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## ESSAY TEST 1

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## Equality in Workplace & Home: Biggest Form of Women Empowerment

Women empowerment is one of the widely discussed topics across the world and India too, <sup>and</sup> ~~key~~ shouldn't it be. Let's look at some numbers to keep the theme in context - a woman constitutes almost 50% of population but lags behind them in all aspects of life.

In India, their literacy rate is just 65%, and just 24% ~~of~~ women make it to the economic workforce. Only 11% make it to the politics. What is behind this situation?

Probably, the answer resides in the inequality that women face beginning from <sup>home</sup> and extending to the workplace and also in other dimensions of life. In this essay, we will examine why equality in workplace & home ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> dubbed as biggest form of women empowerment.

In India, women face inequality at home even before the birth. Economic survey 18-19 says that there are 2.5 million unwanted girls between the age of (0-25) years due to son-male preference. Further, around 2 million girls have gone missing due to the same phenomenon, as parents don't want girl child if they get required number of sons already.

Further, when the girl child gets born, she is deemed as financial burden due to the prevalent dowry system. It affects her access to quality education as parents save for the dowry instead of spending on education.

Moreover, she never gets the quality food & nutrition as her brother as the culture of women feeding over the leftover or after the male members is widely normalized.



All these inequalities make her incompetent worker and then ~~after~~ they are quickly married off. NCAER study shows that only 5% of women had right to choose their spouse in 2011-12.

Post-marriage another cycle of inequality starts. There is lack of equal decision making power with women. The situation is further grim in joint-families. The worrying segment is the quantum of physical & mental violence they face, as shown by NCRD data. Physical & mental violence constitutes the highest category of crime against women. This is despite of the fact that many crimes are not reported due to widespread notion of stigma.

Thus we see that strong socio-religious biases are working against the women of our society. The irony is that the same society worships the female divinity - deities of power, wealth & knowledge are all female.

Lets move to the work place and analyze the inequalities present against women. Data suggest that 80% of women are in agriculture with just 12% ~~own~~ cultivators. They lack access to timely credit & input.

Further in organized sectors, women are restricted to pink-collar jobs - forex-receptionist, teachers, nurse etc. Even if some of the women manage to get into industries, they face the glass-ceiling effect which prevent them from taking leadership roles. There is a negative stereotype that women can't handle emotional strain and lack leadership skills.

The recent judgements of supreme court for <sup>for equity</sup> the armed-establishment of country is a reminder of strong patriarchal mindset in the socio-political institutions. This is after the seventy five years of independence that women have parity in military & air force.



Moving ones from the question of existence in ~~an~~ workforce, ~~we are~~ next we face the question of safe environment. Unwanted advances, ~~gaze~~, sexual assault and weak legal machinery dissuade many women to suffer in silence. The #MeToo movement showed the prevailing situation.

Further, women are paid less for the same work they do as that of men. Oxfam report shows staggering 24% pay-gap in India.

All these inequities persisting in home ~~is~~ and work-place reduce the free agency of the woman. This hampers the growth of society & nation. India stands very low on global Gender Gap Index (145<sup>th</sup> rank) and the <sup>very</sup> similar standing is in the UNDP's Human Development Index. Therefore there is a strong case that ~~and~~ striving for equality at home and work-place ~~is~~ <sup>will be</sup> biggest push for women empowerment.

It will require fundamental changes in the thought process of society but persistent efforts based on persuasion and backed by strong evidence can achieve the goal.

The beginning has to be made from home where the arrival of girl child should be a moment of happiness. The government's Beti Bachao Beti Padhao aims to change the attitude of parents.

Further interventions in the form of pre-education opportunities can delay her marriage and give her the opportunity to become a productive workforce. Many states like Bihar, Bengal etc are giving significant chunk of money at time of matriculation, higher secondary and graduation. It should be expanded in all states.

A well educated woman will be well-aware of her rights



and will be able to exercise it more freely. Post marriage, there will be very less chances of violence as she will be vocal against it. Thus we see that how access to education secures her a dignified life.

Moving over to the domain of workplace, there are host of steps which we can take to achieve the equality. Creation of safe-environment enjoys the top priority as it encourages the women to join the workforce. The legal machinery needs to be more sensitive and conviction rate must improve to increase the trust of women.

Further, the infrastructure of workplace must cater to the needs of expecting women or those women who ~~wish to~~ return after child birth. If we can build smoking areas, then how tough is it to build breast-feeding rooms for women. All we need is slight change in mindset.

Margaret Thatcher says that "If you want to get something done, ask a woman". It shows her positive experience with the women at the leadership position. Further, examples of ~~like~~ Indira Neogi, Arundhati Bhattacharya, Uthra Raj Kulkarni substantiate the efficacy of women-leaders in their respective domain.

This takes us to the another important dimension of unequal pay. Wage gap for similar work lowers the morale of female workforce and this also goes against the ethical norms of work-culture. Firms must emulate their industry leaders like TCS, Infosys, Mahindra etc who have made quite a reputation in attaining 100% wage parity.

The big informal sector of India <sup>will</sup> continues to be a serious question over attaining equality for its female workforce. It will require

more vigorous government push and an attitudinal change on part of small employers. Recently launched 'Atmanirbhar Bharat. Rajgar Yojna' can go a long way in formalizing the work-force and extending social security benefits like - Maternity Leave, provident funds all at ~~the~~ female workers.

Thus we see that the Capability Approach, advocated by Amartya Sen is a strong tool for development of free agency of women and it all begin with the home.

But lets not miss the another important dimension of politics. women empowerment will take long time unless fair representation of women takes place. National Institute of Democratic studies (NIDS), with its work over 25 years in 100 nation show positive results in social sector when women remain at top.

India, too has rich evidence at the lower level of governance



which comprise of 44% of women.  
The access to health and nutrition schemes  
increases manifold with women being  
Sarpanch, Mukhya etc. Thus its time  
that we promote the women politi-  
-cians at state and central level.

Former U.N secretary  
general Kofi-Annan said that "  
Empower women; Empower community"  
for the all encompassing role of  
women in our lives. In the recent  
pandemic of covid-19, women played  
an important role. Overwhelming  
share of healthworkers are women,  
engaged in diagnosis of disease  
to the treatment and the disbur-  
~~ment~~ sement of vaccination. They  
were lifeline for the whole world  
and not just India, and yet we  
continue to harbor inequalities for  
them.

Further, General U.N studies  
point to the role of women in  
achieving multiple targets of SDGs  
ranging from poverty, hunger, climate  
change, equitable growth etc.

An engendered growth will be sust-  
-ainable for the long run. ~~A An~~  
A developing world like India needs  
its women more in every aspect.  
Let's give the same space to our  
women which they enjoy in divinity,  
in the reality.

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Peace and Justice are two sides of same coin

If not the entire humans, ~~many~~ but an alien from Mars must ~~be~~<sup>get</sup> perplexed when it visits two places on earth - one is Nordic countries and other is Middle East countries. It will certainly ask question from us as why two places on a single planet are so different from each other, for one is peaceful and other witnesses perpetual bombardings.

The answer lays in Justice which the latter nations failed to achieve for its subjects. The tale of <sup>two</sup> different nation-groups form the theme of our essay that Peace & Justice are two sides of same coin, and they must co-exist.

Since the ancient time, there has been constant struggle to attain peace in the society. As



peaceful societies prosper easily because everyone is engaged freely in the activities they want to pursue, without any ill-will against anyone. However, it can't be achieved without justice.

Kautilya in his Arthashastra affirms that a just administration is key for peaceful subjects which will eventually form strong state. Therefore, let's examine what justice actually means and how lack of it affects the peace at different levels.

Justice is a universal value which means fairness to all, irrespective of the different identities of an individual. Aristotle in his value-ethics theory emphasized 'Justice' as one of the cardinal values.

The idea of justice can be expanded in different domains - for ex- justice among the nations, further within a

a nation, justice transcends from social aspect, to economic and political. Further, the idea of environmental justice is being explored in the recent times.

The absence of any form of the justice makes the conflict inevitable and peace vanishes eventually. Lack of peace keep the society and nations away from development. Let us explore different themes of justice.

It is not long before that World War I was fought among the allied and axis power. Postwar, Treaty of Versailles sought to achieve peace in the world, but the conditions of treaty caused injustice to the axis powers especially Germany. Lack of Justice fuelled rise of fascism in Germany and World War II followed soon.

During the same time in colonial India, the idea of justice was almost absent. Britches unleashed great amount of social,



economic and political justice and hence it kept facing the recurrent small and big rebellions. The revolt of 1857 is the most notable one.

Post freedom, India fought for the justice of newly-independent nations by advocating the principle of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). This movement not only led to decolonization of many African nations but also prevented the nations from joining any military camps which ensured world peace.

Further, in our celebrated constitution, the composite idea of justice is enshrined. It aims for building ~~to~~ a equitable social order where all the social groups have equal access to state's resources. Equitable access is at the root of equitable opportunity. For instance, two kids having unequal access to education can't be asked to compete on similar parameters. It violates the idea of justice.



In the 1970s India, there were strong movements for social justice. ~~of the~~ ~~the~~ Lower caste groups had gone <sup>through</sup> years of injustice. Lack of justice had created grounds for caste-violence and discrimination. Finally the equitable position were given through reservation and some sort of peace prevailed since then. However, the struggle for further justice is still on.

Further in the realm of economy, the unbridled capitalism has challenged the economic justice. Oxfam report shows that <sup>top</sup> 1% of rich Indians cornered more than 70% of wealth generated in 2016-17. This glaring economic inequality has potential to disrupt the peace in society. Economic injustice leads to corruption, crony-capitalism and eventually social unrest. The poor people become prey to anti-social elements and crimes like organized kidnappings, theft etc increase.

Moving to the political justice is aspect of justice is natural in continuation to social and economic. The relative lack of peace in Nepal and Sri-Lanka

is due to ~~the~~ political injustice imposed upon Madhes & Tamil community respectively. In case of Sri Lanka, the injustice caused serious damage to peace and also strained the India-Sri Lanka relations.

Therefore, justice is universal in nature and also an important human value. Lack of justice in our own conduct robs peace out of us. For instance, when we discriminate against someone on basis of color, caste or religion, the feeling of guilt comes to haunt us eventually.

Thus, it can be objectively established that justice and peace co-exist with each other. If there is peace without justice, then that peace is either of the graveyard or the manufactured one, which will fizzle out sooner or later. For instance, the temporal peace which must have followed after the Kalinga War (261 BC) is the peace of graveyards.



Now, the question arises that if justice is all we need for peace then how do we achieve it. John Rawls, a social-contractarian theorist holds the answer. He gives the concept of 'veil of Ignorance', where one is completely ~~aware~~ → un-aware about his/her standing in society. In that position, he/she must be asked as what kind of society, institutions, facilities he/she would need. Rawls says that the person will surely go for just society where - equal facilities and opportunities are present for all.

This concept is also closely linked with the social-contract between state and citizens. Under the contract, it is the <sup>moral</sup> duty of state to provide for all types of justice to its citizens, to lay strong foundation for peaceful society.

In the contemporary world, in any form of governance system, we see that ~~that~~ effective dispensation of justice has led to peace. Returning to our example of Nordic countries, where justice permeates in all aspect



of life, peace prevails. It is why that these nations perform better in World Happiness Index.

The developing nations can take cue from these nations as how to make their administration more transparent and just. The advent of 4th Industrial Revolution and the ensuing digital infrastructure can help fight the injustices. The e-governance addresses the issues of biasness in the persons which cause injustice at first place. Forex-Aadhar backed public welfare schemes do not discriminate among citizens.

Finally, let's conclude with what is needed for the peaceful existence of not one single nation but of entire humankind. Yes, it is about the environmental justice which has certainly been missing in both developed & developing nations. If not addressed swiftly, the <sup>horrific</sup> glimpses of skyscrapers

surrounded with floating cars in  
floods, ~~and~~ ravaging forest fires  
like that of Australia, climate-led  
heat strokes in Arctic etc will become  
order of the day and finally  
engulf the human existence,  
and once again it will be peace  
of graveyard and not of thriving  
human societies.

Let's hope that <sup>principles of</sup> climate

justice prevails over the recent UNFCCC  
summit ~~and~~ at Glasgow so that  
the entire world can march towards  
peace.