

**WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATIZATION:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF UZBEKISTAN AND RUSSIA, 1991-2013**

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**RASHMIREKHA BEHERA**



**CENTRE FOR RUSSIAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES**

**SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY**

**NEW DELHI-110067**

**2017**



# JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies

School of International Studies

New Delhi-110067

Tel.: (O) +91-11-2670 4365  
Fax: (+91) - 11-2674 1586, 2586  
Email: crcasjnu@gmail.com

Date: 21-07-2017

## DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entailed “**Women’s Participation in the process of Democratization: A comparative study of Uzbekistan and Russia, 1991-2013**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The Thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

*Rashmirekha Behera*  
Rashmirekha Behera

## CERTIFICATE

We recommended that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

*A. Upadhyay*  
Prof. Archana Upadhyay  
Chairperson (CRCAS)

*Dr. Preeti D Das*  
Dr. Preeti D Das  
Supervisor

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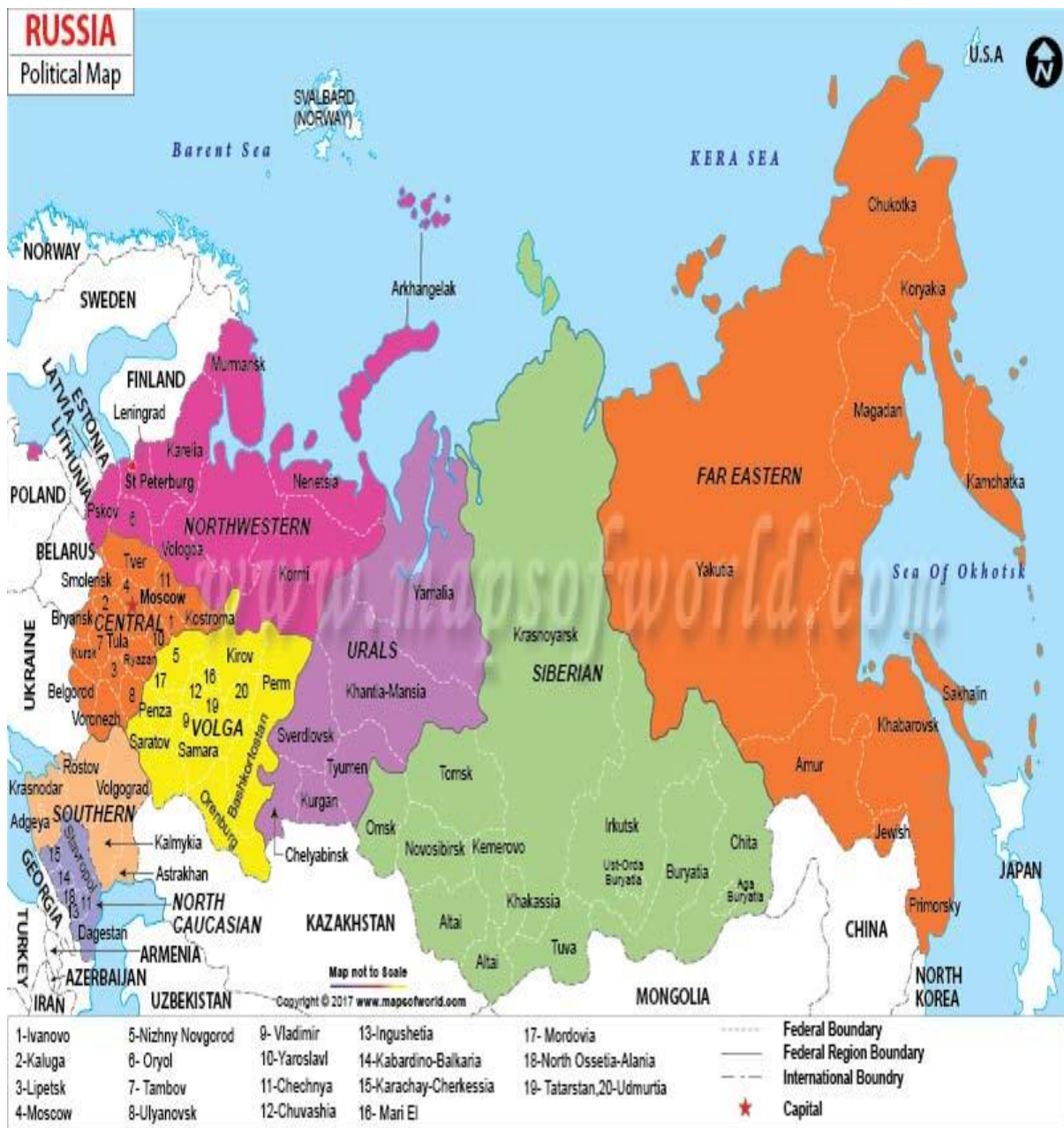
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# MAP OF UZBEKISTAN



Source: <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/uzbekistan-political-map.htm>

# MAP OF RUSSIA



Source: <https://www.google.co.in>

## **ABBREVIATION**

ARWE :	Association of Russia among women Entrepreneurs
BPFA:	Beijing Platform for Action
BWA:	Business Women Associations
CEC:	Central Election Commission
CEDAW:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPSU:	Communist Party of Soviet Union
ECDC:	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
FCEM:	Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises Mondiales
GAD:	Gender and Development Approach
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
ILO:	International Labour Organization
IOM:	International Organization For Migration
IPU:	Inter Parliamentary Unit
IWF:	Independent Women's Forum
KPRF:	Communist Party of Russian Federation
LFPR:	Labour force participation rate
LPG:	Liberalization, privatizations and Globalization
LSS:	Living Standards Strategy
MCGS:	Moscow Centre For Gender Studies
MDG:	Millennium Development Goals
MP:	Members of Parliament
MSME:	Micro, Small, And Medium-Sized Enterprise
NGOs:	Non-governmental organization
NSS:	National Security Service
OECD:	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE:	Organization For Security And Cooperation In Europe
ISOSCEPA:	International Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
PDP:	People's Democratic Party
PDPU:	People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan

PEC:	Precinct Election Commissions
RSFSR:	Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic
SMD	Single-Member Districts
UN:	United Nations
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
URW:	Union of Russia's Women
UAW:	Ural Association for Women
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development
USD:	United States Dollar
USSR:	United Soviet Socialist Republic
WID:	Women in Development
WIS:	Welfare Improvement Strategy

## GLOSSARY

aksakal – head of the mahalla

*Dekhan* — household (farm)

hokim – presidential representative who is the head of the khokimiyat

*hokim* ----local leaders

JokargyKenes – the Parliament of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, an autonomous regional administration in Uzbekistan

*kalym*---bride price

*Kamolot*--social movement of the Youth.

*kengashes*– council of people’s deputies; a local elected assembly

khokimiyat – local governing body

*Komsomol*---All-Union Leninist Young Communist League

*Local Currency* — Uzbekistan soum (SUM)

mahalla – a community-based organization or council that comprises citizens from a neighborhood, village, or settlement; they are formal structures run by committees, with an elected chairperson, and fulfill local self government functions

*Mahalla* — a small (village-level) traditional assembly of citizens: these have been revived as community organizations during the transition period

*Mardikhor* — informal labor market

*mardikhors*- Female mardikors (day laborers) rush towards a potential client at a laborer muster point in the Ferghana Valley. With the economy in an unremitting funk, many women in Uzbekistan are resorting to this day-laboring way of life.

mardikor bazaar – informal job bazaar

merab – manager of agriculture water supplies

*Okrug*----administrative division for oblasts

OliyMajlis – the National Assembly, the Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan

*Raion* — district

shirkat – former state farms that were restructured as collective enterprises

*Shirkat* — joint stock forming enterprise Currency Equivalents

suvokava – district water supply and delivery organization

*Synovia*----*sons*

tuman – district

*Tuman*---(district)

*Viloyat/oblast* — region (12 plus Tashkent city, which has the same status as a region, and the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan)



# Chapter-1

## Gender and Democratization-A Theoretical Framework

### 1.1 Introduction

Democratization is a process where political parties and civil society organizations including diverse ethnic groups, communities, and citizens of the society can equally participate in overall management and functioning of that society. As a result, women have been given a space for political participation and representation in the democratic process of Uzbekistan and Russia also since 1991 though not significant. Globally, a number of women claim the right to political representation as a public recognition of their abilities, as national administrators and as political leaders. They demanded the provision of political space for women at par with men. In practice, women activists and women movements all over the world demanded the end of patriarchal domination, which was regarded as the root cause of gender inequality in societies. Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the early feminists, wanted women to act as “autonomous decision makers” and be economically independent. Radical feminists like Kate Millet asserts, that women should have more powers in the decision-making process, including the access of women to state resources, socio – political benefits, and overall protection.

Practically, all-modern democracies guarantee equality of status and equal treatment of the law to all its citizens irrespective of their gender. Women’s status in the society remains a fundamental issue, as the question of their empowerment has not received its due credit. Participatory Democracy of C.B. Macpherson emphasizes the importance of equal participation of all the citizens. He also believes that it would not only help in ending the inequalities from the society but would also help in developing an equitable political system. Political Scientist like Rousseau, J.S. Mill and Bentham have emphasized the need for the involvement of people in various spheres of political life. However, the nature and extent of participation in public life have not always been uniform in every society and every form of government. They also argue that the liberation of humanity is unimaginable without the liberation of women. According to Mill’s point of view, the equality among men and women in all the spheres such as legal,

social and political constructs favorable circumstances for freedom and democratic way of life.

In fact, strong authoritarian leaders like Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin in Russia and Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan since 1991 have ruled their respective countries and none of these leaders ever denied women from their equal participation either constitutionally or ideologically. Despite this, till 2013 women representation in national parliament of Uzbekistan was only 22 % while in Russia it was only 13.6 %, whereas their population in Uzbekistan was 51% and in Russia 53.54%. There is a lack of women representation in public life and decision-making bodies especially with regard to their representation in the parliament. Hence, women participation in politics is low both in Russia and Uzbekistan. The position of women participation in Uzbekistan is better than the participation of Russian women in the lower house. Nevertheless, the political participation and representation of women are relatively low in comparison to men in both the countries.

It is to be noted that, the lesser representation of women is not only the end product of reluctance on the part of voters to vote for women in Uzbekistan and Russia; but also connected with the process of nomination of candidates. For example in Russia out of total seat of 450, women are only 57, i.e. only 12.7% represented in the lower house of parliament. Despite such a low representation of women, there is no quota for women, which was once part of Soviet Union. This highlights the need to understand the main factors, which are concerning the decrease in the percentage of women in the various elections in both Uzbekistan and Russia. Now both Uzbekistan and Russian democracies are facing new challenges for women and hindrances to their realization of opportunities in the present context of globalization.

The present chapter introduces the political situation along with the position of women in both Uzbekistan and Russia. The chapter gives a theoretical understanding of gender and women's participation in the democratization process. An attempt has been made to discuss some major feminist theories and the theories of political participation and women's representation.

## **1.2 Conceptual Understanding of Democratization**

As has already been pointed out democratization is a process that has equal representation of different social sections, division of society, irrespective of gender. These divisions can be reflected differently in different countries. Political parties, social groups, civil society organizations etc. may represent the common interest of diverse communities, section of the society. Hence, it can also be characterized by a multi-party system of government based on regular free and fair elections with legally and constitutionally recognized opposition parties to have healthy debates. As Stephanie Lawson argues, any regime, which does not permit the articulation of free political ideas, is not worthy of the healthy democracy. Therefore, for the success of democratization process the existence of multi party system is crucial and at the same time the existence of civil society organizations such as voluntary associations, interest groups, and trade unions, women groups, NGOs, media, religious organizations and the other socio-economic institutions are equally important. Since, democracy is based on the principle of equality, liberty, right, and justice, therefore, the participatory democracy also tries to focus on the inclusive nature where the minority, tribes, and women can be included in the democratization process and play the equal role in the socio-political and economic spheres.

Ultimately, the State's role is crucial in the democratization of society and political system. The notion of states refers to the degree to which the administrative and legal order in a country is compatible with the interests of individual members of the political community. Here, it can be argued that women also constitute important part of the state, which lays the foundation for democratization. There is a general agreement that an organization with state-like attributes is a necessary condition for the pursuit of a democratic form of governance.

Consequently, democratization is a continuous process that best accommodates social diversity and gender divisions and diverse groups can voice their grievances in a peaceful manner. Development of a democratic culture means expanding equal participation to all sections and sub sections of the society. Modern nation - states are working in electoral democracies towards democratic stability in terms of avoiding disintegration of society on the basis of social division. Thus, democracy is consolidated with the role of civil society and similar other organizations. According to Larry Dimond democratization takes place in two phases. In the first phase transition to democracy, political change takes place from

military or one party regime to multiparty system, whereas, in the second, political parties play a key role in the democratic consolidation. Here, the civil society organization, women's organizations and groups may play a crucial role for democratic consolidation in a country. In fact, during the democratic transition phase, civil society organizations become active in order to end the authoritarian rule for inaugurating democracy. Despite its internal differences, civil society is united with the common goal (Dimond, L 1996:22).

### **1.3 Concept of Empowerment**

The concept of women empowerment implies to an increase in the participation of women in the decision making process. It also aims at according them important position of power in the decision making and representative bodies. It guarantees them fully fledged access to opportunities concerning employment, finance and property (Hatim 2001). The concept of empowerment is associated with the attainment of control over issues concerning one's life. The issues include resources, ideology and self confidence. Thus empowerment of women would imply greater self confidence and utilization of their potential to further their ability, career and personality. According to Huyer and Sikoska (2003) women's empowerment is a process which propels women to establish them as capable of making decisions and choices concerning their lives, the concept of women empowerment with regards to development was taken account at after the Beijing conference. The Beijing Declaration, 1995 recognizes women empowerment as a main factor for development. "Women's empowerment and their full participation having equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development, and peace." Women empowerment can also be viewed as a continuum of several interrelated and mutually reinforcing components (Sahay 1998).

Naila Kabeer, argues that the idea of empowerment can be conceptualized through the interaction between agency, resources and achievements. The concept of agency denotes the procedure of decision making. It is basic premise of the empowerment process. Resources are the means to achieve and exercise agency which leads to achievements as it outcome. So, women empowerment is necessary for the development. Today a large numbers of countries have started introducing different programs and policies to empower women (Kabeer 2015:14).

## 1.4 Understanding Gender

Gender is the importance accorded by the society to the biological division of male and female and their functional role in the society. Gender discrimination in legislation acts as an obstacle for women to further their potential in society. Their potential in the fields of politics, business and professional capabilities stands impaired due to biases in legislations. In all the Central Asian countries, during the soviet period, women threw off their “*Paranja*” – an Islamic dress that is used by women to cover the whole body. It is noteworthy that during Soviet rule the state had gender sensitive laws to ensure justice and equality among genders. Quotas were introduced and indoctrinated in educational institutions, government, parliamentary and executive bodies. There was reservation of seats even in the soviet army. Emancipated and educated by the liberal soviet education, the older generation encouraged young women to pursue higher educational qualification and professional training. This enabled the women to have access to opportunities and achieve professional success. However, all these provisions changed the scenario after the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991. Women were forced to return to their traditional gender roles in the newly independent Central Asian republics. Along with the process of democratization the major changes occurred in Uzbek society due to restoration process of traditional Uzbek culture and religion. This was also the time when Uzbek nationalism was reformulated and national consolidation was going on (Buckely 1989).

However, in Russia advocating the principle of equality, the approach of USSR was based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Priority was given to political participation and Representation men and women equally. Necessary steps were taken to provide opportunities for women to solve the challenges faced by them. Women replaced men under war conditions and a number of women obtained administrative status and were admitted to leadership and decision-making positions.

In order to understand the ongoing changes occurring in Uzbekistan a reference to international approaches towards women are of significance. As the theoretical structure provides a special platform, or dimensions, through which one can discuss and approach the social issues. Theoretical frameworks include specific theories dealing with different perception or understanding of one and the same socio-political or cultural challenge.

### **1.4.1 Feminist View**

Feminism has been used to describe a political, cultural or economic movement that aimed at giving equal rights and opportunities to women. The feminist movement rose to women's suffrage since the 1980s mainly for women's right to vote. It then focused on the ideas and actions associated with the women's liberation movement along with the demand for equal distribution and share in socio-economic and political fields.

Based on the principles of Marxism, feminist theories have questioned the evolutionary underpinnings of modernization. They advocated the idea that history of human society is a continuous movement towards development of forces of production. They visualized development as a strategy to combat scarcity to generate material abundance that is viewed as a necessary condition for resolving individual conflicts over resources. Implicit in both Marxist and liberal theory is the assumption of a simple correlation between labor force participation and women's status. Both theories fail to recognize women's work in informal economic and political spheres or identify the cultural factors that determine traditional role and status of women in the society. Their gender-blind categories hardly apply to household work, re-production, procreation, which includes childbearing and childrearing (Verma 2004). Nonetheless, the Feminist theorists have attacked Marx's theory of exploitation as too narrow to encompass all forms of oppression and are dominating. Exploitation, as defined by a standard theory of exploitation, is mainly appropriation of surplus-labour time and thereby it views household work under capitalism, outside the sphere of production.

In the early stages, development theorists focused on women's family-related responsibilities, marital status, fertility, family planning and childcare. They accepted domestic work as the domain of female activity and advocated the possession of skills that would make women perform tasks within that domain. The concept of 'Gender' emerged from the critique of Women in Development (WID). WID is an approach that focused on eradicating poverty and implementing efficiency measures to augment development programs. The analysis of the subordinate position of women in the framework of social relations was started by Gender and Development approach (GAD). This approach in the 1980s sought to confront the gender based hierarchy in institutions, organizations and practices (Verma 2004).

Nevertheless, these feminist critiques have been extended to spheres of international law and justice. During the UN Decade for Women, many attempts were made to recognize women's rights and violence against women, which was reframed as human rights issue at the Vienna Conference (1993). Resistance to universal standards for women's rights has come from religious-minded scholars, post-structural feminists, and non-liberal states. From these different positions, challenges to the principle of universalism have been there, such as moral standards are decided by cultural values. Conservative states specifically argue that the idea of rights are of western origins and have little meaning for other cultures; for example human right entails an ideology based on possessive individualism and thus ignores the value placed on the individual vis-a-vis the social unit of which he or she is a part (Verma 2002: 177). Simultaneously, the international dictates of women's right often interferes with the cultural and religious standards at national level. Another major problem is enforcing women's rights means that special attention is given to the private sphere which implies reinterpreting the notions of female dignity, autonomy and sexuality that are embedded in the cultural norms and institutions defined by religion. Further, there is disagreement amongst feminist scholars about whether a violation of rights occurs due to the presence of gendered ideologies or due to the global contradictions of capitalism.

Communitarian or Eco-feminists like Vandana Shiva have contributed to a critique of the dominant development model, by questioning the epistemological framework of western science as the only valid way of arriving at knowledge and as the ultimate justification for all institutionalized violence. Along with other scholars working on development, she postulates the need for 'people's science' to develop an alternative model of development with diverse groups. Taking some of these arguments further, studies on the impact of changing technologies on women workers have also found that despite all their present gains, there is no significant improvement in women's autonomy, general skills or powers of making production related decisions (Verma 2004).

### **1.4.2 Mary Wollstonecraft**

Wollstonecraft Mary often considered the first feminist, who was an early pioneer of women's rights. Her best-known work "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)" is an attack on the chauvinistic conventions of her time. Wollstonecraft is a liberal feminist who advocated the idea that women being a part of human species should be accorded the

same privileges as men. She propagated the humanist idea of feminism. In her study she finds that specifically the Muslim women of East and Turkey are losing their dignity and she, thus, appeals those eastern women and men must be westernized in order to be free. She put forth the ideology that under patriarchy, women are prisoners to the embodied psyche. The patriarchal fetters of existing power structures limit the sense of agency, self, rationality and knowledge in women. The women are conditioned around confined social constructs. They are raised with the existential idea to perform the role of an attractive partner for men. This convoluted concept of fulfilling a meager social function conflates their psyche and senses with rudimentary experiences of their physical self. She held the view that women are regarded and respected socially in relation to their physical self and sexual function (Botting 2016:163).

Wollstonecraft views family as a functional model of society. It exists as a voluntary unit between equals. A virtuous and just society is based on the principles of equality. In order to have a real society, it is imperative for women to have the same rights and freedom of status as that of a man. Women constitute the other half of human population. The concepts of reason, natural rights and social contract must be extended to women as well. She emphasizes the importance of education in being instrumental in bringing about social change. Education entails enlightenment and emancipation. This leads to the eradication of social evils. Hence the state should provide for equality, justice and liberty to its citizens (Farina, et al., 2012).

Immanuel Kant, in the backdrop of French Revolution, used an abstract approach to defend human rights. In spite of his moral universalism, he wasn't in favor of granting political rights to women in modern republics. He viewed them from a lens of prejudice and felt that they were incapable of rational self-governance. Wollstonecraft exposed the prejudices existing against women but she failed to critically explain the range of cultural biases that limited the universalism of her feminist argumentation (Botting 2016).

### **1.4.3 Liberal Feminism**

Liberal feminism was the earliest school of feminist thought. Liberalist ideology has been always intrigued by the idea of gender equality. It is based on the premise of individualism. It advocates for the equal treatment of all individuals irrespective of their gender, race, colour, creed or religion. The sole parameter to judge an individual should be



based on rationality, character, talent and personality. Discrimination on the grounds on gender or sex should be removed. Thus the primary aim of liberal feminists is to break down the existing legal and social barriers that hinder the success of women. They seek to increase the participation of women in public and political spheres. This in turn would promote equal opportunities and justice among women and men and bring about a change in the political scenario. According to liberals, men and women have differential preferences and characteristics. Women's inclination towards family and domestic life is shaped by a natural urge for caring and nurturing. Liberal scholars such as Keohane (1989, 1998) were influenced by the feminist thinking. He gave the idea of complex interdependence and institutional alteration which is a broader and more gender-sensitive formulation. However, he criticized the inclination of some feminist scholars towards postmodern or post-structural methodologies. He insisted that knowledge can only be furthered by developing testable hypotheses (Heywood 2011:419).

#### **1.4.4 Radical Feminism**

Radical Feminism, first emerged in 1960s in the United States, radical feminism concurred with existing radical movement of the sixties. According to it, the existence of dominant patriarchal institutions have denigrated and devalued the position of women throughout the course of history. According to radical feminists, many societies and cultures were matriarchal in their early stages of development. This was taken over by complex patriarchal institutions and economic structures. Often lesbian or leftist in orientation, radical feminists advocate the complete overhaul of cultures and institutions in order to eliminate the oppression of women. They often focus on specific issues such as abortion, rape, sexism, and the political nature of personal experience.<sup>1</sup>

#### **1.4.5 Cultural feminism**

Cultural feminism grew out as an offshoot of radical feminism. It is different from radical feminism in its perspective towards the assigning of power. It accords greater agency and authority to women in comparison to men. It focuses on building communities amongst women. It evaluates the differentiating factors between men and women and promotes "women's ways". The ways of women stems biological and social roles of women. Work

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid

that has traditionally been associated with women such as the rearing of children is assigned a very positive value, and social transformation is seen as replacing competitive and destructive male ways with nurturing and constructive female ways.

However, Cultural feminism has a tendency to underestimate strategic and oppositional political activity. It does not consider differences among women, especially those differences that result from their different racial and class backgrounds and their different historical situations. It also has a tendency to see gender as an essential rather than a contingent category and to see male/female differences as binary oppositions.

#### **1.4.6 Post-modernism feminism**

Post-modernism feminism is different from cultural feminism in a way that it views the categories of “male” and “female” in a different way. It rejects constructions of binary gender. Gender is viewed in relation to race and ethnicity and to social contexts that destabilize identity, including gender identity. Emphasis is placed on difference within the category “woman,” hence differences in sexual orientation, race, and social class are foregrounded, and ramifications that endeavor to overcome the specificities of time and place are criticized.<sup>2</sup>

#### **1.4.7 John Stuart Mill’s Views**

John Stuart Mill is a liberal feminist whose one moral theory and perception of human nature of the liberal feminist whose moral theory, and his views of human nature have important implications for his liberal political philosophy. It can be stated that Mill’s notion of humanity involves the idea of self-development. The core premise of Mill’s theory is the importance on the internal culture of the individual which involves development of individual’s capacity and feelings. This is in tandem with the principles of a feminist ethic of care. He also, argues in the course of moral growth children must be socialized to feel connected to others and to take pleasure in their happiness and wellbeing. Mill believes that “it is essential that women, as well as men, have genuine choices about the commitments and pursuits of their lives. This conception of autonomy as self-determination and power over our lives is consistent with feminist vision. Many

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

feminist writers eloquently elaborate upon the significance of empowerment and self-determination for women and the harm is done to women when they are denied these goods. Other writers are more ambivalent about the value of autonomy for women” (Donner 1993).

#### **1.4.8 Multiculturalists Views of Feminism**

Will Kymlicka, one of the main exponents of multiculturalism, explain that the liberal view of self perceives individuals as free beings. The individuals are free to question their role and participation in social conventions around them. They are at will to opt out of any desolate social practices. They are defined irrespective of their belonging in any economic, religious, sexual or recreational relationship. They have the agency to question and reject any such relationship. This view has been widely criticised by communitarians. According to them, it does not explain the position of self in the existing social conventions. The self is an inherent part of the society and any definition of self should always account for the social relationships it is embedded in (Donner 1993).

In the context of feminism, Charles Taylor perceives discussion on the suitable understanding of needs as necessary for two main reasons. The first concern is to examine and emphasize the incongruity between definite discernment against men and equality or “de jure”. The second concern is to elude the over widespread arrangements used to tag deprived situations and disadvantaged groups of women that leads to many novel ways of discrimination. In both cases, what is at issue in this struggle for recognition of differences in needs is the achievement of not just “de jure” but “de facto” autonomy. Women (and other socially deprived groups) are stalled in the exercise of their capability to pursue their own outlets of the good life by false insights of their needs, based on unawareness of their specific proficiencies and life circumstances. Thus Habermas writes: “It is necessary to establish in the public sphere clearly the respects in which differences between the experiences and life situations of (certain) groups of women and men become pertinent to equal opportunities to exercise individual liberties.” To sum up , this perception of the politics of difference demands for the identification of the specific aspirations of the socially desitute groups. This results from their individual experiences and circumstances that allows the members of these community to fuction as autonomous individual.

### **1.4.9 Marxist View**

The Marxist perception of sexual inequality can be summed up as follows: women's low status under capitalism is a result of their dependence upon men within the bourgeois family framework. This derives its reason from the existence of the private property. The annihilation of the private property will lead to revolution of the family system. This in turn, will lead to the freedom of women from the shackles of the domestic health. This will build up their belief in political, economic and social roles. The socialist revolution will lead to the abolition of gender inequality. This will also stop the exploitation of women by men. It will eradicate the inequalities in class. It will also give the workers some agency and autonomy over the means of production. (kumari 2012).

### **1.4.10 Realist view**

Realists have not focused much on gender issues. However, J. N Tickner has developed the feminist view of realism, which has a great impact on women power. Realists view gender dynamics irrespective of international and global affairs. This is due to the overarching presence of the state's role in the global level. The states tend to prioritize issues pertaining to national interest. For example, security and military expansion is given most importance. States operate as 'black boxes'. Their internal political and constitutional structures and social fabric encompassing divisions such as gender, ethnicity, class structure etc have no influence on their external structure. However, by stating that state egoism is gained from human egoism, a classical realist like Morgenthau have mentioned that the propensity to influence is one of the characteristics in all human associations including the family. The patriarchal structure of family and the gender based allotment of labor between men and women, where men are assigned the role of working outside and women were expected to work at home, was considered as natural and inevitable (Elshtain 1981).

Tickner suggests how feminist theory's post-positivist approach expands the field of international relations. For Tickner, the purpose of feminist research is fundamental to challenge 'existing andocentric theories' a position that suggests its marginalization is desirable. This conclusion is not heartening for theorists who would like to see more substantive developments. However, Tickner's book provides in detail the assessment of

feminism and international relations, which moves way towards reconciling feminism and more traditional approaches to world politics (Tickner 2002).

## **1.5 Democratizations and Women Participation: Uzbekistan and Russia**

During the post-Soviet period, major economic and political transformation appeared in the Central Asian countries. Both Russia and Uzbekistan have addressed gender equality in their constitution. The Constitution of Uzbekistan and Russia prevents all types of discrimination and grants equal rights for men and women. Both the Russia and Uzbekistan are committed towards the protection of women rights. However, it has been observed that women of these countries still have a long way to go to attain gender justice and equal political participation. Historical, cultural and social elements control women's capabilities and opportunities to utilize their freedom to participate in political processes. The electoral process in Uzbekistan and Russia has contributed a low-level participation of women in parliament, political parties, state legislatures and local government, and in other decision-making authorities. In fact, marginalization of institutions women is prevailing in social, political and economic fields in these two countries.

### **1.5.1 Uzbekistan**

Uzbekistan is Central Asian Country, which is situated in Central Asia, east of the Caspian Sea, straightly south of Kazakhstan, north of Turkmenistan, and on the western borders of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan is the most populous Central Asian country and has the largest ethnic groups. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 Uzbekistan attained independence, along with other Central Asian states. It adopted a secular and democratic form of political system. Unlike most of the former Soviet republics, Uzbekistan started the democratization process with Islam Karimov as the president. He advocated for freedom of expression, democratic government, religion, and the rule of law. Though the Uzbek women have attained proper rights statutorily, the traditional culture continues to impede their progress. Women are affected more severely than men in the on-going socio-economic revolution in Uzbekistan. Some of the aspects like rising poverty, rising unemployment, lack of resources are still persists. Similarly, political marginalization, domestic violence, etc. are affecting women for which they are

dominated and oppressed at all situation in the patriarchal society. Nevertheless, women have been granted equal rights by the government declaration although not in practice, though, the NGOs and other civil society organizations' main focus lies in educating women about their rights, status, and duties, etc.

Despite this the authoritarian government is a characteristic feature of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Nonetheless, for the past 25 years of independence, it has expanded in the fields of democracy, socially oriented market economy, the nation building progression based on the ethnic-national culture and traditions of the constitution. Uzbekistan is on the path of national revivalism; it is revitalizing the past in which women were believed to be inferior as compared to men. Main expectation from women was to look after the household and family affairs, including the upbringing of children. The country has inherited the Soviet legacy combining both indifference and softness towards women in the overall gender structure. In Uzbekistan, the introductions of legal and legislative reforms led some changes in the political life of women.

It has been observed that the percentage of women in the administrative positions like deputy ministers is around 17.5 percent, while the number of women elected in the Oily Majlis has risen from 9 percent to 18 percent during 2004 elections. This increase in women's representation in Oily Majlis was mainly due to the re-establishment of quota system. Another characteristic feature is that the political parties were obligated to assure that 30 percent of their candidates would be women. To some extent, it would be right to mention that Islam Karimov has introduced women participation and encouraged their selection to lead positions in lower, middle and topmost administrative bodies though it is not satisfactory. (Uzbekistan: A political overview 2006)

Karimov became the President in December 1992 after winning the presidential election with an overwhelming majority. The new constitution adopted by Karimov in Uzbekistan 1992 was secular in nature; it advocated for democratic government, freedom of expression and religion, and the rule of law. Nevertheless, in particular, the president dominated over the legislature, executive, and judiciary. Uzbekistan is established under the provisions of UN records, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and international public law. The head of the state and executive power is the President. Similarly, the president of the Republic of Uzbekistan is also the Chairman of the Cabinet

of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The President is elected by nation-wide elections for a term of five years. He performs as a guarantor of democracy and observer of the Constitution and represents Uzbekistan in international relations. He also concludes and ensures the observance of signed international treaties and agreements, forms and manages the cabinet of executive power. Upon the expiration of the presidential term, the president becomes a lifetime member of the Constitutional Court.

Uzbekistan has started a number of legislative and legal reforms, these are designed to protect the interests and status of women. In general, women in Uzbekistan are given equal rights with men and enjoy a number of special provisions that guarantee and protect the position of women as biological and social mothers at the home and at the workplace. However, in practice, many women are not helped by these laws because of faulty implementation and a lack of compliance.

According to the Constitution of Uzbekistan, all citizens enjoy equal rights and freedom irrespective of sex, race, ethnicity, linguistic basis, religious inclinations, social background, convictions, personal or social status(Article 18). Article 46 guarantees equality of rights for men and women. Women's status in the Uzbek society is mainly based on their socio-economic and cultural factors. Though a traditional society, after the democratization process some changes have taken place in the women position. Nevertheless, they are relatively very low in the socio-political and economic field compared to men in the country.

As the first country in Central Asian, Uzbekistan introduced the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all types of Discrimination against Women). It has also accepted the National Platform and Action Plan based on the significant directions of the Beijing strategies in 1998 for developing the status of women. In 2001, the Government also accepted the National Action Plan for enforcing the instructions of the U.N. Committee (CEDAW). Thus, the National Platform and Action Plan became significant state policy for Uzbek women who aimed at improving the health, the condition of education and employment of women, environmental protection and women's rights that will encourage the participation of women in the political, social and economic transaction of society. The Uzbekistan state law prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender. The country's first program on gender was launched in 1995 (National Platform for Action 1995-2005) that

made the priorities for improving the status of women. Similarly, in 2008 (World Bank Report on Uzbekistan 2012).

So far as the Country Gender Assessment of Uzbekistan is concerned, it highlights that the Uzbekistan had an estimated population of 25,707,400 in 2003-2004, of which women made up 50.1% (Asian Development Bank 2005). Thus, it seems that women's population is greater than men. In fact, "the gender profile in Uzbekistan is controlled by three dominant factors: the Soviet inheritance, the social and economic challenges of the transition period, and the traditional Uzbek values and cultural traditions" (The Report of United Nations Country Team, 2008).

Under Uzbek law, women should include at least 30% of those nominated for deputy candidate posts. In December 2009 parliamentary elections, 33% of candidates were women. However, women are involved relatively well in public life in Uzbekistan in spite of their representation at higher decision-making levels. Here it is clear that despite the improvement in their representation they are far behind from men in Uzbekistan (Country Gender Assessment 2010).

In the field of economy, women are again disadvantaged. Women's participation rate in economic activity is around 66% compared to 82% for men according to 2002 report. Only 24.4% of women hold managerial positions in government organizations. More women than men work in public health sector, education, culture, art, science and scientific services sector. However, the ratio of women who are employed and who have a higher education is 18% (ratio of men who are employed and have a higher education is 17.3%). Thus, it is said that the position in Uzbekistan is gradually improving.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.5.2. Russia**

Russia has been a patriarchal society with strict roles for men and women, but the democratization process has brought changes and made its society liberal. The political and economic transformations have offered women and men new rights and freedoms. Nevertheless, it has also brought much uncertainty about social benefits, employment, and the future for women. It can be observed that women's status in Russia and Uzbekistan is

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



almost similar. However, statistically, Uzbek women are better represented in the parliament and other decision-making bodies.

Even during Soviet period women's empowerment meant their active participation in education, health and production, with regard to their decision making they remained marginalized. Hence even, the seven decades of the communist rule could not uplift women's representation in the democratic process. Later on, during the period of Gorbachev, the policies of Glasnost and Perestroika introduced women participation. But the policies of Glasnost and Perestroika did little to further the matter of women's rights. Of course, there were various types of women's rights in post-Soviet Russia, such as the role of women in the labor market and women in the political field but changes in women have not made significantly (Posadskaya 1994).

The reform process in the mid-1980's brought some positive transformation. Around 30 percent of the seats in the Supreme Soviet were reserved for women before 1989 election in Russia. During the election, quotas were removed, and women made up less than 16 percent in Congress of people's Deputies. However, the quota system was reinforced during this time, but practically; it provides women symbolic and less power. A year later, during the parliamentary elections of the Russian Federation, women acquired less than 6 percent of the seats. In post-Soviet Russia, the political parties are less involved women participation, only the electoral bloc of Russian women has openly granted considerable freedom for women to serve in the parliament.

The election of women was insignificant during the elections of 1990, in Russia as women constituted merely 5.3 percent of Ukrainian deputies. Women face an unsatisfactory level of representation in the legislature despite amounting to half of the Russian Electorate. The necessity of rectifying this imbalance concerning women's representations in all legislative bodies by the firm and timely measures is indisputable (Economic and political weekly: 1993).

The construction of the state and the political organization of Russian society have undergone major transformations. Since 1993, there has been a new constitution in Russia, that announces commonly accepted democratic principles such as human and civil rights, the impartiality of sexes, freedom of speech, religious freedom, the human rights to private ownership, the separation of power, moderately more independent local administration and so on. The constitution also ensures non-discriminatory policies and equal treatment to

all the Russian citizens. Several democratic institutions have come up in Russia. Elections are being held at all levels; legislations has been passed which is considered to guard the rights and freedom of citizens; an autonomous legal system; several self-regulating print and electronic media are implementing; and a multi-party organization is being recognized.

It is noteworthy that, in 1993, the first multi-party election in Russia, women won 61 seats, approximately 13.5 percent in the Russian Duma. However, during the second democratic election in 1995, women won only 46 seats, which are around ten percent in the Russian Duma. Later on, the number of women in the Russian parliament dropped to as low as 3 percent, and it was considered as a failure of the Russian Women movement because it has not exceeded 5 percent. There was deterioration in women's representation in Russia's elected government bodies. During 1999 election, women acquire 30 seats out of 450, which was around 6.6 percent. The major factor that causes the decrease in the percentage of women was a decline in the women participation in single – mandate districts. Nevertheless, in Russia, the democratization process has opened opportunities for individual women of exceptional talent, like Irina Khakamada and Pamfilova to secure real influence by office holding and by public acclaim. At the same time, women's success in politics has encountered new obstacles. Few women rose to the top political level, and only three women ever sat in the Politburo- EkatrinaFurtseva in the 1950s Alexander Burikova in 1989 and Galina semenova in 1990 and Ella Pamfilova was a candidate for Presidential election in the year 2000.

In the year 1995, only one woman was elected to the 178-member upper house and in 1997, also only one woman, Tatiana Dmitriyeva, was a member of the cabinet. And things were not already bad enough, one of the most prominent and outspoken women politicians, Galina Starovoitova, was assassinated in 1998. From 1996-1999, women made up only 7.2 percent of Russia's federal assembly, with only one woman current in the upper chamber, the Federation committee. Russian women thus continued to face hurdles in winning equal participation as men in the political sphere. The discrimination against women was systematic. Economically and politically deprived women could not compete on an equal footing with men for electoral stakes (Nechemias, Carol 1994:1-18).

## **1.6 Review of Literature**

A detailed understanding of different approaches dealing with women's participation in the process of democratization involves sub-themes such as Women and Democratization Process, Women position and legislative representation in Uzbekistan, Women position in Russian society and Politics and Policies and Challenges for Women's Participation.

### **1.6.1 Women and Democratization Process**

The post-independence period witnessed newer opportunities that opened up for women's increased participation in political life and in decision-making process. Women are now playing different roles in the current wave of democratization in the most part of the world, which can no longer remain in isolation, or be country specific. In addition to this, the socio-economic circumstances also play an important role in the representation of women to legislatures in both long-standing and new democracies. Besides, more women have access to education and exposure to the knowledge that is necessary to become politically active. The percentage of in higher education is much higher than men, and due to unemployment they are forced to work as labor force. Internet, globalization, NGO, international Funding, leading to higher potential of them creating interest groups.

The challenge for women is to construct a society based on a paradigm that emulate their values, strengths and aspirations and thereby reestablishes their interest and involvement in political processes. In order to empower women and facilitate them to participate in politics, it is essential to develop the scope of women's participation at the grass-roots level and in local elected bodies. This also includes a significant step towards confidence building and promotes the sharing of experiences. According to (Shvedova 2005) abolishing poverty will lead to women's increased participation in the process of decision making and democracy. The improved economic autonomy, access to education will emancipate women from the shackles of domesticity and ensure their participation in politics and democratic process. Education has led many women in society to join political parties or participate in political activities.

(Shvedova 2005) in her work has emphasized on women roles in social movements, NGO's, political parties and many other fields. She argues that social, cultural and economic elements are restricting women's participation as informed and active citizens in

nation construction. Thus, the work of Shvedova is one of the contributing parts for study of women issues in the field of politics.

Women's social status has been described as a new ways of understanding human rights. Thus, in this regard, the CEDAW provides women the same rights that are available to men. Nevertheless, it fails to adequately address the systemic changes that are needed to protect the human rights of women. According to (Southard 1996), CEDAW, as an expression of women's human rights, is closely aligned with the liberal political approach. This approach continues to establish the male-dominated view of inequality. This view of inequality, however, does not hold much for rectifying the unequal treatment of women and men. In 1996, Uzbekistan Women's issues are part and parcel of the national agenda and should be examined seriously by women and men alike. Democratization must also necessarily include women and the population at grass root level (UNESCO 1994). In addition to identifying problems and seeking solutions, it is necessary to muster the political will and commitment of governments and the international community at the highest levels (UNESCO 1994). With regard to participation, it is important to include participation of women at the grass roots level. One obstacle to the process of democratization is that political parties by and large remain undemocratic in their behavior and practices. Rather than debating ideas and making proposals for nation building, they become involved in nepotism, personalization of power and ethnic conflicts.

### **1.6.2 Women's Position and Legislative Representation in Uzbekistan**

Women's status in the Uzbek society is mainly based on their socio-economic and cultural factors. Despite being a traditional society, after the democratization process, some changes have taken place in the women position. The communist party of Uzbekistan changed its name three months later to People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, in the ruling period of Islam Karimov. The constitution of Uzbekistan was adopted on 8th Dec 1992. This was the first step toward Democratization. The first presidential election was held in 1991 and Karimov became the first president with securing 86 % of the vote of the majority. After gaining power, he established a strong hold over politics of Uzbekistan. In fact, it was Karimov who for the first time took the step for the women empowerment.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan created a new chapter to bring socio-cultural changes in the status of women. Uzbek women might have won formal

rights statutorily, but in practice, the traditional society remains to hamper their progress. Women are also influenced more unnecessarily than men by the negative dimensions of the on-going socio-economic transformation. Here, Ibrahim argues that the nature of traditional society on women still play significant role even after the independence of Uzbekistan for decades. Here, Ibrahim, 2013 analyses that “Uzbekistan is a patriarchal society in which a cultural bias against women has been an acceptable norms”. Democratization is a process by which people can participate and play a major role in the government system. This system remains more inclusive in which large number of women, tribal’s and common people becomes important part and parcel of the democratization process. The possibility for long-term stability in Uzbekistan, where an authoritarian system of rule has been strongly fortified (Bohr 1998). She explores potential areas of instability, political institutions, and parties, including ethnic and religious tensions. (Abramson 2006) addresses women’s status in Uzbek society from the Islamic point of view. According to the author, Islam is strongly adaptable to current circumstances and has for providing Muslims with the means to solve present issues in Uzbekistan.

The Country Gender Assessment of Uzbekistan mainly highlights the demographic background of Uzbekistan with special reference to gender and development. As per the report, “Uzbekistan had an estimated population of 25,707,400 in 2003-2004, of which women made up 50.1%” (Asian Development Bank 2005). Thus, it seems that women’s population is more than men. The concept of gender equality has seen both progress and regression since 1991; however, the Government has demonstrated some commitment to resolving gender issues in Uzbekistan. In fact, “the gender profile in Uzbekistan is controlled by three dominant factors: the Soviet inheritance, the social and economic challenges of the transition period, and the traditional Uzbek values and cultural traditions. Moreover, an external factor also plays as controlling factor for women” (The Report of United Nations Country Team 2008). So, these reports are essential for above study.

Based on the Country Gender Assessment 2010 it is found that although, the number of women in the lower house has been increased from 17% in 2004 to 22% in 2009. Uzbekistan parliament has brought the new law, which provides 30% seats for women of the nominated post for deputy candidates. Within the election administration, 2 out of 7 CEC members were women. “They are, however, better respondent at the PEC level, since

many of them work in the public sector, particularly in schools and medical facilities where PECs are located” (OSCEPA 2012). For the December 2009 parliamentary elections, 33% of candidates were women. Earlier the number of deputies was increased to 150 in late 2008, and at this time there were only 21 women in the 100-membered senate. However, women are strongly involved in public life in Uzbekistan; they are not well exemplified at higher decision-making levels. Women held 17 of 107 seats in the outgoing parliament. Two of the 47 senators and 2 of the 18 government ministers were female. In these elections, women include 21 % of candidates. Thus, from the two reports and assessment, it is clear sense that despite the improvement of women in their representation they are far behind men in Uzbekistan. However, these reports have not analyzed causes for the massive gap between men and women in this country.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office Report, (2012) has given some different facts showing some optimistic analysis and thus it says that there were some positive developments during 2012 on Human Rights and Democracy which remained to have a prominent interest in Uzbekistan, in particular about the lack of freedom of expression, severe restrictions on political activity and religious activity. The report explores an important gap between government Public speaking expression and legislation on the protection of human rights. However, government took some initiatives in regard to human rights in the later part of 2009 President Karimov cited “the “Concept” in a December speech as a long-term national strategy in 2010. The year 2012 was the “Year of the Family” and observes legislations and some large funding programs to facilitate family well-being and opportunities for women. In the course of time government has amended number of human rights-related legislation”. Another positive step was the formation of a working group under the Minister of Justice to study the performance of human rights by law enforcement and other state departments.

Both the “Country Gender Assessment Foreign, 2010” and “Commonwealth Office Report, 2012” have some good relevance for the study of women status. Nevertheless, these reports still lack some proper survey particularly from the grassroots political scenario.

### **1.6.3 Women's Position in Russian Society and Politics**

Russia remains a patriarchal society with strict roles for men and women. However, the democratization process in Russia connects on the acceptance of democratic ideas practiced by the bulk of the population as well as by leading politicians. The political and economic transformations in the former Soviet Union have caused major upheaval and readjustments for its people. The transition offered women and men new rights and freedoms but also brought much uncertainty about social benefits, employment, and the future. Women's position in Russia is not that much different from Uzbekistan. But politically Uzbek women are better represented in the parliament and other decision-making bodies.

In Russia, the legal, economic, social and political inequalities have continued despite the Revolution of 1917. It was sever for women during this time. Under socialist regime, the women issue in society had not been taken serious and continuously. So, women remained vulnerable for decades. Koval in his study finds that "economic, social and political inequalities between men and women have been continued even after the decades of Russian revolution". According Koval, "the democratic reforms of the mid-1980s brought some positive transformation at last. Thereafter, the "women's issue" was identified as a necessary socio-political problem requiring serious investigation and practical initiatives in Russian society".

Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of "Glasnost and Perestroika did little to further the matter of women's rights. On the contrary, he called for 'women to return to their womanly mission'-a sentiment echoed by the press-while unsuccessful to put into places any social assistance for women who need to stay at home". Various types of women's rights in post-Soviet Russia, the role of women in the labor market, women in the political system and the history of feminism in Russia. According to Posadskaya "the collapse of the monolithic Soviet state sounded the death knell for several myths about the Soviet Union. One of the major consistent misapprehensions remains to thrive. The emancipation of women in the early years of the Soviet regime was considered by many as a simple fact. But as the contributors to women in Russia shows that work outside the home became a powerful tool of subjection for women". The study of (Posadskaya 1994) has examined the women status of Russia during Gorbachev's policies of Glasnost and Perestroika and found no change in women condition.

According to Salmenniemi, 2008 gender perspectives both masculine and feminine, of socio-political participation in Russia, considering types of gendered meanings, which are given to civic organizations and formal politics in the background of femininity and masculinity. Analyzing the role of state institutions in the evolution of democratic civic life Salmenniemi analyses the gender related policies during Putin rule and finds that relationship between the civic activism, democratization, and gender in the Russian society. He finds the expanding nature of the character and values of Russian democratic civic life since the Soviet period.

Barry observes “the structures and issues, the main concepts treated are constitutional evolution, presidential-parliamentary relations, electoral politics, the party system, and the search for a workable federalism, consisting descriptions of principal people and events” (Barry 2002). The development and function of political organizations in Russia from its basis from the shadow of the disintegrating Union of Soviet Socialist Republic through its first decade as an independent state.

Many well-known individuals and institutions were connected with Russian women’s movements from the early 19th century to the post-Soviet era. Women activists who followed development in educational possibilities fought for suffrage, published journals, and sought to change women’s consciousness in the society. “The women’s studies programs and women’s crises centers were created gradually. They were a strong voice against the tsarist rule and the oppression of communism. Their objectives and strategies were various which differ from incremental reform to terrorism, to the development of women’s electoral organizations” (Noonan2001).

“Women’s Activism in Contemporary Russia consists a concise history of women’s position in tsarist and Soviet Russia, which illustrates how their capacity to organize was compelled by social structures and state policies” (Racioppi 1997). The reason of the state-sponsored Soviet Women’s Committee and new groups like the Independent Women’s Forum, the Women’s League, and the International Institute for Entrepreneurial Development. Thus, according to the author it shows that “the dynamics among the women’s groups in Russia and how the personal life histories of the activists portray the ways women have answered to the altering political, economic, and social sphere in the former Soviet Union”. The story of the women movement’s creation and development in a country experiencing a radical economic and political transformation from communist rule



in Russia (Sperling 1999). Thus, Racioppi, (1997) examines “a broad and thorough initiation to the evolution women’s movement and women’s organizations in Russia. She has observed that the improvement of women’s activism in late Soviet and post-Soviet Russia and the confronts activists face in a time of revived nationalism and turmoil over democratic reform”.

#### **1.6.4 Policies and Challenges for Women’s Participation**

The Uzbekistan was one of the first nations in Central Asia to introduce the “Convention on the Elimination of all types of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)”. It states that “by the crucial directions of the Beijing strategies (30 March 1998), the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan accepted the National Platform and Action Plan for developing the status of women”. Finally, in 2001, the Government accepted the National Action Plan for enforcing the instructions of the U.N. Committee (CEDAW). So continuously the National Platform and Action Plan became significant state policy for Uzbek women who consists ten preference objectives aimed at improving the health, the condition of education and employment of women, environmental protection and women’s rights that will encourage the participation of women in the political, social and economic transaction of society.

According to (Asian Development Bank’s Country Report on Uzbekistan 2011) “it has been observed that Uzbekistan confronts a number of governance challenges moving toward less centralized and more participative policy-making, improving encouragements and performance in the civil service, improving transparency and accountability in public financial management, and permitting the media and civil society to play a major role in considering communities’ needs”.

Similarly, the (National Platform for Action 1995-2005) states that “Uzbekistan state law prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender”. The country’s first program on gender was launched in 1995 with the strategies and priorities for improving the status of women. “The 2007 ‘Concluding Comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Report” emphasized the very low number of court cases in the spheres of domestic violence against women, polygamy, exploitation of prostitution and human trafficking. Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan, a non-government national organization, enters the mainstream society of Uzbek states which has become an important part of

women movement. Thus, it remains a challenge for women participation in the state of Uzbekistan in the socio-political fields.

(World Bank Report on Uzbekistan 2012) describes that the “Law on Combating Human Trafficking in Uzbekistan, 2008” has become a significant step for women rights. Although there is a quota for female representation in Parliament (30%), the actual number of female members of parliament is much lower. Also, there is no comprehensive national action plan on gender equality. The report also states that Uzbekistan has almost bridged the gap towards gender parity in primary and secondary education and has ratified international conventions related to gender equality. However, being one of the poorest Central Asian states, development and democratization has not always reached the most vulnerable populations living in rural areas. In fact, there are various challenges in the field of women participation in the democratization process. The report argues that the key challenges to the country are allow representation of women in the decision-making process and at the top positions in public and private sectors; traditional attitudes and stereotypes about the role of men and women. The National Women’s Committee’s influence is too weak regarding policymaking and implementation, and there is no national strategy has been implemented for gender equality and thus, there is a serious concern about the inexistence of law to tackle domestic violence (World Bank Report on Uzbekistan 2012).

On the basis of the “Asian Development Bank’s Country Report on Uzbekistan, 2011” it has been observed that the major of problems of gender and development are economic insecurity, urban-rural division in terms of differential access to infrastructure and basic services, alteration to the healthcare system, lesser involvement in decision making and weak gender-disaggregated statistics. Thus, Uzbekistan aimed to develop women’s involvement in three ways: (i) enlarge criteria for the gender content of educational materials to abstain stereotypes, (ii) examine ways to reinforce technology training courses for women; and (iii) helping a survey to assess time burdens on men and women and construct capacity in government to better use such data in policy decisions (Asian Development Bank’s Country Report on Uzbekistan, 2011).

In comparison to Uzbekistan, Russian women’s movement has developed tremendously since the Soviet period. It now talks various organizations and institutions with research, recommendation about policy and legislation, employment, training services and rape

crisis centers. Women's organizations play a vital role in demonstrating the concerns and inclinations of women and in forming public debate about women's rights and gender relations. This role is especially significant in the present circumstances because of the marginalization of women from political and economic life in the transformation process and the scope of changes now under way.

Jevtushenko in a study finds that "women occupy 70-80 % of central government jobs, but 80-90 % of the top civil servants are men. Women are almost totally eliminated from political decision-making. Women occupy only 9.8 % of the seats in the State Duma (Russia's parliament) before the administration reform (2007)". Russia has signed up to the Millennium Development Goal of the United Nations, according to that the share of women in the Duma and the Cabinet should be increased to 50 %. Thus, there are a lot of challenges before the Russian women in the democratization process Schalkwyk and Woroniuk, 1999 in the report of "Canadian International Development Agency" has highlighted three major issues of gender equality in Russia. He discusses projects involving Russia by Canada. This involves changes in the structure of market economy and establishment of a democratic and responsible government. Violence against women is given importance due to its far reaching consequences on the state. It advocates unraveling opportunities within the current framework to enable constructive action. The marginalization of women is happening in politics as well as the economy. There has been a sharp decline in the number of women in Parliament. Besides, women are under-represented in decision-making positions in government ministries and other organizations that are now presiding over significant transformations that will construct the society of the future. Russian women's organizations have conveyed concern that the under-representation of women in political and bureaucratic Organisations means that decision-making does not take account of women's needs and interests, culminating in new legislation and policy that restricts women's rights and opportunities. In this situation, recommendations by women's organizations are especially significant in achieving attention for women's right and problems.

On the above analysis (Jevtushenko 2008) states that "in Russia, professions are restricted by women, and whenever assured jobs attract more men, their salaries increase. Respectively, if more women take up any given profession, wages fall. One can also talk about vertical division in the Russian labor market: men occupy the highest positions".

Discrimination against women has arisen to become an important issue of the international development industry. In Russia, campaigns against domestic and sexual violence are formulated by foundations, which support women's nongovernmental activity. In this regard Hemment (1999) examines women's nongovernmental activity emphasizing on programs to stop domestic violence. It solves the issues pertaining to application of feminist discourse on practical applications. It discussed with the "ethnographic details and consideration of the meanings activity in this sector has for participants with broader discussions of the procedure of civil society formation in Russia".

The study has focused on the women political participation in the democratic process and their representation in the election of Uzbekistan and Russia. It has mainly focused on the comparative analysis in both the countries. Thus, the study has intended to understand the socio-political status of women since the period of democratization of both the countries.

## **1.7 Objective of the study**

1. To study the socio-economic status of women in Uzbekistan and Russia.
2. To analyze the contribution of women in politics and the nation-building process in Uzbekistan and Russia from 1991 to 2013.
3. To understand the role of political parties and civil society organizations while dealing with women participation in the democratic process.
4. To examine the challenges of women in their participation in the democratization process.
5. To examine the main causes of underrepresentation in politics while dealing with the affecting factors for decline of percentage of women in electoral process.

## **1.8 Research questions**

The study seeks to answer the following questions.

1. Why women are not adequately represented in the government bodies either in Russia or in Uzbekistan?
2. What are the main reasons for poor representation of women in democratization process?
3. What are the factors affecting the low percentage of women in the various elections in both Uzbekistan and Russia?
4. Will the empowerment of women help in bringing the equality for women?
5. What are challenges to women in their participation in the democratization process in both Uzbekistan and Russia since 1991 to 2013?
6. How far do political parties and civil society organizations help enhance women participation in the democratic process of Uzbekistan and Russia?
7. What are factors responsible for more women to participate in the decision making process in Uzbekistan and Russia?
8. What are the levels of political mobilization of women in Uzbekistan and Russia?

## **1.9Hypotheses**

1. In Uzbekistan and Russia, despite the reintroduction of quota system, role of political parties and civil society groups, the percentage of women's political participation remains low in comparison to men.
2. Though the role of women's representation in the process of democratization is higher in Uzbekistan, Russian women play a bigger role in decision making process.

## **1.10 Rationale and Scope of the Study**

The research work on “Women’s Participation in the Process of Democratization: A Comparative Study of Uzbekistan and Russia, 1991-2013” tries to examine the political space for women in Uzbekistan and Russia particularly since 1991. Participation of women in politics and government are necessary for every healthy democracy. It is one of the significant factors in the formation of a democratic state. As we know that women though constitute more than 48 percent population in the world, but they have been marginal in all aspect of life. Political space for women in participation and representation in the decision-making process has been a great significant for all most all the nations in the world today. Thus, the study of Uzbekistan and Russian regarding women in politics has a greater significance, which can affect developments in the other Central Asian countries and other democracies. Also, this study draws attention to the existing research in the field, which argues that role of women in the political system has been limited. It has been observed that women are higher represented in Uzbekistan than Russia. However, there is a low representation in both the countries in comparison to men. The research work would deal with the factors responsible for the low representation and participation of women in the electoral system in Russia with a comparison to Uzbekistan with the particular emphasis on democratization. It analyses the changes in the Russian political system during four presidential administrations and assesses the role women who have played in the constitutional and legal system to suit the interest of their respective regimes. The research analyzes how democratic system influences women support for their political participation in both the countries.

The thesis has been organized in six chapters. The present chapter introduces an overview of political situation along with the position of women in the both Uzbekistan and Russia. The focus has been given on the theoretical understanding of gender and women’s participation in the democratization process. The present chapter also highlighted some of the major feminist approaches and the theories of political participation and representation. The next chapter “the socio-political status of women in Uzbekistan” and role of political parties and civil society organization critically examines not only the women’s participation but also the influence of women in the decision-making process. An attempt has been made to understand the political change and its impacts on women since 1991.

The chapter titled “socio-political status of Russian women” discusses in detail various issues and factors that confine women to private sphere in the society. The section dealing with the “impact of women’s empowerment in Uzbek and Russian women” projects to what extent the policies and programs of the government have been successful. Next section deals with the role of women’s participation in the process of democratization along with the role of political parties and civil society organization in Uzbekistan and Russia. This chapter focuses the comparative analysis women’s participation in both the countries and examines the socio-cultural environment of these societies for a better understanding of their position and to understand the influence of women in the decision-making process. Conclusion summarizes the whole thesis based on the above chapters and explores the findings.

## **Chapter-2**

### **Status of Women in Uzbekistan: Socio-Political Overview**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Geographically situated in the east of the Caspian Sea, Uzbekistan is surrounded by Kazakhstan in the South, Turkmenistan in the North, and on the western borders of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan has the highest population in Central Asia and consists of largest ethnic diversity. A combination of economic transformation and strengthening of authoritarian government characterize the republic. However, for the past 25 years of independence, Uzbekistan has adopted democratic form of government with the socially oriented market economy. The existence of indigenous ethno-culture and traditions in Uzbekistan has formed the core of its nation building process. Another noticeable dichotomy that exists in Uzbekistan is co-existence of traditionalism and modernity with regard to women's position. While the Traditionalists want the women to stay at home, but the Liberals want more participation of women in the society and endorse equal status of women. Nonetheless, in practice women's role in modern Uzbek society remains close to traditional rather than modern, i.e. looking after the household work and family affairs, including the upbringing of children.

This chapter discusses socio-political status of women in Uzbekistan and role of political parties and civil society organization. It critically examines not only the participation but also the influence of women in the decision making process. An attempt has been made to understand the political change and its impacts on women since 1991.

#### **2.2 Historical Background**

Uzbekistan was created as a part of the trade route called as the Great Silk Road connecting China, Middle East and imperial Rome during the first century BC. It was under the influence of diverse empires and dynasties for a very long time, which left a remarkable impact of its culture and religion on Uzbek tribes. Islam was introduced in the region during seventh and eighth centuries when the Arabs captured Uzbekistan. Persian



Samanid dynasty ruled during 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> centuries when Bukhara was created in Uzbekistan. The later part of 10<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the cultural decline. Uzbekistan was under the control of Genghis Khan and his Mongol empire between thirteenth and fourteenth centuries along with the whole of Central Asia. The Tamerlane, Turkic ruler, conquered Uzbekistan during the Fourteenth century and constructed Samarkand the capital of the Uzbek. Thereafter a number of nomadic groups also ruled the country after the fall of the Turkish Empire. Several aboriginal tribes of Central Asia like Daxia, Sai, Sute, Wusun, etc. slowly got integrated with different tribes of the other cultural groups.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Golden Tent Khanate under the Mongol Empire was created and considered as one of the four khanates which was chiefly under the rule of Uzbek Khan. The khanate was also known as “Uzbeks Khanate”. This is how the group of people ruled by Uzbek Khan came to be known as “Uzbek ethnic group”.

It was by the 17<sup>th</sup> century a few Uzbek traders started to settle down in the cities of Xinjiang extending from the south Xinjiang up to the north Xinjiang and created the Uzbeks’ occupying zones in different forms. In 1750s, the Qing Dynasty, which ruled Uzbekistan, had friendly relations with Haohan Khanate, Xiwa Khanate, and Buhala Khanate, who were primarily Uzbeks, for more than half a century. Russia conquered Uzbekistan in the late 19th century leading to subsequent merger of Uzbekistan in the USSR in 1924. Uzbekistan, being one of the oldest civilizations, and a multi-ethnic state, has a long history in terms of its ethnic groups and their relationship. Hence, the inter-ethnic clashes have been the part of Uzbek society ever since its formation.

### **2.2.1 Women’s Position in the Traditional Society**

Traditional social norms, values, and customs in Central Asian regions continue to restrict women’s roles in society and politics till today. Generally, Central Asian countries traditional social norms, values, and customs continue to restrict women’s roles in society and politics. Uzbekistan is a country, which follows patriarchal nature in their society, in which cultural bias against women are highly acceptable practice. Women are being discriminated as an individual and as an autonomous political being. They are denied equal status and basic fundamental rights. This violation of their basic rights has been continuing since centuries in traditional societies and more so in Uzbekistan (Ibrahim 2013:47).

### 2.2.2 Pre-Soviet Period

There were strict traditions and canons of Islam towards the women's position in the history of Central Asian region including Uzbekistan in the pre-Soviet period. During this period Men and Women were deprived of their basic rights to choose their respective future partners. Families or close relatives chose the partners and arranged marriages according to the Islamic Customary Law. Similarly, the age, specifically for men, was no criterion for selecting the groom for bride it was the "*Kalym*" which was the deciding factor for the marriage. "*Kalym*" is the payment made to the parents of the bride to marry a girl. Often the amount given to the parents of bride as "*Kalym*" used to be a big amount leading to heavy financial burden on men. Therefore, this could be one of the reasons for women being treated equal to slave. Many a times, it was possible only for young men from the richest families to manage to pay for this price. Hence, only the rich men could afford '*kalym*'. In lieu brides would bring along with them dowry which would include linen and other household goods.

Despite the fact that Polygamy existed and was legal according to Muslim Law and men are permitted to have four wives on the condition that all were treated equally, but in practice only the rich men could have more two wives. According to Muslim law a man once he divorces his wife at will has to return all the property which she had bought during the marriage. Consequently, in practice, the bride-price appeared as a sort of enslavement and humiliation of women but at the same time it acted as a check to divorce as well in the traditional Uzbek society. The entire dowry process was considered as a luxury. With the value of bride-price and the dowry this made the dowry a very expensive affair which not everyone could afford. Divorce was considered a rarity and expensive among certain sections of the society particularly the craftsmen and rural cultivators because of women's significant contribution to the family economy.

There is also a tradition where women can divorce their husband on certain grounds, one if the husband is absent for a prolonged time, two if the wife is a minor until she attains her majority and also if she has been treated badly and lastly, if the husband marries a second time without taking prior permission from his first wife. All the above grounds state that although the status of women was considered to be subordinate to their husbands, women did enjoy few basic rights.

The basic rights to food, clothing, lodging servants, money, and all expenses, which are common for people of her rank, are expected to be provided to her. If these basic facilities are not provided to her, she has all the right complains about the same to the Qazi or judge who can permit her to borrow money on account of her husband, or can even order the sale of some portion of her husband's property in order to fulfill the requirement amount of money. Thus, traditionally speaking women did not have any share in the parental property though they did have some rights on husband's property. Greater security and stability in the status of women comes with the birth of a male child. There is a noticeable increase in her right as a women and respect along with the additional property rights given to her after the birth of a male child. If she is widowed, she acts as guardian of her son in every aspect while he is a minor. Hence, the position of women is largely decided by presence of men in her life, be it father, husband or son.

The marriage system, bride-price (*kalym*), polygamy, child marriage were ingrained and inextricable part of the traditional Uzbek society. This highlights that though the role of Muslim women in the politics was negligible; their control over the whole family affairs, its property and family business was present even in the patriarchal family structure of traditional Uzbek society.

Thus, indirectly women significantly contributed in the socio-economic field and provided a considerable financial support to their families. This was applicable to not only women of lower strata but even wives of high officials used to make crafts at home which had a big market and substantially used to contribute in the family income. The traditional hatching industry remained entirely in the hands of women such as making of ceramic bowls and metal products.

Apart from this women contributed in teaching to young boys and girls. Female teachers known as *Otines* were responsible for the religious education of both boys and girls. They were invited by the families to participate in the rituals such as birth, marriages etc. "These *Otines* also recited prayers or mystical poems at various religious ceremonies among women such as *Mavlud* (commemoration of the Prophet Mohammad's birth). Education in the pre-Soviet period was founded on Islamic learning and among women was confined exclusively to rich people of society. In fact *Otines* were honorific titles and referred to the educated ladies, especially ladies of the court" (Ibrahim 2013:47).

A progressive Islamic movement of the Volga - Tatar intelligentsia known as Jadidism, which emerged in 1880s to revive Islamic culture in Central Asian region had raised the issue of liberation of women and their participation in social and cultural life as part of its program around 20th century. Shura-i-Islam, a Jadidist organisation, was the first to make the issue of women's participation in elections a part of its program in Central Asia. "They believed that society's intellectual level depended in many aspects on the status of women. They held that society's transformation must begin with reforms in the spiritual and cultural spheres and in everyday life, which also meant changing the perception of women's place and role in Muslim life. Jadidism advocated equality and secular education for women and condemned polygamy and the poor treatment of women" (Ibrahim, 2013:47). Hence, the Jadidist ideology corresponded with the Soviet ideology with regard to women's active participation and liberation.

### **2.2.3 Soviet Period**

Based on the principle of 'equal work for equal pay', Soviet leaders always focused on women's emancipation and education. Hence, during the Soviet Period, the leaders in Central Asia focused on issues of liberation of women in all parts of the country and also to create a place where women enjoyed equal status along with men in all aspects of economic, political and social life. They aimed to designate women as a producer of new social order in the society and the family. Thus, the efforts to eradicate the so-called oppression of Muslim women, which they inherited from traditional practices, were made during this period. The main focus of Soviet leaders was to transform the Soviet Republics as per the communist ideology, which also included all the Central Asian societies.

Major transformations started with the introduction of compulsory primary education in all parts of Soviet Union. Consequently Central Asian women were forced to attend the school. Though this was not easy even for the Soviet leaders to implement compulsory education in remote areas of Central Asia. The works of Chengiz Aitmatov, Anna Akhmatova and many other literary writers project the ground difficulty phased by the authorities to send girl child to school.

Some major state policies for empowerment of women were introduced and the first step was the secularization of family law. The traditional Shariah based rules was replaced by a new set of codes and civil law.

In 1918, the official registration of marriages, births and deaths were made compulsory, banning the traditional form of religious marriages (nikah). “Instead of Shariah code, Soviet divorce law was introduced, to give women greater protection. Between 1921 and 1923, laws were passed banning such practices as polygamy, the payment of Kalym (bride-price) and marriage without the consent of the bride, while the legal age for marriage was fixed at sixteen years (instead of nine) for girls and eighteen years (instead of sixteen) for boys. Women were given the right to vote and access to all positions of power”. This was mentioned under article 64 of the Soviet constitution of 1918.

Pronounced efforts were made to popularize these new laws. Also “some public meetings and rallies were held to explain women’s civil and constitutional rights. Several women were given basic training under Soviet law and attached to the courts of People’s Assessors as a trainee”. Slowly, by the end of 1930, women were further trained to independently enter the judiciary system. Groups of activist and Russian communists were sent to train the local people of the Central Asian region from 1925 onwards and in turn trained local cadre joined hands together with Russians in women's emancipation movement. A number of women’s organizations “Zhenotdel” were opened in Central Asia to overall enhance women's participation. Women were encouraged to visit each house in the areas and to start women’s social clubs and organizations, cooperatives and learn to sew read and write.

One of the most important aims of these women’s groups was to organize social clubs which was exclusive to women. One of the first such clubs was started in Tashkent in 1924. These clubs educated women and made conscious of their legal rights under the new Soviet government. The clubs undertook several social causes and some of these efforts made by these clubs included eradicating illiteracy, training of women in modern ways of life, medical aid, and also advised on education. They also emphasized on nutrition, hygiene and child care.

Conclusively, “the clubs began to give emphasis on the women’s participation in social production by raising their skill level. The clubs introduced organized woman’s training courses for various kinds of factory work and trades in various districts. Apart from this these clubs also helped in organizing workshops and trade schools for skill development. They represented the first cautious step towards women’s full participation in public life.

Thus, the women participation gradually grew in the Russian and Central Asian societies” (Ibrahim 2013:49).

The steps taken by soviet authoritarian also led to emergence of a movement initiated by Central Asian Women, called “*Hujum*” to register their voice against the existing traditional practices, life styles, cloistering of women, the heritage of slavery etc. The first large scale display of unveiling started in 1927, on International Women’s Day (8th March), a historic day in the life of Uzbek women. This was day, when “thousands of women marched through the streets, squares and bazaars of Central Asian cities like Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Kokand etc. and cast off their parandzha (traditional garb which cover the body entirely) and Chachvan (a woven screen covering the face) and ceremonially incinerated them on giant bonfires”. Though directly law did not ban the wearing of the veil (although some activists were in favor of this), however, a variety of so-called “administrative”, measures were used to further the campaign.

This was a significant move by Central Asian women as in traditional society as unveiled woman was assumed to be equivalent of a prostitute. “Special privileges were given to women who discarded the veil and such women who continued with the practice, their husbands were liable to penalty. However, despite state support some local men did try to curb this movement”.

Occasionally ruthless methods were used to intimidate women against unveiling. “More than a thousand unveiled women were murdered, either by their relatives or by the basmachi (local guerrilla movements) in these years”. In Uzbekistan “alone 203 Uzbek women were killed for abandoning the veil in 1928 and another 165 in the first half of 1929. However, incountryside or in the old quarters of the cities, women continued to cover their heads and shoulders with large headscarves. The year 1932 marked the beginning of a new era for Central Asian women who were educated and trained by the Communist party. These female Communist workers were sent to Moscow to oversee the political education and were expected to be the role model of other indigenous women”.

The Soviet government considered education as an important component in political and economic mobilization. By 1930’s the primary education was given utmost importance and was made compulsory for both boys and girls. They undertook special efforts to eradicate illiteracy among women. This was done through creation of special women’s schools of a higher secondary level in a number of towns. Thereafter, women entered the

professional training centers, particularly law, medicine, teaching and scientific research. School was considered a place not only for providing education but also to create a medium through which values and goals of communism can be inculcated to the younger generation. Education became an instrument to defy inherited conventions regarding the role of women in society.

From 1930 onwards, attempts were made to include women actively in the political and administrative process. “As a result, women delegates were elected to represent their communities in public meetings both locally and at republican level”. Though the actual number of women in political administration was comparatively higher than before, this did not materialize into an active participation by women in politics. This may be attributed to the fact that women lacked any prior political experience. By the beginning of 1929 there were over 1000 Uzbek women party members in Uzbekistan.

In 1929, there were more than 1000 Uzbek party members in Uzbekistan. A quota system was introduced wherein women were allocated around a third of the posts in government and in the party administrative organs. There were initiatives to include women in the socialized labor through women’s cooperatives. Several special shops and consumer cooperatives were established wherein women could sell their products directly. Towards the end of decade there was an increase in the light industrial enterprises and also saw an increasing number of local women working in factories which included in food processing, silk spinning and also in the production of garments and hosiery. There was less seen less participation of women in the Heavy industries. It was considered unsuitable due to the extreme physical demanding conditions required in this field and also the psychological reasons. During the Soviet Period, land and water reforms were introduced which also endorsed and gave importance to the equal status of both men and women and also gave women the economic independence.

Thus, it shows that after the long period of gap, efforts were made to empower women in Uzbekistan society but it was very low in comparison to men even during the Soviet time. Nevertheless, it was better than ever before in the life of women. We could also see the role of Communist party, which gradually took steps for women issues and included some women in its administrative organizations (Ibrahim 2013:49).

#### **2.2.4 Post Independence-period**

The post Soviet period has become the open society with the democratization and globalization in the whole world, which directly and indirectly affected the Uzbekistan society. The Post-Soviet period has experienced the major political and economic changes in Central Asia region after the disintegration of Soviet Union. With the emergence of five independent states in the region major socio - political and economic changes took place in all the Central Asian societies. The revival of indigenous cultural values, religious practices of Islam has become one of most important political tools of the newly independent states. Revival of traditional cultural and religious identity of Central Asian countries also touched upon the traditionally assigned roles to women in the society. This became the target of strong criticism due to newly emerged consciousness and national identity. A new trend for a change in the societies emerged during the transition period.

Even though, the constitution of Uzbekistan prohibits all forms of discrimination and provides equal rights for both men and women, the state authorities continue to support a patriarchal order based on women playing the traditional role as mothers. “Some special provisions for women such as family code and labor code were introduced in 1998. These code set privileges and protective measures which emerged primarily from women’s biological and reproductive, rather than their existence as individuals or citizens. Thus, though the new changes brought about an increase in the status of women, their comparative position in the society vis-à-vis their male counterparts continue to be low”. (Ibrahim 2013:50).

### **2.3 Social Overview**

Social development was the fundamental priorities of Uzbek government; therefore a strong social policy was adopted. It adopted gradual economic transition to a market economy with aim to avoid the short-term disruption associated with more rapid transition while maintaining social expenditures and improving wellbeing of the population, ethnic minority, education, religion, crime against women, and trafficking.

Nonetheless, multiethnic composition of Uzbekistan has a higher probability of causing discord and clashes within social groups related to their differences in their socio-economic condition. As has been noted earlier, Uzbekistan has had a strong influence of Turkic and Arab cultures both and Islam was introduced during this



period. Its impact can also be seen in their language. Though, the Uzbek people were perceived as legitimate ruler of the country since the colonial era, the demarcation of geographical boundaries of present day Uzbekistan was made during Soviet period on the linguistic basis. Thus, through the brief historical analysis of Uzbekistan's ethnic groups it can be clearly understood that Uzbekistan has people belonging to different ethnic groups with many characteristic difficulties and conflicts that remain as the basis for ethnic relations. Consequently, the great division between the largest ethnic community that is Uzbek and other remaining ethnic groups has become a challenge before the Uzbekistan State. All these factors have adversely affected women from minor ethnic communities who have become the biggest victims of ethnicity based divisions and marginalization. The position of women belonging to minor ethnic groups continues to be low in comparison to the women of majority ethnic communities.

At present "there are about 100 different ethnic groups in Uzbekistan. Ethnic Uzbeks form the largest group, comprising roughly three quarters of the population. Russians, Tajiks, and Kazakhs, Karakalpaks are the largest minorities, with Tatars and other groups forming the balance of the population". As per the available data "there are approximately 71 percent of the total population are Uzbek, only 8 percent Russian, 5 percent Tajik, 4 percent Kazak, 2.5 percent Tartars and 8.5 percent other ethnic groups". Urban and rural populations are divided along ethnic lines, where Uzbek dominating most of the rural Uzbekistan, while other ethnic groups live in both urban and semi-urban areas. (Country Profile: Uzbekistan 2007). In addition to this there are other nationalities residing in Uzbekistan such as Turkmen, Koreans, Ukrainians and Byelorussians and also small groups of Armenians especially in Tashkent and Samarkand.

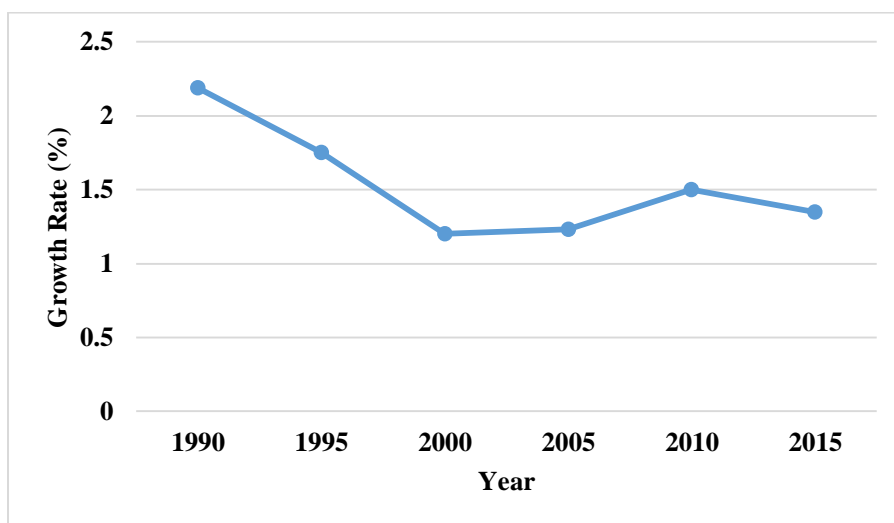
The gender division of population shows that female population dominated male population in Uzbek society since 1990 till 2015. "Majority of Uzbekistan's population is young with 45 percent of the population under the age of 16 and only 7 percent of retirement age". Hence, due to presence of a large number of youngsters, Uzbekistan has a total population of approximately 30 million as in 2014 with the potential to become one of the most powerful economies in Central Asia.

**Table 1: Historical Analysis of Uzbekistan Population**

Year	Population	Male (%)	Female (%)	Annual Growth Rate (%)	World Rank
1990	20,515,248	49.43	50.57	2.19	39
1995	22,687,456	49.62	50.38	1.75	40
2000	24,518,222	49.532	50.468	1.2	39
2005	25,922,238	49.31	50.69	1.23	42
2010	27,739,764	49.212	50.788	1.5	45
2015	29,893,487	49.173	50.827	1.35	45

(Source:<http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/uzbekistan-population>)

The table 1 reflects the overall population dynamics of Uzbekistan for both male and female for the period of 1990 to 2015. It clearly indicates that the female population has dominated marginally over male population during this period. The population-wise rank of Uzbekistan in the world has improved to 45 in 2015 from 39 in 1990. But the growth rate of population has declined to 1.35 % in 2015 from 2.19 % in 1990. The total population of Uzbekistan has increased continuously in absolute terms. Uzbekistan has witnessed the steady decline in terms of population growth rate since 1990 to 2000 (Image 1). Population growth rate increased slightly during 2000 to 2010 but again it has witnessed decline during 2010-15.



**Image:1 Growth Rate of Population of Uzbekistan**

(Source:<http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/uzbekistan-population>)

For the purpose of analysis of social position of women in Uzbek society, a sector wise analysis of their status in education, healthcare, economy, political and public life, their role in democratization process, can prove to be more helpful. Such an effort has been made ahead in the chapter.

The gender division of population shows that female population dominated male population in Uzbek society since 1990 till 2015. Majority of Uzbekistan's population is young with 45 percent ( table 2) of the population under the age of 16 and only 7 percent (table 2) of retirement age by census 2011. Hence, due to presence of a large number of youngsters, Uzbekistan has a total population of approximately 30 million as of 2014 and has the potential to become one of the most powerful economies in Central Asia.

**Table 2:Age-wise Population of Uzbekistan**

Age	2011					
	Women	Men	Person	Women (%)	Men (%)	Person (%)
Including is elderly, years						
0-2	930.9	991.6	1922.5	6.4	6.8	6.6
3-5	814.7	862.4	1677.1	5.6	5.9	5.8
6-7	502.1	531	1033.1	3.4	3.6	3.5
8-15	2179.8	2286.8	4466.6	15.0	15.7	15.3
16-17	625.6	651.2	1276.8	4.3	4.5	4.4
18-19	661.7	682.5	1344.2	4.5	4.7	4.6
20-24	1551	1594.7	3145.7	10.7	10.9	10.8
25-29	1335.5	1345.7	2681.2	9.2	9.2	9.2
30-34	1104.1	1108.6	2212.7	7.6	7.6	7.6
35-39	988.5	988.9	1977.4	6.8	6.8	6.8
40-49	1715.3	1624.2	3339.5	11.8	11.1	11.5
50-59	1189.2	1119.3	2308.5	8.2	7.7	7.9
60-69	468.1	427.7	895.8	3.2	2.9	3.1
70 va undan katta	488.5	353.8	842.3	3.4	2.4	2.9
Total population	14555	14568.4	29123.4	100.0	100.0	100.0

(Source:<https://gender.stat.uz/en/osnovnye-pokazateli-en/demografiya-en/naselenie-en/411-ozhidaemaya-prodolzhitelnost-en>)

Uzbekistan has not been able to speed up the process of urbanization and other social development process despite having a very impressive growth rate of the economy. Actually, its rural population has increased to 64 % in 2015 from 63 % in 2005. The life expectancy at birth has improved marginally during 2010 to 2015. It has increased to 68.1 years in 2015 from 67 years in 2005. The unemployment rate is still above 10 %. According to “the International Labor Organization (ILO) estimate the unemployment rate in Uzbekistan is 11 % throughout the period 2000 to 2013” (Table 3). The share of agriculture in the GDP has been observing a steady decline since 2000. Now, it accounts

only 18 % of GDP in 2015, whereas it was 34 % in the year of 2000. This shows the impressive performance of the other sectors of the Uzbekistan Economy.

**Table 3: Population indicators of Uzbekistan**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2015</b>
Population, total (million)	24.65	26.17	28.56	30.24	31.29
Rural population(% of total population)	63	63	64	64	64
Rural population (million)	15.42	16.57	18.23	19.29	19.92
Life expectancy at birth, (years)	67	67	68	68	68.1
Gross School enrollment, primary and secondary (%)	98	98	99	---	105
Unemployment rate (ILO estimate)	11	11	11	11	---
Agriculture, value added(% of GDP)	34	28	20	19	18
GDP growth rate (annual %)	4	7	9	8	8
Net official development assistance received (current '000 US\$)	185750	169790	232080	292740	---

Source: World Development Indicators database, World Bank

### **2.3.2 Education and Women**

Beginning from 1991 the system of education has been reconstructed based on the requirements of modern Uzbek society. This process was carried out step-by-step in correlation with the types and forms of education including pre-school education, secondary school education, secondary specialized, professional (vocational) education and higher education. After Uzbekistan became independent, a new law of education was written guaranteeing its citizens compulsory secondary and higher education.

Independence brought many reforms keeping in mind the issues of women within Uzbekistan, especially educational reforms.

The focus of the current educational system of Uzbekistan is to form a healthy and developed personality of a child be it a girl or a boy. At the pre-school level there are state as well as private educational institutions. At this level the states as well as private schools are bound to provide care, supervision, health promotion, education and training to children under the seven years of age. General secondary education consists of nine years of compulsory education, which involves primary (1-4) and general secondary education (5-9). Children of age group 6-7 can join the class one. At this level the focus is to develop basic literacy, knowledge and development of basic skills. It is after the secondary school students have the right to choose the area of their further study in academic lyceum or vocational college. The courses offered at Academic Lyceums are for three years and career oriented. They provide specific training for the development of their professional career. Higher education is carried out at the university level and is divided into Bachelors and Masters Degree program.

The available studies on highlighting girl child education<sup>4</sup> in Uzbekistan point out that the proportion of girls to boys beginning from the year 2001 till 2013 was constant at the average rate of 0.94 in general education. Where specialized secondary professional education maintains the proportion of 0.96 in the year 2013, the gender parity in academic lyceums is only at 0.74 in the year 2013. Hence though there is increase in overall specialized secondary professional education the vocational or academic lyceums are lagging behind.

Consequently, the above data highlights that the educational reforms introduced by Uzbek government have positively contributed in overall development of women. The gender parity has been maintained even at the urban - rural divide. The literacy rate in rural areas of Uzbekistan has been practically at par with the literacy rate in urban areas. If in the 2000 it was 99.5 in rural Uzbekistan and urban areas it was 99.6 it has achieved 100% literacy by the year 2013.

Among other parameters pointing towards the success of economic reforms include increase in the number of secondary school with higher education from 74.6% to 95.3%

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<sup>4</sup>[http://www.uzbekistan.be/press-releases/2015/MDG/mdg\\_eng.pdf](http://www.uzbekistan.be/press-releases/2015/MDG/mdg_eng.pdf)

beginning from 2001 to 2013 leading to decrease in student – teacher ratio from 14 to 11. Similarly, as per available data of 2013, at the level of senior research– candidate women are 40 percent whereas men are 60 percent in Uzbekistan. It is to be noted that only in Bukhara region, at the senior research level women are 53.3 percent whereas men are only 46.7 percent. A large number of women are there even in the Tashkent city where they are 41 percent and men are 59 percent. However, Contrary to this their percentage is very low in Samarkand and Sukhandarya regions; they are at 31.8 percent and zero percent respectively. Conclusively, women are doing well in education, as far as attainment of the basic or minimum literacy is concerned. Nonetheless, their presence in higher education is lagging behind. Their presence at research level is higher only in a few selected cities.

### **2.3.3 Healthcare and Women**

Similar to educational reforms the healthcare reforms of Uzbekistan provided “wide access for the Uzbek citizens to quality, professional, well-equipped medical services, which include primary health care in rural areas, multi-profile and separate specialized units in urban areas and regional centers, and high-tech specialized services in the capital city. Particular attention has been given to disease prevention and health promotion, development of physical training and sports, primarily junior sports”. Precautions have been taken to introduce the system where pregnant women and children can be provided better health facilities to reduce the infant and maternal mortality rate. A decline from 24.3 to 12 per 1000 births among children under the age five has been observed in the year 2013. Similarly, “the number of underweight children decreased from 3.8% to 1.6%, maternal mortality rate went down from 34.1 to 20.0 per 100,000 live births”.

### **2.3.4 Economy, Society and Women**

As is known, the economic crisis followed by the collapse of USSR led to overall instability in all the newly emerged countries. The major impact of this crisis was overall unemployment, which obviously, affected women worse than any other section of society. It can be observed from the available data of 1990-91, where out of 10000 unemployed, women’s proportion was as high as 80%. Further it is to be noted that the period 1991-94 was the time when major staff cutting was done. This was the time when approximately 70% staff had lost the job majority of who were women. For example approximately 63 percent of women were sacked in the year 2000. The job cutting was not done based on

the unskilled or semi-skilled workers even the trained professionals had lost their jobs. “It was only with the introduction of quota system and the positive discrimination that operated in support of female employment”.

Emergence of private sectors, de-nationalization of factories and major plants also had an impact on employment issues of Uzbekistan. With the emergence of privatization process, there has emerged new opportunities for men who were earlier occupied in high administrative positions but this has also resulted in great challenges for women. Majority of challenges that emerged were related to lack of latest technological knowledge among women required for emerging industries. In addition to this private firms did not provide the basic facilities, such as maternity leave, child benefits, which they enjoyed earlier. Hence, they were forced to either work as sex workers or get into unorganized sectors where they were further subject to further exploitation.

However, the situation improved by the years 2000 - 2002 onwards with the increase of volume of investments from 2.0 USD to 12.1 billion USD leading increase in economy 6.4 times by the year 2013. The basic industries such as ferrous and nonferrous sector, fuel and energy sector received large scale investments which was crucial for enhancing the economic growth. It also helps “to boost the exports and create the foundations for the sustainable welfare improvement in the medium and long run. There is an increase in the agricultural output in absolute numbers. The share of agriculture in GDP has been declined from 30% in 2001 to 17.6% in 2013. However, the share of industries has increased from 14.1 % to 24.2%”. Service sector also witnessed an increase in their share to GDP from 44% to 53%. Moreover, the investments put in the social and productive infrastructure paved the way for the expansion of domestic demands, generation of employment and the improvement of the quality of life of the people.

It is significant to take notice that the structural transformations and the economic growth have given an opportunity to change the structure of employment. Structural reforms between 2001 and 2013 led to a “modest increase in the share of employed in services and industry from 66.6% to 72.8%”. It also led to the decrease in proportion of those employed in agriculture. There was a decline from 33.5% to 27.2%. The data says that “the share of women in the employment has increase and reached 45.7% in 2013”.



Restoration of cultural traditions, promotion of traditional crafts positively contributed in the development of small-scale industries associated with handicraft items, textile etc. These industries get extensive government support in order to restore and strengthen traditional art and culture. In 1991, a number of women organizations supporting handicraft were established such as Association of Business Women of Uzbekistan (BWA) which was one of the first few Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) founded in Uzbekistan. One of the important tasks of this organization was to provide vocational education and make women self sufficient. Women were also introduced to the new areas of education like economy, marketing, taxation and marketing. More than 300 women were trained to do gold embroidery, carpet weaving, chain stitch hand embroidery and basket weaving. International organizations joined hands in “providing training in latest techniques of carpet weaving and gold embroidery in several Uzbek provinces. Hence, the association’s main goal is to help women survive and achieve economic independence in unstable economic conditions”. Many other “international organizations such as UNESCO, SDC, CADA, CAMP etc. offer enormous aid to women wishing to work in craft production”. Since, majority of the population lives in rural areas, traditional art and craft continues to represent one of the main potential resources of the country.

“Women’s share in employment increased for the period of 2000-2013 from 44% to 45.7%. In these years, women’s employment in small businesses and private entrepreneurship rose significantly. By 2012, 40.4% of small enterprises and 13.7% of micro-enterprises were run by women. As far as regional disparities are concerned, the best regions in terms of gender parity are Karakalpakstan, Andijan, Samarkand and Tashkent regions”.

To understand the disparities which exist among men and women across sections, we must look at certain data. Economically active population (that part of the population which provides supply of labor force for production of goods and services) includes women belonging to age group of 16-54 years and men belonging to age group of 16-59 years. While this difference in the limits set on age is in itself an indicator of the discrimination against women, the absolute and relative numbers of female labor force continue to be lesser in comparison to male workforce.

The total economically active population in the year 2007, was 11299.2, where female workforce stood at 5332.6 and male workforce stood at 5966.6. In the year 2013, total

economically active population was 13163.0, in which female workforce was 6004.8 and male workforce was 7158.2. In terms of percentage, economically active population of women and men was 47.2 % and 52.8% respectively in the year 2007, as compared to the year 2013, where women formed 45.6% of workforce, and men formed 54.4% of the workforce. It is clearly visible from the data that while in absolute terms, the number of women workers has increased as a result of increase in overall workforce, between the years of 2007-2013, but relatively, when compared to men, the female workforce has decreased in economical field in comparison to men.

Unemployed registered with local employment agencies, are those individuals of active working age (from 16 years old to the eligible retirement age), having no job or income (earnings), registered with local employment agencies as individuals seeking for job, ready to work, to get vocational training or retraining and skills upgrading.

Consideration for the needs and interests of both sexes, as well as setting the equal opportunities for men and women contributes to improving the situation of both women and men, strengthening the families, improving the physical, spiritual and moral upbringing of children, and thus enhancing the nation's potential and opportunities to stimulate economic progress. In turn, the economic growth offers great opportunities to improve gender equality in the long term. For effective growth of the country, it is necessary to create an institutional mechanism that will guarantee the equal opportunities for women and men in all spheres of the society and public domains.

### **Labour Force situation in Uzbekistan**

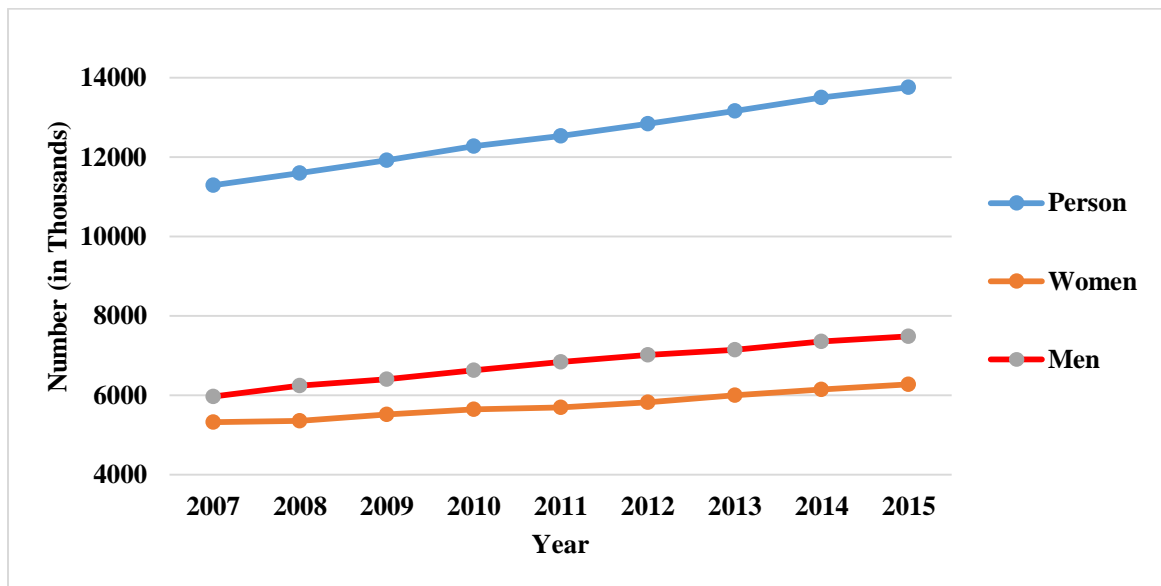
The labour force participation rate (LFPR) basically defined as percentage of persons of total population who are seeking employment or in other words economically active population in the economy. The overall LFPR has improved to 44 % in 2015 compare to 43 % in 2010. The LFPR for male workers is 54.4% whereas for female workers it is 45.6 % in 2015 (Table 4).

**Table 4: Labor Force Participation Rate in Uzbekistan**

	2010	2013	2015
Person	43.0	43.5	44.0
Women	46.0	45.6	45.6
Men	54.0	54.4	54.4

Source: Gender statistics of Uzbekistan <https://gender.stat.uz>

In terms of absolute number, the labour force or the economically active population is increasing over the period of 2007 to 2015. The increase can be observed clearly through graph below for both male and female labour force (Image 2).



**Image 2: Economically Active population**

Source: Gender statistics of Uzbekistan <https://gender.stat.uz>

The male labour force constitute 54.4 % whereas female are 45.6 % in 2015. The table below reflects the increasing share of male labour force whereas female labour force has declined since 2007. But their respective share in total labour force has almost stagnated since 2011 (Table 5).

**Table 5: Number of economically active population in Uzbekistan**

<b>Economically Active Population of Uzbekistan</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>Person</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	<b>(In Thousands)</b>			<b>(Per Cent)</b>	
<b>2007</b>	11299.2	5332.6	5966.6	47.2	52.8
<b>2008</b>	11603.1	5362.2	6240.9	46.2	53.8
<b>2009</b>	11929.5	5523.5	6406	46.3	53.7
<b>2010</b>	12286.6	5648.5	6638.1	46.0	54.0
<b>2011</b>	12541.5	5691.3	6850.2	45.4	54.6
<b>2012</b>	12850.1	5829.5	7020.6	45.4	54.6
<b>2013</b>	13163	6004.8	7158.2	45.6	54.4
<b>2014</b>	13505.4	6149.6	7355.8	45.5	54.5
<b>2015</b>	13767.7	6275.5	7492.2	45.6	54.4

Source: Gender statistics of Uzbekistan <https://gender.stat.uz>

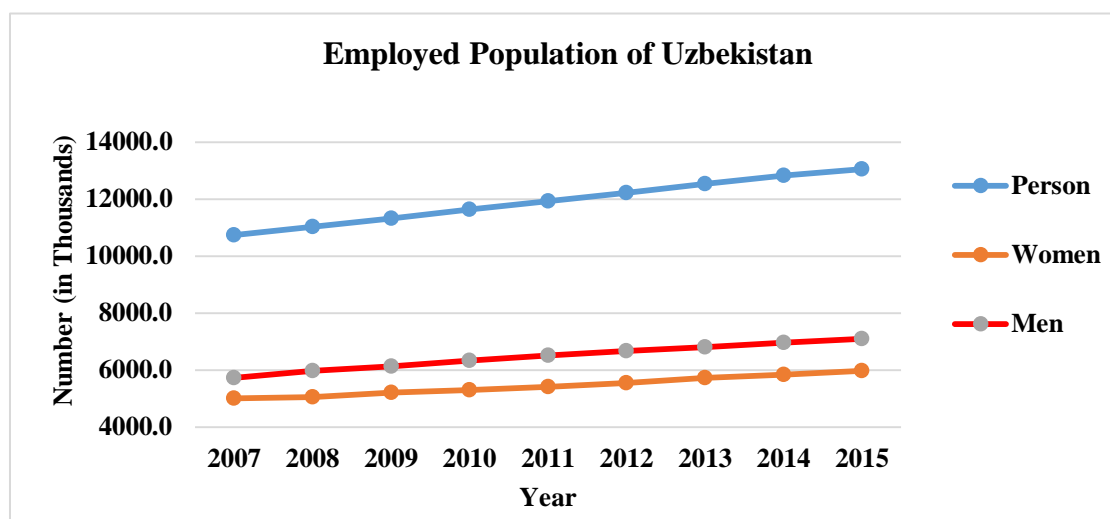
### **Work Force Situation in Uzbekistan**

Workforce basically constitutes the persons actually employed somewhere meaningfully and contributing to the economy. The workforce as a whole has increased significantly in Uzbekistan economy in absolute number (see the chart below). It has increased to 13058.3 thousand in 2015 from 10735.4 thousands in 2007. But the share of male workers has increased significantly from 53.3 % in 2007 to 54.3 % in 2015 whereas female workers share has declined from 46.7% in 2007 to 45.7% in 2015 (Table 6 and Image 3).

**Table 6: Year-wise Employment Dynamics for Male and Female in Uzbekistan**

Year	Occupied in economy	Women	Men	Women	Men
	(In Thousands)			(Per Cent)	
2007	10735.4	5017.1	5718.3	46.7	53.3
2008	11035.4	5057.1	5978.3	45.8	54.2
2009	11328.1	5200.3	6127.8	45.9	54.1
2010	11628.4	5295.1	6333.3	45.5	54.5
2011	11919.1	5416.6	6502.5	45.4	54.6
2012	12223.8	5554.1	6669.7	45.4	54.6
2013	12523.3	5723.7	6799.6	45.7	54.3
2014	12818.4	5848.1	6970.3	45.6	54.4
2015	13058.3	5964.3	7094.0	45.7	54.3

Source: Gender statistics of Uzbekistan <https://gender.stat.uz>



**Image 3: Employed population of Uzbekistan**

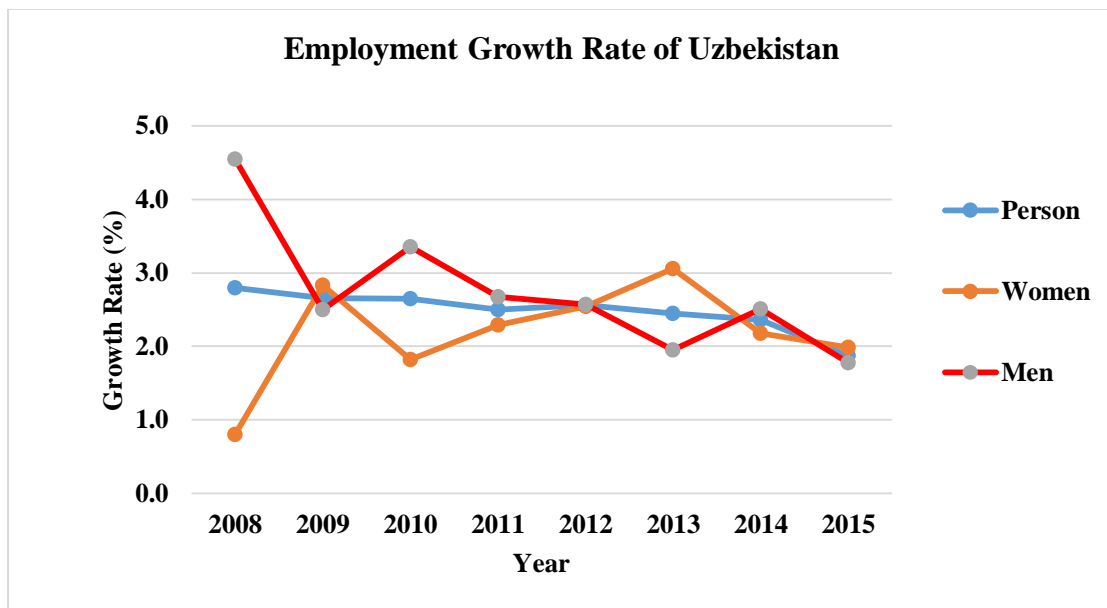
Source: Gender statistics of Uzbekistan <https://gender.stat.uz>

The growth rate of employment has deteriorated for the economy as a whole in recent years. The pattern of employment growth rate is mixed for male as well as female workers. But female workers seems to experience better outcome compare to their male counterparts in

terms of employment growth (Image 4). The growth rate for male workers have taken a drastic downfall since 2010 and the situation has turned grim in 2015 when the male employment growth registered a abismally low at 1.8% (Table 7 and Image 4).

**Table 7: Year-wise Employment Growth Rate in Uzbekistan**

Year	Person	Women	Men
2008	2.8	0.8	4.5
2009	2.7	2.8	2.5
2010	2.7	1.8	3.4
2011	2.5	2.3	2.7
2012	2.6	2.5	2.6
2013	2.5	3.1	1.9
2014	2.4	2.2	2.5
2015	1.9	2.0	1.8



**Image 4: Employment Growth rate of Uzbekistan**

Source: gender statistics of Uzbekistan

The above table gives the wholesome picture of the Uzbekistan society. As per the given data, since 2000 onwards, it shows the increasing addition of to the population. The percentage of total population from 24.65 in 2000 increased by almost 7 and it became 31.29 in 2005. Due to different measures and development in standard of living, the life

expectancy of the people increased to 78 years. The percentage of unemployment (the percent of total labour force) retained the same 11 till 2015. The value addition of agriculture to GDP in percent shows gradual and continual decrease. It was 34 in 2000, and then reduced to 28 in 2005 to 20 in 2011. In 2013, it again decreased to 19 and in 2015, it maintained 18. The growth of national economy reflects both ups and downs. In 2000, it was 4 whereas in 2005, it touched 7 and then 9 in 2010. However, it maintained the same 8 in both 2013 and 2015. However, it also tells the fact about school enrollment both in primary and secondary level. It more or less maintained the same digit 0.98 and 0.99 in 2005 and 2010 respectively.

### **2.3.5 Poverty and Women**

The national poverty rate was reduced by 1.9 times between 2001 and 2013. It also decreased at the sub-national level. “The poverty rate was decreased from 27.5 % in 2001 to 13.7 % in 2015. Some of the estimates suggest that there is still possibilities that poverty rate will further decline to 13.7 % in 2015. The rates of poverty were also decreased at the regional level with some variations. In the rural areas, the poverty rate was decreased from 30.5 % in 2001 to 17.3 % in 2013”. Rate of poverty has decreased from 22.5% in 2001 to 10.6 % in 2013 in the urban areas.

In terms of region wise analysis of poverty rates in Uzbekistan, during the period between 2004 to 2012, the most important reduction of poverty-3.8 fold- was registered in the city of Tashkent. The rate of poverty was decreased by more than twice in Samarkhand, Tashkent, Khorezm and Namangan regions. In the other remaining areas, the rate was decreased by 1.4-1.8 times. In some regions, “the poverty rate is higher than the average which includes Navoi, Jizzak, Sirdarya, Kashkadarya, Khorezm, Surkhandarya and the republic of Karakalpakstan”.

Uzbekistan was able to reduce its poverty rate from 27.5% to 14.1 % due to the social and economic policies of the president and the government which aimed at gaining stable economic growth, harmonious development of the population and the equitable distribution of income in the period between 2001 and 2013. The living standards were also improved for several socio-economic groups within the period between 2001 and 2013. The poverty rates among children and families were also “reduced from 22.1% in

2007 to 11.8% in 2013. The poverty rates in those households headed by women were also declined from 1.3% in 2007 to 0.3% in 2013”.

One of the important factors which contributed to the reduction of the poverty level “was increased social expenditures which provided people with guarantees for basic social rights. Several reforms were implemented with the National Program for Personnel Training”. Utmost importance was given to the “protection of public health. Maternal and child health was identified as a priority of health care sector development. Between 2001 and 2013, public spending on the social sphere expanded significantly from 47, 6% of state budget to 58.6%. The share of expenditures on education in total public expenditures increased from 25.5% to 35%; on health care – from 9.8% to 14.4%, and on social services and social allowances for families – from 6.5% to 6.7 %”.<sup>5</sup>

## **2.4 Political Transformation and Women**

With the democratization process in Uzbekistan, People’s Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, in the ruling period of Islam Karimov. From the very beginning he took the initiatives for the women empowerment. There were several legislative changes and legal reforms were introduced to guarantee the interests and status of women. As has been already mentioned the Constitution of Uzbekistan provided “equal rights and freedom irrespective of sex, race, ethnic origin, language, religion, social background, convictions, personal or social status (Article 18). Similarly, Article 46 also guarantees equality of rights for men and women”. Hence, in general, “women in Uzbekistan are accorded equal rights with men and enjoy a number of special provisions that recognize and protect the position of women as biological and social mothers at home and the workplace”. However, in practice the implementation of these laws was poor or inconsistent due to lack of compliance.

Apart from constitutional provisions “there are some special measures taken pertaining only to women, such as the Labor Code and Family Code”. These privileges and protective measures enhance women’s position from just biological and reproductive functions to an equal partner for the development of the society. “Uzbekistan is also a signatory to the CEDAW and the United Nations Declaration and Action Platform set forth in Beijing in 1995. The Government of Uzbekistan passed a new Family Code (1998)

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<sup>5</sup>Millenium Development Goal Uzbekistan, 2015



to bring the existing family law into compliance with these international conventions and declarations for women in the republic of Uzbekistan” (Women in the, Republic of Uzbekistan 2001:14).

Women’s population has throughout been larger than men in Uzbekistan. Since 1991, “gender equality has seen both progress and regression even when the government has shown some commitment in addressing gender issues in Uzbekistan”. In fact, “the gender profile in Uzbekistan is influenced by three dominant factors: the Soviet inheritance, the social and economic challenges of the transition period, and the traditional Uzbek values and cultural traditions. However, it can also be argued that apart from these factors, the external factor also influence the gender profile in Uzbekistan” (The Report of United Nations Country Team 2008).

In 2012, “the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) included Uzbekistan in its Social Institutions and Gender Index. This index fluctuates from other indexes since it concentrates on unfair social organizations such as early marriage, biased heritage practices, and brutality against women and does not measure gender gaps in effects such as service or education. Uzbekistan was ranked 56 out of 86 non-OECD countries and established an overall score of 0.304 in 2012”.

#### **2.4.1 Women Representation in Democratic Process**

Women are participating and representing in various fields particularly in the political field this has resulted in a change in the tradition rules of engagement in public, and also has opened up new opportunities and political discourse. Consequently, People and organizations have increasingly recognized the linkages between civil society and government institutions and have been able to feed their concerns into the policy making process. With the leaders and organizations realizing the sense of power, they are more involved and concerned about women’s participation (Ahern, Masterson 2000:39).

As mentioned earlier that women’s under-representation in political organization and decision making process have not only made women vulnerable but also deprived them in the entire field. “Which could be restrained with the introduction of a quota in 2004 entailing 30% of political party candidates should be women; the number of women in the Oliy Majlis (National Assembly) has enlarged with each election. Still, women form only 17% of all members of legislative, representative, and executive bodies in Uzbekistan, and

are not yet in a position to effectively influence the decision making process. Even though a number of women hold very high offices but their share is below average in the national scenario. Over all women continue to be underrepresented in additional branches of administration. For example, it is found that a female minister heads only 1 of the 14 ministries, and occupies merely 4.2% of seats in the Oliy Majlis. Women are also under represented in local bodies. For instance, there were no female hokim (local leaders); however, there were female deputy hokim” (Asian Development Bank 2014).

#### **2.4.2 Women in Political and Public Life**

Uzbekistan has brought some political reforms that “guarantee the interests and status of women. President Islam Karimov declared 1999, as the “Year of women”, which stated that the way society treats its women shows the level of the culture and the spirituality of a given society and the results of society’s movement toward democracy. This move of the government was designed to draw attention to gender related issues that adversely affects women’s ability to participate in society democratically”. It was in the same spirit that President re-emphasized the importance of women’s participation and encourages their appointment to leading positions in lower, middle, and topmost administrative bodies. “Women’s involvement in government is one of the major elements in the construction of a democratic state. After joining UN, Uzbekistan has adopted many international agreements and conventions that confirmed women’s rights and set the terms of the state’s action plan for their protection”. Through participation in the government, women can more efficiently and effectively gain true equality in all spheres of life. Women are mainly involved in “local or grass root politics while they hold only few leading positions in political parties. There were only 17 women members in the Uzbekistan parliament elected in November 1999 (compared with 23 in the previous elections) out of a total of 250 deputies. From 1008 persons nominated as parliamentary candidates 300 were women”.

On 28th November 1995 by which the new position of the female deputy Prime minister of the republic was established. “This position was promoted to consolidate the position of women’s committee by increasing their involvement in the resolution of social and cultural development and their participation in administration”.

In 1991 “the Women’s Committee was established. It is the main institute responsible for the formulation and implementation of government policies relating to women’s issues in the country”. There is a structure of local self governance incorporating so called women’s councils which are headed by women. “Similar positions at the deputy *Hokim* (deputy governor or deputy mayor) level were concurrently established for women at three administrative levels, provisional (*oblast*), and regional (*rayon*) and city levels. Despite the effort of the government to increase the number of women in governmental structures, their number remains low and those women holding positions in governmental bodies have little work experience”.

In his study Ibrahim has “stated that women account for 35% of members in the Supreme Soviet of Uzbek. They accounted for only 7% of parliamentarians in the *Oily Majlis* in 2000 (just 17 out of 250) members. He also finds that the same decline is observed at local government levels. Where the proportion of women in the highest administrative and management positions such as deputy ministers and deputy directors of enterprises is 17.5. But the number of women elected to the national parliament that is the *Oily Majlis* has increased from 9% to 18% since the December 2004 elections. This was largely due to the reintroduction of a quota system, not for the share of women parliamentarians, but for political parties that put forward candidates for elections, which were obliged to ensure that 30% of their candidates were women” (Ibrahim2013:53).

The Gender Assessment, 2014 states “that during 1992–1998, women’s representation in politics was a fairly steady at 9.4% but when a quota system was introduced into the Law on Elections to the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan it has shown some development as it, requires political parties nominating members for election to the Oliy Majlis and to *kengashes* (councils) of people’s deputies to include at least 30.0% women among the total candidates. The quota has played a key role in increasing the number of women in the Parliament with each election. Before constitutional reform and the creation of a bicameral parliament, only 7.2% of members of Parliament were women. After the 2005 elections, women gained 17.5% of seats in the legislative chamber (lower house) and 15.0% of seats in the Senate (upper house). There is a gradual increase in the legislative process. As per 2012 data is concerned, women represent 15% of the Senate and 22% of the legislative chamber, or 19% of the full Oliy Majlis. Women’s representation in the

lower house has been increasing, but the number of women in the Senate has not changed from the previous election cycle”.

There is no women chair in any of the 11 parliamentary committees, and only two committees have female deputy chairpersons: the Committee on Labor and Social Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Inter-Parliamentary Relations. “Only 1 of 13 members of the Committee on Agriculture and Water Management and 2 of 11 members of the Committee on Industry, Construction and Trade are female. 101 Women parliamentarians are better represented on committees concerned with labor and social affairs and with democratic institutions and civil society, which signifies that gender stereotypes on women’s responsibilities for social issues may influence women’s position within the legislative branch” (Uzbekistan Country Gender Assessment 2014:23).

At this point it is important to note that “the Speaker of the Legislative Chamber and the Ombudsman for Human Rights that is connected to the Parliament, are both women and for the first time in history a woman was nominated as a candidate to contest for the post of president of the country during the 2007–2008 elections. Although the emergence of isolated incidents suggest that notions about women not being suited for political office may be changing, it is also important to examine the pattern of women’s access to elected office at various levels. For example, in 2008, several regions had no female representation, or only a single female Member of Parliament, in the Oliy Majlis. Similarly, while the number of women in regional and local representative bodies, the *kengashes* of people’s deputies has increased, the status of this office has diminished, suggesting that there remain considerable barriers to women’s representation in positions of power, latent and manifest”(Uzbekistan Country Gender Assessment 2014:24).

### **2.4.3 Role of Political Parties in Democratization Process**

Democratization is a process for which people can participate and play an important role in the government sector. Democracy leads to more women’s participation in the political system. Bohr (1998) analyzes “the prospects for long-term stability in Uzbekistan, where an authoritarian system of rule has been firmly entrenched. She explores potential areas of instability, political institutions and political parties, including ethnic and religious tensions”. Abramson (2006) addresses women’s status in Uzbek society from the Islamic point of view. According to the author “Islam is extremely adaptable to contemporary

circumstances and has the potential for providing Muslims with the means to solve contemporary problems in Uzbekistan. State plays a crucial role in the democratization of society and political system. Democratization is a continuous process. It means development of a democratic culture. Thus, democracy is consolidated with the role of civil society and such other organizations. The existence of several competing political parties is accepted as a crucial characteristic of democratic regime”. In the words of Robert Dahl, “Political regimes that banned political opposition and competition among political parties for votes of the people are not ‘competitive’ and as a consequence not democratic’. The significant political liberalizations resulted in the emergence of free press, opposition parties, independent unions and a multitude of civil society organizations from the state” (Stepan 1996:170)

#### **2.4.4 Women in Political Parties**

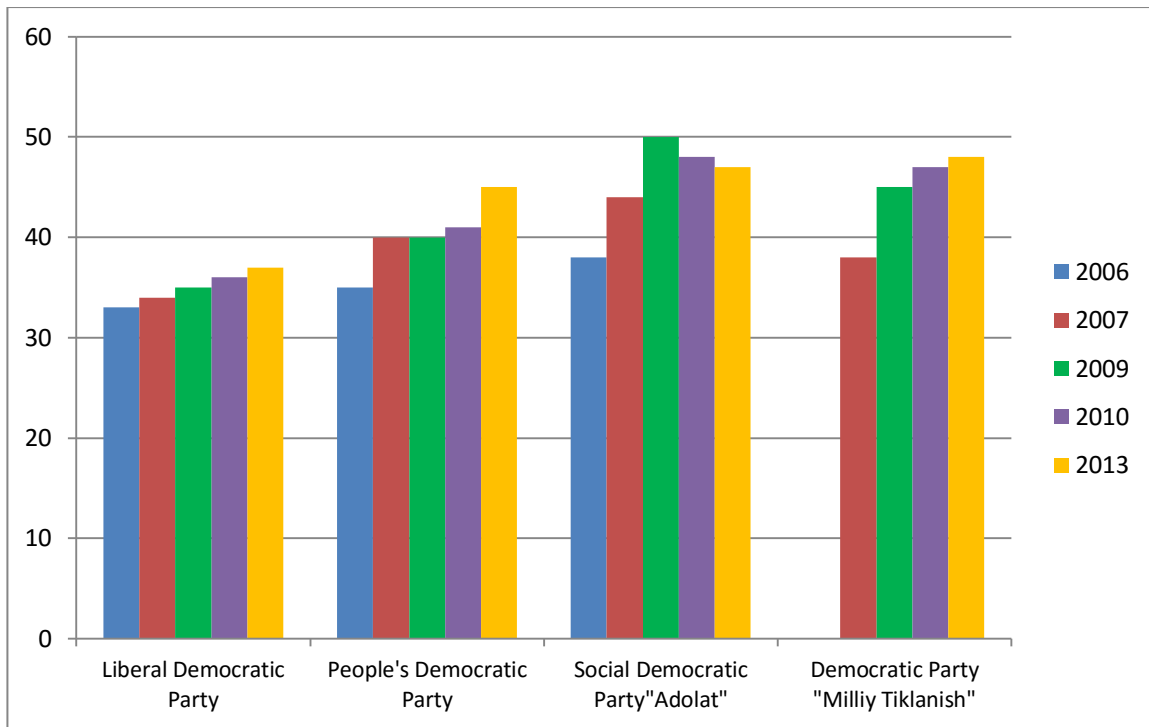
The emergence of political movement’s in Uzbekistan had started Gorbachev’s period with the introduction of Glasnost and Perestroika. In Uzbekistan the Birlik national movement, founded in November 1988, had a national democratic orientation. Its programme was based on general democratic principles of social life and slogans of an Uzbek national revival. The movement consisted almost exclusively of ethnic Uzbeks. It also included demands to adopt a special government programme designed systematically to increase the percentage of Uzbeks in the blue collar sector (Ro’I, 2004: 152).

After the disintegration of Soviet Union, “through the early 1990s, the government’s stated goal of creating a multiparty democracy in Uzbekistan was not materialized”. After independence “the Communist Party of Uzbekistan was officially banned, but its successor, the PDPU, assumed the personnel, structure and political domination of its predecessor”. Deputies of opposition parties were thrown out and the PDPU members took the complete control of the Supreme Soviet. “The only other legal party was the Progress of Fatherland Party, which was created by a key adviser to President Karimov, to give the country a semblance of a multiparty system”. Other parties include “the Movement for Democratic Reforms, the Islamic Rebirth Party (banned by the government in 1992), the Humaneness and Charity group, and the Uzbekistan Movement. Former Prime Minister (1990-91) and the former Vice President (1991) of Uzbekistan, Shukrullo Mirsaidov, created a new party, Adolat (Justice) in December 1994. Like Birlik and Erk, the Adolat

calls for liberal economic reforms, political pluralism, and a secular society, but experts describe its opposition to the government as quite moderate”. (Melvin 2004 ).

Above all, it has been observed that there was a complete ignorance towards women’s particularly in the field of politics during the Soviet and pre-Soviet period. “The before a remarkable increase was observed of women in political parties since the quota system was adopted, and on average, women comprised 37% to almost 50% of the five major parties in 2010. All political parties have women’s divisions dedicated to preparing women to contest for parliamentary elections. However, none of the major political parties’ platforms advocate gender equality or take a position on women’s rights. It also does not appear that there is any particular correlation between women as party members and the number of female members of Parliament in the Oliy Majlis. Because the electoral quota stipulates a numerical goal but does not regulate how women and men are placed on party lists, it is possible that, although women make up more than two-thirds of the major parties, they occupy non-leadership roles and are thus not put forward as candidates in the same proportion as men” (Uzbekistan Country Gender Assessment 2014:24).

“The proportion of women in the parliament increased from 19 % in 2005 to 22 % in 2013. This is amounted to the introduction of a 30% quota in the lists of candidates of political parties in 2004. In the local representative bodies, the proportion of women was more than 19% of the total number of deputies”. There was an increase in women representation from “3.4 % in 2005 to 16 % in 2013. The proportion of women in government was also increased. As of November 1, 2013 the proportion of women in high level of position (Ministers, First Deputy Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Heads of the territorial government bodies, and etc.) was about 11% and mid level positions (Heads of main departments, their deputies, heads of departments, etc.) was 31.2%”.



**Image 5: Women’s Participation in Political Parties, 2006-2013<sup>6</sup>**

Sources: Statistical collection. Men and women in Uzbekistan, Tashkent, 2012, Data for 2013 from the Women’s Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan

The Image 5 shows that the proportion of women in the political parties has been increased from 3.4% in 2005 to 16% in 2013. In Uzbekistan, “women account for more than 35% of the four political parties. In each political party, women wing has been created to help advance in institutions of local government and in the Mahalla structures. The share of women who were elected as chairpersons of Mahalla was increased from 9.6% in 2006 to 25.6% in 2013”.

Thus, there is no doubt that women have a special role in the society of Uzbekistan. A brief analysis of the Uzbek legislation showed that government does provide basic constitutional rights, gives opportunity for political engagement of women into decision-making process and guarantees gender equal freedoms. However, strong traditional pressure and public opinion disables women from taking up political positions and developing their public careers. And the political parties also follow the same path of

<sup>6</sup>Tashkent(2015) Millennium Development Goals Report UZBEKISTAN, p-39

traditions and old culture. Thus, enabling legislation in Uzbekistan requires additional work on either changing the mindset of the traditional society or providing special terms of participation for female candidates.

Since women promote family values, their involvement into professional lives requires justification in front of men who are current heads of the households. Mutual understanding that a man can contribute to a family's wellbeing not only financially but also psychologically will bring social changes, where a woman would like to run for the Parliament or the Presidency without a fear to lose the family and be condemned by public opinion (Dilfuza Kurolova 2015).

#### **2.4.5 Women in Governance**

Though the Uzbekistan government has undertaken initiative to increase the number of women in the executive branch, it finds that despite all inclusive efforts of government women still face discrepancy in securing appointments. In 2008 “women held only 6.2% of all executive branch positions. Of the 14 ministries, only the Ministry of Economy was headed by a female minister. Women make up 6.5% of the Cabinet of Ministers and hold a mere 4.2% of total ministerial positions”. Women do not chair any of the 11 state committees and are only represented among members of two committees. Within the executive branch, women are more likely to be represented in deputy or department director positions. At present, “there is only one female deputy prime minister (the chairperson of the Women's Committee, a post reserved for a woman), but women account for 14.3% of “high-level directors” in government offices. Women are also underrepresented in governing bodies of local authority. The president approves candidates for hokim of the 14 regional administrations”. There are currently no female hokims, but according to data “from 2008, women represented 11.9% of deputy hokims. In Uzbekistan, local bodies of citizen self-governance, mahallas, are organized in villages, settlements, and neighborhoods of town and cities. The mahalla is run by a committee of citizens, which is headed by the aksakal, an elected position. Of 10,126 mahallas, women chair 1,131 mahalla committees (11.2%)” (Uzbekistan Country Gender Assessment, 2014: 25).



Women's representation in the Councils of People's Deputies of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, cities, districts and regions. In 2004, the Human Rights Ombudsperson of the Oliy Majlis, the speaker of the Legislative House of the Oliy Majlis and the Chairperson of the Women's Committee were women. Tashkent had the highest proportion of women (23.7%) in the Councils of People's Deputies. Jizzak had 22.8 % and Andijan had 22.8% women representation. The lowest representation of women was seen in Fergana (11.9%). Kashkadarya has witnessed 14.9 % of women's representation. 14.9% and 15.9 % women were represented Kashkadarya and Sirdarya respectively<sup>7</sup>.

## **2.5. Civil society Organizations in Uzbekistan**

Civil society organizations contribute to the consolidation and strengthening of the democracy. Though they are not governed by State, they play an important role by making state more responsive. The progress of social movements and the civil society is important for the socio-political arena of the country particularly for the empowerment of minority, tribal and women. In Central Asia the emergence of civil society inclose prorrximity with the state. After the collapse of Soviet Union it was the civil society organization that had played a significant role in maintaining and strengthening the socio-cultural process in the Central Asian countries including Uzbekistan. The concept of civil society and the issue of democratization are closely linked in Uzbekistan. Masaru in his article "The politics of civil society, Mahallas, NGO: Uzbekistan" argues that the country is the steering strength in the reorganization of the society, hollowing Islam Karimov. He exclaims that three classic primary distinctiveness which exist in civil society comprises the media, democracy and international law. The Mahallas are the good example of civil society organization in Uzbekistan which has been central in terms of raising the space of the Uzbek state.

The discussion of civil society has much significance while discussing with the issue of women participation in the democratic process. It is found that numerous women are associated with the different civil society organization and NGOs who are not

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<sup>7</sup>Tashkent(2015) Millennium Development Goals Report UZBEKISTAN,p-40

only supporting the consolidation of democracy and maintaining the political stability but also working as a channel between the state and the society. In fact, women groups are also actively involved and participate in various civil society groups, social movements, voluntary association, non-governmental organization etc. This kind of process is a good initiative in establishing and strengthening the relationship among the ethnic groups (Suda, Masaru 2004:353).

After the disintegration of USSR all the independent countries practiced a policy of transformation to the market economy and democracy thus constructing prospects for the appearance of civil-society. The prospects and proposals of privatization in diverse areas of economy and society, supplemented with the ideas of freedom of movement and, in an extremely incomplete measure, freedom of expression has led to an escalation of NGOs, autonomous media channel, religious associations and political parties. However some of the post soviet nations, particularly in the western part of the former Soviet Union are still far from obtaining the characteristics of the contemporary nation and societies. The development of civil society of Uzbek was oriented towards strategic partnership with the west during the second part of the 1990s and until 2004. Thereafter, there was the continuous rise of civil society organization in the most part of Central Asian region (Ilkhmov 2005:297-317).

“The structural aspects of civil society development can emerge from social action, communication and social networks. Most viable organizations are those resting on a network of networks. NGOs in Uzbekistan lack a comparable reliance on social networks engaged in the public sphere and civic activity”. The NGOs which “receive International assistance have not helped enough to develop such capacity building. In Uzbekistan the social action and speeches are displayed by a few social activists for ensuring the organizational activity and publicity. It is found that a group in Ferghana province led by human rights activist Mutabar Tadjibayeva playing an important role for persistence advocacy activity in defending the rights of the local population and Muslim community”. The most active Civil Society groups in Uzbekistan are: Civilians, Mahalla (community), Family(clan); NGO, Public organizations, religious organizations, trade unions, Governmental Institutions, Business, Youth movements, Religious organizations, Missionary organizations, and Sport organizations (Steven 2010:49).

### **2.5.1 Women's Participation in NGOs**

It is necessary to note the fact that the construction of market economy with strong social protection is a priority of all reforms. Therefore, one of the Uzbekistan transition period principles is that the state is the main reformer. Its strength must be displayed first of all by executing the state laws in place. At the same time it is necessary to determine key tools to be used in state reforms, both in economic and social fields (Khodjaev 2004).

For the last couple of years NGOs in Uzbekistan have been giving positive assistance for the social and economic growth of the state. Nevertheless, it was complicated in constructing the solid third sector. These NGOs suffered from inadequate information and lack of professionalism. However, there was incredible desire to overcome these shortcomings which hurdled the course of continuing social transformations. Women's NGOs is helpful in providing the crucial assistance the social economic growth of the country (Khodjaev 2004).

The growth of women's NGO is one of the most positive achievements in terms of women's political participation, in Uzbekistan. "The roles of women's NGO in Uzbekistan are improvement of women's status in the family and society, protection of women and of women's legal rights and expanding women's access to new income and business opportunities. The Women's Resource Centre was organized by a group of women at different professions in 1995. The organization aims at strengthening women's independence and their spiritual, intellectual and professional potential. It also encourages women's active participation to the realities of social life and supports initiatives to broaden and deepen women's awareness of their role in social, economic and political life and of their rights and opportunities to attain genuine equality in all spheres of life. Similarly the women's society (*Merci*) deals with the educational programs, reproductive health and legal literacy" (Ibrahim 2013:53).

Employment problem from the transitive period till the present time has been a public problem in Uzbekistan society. Women associations are now working on the issue of motherhood, childhood support, women empowerment, health, protection of women interests etc. In Uzbekistan, female NGOs take part in the state programs on employment, involvement of the citizenry in development process and discussion of

the laws, educational and research programs and training methods. Some of the important NGOs have been discussed further on.

Business Women Association (BWA) of Uzbekistan was established in 1991. From 1991 to 2000 twenty-four endeavors have been executed at national level. Exterior of this, every division implements its own ventures, such as women's training in the area of business and law, generating workplaces for women. The BWA is committed to the country's progress, contributing significantly towards the evolving market economy. At the same time the BWA has established itself to be more cost-effective than the government (Non-Governmental Organizations 2015).

The Women's Committee was presented NGO status in 1991, in the immediate consequences of freedom. It has since been the objective of both the government of the country and UN agencies (UNDP in particular) to make women NGOs an important part of the national machinery of development of women in Uzbekistan. "On 25<sup>th</sup> may 2004 the government adopted a new decree on additional measure for supporting the Uzbek women's committee according to which all women's NGOs had to reregister by 1st November 2004" (Kandiyoti 2007:40).

### **2.5.2 Role of Media and Human Rights**

In every democratic society, the media functions as the fourth branch of authority, penetrating for information on the circumstance of society and the activities of the State and reporting it to the people to keep them well-versed on the growth being made by their democratic council. The media is a marvelous strength of society, channeling information to citizens. It is capable to create public opinion and even to control which concerns should be given enormous concentration. Thus, there is a great role of media in highlighting and addressing the women issues and play as the mediator between the state and the women groups. Uzbekistan is not exception for playing role in the field of women and society. In the traditional society of Uzbekistan where the legal and official instruments are still weak, the media should play a more significant role of shielding human rights and use its influence to pressurize the authorities and state establishments to promote the interests of women (Human Development Report 1999:40).

If civil society in Uzbekistan wants to effectively safeguard the people's right and interest against the government, it needs to acquire information and awareness of the working of government and state apparatus. In this regard, media has an important role which can contribute to the strengthening of civil society. However, the media sector in Uzbekistan faces major obstacles. Most of the times, the Uzbek administration tries to obstruct entrance to internet sites that carries information which scrutinize the government and its guidelines (Bruce 2006).

There is no autonomous print media, radio, or television, though some Western radio stations like the BBC help in spreading information in Uzbekistan from outside of the country. The correspondents functioning for such organizations face a regular menace of arrest and detention. State-operated media outlets have an important pro-government prejudice but the private media generally functions in a restrictive environment and they are often highly critical of the government and its authorities.

Though private radio stations and press have been playing a crucial role in Uzbekistan since the beginning of democratic process, and have helped in restructuring and expanding the national information space, idea of freedom of expression, guaranteeing more public control over behavior of state and governance, the idea of 'freedom of press' has a long way to go before it establishes itself firmly in the society (Human Rights Watch 2011).

As far as women are concerned, a culture of participation and representation of Uzbek women in the mass media has to be developed for more participation of women in the civil society organization. "There is a need to increase the number of specialized newspapers for women as well as TV and radio programs dedicated to women's issues which can design a comprehensive plan aimed at expanding social debate on gender issues in all forms of media. Media can prove to be a strong channel to disseminate legal knowledge regarding women's rights and obligations. In fact, the media should raise awareness in society and create conditions for widespread discussions on the role of women in society, including the historical development of roles assigned to men and women, as well as acute social problems arising from gender inequality" (Bruce 2006).

Human rights groups are one of the important components of civil society movement in all the democratic societies. Since the UN Declaration on Human Rights in 1948 almost all the countries took initiative in protecting the rights of women, children, tribal, and minorities and so on. With the disintegration of Soviet Union, there emerged new factors which directly affected Uzbekistan. Issues like regional instability, international terrorism, drug and human trafficking, environmental disasters, emergence of new regional organizations and globalization. Simultaneously, Uzbekistan was also facing internal problems with the disintegration of Soviet Union. Some of the challenges faced by Uzbekistan were the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, deterioration in the living standards and also issues related to implementation of the international norms including in the area of human right that directly or indirectly affected women.

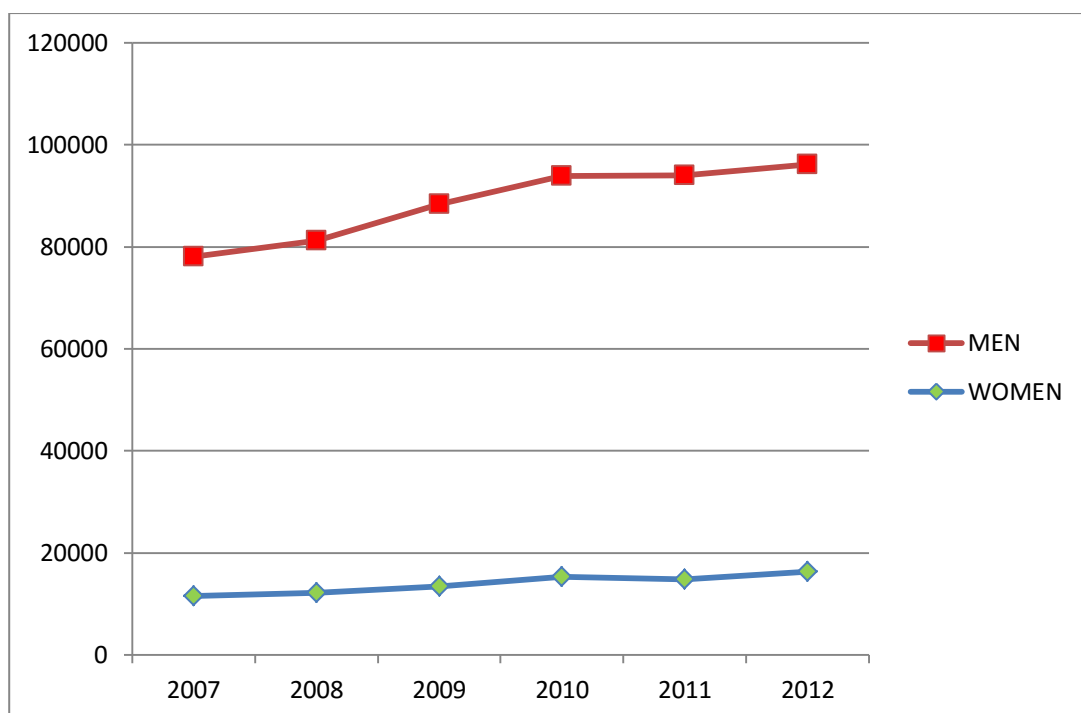
“As a member state of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Uzbekistan undertakes additional obligations in the field of human rights, including commitments to combat intolerance and promote non-discrimination. Though Uzbeks are in majority in Uzbekistan the situation is worsening due to the presence of other titular minorities” (World Report 2011: Uzbekistan). Uzbekistan Government’s human rights records remained poor. “Though there were some improvements in a few areas; serious problems remained in most part of the country”. The continued dominance of President Islam Karimov and his ruling party limited citizen’s rights. They continued to torture and abuse detainees. Though the Uzbekistan Constitution promises civil and political rights in their entirety. Authorities continue their crackdown on civil society activists, and autonomous journalists. The judiciary lacks sovereignty, and has an abysmal record in restraining the executive power. In 2010 authorities continued to disregard calls for an autonomous examination into the 2005 Andijan massacre, when establishment shot and killed hundreds of habitually unprotected protestors. Authorities also harassed families of Andijan refugees and in April 2010, imprisoned a woman who revisited Uzbekistan four-and-a-half years after escaping (World Report 2011: Uzbekistan).

This scenario presents dire situation in which the women of Uzbekistan are placed. They are facing numerous problems, starting from lack of freedom of expression to threats to life. In order to avoid brutality against women, steps should be taken to

promote legal codes with the aim of increasing punishment for the same. Women's rights in wedding, separation of property, moral and material compensation in case of divorce should be reinforced and enhanced. Both the state and society should raise women's position inside and outside the family on the basis of the Marriage and Family Code. Nevertheless, the human rights movements are playing a leading role for the restoration of justice and reduction of culture of resistance against raising the issues concerning women. There are a number of human rights protection and promotion organization that are working to promote, protect and defend human rights in Uzbekistan.

### **Crime rate in Uzbekistan**

The image shown below (Image 6) tells about the situation of Uzbekistan and the participation of people in crime. The steep high number of male persons in going against the prevalent laws and rules and regulation show the abysmal situation of Uzbekistan. Till 2007, the number of persons were less than 80, 000, a number almost 8<sup>th</sup> times higher than female persons participating in crime in the same period. From 2007 onwards till 2010, it sees the continuous growth of male individuals amounting almost 95000. Then from 2010 to 2011, it shows stability in the involvement of individuals. However, in the next year i.e. 2012, it sees a slight growth of persons having involved in crimes. On the contrary, women's involvement in the crime displays a continuous and steady growth. However, the highest number of females' presence in crimes was around 18000 in 2012. It is important to mention the fact that the number of persons having involved in crimes (both male and female) maintain the stability from 2010 to 2011.



**Image 6: Dynamics of Individual Committing Crime (Persons)<sup>8</sup>**

Source: <https://gender.stat.uz/en/osnovnye-pokazateli-en/pravonarusheniya-en/po-vozzrastam-en>

## 2.6 Limitation of Uzbek Civil-Society groups

Civil society groups work as a life line of the democratic set up of a country, representing the under-represented, bringing out lacunae in the governance of the country and protecting the rights of the individuals. In Uzbekistan, as the democratization process evolves the civil society groups are struggling to increase their space in the body-politic and re-invent their roles. However, as with any evolving institute, these suffer from some characteristic problems, which become more enhanced due to the authoritarian nature of the government. Some of these limitations, along with their reasons are discussed below.

Many civil society groups in Uzbekistan are ruling it more for the reason of maintaining their occupation rather than finding a solution to the problems of the

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<sup>8</sup>gender.stat.uz



society. Massive registration and reporting requirements have left some of these groups incapable to function. Others have had to restrict their functions. Majority of the suppressed groups have been those which are focused on political and human rights concerns. The groups functioning on problems connected to ecological instruction, environmental legal support and ecotourism persist their operations, and however, they lack the issues of women in their agenda of functioning.

Another important area of concern is that the Uzbek civil society is under the control of administrative authority. Thus, many a time it has been a victim of the patriarchy, which remains the over-arching ideology of the state. It has been particularly difficult to schedule an NGO with the right to function at a national level. To schedule a NGO at the central office of the Ministry of Justice has established a much more stringent procedure than the one required for combined undertaking firm. The explanation for these limitations is that the Ministry was forced to formulate a judgment on listing only after getting the go ahead from the NSS and other concerned ministries to which copies of the submissions were sent for evaluation. The limitations on NGOs and the mass media have overlap with an operation of coercion of self-governing groups and individuals. “The government, disturbed that its poor human rights evidence and lack of economic improvement has given it an ungainly image abroad, considers the reason as being not its own domestic strategies but the continuation of independent voices within the nation”(Ilkhamov 2005: 297).

Another reason hampering the expansion of an inspiring civil society in Uzbekistan is the nationwide ideology forced by the administration and maintained by the dictating patriarchal principles. The political administration in Uzbekistan has few pillars of authenticity left. On the other hand, civil society in Uzbekistan has been unsuccessful to present itself as a power to be considered with by the nation. In this regard, one must reflect on the violence of the existing dictatorial rule. Any political or social organization is limited and controlled by the framework inside which it functions. The most important challenge which lies ahead of the civil society groups is to gradually increase their space in the political sphere. “The administration of President Karimov, as a practical dictatorial organizer has on a number of instances established its capability and willingness to take into account interest groups. The matter is whether

civil society is acknowledged as an influential strength in the Uzbekistan society” (Ilkhamov 2005:310).

Similarly, there are numerous issues which affect the development of civil society in Uzbekistan. Absence of financial resources, weak networking, passivity and misunderstanding, lack of government interests, absence of legislation associated to social partnership and charity, lack of self-relied approach to non-governmental organisations, weak understanding of civil society by civilians. Lack of information and transparency and the corruption in the governmental mechanisms are some of the issues that affect the development of civil society organizations.

Above all, it can be argued that in the post-independence era particularly since 1991, the rise and growth of civil society in Uzbekistan has significantly inspired and encouraged the people to continue the democratic struggle in spite of their differences and diversity on the basis on ethnicity. The participation of women in civil society and NGOs is also rising for the last couple year which is good impact in society. It should be highlighted that social and communication arrangements competent necessitate developing and changing into social movements.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In a nutshell, the women position in Uzbekistan is influenced by three dominant factors: the Soviet inheritance, the social and economic challenges of the transition period, and the traditional Uzbek values and cultural traditions. Although, Uzbek woman have won formal rights statutorily but in practice, the traditional social norms and customs continues to hinder their progress. Women are affected more disproportionately than men by the negative aspects of the on-going socio-economic transformation in Uzbekistan. Some of the issues like increasing poverty, rising unemployment, lack of resources in many families to educate boys and girls, political marginalization, domestic violence, sex trafficking etc, have given the women marginal space at all fronts, due to which they are discriminated and exploited on all fronts. It can be argued that in a male dominated society women have been granted equal rights not by the society but by the government rule.

Efforts to educate the women about their rights, status and duties should be taken up by government, NGOs and other institutions of the society eliminate the gender bias and discrimination. All such rights that are guaranteed to women in Uzbekistan need to be implemented to ensure the equitable developments of sexes. Organizations of civil society though growing are too small in outreach and efficacy to produce significant results. There is no doubt that women have a special role in the society of Uzbekistan. The study has showed that Uzbekistan government provides basic constitutional rights and opportunity for political engagement of women into decision-making process and guarantees gender equal freedoms but the strong traditional pressure and public opinion disables women from taking up political positions and developing their public careers. In the same way political parties also follow the same path of traditions and old culture. Thus, so that women are empowered and are able to participate in the democratization and other political processes, it is crucial to change the mindset of the traditional society. This must be supplemented with a strong political will and desire to provide special opportunity of participation for female candidates along with the proper legislations.

## **Chapter-3**

### **Status of Women in Russia: Socio-Political Overview**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Russia is the largest country on earth in terms of the area which occupies much of Eastern Europe and northern Asia, stretching from Norway to the Pacific Ocean and from the Black Sea to the Arctic Ocean. “It shares its borders with nations such as Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Norway, Poland and Ukraine” (Country Profile: Russia:2006). After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia officially declared its independence on June 12, 1991. Since then Russia’s economy has undergone major changes. The socialist ideology and economic structure was replaced by the adoption of free-market economy. The present Russia is a democratic federation with 89 sub-national jurisdictions; classified as republics, provinces, autonomous regions, and territories. Russia throughout had larger women’s population, in 1990 the number of women per 100 men was 111. There has been a gradual increase over the past few decades from the very low proportions of men following the Second World War. Women’s participation, socio-economic activity has now been the way of life for several generations (Fong 1993).

This chapter discusses the socio-political status of women in Russia and the role of political parties and civil society organization. Historical background helps to highlight the traditionally established role of women in Russian society. It critically examines not only the participation but also the influence of women in the decision-making process. An attempt has been made to understand the political change and its impacts on women since 1991.

#### **3.2 Historical Background**

So far as the early history is concerned, “the Kievan Rus (East Slavic State) which was founded in the late ninth century was the first state established on the territory of modern

Russia. Orthodox Christianity was declared as the official religion of the state in 988 and which later sustained its close ties with the Byzantine Empire”. Weakened and fragmented Kiev was occupied by a Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century. “The Mongol occupation which extended till 1840 paved the environment for a new state, Muscovy, to emerge Kiev. Under the succession of capable leaders, by 1600 Muscovy united a large portion of what later became centre of power in European Russia. The decline of the Byzantine Empire led to a longstanding claim that Moscow was the Third Rome and subsequently in 1589 an independent Russian Orthodox Church emerged”.

With the rise of Tsar Mikhail Romanov, whose family ruled Muscovy and then Russia for the next 300 years, Muscovy ended a period of political and economic hardship in 1613. Peter I emerged at the end of the seventeenth century as a powerful force for change after a series of weak rulers. Peter laid the foundation of the Russian Empire as a world power that was open to foreign cultural influences through a series of wars, political reforms, and extensive contacts with the West. Another powerful monarch of the eighteenth century Catherine II (1762–1796), further expanded the empire and attempted political and social reform. Russia became the most powerful countries in the Europe by the first half of the nineteenth century. But “Russia did not share the advances of the Industrial Revolution, whereas the survival of serfdom as the basis of Russian agriculture further hindered social and economic progress in this period”.

Russia was ruled by autocratic leaders during the nineteenth century, who the suppressed revolutionary ideals imported from the West. “The key social and economic reform programs were futile in addressing Russia’s most acute problems in the 1860s. When Russia became a major participant in World War I in 1914, the economic gap between Russia and Western Europe had grown and also the dissatisfaction with the monarchy”. All these circumstances combined with the pressure of war effort allowed Vladimir I. Lenin, leader of the radical Bolshevik Party, to defeat the provisional government that had displaced the tsar in 1917. At the conclusion of a bloody, four-year civil war, the foundation for Soviet Union was laid, which continued approximately for 70 years. “At the outset, that union included Ukraine, Byelorussia, and three Transcaucasian republics and the ruling party that is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union” (Country Profile: Russia: 2006:2).

“In 1927 the Soviet Union came under the control of Joseph V. Stalin. His regime became gradually more authoritarian in the 1930s the national economy into a rigid system of state control, with five-year plans prescribing the performance of every economic sector”. Special emphasis was given to heavy industries. The Soviet Union changed from a primarily agricultural country into a world industrial power by 1939. The Soviet Union fought German invading forces in World War II from 1941 until 1944, leading to loss millions of Russian lives. “After the war, the Soviet Union and the United States emerged as the world’s major economic and ideological rivals which came to be known as the Cold War. In the early years of that conflict, the Soviet Union gained control of all of Eastern Europe and developed a nuclear bomb. The death of Stalin in 1953 led to some domestic liberalization under Nikita Khrushchev (1953–64), but the ideologically based confrontation with the West continued until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991”.

Under Leonid I. Brezhnev from 1964 until 1982, major agreements brought some relief of Cold War tensions, but an 11-year Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979–89) minimized their effect. The accession of Mikhail S. Gorbachev as (CPSU) Communist Party of Soviet Union first secretary in 1985 brought major changes in domestic and international policy. “Gorbachev liberalized economic, political, and media policies and opened the country for the west major changes were brought in foreign policy of USSR. By 1991, however, the inherent weaknesses of the Soviet Union brought about the collapse of its East European empire and then the union itself. When the union ended, the former Russian Republic became a separate country, the Russian Federation, under the leadership of Boris N. Yeltsin”(Country Profile: Russia: 2006:3).

Yeltsin during his nine years as president of Russia (1991–2000), “watched a hysterical revolution that wrecked the supremacy of communism and brought uneven changes in the economic, political, and social spheres. Even though the constitution of 1993 made the executive the dominant branch of government, Yeltsin struggled with the legislative branch over many issues”. When Russia nominally moved toward a free-market system economic reform was undermined by corruption and public suspicion. “Judicial reform was ineffective. Relations with the West, which began the 1990s in close concert, soured somewhat over issues such as the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Russia’s ongoing conflicts with the Republic of Chechnya, and Russia’s opposition to the United States-led war in Iraq in 2003”. With the presidency of Vladimir V. Putin (elected

in 2000), a new concentration of executive power began. Putin who was Yeltsin's handpicked successor wanted to reinstate Russia's regional power while continuing ties with the West. Putin was re-elected overwhelmingly in 2004. "Political opposition became extremely fragmented, media independence lessened significantly, and Putin was able to shift the center of economic power from a group of independent entrepreneurs to government-controlled enterprises in the first six years of his presidency". "Although repression of the media and non-governmental organizations increasingly strained relations with the West, in 2006 Putin retained guarded support against Western governments and gained prestige by hosting a meeting of the G-8 nations" (Country Profile: Russia:2006:3).

### **3.2.1. Women Position in the Traditional Society**

Russia has a long history and traditions as it declared a multinational and multicultural country. Russia has been a conservative and patriarchal society. People in Russia belong to different regional communities. Due to its multiethnic nature, it remains a home for people of multiple religions, languages, and cultures. Russian people are closely associated with their cultural and traditional values, norms, and customs.

### **3.2.2 Pre-Soviet Russia and Women**

The status of women in Russian society has frequently varied according to its socio-political conditions throughout history. It has been a male dominated state since the pre-Soviet era. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century Russia, women were under restrictions in terms of education, rights and personal freedom. Of course, later on, "Peter the Great, who was influenced by Western enlightenment and the significant role of women in the French Revolution as symbols of liberty and democracy, lifted such barriers and took initiatives for women liberation". The role of women in pre-revolutionary Russia remained enormously restricted. Women were neglected by male socialists even in the factories and industries. According to Hardwick, "in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Russian women movement began to reach the working classes and the peasants, leading to the creation of socialist all-women unions for female factory workers" (Hardwick 2014:3).

The majority people were peasants prior to the revolution of 1917 under the Tsarist rule in Russia. They were living in rural backwardness for centuries. The condition of women was worse because they were treated as the property of man and Russia was extremely patriarchal. In Tsarist law, women were considered no more than the slaves and many a times they were beaten up by their husbands. Repression of women was prevalent in the culturally not so advanced countryside where the Church and tradition had a firm hold. According to an 1897 report, only 13.1% of Russian women were literate.

In his “Analysis of the development of Capitalism” in Russia written between 1896 and 1899, Lenin studied the situation of the Russian working class and the tragic condition of women. He said,

*“It is this break with obsolete tradition that is one of the substantial conditions which have created the possibility and evoked the necessity of regulating production and of public control over it. In particular, speaking of the transformation brought about by the factory in the conditions of life of the population, it must be stated that the drawing of women and juveniles into production is, at the bottom, progressive. It is indisputable that the capitalist factory places these categories of the working population in particularly hard conditions, and that for them it is particularly necessary to regulate and shorten the working day, to guarantee hygienic conditions of labour, etc.; but endeavours completely to ban the work of women and juveniles in industry, or to maintain the patriarchal manner of life that ruled out such work, would be reactionary and utopian.”*

*“By destroying the patriarchal isolation of these categories of the population who formerly never emerged from the narrow circle of domestic, family relationships, by drawing them into direct participation in social production, large-scale machine industry stimulates their development and increases their independence, in other words, creates conditions of life that are incomparably superior to the patriarchal immobility of pre-capitalist relations”.*(*The Development of Capitalism in Russia - V.I. Lenin*) (Frederiksen, 2017)

### **3.2.3 Women Representation in Soviet period**

In the soviet rule the status of women changed considerably. The aim of the Soviet government was “the creation of a communist state, socialist society and Soviet citizens



which were to be implemented by a proletarian dictatorship as per the 1924 constitution”. According to Marxist-Leninist ideology, the abolition of class structures can remove all forms of inequality. It also equally focuses in building an egalitarian society based on the fair distribution of resources among its people. Lenin was of the opinion that in order to attain successfully the liberation of women “it is necessary to be socialized and equally participate in common productive labor. Then only the woman will be the equal of man.” Nevertheless, many sovereign women’s associations could no longer carry on due to the communist’s monopoly of power in Russia.

Although Stalin Constitution of 1936 under (Articles 122 and 137) recognized the equal rights of women, nonetheless, the real picture was rather different. Women’s equal participation was must in order to achieve the Soviet goal of a single class of workers and peasants. To achieve women’s participation, the state required women as workers and thus enabled them to have easy access to education, a career, and legal guarantees of equality. They were encouraged to finish their education and professional training so that they can work as scientists, doctors, engineers, journalists or even truck drivers and construction workers. This was a considerable achievement when compared with many Western societies. Regardless of all these achievements, “they were discouraged from attaining high-ranking economic and political leadership positions. They were paid less, and there were no reliable means of protection for those women who suffered sexual harassment on the workplace” (Hardwick 2014:3).

Women’s contribution was also significant in the Russian revolution and as result of which began the International Women’s Day in 1917. On this Day, women workers went on strike in Petrograd in demand of bread and against autocracy and war. The key role of women became part of the organizing principles of the system. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was a landmark event for the emancipation of Russian women. For the first time, the leaders mentioned the overall economic, political and sexual equality of women. Thus, women’s role after the revolution was not only confined to the house, but they were given freedom to work outside (Pickard 2001).

The Communist Party held a program in 1919 that started to eradicate inequality particularly among the backward strata of the proletariat and peasantry, including women. The party took to empower women from the material burdens of houses, public eating places, central laundries, nurseries, etc. This was one of the steps in bringing women out

of their houses and into the life of the country. The revolution had the overall effect on traditions and had a great impact on the family (kumari 2012).

Life was very difficult for women in Tsarist Russia. Under the Tsarist regime, women were considered a simple household's extension and laws explicitly allowed men to use violence against their wives. To earn a meager amount, women had to work for long shifts in the workshops and factories under very difficult conditions. They made great efforts to avoid being dismissed, enduring terrible labor conditions. Access to education was very limited, and over 80% of women throughout Russia were illiterate. For peasants, conditions were even harder: they faced exhausting work shifts from sunrise to sunset, living under constant accusations and beatings from their masters and husbands. Like this, women were deprived of all rights. It was, with the Revolution of October 1917, and the seizure of power by the Soviets, women's lives changed radically. The Soviet Constitution introduced important changes that made equal political rights to women. Thus, for the first time, working women and peasants had the same right to vote in the election as their male co-workers. They achieved the right to elect and be elected and were able to occupy positions in factory committees, village institutions, and police stations. (Barquero, 2017:1).

However, the quota basis representation formula of Soviets made women participation in politics inevitable. "They made up about 33 percent of the USSR Supreme Soviet, 36 percent of Republican level Supreme Soviets and 50 percent of local Soviets. This representation, however, represents women participation in government but not in power as the decision-making body of the government did not lie with the Soviets" (Chuka Chukwube 2015).

The condition of women's participation in government was further organized by the introduction of the reforms of Gorbachev. "The number of women in parliament got reduced except the 75 reserved seats for women (along with 100 reserved for CPSU and 75 for the Komsomol and various other social organizations)". Women became less interested in contesting political posts and elections into the parliament, and where they did, preference was given to their male counterparts by the electorate. "Consequently, the percentage of women in parliament reduced to 15.6 percent. Elections held in different republics indicated that women made up 11 percent of the Supreme Soviet in Turkmenia, 7 percent in the Ukraine and Belorussia, 5.4 percent in the new Russian Supreme Soviet

and 4.8 percent in Moldova. This trend further deteriorated with the collapse of the Soviet Union and with the abandonment of fixed quota for women”(Chukwube 2015:3).

In fact, the quota system for representation gave women numerical representation in their ineffective legislatures. This representation was largely symbolic. Though the quota system provides women symbolic, but little real, power. When quotas were eliminated in the first Soviet competitive elections in 1989, women made up less than 16 percent of the newly formed Congress of People’s Deputies. In parliamentary elections a year later in the Russian Republic, women won less than 6 percent of the seats. Most of the political parties of post-Soviet Russia have not been kind to women. Only the electoral bloc of Russian women had directly offered substantial opportunity for women to serve in the parliament.

In a nutshell, women did not get involved freely in full politics in the Soviet system. In fact, women in the Supreme Soviet and other levels of parliament were not allowed by the Soviet system to articulate their viewpoints independently. They were rather mobilized to rise up their hands in support of policies and issues of the Communist Party of Soviet Union. Thus, politics did not become the kind and gentle nature of women.

### **3.2.4 Women during Transition Period**

Women were mobilized during Gorbachev regime who introduced the policy of Glasnost and Perestroika. At this time many women’s organizations could voice their issues openly. Many women institutions were supported by the foreign funding. The concepts of sex, sexuality, and individualism which had been repressed in Soviet society were discussed. “Awareness increased about gender inequalities in the USSR including job discrimination, the exclusion of women from decision-making levels, violence in domestic work, as well as patriarchal community and family structures. During this time, there was a trend towards patriarchy, which ignored gender research in politics”. There were other problems as the “women’s movements in Russia had no common position, and they were rather heterogeneous in their views”. Hence, it was weakening for their presence. In fact, “Russia’s transition period from communism to a new regime was fundamentally associated with gender issues. Throughout Gorbachev and Yeltsin period, women faced a various challenges. On the one hand, the policies of glasnost and perestroika led to a delayed sexual revolution in Russia”. In the early 1990s matter on sex and gender roles remained in the state’s control. According to Hardwick, “the liberalization of Russia

fostered a patriarchal, neo-traditional conception of gender relations, re-empowering women in the public sphere and pushing the role of women into the background” (Hardwick 2014:5).

### **3.2.5 Post-Soviet Scenario**

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the characteristic of public life in Russia has been changed in the post-soviet communist system. In fact, the condition of women in Russian rather worsened due to abolition of state subsidies, society remained unsatisfactory as it was in previous decades. It is observed that Russian State either failed to ensure legal protection for women and to address the obtainable issues or it failed to supply ample support to women’s rights. There was little opportunity for women in the 1990s when the country was facing increasing economic pressures. “During this time, feminist groups and social organizations have begun advancing the cause of women’s rights in what remains a strongly traditional society” (Curtis 1996).

Job discrimination was a fundamental problem for women in Russia. “In 1995 women constituted an expected 70 percent of Russia’s unemployed population. Working women continue to bear the double burden of a job and family-raising responsibilities, where husbands play a very little role”. Despite the progressive communist agenda, the role of women in the family did not change. While men were marginalized from the family unit, the women were expected to fulfill both roles as a worker and a mother.

In a 1994 survey it is visible that “about two-thirds of women said that the state should help families by paying one spouse enough to permit the other to stay at home. Most women also consider their role in the family more difficult than that of their husband. Such tragic condition was a factor in Russia’s accelerating divorce rate and declining marriage rate. In 1993, the divorce rate was 4.5 per 1,000 population, compared to 4.1 ten years earlier, and the marriage rate declined from 10.5 per 1,000 population in 1983 to 7.5 in 1993”. Unmarried women giving birth to children were roughly 17.2 in the year 1992. According to 1994 government statistics, “about 20 percent of families were run by a single parent, the mother in 94 percent of cases” (Kapoor 2016:60).

“This period also witnessed increased sexual harassment and violence against women had increased at all levels of society beginning from 1990s. More than 13,000 rapes were

reported in 1994, meaning that several times that a number of often-unreported crimes probably were committed". In 1993 an estimated "14,000 women were murdered by their husbands or lovers, about twenty times the figure in the United States and several times the figure in Russia five years earlier. More than 300,000 other types of crimes, including spousal abuse, were committed against women in 1994; in 1996 the State Duma (the lower house of the Federal Assembly, Russia's parliament) drafted a law against domestic violence" (Curtis 1996).

During the 1990s women witnessed the beginning of a gradual decline in their status in Russian society. Women began to face open discriminations and a reduction in the number of opportunities available to them. In post-1991 Russia, a preoccupation with glamor and sexuality replaced the old Soviet ethos of glorifying 'heroine mothers' and 'women workers'. Women emancipation came to mean altogether different things in post-disintegration Russian society. Women were no longer producers but consumers as they tried to conform to standards and conceptions borrowed from the developed West.

According to the article 7 of the 'international convention on the liquidation of all forms of women's discriminations of 1979' also signed by the former USSR, all signatory States are bound to ensure equal rights to women to participate in state policy, to occupy state post at all levels of government and to participate in all state functions. However, in the majority of countries in the world, including Russia, this obligation is yet to be fulfilled. It had become a tradition to emphasize certain hardships faced by women as mothers and workers and to issue resolutions about improving conditions at the work place and at homes, at every party congress. Conversely, there was no visible effort on the part of the party to carry out these resolutions.

The communist party's attitude towards women's participation in the political sphere was ambiguous. Officially, the importance of women's participation was never denied, but it was stressed that the real degree of their participation depended on the level of development of the general social structure and on economic conditions. So, it was very clear that Soviet society and its power structure were not prepared for women in posts of political leadership. The communist party justified the absence of women by citing their extreme economic burden on producers and reproducers and by highlighting their political passivity.

In effect, the communist revolutions in Russia did not keep its promise to the New Women. While women were granted equal rights at par with men, the actual state of affairs belied the spirit of these laws. And in the 1990s as the command economy was sought to be replaced by the market economy in Russia, many new problems of socio-economic nature came into existence like unemployment, the absence of social security, steep fall in purchasing power inflation and so on. Many of these problems had a direct effect on women. As the socialist path gave way to a fully fledged imitation and adaptation of western ways and ideals, women were again badly affected as social security measure crumbled, and they were caught up in the new currents that often led only to a demeaning of their status and roles in society (Curtis 1996).

The transition period in Russia was unfavourable for women's political economic and social status. The reduction in the number of women in legislative organs is one example. The elimination of the proportion that made mandatory that women comprise 33 percent of the USSR Congress of deputies led to an exceptional decline in women's demonstration in Russian legislations. Even when the quota existed, women were only concentrated in the middle and lower levels. Only a very few women rose to the top political level, and only three women ever sat in the Politburo- Ekaterina Furtseva in the 1950s, Alexander Burikova in 1989, Galina Semenova in 1990 and Ella Pamfilova was one of the candidates for Presidential election in the year 2000.

Moreover, "women's representation in national legislative bodies, while important on the grounds of social justice and legitimacy of the political system, does not easily translate into an improved representation of women's interest". Much of the research and media attention during the transition period in Russia had focused on privatization and the development of a pluralistic political system. Both of these realms tend to be populated by a predominantly male cast of characters and as a result, the effects of the transition period on women remain largely hidden.

"Despite the communist ideology, Soviet women did not enjoy the same position as men in society or within the family. Average pay for women in all fields was below the overall national average, and the boasted high percentage of women in various fields, especially in health care, medicine, education, and economics, did not hold true in the most prestigious and high-paying area". "Women were conspicuously underrepresented in the leadership of the CPSU; in the 1980s, they constituted less than 30 percent of party membership and

less than 5 percent of the party Central Committee, and no woman ever achieved full membership in the Politburo (Curtis 1996).

### **3.3 Social Overview**

Mikhail Gorbachev introduced openness and a restructuring of the government when he took office in 1985. The new political atmosphere led to the collapse of the Soviet Union, and by late 1991 Russia and 14 other former Soviet republics emerged as independent states. “Russia is enriched with vast natural resources, including oil, natural gas, coal, and timber. It holds the world’s largest natural gas reserves, the second largest coal reserves, and the eighth largest oil reserves. Russia is also the world’s largest exporter of natural gas, and the second largest oil exporter”.

Russia has been a patriarchal society with strict roles for men and women. The political and economic transformations in the former Soviet Union have caused major changes and restructuring for its people. Another set of changes took place after the democratization process came in Russia with the role of the bulk of the population as well as by leading politicians. The transition offered women and men new rights and freedoms but also brought much uncertainty about social benefits, employment, and the future.

In Russia, the legal, economic, social and political inequalities between men and women have remained severe in spite of the Revolution of 1917. In the West and the East, the actual situation of women was illustrated in rose-colored hues and announced that, under socialism, the question of the position of women in society had been determined once and for all. In fact, “the inconsistency between the official and actual situating of functioning women became so sharp that it led to severe social issues. The democratic reorganization of the mid-1980s brought various optimistic modification at last; for the first time, the “women’s issue” was documented as an imperative socio-political difficulty involving severe examination and convenient procedures” (Koval 1995).

#### **3.3.1 Demographic Analysis**

Russia is the largest country in the world in terms of area. But it is located unfavourably in relation to major sea lanes of the world despite its size. Much of the country lacks proper soils and climates; it is either too cold or too dry for agriculture. “The population is

heavily concentrated in the westernmost part of the country extending from the Baltic Sea, south of the Caspian Sea, and eastward parallel to the Kazakh border generally found in the south”. There are around 142,355,415 people from the July 2016 estimate. The Russian ethnic group is the largest that constitutes nearly 77.7% of the total population. Russian is the official language that almost 85.7%, of the total population of the country, speak and use in their various ways of life (The World Factbook, 2017). The 2016 population estimate also indicates a decline of 3,104,710 people in comparison to 2015. The female population is higher than the male population. Women represented 53.54 % and the men represented 46.46%. Russia has very low population density which has just eight people per square kilometres <sup>9</sup>.

### **3.3.2 A Multiethnic State**

The Russian Federation is home to nearly 200 different ethnic groups, other than ethnic Russian; hence, Russia is a land of social and cultural diversity with people from a different language, culture, and religion. About 100 of the ethnic groups are there in significant numbers in present-day Russia. In a speech in a synagogue, Putin said, “Every person and every ethnic group has been adding the colors of their own discovered, energy and talent to the palette of common culture.” Broadly, the ethnic groups of Russia and the former Soviet Union can roughly be divided into four groups based on their origin: 1) the European groups, dominated by Slavs, but also including Tatar and Uralic minorities; 2) the Central Asian groups, which are dominated by Turkic-Muslim groups like Kazakhs and Uzbeks; 3) the Siberian groups, which includes Slavic immigrants and variety of indigenous groups; and 4) groups in Caucasus, one the world’s most ethnically diverse areas. So far the composition of the ethnic groups in Russia is concerned: Russian are the largest ethnic group approximately 77.7 percent, second largest ethnic group Tatar 3.7 percent, Ukrainian 1.4 percent, Bashkir 1.1 percent, Chuvash 1 percent, Chechen 1 percent, other 10.2 percent, other minorities 3.9 percent.

“The last official Soviet census, conducted in 1989, listed more than 100 nationalities. Several of those groups now predominantly inhabit the independent nations that formerly were Soviet republics. However, the Russian Federation the successor to the Soviet Union still is home to more than 100 national minorities, whose members coexist uneasily with the numerically and politically predominant Russians” (Jeffrey Hays 2008).

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<sup>9</sup>Russia - Population country economy.com, 2017



### 3.3.3 Education

The former Soviet Republics all belonged to the same educational system until the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. The newly independent countries after the disintegration of Soviet Union began developing their system of education in response to new trends and demands in educational development at the international level. However, the old Soviet system of education still exists with the new modern educational structures. Along with the existence of basic Soviet structure of education, the changes have been inculcated into the old system of education consisting of newly introduced entrance examination at the national level which is known as the “Unified National Exam” (UNE). In fact, there have been significant changes in the education (NORRIC February 2005).<sup>10</sup>

“Russia is a country with the highest literacy rate. Almost 53% of the population has tertiary education. It is estimated that 95% of adults in Russia have higher secondary education and the country spends some 4.9% of GDP on education. According to 2015 report, the literacy rate of the total population is 99.7% including male: 99.7% female: 99.6%” (CIA World Fact Book: 2015).

Nevertheless, the level and type of education have also made a difference in the condition of employment for women. The overwhelming majority, between 60-70 percent of women had only up to secondary education, and they had greater difficulty in getting jobs. As against that for women with higher education, the condition was not so bad. This is evident from the fact that the percentage of unemployed women with higher education went down from 20 percent in 1992 to 12 percent in 1994. In Russia, job market condition is becoming more demanding than in the past with specific requirements of job qualification as the economy has become more competitive. Hence in many cases, former education has been found to be inadequate for getting jobs and thus requiring retraining or additional education to suit new job conditions particularly for marketing, accounting, computer work, etc. Hence to meet such requirements, many private specialized educational institutions have come up during the last 3-4 years in Russia to train students for specific categories of jobs (Gidadhubli 1997).

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<sup>10</sup>Nordic National Recognition Information Centres,(NORRIC) is a network established by the five Nordic ENIC/NARIC offices.

### **3.4.4 Healthcare**

Health is an essential component of human development, and it largely determines the long-term sustainability of socio-economic development in any country. The important indicators of public health are mortality rates and life expectancy at birth. In current years and there is an increasing trend in the improvements of both of these indicators. “The mortality rate decreased from 16.1 per 1,000 populations in 2005 to 13.5 in 2011, while life expectancy at birth increased from 65.3 years to 69.8 years. The total fertility rate (average number of children born to one woman of reproductive age) rose from 1.287 to 1.606 during the same period”.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Change in the Structure of Women of Reproductive Age**

Demographic policy measures to stimulate fertility ‘maternal capital’ provided by the Government since 2007 to women who give birth to a second child and other support measures for families with several children. “Smoking and alcohol abuse are widespread in Russia, 35% of the adult population (55% of men and 18% of women) smoke. Approximately 18% are passive smokers, while 59% of the adult populations consume alcohol, and 27% consume spirits. Social stratification and membership of certain groups dictate living conditions, behaviour and lifestyle choices, which have significantly impact on human health”.

In the post-Soviet period changes in the employment structure have much significance for health. Both men and women who work in the public sectors are affected by Somatic diseases. “Cardio-vascular diseases and other serious debilitating illnesses such as diabetes, asthma, peptic ulcer and duodenal ulcer, osteochondrosis, and gynecological pathology among women”.

#### **Working Conditions**

In the period from 2004 to 2010 the share of workers in Russia employed in industries with hazardous conditions increased. “The percentage were 23.7% for men and 35.1% for women in the extractive industries, 25.2% for men and 31.5% for women in manufacturing, respectively 70.2% and 48.3% in construction, and 63.3% and 93.8% in transport, storage and communications. The share of employees engaged in heavy work in

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<sup>11</sup>UNDP (2013),RUSSIA ,National Human Development Report for the Russian Federation,P-50

Russia has increased over the same period by 93.2% for men and by 2.65 times for women”.<sup>12</sup>

### **Mortality and Life Expectancy of the Working-age Population**

Since 2006 Russia has made progression reducing mortality rate including the mortality of working-age population. According to Rosstat, “compared to 2005 the mortality rate had decreased by 11.8% in 2009, and the reduction in the working-age population was 22.9%. However, growth of working-age mortality during 1990-2005 was so intense but the mortality rate of 1990 was not yet achieved. The mortality rate for men of working age in 1990 was 7.5 per 1000 for men and 1.9 per 1000 for women. In 2010, these figures had risen, respectively, by 29.3% for men (to 9.7 per 1000) and 36.8% for women (to 2.6 per 1000)”.

The men and women between the ages of 25 and 39 years had showed the largest growth. Men showed 1.3 to 1.6 times growth and the females showed 1.6 to 1.8 times growth. The infant mortality and the child mortality were declined by 1.4-2.2 times. There was no change in the mortality among the people above the working age. It did not exceed 9.0% in different age groups. Among the working-age population, the decline in life expectancy of the total population was driven by excessive mortality. The negative trends were reduced by the deduction of infant mortality. Since “the integral criterion of public health is life expectancy, it is important to consider and evaluate changes in the most important component of this indicator, which are interval life expectancy and the average loss of man-years of life for men and women of working age”.

### **Work Conditions and Health of the Working Population**

The World Health Organization adopted a Global Action Plan for Workers’ Health in 2008-2017 on May 23 2007 at the sixtieth session of the World Health Assembly. This has emphasized that the “workers represent half of the world’s population. They are the main contributors to the social and economic development. The document expressed concern

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<sup>12</sup> Social Conditions and Living Standards in Russia, 2005, Statistics Handbook / Rosstat, Moscow, Statistics of Russia Publications, 2005, 525 pages; Social Conditions and Living Standards in Russia, 2011, Statistics Handbook / Rosstat, Moscow, 2011. 527 pages

about the condition of workers' health in most of the countries across the globe and their exposure to the occupational risks"<sup>13</sup>.

### **3.4.5 Religion**

Soviet government could not completely stop people from practicing the religion and follow religious ideologies regardless of the seventy-four-year effort of communism to promote atheism. Around 60 percent of Russians were non-religious when the communist regime fell; Christianity and Orthodoxy are experiencing a mild revival. Islam and Buddhism are widespread among the non-Russian populations. The official state religion is Russian Orthodoxy, which enjoys a privileged position with the government. About 75 million Russians are believers, but fewer than half of those numbers are considered active worshippers.

Islam is "the fastest growing religion practiced by about 20 million people who are considered active participants. Other religions are Roman Catholicism, 1.3 million; Judaism, between 400,000 and 550,000; and Jehovah's Witnesses, 131,000. Religious activities have been increasing rapidly since the collapse of communist rule in 1991, but restrictions have remained for certain groups". A 1997 law set requirements that religions be registered, putting unrecognized groups at a disadvantage. In one case it is stated that "all Muslim groups falling outside the government-sanctioned Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Russia are repressed as potential terrorist organizations" (Jeffrey Hays 2008).

### **3.4.6 Economy and Society**

Democracy and market economy were introduced when Russia became a sovereign nation in 1991 and Russia became an active participant in the globalization process. "Today, Russia has made great mileage in the democratic process. The country has held several parliamentary and presidential elections, all of them endorsed by international observers". Russia has fostered more political parties than the countries of Western Europe and has allowed a political culture and civil society to develop. It is thus justifiable to say that "Russia today is a democratic society. Russia has instituted a wide range of economic, political, and administrative reforms since it achieved independence in 1991. Production

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<sup>13</sup>Global Plan of Action for Workers' Health in 2008-2017, 60th Session of the WHO, Geneva, May 23, 2007.

has been drastically restructured, and changes to the mechanisms of production and investment have been made”.

Privatization and liberalization have given businesses entirely new guidelines and opportunities in Russia. “The privatization of small and medium sized businesses has been carried out, but the state still owns and influences a number of big companies. The long waited land reform has also been passed. However, privatization of the agricultural sector has not yet been carried out in practice”. Russia has an independent national bank and floating exchange rate. “Free market forces work well in large parts of the economy now that the worst cases of ultra-liberalism have been regulated. Stabilization of the large scale economy is beginning to work out to a prerequisite for a permanently thriving Russian economy”. Russia’s trade patterns have changed considerably. Trade with the West has gone up dramatically, simultaneously, the mixture of trade goods has changed both for imports and exports. “If Russia is to avoid ending up as a poor industrial country, its exports must become less dominated by raw materials. Considering Russia’s well-trained labor force and relatively high level of research and education, it is likely that Russia’s exports will in time come to contain a greater degree of processed and manufactured goods, but this restricting will take a long time”(Russian Prospects Social and Political Scenario 2005:6).

“The socio-economic reforms of Russia have shown that all the changes happening in society have a different and contradictory impact on men and women. In fact, the Russian gender situation in different spheres is scattered. Women still are far behind men in earnings, and this gap has been widening since the past decade”. While in the 1980s, “the wages of women constituted, on average, 70% of men’s; by the end of 1999 this figure had dropped to 52%, and in 2000, to only 50%. The majority of women continue to work in public sector of the national economy. In social services, where females constitute for about 65-80% of personnel engaged, the size of their wages is less than 60% of the minimum subsistence level and represent about 60-70% of the national average”. In the recent years it has been seen that a “continuous exclusion of women from the banking and insurance sectors can be noticed, where the share of women had decreasing from 90 to 70 per cent over 11 years (1990-2001) and the wages have risen during this period from 95% to 287% of the average nationwide wages rate” (Elena Mezentseva 2006).

**Table 8: Unemployment Rate and Women in Russia (1992-2002)**

Years	Unemployment Rate, Percent	Unemployment Rate, Percent	Share of women among unemployment percent
	Male	Female	
1992	5.2	5.2	47.74
1993	5.9	5.8	47.03
1994	8.3	7.9	46.09
1995	9.7	9.2	46.13
1996	10.0	9.3	45.60
1997	12.2	11.5	45.76
1998	13.5	12.9	46.16
1999	13.5	12.7	46.74
2000	10.8	10.1	46.37
2001	9.8	8.6	45.62
2002	9.0	8.1	46.01

Source: Gendernoe ravenstvo I rasshirenie p[rav I vozmodnoctj zhenshin v rossii v konteksten tselej razvitija tjcjicheletija, gendernorabochej gruppj uchrezhdenij sistemj OOH v RF, Moskva 2005,p-9

**Table9: Share of Women among Employees by Sectors, 1992-2000**

Sector	1992	1996	1998	2000
Total economy	49	47	48	48
Industry	45	41	38	38
Construction	36	34	32	35
Transportation	25	24	24	24
Communication	71	62	60	61
Trade, Public catering, MTS	73	62	62	64
Communal and Public services	48	46	46	47
Health care, Sport, Social security	83	82	81	8
Education	79	82	80	80
Art and culture	70	69	68	69
Science	53	51	50	50
Finance, and credits	86	74	71	71
Public administration	68	50	48	45

Source: *Gedernoe ravenstvo I rasshirenie prav I vozmodnoctej zhenshin v rossi v kontekste tselej razvitija tjicjicheletija, gendernojrabochej gruppi uchrezhdenij sistemji OOH v RF, Moskva, 2005, p-17*

### **3.4 Political Transformation and Women**

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union Russia began transitioning away from a totalitarian system to a more democratic regime led by President Boris Yeltsin (1991-99). “Russia shifted toward a centralized authoritarian state under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin (2000-2008, 2012-present) in which the regime seeks to legitimize its rule through managed elections, populist appeals, a foreign policy focused on enhancing the country’s geopolitical influence, and economic growth. Now more than two decades later Russia is still transforming” (World Fact Book: Russia; 2017).

#### **3.4.1 Women Representation in the Soviet period**

Life was very difficult for women in Tsarist Russia. Under the Tsar’s regime, women were considered a simple household’s extension and laws explicitly allowed men to use violence against their wives. To earn a few coins, women had to work long shifts in the workshops and factories under very difficult conditions. Women made massive efforts to avoid being dismissed, enduring terrible labor conditions. Women were deprived of education and 80% of women throughout Russia were illiterate. For peasants, conditions were even harder; they faced exhausting work shifts from morning to evening, living under constant accusations and beatings from their husbands. Like this, women were deprived of all rights. However, with the Revolution of October 1917, and the seizure of power by the Soviets, women’s lives changed radically. The Soviet Constitution introduced important changes that made equal political rights for women. Thus, for the first time, working women and peasants had the same right to vote in the election as their male co-workers. They achieved the right to elect and be elected and were able to occupy positions in factory committees, village institutions, and police stations. In fact, this has become a great event in the history of Russia where women, who were in majority, got the equal opportunities in the decision making process. (Jessica Barquero 2017:1).

During the Soviet period, the quota basis representation made women participation in politics inevitable. “They made up about 33 percent of the USSR Supreme Soviet, 36 percent of Republican level Supreme Soviets and 50 percent of local Soviets”. This representation, however, represents women’s participation in government but not in terms of holding power as the decision-making body of the government (Chukwube 2015).



The condition of women's participation in government was further organized by the introduction of the reforms of Gorbachev. "The number of women in parliament got reduced except the 75 reserved seats for women (along with 100 reserved for CPSU and 75 for the Komsomol" (All-Union Leninist Young Communist League, b.1918), and various other social organizations). Women became less interested in contesting political posts and elections into the parliament, and where they did, preference was given to their male counterparts by the electorate. Consequently, the percentage of women in parliament reduced to 15.6 percent. Elections held in different republics indicated that women made up 11 percent of the Supreme Soviet in Turkmenia, 7 percent in the Ukraine and Belorussia, 5.4 percent in the new Russian Supreme Soviet and 4.8 percent in Moldova. "This trend further deteriorated with the collapse of the Soviet Union and with the abandonment of fixed quota for women" (Chukwube 2015:3).

In fact, a quota system for representation gave women numerical representation in their ineffective legislatures. This representation was largely symbolic. Though the quota system provides women symbolic, but little real, power. When quotas were eliminated in the first Soviet competitive elections in 1989, women made up less than 16 percent of the newly formed Congress of People's Deputies. In parliamentary elections a year later in the Russian Republic, women won less than 6 percent of the seats. Most of the political parties of post-Soviet Russia have not been kind to women. Only the electoral bloc of Russian women had directly offered substantial opportunity for women to serve in the parliament.

Above all, women did not get involved freely in full politics in the Soviet system. In fact, women in the Supreme Soviet and other levels of parliament were not allowed by the Soviet system to articulate their viewpoints independently. In spite of their good representation in the Supreme Soviet, they were rather mobilized in the field of policies and issues of the Communist party of Soviet Union.

### **3.4.2 Women Representation in Democratic Process**

Women's influence on political decision making has declined in recent years. Since women obtained the voting right in 1917, their participation in political life was a central tenet of Communist ideology. A fixed proportion of seats in the legislature were earmarked for women. The change in ideology has eroded this practice, and the number of

women representatives in the Russian Congress of Deputies has declined to five percent, well behind Western European countries. There is no indication that women are less active politically than men. However, the emerging parties have not yet found space for women's issues or female candidates. Only five of the 25 political parties included women's issues in their current platforms. The lack of clearly voiced views of women in the political process was a serious handicap. Women's needs in the transformation process were not likely to be addressed unless their views were articulated and taken into account in policy making. Non-partisan legislative advisory committees on women's affairs could be an interim measure until women's issues are included in party programs. Setting quotas for women's participation in political and legislative committees' period has also been proposed (Monica S 1993).

**Table 10: Seats in the Duma from the Party List, 1995 Election**

<b>Parties</b>	<b>No. of Women</b>	<b>No. of Men</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Women as a % of total of each list</b>
Our Home is Russia	2	43	45	4.4
Yabloko	2	29	31	6.5
Communist Party	9	90	99	9.4
Liberal Democratic Party	1	49	50	2.0
Total	14	211	225	22.3

Source: Compiled from Rossiiskaya Federatsiya, No. 2, 1996, pp. 8 – 12.

The above table (Table 10) shows the lowest level of representation of women in Duma from the party list in 1995 elections. It basically happened when the quota system was abandoned and the presence of women in parliament consequently reduced in Russia. Table 11 gives the seat reduction for women that are seen in the result of 1995 election. But before this, the 1993 election shows that only 60 women won seats out of a total of 450 in the new Duma amounting to 13 percent. In 1995, the number fell to 45 or 10 percent of all the seats.

**Table 11: Political Affiliation of Women Elected to the Duma in the Single Member Constituencies, 1995 Election**

<b>Party or Movement</b>	<b>No. of Women</b>
Pamfilova-Gurov-Lysenko	1
ObshcheeGeils (Common Cause)	1
Our Home is Russia	2
VlastNarodu (Power to the People)	2
Women of Russia	3
Yabloko	4
Communist Party	8
Independents	10
Total	31

Source: Compiled from RossiiskayaFederatsiya, No. 2, 1996, pp. 12 – 20.

Table 11 shows that women did better in the year 1995 in the single member constituencies. They won 31 out of the total 225 seats amounting to 13.8 percent while that of men amounted to 86.2 percent. The table further shows that ten women candidates contested as independents while others held different political views and were affiliated to different political parties. From the table, it is also clear that not all parties fielded women candidates as none of the elected women were from Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party.

In comparison to other political parties, the number of independent candidates outnumbered the candidates from other political parties. Communist Party has large number of women candidates i.e 8 followed by Yabloko which is 4. From the table, it is also clear that not all parties fielded women candidates as none of the elected women were from Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party.

**Table 12: Women in the Duma in Post-Soviet Russia**

Duma election year	Women representation (in per cent)	Number of women (Out of 450 seats)
1993 (PR + SMD)*	13.5	60
1995 (PR + SMD)	10.5	46
1999 (PR + SMD)	7.7	34
2003 (PR + SMD)	9.8	44
2007 (only PR)	14	63
2011 (only PR)	13.6	61

(PR: Proportional Representation and SMD: Single Member District)

Source: Kapoor (2016) *Women in the Duma: Why Post-Soviet Russia Has Low Female Representation?* Comparative Politics

According to Table 12, under the Proportional Representation and Single Member District system, low level of women representation continued even after the breakup of the Soviet Union as the quota system was not introduced in the Duma. This scenario continued despite the continuous fight of women in the elections.

### **3.4.3 Women and the Legislative Process**

At the end of 1995, the proportion of women among the deputies in the federal assembly was 11.4 percent. Women comprised 5.6 percent of members in Assembly of the Federation, and 13.6 percent in the state Duma. There were three female heads and 12 deputy heads among the heads of federal executive organs. Around 22 percent of heads of administration of the Russian Federation and major cities were women. “The low representation of women in the Duma from 1993 to 2003 highlights the inequality of opportunities and male-dominated nature of democracy that was taking place in Russia. Women’s share in the Deputies of the State Duma declined from 10 percent in 1995 to 7.7 percent in 1999. In the federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of 1996-99, there were only 7.2 percent women, while in the Federation Council; there was only one woman out of 178 members”(Usha 2005).

Women's repression and unemployment continued, and the mass media also favored confinement to the home for women in their traditional role of serving as wife and mother. As, Rosalind Marsh, observes, "Democracy in Russia maintained a Masculine Face." Women after realizing their plight started asking for their say in all walks of their life including the law making process. "In particular, 'women of Russia' broke the political ceiling in 1993 and made women visible on the political stage. This represents the consideration of many parties to view women as an important element of the electorate. There was a sense of immense chance, option, and expectation".

Nadezhda Shevedova states that "women parliamentarians are redefining national security to go beyond armies and arsenals to the quality of life of people, their health, education, safety, and welfare by working to enhance people's access to health care, education and training; introducing family-friendly workplace policies, and encouraging the broadening of a safety net of social services. Women's interests are being transformed into policies representing concerns of a special socio-economic group. It is expected that concerns would be reflected in legislation. Women are increasing accessibility, transparency, and accountability and thereby strengthening all levels of government while working in partnership with citizen. Women MPs were asked what they themselves think about the means and ways to increase their representation and their influence within the Russian Parliament. Many of them said that it is necessary to assist women with campaign funding and other resources. Quotas and the leadership training were also seen as key points in promoting women to the elected body. In addition, many stressed the importance of financially supporting organization working to increase the number of political candidates who specifically support policies that advance the status of women and girls. Experience, professionalism, a strong character and an active position are among the key factors affecting women MPs influence" (Shevodova 2011).

#### **3.4.4 Low Representation of Women**

There are political, social, cultural and economic factors that affect the low representation of women in the democratic process of Russia. The study reveals that the type of electoral system has a deep impact on the level of women's representation in the country. Kenworthy and Malami point out that in a system where women represent just a "part of a

larger group of candidates.” As compared to a method where the election is directly between two candidates political parties seem more willing to nominate more women candidates, who have less difficulty in securing votes. That is the reason a Proportional Representation (PR) system, where party lists determine the final elected candidates, is considered more helpful for women unlike the plurality system based on Single Member Districts (SMD) (where there is a zero-sum election in which only one candidate emerges victorious). It is further observed that a PR system forces parties to be seen as progressive and accommodating women, thus, leading to women being named on party lists to seem credible. An increase in the presence of right-wing parties has a clear negative impact on women’s representation while a left-leaning government that has an increased commitment “to reduce gender inequality” has the opposite effect, but it has been seen that slowly non-left parties too are working to increase female presence in their ranks. Thus, women suffer even with the use of PR and SMD system in the elections.

Quotas have also been found to have an impact, but their effect varies based on what kind of quota has been implemented and at what level. These quotas can be at the level of the party, which takes voluntary decision to allot a certain percentage of women as nominees or it can be done in the elected legislatures via a new law or constitutional amendment. While these quotas have been found to not have a very deep impact in developed countries, primarily because they do so at a level when female representation is already at a higher level; the affirmative action of reserving seats for women in national legislatures has been found to have a very “significant and positive” impact in developing and less developed countries (Kapoor, 2016).

It has been found that an increased participation of women in labor force was another ingredient that failed to lead to a commensurate rise in their presence in legislatures. In fact, the increased economic activity had a negative effect on women participation in certain states, concluding that this was due to overwork and not enough presence in professional positions, rather than a reflection on labor force participation and its effect on political representation. So, an increase of women in professional sectors like lawyers, bankers, financial services directly impacted their numbers in parliament (Kapoor, 2016).

Cultural factors have a deep significance when it comes to representation of women in parliaments. While Protestant religion was found to be the least resistant to the presence of women in the sector, Catholics, Orthodox and Islam were all found to be lowered

representation of the female population in the political system. This restriction is only seen in the nomination of candidates, and once they have been nominated, religion has no impact on the electability of women candidates.

According to Kapoor, 2016, it has been seen that Scandinavian countries have achieved a high rate of women representation without introducing formal quotas. A rise of women's movement and pressure from the society led parties to nominate more women and create better conditions for them to be able to compete at par with men. Thus it can be argued that it is a combination of various factors that explain high or low levels of women in politics (Kapoor 2016).

In the post-communist Russia, women not only constitute 70 percent of the unemployed but their earnings also dropped from 70 percent in comparison to men's wages. This also reflected in the election on women percentage. It has also been found that while all socio-economic factors do not directly affect female representation in parliaments, the presence of women in professional jobs does have a crucial impact. This factor is especially visible in Russia, where very few female parliament members have been found to have come from professional fields like "law, military or journalism."

On the other hand, instead of taking concrete steps to promote grassroots mobilization of women into politics, the Russian government has co-opted members of the elite in the country, "nominating big names, such as celebrities, singers, and athletes to attract voters." It has, however, be deduced that most celebrities do not serve for more than one or two terms, with a few exceptions. Also, it is seen that parties have been unwilling to place women at a higher position in party lists, making their election to the parliament difficult and displaying a unique anomaly wherein women would be more successful in single-member districts rather than the via party lists, where once nominated they can use different resources for a more positive result (Kapoor 2016).

### **3.4.5 Women in Political and Public Life**

Russia has majority female Electorate. They also constitute a large part of the population in the country. According to 2004 report, the gender proportion of the electorate is 54% women and 46% men. "Thus, there is a likely gender gap in political participation. Since the fall of communism, Russia has experienced a significantly lower level of women's participation in politics". It has been seen that "in 1984, one-third of the members of the

Supreme Soviet were women, but by 1989, women comprised only 15.7% of Members of Parliament (MPs)” (Gender Assessment, 2004).

According to Frederiksen, (2017) “fundamental need to inform women about their new position and draw them into active participation in public life opened up. Kollontai, Armand, Krupskaya, and Nikolaeva, played an important part in getting the Communist Party to decide to set up new organizational structures to mobilize women. After the culmination of first All-Russian Congress of Working Women in November 1918 there were a series of smaller conferences for women in the following months”.

Babaeva and Chirkova have seen that in 1994 women made up 39 percent of joint owners of commercial companies (of which there were over 900,000), 23 percent of “cooperative” business-persons hiring labor. In Babaeva and Chirkova’s opinion compare to men women are more hesitant to start a business but once in business they are more considerate to their employees. However, during the post-Soviet Russia, the public life has improved significantly as they are well placed in the field of economy and society. Despite the low representation of Duma women became more conscious and active politically and are playing a key role in a certain sector in the state (Frederiksen 2017).

### **3.4.6 Women and Political Parties**

Political parties are an important part of every regime. Political parties have become salient features on the political landscape of most post-communist countries including Russia. “The abolition of the Quota, which made it mandatory for women to comprise 33 percent of the Soviet Union’s Congress of people deputies, led to an extraordinary decline in women’s demonstration in the Russian legislature in 1990. In a country where women are more than half of the population, male members estimated for 95 percent of the seats in the Congress, and the women comprised only five percent of the seats”. The next comparatively multi-party election in 1993 observed a comeback for women in legislative demonstration, as they prepared themselves to enlarge their numbers. As a result women represented 13.5 percent of the members of the State Duma (60 women MPs), and five percent of the delegates in the federal council (Neft and Levine 1997).

One of the most interesting issues is that the political party which was “formed in the 1990s was the Women of Russia Party, which secured 8 percent of the vote in the 1993 State Duma election, though its level support had dropped by about three-fourths by the



end of the decade. In 2001 a number of parties merged to form the pro-Putin United Russia party; beginning in 2003, this bloc held the largest number of seats in the State Duma”.

women lead an important role in political field in the soviet period. According to soviet congress of peoples deputies women should constitute at least one-third of the total membership. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, quotas for women dissolved and by 1990s representation for women had declined only to 10 percent in the State Duma and 5 percent in the Federation Council (Women of Russia).

On the basis of 1995-1998 regional legislative elections in Russia, Golosov, (2001) argues “that party nomination tends to replace independent candidacy as the major tool of the legislative recruitment of women. By assuming party labels, women enhance their electoral chances to a larger extent than men do”. However, incentives to nominate women are most visible among strong organizations that often monopolize the local arenas of party politics. The overall importance of political parties increases, under electoral systems with large district magnitudes. Similarly, “such electoral systems support political fragmentation that makes ticket-balancing strategies less feasible. This explains why gains in party system development generated by electoral systems are not conducive to increased women’s representation”.

### **3.4.7 Women’s Achievement in political life**

Russian history is proud of famous Russian women political leaders, like Catherine the Great, Russian Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, Regent of Moscow Elena Glinskaya, Empress of Russia Catherine I and others. “Russia recognized women’s right to participate in the elective franchise earlier than many other countries. Women in Russia got the vote in 1917, whereas British women won suffrage on the same terms as men in 1928 only and American women in 1920. In France and Japan, women got the voting right in 1945”. Russia was the first country to bring up the topic of including women in parliament in 1920. In the Duma, the proportion of women fell from almost 14 percent in 1993-95 to 10 percent in 1995-99 and under 8 percent in 2003 and 14 % the current Duma which is less than Uzbekistan (17.5 % ), This ranks Russia 82nd in the list of 188 countries that include women in national parliaments. “The number of women from the leadership of major political parties that have fractions in parliament is very limited. They are Irina

Khakamada and Elena Mizulina, two of the three leaders of the Union of Right Forces (SPS)". Yabloko, SPS and the Communists each have women in the federal power: Communist Deputy Svetlana Savitskaya, the first woman to walk in space is one of them. Lyubov Sliska is a deputy of the State Duma and a First Deputy Speaker of it (Unity and later United Russia faction) (Russian women club)

The well known women are in parties that failed to get into parliament, especially in parties of a social-democratic or ecological orientation. "Russian feminist Maria Arbatova, who failed to get elected to the Duma in 1999 when she ran for the Union of Right Force's ballot, the co-chair of the Human Rights Party thinks that the reason for the low number of women in parliament is that Women did not have and do not have money". However, Arbatova says that "low percentage of women in the Duma reflects the structure of Russian society in general. Among the female political parties, the most significant were Women of Russia formed in the 1990s. It captured 8 percent of the vote in the 1993 State Duma election". This party made an attempt to introduce positive social changes in Russian politics. "Women of Russia made it possible to adopt a new amendment to the family code that grants to take into account the children's benefits on all real estate sales. However, Women of Russia later split into 2 fractions. One of the fractions 'The movement of women of Russia supports United Russia', and thus it became weak in the political process" (Russian women club).

According to Larissa Nikovskaya "a modern Russian Sociologist believes that the reason for the low number of Russian women in politics were low political activity of women, weak civil society institutions, undeveloped legal and regulatory framework". She, however, highlights that "the main reason to this is the patriarchal tradition in Russian society and peculiarities of Russian culture". Professor Svetlana Aivazova considers that "Russian women participation in politics is considerably small and is resisted by the political elite". She thinks that the "number of women in Russian parliament depends on the way voting system is arranged. So, though the voting right is granted by the Constitution of Russian Federation, yet the right to be elected is repeatedly violated by either political parties or state bodies. The proportion of women in regional legislatures is similarly low 9 percent in 1999-2000".

### **3.4.8 Women Political Movement**

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 brought some radical changes for a guarantee of women's equality in Russia. Women were considered and recognized, equally with men. Significant Bolshevik feminist activists like Inessa Armand and Alexandra Kollontai confronted the new rule to hold fast to that egalitarian objective. As a result, the state discussed a variety of problems imperative to women and executed policies formulated to enhance the situation of women in Russian society (Racioppi, Katherine 1995).

The women's movement activists in Russia who began women's organizations of various types between 1987 and 1994 possessed a well-developed sense of women's oppression, exploitation injustice, and consciousness for liberty and equality. Thus, the awareness among women's association activists was spreading to increase more extensively in Russian society. Without this transformation, the movement cannot hope to achieve a mass status that might have ten cultural changes (Sperling 2004).

Prior to 1993 election, some women activists had planned to fight in the election and to defend women's interest in the Duma, through a movement by themselves. Consequently, they formed a new women's political movement known as "Women of Russia" which was made up of three organizations: the Union of Women of Russia (formerly known as SWK), Women of Fleet and the Association of Women Entrepreneurs.

The election of December 1993 was a turning point in women's election into the Russian Duma. Women of Russia won 8.1 percent of the 21 seats in the State Duma. There were two more seats which came from the single-member constituencies thereby bringing the total number of seats won by women to 23. With this number of seats to their advantage, Women of Russia formed a faction in the Duma which met weekly or bi-weekly. "The faction was led by an experienced politician, Eketerina Lakhova who had been a deputy in previous Russian Parliament. She was formerly an Adviser to President Yeltsin on Women's Affairs". Apart from Lakhova, Alevtina Fedulova was another influential leader of the faction. "She was the Chair of the Union of Women of Russia and was elected to the Duma to the prominent position of a Deputy Speaker". Some of these women had a wide range of experiences in politics as quite a number of them were members of the moribund

CPSU, and they were mostly professionals from education, arts, medicine, entertainments, etc. (Chukwube 2015:4).

They had experienced the beginning of good things that were able to capture some seat and be a part of the parliament. However, they again realized that the best was yet to come into women's participation in politics and government. "They were not only represented in Committee for Women, the Family and Youth and on the Committee for Health Protection, Women of Russia was also symbolized in Committees for Defence, Security, Budget, Economic Policy, International Affairs, cooperation with independent States, etc". For women, this has turned around the popular belief that women can only do better in matters relating to women. They now began to realize and enjoy equality with their male counterparts who could sometimes rely on their suggestions in carrying out some government policies and decisions. This is the way that they were motivated by the morale booster for Women of Russia as it improved the movement's grasp of modern issues.

However, the activities of Women of Russia in the Duma have been viewed as having a lot of inconsistencies. It was on record that Women of Russia voted in favor of the non-inflationary budget in 1995 but later supported a draft law on the minimum wage which was inflationary itself. Before this, "it was also known that on 21 June 1994, the faction voted for government's privatization program but later on 7 April 1995 decided that the President's declaration should be referred to the Constitution Court". On the war in Chechnya, the Women of Russia demanded a debate on the war, but the special relationship that existed between especially Lakhova and Yeltsin hindered it. What is more, on 13 January 1995, over half of the section voted in support of a bill prohibiting war in Chechnya but declined to back a bill which denies finances to military act in the Chechnya. In view of all these, "the faction was variously recognized 'inconsistent,' 'supporter of the government,' 'supporter of the communists' and also supporter of the Liberal Democrats". The faction defended this by insisting that their voting patterns had always changed according to the changes of time and regarded their actions as being pragmatic (Chukwube 2015:5).

With this euphoria at the back of their minds, they were full of expectations in the elections and hoped to make over 5 percent barriers on the party list. The results, however, showed that the results varied in different regions in the elections of 1993 and 1995. The result of 1995 elections showed that Women of Russia won over 5 percent in 44 of the 89

'areas of the federation.' In ten of these subjects, the vote was over 8 percent, reaching 10 percent in the Evenk Autonomous Okrug. In nine regions, the vote was over 7 percent. By contrast, however, Women of Russia fell below the 5 percent threshold in 45 of the republics and regions; and in 16, their support was under 2 percent. These included "the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, the Chuvash Republic, Krasnodar Krai, Voronezh, Tambov, and Kursk Oblasts. Borderline areas which nearly made the 5 percent hurdle included Iskov, Kaliningrad and Novosibirsk Oblasts; but in all the republics and regions, with just one exception, the percentage vote for Women of Russia fell in 1995 in comparison with 1993 (only in the Kabardino-Balkar Republic did the vote negligible increase from 4.6 percent in 1993 to 4.74 percent in 1995)"(White, Pravda, Gitelman 1997).

Success at polls, therefore, depended largely on interest and membership of a party and not because of protection of a particular sex. Equally significant was a large turnout of voters in the 1995 elections and many voters in that election who did not vote in 1993 chose to vote other parties instead of Women of Russia. Consequently, the popularity of Women of Russia started declining. Nevertheless, women's entry into other political parties significantly improved (Chukwube 2015:6).

By and large, in the post-communist Russian state, the awareness among women has been spreading to increase their role and participation in the democratic process. The women political movement and the political parties have a great role in making women strong enough in fighting the elections and other decision-making fields.

### **3.5 Civil Society Organizations in Russia**

Civic organizations and movements created during and after the break-up of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s are referred as civil society in Russia. At times, it is compared with NGOs; non-commercial or public organisations etc. These organisations played an important role in the pro-capitalist revolutions in Eastern European and former Soviet Union countries that opened their transition periods. This included the attempts to "rehabilitate the authoritarian Tsarist regime and to identify democratic or liberal trends in the pre-soviet period in Russia. When the communist regimes collapsed one after the other, it seemed too many people that an entirely new society was being born". Different

civil society organisations were formed to protect the interest of the people including women (Buxton and Konovalova 2012).

The administration of Vladimir Putin for civil society offers a vision of self and nation indivisibly linked, a vision of civil society coupled to state sovereignty. The “Putin administration placed constraints on existing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) particularly foreign-funded ones while promoting more politically palatable alternatives starting in 2005. It launched its own “NGO boom,” founding state-run organizations and creating an elaborate infrastructure of grants and funding for officially sanctioned organizations. Youth organizations have been prominent among these”. Indeed, the civil society groups have been strengthened and taken the issues of women in the post-communist Russia though slowly but positively (Hemment 2012:234).

### **3.5.1 NGOs and Women Participation**

In Russia, significant women groups had started emerging with the introduction of Glasnost under Gorbachev. Various women’s professional associations such as the Club of Women Journalists, Federation of Women Writers and the Union of Women Cinematographers were formed to set up feminist organizations and to establish women’s studies as an academic discipline in the Academy of Science. A remarkable attempt to bring together women from different regions for a central coordinate action was made in 1991 at a gathering in Dubna of “The First Independent Women” forum and was later followed by the second in 1992. Among participants in the forum are “SAFO (The Free Association of Feminist Organization) and NEZDHI (The Independent Women’s Democratic Initiative) which grew out of seminars held at the center for Gender Studies in Moscow” (Lipovskay 1992).

Another popular and important women’s group that was formed in 1989 during the time of Gorbachev was the “Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers which brought together mothers whose sons had died, were injured or were still fighting in Afghanistan”. The main objective of this group was to “fight for social security and benefits to those whose Mothers’ made an important impact on public awareness and Gorbachev set up a special commission to respond to the thousands of complaints received” (Dermid 1997).

The mothers began demonstrating in Red Square and bombarding Yeltsin with letters of protest after troops had been sent into Chechnya. By 1994, the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers had local committees across the country and so established a coordinating committee. Like Gorbachev, Yeltsin felt forced to respond, and he asked his staff to draft a report 'On Appeal from Soldiers' 'Mothers.' "Although the mothers enjoy considerable support among women and exude a 'moral' authority, they have been accused of being unpatriotic and of fuelling the anti-conscription movement. Indeed, the mothers threatened to disrupt the call-up procedure for Chechnya" (Pinnick 1997). "Among all the women's groups the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers has made perhaps the largest impact on Russian society and politics, since Glasnost, International recognition came in 1996 when they were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize" (White, Pravda, Gitelman 1997). Remarkable is also their stance on the present Russian forces battle with Islamic militants in the mountains of the North Caucasus of Dagastan, where they have persistently criticized the use of inexperienced young soldiers in the war (Chukwube 2015:9).

There are various reasons for the weakness of the Russian women's movement. Many are because of the Russian politics and the society which contribute to numerous other problems in Russia. It can be categorized into "three broad categories: political, economic, and normative barriers. Women's NGOs have very little influence in the policymaking process, especially at the national level. In Russia generally, there are very few channels through which cash-poor civil society actors can exert political influence". Political parties' does not have any particular pattern of working when working closely with NGO allies or conducting significant outreach to voters. Adding to the disconnect between political parties and NGOs, "the power of NGOs to influence politics is hampered by a government system that allows NGOs hardly any input, while at the same time wielding a great degree of control over their very right to exist. Thus, with this kind of government resistance to acknowledging an autonomous NGO sector, it is clear that the women's movement will have a tremendously difficult road ahead to improve its strength in the policymaking arena" (Sundstrom2010).

The economic environment in Russia is not favorable for the development of majority of NGOs. "The women's rights NGOs are more affected by the political and economic problems compared to basic charity organizations or even some other advocacy NGOs such as environmental groups. Important reasons for the difficult development path of women's organizations are mainly normative ones, related to historically rooted, negative

attitudes toward the idea of gender equality and the concept of feminism”. Women's NGOs have made some visible gains in terms of the numbers of organizations existing and the extent of networks among organizations throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium. “There have also been some glimmers of success, particularly at regional levels, in developing a dialogue with government agencies concerning the policy goals of women's NGOs. But the women's movement continues to be plagued by internal and external problems that are unquestionably formidable. It remains largely depoliticized, fragmented, and detached from its purported constituency-women” (Sundstrom 2010).

### **3.5.2 Role of Media**

The role of media for social values has become important elements in constructing social identities of people across nations. “Contemporary Russian media has never widely discussed the women issue in professional circles in recent years, nor was it discussed in the society as a whole, and was completely ignored”. With the beginning of new era, Perestroika and Glasnost Mikhail Gorbachev talked and wrote about the “necessity to free women from an excessive load at their workplace. However, serious discussion about the issues of women in the period of perestroika was never undertaken in the mass media but, journalists started writing about prostitution, women's alcoholism, drug addiction and crime among women”. The issues of women's prisons, nuns, hermits, nymphomaniacs and drinks (both men and women) were covered by the leading liberal papers of those times, such as The Moscow News and the Literary Gazette frequently but practically nothing was ever told about ordinary women. “Politicians, following in the footsteps of editors, believed that the women’s issue did not exist in this country and the only thing to be done to make women’s life easier, in their opinion, was to set her “free” somewhat from her emancipation” (Azhgikhina 1995)

The era between 1991 and 1993 was marked in journalism by the advent of a really free press. “The market economy emerged, and female images turned out to provide a most profitable commodity in this new situation. As a matter of fact, this became clear earlier, when it was discovered that newspapers covering the first ever beauty contest in the country sold better than the others”. Gradually, the women’s issues were highlighted in the media though not sufficiently. After 1991, “the image of the fashion model and beauty queen came to reign supreme in the mass media, successfully replacing the political woman. It can be said that women do not find the support they need in the Russian mass



media”. Independent women’s organizations in the present day Russia have not yet established adequate contacts with the mass media. On the whole, “the situation regarding the existing images of men and women in the mass media can be characterised as serious, and one that demands urgent attention and action” (Azghikhina 1995).

### **3.5.3 Human Rights Groups**

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, a state of political, economic, and social disorder was accompanied by a renewed hope for improved human rights conditions in Russia. “However, transitions toward more democratic forms of governance and market economies have faced many obstacles, and have not necessarily facilitated the protection of such rights. The lack of democratic progress has been a hindrance to the development of human rights in much of the post-Soviet region. Though the rights of women, sexual minorities, and disabled people were acute during Soviet times, they continued to be denied in post-Soviet Russia” (Nowakowski 2007).

The post-Soviet Russia has witnessed the declining role of the state as the general provider for its people. “The rise of the liberal economic market has resulted in creating social instability and increased unemployment. While the new Russian state has expressed a legal commitment to equality for all and has removed homosexuality from its criminal code books, its weak democratic institutions do not effectively protect these legal measures. Thus, inequality remains a widespread problem in Russia as reflected by the poor economic and health conditions of men and women, the continued ill-treatment of homosexuals, as well as the victimization of women through public and private violence”.

Following its transition from communism, Russia has suffered incredible economic strain which affected men and women in different ways. “Russian men became unemployed that damaged their masculine identity as breadwinners and as the major workforce for the Russian state. The increasingly hands-off state policies toward the family have not been countered by an increase in male support in the home which led women to continue with the double burden”. Because of the need for second income in the households, women continued to work in the public sphere and also remained as the main caretakers in the home. “Economic inequalities extend beyond this, however, to include issues of unequal wages for women and a high prevalence of sexual harassment and discrimination in the

labor market that impacts women's ability to acquire steady employment. Yet, gender inequities are not simply limited to economics"(Weilminster 2007).

### **3.6 Limitation of Russian Civil-Society groups**

Despite role and contribution in the process of democratization, civil society groups in Russia faces a great number of problems. Most independent media in Russia are cut off from major funding sources, leaving them completely outmatched by heavily subsidized state media. "Democratic governments and foreign NGOs could respond with increased funding for their own Russian-language news services, such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Svoboda.org, and support for foreign-based, Russian-founded projects like Meduza, Open Russia, Free Russia Foundation, and the Committee for Russian Economic Freedom. However, more expert discussion is required on how to reach the domestic Russian audience on a large scale" (Snegovaya, 2015).

It has also been observed that Russian associational life is extremely weak. The activities of the citizens temporarily sprouted during the glasnost and restructured years, particularly in Russia's largest cities. "The communist monopoly on association gave way to the growth of conventional civil society over the following decades. But even this modest growth in associational life was viewed as a threat by President Vladimir Putin the Russian government imposed new restrictions on NGOs, forcing them to register with the government if they wished to continue to operate" (Beissinger 2012).

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The reforms of Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin were good days' of the Communist era but worst hit for women. Although women in Russia have political opportunities but top political positions are still held by men. The benefits of PR system for women representation are more ambiguous in the case of Russia, as it was a complete PR system only for a few years. The placement of women on the party list also reflects a lack of commitment by the political parties to encourage women to enter parliament. There are also social barriers which consider men to be better political leaders to manage the government or the system. The introduction of quotas has also fallen foul due to an aversion to the idea owing to Soviet legacy and paternalistic attitudes, as reflected in Duma debates on the subject. The phenomenon of more women in professional positions leading to an increased presence in parliament is reflected in Russia in line with world

trend, where they have been clustered in lower-paying jobs, and very few women from professional fields have made it to the Duma. Women's repression and unemployment continue in the Russian society.

In a nutshell, decision-making process in the Duma was always dominated by the men due to low representation of women. The prevalent inequality and discrimination have been hampering the interests of the women that posed a serious challenge to the democratization in Russia. There is no doubt that women are less active politically than men, but the political parties have not yet given equal space for women candidates to be included in the electoral process.

Nevertheless, in the post-communist Russian state, the awareness among women has been spreading to increase their role and participation in the democratic process. Despite its low representation, today women have become politically more active and conscious which positively affecting in their socio-economic field. The sizable increase in Duma will further empower women in every field so that they can be strong and courageous in leading the Russian state. Moreover, both political parties and civil society organisations are equally important in the case of women empowerment and participations.

## **Chapter-4**

### **Impact of Women's Empowerment in Uzbekistan and Russia**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Constituting half of the population, women's backwardness leads to fractured growth in both Uzbekistan and Russia. On the other hand, empowered women positively contribute in the socio-economic development of the society. Women empowerment has to cover all spheres of life, including social upliftment, economic independence and adequate political participation. Women from the developed countries have already reached a certain stage, where they can lead a decent socio-economic and political life and have freedom in decision-making. However, most of the women from the developing and the underdeveloped world still face a lot of challenges. The governments of such countries have to take measures to uplift the condition of women. Key to women empowerment is improvement in basic facilities like water, sanitation, healthcare and education. Today, many countries are making public policies, reforms and laws that aim to strengthen the status of women.

Collapse of the USSR led to creation of 15 sovereign entities in the Eurasian landmass. Previous chapters have extensively dealt with the condition of women before and after the disintegration, especially in Uzbekistan and the Russian Republic. It is not an overstatement to say that women have been the chief victims of the situation arising out of Soviet disintegration. In both the countries, Uzbekistan and Russia, during post-collapse socio-economic transformation, women were affected more disproportionately than men. They had to face the negative consequences of the political events, including economic slowdown, scarcity of day-to-day requirements, loss of jobs, breakdown of social systems. In Uzbekistan, factors like migrations, cotton monoculture, ethnic disputes, scarcity of goods and services also affected women.

Breakdown of existing relationship between the State, society and people had worst impact on women. The new system required some time to build up. The transitional phase from soviet system to market economy proved to be difficult for people, especially women. In order to deal with the condition of women, both Uzbekistan and

Russia introduced a number of legislative changes and legal reforms, which were specially designed for the security and empowerment of women.

This chapter analyzes the effectiveness and outcomes of women's empowerment in Uzbekistan and Russia. The impact of empowerment of women is analyzed through factors such as their employment status, access to healthcare, legislation against sexual harassment, prevalence of crimes against and women trafficking. The role of women in the decision making bodies, and their political participation is also discussed in the chapter. The purpose of this discussion is to understand the status of women empowerment in these different sectors, compare it to their democratic participation and then its evaluation.

## **4.2 Women Empowerment: Theoretical Framework**

As it is discussed in the previous chapters, empowerment represents not only for socio-economic development but also enhance the choice-making capacity to an individual or a group, providing freedom to choose, creating favorable conditions and options from which one can choose and lastly, build the capacity of the person to transform the chosen options into outcomes. All deprived sections in the society, including women, children, old people, economically weaker sections, need external help for their empowerment and emancipation. In this regard, the State plays a vital role, through making laws, social security's and opportunities. The society at large also has to play its role in uplifting these sections.

In other words, empowerment involves social transformation of the deprived people through a re-arrangement of power. As the less-powerful lot of the society assumes the position of power, the position of the previously more-powerful ones is compromised. This generally leads to the resistance from others within a society. However, once the transition is over, power relations are again stabilized. The change in the power relation, defined by empowerment of one of the weaker sections, should generally be evolutionary and smooth.

The center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, United States has come up with the definition of empowerment. The prime elements of empowerment include the following:

a. Decision making power: No one achieves independence unless given the opportunities to make important decisions about one's life.

b. To understand people rights: The main reason of differentiated treatment meted out to different categories of people lies in the correct assessment of their true rights. Only when rights are understood, the sense of strength and self-confidence can be increased.

c. Change in one's life and one's community: Empowerment not only includes a "feelings" or "sense" but also change, both to the individual to the individual and the community (Dey, Pain 2007: p-5).

According to NailaKabeer, "empowerment refers to a process by which those who were denied the ability to form a strategic life choices gain such ability". Kabeer (2005) is of the opinion that the idea of empowerment could be explored through mainly three closely interrelated factors such as resources, agency and achievements. Resources mean the medium through which an agency has been exercised. Agency indicates the process by which choices are formulated and put into effect. It is the main crux of the concept of empowerment. Achievements represent the outcome of the agency. World Bank identified empowerment as a prime element of poverty reduction and as a primary development assistance goal. Again, to achieve that goal, gender equality both as a development objective and as a tool for promoting growth needs to be brought fourth.

Traditionally, women have been subjected to problematic power-relationship vis-à-vis men, and vis-à-vis the society at large. Through ages, women have generally occupied an insignificant role in social inclusion or empowerment. The concept of women empowerment has come up in recent years to question these power-relationships. The concept of women empowerment is a complex one, and there is more than one angle to it. It encompasses physical, mental, social, cultural, economic as well as political aspects. Women empowerment broadly refers to participation of women in the decision-making process and power-sharing.

Women empowerment first hogged the limelight in the 1970s when the third world feminists and women's organizations brought into fore the concept to facilitate the struggle for social justice and equality through the transformation of the economic, social and political structure. However, the term "Women Empowerment" was coined only in the 1990s when various agencies used it to develop strategies that enable enlarging the choices and economic and social productivity of women as individuals.

Huyer and Sikoska (2003) explain “the empowerment of women as a process which leads woman to differentiate themselves as proficient of undertaking decisions and deciding choices about their life which needs adequate levels of firmness and self-confidence”. The idea of women’s empowerment was adopted at the executive level after the Beijing Conference in 1995. The section thirteen of the Beijing Declaration describes the empowerment of women as an important strategy for development. “Women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development, and peace”. The empowerment of women can also be viewed as a range of several interrelated and mutually reinforcing components which includes right to independent Capacity building and skill development, and ability to plan, make decisions, organize and carry out activities.

### **4.3 Women Empowerment and Impact in Uzbekistan**

As discussed earlier, the women empowerment is inevitable for attaining every goals associated to development, human rights and peace and security in every nuke and corner of the globe. In the present context, gender equality indicates a state of affairs in which both men and women possess the same opportunities in every walks of their life. It also means the existence of a gender orientation in the process of decision making of all sorts in which the interests of women are given the same importance and consideration as men’s concerning rights and the resource allocation etc.

Women in Uzbekistan have come a long way since independence. They are progressing in various walks of life. In spite of this they face of a lot of challenges. Their presence and participation is still minimal in various sectors. Especially in the political spheres, they lag far behind men. The stereotypical belief such as politics is a dirty play and preserve of man stops woman from coming into politics exists. The women in Uzbekistan have had problems in the process of campaigns for political seats majorly due to the factors such as lack of money and an imbedded culture of violence at the time of campaign period. Trade unions are the other area where the women have low representation. Women seldom occupy highest seats in private and public spheres which are a sign of low education level and skills among women.

Effective Policies that deals with serious gender imbalances would help in reducing gender inequality. Equality of access to education is crucial as it enhances one's capacity to learn and earn. This will ensure that women are elevated from inequality, deprivation and become key players in socio-political lives of Uzbekistan. Women's higher education is helpful in improving health and education in the family. It is also crucial for the participation in the decision making processes. This ultimately influences the formation and implementation of policies and programmes at each and every levels.

### **4.3.1 Social Empowerment on Women**

The alienation of women from the arenas of politics, institutions and process of decision making paved the way for their presence in non-institutional political spheres in an attempt to get a space and voice in a transforming civil society. With unseemly swiftness international organizations and western financial support came into the region, with pro-western liberal democratic notions, a communist approach and zero tolerance of any proposal that some of the good dimensions of the Soviet system, such as affirmative action policies and universal state support, be retained. In this, there was huge support from male politicians and ministers from the government, who started to express their opinions publicly, showing a long-held but once perceived 'politically incorrect' belief that woman shall retain their rightful places and positions inside the home and renounce their privileges which they had enjoyed under the earlier system. Once, minister of Uzbek government outspokenly stated:

*“Under the previous system there were no laws which discriminated against women, in fact they were given many privileges and in this way men were disadvantaged. Even single men did not get the same privileges as single women. Now this has to stop. We are now a democracy and women will have to compete equally with men for their place in society, politics and the labor force, just like the West. If they do not compete well, if they are unable to achieve similar positions to men, then it will be because they do not have merit”.*<sup>14</sup>

The women were consistently referred by “the question of merit in regard to political representation and career advancement under the former system. The affirmative action's,

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<sup>14</sup> Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes, (2005) Central Asian Women Confronting Transition, Zed Books, p-161



policies and quotas were introduced and put in place by the Soviet government in order to ensure *de jure* equality were believed to be part of the system which had supported party loyalty over merits of the individuals” (Tokhtakhodjaeva 1996: 63).

### **Education in Uzbekistan**

Uzbekistan has been moving forward to an effective education policy since 1991, with the objective of country’s social and economic development. Today, the country has a national model of consistent education and training of young generation including women within the background of a harmonious development. The Constitution of Uzbekistan also enunciates that all its citizens shall have the right to education and the state shall guarantee its citizens a free general education. With the introduction of Law on Education on 29 August 1997 and the National Programme for Personnel training by President Islam Karimov’s initiative, Uzbekistan opened a new phase of radical reforms. Thus, in Uzbekistan, “education was legally declared as a priority area of development which meets all social, economic, scientific, cultural and technological needs of the state, society and individual” (National Review of Education: 2015 50-54)”.

The educational empowerment for both men and women was recognized in the National Programme for training which was given approval by the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 1997. The legal framework of the system of education of Uzbekistan was pledged by principles, norms and provisions of the international community. Some of them were the “Convention on the Prevention of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Convention on the Rights of the Child; and Convention on Technical and Vocational Education (2015 National Review of Education)”.

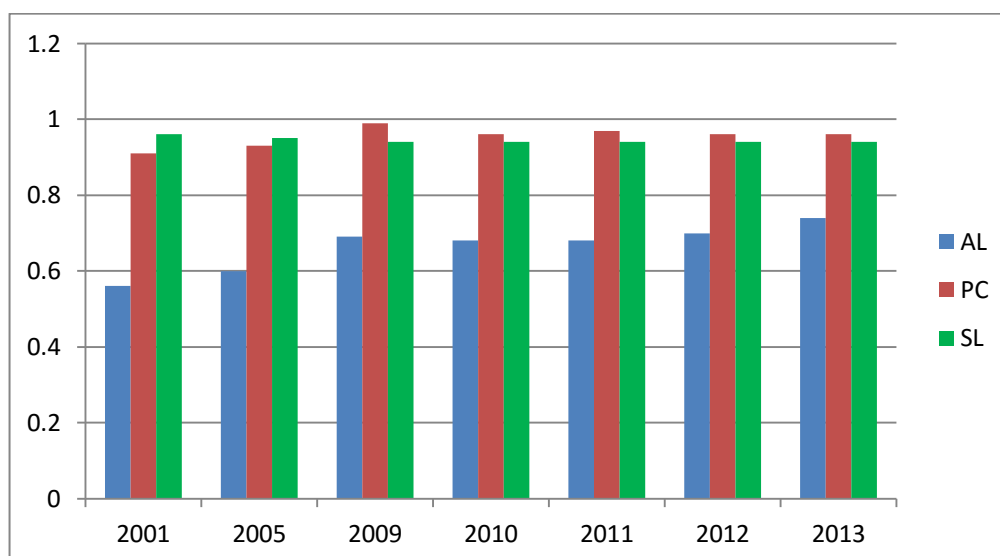
Uzbekistan has a non-governmental educational sector which is rapidly developing. The non-governmental educational institutions are growing at a large level in the country. It is observed that there is no gender inequality in the primary and secondary education. These two levels of education is compulsory in Uzbekistan. In 2012, there were 4,464,018 registered students in secondary schools out of which 48.4% were girls (Table 13).

**Table 13: Ratio of girls to boys in secondary schools (by September 2012)**

	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>
1-9 grades	48.4	51.6
5-9 grades	48.6	51.4
1-4 grades	48.2	51.8

Source: Collection of statistics for 2012/2013 academic year. Tashkent: MoPE, 2013. – P. 13

Certain observation has been found from the Image 7 “The proportion of girls to boys was sustained at an average growth rate of 0.94 in general education during the period 2001-2013. In case of the specialized secondary professional education, gender equality has been achieved in professional colleges. There the proportion of girls to boys remained at a level of 0.96 in the year 2013”. The proportion of girls to boys in academic lyceums went high from 0.56 in 2001 to 0.74 in 2013. However, the gender parity in enrolment in academic lyceums still remains low. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, EFA goals and the target of further sustainability level are ensured by the National Action Plan. NAP represents a collective commitment which is the concept of development along with the successful implementation of specific measures.

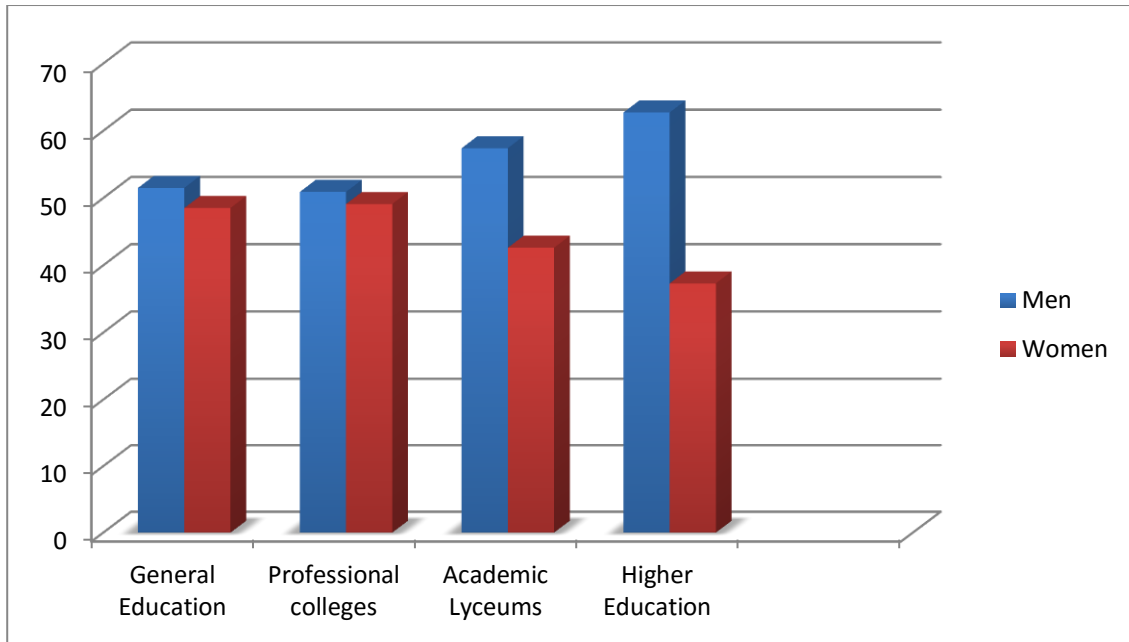


**Image 7: Proportion of Girls to Boys in Schools, Academic Lyceums and Professional Colleges, Ratio of the number of Girls to 1 Boy, 2001-2013<sup>15</sup>**

Source: Millennium Development Goals Report Uzbekistan 2015: p: 27

<sup>15</sup> Source: Millennium Development Goals Report Uzbekistan 2015: p: 27

**Image 8: Gender Structure of Education Enrolment in 2013-2014**



*Source: State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan*

From the above image (Image 8) it has been observed that in Uzbekistan gender gap is maintained in enrolment in professional colleges, primary and secondary general education from the year 2009. Parity of enrolment in tertiary education however is still lagging behind. In primary and secondary general education, parity has been maintained through the system of mandatory enrolment. Although, the female and male ratio has been increased from 0.56 in 2001 to 0.74 in 2013, disparities still remain in academic lyceums(Millennium Development Goals Report Uzbekistan 2015, p-15).

## **Health**

Wages in the health and education sectors were maintained near to “the national average wage during the soviet period. However, the relative level of wages began to fall in these sectors after the collapse of Soviet Union due to limited resources” (Ibrahim 2013).

Empowerment of women in health sector in Uzbekistan has brought various changes. In 2012, the life expectancy was recorded at 75.5 years for women and 70.7 years for men in the official statistics. However, the estimates of the World Bank are much lower. The estimates of the World Bank suggest that the life expectancy of female is 71.5 years and the male life expectancy is 64.8 years. This difference in estimates is majorly due to the combination of various factors. The under-reporting of infant mortality is also added to

those factors. Uzbekistan, being a member of World Health Organization, has adopted several initiatives connected to issues of women. The maternal mortality rate in Uzbekistan displayed a similar trend with the other former soviet countries. “The official statistics shows the rate of 20.2 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2012. The maternal death is perceived to be the culmination of criminal acts and is subjected to criminal investigation by the office of the prosecutor which created an incentive for under reporting in official statistics”. In 2012, World Health Organization had estimated maternal mortality at 36 per 100,000 live births.

In Uzbekistan “all services including maternal and child health are given in the public sector. One of the major health policies of Uzbekistan is *The Law on health protection of 1996 which has significant impact in the life of women*” (Republic of Uzbekistan, 1996). Similarly, *the Presidential Decree of Uzbekistan, 2005* further stressed the importance of financial incentives. Its aim is to introduce the mechanism of reimbursement into the health system in the public sector. The Ministry of Health has developed various preventive protocols which have been implemented throughout the country for the health of its citizens including women and children. The Uzbekistan Presidential Decree (No. 1096) came into force on 13 April 2009 which prescribed certain reform measures to improve both maternal reproductive and child health (Ahmedov and et.all, 2014).

### **Gender violence, human trafficking, Marriage and Divorce**

In pre-1991 the practices of polygamy, early marriage, divorce, abortion, sexual harassment, and Human trafficking and gender violence had major impact in Uzbekistan. These are more severe in rural than Urban area.<sup>16</sup>

Uzbek society still considers domestic violence to a private, family affair and victims are not encouraged to report to the police, with local authorities emphasizing reconciling a husband and his wife rather than making a formal complaint. Subsequently, there is no law on the punishment of domestic act offenders and the prevention of domestic violence. The government’s reluctance to allow free NGO activity in the country means that there are very few NGOs working in the area of domestic violence and there are currently no domestic violence shelters for victims of domestic violence in the country.

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<sup>16</sup> CEDAW (2010) ‘Concluding Observation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women’, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws45.htm>

In the National Platform and Action Plan, questions of preventing violence against women are incorporated. Those two action plans are meant to improve the status of women in Uzbekistan. The national Action Plan is very known and well realized in regard to the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee. As a result of the measures the illness and mortality cases in women have decreased. It was decreased by 43.6% from 2003 to 2002. The number of indictments for committing violence against women was increased (Beijing Platform and Uzbekistan, 1995:45).

“In Uzbekistan, the elimination of all forms of violence against girls is accomplished in the

Following directions:

1. Legislation: the Family Code regulates the rights and obligations of parents with regard to their children;
2. The assessment of the readiness of girls for school instruction: during the selection period for school, children are subject to testing, in which, in addition to psycho physiological readiness, the family environment of the girl is also examined. If anxiety and psychological depression are discovered in a girl, pedagogues and school psychologists conduct focused work with the parents of the child.
3. Introducing the position of school psychologist in all academic institutions;
4. In the Republic, the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women is monitored, and according to the final results of the annual monitoring, there were no cases of violence against girls”(Beijing Platform and Uzbekistan, 1995:45).

Uzbekistan is a country for women and girls trafficked to Kazakhstan, Russia, Middle East, and Asia for the reason of profitable sexual utilization. Men are trafficked to Kazakhstan and Russia for reasons of required labour in the manufacture, cotton and tobacco production. Men and women are also trafficked inside for the principle of domestic servitude, required labor in the farming and production industries and for profitable sexual utilization. In March 2008, Uzbekistan implemented ILO Conventions on lowest age of service and on the abolition of the most awful types of child labour and is functioning with the ILO on execution; the administration also established its rising obligation to combat

trafficking in March 2008 by implementing a widespread anti-trafficking law (World Bank, UNDP).

Uzbekistan has joined the Convention on the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, (by resolution of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2003).

The illegal migration of citizens, as one of the forms of violation of human rights and freedoms, has taken on the form of traffic in persons, and under the conditions of a global economy this has become a problem for the entire world community.

In Uzbekistan, the migration that takes place is essentially work-related, and it is carried out in accordance with appropriate contracts that are concluded in the agency attached to the Ministry of Labor responsible for questions of work-related immigration and the social protection of the general population of Uzbekistan. "For the purpose of preventing cases of the illegal migration of women, self-government bodies, Women's Committees, together with employment offices in the localities, are studying the opportunities for providing women with jobs, and unemployed women are put on the welfare rolls and are taught professions. In self-government civil bodies, centers of social protection for families are being created in which jobs for women are organized" (Beijing Platform and Uzbekistan, 1995).

#### **4.3.2 Political Empowerment of Women**

In Uzbekistan quota systems have significantly increased women's participation and representation in both elective and appointive political decision making positions. Quotas have been viewed as one of the most effective affirmative action in increasing women's political participation. "There are now 77 countries with constitutional, electoral or political party quotas for women. In countries where women's issues had always been relegated to least priority, the increase in some women in decision-making positions helps put women's agendas at a higher priority level. The visibility of women leaders gives a higher profile to women's rights in general. Quotas for women in politics make possible changes in attitudes about women's roles and abilities such that they open education, work and other opportunities for women" (Dey and Pain 2007).

The introduction of the quota system led to a significant increase in proportion of women in public office. The proportion of women in parliament has also increased. There was an increase in proportion from 19% in 2005 to 22 % in 2013. The proportion of women was more than 19% of the total number of deputies in local representative bodies. “The presence of women in executive power increased from 3.4 % in 2005 to 16% in 2013. The proportion of women in government also increased. As of November 1, 2013 the proportion of women in high level of position (Ministers, First Deputy Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Heads of the territorial government bodies, and etc.) was about 11% and mid level positions (Heads of main departments, their deputies, heads of departments, etc.) was 31.2%” (Millennium Development Goals Report: Uzbekistan, 2015:41)

Uzbekistan has developed and is constantly improving the appropriate national mechanisms for the advancement of women at the level of the legislative and executive authorities. “The regulatory framework of the Government’s policy on gender equality was established in the national legislation (the Constitution, a number of decrees and resolutions), as well as by Uzbekistan’s accession to a number of international initiatives (for example, the signing of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), accession to the UN Convention “On the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women”, and the draft law “On equal rights and equal opportunities” that is pending approval)”.

The appropriate national institution for mainstreaming gender and protecting women’s rights was created in 1991 with the establishment of the Women’ Committee of Uzbekistan, the Head of which was also appointed as Deputy Prime Minister by decree. The Chairpersons of the regional Women’s Committees were similarly appointed as the local Deputy Khokims (governors).

In Uzbekistan the National Plan of Action to improve the status of women in Uzbekistan which was created at end of the 1990 played a major role to provide direction to the Government, parliament, public organizations and civil society in their efforts to promote gender equality. “A 2004 President Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan further provided impetus to support the Women’s Committee in developing and implementing policies in the field of social and legal support to women, welfare, protection of health and opportunities to participate in public life” (Millennium Development Goals Report: Uzbekistan, 2015:41).

Since the late 1990s, the administration has also adopted numerous national plans and decrees aimed at toward matters of particular significance to women, typically regarding women's reproductive health. Consideration has been given to women and girls in numerous annual state agenda such as the Year of Rural Development and Improvement (2009), the Year of Social Protection (2007), the National CEDAW Plan (2010), and the State Program on "Year of Family" (2012), although an evaluation of official strategy papers connected to such agenda establish that none referred purposely to gender parity. The administration has not mentioned an approach to gender mainstreaming in policy surroundings, but the National Welfare Improvement Strategy (WIS) of Uzbekistan, 2012–2015 expressed that gender should be measured in welfare development policies and restated Uzbekistan's obligation to counting gender in strategies and agenda: (Uzbekistan's Implementation of the CEDAW,2015)

## **Role of NGOs**

*"The National Action Platform of Uzbekista consolidates the efforts undertaken by the government, parliament, civil society institutions, NGOs, and the private sector to improve the role of women in the development of a democratic society. The National Action Platform has stipulated the following national priorities for improvement of status of women.*

- Improving women's health, and the development of family services;
- Educating and advancing professional literacy among women;
- Improving the economic status of women;
- Mitigating the impact of environmental degradation;
- Strengthening the participation of women in the political process;
- Establishing special programs to support girls;
- Developing a new image of the Uzbek woman in the mass media;
- Ensuring equality for women and the elimination of discrimination;
- Conducting gender-specific surveys;
- Developing and strengthening the role of women within NGOs; and



- Enhancing national mechanisms for improving the status of women (Embassy of Uzbekistan to the United States 2004)".

One of the first NGOs to be established in Central Asia was the Association of Business Women of Uzbekistan, which was formed in 1991. This organization grew from a small women's cooperative making handicrafts with a commitment to support other women in small business activities to an organization with branches in all the main regions and districts of Uzbekistan. "From the outset the modus operandi of the association, bereft of government support or any form of financial sponsorship, was geared to it becoming a fully independent WNGO both economically and politically. It now has over three thousand female entrepreneurs as members, whose financial subscriptions and skill inputs have made it one of the most successful self-funded organizations in Central Asia" (Khassanova 2000: 388).

In Uzbekistan leading members of the voluntary association have been members of government advisory bodies on small business, and it is the main conduit for internationally funded programmes aimed at small business training, micro-credit and skills training in Uzbekistan. Some women have been playing as the leading member in the NGO sector that has enlarged in the most part of the country. "The lines of communication and contact developed by these organizations with international organizations, women's forums and academic institutions have widened the range of 'global' and regional intercommunication previously monopolized by the Soviet Women's Committee and latterly by the National Women's Committees". In 1996 it was the UNDP initiative in establishing Gender and Development (GAD) bureaus in Uzbekistan which offered important early sponsorship and support for the formation of these organizations, some of which were initially ad hoc groups of professional women, artists and academics with a broad agenda to promote gender equity in all spheres of life and increase women's presence and representation in political decision-making at the highest levels (Sirojiddinov and Handrahan 1999: 9-26).

The construction of a united front in the struggle for more political representation for women in institutional politics is considered to be one of the most important civil engagements of women NGOs. The same initiative was successfully thwarted in Uzbekistan amounted to the presidential decree that embedded the National Women's Committee in the institutional political structure at every levels of the government. The appointment of members of the committee to the office of deputy mayors in the regional government and

the deputy in the prime ministerial office has efficiently made them the official representatives of women in the government.

This is in contradiction to the political agenda of the principal leading women NGOs which seek to pressurize the governments to stick to their commitments and responsibilities as signatories to CEDAW convention. Marfua Tokhtakhodjaeva, the director of the Women's Resource Centre made a scathing criticism against women's committee and media at an inter-regional conference on the role of non-governmental organizations. Marfua criticized the media and the role of Women's Committee and their failure to support the recommendations of the CEDAW committee. Marfua argues that by doing so, the status of women is being undermined in Uzbek society and the traditional stereotypes get promoted:

*“Thus, at the initiative of the Women's Committee, Channel III of the Uzbek TV regularly promotes the role of mother as [the] principal person for raising children and the role of the father as the only head of family (which is in contradiction with the Convention). One can feel an intention to control what women wear and also to limit their role to performing only family duties. The newspaper Oilava Jamiyatin its every issue educates women on how they should meet their husbands, serve and entertain them ... It is time that Women's Committees should stop praising large families and mothers, who serve all members of families. And it is time to recognize the social role of mothers who raise citizens of a modern state and women, who actively participate in the development processes, in reforming the society and its enlightenment. As a distinguished Uzbek scholar, Abdurauf Fitrat, said, ‘A slave woman raises a slave child’ (2001)”*

Since 1995, there has been a consistent effort from both independent women NGO community and the Women's Committee to engage in positive exchange of co-operation and information in their activities in spite of the disagreements between the two. Otherwise, it weakens the position of both. However, the independent women NGOs continuously classify the differences between them as the inside and outside organizations. Yet the issue of representatives also affects the independent women NGOs. The overwhelming majorities are urban based and they do not possess the resources to formulate a comprehensive structure of branches in rural areas. The majority of the women in central Asia continue to live and work in rural areas. Undoubtedly, women NGOs are the powerful NGOs in

Uzbekistan and also the recipients of greatest international financial support(Sirojiddinov and Handrahan 1999: 13).

Millions of dollars were spent on gender specific works and projects in 1995 by organizations such as Counterpart Consortium, UNDP, Soros Foundation, Eurasia Foundation and USAID. The funding plans are diverse. It generally focused on the promoting civil society through civil education and leadership programmes, advocacy through training and publishing educational materials, legal literacy and supporting the initiatives of private sector through skills training programme and micro credit. A Radio Programme was set up for women by the Centre for Women's Leadership in Uzbekistan. The Centre had also sponsored various local community activities. There is a solid symbiotic relationship among various women NGOs. The most economically successful women NGOs are capable to give support and encouragement for those who are less fortunate. This relationship is fundamental for sustaining the multifarious activities, aspirations and agendas of the independent women NGO community in general.

In the present day context, the independent women NGOs are showing deep concern for their survival. They are involving in several business engagements as a means to maintain base-line funding in order to lower their vulnerability in the long run and to ensure their survival. The community of women NGOs plays an important and crucial in improving the political and social status of women in Central Asia. These women NGOs have given the women an opportunity to represent themselves. They have empowered the women to define and decide the terms of their political involvement and to place their problems and issues in the political agenda. They taught them the relevance of speaking for themselves for their political future within the background of cultural values and principles. This is the distinct and unique feature of Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek society. The active women workers defend their rights and status in the independent Central Asia (Sirojiddinov and Handrahan 1999: 13).

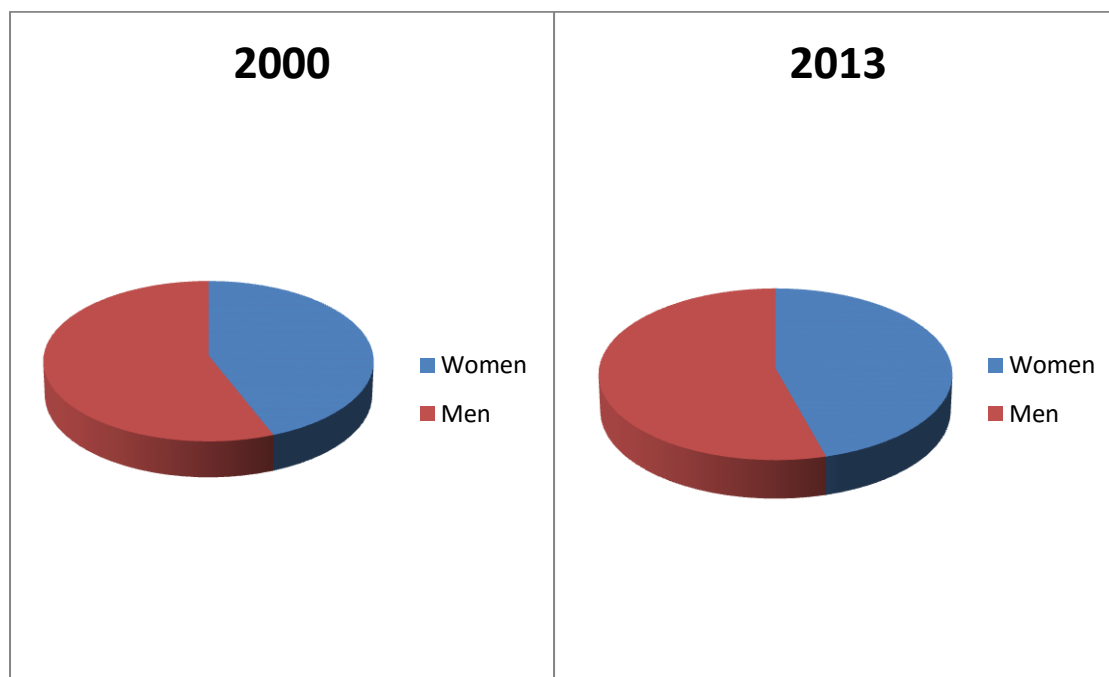
### **4.3.3 Economic Empowerment on Women**

The development of women's entrepreneurship and their participation in the labor market have been given special attention through the provision of targeted credit lines which primarily meant for the start-up business for women. Female entrepreneurs were given 491 million loans in 2012 which is 30% larger than what was given in 2011. Around six lakhs

home jobs were generated between 2009 and 2013 with an aim to widen the opportunities from women in large families. This has encouraged the idea of making women engaged in labor market through the work at home initiative.

There would be a transformation in the gender role and stereotypes if the necessary changes can be brought into the structure of economy and society. This requires advance planning. The new employment opportunities for women could be created by increasing the share of the manufacturing industries. The level of employment of women in manufacturing industry is higher than the mining industry. Hence, the promotion of manufacturing industry will ensure the promotion of employment opportunities for women in the sector. The production of good with high level of technological advancement will also improve the competitiveness of women in the labor market. Thus it ensures a sustainable income for women. This transformation would enhance the economic status of women at a large level (Milleneum Development Goal Report: 2015).

The proportion of women’s employment increased from 44 % to 45.7% in the period of 2000-2013 (Image 9). The employment of women in small business has increased significantly. In 2012, 13.7% of micro-enterprises and 40.4% of small enterprises were run by women (Millennium Development Goals Report Uzbekistan, 2015).



**Image 9: Structure of the Employed in the Economy by Gender, 2000 vs. 2013,**

*Source: State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan*

In Uzbekistan the reproductive health services has become universal. The inclusion of pregnant women by the antenatal care during the first twelve weeks of pregnancy raised from 87.9% in 2002 to 89.5 in 2013. The coverage of antenatal care has increased substantially in the regions of Fergana, Namagan, Samarkand and Sirdarya especially during the period between 2000 and 2012. The highest level of coverage was achieved in Navoi, Fergana, Jizzak and Sirdarya regions in 2013. The number of abortions decreased from 8.7% in 2002 to 4.3 % due to the increase of contraceptives. “A small scale population survey conducted by the Social Research Institute with the support of UNFPA in 2013 showed that 71.1% of women in Tashkent city, Namangan, Navoi and Surkhandarya were using contraceptives. According to the 2013 data of the Institute for Social Research, the level of awareness and use of various types of contraceptives in urban and rural areas did not differ substantially”.

Given the importance of the quality of antenatal care, diagnosis and treatment of somatic diseases among pregnant women, antenatal care was integrated into the primary health care system. This has allowed the coverage of 100% of pregnant women for essential antenatal care, including those in rural and remote areas. In 2012, a Decree and national standards were adopted for the provision of prenatal and postnatal care, including in rural areas. By 2013, a total of more than 4 thousand polyclinics and rural health units were providing antenatal care to pregnant women, including supplying various types of contraception to women of fertile age.<sup>17</sup>

#### **4.4 Women Empowerment in Russia**

Since its independence from the Soviet Union, “Russia has entered a process of democratic transition to a market economy and political liberalism. In this process, women have lost many of their Soviet era achievements like employment security, state benefits and quotas for political representation. They have faced increasing gender discrimination in salaries, recruitment, promotion, dismissal and professional segregation. The Russian Federation has faced feminization of unemployment and poverty”. Women have become the victims of

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<sup>17</sup>Millennium Development Goals Report Uzbekistan 2015

prostitution, trafficking and violence. However, in the course of time, various changes in the life of women have come up which further boost for women empowerment in Russia.

As discussed earlier, empowerment of women is essential for the achievement of women status in any country. Women in all the countries today are given gender justice, equality, rights, peace, and security in every part of the world. Post-Soviet Russia's transition from communism to democracy was unfavorable to women's needs for greater representation. The patriarchal elements in society were further strengthened with various policies and programme. Social attitudes of differentiated gender roles and identities were also reinforced. "In Russia women remained marginalized due to a hierarchical and stereotyped conception of sexes. However, certain new opportunities were available to women whom they could use to fight for their rights and pressurize the government to take policy initiatives. The support of global feminist movements and networks came as a big help for Russian women in their struggle for empowerment and the Russian Government was compelled to incorporate women's empowerment as part of its policy" (Usha 2005:142).

#### **4.4.1 Social Empowerment and women**

The area of government social policy, which, with certain reservations, can be defined as a "policy on women's issues, has been entirely incorporated into national policy on the family, demographics, health, poverty reduction, etc. by Government involvement in prioritizing of social issues in recent years has helped to improve a number of problems faced by men and women". For example, the share of women among deputies of the State Duma (the lower house of parliament) has gradually increased; life expectancy has risen, though to a limited extent (it has risen more for men than for women, thereby reducing the gender gap in life expectancy). There has been a significant decrease in the number of officially registered sex crimes and gender disparities in pay and pensions have reduced.

Because the gender issues are not distinguished as an aspect of government policy, a number of tasks critical to the development of the country and of democracy remain outside the scope of government responsibility. "These issues include: eradicating gender discrimination, overcoming gender role stereotypes in society, observing the constitutional principles of equal rights and opportunities for men and women, etc. Lack of focus on gender issues also reduces the efficiency of social policy" (National Human Development Report in the Russian Federation 2010:48).

Russian government policy towards women is increasingly driven by a new or old assumption that: “the traditional labor division between men and women (where the man is the main breadwinner, while the woman combines the tasks of earning money for the family with household duties and raising children) is the only feasible and socially acceptable paradigm”.

In the Fourth UN World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995), after signing the Declaration and the Platform of Action, which were accepted, the Russian Federation made vow at the highest level to build a national mechanism in a form of an independent authority, which would have the right to directly influence government policy formation on advancement of women, participate in the legislative process and have its own budget.

The legal basis of the national mechanism for the advancement of women in Russia complies with international requirements and has undergone no changes in recent years. It is based on the “principle of equal rights and liberties, and equal opportunities for men and women in their exercise, which is set out in the Constitution of the Russian Federation from 1993 (Article 19, Paragraph 3), the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ILO conventions and recommendations, which have been ratified by the Russian Federation, and a number of Russian laws and presidential and government decrees”<sup>18</sup>.

In the recent years the institutional basis of the national mechanism at federal level has been effectively lost. “During the administrative reform (2004), when the core element of the national mechanism – the Commission on the Status of Women in the Russian Federation – ceased to exist its disintegration began. In 2005 the Commission was substituted by an Inter-departmental Commission for Gender Equality in the Russian Federation which, in turn, was disbanded in 2007 in connection with a change of government”.

women exceeds the number of men by almost 11 million, where women account for almost half of all professional employees (49.6%), and where their level of education is higher than that of men, decision-making remains a largely male preserve. “Absence of women in decision-making structures limits ability of women to protect and promote their own interests, but also has an adverse effect on overall development of democracy” (National Human Development Report in the Russian Federation 2010:48)

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<sup>18</sup>National Human Development Report in the Russian Federation 2010:48

## Public Health in Russia

Health determines the long-term sustainability of socio-economic development in any country and also is an essential component of human development. Mortality rates and life expectancy at birth are the main indicators of public health. There are distinct improvements in both of these indicators in recent years. The mortality rate decreased from 16.1 per 1,000 populations in 2005 to 13.5 in 2011, while life expectancy at birth increased from 65.3 years to 69.8 years. The total fertility rate (average number of children born to one woman of reproductive age) rose from 1.287 to 1.606 during the same period (UNDP: National Human Development Report for the Russian Federation, 2013:50).

In Russia, women on average rate their health lower than men, which is a typical finding in the data for other countries as well. “Average health scores of men and women improved slightly over the observation period, since 1995. This corresponds to the trend in mortality rates, which started to decline after they reached a peak in 1994” (Deaton 2003: 791-837).

According to CEDAW report, “a separate problem is the distribution of HIV infection among pregnant drug addicted women. In Russia, from 2011 to 2013, the number of HIV infected women who gave birth increased by 23%. Official Russian statistics do not make note of drug-addicted childbirths, but research from 2007 shows that among HIV infected pregnant women, practically one third (32.3%) of them used injection drugs. These figures show the high dissemination of HIV among drug-addicted women of reproductive age. Still, the country lacks separate standards of medical assistance for pregnant drug-addicts” (CEDAW Report 2010-2014). There was lack of nutritious food and dearth of vitamins and minerals supplement to pregnant women, which had led to malnourishment in children and eventually has caused poor living standard. Thus, now different health project and programme have been started by the Russian government. Maternity care in Russia took place in a historical context of a rapidly declining population and exceptionally low fertility. “The country experienced a sharp decline of fertility in the early 1990s. As an attempt to address decline in population, the Russian government launched the *National Health Project in 2006*. The government aimed to prevent untimely mortality by improving primary and preventive care”. As per public opinion, especially that among healthcare directors at different points, the situation is often linked to the improvement of diagnostics services through improved healthcare facilities in hospitals and introduction of public health



examinations for huge groups of employees. Increasing morbidity was evident in rural areas with poor healthcare facilities (Lazareva 2009).

### **Violence and Sexual Harassment and Trafficking against Women**

In Russia the discrimination and sexual harassment as per the data of Federal employment services is increasing. It reveals that approximately 70 percent of girls graduating from the high school and higher institutes (VUZ) face sexual harassment which is a major cause for safety and security (Khotkina 1992:15).

Violence against women is another social problem for women in Russia. “During period of 2002-2006 it shows that the total number of household crimes increased by one-and-a-half times. In analyzing such statistics, it is necessary to take into account that many victims do not report crimes to police. According to the research data of the Congenial Home Centre, 60-70% of women suffering from domestic abuse do not seek help from law enforcement authorities. Women victims of domestic violence repeatedly stressed the fact that they face extreme difficulty in obtaining a response to their appeal for help from the police. Women’s movement activists and employees of public organizations also reported that in many cases the police refused to respond to complaints of domestic violence” (Violence against Women in the Russian Federation 2010:7-8).

Due to widespread poverty and unemployment the women have become vulnerable section and their life turned into the trafficking in various regions. It seems a big social problem in Russia. It also shows how the society turned into a criminal society. Hundreds of brothels and striptease bars are operated by Russian criminals in Europe and Asia and they are expanding. “Bar and casino operators propose young Russian, Ukrainian and Baltic women high salaries to work in their clubs, but once a woman joins their club they end up in near-slavery and is unable to return home. Criminal groups are getting stronger and are using Russia as a base for global ventures, including prostitution, drugs, and currency exchange” (Rosser 2000).

#### **4.4.2 Political Empowerment and Women**

The process of transformation brought reorganization of gender identities, gendered definition of citizenship, re-domestication, marginalization and discrimination among women. The political freedom in terms of political empowerment which women have achieved allowed them to stay in touch with global feminist groups and presented them the

prospect of partaking in international conferences concerning women's issues. "Gender, particularly after the Beijing women's convention in 1995, has been established in Russia as a significant variable in development policies. Moreover, Russia is also a party to the common model of economic programme aimed at sustainable human development, and has to abide by the millennium development goals in which gender equality and empowerment of women are among the most important" (Usha 2005:155).

A woman was appointed as Head of the Federal Agency for Deliveries of Weapons, Military and Special Equipment in 2010. No women have ever been appointed as heads ('presidential plenipotentiary envoys') of any of the eight Federal Districts of the Russian Federation. Though, the number of women leaders of Russia's 89 Federal Regions has doubled – from one to two.

The share of women deputies in the current State Duma, elected to serve from 2008 to 2011, has increased compared with the previous Duma from 9.8% to 14.0%. However, according to the IPU (Inter Parliamentary Union), "that puts Russia 84th out of 134 countries by the number of women in its national parliament. There is also major gender asymmetry in leadership of the State Duma: the Duma chairperson is a man (as has always been the case), and there are only three women among 10 vice-chairpersons".

As party policies do not incorporate the objective of gender equality (or of equality between the genders in their party leadership) major increase in the number of women deputies in Russia's national and regional parliaments is not likely in the near future. The only exclusion is the minority liberal party, Yabloko. Local (municipal) government is the lone stage of decision-making where women are strongly represented the Judicial Branch. Women's share amongst the judges of the Constitutional Court remains rather low at 17%.

#### **4.4.3 Economic Empowerment and Women in Russia**

Russian society tolerates the existence of a gender wage gap. Gender gap was not viewed as a social problem by the government and people but as a social norm. It is seen as a normal outcome of the 'natural predisposition of women to look after children and the household rather than seek professional employment'. Russian legislation does not include any wage policies that are seen as forms of gender discrimination and the current Labor Code of the Russian Federation stipulates the employer's duty to ensure that employees are paid equal

pay for equal work. “Direct wage discrimination based on gender also exists in Russia. New research from Grant Thornton International suggests that in Russia women occupy 42% of senior managerial posts in owner-operated companies. The poll covered 7,000 companies in 36 countries, including Russia”. (National Human Development Report in the Russian Federation 2010:54).

### **Women Employment and Poverty in Russia**

Russia is a good example for women empowerment through employment in spite of facing economic crisis. Russia is on the path of global leadership in gender equality. Here, women are getting equal opportunities in jobs. They are engaged in different sectors, like technology and communication, retail, manufacturing, transport sectors. However, till date, there are certain areas where male dominance is present; they include oil, gas and metals.

Svetlana Balanova states that “There is no gender discrimination in the Russian workplace”. In Russia salary benchmarks is also same for male and female. But due to the fear of job insecurity and unemployment some causes such as to get the job and for job security women are often ready to work on lesser salary than man. This situation has been shown in below 1 regarding the male and female employment and unemployment rates in Russia from 1992 to 2014.

Providing employment to women has had dual impact on Russian economy; firstly, it has made women economically independent and more empowered, and secondly, it positively adds to the economic development of the country. To fill the gender gap, it is also necessary to provide equal opportunities to both men and women. The current situation of women employment in Uzbekistan and Russia is better than the earlier period in general (as is shown in chapters 2 and 3). However, it is not satisfactory to its potential. Present day’s women are contributing enormously in economy through business, government jobs, and entrepreneurship or as an employee in private sector (Balanova2006).

**Table 14: Economic Activity, Employment and Unemployment Rates at the Age 15-72 by Sex Group in Russia, 1992 To 2014 (Percent)**

	1992	2000	2005	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Economic activity rate total	70.7	65.5	66.0	67.6	67.7	68.3	68.7	68.5	68.9
Male	78.2	71.5	71.1	73.4	73.8	74.4	74.7	74.7	75.1
Female	64.1	60.0	61.5	62.5	62.2	63.0	63.3	63.0	63.3
Employment rate total	67.1	58.5	61.3	62.0	62.7	63.9	64.9	64.8	65.3
Male	74.1	63.8	65.9	66.9	68.0	69.2	70.4	70.4	71.0
Female	60.8	53.8	57.2	57.7	58.0	59.2	60.1	59.8	60.3
Unemployment rate total	5.2	10.6	7.1	8.3	7.3	6.5	5.5	5.5	5.2
Male	5.2	10.8	7.3	8.9	7.9	6.9	5.8	5.8	5.5
Female	5.2	10.4	6.9	7.7	6.8	6.0	5.1	5.2	4.8

Source: the employment population sample surveys: 1992-as of October, 2000-2014-average annual data, from 2006-including data on the Chechen republic.

Source: Statistical handbook of Russia

The data from Table 14 shows that the difference between male and female employment rate is steady between 8 to 11 percent and women employment rate. This employment rate difference was highest in 1992 with 13.3% due to the dissolution of USSR. Unemployment rate difference between male and female is fluctuating from 1.0 to 0.5% till the 2014. Gap of economic activity rate between both genders varies from 10 to 13 percent. So from this data analysis it is clear that women involvement in employment is growing and they are becoming economically empowered in Russia. But according the World Bank in Russia, although women involvement in workplace is higher than other countries, there is still a gender income gap between employees (Balanova 2006).

As per Moghadam stated that “in 1994, 16 percent of the population, which means 38 million women, men and children were without health insurance; that figure grew to 41 million in 1999. Following welfare reform the number of welfare recipients has continued to decline, but poverty rates, particularly for single mothers and children, have surged. In August 2004, the government reported that the number of families in deep poverty rose by 3.2 percent in 2003. The percentage of single-mother families living in poverty also jumped to 28% from a recent low of 25.4% in 2000” (Moghadam 2005:8). Feminization of poverty

includes high risk of poverty among single retired women of older age groups. “Women residing on their own at the age of 65 and older, who have no other additional payments but pensions and who lost their physical ability to earn extra income and engage in individual small holding found themselves, as a rule, beneath the poverty line” (Prokofieva and Rzhانيتsyna 2000:20).

## **4.5 Conclusion**

The study has evaluated the level of women empowerment in three distinct dimensions: social, political, and economic and found that inadequate progress has been made to improve the conditions of women in the post-Soviet Uzbekistan and Russian society. In the social spheres, women are still suffering from lack of higher education, lack of health facilities, human trafficking, domestic violence, divorce and abortion in both Uzbekistan and Russia. Of course, there has been a change in these sectors by the government policies and programme but they remain at the bottom. The family code, civil code, education policy and health project of Uzbekistan and Russia has brought significant changes though not at par with men these two countries. In the political sphere, the traditional beliefs, reluctant nature of political parties and weak civil society organization hinder women from participating in the mainstream politics in Uzbekistan. However, the reintroduction of quota system has considerably helped the Women of both these two countries. Efforts to organize women help in teaching them to speak up and influence decisions. Thus, there must be more efforts by the state, political parties and civil society to educate and generate political culture and consciousness among women for sizeable political participation in each level of society. In the economic sphere, the study has found that low economic activities, poverty, low wages and unemployment have made women vulnerable.

In conclusion the study observes that National Action Plan for the Improvement of the Status of Women of Uzbekistan played an important role in bringing major changes in the women life in both Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan and Russian have adopted different policies and programme such as Family Code and Labor Code, Civil Code quota system to empower women which has a great role in bringing change in the life of women. Both the countries have implemented the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Millennium Development Goal for empowering the women which has positive impacts on women.

## **Chapter-5**

### **Women Participation: A Comparative Study of Uzbekistan and Russia**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Russia and Uzbekistan are unique in terms of women's rights because of its history and geographical location. Uzbekistan and Russian both became independent countries in the year 1991. Along with the major changes that occurred in both the countries the year is also marked for changes especially with regard to the issues of women. If one compares the role of women in these societies the current changes have been dynamic with a changing dimension of international politics. Status of women's participation in the process of democratization is crucial in Russia as it is the regional power both economically and politically. Politically it is the most stable country and has the most to offer to the international community. Though, Uzbekistan has a lot in common with Russia historically, politically and even economically, nonetheless, the position of women are drastically different from each other in the post independent society. It is noticeable that despite once being part of one and the same empire these two countries are at a different stage of development especially with regard to women's rights. The Constitution of Uzbekistan and Russia prevent any types of discrimination and grants equal rights for men and women both and are committed to the protection of women rights. However, it has been observed that women of these countries still have a long way to go to attain gender justice and political participation in their respective countries.

As is known both Uzbekistan and Russia before becoming part of USSR were the patriarchal society with strictly defined roles for men and women, however, the democratization and liberalisation process has brought changes in altogether a different direction. The political and economic transformations have offered women and men new rights and freedoms. Despite this, it has also brought greater uncertainty about social benefits, employment, and the future for women. The disparity between men and women in different fields are still prevalent today in both the countries having close or similar status of women in Russia and Uzbekistan. However, statistically speaking, Uzbek women are better represented in the parliament and other decision-making bodies.

Though the Uzbek and Russian women have won formal rights statutorily; the traditional society continues to hamper their development, though the degree of discrimination in both the countries is different. Women are affected more disproportionately than men in the on-going socio-economic transformation. Some of the factors like rising poverty, rising unemployment, lack of resources are still there. Similarly, political marginalization, domestic violence, etc. are till date affecting women for which they are subjugated and exploited at all fronts in the male dominated society. Although, the population of women in both the countries is more than that of male, however, their participation in the electoral process, in parliament, political parties, state legislatures, local government, and other decision-making authorities is far lower. Hence, the marginalization of women is still prevailing in social, political and economic fields in these two countries.

The present chapter examines the comparison of role of Women's participation in the process of democratization along with the role of political parties and civil society organization in Uzbekistan and Russia. The focus of the comparative analysis in both the countries also focuses on the socio-Political, traditional and cultural environment of these societies for a better understanding of their position and to critically examine the difference in the influence of women in the decision-making process.

## **Ethnicity**

Like any other multicultural society Uzbekistan and Russia have approximately more than 100 diverse ethnic groups, though, with majority of ethnically homogenous population. "Overwhelmingly, Uzbekistan's population is comprised of Uzbeks (greater than 70%) with the next highest ethnic group being Russian with close to 8%. Similarly in Russia, the ethnic Russians are 80.9% with the second largest Tatars 3.9%". According to the 2010 census, "ethnic Russians make up 81% of the total population. This share remained steady over the last few decades. Six other ethnicities have a population exceeding 1 million – Tatars (3.9%), Ukrainians (1.4%), Bashkir (1.15%), Chuvash (1%), Chechens (1%) and Armenians (0.9%)".

Ethnic tension within each country has been building between different groups since the time they gained independence. In Uzbekistan the tension is growing between the Uzbeks and Russians as largely the Uzbek people have the fear, of colonial dominance, which they

experience during soviet past. In addition to this Uzbekistan is facing challenges with regard to their relationship with the Tajiks, and Kyrgyz within the state that has escalated after the Soviet dissolution (Curtis 1996).

Boarder issues have caused continuing tension between the disputed Kyrgyz- tajik an ethnic Uzbek convicted of organising ethnic clashes. In June 2010 Suthern Kyrgyzstan was again the scene of ethnic conflict between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Aside from the civil war in Tajikistan, Central Asia had been free of large-scale violence after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The violence in 2010 in Kyrgyzstan between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks has shocked many, particularly those who thought that the hostility between these two ethnic groups had already been lost in the darkness of history (Rezvani 2013).

The nature of inter-ethnic tension in Russia is diverse and region specific. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the majority of ethnic conflict in Russia was due to exit claims by former satellite states that no longer want to be part of the Federation (Kristina Libby, 2008). For example, secessionist movement in Dagestan, Ingushetia, Chechnya, North Ossetia, and Tatarstan has historically been the most vigorous and often bloody. However, Uzbeks or other Central Asian ethnic groups are not posing any threat to Russians as their presence in Russia is merely 5.4%. However, in Uzbekistan Russians, Tajiks, and Kazakhs, Karakalpaks are the largest minorities, with Tatars and other groups forming the balance of the population.

Apart from this the tension between ethnic communities in Uzbekistan is also at the Urban and rural level, whereas in Russia. Most of the Uzbek populations reside in rural areas, whereas the urban areas are dominated by Russians, Korean, and Tajikistan. The main cause of conflict is as the urban sector gets most of the benefits in comparison to rural area. Hence Uzbek community feel deprived in their own country. (Country Profile: Uzbekistan 2007).

Consequently, inter - ethnic conflict over shadowed the challenges women were facing in these societies. As has been pointed out by Jeffrey Hays that the “ethnic diversity weakens the unity of women in their fight for socio-political participation and representation in Uzbekistan and Russia” (Jeffrey Hays 2008). It is believed that within the traditional setup of ethnic groups women occupy lower status and in case of inter ethnic conflict women from the minor ethnic communities, all the more, become victims. Hence, the women



belonging to minority community are ignored in comparison to the women of major ethnic communities.

## **Religion**

Being modern multicultural society Uzbekistan and Russia are a secular country; Uzbekistan having a vast majority population is Muslim, whereas Muslims are second largest majority in Russia. The relationship between the issues of ethnicity, religiosity, minority and women empowerment is extremely intricate in both the countries. However, the practice of religion in Russia is different from Uzbekistan. Though, both the countries are undergoing the process of restoration of religion, which practiced soviet atheism for approximately seven decades. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that even during soviet atheism people did have faith in religion, be it Orthodox Christianity or practice of Islam, though they were very few in numbers. Hence, Soviet policies could not completely eradicate the religiosity from the country. The present religious revival is related not only to the religion of majority, but also of a number of traditional minority religions, which existed or were introduced in these regions before the formation of USSR, are also being revived.

Presently, the largest groups of Muslims in Uzbekistan follow the Sunni tradition, and majority of Muslims residing in Russia follow Shia practice. But, the official state religion is Russian Orthodoxy, which enjoys a privileged position with the government. About 75 million Russians belong to Orthodox Christianity. Based on the survey reports the numbers of Orthodox christians, who visit Church regularly are almost half of those, who call themselves as Orthodox christian. Contrary to this, the believers of Islam, professed by about 20 million people in Russia and majority of them are considered to be active followers of Islam. Among other religions that existing Russia are Roman Catholics - 1.3 million; Judaism, between 400,000 and 550,000; and the population of Jehovah's 131,000 approximately.

In Uzbekistan, approximately 93% of the population of the country are Sunni Muslims, except for 1% of Shia Muslims, mostly living on the territory of Bukhara and Samarkand. Christianity, both Orthodox (4%) as well as Catholics (3%), is the other religion present on the territory of Uzbekistan. Though, "the Russian Orthodox is declining with the

emigration of ethnic Russians and Slavs. The state highly regulates all religion in order to prevent an overthrow of the secular authorities as well as to avoid ethnic instability” (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2014).

The practices of different religion during the Soviet and the post-Soviet periods have the basic difference between Uzbek and Russian societies as the degrees of religious beliefs was more profound among the Uzbeks rather than Russian.

Russian law passed in 1997 set requirements that religious organisations be registered, and emphasized that unrecognized groups will be at a disadvantage. At some point it was also mentioned that “all Muslim groups falling outside the government-sanctioned Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Russia are repressed as potential terrorist organizations” (Jeffrey Hays 2008).

Hence, religion can play both positive and negative role in the society. If it has played the role of uniting a group of people based on beliefs and practices to a great extent it also divides them. Traditionally, even within the same religious groups discriminations have been practiced. These discrimination were made between men and women, clergy and laity, in the field of religion, women were always oppressed even within their own religious groups. Women have not been promoted in the religious institution even in the current restoration process of religion. Therefore, to some extent, it would right to say that religion hinders the women’s empowerment in the development process (Brankovic and et.all, 2003).

## **5.2 Social Status: Educational, Cultural Engagement, Religion, Health and Ethnic group**

### **Education and Employment**

With regard to education the literacy rate has been very high in these countries. The specialized secondary professional education maintains the proportion of 0.96 in the year 2013, and the gender parity in academic lyceums is only at 0.74 in the year 2013 in Uzbekistan. Similarly, in Russia men and women also do not differ much by their education level. Though, as per recent data, men on the average have a slightly higher level of education. Hence, both Russia and Uzbekistan are “a country with the highest

literacy rate. Almost 53% of the population has tertiary education”. It is estimated that 95% of adults in Russia have higher secondary education and the country spends some 4.9% of GDP on education. According to 2015 report, the literacy rate of the total population is 99.7% including male: 99.7% Female: 99.6%. In fact, women’s high level of education is the legacy of Soviet times (CIA World Fact Book: 2015).

Similarly, Uzbekistan has consistently maintained the standard and average ratio for girls and boys in the education as it shows the proportion of girls to boys beginning from the year 2001 till 2013 was constant at the average rate of 0.94 in general education. Literacy rate in rural areas of Uzbekistan has been practically at par with the literacy rate in urban areas. If in 2000 it was 99.5 in rural Uzbekistan and urban areas it was 99.6 it has achieved 100% literacy by the year 2013. Thus, the gender parity has been maintained even at the urban - rural divide. According to 2017 estimates in Uzbekistan, the literacy rate of adult population is 99.59% (aged 15 years and above) in which male population is 99.72% female population is 99.47% Youth literacy rates are 99.9% and 100% for males and females accordingly. The overall youth literacy rate is 99.95%. Youth literacy rate definition covers the population between the ages of 15 to 24 years. The literacy rate for male and female have been interchangeable since the couple years. But despite the significant literacy rate, women remain far behind men in the higher and research education (countrymeters.info: Uzbekistan). Though there is an increase in overall specialized secondary professional education the vocational or academic lyceums are lagging behind.<sup>19</sup>

Nonetheless, despite such a high literacy rate in both the countries, the level and type of education have made a difference in the condition of employment for women in Russia. The “gender differences in educational levels may reproduce and consolidate male attitudes and hinder effective social policies directed at gender equality” (Gidadhubli 2010). Similarly, in Uzbekistan male dominance continues, especially, in higher education. Despite efforts made to facilitate women’s access to available opportunities, male populations continue to dominate the employment.

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<sup>19</sup>[Http://Www.Uzbekistan.Be/Press-Releases/2015/MDG/Mdg\\_Eng.Pdf](http://Www.Uzbekistan.Be/Press-Releases/2015/MDG/Mdg_Eng.Pdf)

Uzbek women have excelled in private entrepreneurship in comparison to Russian women. Though, one of the scholars has pointed out that there is a lack of interest among Uzbek women to become entrepreneur in comparison to interest expressed by Russian women.

**Table 15: Women participation in the economic sector: a Historical Analysis**

Fields	Women 1998	Men1998	Women 2007	Men2007
Entrepreneurs	2	4	6	6
Managers	8	12	6	9
Supervisors	11	11	12	13
Experts	20	11	19	10
Skilled Workers	42	37	44	43
UnskilledWorkers	17	25	13	20
Total	100	100	100	100

Sources; Gendernoe ravenstov I rasshirenie p [rav I vozmodnoctj zhenshin v rossii v konteksten tselej razvitija tjcjicheletija, gendernorabochej gruppj uchrezhdenij sistemj OOH v RF, Moskva 2005,p-9

It has been observed that women participation in the above fields mentioned in the table 15 was quite marginal in comparison to men in the year 1998 whereas their participation has been gradually developed in 2007.

It is noteworthy to point out that in even traditional Uzbek society there is a community “*Makalla*”, which advocates the significance for at least vocational education, throughout the country and regularly hold talks and meetings with families in order to explain the importance for girls to acquire appropriate education and vocation. This, probably, can be said to be the influence of erstwhile soviet exposure or current globalisation that the country had or experiencing. The introduction of the annual *Zulfia state prize* in all regions in Uzbekistan allow talented and gifts to manifest their aptitude in science, education, literature and arts as well as to receive a scholarship (a grant) for studies at higher educational institutions. These are some of the efforts made by Uzbek government to

promote and support girls education, however, in Russia privatisation of educational institution is creating.

## **Health**

Since 1991, Uzbekistan has launched several major health reforms that include “health care provision, governance, and financing, with the aim of improving efficiency while ensuring equitable access. Primary care in rural areas has been changed to a two-tiered system, while specialized polyclinics in urban areas are being transformed into general polyclinics covering all groups of the urban population”. Secondary care is financed on the basis of past expenditure and while financing of primary care is increasingly based on capitation. “Health care provision has largely remained in public ownership, but nearly half of total health care expenditure comes from private sources, mostly in the form of out-of-pocket expenditure. There is a basic benefits package, which includes primary care, emergency care and care for certain, disease and population categories” (Ahmedov et.al, 2014).

Uzbekistan has undertaken major efforts to improve the efficiency of the health system, ensure an equitable distribution of health facilities and protect weak groups including women of the population from catastrophic health expenditure. “Despite an increasing share of public expenditure on health, the high share of out-of pocket payments and the limited scope of the benefits package to include only primary and emergency care mean that financial protection of the population from the consequences of ill health is still limited, with resulting problems for health equity and access to services”. Quality health care is increasingly recognized as a problem, with ongoing efforts to update treatment protocols and to revise medical education (Ahmedov et.all, 2014).

Uzbekistan provides quality and well-equipped medical services, to women and girls. The introduced the system where pregnant women and children can be provided better health facilities to reduce the infant and maternal mortality rate. A decline from 24.3 to 12 per 1000 births among children under age five has been observed in the year 2013. Similarly, the number of underweight children decreased from 3.8% to 1.6%; maternal mortality rate went down from 34.1 to 20.0 per 100,000 live births.

Russian healthcare system has radically changed since the 1990s. Government initiatives to reform healthcare system and to open up the economy have caused a rapid growth in the Russian healthcare industry. In 2006, a national project “Health” was launched to improve the country’s healthcare system through improved funding and healthcare infrastructure. Although the economic background of Russia has made all reform and planning difficult, the urgent need to address health issues overrode the possibility of waiting for events external to the health sector to stabilize. “It would be helpful for Russian planners and policy makers if there could be an age of stability and certainty on the horizon. However, there seem to be no such guarantees. Rather the Russian health system faces the challenge of how to manage in huge uncertainty and within the constraints applying while trying to secure health gain” (World Health Organization, 1998).

The status of women’s health in Russia is strongly influenced by cultural, historical, and socioeconomic factors. Major changes in the organization of health care services and financing over the past several decades have ushered in a long period of transition in which major reforms of different sectors have been carried out. In 2007, “the Russian Federation adopted a Demographic Concept Policy for the Russian Federation 2025. Fundamental goals of the policy include at least 50% reduction of maternal and infant mortality and strengthening of population reproductive health” (United Nations Population Fund, 2012). It has found that the main indicators of public health are mortality rates and life expectancy at birth. “The mortality rate decreased from 16.1 per 1,000 populations in 2005 to 13.5 in 2011, while life expectancy at birth increased from 65.3 years to 69.8 years. The total fertility rate (average number of children born to one woman of reproductive age) rose from 1.287 to 1.606 during the same period”.

From the above health care analysis, it has been drawn that both Uzbekistan and Russia have acquired the Soviet legacy and initiated various major health care reforms to provide quality health and medical services to all citizens. In Uzbekistan, improvements have been made in maternal health, but further work is needed to address risk factors for poor maternal health outcomes and to improve men’s participation in reproductive and sexual health projects.

### **5.3 Economic Status: Participation in Different Economic Sector and their Position**

With regard to women's economic participation the focus is given to economically active population, unemployment, skilled and unskilled status of workers are highlighted in the present section. A comparison of statistical data pointing national poverty rate have also been given.

#### **Uzbekistan**

Unemployment was one of the major impacts of this crisis which directly affected women worse than any other section of society. On the basis of available data of 1990-91, women's proportion was as high as 80% out of 10000 unemployed. Other than this, the percentage of women among those who lost their job was approximately 70% staff. Approximately 63 percent of women were sacked in the year 2000. The job cutting was not done based on the unskilled or semi-skilled workers even some of the trained professionals had lost their jobs. It was only with the introduction of the quota system and the positive discrimination that operated in support of female employment. Although the LPG (Liberalization, privatizations, and Globalization) process has opened new opportunities for men, it has presented challenges for women.

In Russia, the range of unemployment does not reflect a significant gender difference. However, based on the survey report women spend more time on searching the job rather than men. There is also a need to point that women remain unemployed for long-term than men. On the basis of the unemployment data of Russia prepared by the International Labour Organisations the male and female unemployment was practically same and stood at 5.2% in 1992, while in the year 2003 the male populations were in the disadvantageous position rather than female. Unemployed male population was 8.6 and female 8.0 in the year 2003. Hence, in comparison to Uzbekistan there was marginal difference in unemployment between men and women in Russia, however, the wage difference was remarkable.

With regard to economically active population in the year 2007, were 11299.2, where the contribution of female workforce was lower than the male and it remained throughout low

till 2013. In terms of percentage, the active population of women comprised only 45.6% of the workforce.

Throughout the period of 2001-2013, “structural reforms led to a modest increase in the share of employed in industry and services from 66.6% to 72.8% and a decrease in the proportion of those employed in agriculture (from 33.5% to 27.2%). Women’s share in employment increased for the period of 2000-2013 from 44% to 45.7%. In these years, women’s employment in small businesses and private entrepreneurship rose significantly”. In 2012, 40.4% of small enterprises and 13.7% of micro-enterprises were run by women.

In Uzbekistan between 2001 and 2013, “the national poverty rate reduced by 1.9 times and also decreased at the sub-national level, the poverty rate from 27.5% in 2001 to 13.7% in 2015. According to estimations, the poverty rate will further decrease to 13.7% in 2015. Poverty rates also decreased at the regional level, although with variations”. The poverty rate in rural areas decreased from 30.5% in 2001 to 17.3% in 2013. In urban areas, “the rate decreased from 22.5% in 2001 to 10.6% in 2013. On the analysis of the region-wise rate of poverty in Uzbekistan, between the years of 2004-2012, the most significant reduction of poverty--3.8-fold--was registered in Uzbekistan” (Gender Statistics of Uzbekistan).

## **Russia**

With regard to Russia the economic status of women has shown that women still have been far behind men in terms of wage earning since the past decade. In addition to this it has also been observed that “there is a continuous exclusion of women from the banking and insurance sectors, where the share of women had decreased from 90 to 70 percent over 11 years (1990-2001) and their wages rose from 95% to 287% of the average nationwide wages rate” (Elena Mezentseva 2006).

On the contrary to Uzbekistan, Female employment rates in Russia have declined substantially since the end of the Soviet period. The Soviet period in the Russian history is “traditionally characterized as a period of high female labor force participation. The female employment in Russia still remains relatively high if compared with many other countries including Uzbekistan. The position of women in the Russian labor market



worsened in the post-Soviet period. The number of employed women decreased by 22 percent, from 39.1 million in 1990 to 30.5 million in 1998” (Teplova, Woolley 2005:3).

The Russian labor market has, historically, allowed women to combine employment and motherhood due to the provision of such policies as leave and child care among others. The degree of women’s participation in labor activity and their employment opportunities reflect the level of economic activity.

According to State Committee on Statistics of the Russian Federation (GOSKOMSTAT) in 1990s, the total number of the employed in Russia decreased from 71.1 million (as on October 1992) to 57.9 million (as on October 1998), i.e. declined by 13.2 million of people. This decline affected men and women both. For men, “the shrinkage took place at the expense of the older, while for women – at the expense of the younger within the 25-29 and 30-34 age groups. Nonetheless, the employment percentage of Russian women among the age group 25-54 years was very high and was highest in the world. The credit for the same can be given to the Sovietheritage”. However, since 2003, “there are 1.5 times more women – registered unemployed than men. They represent 72% among unemployed people staying without work for 12 months or more, and in 2003 the average duration of unemployment among women reached 8, to 6 months”.

In Russia, “women working in the social sphere have created their own support networks for helping people to take part in state programs and to become entitled to support in one way or the other”. Unlike Uzbekistan, poverty in Russia has been strongly skewed toward women, and the current economic crisis has intensified this tendency. According to 1989 Russian census, there were 15,570,350 women over 60 years of age compared 6,945,392 men. This could have been the continuation of wartime losses in the male population and the lower life expectancy of men (Rule and Noonan, 1996). Hence, a larger portion of women, especially of 60 and above years of age suffered the most due to poverty.

While looking into the economic status of women of Uzbekistan and Russia, it has been observed that women in both countries are engaged less than men in a different sector. In Uzbekistan, the employment rate has increased since 1991 when the country got independence, but it is not so in Russia. During Soviet period the employment women were more than men, but since 1992, there is an increase in number of unemployed

women. While in Uzbekistan, quota system and the positive discrimination have significantly supported enhancement of female employment, but in the case of Russia, the economic activities of women were much influenced by the socio - economic reasons.

In a nutshell, the socio-economic reforms of Post-Soviet Russia have shown that all the changes happening in the Russian society have a different and contradictory impact on men and women. On the basis of Russian gender situation in different spheres women got more exposure and easy access to education and medical services, social safety net, and personal security. Thus, for the sustained and effective growth of the country, it is necessary to create an institutional mechanism that will guarantee the equal opportunities for women and men in all spheres of the society and public domains.

#### **5.4 Socio-Economic Programs for Women: Uzbekistan**

The Republic of Uzbekistan has implemented a number of reforms and program such as Family Code and Labor Code. It has signed a number of international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to enhance the status of women in Uzbekistan. The Uzbek Government had taken proactive steps to address women issue and established the Women's Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan by Presidential Decree. The Women's Committee, in turn, has been a major force behind the number of reforms and programs which direct to protect the rights and status of women in Uzbekistan. Despite these other policies and programs were introduced to improve women's status.

The Beijing Action Platform (1995) on women influenced Uzbekistan to move forward for the empowerment of women. Thus, in 1997, the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan developed the *National Action Plan for the Improvement of the Status of Women of Uzbekistan*. Finally, in the directions of the Beijing strategies the "Republic of Uzbekistan and adopted the National Platform and Action Plan for improving the status of women on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1998. The twin objectives of the National Action Plan are to "improve women's status in Uzbekistan and enhance their role in society". Women's Health, Education and professional and functional literacy of women, Women's economic status, support for girls child and Women's NGOs were some of the selected areas taken as the

focus of the Uzbekistan National Action Plan (see Appendix 1 for a more detailed summary):

The Action Plan state that:

*“The “National Action Plan for improving the status of women in Uzbekistan and improving their role in society in view of the Beijing platform and action plan” was confirmed on 30 March 1998. It strengthened the response to violence against women by calling for the development of “specialized measures including the creation of crisis centers.”*

Uzbekistan is also a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination (UN women, 2009).

The CEDAW defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" (UN women, 2009).

“By accepting the Convention, Uzbekistan initiated a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including the following:

- o “to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- o to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and
- o To ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

- o The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life -- including the right to vote and to stand for election -- as well as education, health, and employment. States parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- o The Convention is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations. It affirms women's rights to acquire change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children. States parties also agree to take appropriate measures against all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women.
- o Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations''(UN women, 2009).''

Uzbekistan has introduced another important program for the empowerment of women that is The Family Code in 1998. It regulates family relations, property rights and disputes and all the domestic issues. The Family Code has strengthened spouses to enjoy their equal rights. Polygamy was made illegal in Uzbekistan, and only civil registration of marriage was recognized as legal (Wendy Mee 2011:17). According to The Family Code, the minimum age for marriage was set at 17. Marriages were legally concluded by mutual consent. However, the issues such as discrimination against women on the basis of their family status and prohibition of violence against women were not directly addressed in the Family Code. These types of issues are covered in the Labor Code and the Criminal Code (Wendy Mee2001:17)

**Constitutional Provisions of Uzbekistan:** The constitution of Uzbekistan has made number laws with regard to giving equal rights and opportunities for men and women in the political, economic, social, and cultural and other fields. It guarantees and regulates the legal framework of exercising these rights and opportunities of the citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan. It is noteworthy that the Article 9 of the constitution

guarantees Equal Participation in Governance, where Men and women shall enjoy equal rights as to their employment in civil service. Article 11 guarantees of “Equal Partnership in Governance and Political Life The state shall ensure the observance of equal partnership with respect to relationships and cooperation of men and women in political life, the legislative, executive and judicial bodies, and the organs of self-governance”. This present provision shall be taken into consideration in terms of the representation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in international organizations, and Article 12 provides Equality in the Economic Field.<sup>20</sup>

## **5.5 Socioeconomic Programs for Women: Russia**

Beginning from 1999 to 2003 the priority of Russian Federation has been to promote the development and strengthening of a market economy and a multi-party democracy, which has indirectly affected the status of women. In 2001 a Federal law was adopted, "On political parties," which provides for the participation of women and men in politics on the basis of equal rights. In 2003 “the Government of the Russian Federation approved the Guideline for action on the labor market for 2003-2005, where specific measures for enlarging the opportunities for women in the labor market were considered, along with measures for increasing their competitiveness and professional mobility”.

On the basis of the provisions of the Beijing platform for action, 1996 the Government of Russian Federation adopted the National Action Plans for the advancement of women and the expansion of their role in society. The first Plan implemented during the period 1997-2000, and that of the second Plan 2001-2005 (Women Watch Review, 2006).

In the course time, the Russian state has also ratified all of the international treaties relating to the prevention and elimination of gender discrimination. These are the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions on equal labor rights to working men and women. Nevertheless, the specified rights of the women have not been adequately enforced by the Russian law related to gender issues. Meanwhile, the government developed a national gender strategy and established an Inter-Ministerial Commission on Gender Equality.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.gender.cawater-info.net>

“Although Russian law includes a guarantee of equality of men and women, it does not guarantee equal opportunities. After years of advocacy by women’s NGOs, the Duma approved the first reading of the Bill on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities in April 2003” (Gender Assessment for Russia, 2004).

“UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has positively promoted women in different fields as it shows from the following findings. In fact, there has been significant progress in gender mainstreaming in several programs (Gender Assessment for Russia”, 2004).

**Constitutional provision:** The provisions of the Constitution are the basis for all other legislation on non-discrimination and equality in Russia either at federal or regional or the local level. “The Constitution has the supreme juridical force and applies directly to Russia. According to Article 1, the Constitution of the Russian Federation comes into force from the day of its official publication on the basis of the results of a nationwide vote. The Election Day, December 12, 1993, is considered the day of adoption of the Constitution of the Russian Federation”.<sup>21</sup>

“Article 19.2-3 establishes state guarantees, the equality of rights and freedoms of man and citizen, regardless of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, property and official status, place of residence, religion, beliefs, membership of public associations, or other circumstances. All forms of limitations of human rights on social, racial, national, linguistic or religious grounds shall be banned. Men and women shall enjoy equal rights and freedoms and have equal opportunities to exercise them. Under article 19 in clause 3 says Men and women shall enjoy equal rights and freedoms and have equal possibilities to exercise them”. (Constitute project 2008).

“Article 17, part 1, provides that civil rights and obligations are equally applicable to all citizens. It is important to mention that even though foreign citizens or stateless individuals are not expressly mentioned here, by virtue of Article 2, part 1, the rules of Civil Code are applicable to all foreign citizens, stateless individuals and foreign legal entities unless otherwise stated by the federal law” (Constitute project, 2008). It is noteworthy, that Article 38.1 guarantees Maternity, childhood, and family shall be

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<sup>21</sup>Equalrightstrust.org/.2009

protected by the State Article 43. 1 proclaims on education as it says everyone shall have the right to education” (Constitute project 2008).

Apart from the above provisions other important laws such as Labor Code and Civil Code empower women for their socio-economic field. The Labor Code control and regulates the legal matters between employer and employee, including matters of employment, agreement, remuneration, working time, etc. After the Constitution, the Labor Code is considered to be the second most important part of federal legislation relating to non-discrimination and equality. The Civil Code of Russia is another the main part of civil law legislation of Russia. The Civil Code regulates and establishes the basics legal status of individuals and corporations in private law relationships, rights of ownership, and contract law. This Code is important for non-discrimination and equality in a number of ways (Roschin and et.al, 2005).

Education Law provides a legal basis for the “regulation of the educational process in Russia. The law makes the provisions for the basic principles of the state policy in the educational sphere, determines the system of education. It defines the powers of the federal and local authorities with respect to educational issues in non-discrimination ways”.

On the basis of the existing provisions it is observed that with regard to socio-economic and political development for women, and their equal participation in the process of democratisation both Uzbekistan and Russian have adopted numerous policies and programs. Both the countries have signed a number of international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) for empowering the women. Both Uzbekistan and Russia have launched their National Action Plan in the strategies of the Beijing platform. Although women rights have been guaranteed in the Constitution of Uzbekistan and Russia the rights of the women have not been adequately enforced in practice. In fact, National Action Plan for the Improvement of the Status of Women of Uzbekistan has significantly brought the changes in the women life which is relatively better than Russian National Action Plan. The reason for the same could be as in Uzbekistan women's improvement was given priority from the very beginning.

## **5.6 Political participation and representation in mainstream politics**

However this was not so with regard to women's political participation. Despite the political reform initiated by President Islam Karimov declared 1999 the women participation in politics remains low. The under-representation in political organization and in decision-making process continues. This has deprived them in other socio-economic fields. Though, since the introduction of the quota system in 2004, some changes have been observed for women representation in the decision-making process. Around 30% of women were included in political party lists of candidates which involved them as an active participant in the Oliy Majlis (National Assembly). Nevertheless, they were only 17% in all the legislative, representative, and executive bodies in Uzbekistan. It clearly specifies that women have not yet acquired the sizeable number in the political field for an effectual influence in the decision-making process. Some of the women hold very high offices, but their share is below average in the national scenario. It has found that the office of the Speaker of the Legislative Chamber and the Ombudsman of Human Rights are occupied by women. In 1991 the Women's Committee was established. On 28th November 1995, the new position of the female deputy Prime minister of the republic was established. It is also found that female minister ship is occupied by merely 4.2% of seats which means 1 out of 14 ministers in the Oliy Majlis. Thus, women continue to be underrepresented in additional branches of administration (Asian Development Bank 2014).

With regard to Russian women, they got the voting right in 1917, whereas British women won suffrage on the same terms as men in 1928 only and American women in 1920. Hence, Russia was the first country to bring up the topic of including women in parliament in 1920. Nonetheless, despite this, in modern Russia the proportion of women fell from almost 14 percent in 1993-95 to 10 percent in 1995-99 and below 8 percent in 2003 and in 2013 it was 14 % in the Duma which is less than Uzbekistan (17.5 % ). (Russian women club).

It is noted that the "percentage is high in Uzbekistan due to the reintroduction of a quota system, not for the share of women parliamentarians, but for political parties that put



forward candidates for elections, which were obliged to ensure that 30% of their candidates were women”. According to Ibrahim, “the number of women elected to the national parliament that is the Oily Majlis has increased from 9% to 18% since the December 2004 elections”.(Ibrahim 2013:53).

On the contrary to Uzbekistan, women in parliament gradually reduced in Russia after the soviet quota system was abandoned. In 1993 election 60 women won seats out of a total of 450 in the new Duma amounting to 13 percent, whereas in 1995, the number fell to 45 or 10 percent of all the seats (Federatsiya, 1996). In fact, the quota provision continued to play a key role in increasing the number of women in the Parliament with each election. According to 2012 data, “women represent 15% of the Senate and 22% of the legislative chamber, or 19% of the full Oliy Majlis. Women’s representation in the lower house has been increasing, but the number of women in the Senate has not changed from the previous election cycle” (Ibrahim 2013:53).

With regard to the situation of local self-government, the study has revealed that representation of women increasing in Russia. As per 2007 data “in Russian Federation women comprise about 30% of municipal leaders and 47% of local council members. Local referendums are only practiced in Russia on the establishment or structure of local governments” (UCLG, 2008).In the case, local government women’s participation is increasing. During the period of 2006-2013, “the share of women among the chairmen of mahalla committees increased from 9.6% to 25.6%. The most common women represented in the Council of People’s Deputies of Tashkent (23.7%), Andijan (22.8%), Jizzakh (22.8%) regions and Tashkent city – 21.7%” (Uzbek Embassy, 2015).

However, in case of Russia there are various reasons for the low representation of women in the decision-making process. Other than the quota factor, the Proportional Representation and Single Member District system did not help much for enhanced women representation. Thus, the type of electoral system has a deep impact on the level of women’s representation in parliament. The increased economic activity had a negative effect on women participation mainly due to overwork and labor force participation. (Kapoor 2016)

“Cultural factors have a deep significance when it comes to representation of women in parliaments. While Protestant religion was found to be the least resistant to the presence of

women in the sector, Catholics, Orthodox and Islam were all found to be a lower representation of the female population in the political system. This restriction is only seen in the nomination of candidates, and once they have been nominated, religion has no impact on the electability of women candidates” (Kapoor 2016).

Modern Russian sociologist Larissa Nikovskaya believes that “the weak democracy in Russia, low political activity of women, weak civil society institutions, undeveloped legal and regulatory framework determine the low number of Russian women in politics” (Racioppi Katherine 1995).

Despite the quota reform the women position and representation relative remain low in the Uzbekistan decision making process due to the cultural factor. The economic, social, cultural and political factors determine women’s underrepresentation in politics and governance. It has also been observed even highly educated women to lack about political campaigning, political funding, and political awareness. It appears that despite the choice of the electorate for women as candidates for public office the influence of gender-based stereotypes weaken the process for which they remain low. “The dominant norm of the male leader and the female supporting role influences how society perceives the capacity of women to hold top government offices as well as how women themselves view their career choices and goals. In every country, politics is a demanding profession, but the fact that women are also expected to take on the majority of child care, and family responsibilities mean that a political career may be inconceivable for most women in Uzbekistan Gender Assessment” Gender 2014).

While looking into the political representation of women in the Uzbekistan and Russia, it is observed that the female representation in parliament has been gradually increased in Uzbekistan since 1991, where as there is the drastic decrease of the women representation ratio in the post-Soviet Russia. The economic, social, cultural and political factors determine women’s underrepresentation in politics and governance in these countries because both have remained as the traditional pattern for decades. Weak democracy, the low political activity of women, and weak civil society institutions are some of the factors for the low number of Russian women in politics.

### 5.6.1 Political Parties and Women in both the Countries

**Uzbekistan:** Political movements in Uzbekistan started during the Gorbachev period. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, in the early 1990s, Uzbekistan initiated for introducing multi-party democracy in 1991. “After independence, the Communist Party of Uzbekistan was officially banned and its successor, the PDPU, assumed the office led the political domination for decades”(Uzbekistan Country Gender Assessment 2014:24).

There was a complete negligence in women life in the field of politics during the Soviet and pre-Soviet period. Women number has increased in political parties since the quota system was adopted. Maximum political parties have women agenda for capturing power through elections. The study explores that women comprised 37% to almost 50% of the five major parties in 2010. However, none of the major political parties’ have adequately advocate gender equality. They hardly take a strong position on women’s rights. Many parties do not have a correlation with female candidates as the party member. In fact, it is quota which plays a key role in increasing representation of women rather than political parties (Uzbekistan Country Gender Assessment, 2014:24).

Thus, after the introduction of a 30% quota in the lists of candidates of political parties in 2004 the proportion of women in the Parliament increased from 19% in 2005 to 22% in 2013. In 2014, the proportion of women was more than 19% of the total number of Deputies in local representative bodies. “The proportion of women in the Executive Power increased 5 times from 3.4% in 2005 to 16% in 2013. The proportion of women in government also increased”. The proportion of women in a high level of position such as Ministers, First Deputy Ministers, Deputy Ministers, and Heads of the territorial government bodies increased in 2013. In fact, the number of women in political parties has increased. Similarly, “at the local level, women’s participation increased in institutions of local government and in the *Mahalla* structures. In 2013, the share of women who were elected as chairpersons of *Mahalla* increased from 9.6% in 2006 to 25.6% in 2013” (Dilfuza Kurolova 2015).

## **Russia**

The case of Russia is different than that of Uzbekistan. “Women played a prominent role in politics during the Soviet period. When quotas were removed, the women representation had gradually declined” (Women of Russia).

“In Russia women formed the political parties known as Women of Russia Party in 1990. This party captured 8 percent of the vote in the 1993 State Duma election. In 2001 a number of parties merged to form the pro-Putin United Russia party which held the largest number of seats in the State Duma. It can be argued that many political parties failed to improve women share in the elections for which women representation remains low. Moreover, the patriarchal nature of Russian society has been a barrier the low levels of women’s political participation (Kapoor 2016)”.

In short, the nature and behavior of political parties on women is understood on the basis of a socio-cultural factor from both Uzbekistan and Russia. Although, some women hold a high position in Uzbekistan and Russia, women are given symbolic and minimal role in politics in each country. The study has examined that in both Uzbekistan and Russia the attitudes of political parties on women are changing due to traditional and structural factors which hinder women to occupy offices and be active in the political fields. The rise of women representation in Uzbekistan is not because of the political parties but due to quota formula. In Russia, women themselves have the political parties which present good share in the elections since the couple years in the post-Soviet period. In fact, despite the low representation of women in Russia, they are more powerful than that of Uzbek women.

### **5.6.2. Civil Society Organization: Human Rights Groups, Media, Trade Unions, Movements**

**Uzbekistan:** Since 1991, Uzbekistan has witnessed the growth of a large number of civil society groups. “The most active Civil Society groups in Uzbekistan are Civilians, Mahalla (community), Family(clan); NGO, Public organizations, religious organizations, trade unions, Governmental Institutions, Business, Youth movements, Religious organizations, Missionary organizations, and Sports organizations” (Steven 2010:49).

“In Uzbekistan, women’s NGO is growing which is one of the most positive achievements for women’s political participation. Its role is dynamic for the improvement of women’s condition in the family and society. Some NGOs were formed which have been playing an important role in the Uzbek society. These are Business Women Association (BWA) of Uzbekistan and the Women’s Resource Centre which were established in 1991 and 1995 respectively (Ibrahim, 2013:53).” In fact, “between 1995 and 2003 women’s NGOs had emerged as active players in the non-profit sector and were able to act as independent conduits for donor funding and as implementing agencies for projects” (Kandiyoti 2007:40).

Although, there is a rise of the media sector in Uzbekistan but do face major challenges and obstacles. It has been found that “Uzbekistan Government’s human rights records remained poor although there were some improvements in a few areas; serious problems remained in most part of the country” (Bruce 2006).

The human rights movements are playing a leading role for the restoration of justice and reduction culture of resistance and women issues as well as for Marriage and Family Code. The excessive control by the administrative authority hampers the Uzbek civil society. Similarly, the NGOs and mass media have been under the coercion of self-governing groups and individuals (Ilkhamov 2005: 297),

**Russia:** After the collapse of Soviet Union, various civil society groups were formed to protect the interest of the people including women. Gradually many women’s professional associations such as the Club of Women Journalists, Federation of Women Writers and the Union of Women Cinematographers were formed for the cause of women education thereafter; several NGO, media, women movement and human rights groups were emerged to strengthen democratic reforms in Russia (Lipovskaya 1992).

“Various women organizations and institutions have been formed with the objectives of protecting women’s right in Russian society. Some of the major organizations are The Association of Russia among women Entrepreneurs (ARWE), the women and Business in Russia Association and Amount of World Association of Women Entrepreneurs (FCEM). Further, autonomous women’s Associations consisting of 36 Organizations, and women’s non-governmental organizations which comprised of 99 women organization were

gradually formed with the objective of addressing women issues and their development” (Palitova 2009).

Despite the prevalence of a large number of civil society organisation, women issues remained neglected. Russian women movements were weakened by different socio-political and economic factors. Women’s NGOs have been least influence in the policymaking process, especially at the national level. Many a time NGOs and media are hampered by a government system. Media also addresses women issue in professional circles not sufficiently. Thus, women do not find the support in the Russian mass media (Azhgikhina 1995).

“The lack of democratic progress has been a hindrance to the development of human rights in much of the post-Soviet region. Though the rights of women, sexual minorities, and disabled people were acute during Soviet times but continue to be denied in post-Soviet Russia” (Nowakowski 2007).

By and large, it can be argued that in the post-Soviet period particularly since 1991, women issues have not been significantly raised and taken by civil society organization in both Uzbekistan and Russia. The communist cultures still restrict the society even if there is the democratic government in Russia. The patriarchy and excessive control of the administrative authority have brought the challenges before the civil society organisation in the process of women empowerment in the political fields. Nevertheless, for the last couple years, the civil society organisations have been playing an important role in consolidating and strengthening the democratic process in both these countries. They have significantly inspired and encouraged women to continue the democratic struggle in spite of social structure and traditional patriarchy in Uzbekistan and Russian. The participation of women in civil society and NGOs is growing for the last couple year. It should be highlighted that social and communication arrangements competent necessitate developing and changing into social movements. Uzbekistan is being privileged by the women’s NGO which are playing a considerable role for the cause of women’s political participation.

## **5.7. Opportunities and Challenges for Women in Uzbekistan and Russian Democratization Process**

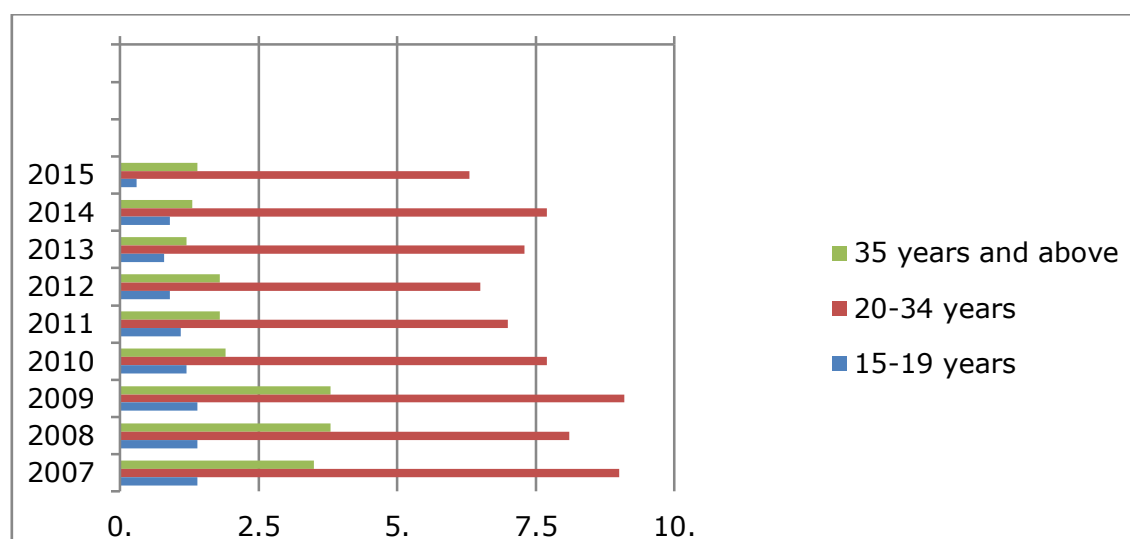
**Challenges:** major socio-economic challenges in Uzbekistan women life are rising in the country. The traditional society continues to hinder the women progress in spite of their political rights. Uzbekistan women have been facing challenges like poverty, unemployment, inadequate health and medical services, low economic activities, lack of higher and professional education and political marginalisation. Even though they have been granted equal rights but they are not treated as equal both by the society as well as the authority (Ibrahim 2013).

Gender violence, particularly domestic violence is another major issue for women in Uzbekistan. This is prevalent in most of the families in Uzbekistan society for which they are tortured by the male power and control. The patriarchal system has become a continuous challenge for women who directly hamper women for political will and progress (Human Development Report 1999). Unlike gender violence, women in Uzbekistan are also being victimized by the practice of sex trafficking which has been prevailing in all parts of the country. The study has found that Uzbekistan women and girls are being trafficked to the countries like Kazakhstan, Russia, Middle East, and Asia for profitable sexual business and utilization (World Health Organisation 2013).

There are other factors such as political parties, and civil society organisations are mostly controlled by the men that become reasons for low participation of women in politics. They are underrepresented due to weak civil society organisation and reluctant of parties toward women.

Although, Russia has the legacy of the Soviet Union which granted equal rights both men and women since 1917 women condition has not changed in every aspect of life in the society. In spite of their key role in Soviet period, their political participation remained low. Being remained as the communist country for decades, Russia has been still quite a conservative and patriarchal society. The constitution has given men and women equal political and economic rights, but they stood as vulnerable section in the society. Of course, the principle of equal pay for equal work is in the constitution, but men are in leading positions and dominate in every field. In fact, men's average wage is higher than women's which is an injustice (Paranyushkin 2015).

**Image 10: Abortion Rate in Uzbekistan**



(Source: Gender statistics of Uzbekistan: <https://gender.stat.uz>)

Unlike Uzbekistan, Russian women are also facing numerous challenges such as poverty, unemployment, inadequate health and medical services, low economic activities, lack of higher and professional education and political marginalization. The Russian women are affected by abortion issues. The Soviet government was the first government in Europe to legalize abortion in 1920 but was then banned between 1936 and 1953 and then made legal again. Russia's abortion rate is one of the highest in the world. So the issue of abortion has been made a great challenge for Russian women (Paranyushkin 2015).

**Table 16: Abortion Rate in Russia**

	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of abortions, total: Thousands	1675,7	1186,1	1126,9	1064,0	1012,4	930,0
per 1000 women aged 15-49	42,7	31,7	30,5	29,3	28,3	25,9
per 100 births	117,4	66,6	63,0	56,2	53,7	48,1
of which mini-abortion: thousands	405,5	316,1	308,8	293,9	286,2	259,4
per 1000 women aged 15-49	10,3	8,5	8,4	8,1	8,0	7,2
Number of abortions among primigravidas1), thou.	161,5	98,7	86,4	80,8	72,2	78,0

(Source: The Demographic Yearbook of Russia. 2015, P-72)



The aforementioned facts throw light on the rate of abortion happened from 2005 to 2014. Both the number of abortion within the age group of 15-49 in 1000 and the total number of abortion show gradual decline. The total number of abortion in 2015 was 16757 and the abortion rate per 1000 women within the age group of 15-49 was 427 but in the year 2014, the numbers were reduced to 300 and 259 respectively (Table 16).

The study has seen that human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Russian is a major problem. Women's rights activist, lawyers, and administration officials revealed that violence against women is widespread in Russia. In spite of identifying the core issues of difficulty, the state, and its law enforcement organization are doing slowly to condemn brutality as an offense or to examine allegations of domestic brutality. Violence against women in the family is a human rights violation, a form of discrimination (Palitova 2009).

In spite of problems and challenges, both Uzbekistan and Russian women are also having better opportunities for improving their participation in decision-making process. The women of both these countries have ample opportunities as they represent a good number of populations of women having a high rate of education. Socio-political, economic, and other women related changes are occurring in the Uzbekistan and Russian society. Both political parties and civil society organisation are gradually giving space for women which help more participation of women. Over time they have taken to have a positive impact on women. Political stability and democracy have been prevailing while creating a conducive atmosphere in this society which directly encourages women groups for their future politics (Ibrahim 2013).

In short, women's political participation has been recognized as important apparatus for the status of women in both Uzbekistan and Russia. However, women remain acutely underrepresented in decision-making positions. Though Uzbek women have represented better than the women of Russia but their situation same as compared to men. The study argues that different factors such as economic, social, political and cultural factors determined to women's underrepresentation and poor political participation in Russia and Uzbekistan. The study reveals that political participation in these two countries helps women to tackle their fundamental problems and needs and ensures to fight against discrimination and exploitation. In both Russian and Uzbekistan society, it shows that the traditional pattern, culture, values, patriarchal system favors segregation for women are treated vulnerable sections of society. However, the Russian and Uzbekistan government

have taken their commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women by initiating different programs, policies and legislation for women empowerment.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

Irrespective of the gender discrimination in each country, the economic growth offers great opportunities to improve gender equality in the long term. Both Uzbekistan and Russian have focus on eliminating gender discrimination and empowering the women. Although, some women hold high position in Russia and Uzbekistan, but women are given symbolic and minimal role in politics in each country. Though, Uzbek women have better representation than the women of Russia, but their situation remains as men subordinate. In both Russian and Uzbekistan society, the traditional pattern, culture, values, patriarchal system favors segregation for women. Both political parties and civil society organizations which are needed to be strong enough in addressing and empowering the women in Uzbekistan and Russia.

## **Chapter -6**

### **Conclusion**

The collapse of Soviet Union and the democratic transition of Uzbekistan and Russia in 1991 was a result of combination of its internal struggles and politics. After the end of cold war a new course of action and development has emerged for the developed and developing countries, while some countries followed the path of neo-liberal policies and globalisation. Russia and Central Asian countries too started their democratization process and peaceful political reforms. The vulnerable sections of society such as women, children, tribal's, and migrants were given more rights and liberty in most of the countries. Women's political participation has been accepted internationally as an important step for enhancing the status of women in every country. Women have been given a significant space for political participation and representation in the democratic process of Uzbekistan and Russia since 1991. During the post-Soviet period, major economic and political transformation appeared in the Central Asian countries. Both Russia and Uzbekistan have been ruled by strong authoritarian leaders like Gorbachev, Yelstin and Putin in Russia and Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan since 1991. Women issues have been addressed in both the countries based on their constitutional laws and influenced by the changing international scenario. Although, there has been a change of women representation in Uzbekistan and Russia, still they have a long way to go to attain gender justice and political participation.

Women political participation is one of the major elements for the development of a country in the present day scenario. The underrepresentation of women not only makes them vulnerable but also the state faces challenges. The main focus of the study is to analyze the socio-political, traditional and cultural issues both in Uzbekistan and Russia for a better understanding of women political participation and critically examine how the democratization process of these two countries has contributed to low participation of women in parliament, political parties, state legislatures and local government, and other decision-making authorities. The study argues that although the status of women participation in Uzbekistan is better than the status of Russian women but the political participation and representation of women is much low in both the countries. The study carries forward this discussion in detail with the help of supportive data.

The major findings of the study have been examined within each chapter. The thesis begins with brief introduction of women of Uzbekistan and Russia in Chapter 1. It discusses the present political process and its impacts on women in both the countries. The study made an effort towards the conceptual understanding of gender equality and women empowerment. This has helped to on the social context and political scenario of Uzbekistan and Russia since the post-Soviet period and how people have supported the women rights. In looking more deeply into the present condition of Uzbek and Russian women in chapter 2 and 3, discussed the social and political status. In doing so the study found that in spite of having low political representation, women in both Uzbekistan and Russia enjoy a certain reputation and status in the socio- political and economic fields. Irrespective of secular nature of society, inter-ethnic conflict is common in Uzbekistan and Russia. Although, the practice of religion in Russia is different from Uzbekistan the relationship between the issues of religiosity and women empowerment is extremely intricate in both the countries.

The findings of this study here allow us to understand how the democratization process of Uzbekistan and Russian has actually implemented gender rights and equality in the life of women. In particular, the study highlights the role of political parties and civil society organisations in the matters of women empowerment in socio-political fields. Throughout the study, analyzed the contexts and situations where authoritarian nature of government of both Uzbekistan and Russia has impacted the process of change of women's status.

While examining the women issues it has been observed that both the Constitution of Uzbekistan and Russia prevents all types of discrimination and grants equal rights for men and women. The governments of these countries are committed to protect the rights of women. However, marginalization of women is prevailing in social, political and economic fields. Traditional, cultural and social elements control women's capabilities and opportunities to utilize their freedom to participate in political processes. The electoral process in Uzbekistan and Russia has contributed to a low-level participation of women in parliament, political parties, state legislatures and local government, and other decision-making authorities.

Socio-political status of women in Uzbekistan, discussed in chapter 2. three dominant factors: that impact on the Soviet inheritance, the social and economic challenges of the transition period, and the traditional Uzbek values and cultural traditions. The

traditional social norms, values, patriarchal mind set and customs continue to hinder their progress. Women are affected more disproportionately than men by the negative aspects of the on-going socio-economic transformation in Uzbekistan. Some of the issues like increasing poverty, rising unemployment, lack of resources in many families to educate boys and girls, political marginalization, domestic violence, sex trafficking etc, have given the women marginal space at all fronts, due to which they are discriminated and exploited on all fronts. It can be argued that in a male dominated society women have been granted equal rights not by the society but by the government rule.

In fact, it has been observed that during the pre-Soviet and Soviet period, women position was very low in comparison to men but during the post-independence there is an improvement of women's participation in Uzbekistan. Some special provisions for women such as family code and labour code were introduced in 1998. As per the data the analysis has shown that there are 16% women in Oily Majlis, Uzbekistan and 14 percent in Russian Duma. But it is noteworthy that the no of women in Uzbekistan is after having the quota system Place in 14 percent and in Russian Duma is without quota. Hence it is difficult to say that the statistical data point towards the actual participation of women in decision making administrative positions. It is difficult to comment that women's presence in administration their participation in decision making process.

In Uzbekistan the civil society organisations though budding, are too small. Though, women participation in NGO sector is speedily growing but it remains low in media, and other voluntary associations. The study has found that the organisations of civil society also follow the same path of traditions and old culture which affect women position in society. Though the new changes brought about an increase in the status of women in political parties and civil society organisations, their position in Uzbekistan continue to remain low as compared to men.

With the collapse of Soviet Union, the scenario of economic crisis in Uzbekistan was that of overall unemployment, which affected women worse than any other section of society. With the emergence of economic and structural transformations in 1991, women's condition particularly with reference to employment has gradually changed. Despite the negative impact of the LPG (liberalization, privatization and globalization) process, women in economic sector improved. Structural reforms in Uzbekistan have been a

modest increase in the share of employment in industry and services, and the decrease in the proportion of employment in agriculture. However, women's share in overall employment has seen an increase. Thus, women participation grew in the economic sector in the post-Soviet Uzbekistan in spite of their low representation in the mainstream politics.

The study in chapter 3 has evaluated the social and political status of women in Russian Federation during the 1991-2013. The study has found that similar problems and situation as they exist for Uzbekistan's women are also found in Russia. The women in Russia were influenced by Soviet inheritance, traditional patterns of life, conservative and patriarchal nature of society. They are affected by poverty, unemployment, domestic violence, sex trafficking and political marginalization due to which they are discriminated and exploited on all front.

According to 2016 estimate female population in Russia just like Uzbekistan is greater than men, with women, representing 53.54% of the total, compared to 46.46% men. Regarding the education status 2015 report shows that the literacy rate of the total population is 99.7% which includes 99.7% male literates and 99.6% female literates. Though the women literacy rate is higher than men but they remain at a lower stratum in higher and professional education, a scenario which is similar to Uzbekistan.

During the Soviet period, the quota representation formula made women participation in politics inevitable, though the quota system provides women symbolic and very little real power. Since the fall of communism, Russia has experienced a significantly lower level of women's participation in politics. When quotas were eliminated in the first Soviet competitive elections in 1989, women made up less than 16 percent of the newly formed Congress of People's Deputies. Thereafter women representation continued to decline in every election. The study reveals that this type of electoral system has a deep impact on the level of women's representation in the country. Women suffer even with the use of PR (Proportional Representation) and SMD (Single Member District) system in the elections.

In the Soviet era, women played a prominent role in politics with the communist party. In Russia, women are fighting election with their own political groups which is significant development in life of women in the Post-Soviet Russia. A political party known as Women of Russia Party was formed in 1990 which captured 8 percent of the vote in the

1993 State Duma election. Of course the level of support has been dropped but this party remained active throughout the decades in electoral process. Russian history is proud of famous Russian women political leaders, like Catherine the Great, Russian Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, Regent of Moscow Elena Glinskaya, Empress of Russia Catherine I and others. More women are involved in the economic and political sector. Some of them hold high position in the political as well as the economic fields. The women political movement and the political parties have a great role in making women strong enough in fighting the elections and other decision-making fields. In the case of civil society organization similar situation of Uzbekistan is found in Russia. Though civil society organisations and NGOs are growing but only a few have been working on women issues. These organizations have also been following the same path of traditions and conservative culture. So, the contribution of civil society and voluntary organizations for gender equality and women empowerment are found inadequate in the democratization process of Russia.

The socio-economic reforms of Russia have shown that all the changes happening in society have a different and contradictory impact on men and women. Women still are far behind men in earnings. This gap has been widening since the past decade. While in the 1980s, the wages of women constituted, on average, 70% of men's; by the end of 1999 this figure had dropped to 52%, and in 2000, to only 50%. The majority of women continue to work in public sector of the national economy. The low wages, unemployment, and poverty have hindered women for their progress in the political participation.

Chapter 4 of this study has looked into the level and nature of women empowerment in three distinct spheres: social, political, and economic and found that inadequate progress has been made to improve the conditions of women in Uzbekistan and Russia. While examining the programme, policies and provisions for emancipation of women the study has found that both Uzbekistan and Russian have adopted different policies and programme such as Family Code, Civil Code, Labour Code, which has impacted significantly in empowering women in the social sphere.

Both the countries have implemented the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as well as Millennium Development Goal for empowering the women which positively impacted on women. Both Uzbekistan and

Russia have launched their National Action Plan in the strategies of the Beijing platform, 1995 and outlined the strategies and priorities for improving the status of women. Both countries have adopted and implemented a number of policies and programmes, which have a lot of commonalities, for the betterment of women. The government of Uzbekistan and Russia has declared its commitment by introducing the rights of women in its constitution, adopting the women's policy and programme and National Action Plan for gender equality and empowerment of women. The National Action Plan has significant impact on women of Uzbekistan even better than in Russia. In the political sphere, both Uzbekistan and Russia have taken a number of initiatives including the reintroduction of quota system for effective participation of women in the decision making process.

While comparing the socio-economic status of women of Uzbekistan and Russia, the study has observed that women in both countries are engaged less than men in a different sector. In Uzbekistan, the employment rate has increased since 1991 when the country got independence, but it is not so in Russia. During Soviet period the employment women were more than men, but since 1992, there is an increase in number of unemployed women. Moreover, Uzbek women have excelled in private entrepreneurship in comparison to Russian women. It is also found that in Uzbekistan, quota system has significantly supported for the enhancement of female employment, but in the case of Russia, the economic activities of women were much influenced by the socio - economic reasons. In fact, in different spheres the Russian women have got more exposure and easily availed education and medical services, social safety net, and personal security. Thus, for the sustained and effective growth of the country, it is necessary to create an institutional mechanism that will guarantee the equal opportunities for women and men in all spheres of the society and public domains.

The study has observed that the nature and behaviour of political parties on women of Uzbekistan and Russia is understood on the basis of socio-cultural factors from both Uzbekistan and Russia. Although, some women hold important public offices, women are given symbolic and minimal role in politics in each country. The study has examined that in both countries nature of political parties on women is changing due to traditional and structural factors which hinder women to occupy offices and be active in the political fields. The rise of women representation in Uzbekistan is not because of political parties but due to quota system. In Russia, women themselves have the political parties which



present good share in the elections since the couple years in the post-Soviet period. In fact, despite the low representation of women in Russia, they are more powerful than that of Uzbek women.

The study has found that in the post-Soviet period particularly since 1991 women issues have not been significantly taken by the civil society organisation in both Uzbekistan and Russia. The communist culture, patriarchy and excessive control of the administrative authority have brought the challenges before the civil society organisation in the process of women empowerment in the political fields. Nevertheless, for the last couple of years the civil society organisations in these two countries have been playing important role for consolidating and strengthening the democratic process in both these countries. They have significantly inspired and encouraged women to continue the democratic struggle in spite of social structure and traditional patriarchy in Uzbekistan and Russian. The participation of women in civil society and NGOs is also growing since last few years. It study has observed that social and communication arrangements competent necessitate developing and changing into social movements. Uzbekistan is being privileged by the women's NGO which are playing a considerable role for the cause of women's political participation.

In spite of the fact that progress in this regard has been slow, there have been some positive changes in women's life in Uzbekistan and Russia. Today Women are more empowered in the social, economic and political fields. Their representation has significantly improved in the parliament, political parties, local self government in Russia and Uzbekistan. Some of the women have even occupied the key position and playing major role not only for women issues but for the nation building process. In the social and economic sector, their participation has been enlarged with better employment and economic position. Political parties and civil society organization have extended their support for women issues and have tried to eliminate the discrimination against women. The study has argued that women's position is relatively better than the pre-1991 period but they remain marginal in the present day scenario in Uzbekistan and Russia.

It has been observed there are various challenges in the field of women participation in the democratization process of Uzbekistan and Russia. Today, the issue of elimination of gender discrimination along with realizing socio-political development is an enormous

challenge before Uzbekistan and Russia. Some major constraints to achieve this goal are: low representation of women in decision-making process and at the top positions in public and private sectors; traditional attitudes and stereotypes about the role of men and women. Reluctant nature of political parties and civil society organisation has further made women marginal in the electoral process. Women of Uzbekistan and Russia are also facing severe problems due to poverty, low wages, unemployment, authoritarianism, gender violence, human trafficking, abortion issues and other diseases. Lack of commitment and efficient implementation of programme and policies by the ruling authorities has been a challenge for women empowerment. In Uzbekistan and Russian, political parties and civil society organizations are mostly controlled by the men that become reasons for low participation of women in politics. They are underrepresented due to weak civil society organization and reluctant of parties toward women.

In spite of problems and challenges, the women of Uzbekistan and Russia are also having better opportunities for improving their participation in decision making process. They represent a good number of populations of women having a high rate of education. Socio-political, economic, and other women related changes are occurring in the Uzbekistan and Russian society. Irrespective of the gender discrimination in each country, the economic growth offers great opportunities to improve gender equality in the long term. Thus, for sustained and effective growth of the country, it is necessary to create an institutional mechanism that will guarantee the equal opportunities for women and men in all spheres of the society and public domains. Although women issues can be addressed in many ways but the democratization and socio-economic reforms are the most favourable means to tackle any kind of issues and problems. However, the essential condition for long-term development and empowerment for women in Uzbekistan and Russia lies in the capacity of the state along with that of political parties and civil society to work tirelessly in this area. Thus, an effort by the government, political parties and civil society should be made to educate the women about their rights and status, and to eliminate the gender discrimination.

Through the analysis of women's status in decision making process in Uzbekistan and Russia it is observed that the government should allow for an electoral reform process that will further help women representation in decision making bodies. A more proportional representation and more inclusive politics are necessary for achievement of this goal. In

this context, an improved system of checks and balances is also needed. The state institutions should be strengthened. Also, major improvements are needed with regard to the workings of civil society and NGOs for women causes. The political parties should also commit themselves to designating more women in their decision-making bodies, as women activists and women with responsibility in politics may become more aware of their civil rights. In fact, political parties and civil society organizations are needed to be strong enough in addressing and empowering the women in Uzbekistan and Russia.

In a nutshell, Uzbekistan and Russian have focused on eliminating gender discrimination and empowering the women. Although, some women hold high position in Russia and Uzbekistan, but women are given symbolic and minimal role in politics in each country.

Though, women in Uzbekistan have better representation than the women of Russia, but their situation remains as men subordinate. The low participation of women is mainly due to economic, social, political and cultural factors. In both Russian and Uzbekistan society, the traditional pattern, culture, values, patriarchal system favors segregation for women and they are treated as marginalised and vulnerable sections of society. In Uzbekistan despite the reintroduction quota system the percentage of women's political participation remains low in comparison to men. Low political and economic activity and weak civil society institutions are some of factors for the low number of Russian women in politics. Though, Russian women play a bigger role in decision making process but their political representations remain lower than the women of Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, women's condition in both Uzbekistan and Russia has been improved in the post-Soviet period in comparison to Soviet era.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Key Aspects of the National Action Plan for the Improvement of Women's Status in Uzbekistan**

*(Prepared by Ms. MekhriKhudayberdiyeva in Wendy Mee paper on, Country Briefing Paper, Women in the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2001)*

“The implementation of the *National Action Platform for the Improvement of Women's Status in Uzbekistan* is designed to provide the support needed by women in Uzbekistan to ensure their advancement. The nine key priority areas targeted by the National Action Plan were briefly outlined in this chapter. The following explanations provide more detail on these priority areas.

#### ***Women's Health***

- (i) Give particular consideration to the health of women of all age groups;
- (ii) Design special programs to fight widely spread diseases, such as breast cancer, HIV/AIDS, heart disease and infectious diseases (including hepatitis);
- (iii) Raise the quality of basic medical knowledge among the population and students at institutions of higher learning with the cooperation of the Government, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Higher and Specialized Education;
- (iv) Continue the implementation of measures aimed at reducing maternity and infant mortality undertaken by the Ministry of Health jointly with other agencies concerned;
- (v) Provide pregnant women and nursing mothers with free medical services guaranteed by the State;
- (vi) Organize the production of various foodstuffs for children by relevant ministries and agencies with the purpose of improving the health and nutrition of women and children; and
- (vii) Design awareness-raising programs to educate women and girls on the negative consequences of alcohol, drug and tobacco addiction.

### ***Women's Education***

- (i) The Ministries of Education and of Higher and Specialized Education will collect data on women and girls' educational level in cities and rural areas; and
- (ii) Relevant government agencies and NGOs will monitor gender equity in access to education; for example, survey the number of overseas training provided to highly qualified women professionals, assess women's access to information technologies, etc.

### ***Women and Ecology***

The Government should pursue a preventive approach to ecological disaster. Steps also need to be taken to ease related social tensions. It will be necessary to

- (i) Elaborate and implement a series of measures aimed at further upgrading government guarantees and indemnity of the Aral Sea residents. A special program designed for women from the Aral Sea is also required;
- (ii) Set up specialized environmental focal points in affected zones and coordinate their performance;
- (iii) Formulate basic regulations to achieve reasonable nutrition for specific professional and age categories of the population, in particular for women. Such measures need to take into account adverse environmental impacts that cause poor nutrition and growing disease rates; and
- (iv) Continue organizing ecological conferences, meetings and training programs dedicated to women and environmental issues.

### ***Women's Economic Status and Employment***

The Government must continue its commitment to improving women's working conditions, job creation opportunities, and strict observance of Labor Code provisions. With a view to expanding women's employment, it is necessary to

- (i) Upgrade mechanisms for continued professional advancement of women to support their competitiveness in the labor market; and
- (ii) Improve social and legal basis for the promotion of gender awareness initiatives and approaches directed at women.

In addition, the Government has to stipulate the following measures:

- (i) Expand support to the needy groups of population;
- (ii) Set up retraining centres for women; and
- (iii) Create more workplaces for women in state-run enterprises.

### ***Women's Rights and Opportunity to Participate in Decision Making***

The international gender standard is that women should comprise not less than 30 percent of the staff in any entity. For this reason, surveys are required to measure and monitor women's level of participation in elected bodies, political parties, the Parliament, the Cabinet of Ministers, ministries and agencies, law enforcement bodies, local authorities, diplomatic institutions and international organizations. In order to create conditions for promoting women to leadership positions and preparing women to perform as government officials it is necessary to

- (i) Amend the Government Service Act and regulations within ministries and agencies so that they encourage greater gender equity;
- (ii) Amend legislative acts to protect women's rights and interests in line with international conventions and agreements;
- (iii) Compile and implement a program on women's preparation for assuming responsibilities within government management structures and ensure equal access to decision-making positions at all levels of administration;
- (iv) With the help of government institutions, NGOs and the mass media, enhance legal awareness among women; and
- (v) Legislate equal opportunities and introduce a quota system to enable women to be elected to the Parliament of Uzbekistan and other government bodies.

### ***Girls' Rights***

The Government should implement a state program aimed at supporting the education and upbringing of girls to imbue them with national and cultural values.

### ***Discrimination and Violence Against Women***

In order to prevent violence against women, which is regarded as a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, etc., steps should be taken to

- (i) Upgrade administrative and criminal codes with the aim of strengthening punishment for violence against women, whether in the home or workplace, including prostitution and compelling women through drug addiction; and
- (ii) Strengthen women's rights in marriage and divorce, including the division of property, and moral and material indemnity in case of divorce on the husband's initiative, in the Marriage and Family Code to raise women's status within the family and in decisions regarding the education of children.

### ***Women in the Mass Media***

The creation of a new “Uzbek woman” in the mass media, culture and arts should overcome existing stereotypes. For this purpose it will be necessary to

- (i) Increase the number of specialized newspapers for women as well as TV and radio programs dedicated to women’s issues;
- (ii) Design a comprehensive program aimed at expanding social debate on gender issues in all forms of media;
- (iii) Explain through mass media women’s rights and obligations to disseminate legal knowledge in the area of equal rights and opportunities and other issues of gender concern in the society;
- (iv) Raise awareness in society and create conditions for widespread discussions on the role of women in society, including the historical development of roles assigned to men and women, as well as acute social problems arising from gender inequality; and
- (v) Publish scientific and other types of publications that contribute to the creation of a new image of Uzbek womanhood.

### ***Women’s NGOs***

To promote and strengthen the role of women’s NGOs it will be necessary to

- (i) Collect data and distribute information on women’s status in Uzbekistan;
- (ii) In cooperation with the Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics, undertake gender statistical surveys and disaggregated analyses based upon new methodological approaches;
- (iii) Promote the activities of the NGO “Women and Society” Institute to ascertain women’s status in the economic, political, cultural, social, educational and scientific spheres of the country, to give practical recommendations and design mechanisms to enhance the role of women in the ongoing democratic transformation of Uzbekistan;
- (iv) Publish an annual report highlighting women’s status in Uzbekistan, as well as brochures and leaflets on gender analysis; and
- (v) Encourage the establishment of NGOs and their integration into the international women’s movement.”

## Appendix 2

### “LABOUR CODE OF RUSSIAN FEDERATION OF 31ST DECEMBER 2001

(Federal law number 197FZ of 2001)

#### Chapter 41. Special Features of Labour Regulation Pertaining to Women and Persons with Family Obligations

##### Article 253. Jobs in Which the Use of Female Labour

Is Limited The use of female labour shall be limited in heavy labour and jobs involving harmful and/or dangerous working conditions, and also in underground jobs, with the exception of non-physical labour and jobs in the area of sanitary/medical and consumer services. The use of female labour shall be forbidden in jobs involving manual lifting and moving of heavy objects in excess of the allowable limits for women. Lists of industries, jobs, and job positions involving harmful and/or dangerous working conditions in which the use of female labour is limited, and the maximum allowable loads for women when manually lifting and moving heavy objects shall be approved under procedures established by the Government of the Russian Federation, with consideration given to the opinion of the Russian Trilateral Commission on the Regulation of Social and Labour Relations.

**Article 254.** Transfer of Pregnant Women and Women with Children under 18 Months to Other Jobs Upon a pregnant woman's request and pursuant to a medical finding, standards of output and service shall be reduced or she shall be transferred to another job that precludes the effects of workplace hazards, retaining her average wage from her former position. Until the granting to a pregnant woman of a different job that would preclude the effects of workplace hazards, she shall be released from work and receive her average wage for all work days missed for this reason, at the employer's expense. Upon going through a mandatory outpatient examination at a healthcare facility, a pregnant woman shall retain her average wage from her place of work. If it is impossible for them to perform their previous work, women with children under 18 months of age shall at their request be transferred to another job, with the wage/salary for the job performed but not below average wage from their former position until the child reaches the age of 18 months.

**Article 255.** Maternity Leave At their request and on the basis of a sick-sheet issued in the established procedure, women shall be granted maternity leave of 70 calendar days (84 in the case of multiple pregnancies) before childbirth and 70 calendar days (86 in the case of labour complications and 110 in the case of multiple births) after childbirth, with payment of the state social insurance benefit in the amount established by federal laws. Maternity leave shall be calculated cumulatively and granted to a woman entirely independently of the number of days actually used by her before childbirth.

**Article 256.** Leave to Care for a Child At her request a woman shall be granted leave to care for a child under the age of three years. Procedures and time limits for payment of the state social insurance benefit during the indicated leave shall be defined by federal laws. Leave granted to care for a child may also be used, in full or part, by a child's father, grandmother, grandfather, other relative, or guardian who is actually providing care for the child. At the request of a woman or one of the persons indicated in the second part of this Article, they may work while on child care leave on a part-time basis or at home while retaining their right to receive the state social insurance benefit. A worker shall retain their job position during leave to care for a child. Child care leave time shall be counted toward workers' overall and continuous employment history as well as their employment history in their field of specialization (with the exception of cases of early issue of a labour old age pension).

**Article 257.** Leave Time for Workers Who Adopt Children Workers who adopt children shall be granted leave for a period beginning from the date of adoption and up to 70 calendar days from the birth of the adopted child (in the case of adoption of two or more children, 110 calendar days from their birth). If a worker who has adopted a child or children wishes, he shall be granted child care leave until the child or children reaches three years of age. In the event of the adoption of a child or children by both spouses, the indicated leave shall be granted to one of the spouses at their discretion. Women who adopt a child shall have the option, instead of taking the leave indicated in the first part of this Article, of taking maternity leave time for a period beginning from the date of adoption and up to 70 calendar days, and if adopting two or more children at the same time, 110 calendar days from their date of birth. A procedure for granting the indicated leave that ensure the confidentiality of adoptions shall be established by the Government of the Russian Federation.

**Article 258.** Break for Nursing a Child In addition to rest and lunch breaks, working women with children under 18 months of age shall be granted additional breaks for nursing a child (children) at least every three hours for a period of at least 30 minutes each. If a working woman has two or more children under 18 months of age, the nursing break shall be set at not less than one hour. At her request a woman's nursing breaks shall be combined with her rest or lunch breaks or cumulatively shifted to both the beginning and end of the workday (shift), with the workday or shift being contracted correspondingly. Nursing breaks shall be included in work time and shall be payable at the average wage level.

**Article 259.** Guarantees to Pregnant Women and Persons having Family Obligations upon Being Dispatched on Business Travel or Assigned to Work Overtime or at Night, on Weekends, or on Public Holidays It shall be prohibited to dispatch pregnant women on business travel or assign them to work overtime or at night, on weekends, or on public holidays. Dispatching women with children under the age of three on business travel or assigning them to work overtime or at night, on weekends, or on public holidays shall be allowed only with their written consent and on the condition that it not be prohibited in

accordance with a medical certificate issued in the procedure established by federal laws and other normative legal acts of the Russian Federation. In addition, women with children under the age of three must be made aware in writing of their right to refuse to participate in business travel or work overtime or at night, on weekends, or on public holidays. The guarantees provided in the second part of this Article shall likewise be given to the mothers and fathers who bring up children aged up to five without a spouse, workers with disabled children and to workers who provide care to sick family members pursuant to a medical finding.

**Article 260.** Guarantees to Women in Connection with Pregnancy and Childbirth When Determining Priority in Granting Annual Paid Vacation Before maternity leave or immediately thereafter, or after a period of leave taken to care for a child, a woman shall if she wishes be granted annual paid vacation, regardless of her length of employment with a given employer.

**Article 261.** Guarantees for Pregnant Women, Women with Children and Persons Who Bring Up Children without a Mother in the Case of Rescission of Labour Contract Labour contracts concluded with pregnant women shall not be rescinded on the initiative of the employer, except for the cases of winding up of an organisation or termination of the activity of an individual entrepreneur. If a fixed-term labour contract expires during the term of pregnancy of the woman the employer shall extend the effective term of the contract until the end of the pregnancy on the woman's application in writing if a medical statement is shown acknowledging the state of pregnancy. A woman who had the effective term of her labour contract extended until the end of her pregnancy shall submit a medical statement confirming her pregnancy not more than once in three months if the employer asks for it. If the woman continues actually working after the end of the pregnancy the employer is entitled to rescind her labour contract in connection with the expiry of the effective term of the contract within one week after the day when the employer learned or should have learnt about the end of the pregnancy. A woman may be dismissed in connection with the expiry of the effective term of her labour contract during the term of her pregnancy if the labour contract has been concluded for the term of execution of the duties of another employee who was absent and the woman cannot be transferred with her consent in writing before the end of the pregnancy to another job that the employer has (either a vacant position or a job meeting the qualifications of the woman or a vacant lower position or a lower-paid job) which can be performed by the woman, given her state of health. Here, the employer shall offer her all the vacancies which he has in the given area and which meet the said requirements. The employer shall offer vacancies in other areas if there is a provision to this effect in the collective agreement, agreements or the labour contract. It is prohibited to rescind labour contracts at the initiative of an employer with women having children aged up to three, single mothers who bring up children aged up to 14 (a disabled child aged up to 18), other persons



who bring up such children without mother (except for dismissal on the grounds specified in Items 1, 5-8, 10 or 11 of Part 1 of Article 81 or Item 2 of Article 336 of the present Code).

**Article 262.** Additional Days off for Persons Providing Care for Disabled Children and Women Working in a Rural Area One of the parents (or a guardian or foster parent) shall, upon their request, be granted four additional paid days off per month in order to care for a disabled child. These days may be used by one of the indicated persons or divided between them at their discretion. Payment for each additional day off shall be made in the amount and under the procedures established by federal law. Women working in rural areas may, upon their written request, be granted one additional unpaid day off per month.

**Article 263.** Additional Unpaid Leave for Persons Providing Care for Children Under collective negotiations agreements, additional annual unpaid leave of up to fourteen calendar days may be established for workers with two or more children under the age of fourteen, workers with a disabled child under eighteen, single mothers raising a child under fourteen, or fathers raising a child under fourteen without a mother, at a time convenient to them. The said leave at a worker's application in writing may be combined with annual paid leave or used separately, in whole or in parts. This leave may not be carried over to the following work year.

**Article 264.** Guarantees and Benefits for Persons Raising Children without a Mother The guarantees and benefits granted to women due to maternity (restrictions on working at night and overtime, weekend, and holiday work, business travel, additional leave time, preferential work schedules, and other guarantees and benefits established by laws and other legal regulatory acts) shall be extended to fathers raising children without a mother, and also to guardians (foster parents) of minor children.”