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Gender Equality is immensely important for the development of Pakistan.

① Introduction.

There is no doubt regarding the importance of gender equality for the development of Pakistan.

② Gender equality and its different ingredients.

③ Situation of gender equality in the world.

a) Situation of gender equality in Europe.

b) Situation of gender equality in Africa.

c) Situation of gender equality in South Asia.

④ Situation of gender equality in Pakistan.

▣ Reports and Indexes regarding situation of gender equality in Pakistan.

a) Global Gender Gap Index, 2017.
(145/142)

b) Gender Inequality Index, 2016.

c) Save the mother index, 2016.

[B] Huge gender inequality in education sector.

[C] Gender inequality in political sector.

[D] Gender inequality in economic sector.

a) share of women in jobs.

b) Percentage of women at higher management.

[E] Increasing incidents of sexual harassment.

[F] Less involvement of women in decision making forum.

⑤ Facts prove that gender equality is immensely important for the development of Pakistan.

[A] Gender Equality and Political development.

a) Formation of effective policies.

b) Better image of the country.

c) Sustenance and strengthening of democracy.

B Gender equality and economic development.

- a) Increase in tax revenue.
- b) Availability of more labour.
- c) Increase in economic activities.

C Gender equality and social development.

- a) Reduction in child labour.
- b) Decrease in population growth.
- c) Decrease in domestic violence.
- d) Increase in literacy rate.
- e) Elimination of conservatism from the society.

D Gender equality and administrative development.

- a) Better working environment in institutions.

E Causes of gender inequality in Pakistan.

- a) Negative and conservative role of males.
- b) Benighted and intransigent role of religious leaders.

- c) Absence of will at the top.
- d) Presence of high illiteracy rate.
- e) Availability of less opportunities.
- f) Distance from true teachings of Islam.
- g) Huge population growth rate.

⑦ Steps taken so far by the government.

⑧ Recommendation for bringing gender equality in Pakistan.

- a) Training and coaching sessions for male members of society.
- b) Positive role of religious leaders.
- c) Formation and strict implementation of laws regarding women empowerment.
- d) Effective measures for population control.
- e) Spread of awareness regarding the importance of gender equality.
- f) Elimination of cultural barriers present in the way of gender equality.

⑨ Conclusion.

Essay:

Notwithstanding having countless resources of countless types, Pakistan, a land of pure people, has been mired in the meshes of plethora of problems that have overwhelmed all its sectors and put fetters in its feet, so that, it may not progress. There are many way outs for Pakistan that can enable it to tread on the path of development and, ultimately, secure position in the row of developed countries.

However, the way out on which all the other way outs are, greatly, dependent is gender equality. A cursory glimpse over the developed countries of the world is enough to justify the fact that gender equality is immensely important for the development of Pakistan. Unfortunately, the situation of gender equality in Pakistan, right now, is very reprehensible. Therefore, the dream of Pakistan to become a developed state seems a distant one. Admittedly, Pakistan can never be a developed state without achieving gender parity in all sectors.

Gender equality is a state in which the right to access opportunities is unaffected by gender. In fact, gender equality is achieved when women and men enjoy same rights and opportunities in all sectors of society and when different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured. Provision of equal rights and equal access to opportunities in economic, social, political and administrative sector of the country are some among many ingredients of gender equality.

Situation of gender equality in the world greatly varies from region to region. For instance, Europe is regarded as the most gender equal region in the world. In both Global Gender Gap Index and Gender Inequality Index, European countries can be seen at praise worthy positions. However, the situation of gender parity in Africa and South Asia is not commendable. Countries of these regions usually secure positions in the lower half of the list of countries having gender equality.

Regrettably, the situation of gender equality is very appalling in Pakistan. Many a report and index categorically proves this lamentable reality. According to Global Gender Gap Index, 2017, Pakistan was at the second last position among 144 countries of the world. Unfortunately, it was not the first time that Pakistan secured this condemnable position. Global Gender Gap Indexes of 2016 and 2015 showed the same depressing situation.

In addition to it, according to Gender Inequality Index 2014 by Human Development Report 2015, Pakistan was the 121st gender equal country of the world. Moreover, the poor position of Pakistan in the Mother Index ranking 2015 by the World's Mothers report 2015, unequivocally, highlights the dismal condition of gender parity in the country.

Besides this, there is huge gender inequality in the education sector of the country. According to Economic Survey of Pakistan 2016-17,

Here male literacy rate in the country is 70 percent while the female literacy rate is just 48 percent. The situation becomes more awful when male and female literacy in rural areas of the country are compared. In addition to literacy, great disparities are present in the provision of facilities to male and female students in the education sector. Similarly, the political sector of the country is not safe from the menace of gender inequality. According to Global Gender Gap Index, 2017, the legislature of Pakistan is comprised of 25 percent women.

Moreover, gender inequality can be witnessed in the economic sector of the country. Share of women in the country's labour force is just 26 percent. Besides this, none of the organisations in the country has more than 30 percent women in their upper management level. The appalling story of gender inequality does not stop here. Regrettably, an increasing trend in the incidents of sexual harassment has

been witnessed in the country. This pitiable reality is evident in the State of Human Rights report 2016 by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Furthermore, there is less involvement of women in the decision making forums of the country. Women can be witnessed marginalised at the decision making forums at both domestic and national level. All these deplorable facts, clearly, lend countenance to the fact that the situation of gender equality in the country is very poor.

If Pakistan is to stand among the developed countries of the world and tread on the path of development, gender equality should be achieved in all the sectors of the country. There are many facts that categorically prove that gender equality is immensely important for the development of Pakistan. The very first fact in this regard is the presence of direct link between gender equality and political development in

the country. Admittedly, gender equality is essential for the formulation of effective, well-planned and consensus-based policies. It is beyond one's wits to imagine that a policy can address all the aspects equally when the process of its formulation is tainted with inequality. Therefore, gender equality is necessary for formulation of effective policies. And it is an all-known fact that a country treads on the path of development when it becomes able to chalk out stringent policies.

Moreover, another fact which proves that gender equality is greatly important for the development of Pakistan is that the image of a country, in the contemporary world, is contingent upon the situation of women and other suppressed sections in the country. The better the situation of gender equality in the country, the more the laudable position will be secured by it in the global indexes. This thing, consequently, will improve the image of the country. It goes

without saying that foreign direct investment, increase in tourists, and increase in business activities in the country are contingent upon the image of the country in the rest of the world. And, clearly, all these outcomes of better image are prerequisites for the development of a country. Moreover, gender equality strengthens democracy in the country. Undoubtedly, sustenance of democracy is greatly required by Pakistan as continuation of democracy will save the country from political chaos and instability. And this thing, in turn, will let the country make progress.

Moreover, gender equality brings economic development in the country by increasing tax revenue of the country. Currently, the tax to GDP ratio of Pakistan, in view of Economic Survey of Pakistan 2016-17, is just 12.7 percent against its potential of 22 percent. There is no blinking the fact that gender equality boosts economic

activities in the country and consequently the tax revenue. Besides this, gender equality provides the country more labour force. In view of Malazy Clinton, a renowned American politician, "Women are the largest untapped reservoir of the country." This untapped reservoir can be tapped only through ensuring gender equality in the country. It is an admitted fact that Pakistan can earn great revenue through effective utilization of this revenue,

Similarly, there are facts from the social sector that prove that gender equality is immensely important for the development of Pakistan. It goes without saying that gender equality reduces child labour. When woman has equal access to opportunities, children will not be sent to earn livelihood for their families. Similarly, gender equality decreases population growth rate which is very high in the country right now. Owing to gender equality, woman will be engaged in economic activities and aware of the repercussions

of successive births. This thing, ultimately, decreases population growth rate. Undoubtedly, reduction in child labour and decrease in population growth rate is essential for ~~political~~ social development of the country.

Furthermore, gender equality brings decrease in domestic violence by empowering women and reducing poverty; increase in literacy rate by improving female literacy rate; and elimination of conservatism by sensitising males to the need of and importance of women empowerment. Undoubtedly, decrease in domestic violence, increase in literacy rate, and elimination of conservatism from society is sine qua non for the development of Pakistan.

In addition to all these, better working environment in institutions owing to gender equality lends enough testimony to the fact that gender equality is immensely important for the development of Pakistan. Many sociologists and economists opine that the efficiency of an institution increases manifold

when there are enough women working in it as, in an institutions, there are many tasks that requires delicacy and are well-suited with the personality of a woman. At the same, there is no denying the fact that effective and better performance of institutions is greatly required by Pakistan to become a developed state. All these facts prove that gender equality is immensely important for the development of Pakistan.

As it has been mentioned that the situation of gender equality is very deplorable in the country, it is pertinent to mention the factors responsible for this egregious reality. Negative and conservative role of males a major reason behind striking gender inequality in the country. Sexual harassment of women at work place, marginalization of women at homes, and very low female literacy rate in the country are some of the outcomes of uncontributive role of women. It is axiomatic that the more the male members of the society are

conservative, the more the gender inequality will be. In addition to negative role of male, the benighted and intransigent role of religious leaders is another cause of gender inequality in the country. Pakistan is an Islamic state and Islam teaches equality. However, our religious leaders, owing to their patriarchal background, could not propagate true religious teachings of Islam regarding women. They could not sensitize males to the need and importance of women empowerment.

Moreover, absence of will at the top is another factor behind deplorable situation of gender equality in the country. In political sector, low percentage of women in the legislature and formulation of flawed policies for women empowerment show absence of will to bring women in the political sector on equal basis. Similarly, in administrative sector, the perfunctory implementation of policies and programmes related to women emancipation reflects absence of will. In ~~administrative~~^{economic} sector, the low percentage of women in the institution shows that the top management

of the organization has no predilection for observing equality in their setups.

Furthermore, another factor behind gender inequality in the country is presence of high literacy rate. According to UNESCO statistics 2015, the literacy rate in Pakistan is just 56.8 percent while the global average literacy rate is around 86 percent. Admittedly, education enlightens a person and enables him to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. Owing to low literacy rate, most of the population is oblivious of the importance of gender equality for a country. Therefore, they do not strive for achieving it. Similarly, availability of less opportunities, distance from true teachings of Islam and huge population growth rate are responsible for gender inequality in the country.

Many steps have been taken so far by the government for achieving gender parity in the country. Provision of soft loans, financial assistance of women from poor

families by Benezir Income Support Programme ; fixation of quota for ^{women} in jobs by both federal and provincial governments ; patronage of many non-governmental organizations working with the sole aim of improving the standard of women ; and conduct of sessions for changing the mindset of male members of society are some of the measure taken by the government in this regard. Moreover, the government has signed Sustainable Development Goals or Agenda 2030 whose goal number 5 specifically deals with achievement of gender parity in the country by 2030.

As every lock has a key and every disease has a cure ; there are solutions for all problems. The situation of gender equality can be improved through taking some stringent measures. Training and coaching sessions for male members of society is the first step in this regard. Although, such sessions are already being conducted in the society, yet they do not have active participation

of government. This thing should be ensured. Moreover, religious leaders should play a positive role and disseminate true religious teachings in the society. They should teach males about the real position of women in the society.

Besides this, laws regarding women empowerment should be strictly implemented. Punitive actions should be taken against those who become hurdles in their implementation. Similarly measure should be taken for population control as it is imperative for bringing gender equality in the country. Easy availability of contraceptives, expensive medical treatment for the delivery of third child, and eradication of poverty from the society will be helpful in this regard.

Moreover, spread of awareness regarding the importance of gender equality and elimination of cultural barriers present in the way of achieving gender equality are necessary for

bringing gender parity in the country. In this regard, education institutions, media, civil society and non-governmental organizations should play an effective role.

In a nutshell, gender equality is extremely important for the development of Pakistan. Unfortunately, currently, the situation of gender equality is very poor in the country. All members of society are responsible for this reprehensible reality. Inevitably, what has been done should, certainly, have been avoided but it never means that it is too late to take any remedial measure. A well-directed, goal-oriented and staunchly-prepared effort; coupled with sincere realization of responsibilities by all members of society, is required. Undoubtedly, it is a hard nut to crack and required painstaking and persistent effort, but, the salvation of the country is contingent upon it.