

**“SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES AND
WOMEN’S POSITION IN CENTRAL ASIA
(1985-1997)”**

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fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of*

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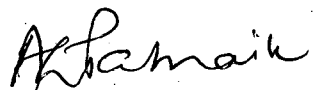
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Certified that this dissertation entitled "**SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES AND WOMEN'S POSITION IN CENTRAL ASIA (1985-1997)**" submitted by Ms. Mamata Rani Naik in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University and is her own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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J.N.U.
NEW DELHI

MAMATA RANI NAIK

***TO MY PARENTS
FOR THEIR LOVE AND AFFECTION***

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PREFACE

The Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 in Russia transformed the age old discriminatory practices against women. They acquired a greater awareness of their role in society and their responsibility towards social development. In view of women's increasing public activities, it was essential to put an end to the discriminatory restrictions and equally empower them through legal rights.

In the history of mankind, the Soviet Union was the first country to promote socio-political and economic equality between genders. The Soviet constitution granted equal rights including the right to work, equal pay for equal work, equal opportunities for acquiring education, and even the establishment of a special system of labour protection for women.

During Gorbachev's Glasnost and Perestroika, the women's issue was again put up for debate and in a more liberal atmosphere, a fresh appraisal was made of women's participation in Soviet society.

However, despite such progressive measures, in Central Asian Regions, women were still bound by tradition and religious dogmas. The conflict became more pronounced when after the USSR

disintegrated, the Central Asian states moved to transform itself into a more liberal economic and political society. This brought significant changes in the women's position.

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the women's position in Soviet Central Asia and the changes therein during the period - 1985-1997. The introductory chapter discusses gender differentiation from a sociological point of view and the Soviet understanding of gender roles. The second chapter deals with women's conditions during the communist period. The focus of the third chapter is on the effect of Perestorika on women in Central Asia. The fourth analyses the implications of the break-up of the Soviet Union on the Central Asian women. The concluding observations tries to put the entire study into a proper perspective vis-a-vis the emerging trends in Central Asia.

INTRODUCTION

The issues of women's liberation, freedom and development have become subjects of intense debate. Different sociologists, psychologists, and politicians have expressed their ideas regarding the women's question.

According to Morgan, endorsed by Engels and Marx - there are four major forms of relations between sexes -

1) The first form -

A stage of unrestricted sexual freedom or complete promiscuity.

2) The second form -

Group marriage, which developed very early and had several subtypes.

3) The third form -

Relationship between man and woman was monogamous family, corresponding to civilization and the era of history.

4) The fourth form -

The pattern of future under communism.

The relationship between man is conditioned woman is conditioned by societies, which impose a certain order upon their relationship. The societal structure combined with fundamental rules and boundaries regulate the activities of each individual with a biological distinction between man and woman. Differences are emphasised and accentuated by socialization of individuals to adopt appropriate dress, manners and education. Finally a gender-based division of labour become one of the universal characteristics of human society.

Furthermore, once a conceptual structure is articulated and accepted as accurate; it exerts pressures on people to conform to it on both the individual and social value level. Infact throughout the human history men have had far greater powers than women, not only physically but mentally also. On the otherhand, Anthropologist Margaret Mead observed, in "Male and Female" (1949) certain similarities across societies because only girls can be mothers, whereas boys have to learn compensatory forms of achievement.¹ On the other hand sociologist Talcott Parsons (1942) suggested that competing demands of family and work are best handled by separating the instrumental roles of man at work from the expressive

¹ Giele, Janet, Zollinger, Women and the Future - Changing sex roles in modern America, (178), pp.4-5.

roles of women in the family. Most of the scientists until 1960s used functionalist theories to explain why women achieved less prominence than men. "Darwin himself in the descent of man and natural selection in relations to sex" (1890) gave extended consideration to sex differences - "why the male bird is more brightly coloured than the female bird, why the human male is larger and heavier than the human female."² Though it's a controversial issue, but the result has been a persistent denigration of women and their activities.

√ The "other half" male perception towards women have been restricting them within certain roles and activities which is described as feminine, where women frequently find themselves in a painful position George Gilder in "Sexual Suicide" (1973: 263-264) writes, "Nonetheless women's position is in the home and she does her best when she can get the man there too. That she cannot easily do alone. The society has to provide a role for him, casually in a masculine way.... The fact is that there is no way that women can escape their supreme responsibilities in civilized societies without endangering civilization itself."³ The prescriptive process of socialization distorts female behaviour, attitude and transformation of women group,

² Ibid., p.7.

³ Ibid., p.8.

Women lose both their ability and voice to stand against gender discrimination, at the sametime women's silence permits men to ignore their activities and achievement as a result of which male description of what women are doing and thinking became more accurate than before. Even in 1913 on the "International Women's Day", a programme on women's question was held in St. Peterburg, under police surveillance. When it was over several women speakers were arrested for attempting to discuss about the elementary rights and political freedom of women in Russia. Tsarist autocracy and Greek church had combined to reinforce patriarchy. the hearth and the family were held as haloed institutions and women were treated as slaves. They were often mistreated, exhausted by endless pregnancies and work in fields where her labour was considered unproductive. The lesson of orthodox church reinforced the low regard for women, which made divorce impossible, dragged them into various customs and superstitions and encouraged the image of males as agents of imperial and religious authority. The most horrible condition of women were shown in Central Asia. During Tsarist colonial period women were generally suppressed in each and every sphere. In the male based society, they were segregated from having social and educational opportunities and live life without human dignity. Her contribution in the handicraft production, in the

household and in other fields returned as unproductive credit. The society refused to recognize women's contribution to its existence.

The Great October Socialist revolution of 1917 in Russia transformed the age old contradictory traditional and cultural aspects of human activities and the status of women in society. After this revolution, women became conscious about their roles in society acquired a greater awareness of their contribution to and responsibility for social development. At the same time the influence of Marx and Engels prompted the socialist parties for women's suffrage and for the full legal equality of women. They were the only political group to do so in the 19th century. Engles's "The origin of the family, private property and the state" exerted it influence upon feminists to establish the determinant of the liberation of socialism attempted to show to the whole world how the women's question should be solved. It provided the basic conditions for equality, elimination of all forms of exploitation and oppression and the involvement of women in Social production and socio-political life. In the labour legislation of the 1920s, several provisions were included in favour of women's social security and development. The third comintern congress in Moscow in 1921 stated the methods and forms of work among communist party women regarding the eradication of female slavery and to create a condition of sexual equality which is

enshrined in the 1936 constitution of the USSR. The Soviet labour code of 1922 and the constitutions of 1936 and 1978 explicitly guaranteed women equal pay for equal work. Though this guarantee is only for identical jobs, it does not necessarily imply equal pay for equal work. Besides, the 1936 soviet constitution has granted right to work, equal opportunities to acquire on education and improve qualification, freedom to choose and even establishment of special system of labour protection for women. Lenin wrote that centuries of oppression had turned women into the "most backward and conservative section of the population."⁴ Marxism - Leninism regards the transition from household work to socially productive labour as one of the most essential conditions for the social emancipation of the women and the all-round development of her personality.

The Soviet Union for the first time had initiated successfully solutions regarding the complex problems of women's education. Very often it becomes a problematic to acquire education and at the same time giving birth to and rearing children. Maternity and child-rearing certainly do hinder the development of women's education. The Soviet society, however, created condition so as to provide equal education for both men as well as women. However it took a long

⁴ Soviet Women, Progress Publishers, 1975, p.14.

time to overcome the influence of old tradition on the educational and professional activities of women. This is compounded by the fact that women themselves often adhere to them. Therefore in addition to socio-economic measures, educational progress also has an important role in solving this problem. In 1939, the 18th party congress passed a resolution on the introduction of seven-year (incomplete secondary) compulsory education. In 1958 a law on compulsory eight-year education was passed. Between 1946 and 1973, collective farms built 63,000 schools for nine million pupils.⁵

Article-35 of the constitution of the USSR, provided equal rights with men in all sphere as well as special labour and health protection measures to improve the condition of labour and every day life of working women which was included in the tenth-Five-Year-Plan outlined at the Twenty-fifth-party congress in March 1976. The Twenty-sixth party congress inaugurated the national demographic policy. Brezhnev himself, addressing the Trade Union Congress in 1977, admitted "we men... have thus far done far from all we could to ease the dual burden that (women) bear at home and in production."⁶ Soviet discussion of these issues turned on five distinct but interrelated questions -

⁵ Ibid., p.73.

⁶ Lapidus, Gail Warshofsky, Women, Work and Family, (1983) p.xii.

- 1) What was the optimum level of female labour force participation for the Soviet economy at a level consistent with demographic and social need ?
- 2) How could female labour be better distributed among different economic sectors and occupations ?
- 3) What changes need to be made in the elaboration and enforcement of protective labour measures to improve the working conditions of the female labour force participation on family structure and fertility ?
- 4) What changes in present policies are needed to achieve an optimal balance between female work and female roles ?
- 5) The heavy reliance on female labour which characterized the Soviet pattern of industrialization had origin in Marxist-Leninist theory, that the full entry of women into social production held the key to genuine equality.

However, it was inaugurated in the First-Five-Year Plan. Female employment outside agriculture was further accelerated in subsequent decades by the interaction of economic, demographic and social pressures created by Soviet policy. In agriculture, as Fedorova's essay point out, an overwhelming proportion is engaged in heavy manual labour while men move into the newly mechanized

jobs. A similar situation prevailed in industry, where women predominated in low-skilled, non-mechanized and partly paid positions. The basic National Economic Development Guidelines for 1976-80 noted the need to "create more opportunities for women with children to work a shorter work day or work week and also to work at home."⁷ The Soviet society, however, recorded a series of historic achievements in solving problems of women labour, achievement which are universally recognized. These include -

- 1) Full employment of Soviet women in socially useful activity and the world's highest rate of female employment.
- 2) Equal pay for equal work for men and women.
- 3) High level of female educational and occupational training.
- 4) One of the most progressive structures of female employment in all branches of the economy, coupled with the world's highest proportion of women in industrial management, science, culture and arts.

However, the social equalisation of women and men in every day life, the radical restructuring of marriage and family law, the acknowledgment of motherhood as a social function, were yet to be achieved. The adoption of central planning and the commitment to

⁷ Ibid., pp. 151-152.

forced industrialisation resulted in changes in the nature of the Soviet conception of sexual equality. Rising participation of women rates resulted in some expansion of occupational choice for women. ✓ A very important factor of changing the mode of life as whole is the public activity of women, her professional and socio-political roles, the high level of her professional and general knowledge and culture. Women's changed social status created a new notion of her authority not only in the family but in soviet society also. Her participation in educational process and in the adoption of important decisions, strengthened women's liberation and development. Soviet statistic on women in employment habitually presented the high level of women's involvement in the workforce as an achievement of socialism, as measure of women's emamipation. The numbers of women with higher degrees or employed in medicine and education were used as a yardstick of social progress. Even the press stressed the detailed health and safety provisions of soviet employment law and the achievement of individual women workers. Separate women's interest didn't exist except in so far as women in the 1920s were more politically backward than men and so needed organisations to mobilize them into politics in order to eradicate the temporary difference. Similarly in 1956, women's lower rate of participation in

politics and economics was highlighted by Khrushchev, as also their differential needs which required special social organisation.

Gorbachev's introduction of Perestroika introduced remarkable changes on the issues of women in social, political and economic life. At a time of radical change, policies for on women were characterized by a renewed commitment to programmes instituted during the period of stagnation. Legislative changes were made on benefit, leave and introduction of part-time work force, to encourage women to spend more time with their family and children instead of work, though the policy of strengthening of the family had begun under Brezhnev. At the same time glasnost had provided ready platform for conservatives as well as radical voices regarding the family policies and women's role in the society.

The policy of glasnost not only encouraged the debate but it turned the spotlight towards the Soviet media which had been untouched throughout the period. Difficult and dangerous working conditions, prostitution and the treatment of abortion and childbirth all came under media's scrutiny. Sex was no more a taboo subject and censorship was relaxed and attitudes got liberalised. The question of sex education, unplanned pregnancies, divorce and employment problems of women with young children were issues of major concern.

They became prime target of both benefit changes and government sponsored campaigns on the family. As a result of which in 1984 a course entitled " the ethics and psychology of family life" was introduced into the soviet school curriculum, specifically during the period of Leonid Brezhnev. The aim of strengthening the Soviet family and extending maternity benefit was to be promoted through an increase in literature, propaganda and instructions about family life.

During the 1970s, concern over the falling birthrate in European areas of the USSR included a series of legislative measures aimed at directly "encouraging women to have more and more children", along with emphasis to look at the institution of the family.⁸ The instability of the Soviet family reflected in higher rates of divorce, was seen as a major factor in both disrupting a women's childbearing years and also promoting a sense of insecurity which made her psychologically ill prepared to consider producing more than one or two children. Since 1987, press articles revealed the gruesome realities of abortion for the Soviet women. Attempts were made by the press to dissuade women from having abortion and instead encouraged to use contraception; while such ideas were published in the youth magazines like "Sobesednik", they were also publishing of pictures of

⁸ Edmondson Linda, *Women and Society in Russia and the Soviet Union* (1992) p.179.

female nudity. The same magazine also published the details of beauty contest, which had burgeoned in the USSR since 1988. Liberalization of attitude towards sex was not limited to the provision of information. The lifting of taboos led to growing use of nudity and semi-nudity in the official media and the art.⁹ The use of female nudity to entertain, titillate and sell products, became familiar to the European part of the USSR.

On the other hand the liberalization of attitudes to sex education led to women's search for easier, lighter work nearer home or in an enterprise which could offer child-care facilities, which may not be particularly to their liking or correspond with their levels of skill. Since motherhood was viewed as women's primary duty and major sphere of work, and as women suffered from low pay and were trapped in low-skilled work in poor conditions as childcare provision, health-care and public services were inadequate, therefore "it is obvious that in these conditions, we must rethink the stereotypes which have developed and realize that for the future of the country and of socialism, the most important form of creative work for women is the work of motherhood."¹⁰ Party policy under Gorbachev had been to maintain and develop the Brezhnev line on "strengthening the

⁹ Ibid, p.184.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 189-190.

family" by extending maternity leave and increasing provision for part-time working and homeworking. Under Perestroika, however, government thinking embraced both conservative views on women as mothers and pronouncements that women must be more actively involved in politics and in decision-making at all levels.

The structure of female employment in agriculture is different in character than that in non-agricultural sectors. But there were more fundamental grounds for arguments that employment in other sectors for men as well as for women. As Peter Miles has recently pointed out, for most of the world agriculture is the source from which all non-agricultural occupations have separated off in the course of relatively recent history. This means that in most countries agricultural work and agricultural organization are much more intimately involved with culture than is true of say metal fabricating or motor car assembly (Miles 1977, pp. 99ff)¹¹.

Though in Soviet climatic conditions seasonal variations were likely to be particularly acute, there was extensive occupational segregation in Soviet agriculture, where women were confined to manual work in the fields that demanded considerable physical strength and promised little financial reward. This pattern can't be

¹¹ Maculey, Alistair, *Women's Work and Wages in the Soviet Union* (London : 1981), p.98.

wholly explained by educational differences, women also experienced greater seasonal fluctuations in their employment than did men. As a consequence, sex differences in gross earning were larger than in other sectors. Although women came to play an increasingly important role as technical specialists they were still largely excluded from position of managerial authority where they might exercise control over men; the absolute fall in female agricultural employment combined with rising female participation rates resulted in a decline in the relative importance of the sector, but it was still the most important single sphere of women's work and the conditions it offered them determined to a large extent any assessment of the nature of sexual equality and inequality of employment under socialism. However the position of women in agriculture was in many ways analogous to the position of manual non-agricultural women workers elsewhere in the economy except that they suffered from the additional burden of looking after large families. Infact, the development of attitudes favouring a reduction in women's involvement in the workforce already had a considerable impact in an era of economic change. Paradoxically, as the concept "choice" in employment for women gained currency, women were to soon find out that in a post-communist market society, their choices became more and more constrained.

CHAPTER I

CENTRAL ASIAN WOMEN UNDER THE SOVIETS

The Soviet Union was comprised of regions with different ethno-religious and different linguistic peoples having distinct cultures and traditions. As a part of the then Soviet union, the significance of Central Asia was that people there were still living in a traditional socio-cultural milieu. Even the Tsarist Russian colonial rule in Central Asia didn't lead to any significant changes in women's position vis-a-vis men. Centuries ago, the most primitive people in Central Asia had lived through a matriarchal phase where the participation of women in public life had been clearly shown in countless traditions, histories and tales. Women had been playing a predominant part in the life of those times, which was never again to be the same in the whole course of thousands of years that followed. Everywhere women met men on an equal footing. Not only in their own special sphere, that they shared joy and danger with men but they also went hunting and fought wild beasts 'Reflecting this is a Georgian Proverb: Dog's don't bark at a woman'.¹

¹ Halle Fannina W., Women in the Soviet East, London, (1938), p.

But after Islam succeeded in capturing the caucasus, Central Asia also, did not take long to become Islamic. The Turkmens, Uzbeks and their northern neighbours, the Kara-kalpaks, Kirghiz (except Kazakhs) were also uniformly Mohammedans. There was no nation whose history is not so deeply related to its religion as that of the Turks to Islam. The steppes of Central Asia seem to have been destined by nature as the true land of the nomad. Only a small proportion of the soil was suitable for arable cultivation and even cotton, now the principal product of Central Asia, was introduced only by the Tsarist government, in what was formerly Turkistan.

It is obvious that the position of women in Central Asia was largely determined by such factors as difference among the nomad peoples and among those who were settled and even Islam could not bridge the difference. There were particularly some varieties of enslavement of women which were simply incompatible with a nomadic life, specially the strict isolation and veiling required by the "Shariat", the civil law of Islam. A warlike nomad life definitely favoured the equal rights of the sexes. There were historical evidences that Mongol women took part in Jenghis Khan's campaigns of conquest, not as camp followers, but as vigorous warriors; girls and boys were taught the use of arms without distinction. The beautiful words in which a Kirghiz woman once described the nomad way of

life as a law of nature were an expression of contentment, and probably most nomad women still feel the same"². One thing is that the total deprivation of women of their human rights were alien to the letter of the Koran. Thus the section of the Koran that is entirely devoted to the question of women begins with the exhortation; "oh, children of men, fear God who created you (men and women) from one and the same substance."³ But the written common law the "Shariat" and the local customs of Islamic people the "Adats" were subsequently clothed with a higher sanction.

The harmless veil or covering women was much better known than another custom, the wearing of the paranjas: "Looking like a ghost a woman hardly received attention from her husband, who required her to even take off his boots. The husband spoke of his wife in the third person as "house wife" or "mother of my son" or "rich bride". The Turkmen even called them "captive" or "slave" instead of wife whilst the Kazakhs referred to them "speaking animal"⁴. A woman neither could take food before her husband nor could she share meals with men at the same table. Childlessness was regarded as the greatest shame for a woman, it became worse if she gave birth

² Ibid, p.35.

³ Ibid, p.66.

⁴ Ibid, p.

to a girl child. For a woman, tolerance started from the childhood itself, when instead of playing like the boys, she helped her mother in the household labour and learnt carpet-weaving, felt-making, embroidering, dress-making etc. She had to learn and get used to the idea that she is not equal with men. Even marriages were either early marriage or child marriage. The "Kalym" which was the purchase price paid for the bride, made her not the chattel of one man (her husband) only, but of the whole family of her husband. Women had no right to divorce and had to accept the condition of their existence without any way to escape from it. "Men could buy them as wives and discard them at will"⁵. Mostly women remained as a property of the family. Even as widows they were married to their husband's brothers, whether they were married or single. "If an elder brother dies he leaves for heritage - his wife; but-if a horse dies, he leaves for heritage- his hide"⁶. Besides women had no control over the fruits of their labour, man owned the family property and land and thus controlled the product of women's labour.

At that time in Central Asia, neither did they have a university nor a secondary school, not even national cultural institutions. Full of superstition, complete illiteracy made them economically,

⁵ Ibid, p.12.

⁶ Ibid ,p.98.

politically and socially backward. But with the fall of Tsarism in February, 1917, a new chapter began in the history of Russia, where there were no landowners, capitalists, or merchants and where the government of the working people undertook to build a new life without these exploiters. Men and women were made equal before the law. The Soviet legislation granted legal equality to the women in a number of ways.

Firstly - it tried to ensure equality to all citizens irrespective of social status, on the basis of socialist democracy.

Secondly - Socialist democracy did not stop at merely proclaiming civil rights and women's rights, but provided material guarantees to the legitimate rights of all members of society. Thus Soviet legislation created material prerequisites for the actual implementation of these laws, paying allowances to mothers with multiple children, giving them privileges, easing the domestic chores of women through the building of a network of pre-school children's institutions, communal laundries, public catering enterprises etc.

Thirdly - Soviet socialist democracy enormously raised women's social role, ensuring for her practical participation on an equal footing with men in every sphere of state, economic and cultural life.

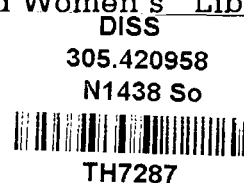
However equality under the law did not mean equality in life. In the condition of Central Asia the announcement of the old laws which enslaved women carried another very important aspect. The domestic slavery of muslim women played into the hands of the colonialist, since it shackled the creative activity of the indigenous population, prevented the industrialisation of Central Asia, held back agricultural production and cultural development. In 1918 the adoption of the first Family code of the RSFSR which laid the foundation of women's legal equality and sanctioned the repeal of pre-revolutionary laws which trampled upon women's dignity restricted freedom of divorce, enforced women's unequal status in the family. The code was published in the Turkestan ASSR in March 1918.⁷

Thus a decree issued by the Turkestan Central Executive committee on July 14, 1921 pointed out that the honour and dignity of the women of the indigenous people were abused by the surviving custom of bride-money, which made marriage dependent on material status and treated the bride as a commodity bartered for money while dooming the poor to eternal celibacy. In this connection the decree aimed to minimize the marriageable age of women to 16 years



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⁷ Amiñova R. kh, The October Revolution and Women's Liberation in Uzbekistan, Moscow, (1977), p.37.



(instead of puberty according to the Shariat) banned polygamy, the payment of bride money, and marriage without the bride's consent.

Central Asia's women under Soviet

In 1922 the Soviet government took its first initiative by introducing two aspects of its programmes, economic and cultural. "One was to help the working masses of the non-Russian peoples to catch up with the more advanced Central Russia. Second was the establishment of industries in the frontier districts, by hastening the pace of development of industry and culture in the backward national areas. Third was the consolidation of the native systems of justice, administration industrial management and government under persons with a knowledge of native conditions and of the psychology of the inhabitants; by encouraging the press, education, the theatre, and club organization, as well as other cultural institutions through a network of courses, schools, both general and technical or professional in the native tongue.⁸

One of the first and foremost action of the Soviet government was to prohibit and punish the so are called "Byt-crime" (Byt means the human relations). In December 1920 a series of measures were issued by the Central Executive Committee, declaring the abolition of

⁸ Halle Fannina W., Women in the Soviet East, London, (1938), p.117.

"Kalym". It proclaimed that "Kalym dishonours and humiliates women and make slaves of them."⁹ Though it became difficult to come out from all the centuries of traditions and customs which were legitimized by religion, still government leaders were much too enthusiastic about the abolition of all kinds of superstitious practices. In April 1928, after thorough consultation with the leaders of the national republics and the Central Committee, marriage by purchase was legally prohibited.

The payment of a purchase price for a bride (Kalym) by the bridegroom to her parents or relatives in the form of ready money or cattle or other goods or of personal services, were punishable by imprisonment or hard labour for a period of one year, in addition to a fine equivalent to the purchase price.¹⁰

According to 'Paragraph 197', "Forbidding Compulsory Marriage" the act of forcing a woman against her will to marry or to continue co-habitation with a man or confining her with a view to marriage were punishable with imprisonment for a period of two years. 'Paragraph-198' on "The Prohibition of Child Marriage" declared that marriage with a person who has not reached puberty

⁹ Ibid, p.128.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.128.

was punishable with imprisonment for a period of two years.¹¹ However the governmental laws were unable to awaken Central Asian women as their lives were enclosed within the "women's half" of the house (the *ichkari*) and hidden behind the black "paranjas". Some of them hardly knew about the legal rights under a new system. Even after long time instead of going to people's court, people preferred to attend their "Shariat" Court.

One of the first steps of the Soviet government was to introduce equal rights for both men as well as women, and to accord them rights to cooperate and participate in all public meetings whether political or social, since the Bolsheviks realized that the revolution can not be consolidated without the liberation of women. Therefore the national minorities were required to address all their efforts to put this point in their programme. Propaganda were carried out everywhere both to counter men's opposition and the women's timidity. Women at first were reluctant to attend such propaganda meetings, but gradually in addition to the "Zhenotdel" (the women's section) organized on the model of the Central Russian body, the number of women's clubs arose particularly in the local areas, with such names as Red Corner, Red Boats, Red Yurtas, Women's Shops

¹¹ Ibid, p.129-130.

and Mountaineer Women's Huts. All aimed against the enslavement of women. Besides there were some special variety of clubs in the agricultural districts of Central Asia like the Houses for "Dekhkan" (peasant) women and in the caucasus the "Mountaineer Women's Huts."¹²

They used all the methods and processes for womens' upliftment, to educate to make them aware about the governmental systems as well as legal rights of equality, as a result of which in Kazakstan for the first time judges were appointed for the "Yurtas".

Secondly, stress was given on cultural efforts like "Likbes Centres" (instrumental centres for the liquidation of illiteracy), where training by various civilized customs, medical aid, educational advice, theatrical performance and others activities were offered to women.

Thirdly, stress was laid upon introducing women to the processes of production and training them as skilled workers. In the meantime, because of its close association with the Five-Year Plans, it became a part of the industrialization process as a whole. In Soviet East, women's clubs were organised to provide women's training courses for various kinds of factory work and trades.

¹² Ibid, p.143.

At the same time the Soviet government introduced some economic measures by providing the rights of independent ownership of property and equal share in certain sphere, which made women more bold. Consequently thousands and thousands of women tore their veils and with uncovered faces came out on the streets collected the valuable paranjas and either set fire to them in the inner courtyards or altered them to clothing for the poor in sewing rooms, used for specific purposes. The campaign against the veil reached its height in Central Asia and Azerbaijan in the years of 1927 and 1928, with the Slogan "Down with the Chador! Down with the paranjas", the great offensive was opened on march 8th International Women's Day and the memorable battle fought, which was called Khudshun (attack) in Uzbekistan and is written in letters of flame in the history of women's liberation. Eye witnesses have described it as follows :

"On the day, preparations for which had begun months before, tens of thousands of women, huddled in paranjas and chachvans, poured like a menacing avalanche through the narrow, crooked streets, squares and bazaars of the ancient Central Asian cities — Samarqand, Bukhara, Tashkent, Khoqand and others. But above this silent gloomy approaching mass, still without faces or eyes, a sea of red flags floated high in the air : an eloquent protest against the old and hated byt. And like a blossoming red flower bed in the midst of a

barren, weedy field, a group of women with uncovered faces and red kerchiefs on their hands contrasted with the strange procession; they marched past with more or less firm trend; there were the few who had previously had the courage to break with their past and no longer to look upon the blue sky through a black grating.

“Amidst strains of music the vast multitude including a number of men and children gathered around the Lenin monument, which was likewise docketed with red banners and native carpets, and the women waited breathlessly for what was to come. Then the great meeting began. Thundering stinging words, but words too that were new, unaccustomed and inspiring, that moved the hearer's hearts, so deeply that they called forth a real frenzy of enthusiasm and unceasing shouts of exultation... They were flung aloft into the quivering air, timidly at first but then with ever wider and more frenzied speed, these symbols of slavery that the women cast off, paranjas, chachvan and chadors. They were piled in rapidly growing heaps, drenched with paraffin, and soon the dark clouds of smoke from the burning common abjuration unbearable, flared up into the bright sky of the spring day... But at the sight of this unique pyre the women's souls flamed aloft; they were ready to drop for shame fear and joy, for here they were daring, for the first time since their childhood, to show their faces openly, to break the prison bars, even

to ascent a platform, to follow the call of strangers... joyful excitement prevailed in the streets and clubs in the factories and festal assemblies. The East was stirred to the depth of its being.

“Every day a new story published in the newspapers “regarding the attack on the paranjas and the old byt”. The next year, 1928, this offensive was repeated on March 8th.¹³

☉ Mass media was another medium to promulgate the upliftment of women as well as women's movement in Central Asia. One of the best known women's film “SS evil”, taken from a drama of the same title and produced in the cinema studios of Baku, attained nationwide popularity. Standing on the peak of mountains of unveiled women's face could not be tolerated by the patriarchal society of Central Asia. Consequently hundreds of women were murdered because of disregarding the veil. In 1926 about thirty women were murdered in the three districts of Turkmen Republic alone.¹⁴

Fifty-One women were murdered in the Samarkand and Khorasan districts of Uzbekistan. Those who were not murdered were living in a terrible condition, scandalizing their lives by unexpected horrible stories spread against them, boycotted by the patriarchal

¹³ Ibid, p.172-173.

¹⁴ Patnaik, Ajay, Perestroika And Women Labour Force in Soviet Central Asia, New Delhi, (1989), p.21.

society constantly suspected by their family members. The story of Anna Jamal, an inhabitant of the Turkmen village of Yangolak, who was the first women to join the Communist Party, exemplifies the brutalities which were encountered by women in the course of their emancipation. In the dead of the night the assassins cut the skin on the forehead of her baby daughter and stabbed Anna Jamal to death.¹⁵ However, the sacrifice of Central Asian women, did not go in vain. Though slowly but steadily, radical changes came in the life of Central Asian women and on the soil of Central Asia a girl child took birth with a smile and opened her eyes without a veil. In the meantime a resolution was passed by the Central Executive Committee of Uzbekistan on march 7th, 1927, with the title of "protection of women" who have laid aside the paranjas.

"The women of Central Asia", the Resolution declared, "once slaves devoid of rights, have been made human beings and citizens of the Soviet union. As the rights conceded to them became real and practical, the women of Uzbekistan were beginning more and more to play their part in political constructive work and the life of the community. Desiring to cast off the last remnants of their former slavish existence, they lay aside the paranjas as the chief hinderance

¹⁵ Ibid, p.21.

to their participation in the national life. But the women who have unveiled were exposed to insults and ill-treatment and are attacked by ill-disposed persons. In order to protect these women and to prevent violence against them, all officers of justice and hereby instructed to facilitate notification by these women of such insults and to prosecute on behalf of the state, as exemplary prosecution."¹⁶

However not only unveiled women who were not able to benefit from all forms of development, even behind the veil large number of women were illiterate in Central Asia. But it does not mean that there was no progress in the colonial period. In 1888, for example, Altynsarin and other officials decided to open one Russian girl's school at Irgiz admitting ten Kazakh girls, who acquired a practical knowledge in sewing, housekeeping etc. During this time steps were taken to improve the education of Russians in Turkestan, necessary in the words of one authority "to strengthen the Russian population so that it can successfully bear the cultural and economic struggle, with the mass of the native population, without losing its religious, national and cultural characteristics and also begin the cultural elevation of the native population."¹⁷ As a result of which in Tashkent a School of "Empress Mary" (a girls' boarding school) in 1901 was

¹⁶ Halle Fannina, Women in the Soviet East, London (1938), p.176.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 217-218.

established. But at the higher level of Schooling the number of natives was very small. In 1896, 10 out of 327 students in the boys' high School in Tashkent and 8 out of 377 students in the girls high school were natives. In fact in the pre-revolutionary Central Asia only 2 percent of the population could read and write and in Treanscaspia only 1 percent. On the eve of the first five-year-plan the *Kontrolnye Tzifry* for 1928-29 state of the Asian Republics said, "Being in the recent pre-revolutionary past Tsarist colonies and Eastern despotism, the Central Asian Soviet Republics suffer from insufficient development of mass education and sanitary and hygienic conditions of life and are distinguished by the extremely low level of general culture and particularly of municipal services."¹⁸

However as a result of the first and the second five-year plan, by 1939 literacy in the different Republics varied from over 67 to 76.3 percent in Tajkistan from 90 percent to nearly 100 percent in other republics."¹⁹ During the fifty-years of Tsarist rule in Central Asia a total of 460 Schools were established. But in 1924, alone, 1,915 Schools were opened and within another ten years the number rose to 11,186. By this time universal compulsory education was introduced

¹⁸ Coates, W.P. and Zelda K. - Soviet in Central Asia London (1951) p. 113.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 113.

throughout the Soviet Union and "Red Yurtas" also played a vital role in order to reduce illiteracy.

In 1925 in Uzbekistan 1,200 grown-up women, as pupils, were learning twenty-one courses and in Turkmenistan the number was 270 women with ten courses. There were also ABC schools. As Lenin said : "Without the ABC there is no such thing as politics, but only gossip and prejudice. An illiterate is shut out from politics."²⁰ In fact these schools opened the way to literacy as by 1921, there were about 1,000 ABC schools in Turkestan with about 5000 students." In 1936, women constituted 45.1 percent of the total enrollment in Uzbekistan's ABC schools and towards the end of 1938, women constituted 52.1 percent of those attending higher types of schools."²¹ Although co-educational schools were not initially successful in the Central Asian Republics, still in 1926-27 academic year, 2.09 percent Uzbek girls attended co-educational schools and by 1928-29 constituted about 25.6 percent of students in these Schools.²² In Tajikistan, where even not a single women was literate and when there were no skilled working women before the resolution, by 1956, there were 240 women engineers and technicians, 80 women shop

²⁰ Halle Fannina Women in the Soviet East London (1938) p. 215.

²¹ Patnaik, Ajay - Perestroika - Women Labour Force in Soviet Central Asia New Delhi (1989) p. 23-24.

²² Ibid, p. 25.

superintendent and 286 forewomen.²³ Besides there were some schools for the young peasants, but it failed to attract them. In 1921-28 there were only 19 peasant women in eleven such schools in Uzbekistan. Not only academic schools and colleges but vocational training were also provided for the pupils, even importance was given to adult education. On May 6-19, 1919, at the First All-Russian congress Lenin had given a brief speech on adult education. By the 1935 it was stated that illiteracy was 86 percent abolished and there were 230 schools with a four years' courses and two dozen with seven years, 470 native teachers, 25,000 scholars, 140 reading huts and Red Libraries, ten colleges, central schools, and a Teachers' college in Astrakhan. The establishment of two educational institutions, the university of "The Labouring East in Moscow", the so-called "Kutv" and the institute of the people of the North in Leningrad-were important along with the creation of an alphabet for the people without a written language.

However the unexpected improvement of education and reduction of illiteracy motivated them (women) to be a part of social production, as women played a vital role in the agriculture of Central Asia, where they gathered 90 percent of the cotton harvest in most

²³ Ibid, p. 22.

districts. They were given importance in the "Kolkhozes", (the agricultural collectives). Throughout Uzbekistan, and in various other parts of Central Asia, majority of the women belonged to the Kolkhozes. There were hundreds of women managers in Kolkhozes. On the other hand, with substantial investment in agriculture in the first and second Five-Year Plans, the organisation of state and collective farms, of machine tractor stations, the provisions of fertilisers and the assistance given by agronomists, agriculture made great strides. During the cotton picking operation in 1931, districts of Uzbekistan show that there were 8,648 women's teams involving 162,960 women as collective farmers.

TABLE 1

Date	Number of collective farms	Numbers of individuals farmsteads	Numbers of collective farmers	Percentage of women collective farmers
1928-29	1,665	28,639	No date	2.2 percent
1929-30	3,576	228,965	10,873	4.7 percent
Feb. 1st, 1931	7,250	349,966	30,684	8.7 percent
Nov. 20th, 1931	9,687	626,070	267,663	41.7 percent

Source : Aminova R.Kh - The October Revolution and Women's Liberation in Uzbekistan, p.37.

Those figures indicate growth of peasant women's participation in collective farm production by 1933, the number of women's teams in Uzbekistan went upto 32,741 and that year there was 100 percent turn-out of women collective farmers in the fields. The machine-tractor-stations (MTS) made a big effort to introduce women's labour into agriculture women craft cooperatives to introduce women into new ways. Traditional crafts, such as clothes-making, knitwear, hosiery-making and cardboard articles production etc. were undertaken as the local crafts were labour intensive and not profitable."²⁴

Through these craft cooperative women developed the habit of productive labour and acquired new skills. At that time schools to train cooperative functionaries were opened in Tashkent as early as 1925, and special courses were also organised to train women cooperative members. This major task was undertaken in the Five-year-plan period, as it was planned to train 11,760 women in the Uzbek republic under the First-Five-year-plan, of which 7,747 were to receive secondary technical training or join the network of training and re-training courses for activities of production cooperatives."²⁵

²⁴ Aminova R. Kh, The October Revolution and Women's Liberation in Uzbekistan, Moscow, (1977), p.167.

²⁵ Patnaik, Ajay, Perestroika - Women Labour Force in Soviet Central Asia, New Delhi, (1989), p.37.

In the subsequent years, women began to play an important role in industrial activities. The characteristics of Central Asian industry was that the essential cotton and silk production were definitely called feminine trades. The workers in silkworm breeding were 80 percent women in Tajikistan and 90 percent in Uzbekistan. But there were no native women in the trade unions and among the urban women workers. At that time there were not a single Turkish woman in the oil industry of Baku; but in 1931 there were 18,000 and some of them were working in the docks. As gradually women became aware about their productive roles women's participation increased in different kinds of industries. In 1928, there were 1,946 women in the light industries of Uzbekistan and 49 in the heavy industries. Within a few years these figures have risen to 8,000 and 700 respectively. In the largest textile mill in Central Asia, the Tashkent "Textile Kombinat", 75 percent were women, with two thirds of them being native women in large clothing factories. In Tashkent, 95 percent of the workers were Uzbek women in the famous silk mill at Ferghana 98 percent of women were native. Nearby 100,000 women were employed in the industries of Kazakhstan and the majority were Kazakhs. Besides, Home industries and Cooperatives were also established in Turkmenistan. There were 100,000 women in cooperatives of Turkmenistan, mainly in carpet

weaving, there were already 30,000 women.²⁶ For several years they formed the semi-skilled workers in Uzbekistan and in various parts of Central Asia. The lower participation of Central Asian women compared to their European counterparts was not only confined to skilled jobs, but in many sorts of occupations." For Example, out of 3,492 women in the textile mills of the Ferghana city, only 161 were Uzbeks. Similarly out of the 1,688 women who joined these mills in 1954 only 281 were Uzbek women. In 1959 in the industry of Ferghana oblast 4,515 women were working of whom 960 were engineers Shop chiefs, and foremen.²⁷ However the participation of women in industrial activities were low because of low migration of people from rural areas to urban areas, but still it was a big achievement for Soviet govt. to bring them out of the veil.

Not only in the field of agriculture and industry, women participated in all kinds of jobs in the service sectors and the growth of this sector increased the percentage of women's employment. The indigenous women of Central Asia largely preferred teaching and medical profession. In 1965 in the Uzbek Republic, 74 percent women were employed in the health field, while 51 percent in the field of

²⁶ Halle Fannina, Women in the Soviet East, London, (1938), p.259-260.

²⁷ Patnaik, Ajay, Perestroika - Women Labour Force in Soviet Central Asia, New Delhi, (1989), p.45.

education, and in 1972, 73.3 percent of women were in health and security sphere while 53.3 percent in education and culture. In 1970, in retail trade and public catering 41 percent in Tajkistan, 46 percent in Uzbekistan and 56 percent in Turkmenia were women.²⁸

TABLE 2

Working Women In The Non-Collective Farm - Labour Force

PLACES	1959	1970	1975	1979
Uzbekistan	29.8 percent	43.6 percent	46.3 percent	46.7 percent
Kirghizia	64.2 percent	80.7 percent	33.1 percent	54.5 percent
Tajikistan	67.9 percent	73.8 percent	23.4 percent	36.4 percent
Turkmenia	59.9 percent	78.7 percent	28.6 percent	40.7 percent

Source : (Ellen Johns and Fred W. Grupp, Modernization value change and fertility in the Soviet Union (London, 1987, pp.216-217).

It was written down in "The Directives of the 24th CPSU congress for the Ninth-Five-year-Economic Development plan of the USSR for 1971-75", that the plans 'main task was to ensure a considerable rise in the living standard and cultural level of the people on the basis of rapid development of socialist production and enhancement of its efficiency, scientific and technological progress

²⁸ N. Lubin, Labour and Nationality in Soviet Central Asia, (London : 1984), p.192.

and rapid increase in labour productivity.²⁹

As we know, the major event in the development of soviet statehood was the promulgation of the 1936 constitution, which built the foundation of legal socialism and a society in which the exploitation of man by man and national oppression had been abolished. Then the latest Soviet constitution was adopted in 1977, to promulgate the developed socialist society. The fundamental principles of socialist statehood were based on socialist ownership of the means of production, with were state authority concentrated in the hand of working people led by the working class.³⁰

The socialist mode of life is a result of radical social transformation which took place in the course of socialist constitution. ~~The~~ October Revolution and adaptation of Soviet government on the basis of socialist democracy, had, by giving equal legal rights to women shown a vital change in Soviet union as well as in Central Asia. In fact after this revolution women became more conscious about their role in the society, acquired a greater awareness of their contribution to and responsibility for social development.

²⁹ Progress Publisher, Soviet Women - Some aspects of the status of women in the USSR, (Moscow), 1975, p.115.

³⁰ Progress Publisher, The Soviet Constitution - A Dictionary, (Moscow), 1986, p.5-6.

CHAPTER II

SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES IN CENTRAL ASIA

DURING PERESTROIKA

Radical social transformations, took place in the course of socialist construction, which developed by adopting certain legal and governmental measures, on the basis of the public ownership of the means of production, on the equality of man and woman, on the friendly and mutual understanding between peoples. The USSR was the first country to experiment with the socialist pattern of society by creating the necessary socio-economic conditions capable of successfully dealing with the most complex problems for the Soviet Central Asian women's personality. The Soviet society, even the government made every effort to guide and regulate their personality. Since the October revolution, comprehensive measures have been taken at the governmental as well as non-governmental level to change the centuries old traditions and superstitions.

During Soviet rule socio-cultural changes were resisted by the archaic customs and traditions of the Soviet Central Asian society. It made uneasy the transformation from an agrarian society to a modern society.

In Soviet Central Asia, social traditions and attitudes were regulated by a male based patriarchal society where women were suppressed in each and every field. Early marriage, fewer divorce, existence of large families confined socio-occupational mobility and women's participation in Social production. Early marriages lead to incomplete education or stopped the progress towards higher education. Bigger families with more children resulted due to traditional values and cultural entities. Consequently, the level of modernization among Soviet Central Asian women was low and even their share in the intelligentsia or white-collar personnel was very low. Apart from it, due to the continuation of traditional division of labour within the family those women who participated in social production hardly had any functional specialization. Women were limited within their household work, in agriculture, in collective and state farms. About half of the able-bodied women were working in Uzbek collective farms and constituted less than 3 percent of the mechanized agricultural workers. As many as 99 percent of the manual workers in the state farms were women.¹ Comparatively, the manual labour was much higher in the total labour force in the industries. They constituted about a third of the scientific workers,

¹ Ajay, Patnaik, Central Asia : Between Modernity and Tradition (New Delhi), 1996, p.138.

one-eighth of the doctor of sciences, one-tenth of the professors and about two-fifth of the head doctors.² In Soviet Central Asia, women generally preferred to work seasonally on unskilled and manual jobs, such as cotton-picking, work in light and food industries, collective and state farms and in agriculture. Overall figures for women's labour show that 43 percent of women working in industry are engaged in manual labour, almost 90 percent in agriculture, and 18 percent of women working in plants and factories work the night shifts.³ So the level of manual labour remained very high in Central Asian republics. It was as high as 66.6 percent in the national economy as a whole in Tajikistan in 1979.⁴

In Soviet Central Asia, heavy and large scale-industries were located in urban cities, which required skilled labours, and the level of unskilled labours were very high in these regions. For example 94 percent of rural women were not trained or employed.⁵ Consequently for skilled labours, industries were dependent on external factors particularly on European countries. The gap therefore between skilled European labours and unskilled local workers were inflicted by the

² Ibid., p.138.

³ Kathleen Watters, "The Current Family Planning Debate in Soviet Central Asia", in *Central Asia Survey*, Vol.9, No.1, (1990), p.79.

⁴ Ajay, Patnaik, *Central Asia :Between modernity and Tradition* (New Delhi), 1996, p.142.

⁵ Ibid., p.68

social as well as economic complexities. However, the lower socio-occupational mobility and a large share of unskilled workers among natives were characteristic of Central Asia.

Compared to the European republics, due to centuries old traditional values, related to having more children large families were very common in Soviet Central Asian republics. The average family size in Soviet Central Asia was about six to ten as compared to the European republics, where the average size of family was only three.⁶ Family planning supporters believed that large families affected a woman's activity in the public sphere such as in education and participation in social production. It is generally accepted that as the number of children rises, the educational levels of women are drop, which came out as the reasons of unemployment and high birth rate. Unemployment figures were twice as high as the national average and 3.5 to four million jobs need to be created by 2005 - a project that could cost as much as 80-100 billion rubles. According to family planing advocates "it is impossible to accept the (current) rate of population growth".⁷

⁶ Katheleen Watter "The current Family Planning Debate in Soviet Central Asia", in Central Asian Survey, Vol.9, No.1, (1990), p.79.

⁷ Ibid., p.79.

In the contemporary period with the rapid growth of industries there was general labour shortage in the former USSR and in the industries of Central Asia as well. There was substantial underemployment and unemployment in Central Asia, despite, rapid development of industrialization and labour shortage in the urban cities. The rate of women's participation in labour activity did not exceed 40 percent in any of the Soviet Central Asian republics. Besides, seasonal unemployment was very high in Central Asian republics. In Tajikistan half of women who worked in July did not work in December. In Southern Kirghizia, the total hours worked by women between December and March were only one-third of that recorded during the cotton-picking season between September and November.⁸ This unique form of unemployment existed only in Central Asia. Because of the existence of large families high birth rate had a negative impact on economy and on the quality of labour, which affected the education and skill levels of women. Raising of children from an early age and a large number later, inhibited the rise in the cultural levels of women especially mothers. Long interruptions in work due to child-bearing also limited their potential for participation in social production. In some republics like Tajikistan and

⁸ Ajay, Patnaik, *Central Asia :Between modernity and Tradition* (New Delhi), 1996, p.109.

Turkmenistan especially due to the lack of informatic family planning policy and sex education the rural population increased in absolute number and its share in the total population exceeded than that of the urban areas. In 1988, the rate of population growth was more than three times higher in the Central Asian republics than in the country as a whole. According to Joseph S. Berliner, the higher the educational level specially of women lower was the size of the family.⁹ Infact, variation in birth rates depends on difference of occupational status and professional skill of women. White-collar mothers had fewer children than workers and workers had fewer than the collective farmers. In general higher the skill smaller was the family, but some time large families were found among workers with high qualifications or with engineering and technical skills.¹⁰ Among women in white-collar jobs lowest birth rates were found among those working in the sphere of science, culture and art, cooperatives, cultural organisations and public health. But higher birth rate was to be found among women who engaged in communal, personal and household services.¹¹

⁹ Ibid., p.109.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.109.

¹¹ Ibid., p.139.

In Soviet Central Asia, according to Susan Bridger, women were trained in rural vocational technical colleges, but were unable to make a full-time career as machine operators and rarely found jobs in urban areas. On the other hand rural women hardly acquired professional technical education in those schools of Tajikistan, they found only about 16 percent women of the total number of students in the PTUs in 1983. The number of students in the professional-technical schools as a whole was extremely low, only about a quarter of the total students in Tajikistan in 1980 and in the rural areas girls found about 12 percent of the total students in those schools.¹² In fact, the educational policy revealed many peculiar measures to create highly skilled local workers and train them outside the region. For example, about 25,000-30,000 students from Tajikistan were sent each year to study out-side the region and they were intended to work not in Soviet Central Asia, but in the labour deficient regions.¹³ For the progress of educational and training process, the CPSU Central Committee Resolution (in 1987) summed up "On the unsatisfactory use of natural and economic potential of the agro-industrial complex in the Uzbek, Tajik and Turkmen republics", which underlined that the party, Soviet and agricultural agencies had failed in those

¹² Ibid., p.142.

¹³ ibid., p.116.

republics to take exhaustive steps to train agricultural officials and specialists in economics in the new conditions. Again they said vocational training for machine operators and for other personnel to fill the most common occupations, in irrigated farming and animal husbandry was seriously lagging.¹⁴

In fact all these socio-economic problems and complexities were transformed through perestroika, (Restructuring or radical reform) during Gorbachev's period. It embraced all spheres of Soviet Central Asia's economy, politics culture, morality even people's daily life - all were being swept by changes. It was a struggle with the old with the obsolete, with the conservative, with everything that hampers progress. Perestroika was a set of tactics aimed at resolving contradictions, which involved with certain mobilizing strategies like self-interest, a mobilizing principle which involved with the changes of economic, social and political accountability. With the advent of perestroika the notion of law and control meant that the Soviet Union along with Central Asia were intended to move towards a legally constituted governing region and extended guarantees for civil rights to the people. Gorbachev observed in the Nineteenth Party Conference in June 1988, the process of the consistent

¹⁴ Ibid., p.118.

democratization of Soviet society should complete the creation of a socialist state governed by the rule of law.¹⁵

In Soviet Central Asia during perestroika, the relations between individual and the society was radically changed. There had been a move from collective interest through state, towards a market pluralism, in which individual as well as groups could acquired more freedom. But under perestroika, those who supported the traditional values associated with Stalinism and the state socialist system of centralisation were marginalized. Though they were not repressed but their access to the mass media was restricted. It is argued that the leaders of the Soviet Union have had to carry out industrial development in the face of resistance from the carriers of traditional forces and the political elites people have had to establish their legitimacy after revolution and war. However, lack of freedom for women were the targets of perestroika, which placed emphasis on the socio-cultural, demographic factor.

Gorbachev viewed that the renewal of socialism is unthinkable without an utmost activation of society's intellectual and spiritual potential contained in science, education and the whole of culture. The task of drastically changing priorities, raising the role of the

¹⁵ David, Lane, Soviet Society under Perestroika (Oxford), 1986, p.15.

spiritual sphere and overcoming its under estimation was set at the beginning of Perestroika.¹⁶ According to the report of CPSU Central Committee to the 27th party congress, special attention was paid to Turkmenia where productivity of social labours had not increased in the past fifteen years. The socio-economic as well as scientific technological progress in the region could lessen the level of low-skilled and manual work. Acceleration of the productivity of social labour was an important aspects of restructuring and in this respect Central Asia had a long way to go. Gorbachev equated the word 'restructuring' to 'revolution', when he said in his famous Khabarovsk speech (on 31 July, 1986), "The question today is of transformation on no less a scale. The current restructuring embraced not only the economy, but all aspects of public life-social relations, political system the spiritual and ideological sphere, and style and methods of party work.... Restructuring is a word loaded with meaning "I would equate the word "restructuring" with the word "revolution". Our transformations and the reforms mapped out in the ...27th party Congress. A resolution in the entire system of social relations, in the hearts and minds of the people, in the psychology and the understanding of the modern period and above all of the tasks

¹⁶ Ajay, Patnaik, Perestroika, Women Labour Force in Soviet Central Asia, (New Delhi), 1989, p.178.


engendered by rapid scientific and technological progress".¹⁷ At the same time equalizing attitudes crop up from time to time. Everybody should be equally measured irrespective of his or her gender differentiation. That is why after a certain point of time it should be perfectly clear that socialism cannot ensure conditions of life and consumption in accordance with principles "from each according to his ability to each according to his needs". Unlike communism socialism has a different criterion for distributing social benefit, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work". There is no exploitation between man and man and no gender discrimination, no division into rich and poor, into millionaire and paupers; all nations are equal among equals; all people are guaranteed jobs; we have free secondary and higher education and free medical services; citizens are free provided in old age. This is the embodiment of social justice under socialism.¹⁸

Gorbachev and some leaders liked to enhance the position of women but the priority most certainly was given to the women's of Soviet Central Asia and to their reproductive role. It was intended to

¹⁷ R.R. Sharma "From twenty-Second to Twenty-seventh CPSU Congress: The nature and direction of change in social relations of production in the USSR", in Man and Development, Vol.IX, No.2, July 1987, New Delhi, p.75.

¹⁸ M. Gorbachev, *Perestroika : New thinking from our country and the world* (collins), 1987, p.100.

develop a part-time and home-working, to encourage women to work and look after children, Additional holidays were available to women with two or more children under twelve years of age. Those women also were given priority for leave in the summer or during holidays. At same time two extra weeks as unpaid leave and fourteen days paid leave per annum were provided for to look after a sick child. The policy was promulgated to encourage birth and the rearing of children by women. In fact the effect of policies during Gorbachev's period, could not properly influence to the Soviet Union and Central Asian people within Soviet Union Central Asia was an exception not to regularised the effective policies. The causes were the strong impact of Central Asian traditional values and cultural entities.

 However restructuring process required specific approaches in the Soviet Central Asian context. There had to great emphasis on Socio-Cultural and psychological factors. Unless in Central Asia, progressive nature of education and the number of skilled workers increased and the centuries old traditional values and superstitions are changed, the effect of perestroika could not turn up in positive ways. Increase in production, new educational and professional system along with wage system, and emphasis on private agriculture could produce positive results. But for that people's skill had to be mobilized and the demographic pressure to be lessened. The progress

on scientific and technological factor was to be modernized, specifically in light and food industries. Because those industries were more attractive in Soviet Central Asian republics and could absorb the surplus indigenous rural labour force.

The socio-cultural restructuring process was a vital factor in order to bring radical transformation in Soviet Central Asia. Measure such as giving emphasis on light and food industries, location of labour-intensive industries and service enterprise in urban and rural areas, expanding housing and communal service to serve the need of the people and to facilitate migration raising to educational and skill level etc, could enable them (rural indigenous women) to take up urban occupations and get away from the hold of traditions and customs. Finally legal administrative measures had to be undertaken to enforce the existing prohibition on practices such as early marriages, bride prices and others. The existing nature of Central Asia's labour force was a reflection of the new society. The growth of this class among various ethnic groups provided various developmental social activities among different nationalities. In fact, uniformity is more important to maintain harmony among different nationalities. In the absence of it particularly in Central Asia resurgence of militant nationalism was too real a danger.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN'S POSITION IN POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

The five Central Asian states have been facing the consequences of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The effects of fuel and raw material shortages, transport and distribution break down, strikes, environmental shutdowns and ethnic disturbances are strongly felt. Inter-ethnic relations have been affected negatively by the economic crisis. Socio-economic problems and the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism again brought women's issues to the forefront during this period. Islam emerged as the alternative source of authority. Since independence of Central Asia, senior political activists began to highlight their Islamic credentials by consorting with clerics, visiting mosques, encouraging religious holidays and giving emphasis on the positive ways of Islamic life. The leaders of the secular democratic movement were obliged to adopt a more religious posture to widen their appeal to the masses. Since the late 1980s many mosques have come into existence and Islamic holidays are observed in Central Asia. Tajikistan has declared a public holiday one day during Ramadan (the fast) and Kurban (marking Abraham's Sacrifice); Turkmenistan made Kurban a public holiday; Uzbekistan

allows Ryza Hayit (the "little festival" ending Ramadan); but Kirghistan allows none. All commemorate the pre-Islamic Persian spring festival, Navruz with two days off in Tajikistan.¹

The efforts of the religious culture began to closely influence the large towns, specially at the teaching institutions. At Dushanbe schools of higher education, the observance of fasting during Ramazán is becoming widespread, as is the observance of modest female dress (hijab).² According to Malashenka the widen activity of religious forces in central Asia was related to the worsening of the economic situation after 1985.³ Abduvakhitov highlighted that Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia is a result of the social and economic crisis. Malashenko is of the opinion that Islamic revivalism generally affected those peoples of Central Asia who were not acquainted with modern industrial sector and to the indigenous people, who are living in the rural area.⁴

Since the independence of Central Asia and re-emergence of Islamic fundamentalism, women are most likely to be adversely affected. During the Soviet period many Central Asian women have

¹ Ajay Patnaik, *Central Asia, Between Modernity and Tradition*, Konarka Publishers, 1996, p.199.

² *Ibid.*, p.199.

³ *Ibid.*, p.200.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.200.

seen a progressive improvement in their economic and social position. But now they face the danger of being forced to lead a subordinate existence.⁵ Even at the religio-cultural level women were more active but after independence, there seems to be a reassertion of the patriarchal values and revival of fundamentalism.⁶ According to Gillian Tett, in Tajikistan men specifically are again playing a greater role in Islamic practices whereas women, during Soviet time were performing the bulk of Islamic rituals like Ramadan fasting, bibi-Sehambe or Grandmother's Tuesday, Mushkil-Kushoda or the solving of difficulties, carrying out a number of domestic rituals to ward off the evil eye and orchestrated the large number of religious rituals that accompanied life cycle rituals such as birth, marriage and death.⁷ Compared with other republics the impact of geographical disruption and weak Central Government resulted the revival of Islam in Tajikistan. With the rise of Islamic party in Tajikistan's political scene and the growing visibility of Islam in the republic. Women have become an issue of bitterness in the political scene, specially between the Islamic party and ex-communist government. Among them some are opposed to the Islamic party, only because of its

⁵ Ibid., p.294.

⁶ Ibid., p.204.

⁷ Ibid., p.204.

alleged plan to introduce the veil, the shariat and prevent women to work, while the ex-communist party opposed the veil-or paranjas, as symbols of everything backward and conservative. The supporters of the Islamic party accused the old Soviet Communist regime of "dishonouring" Tajik women by introducing Russian patterns of behaviour, dress etc. They believe Tajikistan suffered during the Soviet period. The present Islamic revivalism in Central Asia aims to alter this situation:

1. With the revival of Islam across the republic men are coming to play an ever greater role in Islamic practices. Whereas women might have defacto carried the greatest religious burden during the Soviet years, it is now men who dominate Islam in the public sphere and are setting the agenda for the discourse on what Islam should "mean" for women.
2. Much of the emotion generated around the "women's question" at present in Central Asia, would seem to be linked to the continuing sense that a community's honour depends on its ability to protect its women from alien cultural and political pressures - be they Communism, Russification or even calls for

a new type of Islamic orthodoxy. The Islamic party calls the Russification of Tajik women, the "shame" of Tajikistan.⁸

This is the reason the women of Tajikistan are living in a situation where Islamic fundamentalism force them to accept orthodox Islam, instead of liberating themselves. The growing influence and strength of Islam is striking in Tajikistan. Once seven weeks of street demonstration intended to overthrow the old communist leadership and apparatus took on an increasing Islamic character. During these weeks many thousand of Tajikistan's Muslims, who had been prevented from praying in public and from religious instruction all their lives, learned how to pray. Living in tents at what was renamed 'Martyrs Square', in front of the presidential palace, citizens from many parts of the country came to listen to the speeches and sermons, poetries and prayers. When the week went by, confrontation with power deepened the prayers gradually increased from once to five times a day. Increasingly women were seen with their arms, legs and hair covered. Everyday people have to be in the square, said Mohammed Khadizodekh, editor of a new newspaper "The Tribune of Islam" and a leader of the long secret Islamic Renaissance Party. Founded fifteen years ago and now

⁸ Gillian Tett, "Women and Islam in Tajikistan", For Conference on Women, Demographic and Family in Muslim Societies, at and O.A.S., July 6-10, (1992).

in the open "we ourself were learning politics here" Mr. Khadizodekh said "just as the people in the square were learning how to pray."⁹

But the same party is still banned in Uzbekistan. The officially sanctioned Islamic clergy based in Tashkent, the (Uzbek capital), was infiltrated by the government and the KGB. Religious practices were endured by the old but sharply discouraged for the young. Islam was widely practiced and taught at home, often in the kitchen, around the table. The other Central Asian nationalities tended to be more passive. The Kazakhs and Kirghiz stemming from nomadic tribes did not build up urban centres for Islamic study as Uzbekistan did.¹⁰ In Uzbekistan rather than in other central Asian republics, women had to choose of the two alternatives. On the one side the tradition which they inherited from their ethnic group and the other side the imposed modernity which totally replaced the old ways. This dilemma was visible in the sphere of social relations where women were emancipated in the modern way, while in the sphere of private life, success depended on certain rules of conduct derived from Islam. This dual personality which on one hand allows former communists to depend on the ideology of the state, and prompts them to participate

⁹ The Times of India, "With Mahocists Gone, it's Islam New", New Delhi, 13th June, 1992.

¹⁰ Ibid.

in religious ceremonies. In the republic of Uzbekistan there exist fifteen confessional communities, some of them being non-traditional for Uzbekistan and the secular state's attitudes towards them is guided by the following principles:-

1. Respect for the religious feelings of believers.
2. Recognition of religious convictions being private practice of citizens or their communities.
3. Guarantees of equal rights and prohibition of persecution of citizens both professing religions and those who do not profess.
4. Need for dialogues with different religious associations to utilize their possibilities for spiritual revival, promotion of the universal moral values.
5. Recognition of inadmissibility to use religion with destructive aims.¹¹

This shows that these tremendous changes, whether directly or indirectly determine the social, political and economic development of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The policy of openness, commitment to democratic principles, universal values and norms influenced not only the processes of democratization of social life in the Republic,

¹¹ Karimov Islam, "Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the 21st Century" (1997), p.37.

but also the perception of these changes by the world community to form a new modern image of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The civil society is a social space, where law commands only for the self-development of a person and for the realization of his interests the maximum implementation of his rights and freedoms. The processes of building up of the democratic institutions, entails three effective criteria to defined it.

1. to what extent the public is informed about the decision-making processes.
2. to what extent the governmental decisions are under the control of the public.
3. to what extend ordinary citizens take part in the state management¹²

And if there is not a feasible progress in these three fields, then it must merely be either populism or simply a political game.

Comparatively in Kyrgyzstan of questions were raised regarding the position of women in the new order. Sh. Khudabaeva, Chairperson of the Kyrgyz women's committee, noted in condition of rapid change and the relegitimization of some traditional attitudes, she (Sh. Khudabaeva) argued for stronger guarantees of equality and

¹² Ibid, p.154.

against discrimination. The first victims of unemployment were women, who were more or less absent from leading positions. For example, the reference in Article-80 the traditional courts of elders (aksakals) make it clear that these would include older women as well as men. Khudabaeva suggested it might be necessary to provide a quota system for parliamentary representation which provided women with one third of mandates. In a number of regions there was the possibility of old marriage customs resurfacing because of the revival of Islamic influences in public life, not only in Kyrgyzstan but in other Central Asian Republics also.¹³

Even in Turkmenistan one writer wanted to make explicit that marriage must be a voluntary union, a present suggestion in the light of a 1994 decision of the republican authorities to decriminalize practices such as bride price (Kalym) and polygamy.¹⁴ These criticisms however were only partially addressed by the constitutional texts. The Turkmen version repeated some of the socio-economic rights, that had been guaranteed by the past Soviet constitution.

¹³ John Anderson, "Constitutional Development in Central Asia", Central Asian Survey, 1997, 16(3).

¹⁴ Ibid., p.311.

In Kyrgyzstan most of these (Article 21-41) did appear but it was suggested, for example, in the realms of education and health care, that state provision would be supplemented wherever appropriate by private insurance schemes.¹⁵ Moreover, in practice it was unclear how impoverished states facing continuing economic problems would be able to implement such rights in the foreseeable future.

Infact, the adoption of new constitutions failed to resolve many disputed socio-economical as well as political questions. Overall, the rising nature of Islamic fundamentalism, ethnic problems, decline in economical reforms and fall in living standards created sub-conscious resentments among the Central Asian peoples. Within the regions Kirgystan is a front runner and is followed by Kazakhstan. Uzbekistan in liberalising their socio-economic structure and have succeeded to some extent in facing the danger of Islamic fundamentalism, under which women would literally be exploited specifically in the name of Islamic laws. Tajikistan influenced by various internal and external factors is becoming Islamicised and a civil war has been continuing there since independence. Turkmenistan is the least liberalised economy but is relatively free

¹⁵ Ibid., p.311.

from the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism. In fact the efforts made by the Soviet-authorities to eradicate centuries' old traditions could not entirely succeed. Polygamy, marriage of underage girls, the tendency of marriageable girls to quit schools, arranged marriages, the practice of kalyms, separation of the sexes in Central Asian homes (with the *ichkari* for women and the *tashkari* for men), all these practices were attacked but still are prevalent among the indigenous people of Central Asia. And again Islamic resurgence is providing an effective basis to bring back the old traditional values and practices that are likely to roll back the progress made by Central Asian women during the Soviet period.

CONCLUSION

Central Asia, the very name conjures up a vision of rugged terrain, hardy folk, living in tune with nature, whose medieval ancestors had established magnificent empires in China and the Indian subcontinent. A region full of history and romance as testified by the gleaming domes and towering minarets of Samarkhand, Bukhara and Khorasan, which grew prosperous on the flourishing profits of the Silk Trade.

However, the present reality is most bitter. People battling a transition to the market economy, the struggle between individual liberty and religious laws, trying to maintain independence amidst fierce competition by the MNCs to exploit its abundant natural resources, Central Asia is trying, amidst all these, to create a space, an identity for itself.

At one stage of their history, the Central Asian people, who led a nomadic existence, went through a matriarchal phase, where women had a visible role, as reflected by the traditions and folk tales. As a proverb puts it, "Dog's don't bark at a woman". At a young age, women were trained in the arts of handling weapons as their very

livelihood depended on their hunting skills. A strict gender segregation would not have worked in a nomadic society.

Gradually, the influence of Islam coupled with the transformation to a settled, agricultural society, created a difference. The Shariat and the Hadis were the basis of civil life, as interpreted by the priests and enforced by men. Women had no choice in the interpretation of the scriptures. Treated as slaves and chattels by their husbands, women had no right to private property, even on their own self, as they could belong to any male (eg. women were always addressed in the third person by their male relatives). Banished from the public sphere, they spent their lives in a cloistered existence, their gaze under surveillance through the thick veils. Their labour had no economic value.

The 1917 Revolution strived to transform the situation of the Muslim women. The Bolsheviks were convinced that the October Revolution had intended to designate her as a producer in the new society. In order to achieve this objective, they considered that it was necessary first to eliminate the 'oppression of the Muslim women inherited from Czarism', thus they favoured her economic and social liberation. But this liberation could only be gained if the Soviet state replaced what it called the 'old feudal structures' with a new

industrial and agricultural model destined to foster the creation of a socialist economy.

In Central Asia, Soviet policy toward women was implemented in two steps. The first measure to be taken was the secularization of family law, starting in 1918 with the arrival in the region of the Revolution. The second step was a campaign of emancipation, called *hujum* (offensive), launched at the end of 1926. The aim of these measures was to bring the indigenous woman up to the level of the proletarian Russian woman in all areas - cultural, social, economic and political - in order to achieve equality among all workers, male and female in the Soviet Union.

These initial measures of the Bolsheviks had a profound impact on the status of Muslim women. A new set of codes and civil tribunals replaced the traditional Shariat-based tribunals which had previously regulated family life; equality before the law for all citizens, regardless of ethnic or national origin, sex and social status, was proclaimed; women were given the right to vote and access to all positions of power. (Art. 64 of the Soviet Constitution of 1918) and from 1921 onwards, religious marriage, *kalym* (bride price) and polygamy were prohibited, while the legal age for marriage was fixed at 16 (instead of 9) for girls and 18, (instead of 16) for boys.

It was in fact the wearing of veil which became the principal target of the hujum, the offensive launched simultaneously against traditional lifestyles, cloistering of women, 'the heritage of slavery', etc. (while the Uzbek term 'hujum' denotes the emancipation campaign in general, it is generally understood today to mean the struggle against the veil). And while it is true that this campaign worked for the abolition of the local veil, it sought above all to influence women ideologically in such a way that they might be integrated into the system of production.

The progressives had labelled the veil as the 'mobile prison for women.' This struggle mainly affected Uzbek and Tajik women (who wore the paranja, traditional garb which covered the body entirely and which had a woven screen covering the face, (chavchan) and married Turkmen women, whose somewhat less strict garb (a iashmak worn with a bonnet (boryk), actually left the face partially uncovered. This struggle sought to gain mass appeal, and women were encouraged to remove their veils in public and burn them, preferably on the 8th of March or the 1st of May. This took place in the countryside where festivals were specially organized for this purpose.

It was not until 1932 that the hujum campaign ended. That year marked the beginning of a new era for Central Asian women, for it

witnessed the appearance of the first generation of Soviet Central Asian women, educated and trained by the Communist Party. The arrival of this first generation was made possible by the division of Central Asia (razmezhavanie) into five federated Soviet Republics in 1924 (Uzbekistan, Kirghistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan) and by the elimination of illiteracy which took by the end of the 1940s. These two features of Stalin's policy concerning nationalities created the necessary conditions for the promotion of Central Asian women. It was thus during the period of the 'hujum' that the first women national cadres appeared, as well as the first women engineers, teachers, journalists, actresses etc. in the five Central Asian Republics.

But, adherence to the new system of Soviet values exposed Central Asian women to the risk of being attacked by religious conservatives who were fiercely opposed to the hujum. Numerous women who dared to shed the veil during this period were assassinated. But even these who had refused emancipation were not safe : they were forced to confront the intensive propaganda of the Communist organizers, who used terror tactics to express their point. Though the liberation campaign came to an end in 1932, those responsible for the anti-religious struggle continued to promote a

model of emancipation in which the Russian women were held as a paragon of virtue until the time of Perestroika.

Glasnost and Perestroika forced the Soviet State to rethink the 'women's question'. As Gorbachev himself put it, working on construction sites, engaged in scientific research, women no longer had sufficient time for their families. Writing in 1989, a woman engineer from the provincial Russian city of Vladimir described family life as similar to a subsistence economy, if a mother wants her child to be healthy, she herself becomes a nurse. If she wants her child to eat well, she has to slave, and work on a small holding if she wants her children to be well dressed, she has to learn to sew and knit. All these chores are generally handled by women." As the famous Soviet poet Evgenii Evtshenko noted, women have three jobs : at the workplace, in lines, and with their children, homes and kitchens.

For the women of Central Asia 'how to feed, clothe and clean' are still major anxieties. The transition to the market economy has made matters worse. There is food in the shops and consumer goods are available in plenty but the purchasing power has declined. And women would be the first to be thrown out of low-skilled jobs.

The rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism has also to be accounted for, for in any religious resurgence the first victims are

invariably women. Whereas in the days of the USSR, Islam symbolized above all, national identity, with the coming of independence it came to be religious identity again, precisely that religious identity which had been battered by Soviet power. since 1991 the process of re-Islamization (actually begun in the days of perestroika) has grown by leaps and bounds. To be sure, the special attention it has now received from the newly independent states has allowed religion once again to play a major role in society. Religious activity, hidden for so long, is finally beginning to spread. Many observers have been surprised by the magnitude of changes in this area which include the authorization to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, the construction and restoration of mosques, the opening of various religious establishments, the development of religious literature, the implementation of public call to prayer in Arabic, the wearing of beards for men and the hijab for women, the reappearance of the parandja and the revival of Islamic cooperative engagements.

Freedom of conscience and of worship is guaranteed in the new constitutions adopted between 1992 and 1993, but not one of the new nations in the region has recognized Islam as its official religion. Even though the validity of the secular state is not questioned in these new constitutions, they do contain direct allusions to Islam. Specifically it

is referred to as an 'element of historic culture', a statement which implies an awakening of religious awareness.

The leaders of the Central Asian states have contributed heavily to this awakening. They have encouraged the construction or restoration of mosques and financed the opening of new religious establishments. The Muslim Spiritual Boards, which were institutionalized in 1991, control the religious establishments in the larger cities. Central Asian Islam can once again produce its own theologians.

Central Asia, in the post Soviet period has to adjust to a new situation of market and competition, without subsidy and assured prices for its products. To be efficient and competitive means productivity of labour, which in the past had either been negative or stagnant. Women would be the first victims of the campaign to get rid of excess and redundant labour on farms. Where would this labour force go?

The level of education among women is very low in rural areas, due to early marriage and traditional attitude that forces them to drop out after primary or incomplete secondary education. There is little chance of them migrating to non-agricultural occupations in the urban areas. Increased birth rate in Central Asia also has a negative impact

on the quality of labour because it affects the education and skill level of women. Raising of children from an early age and a large number later, inhibit the rise in the cultural levels of women, especially mothers. Long interruptions in work due to child-bearing also limits their potential for participation in economic activities. This is why women work fewer man-days than men and have a high degree of seasonality.

So, if there are no alternative employment opportunities created in the rural area itself in the form of locating low-skilled industrial and service enterprises, more and more women would be unemployed.

Education and training which can help in occupational mobility have been of limited success in the case of indigenous women. Since professional choices have been limited to non-productive spheres, technical education has received low priority among women. In the rural areas, where most of the women are in agriculture, receiving or raising of skill is a rare phenomenon. Women mostly go into general education which does not help much in creating a technical intelligentsia among women.

The persistence of the traditional culture exerts strong pressures on women to avoid occupations where interactions with

males would be greater. Thus, in such branches as public dining, trade, housing and communal and everyday services, women employment level in general is extremely low. The prevailing notion of work appropriate for men and women has kept women away from many occupations in agriculture like driving tractors and operating machines. Lack of horizontal and vertical mobility among Central Asians more so in the case of women, has in the past been a barrier to efficient use of machines and technological change, since there was constant pressure to retain the surplus labour force rather than leave them unemployed. In the case of women, it would mean back to the household chores, which would erode their equality.

The Central Asian women are torn on the one hand between the traditions they inherited from their ethnic group and on the other hand, the modernity imposed by Moscow - a modernity which was supposed to totally replace the old ways. The capable, efficient Russian woman - the role model for Central Asian women is gradually being replaced by the veiled women. The new Islamic parties accuse the Soviet Regime of 'dishonouring' women by introducing Russian style patterns of behaviour and dress codes. Increasingly, the target is the miniskirted, gaudily dressed Russified girl who represents the height of 'cultural corruption' and the threat to 'religious purity'.

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