body, access to economic resources and liberty to gain knowledge or skills or recognition of her skills and knowledge. There are also various articles like article 16 of UN human rights declaration, e.g. which demand from United Nations member counties to remove any gender biasness at regional and state level if there is any. In this regard individual organization of the United Nation has taken various steps like International Labor organizations convention of 2019, which urges member states, employers and workers to improve working environment for all genders. In the same Cairo declaration and international Convention of civil and political Rights (ICCPR) gave freedom to everyone without state interference. Above than these

declarations, women are humans. There are natural rights of every individual as stated by J. Jacques Rousseau. It is primary duty of state; which is part of social contract between an individual and the state to fulfill its obligation and ensure rights and duties are equally observed.

On the papers men and women are equal but practically women are discriminated and have been given an unequal status in Pakistan. Social discrimination is normal routine, political equality is a dream, and cultural equality for women status will take hundreds of the years to get the equal status for women in the society of Pakistan. From harassment to acid attacks, from marriage consent to right of property all are evidences that how women are facing problems with in the society. Further right of education and jobs for women have many problems, either they are not provided these rights or if these

are provided then there are hundreds of the hinderous and complications for women so that to prevail and live with honor in the stereotype society.

Situation of gender equality is that none of the country has succeeded in accomplishing the task of full gender equality. Nordic states along with Canada and Newzeland etc. are relatively better for women. Iceland and Finland are top of this list of Hum development Index (HDI) as par latest report of 2020. On the lower side of list there are countries like Somalia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Pakistan mortality rate under five year of age is 186 per lakh which is even 298 in the province of Baluchistan.

In Afghanistan the neighbor state of Pakistan, women have for fewer rights than man in the fields of education, employment and political representation. A bird eye view of the deplorable situation of Women revealed that Women not enjoying equal rights. Analysis of contribution and benefits which women can provide to this world can emphases importance of equal rights.

In case of political aspects women can play crucial in strengthening democracy. In countries like Pakistan women have legal rights to participate in political process of country. However, like in several parts of the globe customary laws more peaceful and legal laws lack of enforcement. Women who are allowed to vote paste stamp as per instructions and dictations given by members of Family. Similarly, as per election commission of Pakistan's figures there are 50 million female registered voters as compared to 63 million male, although, population is equal of both genders.

Women discrimination in Pakistan

Likewise, image of any nation is of great significance which largely depends upon human rights situations. According to scholars Pakistan is one of least favored nations across the globe in terms of gender equality, even scholars are of the view that Pakistan is worst in gender equality. It is largely attributed to the fact that in 2019 report of women economic contribution of participation in economy of country is the lowest in South Asia and third worsens throughout the world. Similar fate is of Nigeria where Boko Haram

(a terrorist organization) kidnaps girls for its atrocities. And its perception in the world is not much better. Countries in South Africa and South Asia like Democratic Republic Congo, Pakistan or Afghanistan are notorious for their human rights violations and worst societal attitude for women. According to a report it is routine that women face acid attacks are increasing day by day, which is one of the great challenges in terms of women rights in Pakistan. Customs of Vani, Swara and Vata Sata are used as bargaining chip to protect males at the altar of young girls. So these countries are regarded as worst which is still a distant dream in Pakistan.

Without an iota of doubt situation of women empowerment is not satisfactory. However awakening world leadership consciousness is taking the issue seriously. There is significant change in thinking towards women and laudable steps are being taken. The most important step is the United Nations sustainable development goals target is reading gender equality. Similarly, world insistence to Afghan Taliban to ensure women rights to gain any legitimacy in the eyes of international world. Additionally renewed feminism waves for stepping against harassment, violence and discrimination is presenting good omen for future.

Women face discrimination to absence of laws concerning women. Situation is aggravated by the lack of implementation existing laws. According to United Nations there are 59 countries which do not have any laws against harassment and violence. Further four countries have at least one law which discriminate women in joining certain profession. Future of women is grim in a society where customary laws take procedure over legal views as in case of Pakistan. In Pakistan honor killer surrender themselves to police as it gives them pride in the eyes of community. In several countries women are subjected to certain orthodox or misinterpretation of religion which pitched them as source of evil. So women are restricted to four walls of houses. Even though, women are prevented from interacting with anyone other than her husband immediate family. In this scenario women empowerment becomes a distant dream for nation.

There is famous adage a healthy body has healthy mind. In 1960s America was up for clerical jobs mostly occupied by women. Additional edge was easy availability of contraception facilities. It resulted in women empowerment to do jobs. Consequently there was a noticeable increase in life expectancy. In Pakistan 21% girls got married before attaining 18 years of age as per United Nations report and scholars. This is one of reasons that Pakistan has third highest mortality of 186 per lack. Similarly sub-Saharan Africa is the most under develops in terms of women empowerment. A pregnant woman has 43 more chances of dying as compared to 31 in European nations. This stark difference is visible in women empowerment aspects.

Literacy rate is another luxury not available to significant portion of women. According to a report Because I am a girl there are 74% girls in school as compared to 81% boys. This difference translates into millions of girls rendered uneducated; a trigger for vicious circle of poverty, health issues, early age marriages, domestic violence and low paid jobs in informal sector which make them vulnerable to exploitation. There is widespread poverty which becomes more severe for women. Women have very little access to economic resources and financial literacy. Forced marriages is highly condemnable, because the laws of the land and Islamic ideology too does not allow these forced marriages but the consent of the female is necessary even it needs three times acceptance with the will of the girl at the time of marriage contract *Nikah*.

Custom of *Walwar* is an alarming sign for the government authorities because its a heinous crime against the dignity of the women. According to this custom which is under practice in few tribal stereotypes families of Baluchistan and also it is in practice of the few tribes of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa women are just a commodity. Pay money, and purchase a woman like a commodity. Further irrespective of the age and other parameters required for marriage just money will dominate and decide the fate of a poor girl.

Historically inequality remained a huge concern for those who bore the brunt of sufferings and

oppression likewise contemporary era is no different especially for women. Gender equality encapsulates the idea of equal opportunity in every walk of life as it is being enjoyed by her male counterpart. Women empowerment often touted synonymous to gender equality possess great potential which can be channelized into social, political and economic domains. Fundamentals issues of the present world e.g. illiteracy, violence and conflicts largely can be overcome by empowering women.

Women, nearly half of human population, have been granted fundamental rights to her male counterpart. Despite the fact that these rights which are natural owing to being a human, in the views of Jan Jockos Rousseau, remained subservient to patriarchal mindset. Variety of tale stories, myths and misinterpretation of religion coupled with exclusion from economic aspect of society were/are being used to inflict deleterious impact on women. By taking a clear cut stand; supported by appropriate legislation, its implantation and effective media complain can be impactful for bringing women at par their rights and for the collective benefit of family, community and society up to global world. Conventional customs, and so called traditional are as such practiced in Pakistan that even Islamic thoughts are ignored as a result. So called customs in terms of family matters, especially in terms of the decisions about the marriages of the girls are just male dominant. The decision of the matrimonial future of the girls is not in the hands of her but it is based and lays in the hands of dominant parents, elder brothers etc. If unfortunately if the girl is orphan then any elder male of the family has power to put his future life on risk, on the tradition of so called phrase religious obligation, but unfortunately elders of the family have no concerns with other religious obligations as Islam has narrated that consent of the girl is necessary. Laws are there in constitution of Pakistan 1973 so that to how women are and will be facilitated but these are just words and piece of papers but at the time of implementation the so called customs and traditions dominate such laws which is basically an alarming situation for the future of women in Pakistan.

Girls especially living in villages, or even those who living in the cities but belongs to tradition families, male dominate their decision power, and decide what they want irrespective of the consequences whether it is against the rights of women or not, they have power so keep their patriarchal domination. These traditions are reducing the rights of women in terms of her marriages, jobs, traveling, etc. Such situation is also becoming the cause of economic crises in Pakistan. As when women the half part of population have no economic right, or have no decision power, so the only 50% of the population meaning male have their role which is a greater obstacle in the way of economy of Pakistan.

Acid attacks against women are become routine, it can be noticed while reading daily newspapers. Women face is attacked through acids so that to harm her beauty and to make her ugly just because of her decisions which are not acceptable for the tradition society. As a result these attacks have further spread a fear in women. Meaning by in future also, no light or positive prospects are expected for the future of women empowerment i.e. women rights. Even it can be argued that these acid attacks have become a reason for the decreasing ratio of women rights in Pakistan. Law and enforcement agencies can overcome it but unfortunately a social construct of tradition, values, honor, corruption etc. became the hurdle in the way of laws execution.

Discrimination of women can be seen in all aspects of life, socio political and economic aspects have made the women useless, but all these aspects are g dominated by the male dominated society. If women are intending to take admission in her favorite field of education, then she must take proper consent from the elders male of the family. Even the right of education for women is considered negative in the stereotype families. Cultural and traditional customs stops the parents to not to send their daughters to schools, especially parents feel reluctant to provide higher education to their daughters in University or college. As going to college or university for girls is highly prohibited for the traditional mindset heads of the families. Now, when girls are not being provided the opportunities of

higher education then how girls can play their rational and significant role in transforming the society. Sometimes, traditional families stopped girls from taking higher education just because of co-education in universities. If it harms the ego of male dominance of the heads of traditional families then why not they try to send girls to those institutes specified for girls or women. The problem is traditional dominance of the male like ancient patriarchal culture of the families. They basically not consider the male and female equal in terms of their rights; either that right is educational, cultural, jobs, leadership, marriages, or any other type of rational decisions. Traditional families are just considering the female as servants like the servants live in ancient times. So that to maintain patriarchal hegemony in the society. In cities there are many examples that women are given many rights of socio political and economic but the situation in villages is alarming. In villages women are used in the fields for labor and this labor is almost unpaid or less paid. As a result half of the population is less utilized and no or less participation of female in many sectors creating many issues for the society is alarming.

Right of jobs is also less offered to the female in the society, because doing job along with male colleagues becomes the issue of ego and honor for the traditional mind set. Also if we focus on the right of education which is less provided to women, especially higher education is not easily available for female due to traditional customs, as a result female will have no opportunity of jobs because of lower rate of their literacy. Furthermore the new problem get appeared that luckily if a female join any job, then females are harassed at their job environment. Hence it can be argued that females have all fold problems and issues facing day by day in the society. Laws are just laws, no execution or less execution has put the future of female on risk. Not just social discrimination but political aspect of the discrimination is also significant.

Politically women are given the right to vote, or contest elections, or like have same opportunity for their political role according to constitution of Pakistan. But practically it is not. The head of the

family decide and dictate to the female members whom to vote or not. Similarly in KP and Baluchistan provinces even this right is escaped from the women, as they are forced by the orthodox religious clerics, and heads of their families that vote is Haram (Vote is prohibited). As a result when a women is not allowed to even cast her vote, then how it will be possible that women can contest election in such traditional societies. Speech of women, political campaigns led by women, leading rallies and gatherings will be a dream for coming centuries.

Analysis

Gender equality is defined in a number of ways. Oxford dictionary refers gender equality as access to resources and opportunities not affected by gender. According to UNICEF gender equality means both men and women enjoys equal access to resources opportunities, rights and protection. Scholars define it as equal ease to access opportunities and resources. In short various definitions are present. However in general conception gender equality is referred to women that is the most oppressed section of society and needs to be empowered means equal opportunities to men must be ensured for women.

Issues of gender equality remain talk of the town as sufferings are not abating. According to recent report on Human Development Index none of the countries has succeeded in achieving the goal of gender quality. Nordic states especially Iceland and Finland have achieved 85% equality. There is significant need for Pakistan to adopt Nordic model for gender equality in Pakistan. On the contrary, various countries like Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia and Pakistan have abysmal state of affairs. In Sub-Saharan states a women faces 4300 more chances of dying than those developed countries. In terms of literacy only 74% girls are in schools as compared to 81% boys. Similarly in political arena only two countries; Rwanda and Albania has 50% legislature based on women. These figures depicts across the globe inequality between men and women which to be addressed immediately.

Gender equality is one of those elements of society which wields the potential of revolutionizing

the society in real sense. A meticulous analysis of short, medium and long term impacts of potential gender equality revealed that it can be complete transformation of society. One most important aspect of society where gender equality is sin qua none is political spectrum. By empowering women democracy gains its roots to the ground. Empowerment of women for politics or democracy means that 50% portion of state can play its role effectively in electing their leaders with rationale decision. If women their needs and contribute to alleviation of poverty from family and immediate community members.

Third important aspect of women empowerment result into economic development of family, community and regions. In Bangladesh government facilitated women with separate buses which gave them right to employment in specific content of society and is evidenced that Bangladesh exports are improving continuously, with availability of labor at lower rate. Ladhesa an organization worked in India to provide women ownership to land and livestock. Consequently from out 18 million were removed from poverty line and their role in regional leadership was increased.

As women make up to 50% of the world population, their contribution to national and global economy is significant. Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries in Europe which are largely known as Nordic have profited 10-15% of their Gross Domestic Production (GDP) IN LAST 50 years.

Any country having poor performance in women related indicators is struggling in terms of its economic paradigm like Pakistan, Afghanistan and Somalia are in contrast to those of European states.

Lack of economic empowerment means women are devoid of access to financial institution, facilities, assets ownership and ray in financial matters. Currently situation is far from satisfactory if it is optimistic in one state it is pessimistic in another state e.g. in Pakistan. Only 7% of approximately 100 million strong populations own an account in bank which 76% in India while 36% in Bangladesh. In

Bangladesh Grameen Bank successfully included women by giving them economic rights.

Simone Beare said No one born women rather becomes. He was referring to social stigmas, customs and specifications attached to women. From early age a girl is treated differently. She is taught complete subservient to make members of family. Her hobbies, toys, ways of interaction are differentiated from very early age. This inculcate in her instinct that she should serve her family, her ambition must be limited etc. this psyche endanger future generations.

Illiteracy keeps women unaware of their basic rights unless you do not know how to move, you cannot break chains. Millions of girls are devoid of basic rights to education. In Pakistan women literacy rate is 50%. In some areas of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa it is nearly 27%.

Widespread poverty and weak economic and stagnant development directly impacts women. They are first to be stopped from schools and colleges in order to failure basic needs like food and shelter. Accordingly to women to Money an Indian who published an article on women empowerment and development analyzed that boys are preferred for higher education over women.

Discrimination of women in almost all aspects of life has further discriminated the women. They are constructed as a worthless but misused commodity as like as Custom of Walwar is mentioned. Similarly future conditions and prospects of the women status in future can be predicted highly dangerous. Harassment issues Zainab incident of Kasur district and Sialkot Motorway incident these are not just incidents but these are intentional blunders done by a lust seeking society dominated by the male.

Health facilities are not properly available to the rural women especially. And in the cities where health facilities are available these are highly costly and for middle class families its difficult to attain these facilities. Even its almost impossible for the poor families to get these facilities in the cities. In rural areas Ladies Health workers are just like a first aid facility, ultimately they refer the female patients to the cities, and mostly women got died during

travel from village to cities. And if they reach safely in the cities then cost of the private hospitals is unbearable and the attitude and unprofessional behavior of Public sector hospitals is not acceptable. Psychological pressures over patients, and rude behavior of the staff of hospital is highly critical and alarming. It can be argued that competing the developed world will take centuries and during these centuries this society may be reach to backwards like Stone Age. Need of the hour is to take proper measures and to review the whole structure which is hindrous against the rights of women.

Human rights status of women in Pakistan comparing with the other countries of South Asia, ranking of Pakistan is highly low. Further measures to tackle such scenario are almost invisible. Police, Judiciary and other institutions need to overcome all flaws with the help of execution of the laws. Progressive religious clerics must play their significant role to accurate interstition of the Islamic concepts which are negatively misused by orthodox mindsets. In the villages, the educated male must realize the alarming conditions and they must transform the society while explaining the true side of the participation of women in all sectors of life. Similarly family heads must get rid of from stereotype conventions and customs i.e. honor and pride. Surely it cannot be the reason of honor or pride to stop any women from her fundamental rights. Even it can be argued that this is matter of dishonor and shame if when anyone stops others from her basic rights especially right of education, right to life, right to job, right to live a happy life with rational decision of her. If man is rational then why not the women are considered rational. Even its a question over mens rationality if he is not accepting the right of women. World powers are enhancing themselves with the help of science and modern knowledge and developing societies like Pakistan are still grabbed in the net of honor and pride while not caring the rights of women. What kind of pride and honor is there when anyone take and capture the property of women. There is need to rethink, and transform our minds so that to develop the society to compete with the advance world. Women are no doubt more than half of population, and this half

population must neither be ignored nor neglected for her significant participation with in every sphere of life. Even need of the hour is to provide them such opportunities and atmosphere where there they can play their significant role for the prosperity of their state, society, nation, religion and culture. If half population based on women should not be provided such environment then our development would be half, our pride and honor would be half, our culture would be half. So to make strengthen the state and its other intuitions role of women is necessary.

Conclusion

Free enough weak decision devoid of rationality can be detrimental to the failure of a nation. These words were echoed by John. F Kennedy who said Ignorance of one voter can jeopardize the future of all. These words reflect state of affairs difference in Africa and other developed nations. Women empowerment brings good repute to a nation as oppression brings disrepute. Countries like Iran, Afghanistan and North Korea are the most disliked nations as per reports of Pew research broad casted by BBC because of havoc inflicted on women while their fundamental rights like freedom of choice equal access to opportunities and resources is systematically hindered.

Provisions of fundamental human rights to women, is real empowerment. Country which does not provide equal rights to women is referred as the most dangerous nation/place for women. Sudan, Nigeria, Syria, Yemen and Pakistan are prime examples where women rights are abused. Either there is legal clause or customary laws (dominating society) which hampers women from enjoying equal access to employment, health facilities as modern contraception facilities, liberty of movement and emancipation and express her opinion without being censured as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights since 10th Dec, 1948.

Likewise, womens role in societal perspective does not need to be overemphasized. By

emancipation of women society give women opportunity to be natural and excellent in err conduct by learning good hygiene habits which transforms any society towards healthy nation. Further inhuman treatment ends and women gets what a civilized society means. At this stage the western world is considered the most civilized world; world of 21st century which many states still have state of affairs much looks like 14th century Europe.

Eradication of poverty is possible only by giving women equal opportunity to financial, literary, resources and ownership of assets thereupon she can contribute for the economic empowerment of family, community and society. Landhesa an international organization worked in Indian state Gujarat. It succeeded in alleviating one million people from decades of poverty. In any nation women make up almost 50% of their total population. Without giving them power to come out of poverty trap things will not change.

Women empowerment plays significant role in formalizing informal economy; like Pakistan where only 7% women has bank account while the ratio is 7% in India and 36% in Bangladesh. HER a project of Bill Gates and Malinda foundation worked with factories to digitize payment of salaries. It resulted in 20% to 98% bank accounts opening, along 69% increase in salary retention in womens own accounts. In this way empowerment supported by technology brings economic documentation; dire need of Pakistan.

Importance of women is of great benefit for developing states which rely on agriculture. In Pakistan agriculture contributes 21% to the national GDP. 69% of workers are female. However their work largely goes unpaid. If women are provided equality 13% of total global GDP approximately \$10 trillion expansion in economy is predicted. And at national level of Pakistan it can contribute up to 7-15% of national GDP. This could be huge millstone in financial numbers, poverty eradication and women emancipation.

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