

## **Women's, The Leading Voice in Pakistan**

### **Mr. Saboor Ahmed KAKAR (Pakistan)**

Like other developing countries, women in Pakistan make significant contributions in agriculture, household, sports, journalism, academia and other rural activities directly or indirectly. Despite the recent increase in the proportion of working women, the number is still quite small. The main reason for the low involvement of women in economic activities is various socioeconomic constraints, which hinder women's participation in the labour market. Married women remain at home because of several commitments. They have to look after their children and family, and perform numerous household chores. The social commitment in their families bind them as housewives and they accept this commitment without any hesitation.

The decision-making in Pakistan has been regarded as a predominant male prerogative. Women are largely neglected in social, economic, political and legal spheres. Some progress has been made in the enhancement of women in all areas of society, but it is not satisfactory. Women labour force participation in Pakistan at 28% is ranked the lowest in the South Asian region. The share of women's earnings in earned income is 26% of men's. Various studies have been carried out to analyse the labour force participation of women in Pakistan. One of the studies found that rural women were extensively involved in many agricultural and livestock rearing operations, processing of dairy products, poultry and handicrafts. They also perform household chores besides these productive activities. The effect of residence on women labour force participation in urban areas is negative in all provinces and in the overall analyses of Pakistan. The activity rates of rural women depend to a large extent on the social status of the household concerned. Landlessness or land ownership is generally indicative of the poverty or richness respectively of a household. Household incomes are inversely related to women activity rates. Women participation rates fell as a result of increase in rural incomes. In recent years, the increased mechanization of agriculture in Pakistan has also tended to contribute to a decline in rural women's participation rates. In rural areas, women have remained involved in a variety of agricultural activities for a long time, such as land preparation, seed preparation, collecting farmyard manure, weeding and harvesting. Women also undertake the responsibility of cleaning, drying and storage of grains. This increases their workload after the harvesting operations. Taking care of livestock is by and large the responsibility of women. They collect fodder, clean sheds and process animal products.

In 2012 the government revived the National Commission on Status of Women which had been established by General Pervez Musharraf for three years in 2000, and had been revived later for three years at a time. The bill moved by the government established the commission as a permanent body with the task to ensure the implementation of the legislation to protect women and combat abuses against women. In February 2012, the Mutehda Qoumi Movement held the world's largest women's political rally in Karachi, with an estimated 100,000 women in

attendance. Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf PTI has the credit to bring women into the mainstream politics of Pakistan and now the women in Pakistan are contesting in local bodies election as well as in general elections.

In Pakistan, women's access to property, education, employment etc. remains considerably lower compared to men's. The social and cultural context of Pakistani society is predominantly patriarchal. Around 90% of the Pakistani households are headed by men and most female-headed households belong to the poor strata of the society.

Women lack ownership of productive resources. Despite women's legal rights to own and inherit property from their families, very few women have access to and control over these resources. Women's rights in Pakistan are considered equal under Pakistan's dual system of civil and Sharia law. The rights are accorded to women by Pakistan's Islamic Republic Constitution of 1958 and consolidated in 1973, which outlawed gender discrimination on all levels. Nevertheless, women face significant challenges in society and the economy and confront a slow lower courts judicial system in order to get justice.

A census has not been carried out in Pakistan since 1998, but the recent statistics from UNICEF show that the female literacy rate has risen significantly from a paltry 39.6 % to a much improved rate of 61.5% for 15- to 24-year-olds. This is a highly significant factor given that 70% of Pakistan's population is under 30.

Pakistan has the Nobel Peace Prize champion Malala Yousafzai, the Oscar award winner Sharmen Obaid Chinoi, and Samina Baig the first Pakistani woman to climb Mount Everest. Pakistan is rising towards development and peace. We hope that soon women in Pakistan will be equal to men in every sphere of life as promised by the Constitution of Pakistan, and will be the leading voice in Pakistan.



Nobal Peace Prize Winner Malala



Samina bag First Pakistani Women to climb Mount Everest