

Changing Attitude

Expanding Women Role in Media and Politics



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Expanding Women Role in Media and Politics

Seminars Report

*Women office bearers of political parties in policy
and decision-making*

Myth & Reality

*Gender Discrimination in
Media and Politics*

*Converging Women Perspective:
Press & Politics*

ORGANIZED BY:

wmc

Women Media Centre
Pakistan



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Preface

There has never been an enviable political culture in Pakistan. The political parties oppose each other on the basis of personal and vested interests of a single group instead of political principles, economic program or social strategy. It results in providing opportunities to non-political forces and the Establishment to take advantage and thus they dismiss the elected governments and usurp the power. It will not be correct to say that only the weaknesses and shortfall of the political parties are responsible for this situation because the non-political elements of the state (Military and Civil Bureaucracy) are always planning to create such a situation so that they can take advantage.

It has been unfortunate that media never got an opportunity to play its role in creating unity in the nation. However the Establishment takes care in formulating its strategies because the media has become comparatively stronger and independent for the last few years. We witnessed several expression of national unity on the media in the last two to three years. In a television program the representatives of opposite political forces, the Mutahidda Qoumi Movement, (MQM), the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Jamaat-e-Islami were engaged in a heated discussion and the anchorperson created an environment of unity and harmony and the participants of all the parties after the program visited the office of Jamaat-e-Islami and displayed peace with each other.

It has been a taboo to talk about women in politics and journalism in Pakistan until recent past but the situation is changing now. The Women Media Center (WMC) provided a platform to noted politicians and women journalists where communication between the two was facilitated. They established a meaningful and objective relation. Our job is to identify such probabilities and measures with which the politicians and the women journalists can come closer and their professional performance could be enhanced and they do not feel themselves strangers to each other.

The WMC held seminars on the topics of role of women politicians in decision and policy making processes within their respective political parties, gender inequality in politics and journalism and women perception of politics and journalism. These seminars played a meaningful role to create an objective environment with regard to the news and news sense among the politicians and the women journalists. Now there is women participation in every political unit that reflects a new political environment. It gives us immense pleasure to present the reports of these seminars to our readers and your responses and inputs would be awaited and highly appreciated.

Fauzia Shaheen
Executive Director
Women Media Center-Pakistan

25/12/2006

Women office bearers of political parties in policy and decision-making

Myth & Reality

Hotel Marriot-Karachi

Women Media Center is playing a vital role in introducing effective women participation in Pakistani print and electronic media. In addition, WMC also wants to expand women's role in policy and decision-making on the national issues. WMC's works on the principle that in the matters of policy making and governance, women should be empowered so that gender balance could be promoted in the society.

Under the auspices of Women Media Center a seminar was held on 23 December at

hotel Marriott on the topic "Policy and decision making and women, (Perception and Reality).

Member National Assembly from Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Nafisa Raja, former member National Assembly and renowned industrialist Salma Ahmed, member Sindh Assembly Fariha Haroon Razzaq, leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Seemee Malik and the provincial president women wing PML (N) Soorat Thebo participated in the seminar.

After registration, the Executive Director Women Media Center, Fauzia Shaheen welcomed the guests. In her welcome remarks, she said that Pakistani women had never been empowered to make policies or take decisions regarding issues of the state, Pakistani politics and governance. Whenever women were made head of any institution or department, they gave remarkable results, which is a very encouraging sign. Women tend to focus more on the subject than their counterparts because they take their work very seriously. Despite this different departments, ministries, institutions and services the representation of the women has been very limited and a few departments have never employed women thus never enjoyed their professional talent. As a result of this situation, there is no balance in our society which is required by any society to become civilized and prosperous.

In Pakistan, the women not only lack behind in government or other institutions are also not empowered enough in policy and decision making at their homes. There is no equilibrium in Pakistani society thus there is no any balance of power even in households.

The former president women wing Karachi PPP Nafisa Raja MNA said in her speech that according to the census more than half the population in Pakistan is comprised of women and that women are not getting their justified and proper rights in Pakistan. She said that the change is apparent in social circumstances and the process of change is moving ahead and more changes will take place. She further said that she was very optimistic about the

Member National Assembly from Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Nafisa Raja, former member National Assembly and renowned industrialist Salma Ahmed, member Sindh Assembly Fariha Haroon Razzaq, leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Seemee Malik and the provincial president women wing PML (N) Soorat Thebo participated in the seminar.



*Fauzia Shaheen,
Executive Director of
WMC, chairing the
session.*

capacity of women but they are not provided with opportunities to explore their full potential. There are several women who have not only proved themselves but also have achieved a prominent status in the society. They also laid the foundation of a positive and firm change in the society. Many women have reached to the positions of policy and decision-making. The leader of the largest political party of Pakistan is a woman who has the central role in policy and decision making of the party. At every level women have their role. PPP also has affiliated organizations like Women Wing, Peoples Youth, Student wing, labor wing, lawyers' wing, doctors' wing etc. The women fully participate and play their role at every level in

the party organization as well as in the affiliated wings. Women decide their own organizational issue. They are empowered to take their own decisions. For example the party leader is Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the central secretary information of the party is Sherry Rehman, the provincial information secretary in sindh is Dr. Fahmida Mirza and in Punjab is Farzana Raja. PPP does not have women in the party just to fill in the gap rather they are involved in every issue of the party. There is no gender bias in the party.

Nafisa Raja MNA also said that the women protection bill was tabled by the PPP in the National Assembly and the PPP is fighting for the women rights at every forum. The women

Women in Central Leadership of Political Parties

Total	In Central Leadership	Total	In Central Leadership
31 (website)	5 (1-Dr. Hamida Khorho, Senior Vice-President, 2- Begum Mehnaz Rafie, Vice-President, 3- Smuera Malik, vice president, 4- Mrs. Sajida Nayyar Abidi, vice president, 5- Amna Saleem, Joint secretary Women's share: 16.12% (women wing mentioned on website)		(Naila Qadri, Shazia Baloch, Nadia Baloch, Rubina Balcoh) Women's share: 9%
		9	1 (Yasmin Baloch) Women's share: 11%
		10	No Woman member Women's share: zero %
39 (website)	3 (1-Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, Chairperson 2- Begum Nusrat Bhutto, Rahbar Chairperson, 3- Sherry Rhaman, secretary information) Women's share: 7.69%	9	No Woman member Women's share: zero % Link to JI Women Wing's website (www.khawateen.org) present on party web page
55	4 (1- Benazir Bhutto 2-Begum Afsar Riza Qizilbash 3-Begum Dr. Ashraf Abbasi 4- Senator Mrs. Rukhsana Zuberi) Women's share: 7.27% (No Women Wing on the party website)	18	1 Neelam Shah, vice president Women's share: 5.5% (No women wing on the party website)
29	1 Begum Tehmina Daultana, Vice-President Women's share: 3.44% Women's wing mentioned on website)	11	No Woman member Women's share: zero % Separate Women Wing
		35	No Woman member (Note: According to the party constitution total number of the committee will be 40, including 5 women members)
39	No Woman member. Women's share: 0% (No Women Wing on the Party Website)	16	2 (Ansa Mumtaz Anwar, and Khurshid Afsar) Women's share: 12.5 %
45	4		

Women's Wing of Political Parties

Political Party	Office Bearers
Pakistan Muslim League	1- Sumeira Malik, President 2- Dr.Simin Mahmud Jan, vice president 3- Mrs.Tahira Latif, VP 4- Mrs. Syeda Jawaiddi Fatima, federal capital president 5- Ms. Rehana Aleem Mashhad, Secretary General
Pakistan Muslim League (N)	Begum Ishrat Ashraf, president
Pakistan Peoples Party	Naheed Khan, organizer
Jamaat-e-Islami	Senator Dr. Kausar Firdoos, secretary general
Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam	Recently established
Awami National Party	Mrs. Zahira Khattak, organizer

workers have seen good days and bad days in politics and have learnt from their seniors about the parliamentary issues, rules and regulations and procedures. She said that when girls are not sent to school the doors of opportunities are shut at their faces. They do not get proper medical care. They are treated with bias even at home with regard to food and nutrition. She said that all women from every party should be united on these issues and should table the same bill on the issues concerning women rights. Women should get the economic and social freedom.

Begum Salma Ahmed, President, Women Chamber of Commerce expressed her views,

saying that she started politics in 1977 and she joined Muslim League and is still in the Muslim League. She said that she started her business from a very young age entering in ship breaking industry but before that, her first industry was already established in 1968 thus, she

became the first women industrialist. People got employment with her business and she achieved administrative experience. Her family was not associated with business or industry. Her father was a lawyer and employed in the foreign office. The environment of her father's job and her own job was entirely different. She

faced quite a lot of difficulty in adopting new environment. She said that one cannot progress in the society without money. When women are independent economically, their power is easily accepted. She joined Pir Pagara Muslim League in 1977 and became first woman member of the Central Executive Committee. There were only two women in the Central Executive Committee of the party, the other belonged to Punjab.

She said that in her time as a parliamentarian, there was only handful of women in the national assembly. She was a woman who had her own profession and she played a good role in her area. She said that women can do anything by perseverance. She said that nowadays, Hina Rabbani Khar is working with quite a zeal and intelligence.

She said that President Musharraf has worked a lot with regard to women representation. She said that in India, there are no reserve seats for women. There are two women in Bangladesh and there is no third woman mentionable and these two women are also in politics because their families were already in politics.

Fraeeha Razzaq Haroon, MPA Sindh (PPP) came next and in her speech she said that she is delighted to see that there are 72 women in the national assembly now. Out of them, 60 have come on reserve seats whereas 12 women have directly contested elections against men. Similarly, there are 28 women in Sindh assembly out of which 14 belong to her party. After an struggle of several years, the time has arrived that women voice is echoing in the assemblies. She said that she is a journalist and her mother is one of the founding members



(L to R) Ms. Fariha Razzaq, MPA, PPP, Begum Salma Ahmed, PML (F) and Nafisa Raja MNA, PPP

of the PPP. She said that she had entered in practical politics because of the encouragement of the Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. In her party, her male colleagues discussed peoples' problems with them and when the women talk about women issues then the men in the party understand those issues better. The women struggle is not separate from the overall political democratic struggle. Women are pushed back and it is important to create a sense of equality in them.

Ms. Seemi Malik, Vice president, Muslim League (N)-Women Wing, Sindh, said in her speech that as far as the rights of women are concerned, Pakistani women do not have enough insight to their organizations. To combat this issue, PML-N has started an initiative by building a website to train people on how to communicate with the media. They are taught to prepare press releases and are trained for other things.

Ms. Soorat Thebo, President, Muslim League (N)-Women Wing, Sindh, said that in her view, whether women are associated with media or journalism, they need each other's cooperation to raise their voice. She said that, before talking about the role of women in policy making one should look at Pakistani society and see what is the status of women. This is a society where waderas landlords, sardars and chaudhries rule. In such societies, women face many difficulties in coming out of their homes. Same is the case in political parties where waderas and landlords are present and they influence the decisions of the political parties. In her party, women viewpoint is valued now and in the London meeting held recently, women were invited so that they could participate in the issues of decision making. She further said that she agrees with Salma Ahmed that the money is necessary in Pakistani politics. In Pakistan, the women associated with employment cannot take part in politics. India has the same problem and the women participation in decision and policy making is limited there as well. Male members take all the decisions. Benazir Bhutto is a woman heading Pakistan Peoples Party and has been prime minister twice but men had become a hurdle in her decision. In general, she says that women of every party should raise their voice for their rights.

Recommendations

Following suggestions were given by the participants to strengthen the role of women in policy and decision-making:

- 50% quota should be fixed for women in government offices.
- Women should be given the social and economic independence.
- There's a strong resolution required of women to be successful in every field.
- Women should be given ample importance in parties.
- Belief on hard work instead of a shortcut is required for success.
- Training to communicate objectively with media personnel should be given.
- Need to emphasize on the role of the woman and her importance in policymaking is of utmost importance.



Participants of the seminar

28/12/2006

Gender Discrimination in Media & Politics

Hyderabad

Welcoming the participants, the Executive Director, Women Media Center, Fauzia Shaheen said that she is in the journalism profession for the last 15 years. She wanted to work on important issues and she did that but found out that she was being stopped from working on serious issues. She said that she wanted to be a political reporter or the economic reporter. She did not want to work on fashion, women pages or children pages. She tried her

best to work on real important issues and she did a lot of work but when she felt the need to do more, she took out her own magazine, Dastak which is a progressive magazine which covers a lot of real issues. The magazine is popular not only in common readers but the intellectual fraternity also re-

gard Dastak as the only Urdu monthly which targets real issues. Fauzia Shaheen said that she wanted to remove the problems faced by women journalists and being a strong voice against gender discrimination she started Women Media Center to establish gender equality in the honourable profession of journalism.

She wanted to raise the point in the civil society that women should get equal opportunities as men. She believes that women should not be stopped from taking on any project just because of gender bias.

She said that women were given the opportunity to come on the television screen on the basis of glamour but she came to the fore due to her intellect. The women newscasters on private channels are different from the newscasters of the past on the state run television. These women have their own mind and they do not hesitate to apply that mind. They are continuously proving that they do not lack potential.

Women have achieved a space in politics as member in the assemblies and local body system. But unfortunately they could not get advantage of the opportunity. Women in politics and journalism should work together. When Benazir Bhutto became the prime minister of the country, she got great coverage in the Herald and News Line, both the magazines edited by women Sherry Rehman and Razia Bhatti. She said that if we want our nation to develop and prosper then women in every field and profession would have to prove their capabilities.

The Moderator of the Seminar, renowned journalist and liberal intellectual, Jami Chandio said that the aim of the seminar was to discuss gender inequality in politics and journalism. There are two aspects to this problem; one is the structural composition of different organizations and different representation in the



*Ms. Shabnum Gul
making her speech*

institutions and their role in policy and decision making and administration.

The other aspect is that it is not enough just to have women for the sake of numbers but the question is that whether they are getting equal rights and responsibilities or not. How are they treated in the organizations? What is the approach towards women on the state level?

Renowned journalist and storywriter Shabnam Gul said that she started her career as a freelance journalist. She interviewed about 60 to 70 women from different fields and learnt a lot by interviewing them. She said that women are more considerate than men as they have the ability to empathise. Shabnam Gul was of the opinion that resolve and commitment is the driving force driving a person towards success. She said that Pakistan needs strong people, especially women who can make their mark. They must be able to analyze objectively and be able to point out the issues and their solutions.

The basic thing, she said is how sincere we are with our work and people and how can we reach them. Shabnam Gul said that she belongs to a Baloch family and she used to wear veil. She faced numerous difficulties and hurdles in her career. She said that she knew that she had to convince others not by words but deeds. She thinks that the representation of women in the media is less because people think this profession is bad despite the fact that women from respected families are in this profession. She said that her family stopped her from joining this profession in the beginning and asked her to quit but she continued competing on the television.

The change in the society will only come when everyone starts considering men and as women equal. The president of Sindhiani Tehrik, Nazir Qureshi said that the problem of Pakistani society is that we consider women only as a gender. Since Pakistan is a feudal society the mindsets are all essentially feudal and feudal system stresses on possession and women are also considered as possession.

The media's basic fault, he said was to see women and men separately. As a society as a whole, Pakistanis are usually deprived of their creative nature, giving rise to immense frustration. The media's role should be to clear up the misunderstandings between the genders which now is being addressed. The media

should portray women as courageous, as they have shown immense courage throughout Pakistan's history.

He stressed that women from the lower and lower middle classes have to bear all the difficulties and are continuously under pressure. The media should raise its voice against such injustice.

The owners of newspapers and television channels should make a system which not only monitor the preparation of news reports but also should monitor the reality and facts.

The general secretary Sindhiani Tehrik, Zahida Shaikh said that, it should be kept in mind from which section of the society we are demanding response. It is clear that we are addressing men of the society. Men have the control in the political parties and women do not find courage in them to stand against the opinions of men. The past history of sixty years tell us that the politicians and political parties do not win and come to the assemblies with their own effort with the peoples' support rather they become members with the support of the Establishment. Thus they do not regard peoples' views and such laws are made which can satisfy the Establishment. Similar is the situation with the women who reach the assemblies with the support of their political parties. The parties bind them. They cannot differ with the party decisions so one cannot blame them. We have witnessed that NGOs and media often criticize women parliamentarians but this is wrong because in fact they do not have support of women. Similarly 90 percent of the readers of newspapers who read reports by women reporters are men cannot encourage women because they are aware that if they support the viewpoint of female journalists then they will have to give the same rights in their own home.

Samreen Ghori, a journalist from Hyderabad said that she does not see women participation in political thinking. The law of 37 percent representation of women was made recently. What is the level of the women who have come to the fore as a result as councilor? We have not introduced the women representation rather have introduced a certain number of women. Now it has to be seen that what is the role of women in policy and decision making process? They all seem frightened and think that they will be humiliated if they open their mouth. We did not get women who can stand

on their stance and get their potentials recognized. Now women have come forward and there is a hope that their level will increase.

When, no opportunities are given to women as far as education and jobs are concerned then they would not be able to succeed.

The coordinator Liberal Forum Sindh, M. Parkash said that every political party has separate women wing. It is like the colored edition of newspaper, which is not considered as real party. As long as these wings are not

ended women would not get equal status.

Kanwal Sindhi, a reporter of Sindhi Daily Ibrat, said that we live in a society, which belongs to men. Women are said to be able to only certain things and not able to do some other jobs. You cannot judge women perfor-

mance when you do not provide them opportunity. We talk about media, which has given a lot to the society. Just ten years ago we used to hold seminars with regard to women rights or the women representation in the media. Now all the newspapers have separate women pages. Women Media Center conducts workshop, which should continue holding them.

Freelance journalist Fiza Qureshi speaking on the subject said that she will discuss the education institutions. When the students enter in the field of Mass Communication in our country, I have felt that girls are treated with prejudice. This situation needs review. The female students are not imparted knowledge with the aim that they will practically enter into the field of journalism. They are told to carry out table research and to go to library. They are told to study last six months' newspapers etc. It means they should not go out to the streets. The teachers never allow creating confidence in the female students which is necessary to become journalist. This is the reason that only a few women journalists are seen in the practical journalism.

Amir Raza Memon of Center for Peace and Civil Society said that our society needs

to be made aware of the fact the women and men can work together. A new trend has emerged from Indian Dramas where there are divorces in abundance. One person is marrying several times. In reality this is not happening in Indian and Pakistani societies. We have to find balance between men and women. We have to impart education and training to the people who are writing these kind of dramas. If we are not living in Industrial age then we do not belong to this age. We should get training for becoming a responsible media personality.

The moderator of the programme, Jami Chandio concluding the seminar said that Shabnam Gul gave us a good talk because self-confidence is the biggest weapon of a female journalist. Self-confidence comes with ability. If you know to put across your point of view then you can deal with these problems in politics and journalism. The ability in you to express is very important and useful.

Conclusion, Recommendations

- The gender bias is condemnable whether in politics or journalism. This is demeaning thus this bias must stop in politics and journalism and women should be given equal opportunities in these fields.
- There is a lack of confidence between men and women. This should be removed.
- There are opportunities in politics and journalism but they both require potential and ability. Women should concentrate on increasing their potential.
- It is necessary to adopt balanced thinking on the issue of representation in politics and journalism.
- We need to know different elements of the society to bring any change in the society and for creating a conducive environment for women. We should know that what is available in the circumstances at the moment and what needs to be changed. What are the resources available to us for bringing out any change and what new resources we can create and how. What will be the result of our efforts.



(L to R) Nazir Qureshi, president Sindhiani Tehreek, Shabnum Gul renowned writer and Sabar Rizvi, Sindhi Nari Tehreek

19/06/2007

Converging Women Perspective: Press & Politics

Hotel Avari Tower

First session

A one-day seminar titled 'Converging women perspective: Press and politics' was held at Hotel Avari Towers on June 16th, 2007 and was attended by the media personnel. It began with the registration of the participants and was divided into two sessions, the first session focused on the role of women in the media, while the second session focused on the role of women in politics. The moderator of the session, Executive Director Women Media Center, Fauzia Shaheen said that civilized societies progressed because of the elevated status of women, which was absent from third world countries. However, even with this emancipation, women are being exploited into slave trade or for sexual purposes.

In Pakistan female journalists have not been successful in achieving equal status, with their male counterparts. If the electronic media and information technology had not progressed with rapid speed, the women would have not appeared on television being shown for the last three or four years.

Tahir Najmi the editor Daily Express expressing his views said that women would have to fight the battle to bring more women in journalism. There are several examples of women who have made their name in journalism by their sheer hard work. I think that men and women with potential and abilities make their place and progress. Most unfortunate is that there has not been any change in thinking.

Beena Qayyum Khan, who had worked for

News International before making a move to the electronic media, CNBC Pakistan where currently she is reading the news, said that.

The former employee of the News International and currently the newscaster of CNBC Pakistan, Beena Qayyum Khan said that it is up to women to fight for their rights in every field, especially in the field of journalism. She said it is quite unfortunate that not many women have been able to leave their mark in this field. However, she stressed that sometimes women themselves put hurdles in their way. They have to keep aside their gender and work like a true professional and as journalism is a very demanding job, women have to keep aside their problems regarding not staying for late nights for a story because that way men can easily exploit these weaknesses. She said even in the political arena, women have made their mark since the Pakistan Movement. They collected funds and organized public meetings during those turbulent times. Begum Maratab Ali in Punjab had set up a women committee through which



Beena Qayyum, newscaster, CNBC, Sajjad Mir, Director news TV One, Fauzia Shaheen, Executive director, WMC, Dr. Jabbar Khattak, editor Awami Awaz and Tahir Najmi, editor daily Express

hundreds of women had joined the movement. Fatima Jinnah was made general secretary of this committee. Quaid-e-Azam also attended several meetings of this committee. Fatima Jinnah, Begum Shahnawaz, Begum Kakakhel, Hasan Ara Hafiz-ullah and others faced baton charge and imprisonment. She said that we should not forget the role of women in the Pakistan movement and that women had started taking part in politics even before Pakistan had come into being.

President Pervez Musharraf, she said proved to be better with and gave women their rights and women protection bill was amended, this she stressed was a very positive change because women are not depended on men anymore in the fight for their rights. There are 60 seats in the national assembly and 128 seats in the provincial assemblies are reserved for women. In addition, women are also applying for their party ticket to contest in the general elections. A total of approximately one thousand women will be taking part in the coming elections, which will be the largest number of women participating in elections. It is unfortunate that women could not have acquired their due status despite the fact that Begum Rana Liaquat Khan, Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and Zubaida Jalal have been striving for.

The editor Sindhi Daily 'Awami Awaz' and senior vice president, Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors, Jabbar Khatak speaking on the topic said that our society which is male dominated is not ready to give women their rights in any case and the women who come into these profession after passing through obstacles which are there in the society. A particular section of the society has erected hurdles with a view not to let these women come forward and progress. The credit of 33 percent representation on women in the assembly goes to President Musharraf but this is also true that women are not included in policy and decision making and they have been there as decoration pieces. Everyone has witnessed the violence used against Shazia Mari in Sindh assembly. There are many other instances where women have been stopped from going ahead but the greater conflict is the conflict of ideology. Our women are called eastern women. The society exploits women with every means and we should fight against this exploitation. Women, he said are portrayed in the media as weaker sex who can not work

for long hours or during the night time and it is said that they do not have the potential to walk with men shoulder to shoulder. Despite all this women have exemplary role in the media and politics and especially in English and electronic media their performance is there for all of us to see.

In the end, the former editor Nawa-I-Waqt and currently News Director TV One, Sajjad Mir said that the active role of women is a good thing but he has some reservations. We have made a slogan of Women Empowerment. Changing agenda cannot change the nature of a nation. For example, when women movement arrived at our door in the twentieth century, its shape had changed but it had started with the demand of voting rights to women because until the beginning of 20th century women did not have the right to vote and the Western society which is ready to teach us a lot of things was of the view that women and animals do not soul. Reaction started in the Western society against the ideology and thus the women movement began. Problem is that nothing is achieved by political slogans. However, the situation has changed to a large extent but sometime, he said he felt that we also probably think in our sub-conscience that women do not have soul.

Moderator of the first session of the seminar, Fauzia Shaheen in her concluding remarks said that media has its own demands which are changing with time and as the environment will become conducive then women importance will also increase in media and/or politics. She said that if Faiza Daud was not a reporter working with ARY then any man could have not been able to do such a good program from inside Jamia Hafsa. It means that there will be slowly realization of need of women in the media and women will get a place according to their importance. When women acquire important offices in the media then in reality their approach of thinking will also change. They will not only think differently for women in the media but also women in the society. Recently, women ministers meeting was held in Vienna in which Condoleezza Rice told that there is no woman present in any of the sections at any important office in the UN department which works with regard to conflict resolution. Similarly, for the very first time German Chancellor, Angela Marker was presiding over the G 8 meeting, the very first time in that meeting

she tabled the issue of gender equality. We think that the situation would get better with time slowly and gradually. Neither a man can take woman's place nor can a woman replace a man. They both are equal and should be treated as equal human being.

Second Session

The topic of the second session was "women viewpoint in politics". The moderator of this session was renowned journalist the editor of Daily Awam Nazir Laghari. He said that history proves that women's role in politics has been an important one. In the last century in the 60s a few women came to the fore notably Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Mrs. Golda Meyer. Both have left deep imprints on politics and their approach came out as very aggressive. The third Asian woman was Mrs. Bandra Naik. She also has political background like Indira Gandhi as her husband was a freedom fighter of Sri Lanka who had played a very important role in the independence of Sri Lanka. Afterwards Benazir Bhutto, Mrs. Khalida Zia and Shaikh Hasina Wajid emerged in the political picture. Other than governance, the women are also prominent in the peoples movement. For example, women played an effective role in Muslim League and Congress in the sub-continent. Congress had a vibrant and dynamic personality in Mrs. Naido. She used to mesmerize people with her speeches. In Europe including Britain, women played a vital and effective role in politics. Currently the Chancellor of Germany is a woman. Margaret Thatcher was three times prime minister of Britain. Women have played central role in politics all over the world. If Kulsoom Nawaz had not accompanied her husband in exile, she would have been a prominent politician in the country. The number of women is increasing in Pakistani politics. We should encourage this trend.

A senior leader of Pakistan Peoples Party, Habib-ud-din Junaidi said that the nations that have realized that no society can progress without giving the women their due rights, have progressed unlike the developing world where this concept is relatively new. As Pakistanis he said that are not ready to give women their rights or share in representation. When any section of the society is pushed against the wall or denied their rights then there will certainly

be an adverse reaction. However, the societies have realized that society cannot develop without women participation. In our country, women are under the pressure the most with regard to economy and finance. Pakistan is an agricultural country and if you go to rural areas you will observe that women contribute 90 percent in country's economy. They are carrying stones and doing jobs in construction industry without proper clothing and even they do not have shoes in their feet. We do not want to keep women backwards in the name of religion or on some other pretext. We do not believe in inequality. The leader of Pakistan Peoples Party is Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, a woman. This is a proof that we believe that women should be in leadership role.

Haider Abbas Rizvi, member of national assembly and belonging to the Mutahidda Qoumi Movement (MQM) said that it is quite unfortunate that we can only trust a woman as mother, wife and daughter but we are not ready to see her as a media person or politician. The basic hurdles in this regard is said to be our religion Islam in their view. In my view this is not true reflection of Islam. If Islam was against women empowerment and political role for women then in the times of Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) women would have not taken active part in the battles. In Muslim history women have worked shoulder to shoulder with men in every era. The Karbala tragedy is the most important incident of Muslim history and women played very important role. Especially the revolutionary role Hazrat Zainab (AS) played is visible to all. Similarly women have played important role in Pakistani politics. MQM utterly believes that not only women should come out in media and politics but also they should be given opportunities in every field.

The last speaker of the second session, president PML (N) Salim Zia in his speech said that what to talk about women, unfortunately



Participants of the seminar

our political system does not give rights to even men and. If a man comes forward in the political process he is lashed, sent to jail and hanged. In our society there is no ideal situation for women. Democracy is the most important for women participation in politics. More democracy means

more opportunities for women participation in politics. Those women have reached the assemblies who have been nominated by their parties and this is the reason that they have no or less importance. Improvement in our society, according to him is possible and it will help to end the obsolete

reserved seats for women. The parliamentary group has stronger role in their nomination as party candidate as compared to their personal popularity or their services for the party. Women parliamentarians are not free in policy and decision making and have to function according to the party policy, instruction and strategy. They are not free to take any decision after applying their own mind. In our country, for tabling any privilege motion, postponement motion or resolution, one has to consider the party policy.

Similarly, in the print and electronic media women journalists are not included in chalking out the policy and the process of decision making. There are some particular pages marked for women journalists to work for. The way women are not given equal share and status in social life, the same way they do not have equality in politics and journalism. Renowned editors, journalists and distinguished politicians participated in the seminar.



*Mr. Haider Abbas Rizvi,
MNA, MQM and Mr.
Saleem Zia Sindh President,
PML (N).*

traditions like honor killings, marriage to the Holy Book and forced marriages etc.

Recommendations

- Media should provide opportunities to women in their channels, newspapers and magazines. If a free environment is provided to women then women would rule politics, media and other fields.
- Women should be given representation at all level so that they can work as social and political workers. Help in voters registration and work for women rights.
- Women should be brought in the parliament not only on reserved seats but also through general elections so that their empowerment can enhance.

Conclusion

It was observed during the course of this seminar that despite effective women representation in the national and provincial assemblies, they are not truly and effectively included in political measures and activities and decision and policy making. Women reach senate, national and provincial assembly mainly through

Introduction



Women Media Center-Pakistan

Women Media Center (WMC) is a nonprofit organization working to provide research and training facilities to the women in media.

It is an exceptional organization with respect to its ideology and working. It realizes the feeble nature of Pakistani democratic structure and limited women representation in the media. WMC is working to promote creativeness in ideas amongst women so that their recommendations can become a part of policies of the country.

WMC is currently working on several projects which if implemented can enable women journalist to work in a professional environment so that not only democracy could be strengthened but also focus could be directed towards other critical social issues.

WMC has begun working in the largest Pakistani city Karachi. We wish to reach not only other parts of Pakistan but also to extend our efforts to South Asia.



National Endowment for Democracy, USA

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is a private, nonprofit organization created in 1983 to strengthen democratic institutions around the world through nongovernmental efforts. The Endowment is governed by an independent, nonpartisan board of directors. With its annual congressional appropriation, it makes hundreds of grants each year to support pro-democracy groups in Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and the former Soviet Union.

The Endowment is guided by the belief that freedom is a universal human aspiration that can be realized through the development of democratic institutions, procedures, and values. Democracy cannot be achieved through a single election and need not be based upon the model of the United States or any other particular country. Rather, it evolves according to the needs and traditions of diverse political cultures.

Women Media Center-Pakistan

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