Between the Slogans of Communism and the Laws of Islam

M. Tokhtakhodjaeva
Between the Slogans of Communism and the Laws of Islam: the Women of Uzbekistan
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She lives in Tashkent with her daughter and mother.

For Oidin

who stands on
the threshold of the future
Between
the Slogans of Communism
and
the Laws of Islam

Marfua Tokhtakhodjaeva

Translated from the Russian by Sufian Aslam

Edited by Cassandra Balchin

Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre
Lahore, Pakistan
Published by Shirkat Gah,
208 Scotch Corner,
Upper Mall, Lahore
Pakistan

First edition: December 1995

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Printer: Shahid Pervaiz (‘S.P.’)/Creative Design, Lahore
Title design: Khakima M. Makhmudova
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Bringing this unique story to a wider audience was made possible through the generous support of Novib (Netherlands) that has persistently encouraged both Marfua Tokhtakhodjaeva and Shirkat Gah in their efforts to make the voices of Uzbekistan's women heard.

Also to be warmly thanked for their support, encouragement and willingness to make their life stories public are the members of the Women's Resource Centre, Tashkent.

Samina Rehman is to be particularly thanked for so willingly providing us vital material from her private library.

I am deeply grateful to colleagues at the Shirkat Gah office in Lahore: Farida Shaheed, Ayesha Baqir, Samiya K. Mumtaz and Lubna Shah Anwar for their helpful editorial suggestions. And last, but not least, Dr. Sufian Aslam for taking on the daunting task of translating a complex manuscript.

Cassandra Balchin
for Shirkat Gah
Editor's Note

Editing writings on women and society in the Soviet Union in general and on the Central Asian region in particular present several problems. Not least amongst these is the fact that there is painfully little information about these topics written either by 'Sovietologists' (who almost exclusively focused on analysing the weaknesses of the Soviet political system) or by Soviet social scientists (who almost exclusively focused on analysing the strengths of the Soviet political system). Thus the task of verifying the facts contained in the manuscript presented a major challenge. The absence of a tradition of writings on the topic also meant that in terms of style, the author had no pattern to follow, opting instead for an - at times - awkward combination of quite ornate and personalised comments and analysis (a function both of the author's Uzbek mother-tongue and the depth of her feelings), and the formal approach of historical materialism (the inevitable corollary of a Soviet academic training).

Moreover, the author, Ms Tokhtakhodjaeva, is not an historian and, although very conscious of the need for a historical perspective, was not concerned with the minutiae of historical detail. In order to make the manuscript accessible to a wider audience, unfamiliar with the history of the Soviet Union, it was necessary to add such detail.

In the process of editing the translation, I have taken a number of liberties with the original text, largely for the sake of accessibility. Under principles of Muslim jurisprudence and according to the Qur'an and Sunnah there is no clergy in Islam, but in practice there are a whole range of people who have made religion their profession, ranging from simple imam masjids (the regular leader of the prayers at a local mosque) to the alim, usually highly respected for their knowledge and wisdom. The Russian term dukhoznii lichnosti used by the author groups all of these individuals under the broad and neutral term 'spiritual figures'. I have however taken the liberty of translating this as 'clergy' or 'cleric'.

Editor's note

In Soviet academic social sciences (nauchnii) reflects the sake of an audience generally translating. The translation apart from the original manuscript, where it was offered translation, although not generally including each
In Soviet academia, all research whether in the fields of science, social sciences or the humanities, was labelled 'scientific' (nauchnii) reflecting the notion that Marxism is a science. For the sake of an audience unfamiliar with these issues, I have therefore generally translated nauchnii as 'academic'.

The translation of poetry presented the greatest problem in that apart from the difficulty of translating the verses from the Russian manuscript, we were fully aware that in many instances the verses were originally written in another language altogether. Unable to offer translations of a similar literary standard, we hope nevertheless to have conveyed Ms. Tokhtakhodjaeva's purpose for including each of the verses.

Cassandra Balchin
Lahore, December 1995
Foreword

In the three years that have passed since I began work on this manuscript, so many changes and events have taken place that much of it already seems like history. Some things have stabilised, some things have disappeared from our lives, but everything has aggravated the problems facing women. The politicisation of society has diminished with priority being given to the question of simple survival. As the economic reforms begin, privatisation gets under way and the number of private sector enterprises grows, women are searching for a new niche in the changing economy.

But despite the sweeping changes that have taken place in Uzbek society, many pressing problems remain and it is these that have been touched upon in the present book. This is why, as the English translation is now ready, I shall not take back what I have written, in spite of the fact that the reader can point out that different chapters take a contradictory point of view regarding the place of women in contemporary society. The reader needs to understand that, from my point of view, this is simply reflective of the contradactions in society, while my own commitment to the modernisation of Uzbek society and the modernisation of my country remains unshakeable. And in today's Uzbekistan, the equality of economic and political rights granted to women by Soviet power must be preserved.

But that is not how all women and men think. Many have their own peculiar nostalgia for the pre-Revolution past, when women's horizons were limited to the family and children. The present generation sees this past through the prism of the often idealised reminiscences of an older generation. The more recent Soviet past in which the present generation grew up, was in turn coloured by an ideological idealisation that was often a deliberate lie. Thus during perestroika and the first years of Uzbekistan's independence there emerged a tendency of negating everything connected with this Soviet past. The critics first pounced upon the question of women's status, with many of
our writers and even politicians clutching at the anchor of traditionalism, of Muslim values - such as they understood them - in the rough seas on which the disintegrating Soviet Union floated.

And this is not the first time this has happened. At the beginning of this century modernity rudely invaded the lives of Central Asians courtesy of the revolutionary upheaval, and the negation of religion. Thus the concept of cultural identification was preserved through traditionalism. Many, particularly the deprived, poorly educated and oppressed, failed to understand that history should not be repeated. It was precisely this section of society which clutched at traditionism and religion, associating them with the concept of justice. But traditionalism was also upheld by those who could profit from this way of life, specifically from the effective legalisation of the shadow economy, which dictated a lifestyle of conspicuous consumption in the name of its political and economic interests.

The ideal woman emerged: wealthy, one who does not go out to work, and materially dependent upon her husband. An ideal impossible in a poor country suffering a protracted economic crisis. Equally impossible because the participation of women in the production process is vital to the progress of a country which hopes to provide its citizens an adequate lifestyle.

As all former Soviet Republics pass through the post-Soviet period, a new economic policy is being formed, new moral perspectives and new institutions are emerging, and women can - and must - find their rightful and independent place in society and not return to a dependency upon men.

A number of factors hamper efforts to instill in society (and here we are talking not of Soviet but of contemporary society) a sense of support for the idea of women's equality. These include the absence of non-ideological research studies regarding women in various strata of society, of feminist literature and a women's press, of non-governmental women's organisations that emerge from below, and of incentives for economic and political activity. There is a great, Soviet-style inertia regarding the emerging social processes: a tendency to push up problems affecting the country's future; a tendency to only want to see our achievements, believing that this is how to make the problems disappear.

On the face of things, the country's leaders consider women's
problems to be important. President I. Karimov in an address to
the women of Uzbekistan on the occasion of International
Women's Day, says 'Our entire society is indebted to the
mothers, women workers, the keepers of the hearth, the bearers
of light and goodness, peace and humanism, the source of love,
gentleness and beauty, a unique creation of nature which forms
the substance of our existence on this earth.' (Narodnoe Slovo No.
47-1057 from 8th March, 1995). Since 1995, the state has once
again begun to regard women's participation in society as a pre-
condition for the development of independent Uzbekistan. The
background to this reassessment appears to be statistics
indicating the growing number of family breakups, falling
numbers of girls enrolled in higher education and so on which
bear testimony to a lowering of women's status. In May 1995
Uzbekistan signed the UN's Convention on the Elimination of
All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

There has, meanwhile, been an attempt to include women in the
country's administrative and governmental structures. The Vice-
Premier is a woman, while fifteen women were elected in the
December 1994 elections to the Oliyi Majlis (the national
parliament) making their representation 6 per cent of the total
number of seats. Will they lobby for the advancement of women
and the solution of their problems, will they heed the voices of
their sisters? One hopes that they will.

Marfua Tokhtakhodjaeva

Tashkent, 1995
I. Karimov in an address to the occasion of International society is indebted to the bearers of the hearth, the bearers of nature which forms earth. (Narodnoe Slovo No. Since 1995, the state has once participation in society as a pre-independent Uzbekistan. The appears to be statistics of family breakups, falling education and so on which women's status. In May 1995 mention on the Elimination of Women (CEDAW).

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Marya Tokhtakhodjaeva Tashkent, 1995

Between the Slogans of Communism and the Laws of Islam
Introduction

In 20th century state politics, the question of women's rights is a litmus test of a state's adherence to the principles of democracy, its level of economic development, and the mentality of its politicians and citizens. Today the question of women's rights in politics, society and social institutions is inextricably linked with the issue of citizen's rights(1), reflecting the various processes of social development. The women's rights issue also needs to be studied through the perspective of culture, because each civilisation's value systems influence the stereotyped social perceptions prevailing in that culture. Moreover, it takes centuries to overcome these stereotypes.

Today it is acknowledged that the idea of women's rights is one of the values of western civilisation which carries significance for all humanity. Feminism, which appeared more than two centuries ago in Europe, has also attracted women of the East, spreading throughout the modern world. In each country, the extent to which the women's issue has been truly resolved and the methods used to achieve this depends upon its level of historical development and varies dramatically depending upon whether it is democratic, authoritarian or totalitarian. The women's issue has proved to be closely connected with the ideological priorities of different countries, and this is to be expected. In democratic countries the women's issue, above all, emerged as part of the problem of individual rights, while in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, the solution of the women's issue took the goals and rights of the state as its starting point. In order to understand the true status of women in any particular country at various stages of social development, it is necessary to turn to history.

Central Asia is one of the cradles of human civilisation, and since ancient times it has been famed as a transcontinental trade route between the East and the West and has therefore long been a target of political and cultural expansionism. In ancient times it formed part of Massaget, Sogdiana and Bactria; in the Middle
Ages it was part of Maverannahr, the land of the Khorezm Shabs and of Timur's Empire, gradually losing its significance as an international trade route after the opening of sea trade routes. In modern times, Central Asia has found itself among those countries which have remained trapped in the Middle Ages, out of touch with world progress, forced to choose between isolation or colonial dependence on its more developed and stronger neighbour.

Russian military occupation of those areas which later became the nucleus of the Russian colonial government took place between 1860-1890; thus Central Asia has been dependent for more than a century. Military resistance in the East led to the extermination of the Kokand Khans as a state entity. Faced with this military might, the Khans of Kokand and Khiva along with the Emir of Bukhara entered into humiliating agreements with Russia and became vassals to the Russian Tsar. The Russian military campaign lasted some 20 years, both because it met with resistance and because Russia was cautious in its military campaign due to its western political rivals. The Russian expansionist conquest of the small Muslim states in Central Asia was driven by the region's attraction as a new market and a source of raw materials for Russian manufacturers. Once the military expansion was complete, the region, known under the colonial term of Middle Asia, became the object of economic and consequently cultural expansion, a notable feature of Soviet rule.

Under the influence of the new economic relations, the structure of Central Asian society underwent a transformation while cultural expansion led to a forcible change in the tenor and way of life, once determined by complex religious laws. All of these processes need to be analysed from the perspective of their influence on the status of Muslim women, who in the 20th century were gradually drawn into capitalist and socialist production. The process of colonisation and resistance were given an ideological cover, often misleadingly justified by those involved. It was a process which determined the fate of three generations, bringing tragedy to some and success to others but inevitably affecting the region's entire population.

The history of Central Asia in the 20th century requires complex analysis. Its inclusion in the Russian and later Soviet empires was a result of conquest; the people of Central Asia suffered not only oppression and national humiliation, but also experienced the force of the objective laws of history. Through extensive
Introduction

The land of the Khorezm Shahs losing its significance as an opening of sea trade routes. It found itself among those trapped in the Middle Ages, out forced to choose between isolation and more developed and stronger

areas which later became colonial government took place. Asia has been dependent for resistance in the East led to the years as a state entity. Faced with Kokand and Khiva along with humiliating agreements with the Russian Tsar. The Russian years, both because it met with was cautious in its military political rivals. The Russian Muslim states in Central Asia function as a new market and a Russian manufacturers. Once the the region, known under the same the object of economic and a notable feature of Soviet rule.

Economic relations, the structure went a transformation while change in the tenor and way religious laws. All of these from the perspective of their women, who in the 20th culture and socialist organisation and resistance were misleadingly justified by those who determined the fate of three some and success to others but entire population.

The 20th century requires complex Russian and later Soviet empires people of Central Asia suffered not humiliation, but also experienced of history. Through extensive

human interaction with the colonisers and their induction into the colonial state's economy and society, Central Asians experienced the civilising role of empires, as in their time Rome, the Byzantine Empire, the Caliphate and Babur's empire had allowed their colonies to make qualitative changes towards progress.

The research for this book allowed me to examine the lives of millions of Russians, Tatars, Uzbeks, Kirghiz and others not as an uncoordinated mosaic, not as a chaotic brownian motion of human atoms, but as a combined flow, the motion of which is determined by the winds of history.

While the vast majority of the people of Central Asia nevertheless entered the 20th century with a lifestyle stuck in the Middle Ages, after passing through colonisation and the socialist experiment in history a greatly changed nation has been brought towards the shores of the present day. Our future depends on whether we understand that it would be analytically inadequate to take a simplistically negative look at our Soviet past, particularly in relation to the position of Muslim women.

The Soviet period brought changes which had both positive and negative impacts on women, while at the same time also failing to change many of the most fundamental aspects of their daily lives. While the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan guarantees equality of rights, in reality women's status both in society and in the family falls far short of this ideal. One of the causes of this social conservatism is the lack of freedom in the past which lead to the stagnation of perceptions regarding contemporary values. Courtesy of the traditional cultural setting and upbringing, the majority of people continued to accept women's subordinate status as something natural while men failed to free themselves of the sense of absolute superiority over women. In spite of the high education standards among women and their active participation in the economy during the Soviet period, women were still far from decision-making positions.

Perhaps the most dramatic aspect of the socialist experiment was the changes in the lives of Muslim women, who emerged out of the confines of their homes into the public life of their people. I hope very much that this experiment has not been wasted.

Tashkent, April - November 1992
Chapter 1
Islam, Education and Women before 1917

"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has given the one more (strength)"

*The Qur'an; Sura Al-Nisa (IV), 34, translated by Yusuf Ali*

Religion played a major role in medieval society, forming the foundation for the state structure and the basis of social order. In all major religions, at their early stages of development the preachers of the new belief sought support from the socially deprived sections of society, and women were among the first converts because the new teachings addressed them as individuals, speaking of their worth and right to choose. Later, the right to interpret religion became the privilege of the state and its institutions, which assigned women a secondary and subordinate role in society and in the family. The denial of women's equality has taken different forms in Christian and Muslim countries, effectively allowing discussion of the place of women in society to be diverted away from their true problems and towards a pointless comparison of the unequal status of Christian women with the unequal status of Muslim women.

Women in pre-colonial Central Asia

If one turns to history, especially towards the seats of ancient civilisations, the strengthening of patriarchy was still not able to fully suppress women's cults by incorporating them into religions, and their echoes can still be found in all the world's major religions. That women's cults were not altogether subsumed into patriarchal religions also proves the existence of talented women who, through the strength of their character, intellect or will, stamped their names on history. Such women also existed in Central Asia, and out of antiquity come the names...
Islam, Education and Women before 1917

maintainers of women
the more (strength)"

34, translated by Yusuf Ali

medieval society, forming the background and the basis of social order. In early stages of development the classical support from the socially powerful men were among the first teachings addressed them as the birthright and right to choose. Later, the same the privilege of the state was extended to women, a secondary and third in the family. The denial of different forms in Christian and Muslim discussion of the place of women away from their true rights and position of the unequal status of the legal status of Muslim women.

Central Asia

way towards the seats of ancient humanity. Patriarchy was still not able to be overcome nor was it so completely defeated as in many other parts of the world where the period of this period was not altogether ignoble. This time also proves the existence of large groups of women which had not yet lost the freedom of their character, the freedom and the strength of their character, the freedom to take names on history. Such women who lived in antiquity come the names of the princess Tomiris of Massaget, who halted the invasion of the Persian king Kira; Roxana, wife of Alexander the Great, a union which heralded the dawn of antiquity in Central Asia with the formation of the Greek-Bactrian state.

As an architect, I remember the archaeological and architectural monuments associated with women: the famed site of Kirk-Kiz - the city of 40 girls in Surkhandar; the mausoleum of Kiz Bibi outside Bukhara; the tomb of Tuman-aka, sister of Timur, the mosque of Bibi Khanum, Timur's wife in Samarkand; the madrasah of Mekhri Sultan Begum, wife of one of the courtiers of Sheiban Khan; the orchards and park of Sitorai Mokhi Khosa in Bukhara, named after the mother of the Emir of Bukhara, Muzzafar Khan. History retains the names of many mothers of Central Asia's outstanding individuals: Sitora - the mother of Abu Ali Ibn-e-Sina (Avicenna), Karasch-apa - the mother of Yassavi, Oripha Bibi - the mother of Bahauddin Nakhshbandi.

Today Islam strongly influences the culture, the way of life and the outlook of the people of Central Asia, this is why the women's issue in Central Asia cannot be seen in isolation of the thirteen century-long domination of Islam on the one hand, and the 70-year expansion of Communism on the other. Communist totalitarianism was in its own right a form of forcible westernisation of Central Asian society.

ISLAM entered Central Asia both through the sword and through the word. The 'country of a thousand cities', as Herodotus called it, was subjugated in 678 AD. A new stem was grafted onto the tree of ancient civilisation, which was given a new life force by the young world religion, the wisdom of its past and the force of its allure. Maveranahr, as this region was called by the Arabs, was the birthplace of many great Muslims - the scientist Abu Ali Ibn-e-Sina, the mathematician Al Khorezm who's work Al Djabr formed the basis of the science of algebra, the historian Al Beruni, the philosopher Al Farabi; the imams of Al Bukhari and Al Termizi; saint Khoji-Yassavi - the king of all saints. This was the birthplace of sufism and its numerous sects, many of which were reformatory.

The architecture of Bukhara and Samarkand recalls the unspoken secrets of suf poetry and the brilliance of secular life under Timur and his descendants. This was the world of eastern Islam, and the way of life of the Muslims of Central Asia was
both similar and yet distinct from the lifestyles of the *Maghrib* (western Islam). There were periods where the strength of secular rule allowed women to also have an influence on political life. There were women in harems who were known individuals and during the rule of Timur and his contemporaries they were patrons to grand construction ventures. In the absence of rulers and under their warrant women also handled the affairs of state. Thus Timur’s wife Sarai-mulk-khanum during his absence on the western campaign wielded authority in Samarkand. Shadi-mulk, the wife of Sultan Khalil the first heir to Timur’s empire also ruled Samarkand for a short period. The wife of Babur, Momin Begum, ruled Kabul during the emperor’s invasion of India. And it was the memoirs of this founder of the Great Mughal empire, the *Baburnama*, which records the names of those women who participated in the political life of Mauerannahr and Khorasan, detailing the level of their influence on their husbands and sons. In the 14-16th centuries, heirs from both lines of descendants of the dynasty, male as well as female, took part in the struggle for power.

Castilli Rui Gonsales de Claviho, Portuguese Ambassador to the court of Timur, wrote in detail about palace ceremonies in which the royal ladies also participated. To quote from his diary:

"... That day the Seignior (Timur) ordered a grand banquet to be held and invited envoys and his family members, male as well as female, and other guests. On this holiday many people gathered, be they women of the elite or cavaliers (gentlemen)."

"... Next Thursday, October 9th, Khanzada - wife of Mirass Miakh (Miran Shah) the eldest son of the Seignior - arranged a grand feast, to which were invited the envoys. Khanzada and other women of the aristocracy who were with her, sat in state near the entrance to the large tent under its awning. She sat there on a podium and before her were placed three or four small rugs lying one on top of the other, on which she reclined when so required. Along with her were many gentlemen and relations of Timur, and musicians who played.

"Kano (Bibi Khanum), wife of Timur also came to this feast and she ordered the envoys to be presented to her, herself serving them wine..."
Babur in his memoirs dedicates separate chapters to the wives of famous rulers, detailing their origins, character and position in the harem. He also relates the tragic fate of his elder sister Kanzada Begum, wedded to his political opponent so as to save her brother, and about the joy when he met her after a long period. He also writes about Khadija Begum, wife of Hussain of Baikar, who wielded enormous influence on her husband's political decisions regarding his family members.

Later, the stricter observance of the law of purdah, the segregation of the sexes and the seclusion of women, became the established norm for women of lesser origin as well as for ladies of the elite. This happened due to the collapse of secular society and the exclusion of women from better education opportunities. In memoirs dating from around the end of the 16th century onwards, the names of women are recorded very rarely and whatever evidence of women exists, it is only as a wife or mother of someone with the women's own names not being recorded.

In those times, such as the rule of Ulug Bek the grandson of Timur, there is written evidence that a few elite women were nevertheless educated, taught by teachers from the top madrasas and the level of education among elite women was quite high. Among these women, mostly from the court and urban elite, are those who have become famous for their own literary works. One legendary poetess was Makhasti who engaged in a literary rivalry with Omer Khayam, debating on topics of sufism and creation at majalis (literary meetings). In the 15th century, the historian Vasil lists the female musician Chakar among Herat's famous figures. Many of Timur's descendants had significant literary talent, among them also women: Babur's daughter and author of the Hamayunname, Gulbadan Begum; his great grand daughter, the poetess Zeibunisa Begum who is famed throughout the East.

Oh waterfall, for whose sake art thou weeping?  
In whose sorrowful recollections has thou wrinkled  
they brow?  
What pain was it that impelled thee, like myself, the  
whole night  
To strike they head against stone and to shed tears?

Zeibunisa Begum
Even though the language of poetry was Persian, women's poetry was also multi-lingual, just as all literature of Central Asia where knowledge of two or three languages was an obligatory feature of education among Muslims. Famous poetesses whose collections survive, in Turkish and Persian include: Hafiza Mariam (beginning of the 17th century), Zeibunisa Begum (1639 - 1706), Noor Jehan Begum (17th century), Salima Begum (18th century), Jehan-atin Uvais (early 19th century), Mokholroim Nadira Begum, Dilshad, Akbar-atin (19th century). The great number of women's names reflects the level of women's education, and that these names are widely known itself bears witness to the fact that the general level of education and culture in the cities of Muslim Central Asia was not as low as is usually believed.

Dr. Mahbuba Kadirova, who has researched the works of one of Central Asia's most famous poetesses relates:

"In literary history she went under the name Nadira Begum. She lived and wrote in the first half of the 19th century. She was born Mokhlar Oim. Born in the family of the Andijanski ruler, even at an early age she was known for her education, wisdom, rare beauty and gift for poetry. In 1808 she was married to a prince, who acceded to the throne in 1810. Her husband was also keen on literary pursuits and many of the state documents were written as literary works. She wrote in Turkish (Uzbek) and Persian under the pseudonyms Nadira ('rarity') and Kamila ('perfection'). She became a mother of two sons and made use of her influence in court and had absolute authority in the harem. She became a widow at the age of 30, and when her 14 year-old son was enthroned, she became the regent. Her contemporary, the poet Begdjat remarked: 'Nadira thanks to her perfection and wisdom brought the organisation of the state under the protection of the throne. Her goodness and noble actions made the people happy, and she reorganised the kingdom, making their lives more comfortable.'

"But the ruler's enlightened work angered the aristocracy, whose wealth and dominance depended upon military campaigns against neighbours; peace did not suit them. Nadira became a victim of their
political intrigues, as the aristocracy united against her and helped the Emir of Bukhara conduct a raid on Kokand. In 1842 the bloody march on Kokand by Nasrullah Khan, the Emir of Bukhara, was completed; Nadira's son was killed and the city looted, libraries and manuscripts torched and, on the orders of the Emir, Nadira was also executed.

"Nadira's poetry is full of light and love. Her literary heroines speak of the trepidations of a woman's heart, about faithfulness, the sorrows of eternal separation, about women's liberty; she recognises the imperfections of the world, but has faith that the depth of human feelings is capable of overcoming all obstacles. She has left a great legacy. Not all of her works have survived but the best of her verse has been transformed into folk songs and lives on."

Along with its lyrical content, women's poetry also contains social and religious themes. There is protest voiced against the limitations of a woman's world, her deep suffering and the unhappy lives of her contemporaries. Of particular interest is the theological theme in literary imitations of classical eastern poetry, about spiritual service, and solitary prayers to God. Elegant, emotional, witty and with great depth of feeling, women's poetry of that time speaks of an intellectual potential which was not realised in other spheres of life.

Oh Uvais, all is in vain - cease Your childish attempts
To believe in the world - You are In this world just a guest
A fleeting moment, nothing more.

Jahan-atin Uvais

The issue of women's participation in public prayers held in mosques has long been a litmus test of any given Muslim society's acceptance of women's general participation in public life and of the women's overall status. Taking a historical perspective, the ban on women being inams and their leading the prayers appears to be a restriction imposed by the Sunni sect, even though such a ban does not exist in the Qur'an. There is evidence that during the lifetime of Muhammad unveiled women participated in mosque prayers along with their menfolk. Later, in Baghdad and other cities there were female
Historical sources confirm that at the start of the 13th century in Samarkand, women attended Friday prayers at mosques. At the turn of the century in some Bukhara mosques women also gathered on religious holidays, although segregated from men. In Tashkent there were, until the Revolution, special mosques for women. But on the whole, history lays down that for many centuries Muslim women did not take part in prayers held at mosques. This was in effect the logical conclusion of women’s general inequality within the family and in society.

Today, those who advocate the resurrection of the theocratic state use the names of women famous in history to idealise Muslim society and to create the impression that women were accorded a high position. But tragically, the very fate of some of these prominent women proves that women’s involvement in poetry and politics is associated, above all, with those periods when a strong state moderated the power of the theocrats, and when education and enlightenment were accessible to a relatively wide range of classes among the urban population. The history of the region in the Muslim period is full of contrasts in which various states came and went, but overall the region remained in the Middle Ages, with religion playing a major role.

The role of Islam in pre-Revolution society

By the time the Central Asian states were colonised, Islam had become a force contributing to the preservation of medieval norms while the external threat and expansionism forced people to reject new ideas. The politics of isolation led to greater rigidity in religious norms, strengthening the patriarchal system and demanding strict adherence to all religious rites and teachings. The poverty of the feudal society, the public observance of religious ceremonies and the universal character of Muslim holidays all served to strengthen past traditions and gave rise to extreme moral conservatism both in public and domestic life. These moral concepts were reflected in the social norms governing the rights and duties of individuals, with patriarchal relations within the family being strengthened by unchanging customs and strict etiquettes.

The dictates of tradition rejected all those who dared transgress established behaviour patterns and the strict code of etiquette.
Everyone was obliged to dress, look, speak and act in such a way that he did not stand out from others; no one was allowed to question the existing order. Conditions were such that the majority were denied even the possibility of seeing, reading and knowing about that which differed from their own lives; information was scarce and people's mobility negligible. People were so firmly bound to their social grouping and line of work that it was practically impossible for them to move beyond this rigidly defined circle of existence.

This applied equally to women, whose fate was determined by the laws of shari'ah and seclusion; any attempt to escape from the circle of their duties brought condemnation from the family and community. All of the poetesses whose names have survived to today led difficult lives. Many were made objects of condemnation in their social sphere. For example, even Princess Zeibunisa Begum found herself in her father's disfavour because she had defended her right to choose. Recognition usually came late to them, at an elderly age or often after their death.

Each social class had its own particular attitudes towards women. Almost all girls from the upper and middle urban classes received a comparatively sound education at home which included reading books, studying the Qur'an and sometimes extended to learning Persian and basic mathematics. The basic teaching aids were the Qur'an, hadith and classical literature. Education included the study of Muslim laws, seen as the guiding principles to life. Girls from the lower urban and rural classes, while not receiving any systematic education, were nevertheless familiar with the laws of Islam. Primary schools for girls were run by clerics, leading to a strengthening in the female half of the population of a sense of deep attachment to their faith and its laws, while interaction with elders acquainted women with religious legends, ritual and practice. People were also familiar with Muslim literature and poetry. Strongly rooted in the national consciousness was the sense that people's inter-relationships must be based on the shari'ah. Islam was perceived as a universal value, helping people to live together by providing them with an internalised association between themselves and their responsibilities, and by prescribing guidelines and duties that applied to all, thus wiping out the concept of differences between people.

In the fiefdoms and cities of what was an advanced feudal society, the norms of Muslim law predominated in personal and
family life, and the basis of education was the teaching of Islam. Education was one of the institutions of the state which strengthened the adherence to law and religious concepts. Schools for boys had a confessional character and were located on the premises of mosques while teachers were professional servants of religion. There were also primary schools for girls with classes held at the teacher’s residence. The syllabus for boys and girls was primarily identical with the major portion of the pupils’ time being devoted to learning the Arabic script, the study of the Qur’an and the ‘Four Books’ which consisted of explanations of the rules of personal hygiene, knowledge of the faith, exposition of traditions, and extracts from the shari‘at. Less time was devoted to proper literature, which included the study of eastern poetry and also books in Turkish and Persian, while instruction in mathematics was also limited.

After the conquest of Central Asia there was practically no change in the education system because the colonial administration considered the state of affairs satisfactory. According to the Principal of the Tashkent Gymnasium S. Gremianiitski: ‘The education situation is not as bad as expected. The existing local schools are just as effective as those in the Caucasus’, (l) which contradicts the widespread notion among Soviet historians that there was ‘complete illiteracy’. Gremianiitski continues, ‘Studies revealed that since ancient times, there has been widespread literacy in the vernacular amongst the local population of the Turkestan region. On conquering the region, the Russians found a multitude of schools where local languages were studied using the Arabic script. Literacy in the vernacular was closely linked with the Muslim religion’. N. Bobrovnikov, another author, in his report Russian Native Schools, Maktab and Madrassahs of Central Asia in 1910 informs the Governor General:

“Samarkand not so long ago was a prominent centre of Muslim enlightenment; many teaching establishments of Samarkand have been functioning for centuries. Cultural traditions, no matter how much they were suppressed by religious discrimination, only completely died out after the people’s lifestyles were turned completely upside down, a development that was never the aim of the Russian rulers.”

Thus, the colonial rulers considered one of the ingredients of the general process of education to be the development of maktab
and in connection with this a number of lithographic text books were published. In some selected maktabs students were taught Russian. The 1897 census carried no information about female literacy rates, explained by the following:

"Religious prejudice prohibits the holding of a population census as the number of souls is known only to God. The complete seclusion of native women presents an obstacle to counting; men make a spontaneous count of the number of women and children in their household - all this must undoubtedly hamper the census operation."

Women's interaction was not limited to family festivals and common work, but also involved intellectual pursuits such as the holding of mushairas (competitions in which poets publicly declaim their works), manlyuds (the analysis and explanation of religious texts), and majalis (the discussion of worldly problems through song and dance). Even though all forms of social interaction had religious overtones, they provided room for the spiritual growth of those individuals for whom the narrow world of the family and home was too small for their self-realisation. The system of prohibitions which lowered their value, coupled with domestic oppression led them to protest or evolve their own peculiar obsessions and forms of seeking God. Believing themselves to have been specially chosen, they declared themselves to be sorceresses, clairvoyants, soothsayers and the like. Their spiritual energy infected those around them and many of these women had a number of followers. A usual phenomenon found in medieval Christian Europe, and in the Muslim East, it was a manifestation in individual women of what in modern times is known as 'leadership quality'. Some of the talented women of the time who, on their own initiative, studied literature and the Qur'an, became professional poetesses and interpreters of philosophy and Qur'anic ethics. One of them, Akbar-atin, a famous intellectual, author of treatises and initiator of the open schools of the new types for girls wrote:

If God sends happiness to women Himself
Then all of the East be reddened with bright light.

My Grandmother Jamalkhon-atin relates:

"The girls of our family were really drawn to knowledge. I, along with my four sisters, went to study..."
in the primary school for girls where classes were held by a young teacher, a niece of the imam, on the mosque premises. She carefully listened to all of our questions. She herself knew the Qur'an and the Four Books and all her lessons were interesting. That is why, all our lives, we remembered everything she told us. Even though she was a God-fearing woman, in our lessons she taught us much which was not taught even at the boys' school. We loved it when she told us about the cities of the world, their climates and customs, and how people lived in other countries. It was said that her younger sister studied at the Russian Gymnasium and that our teacher had also studied Russian books.

It is impossible to understand today's problems without first understanding the impact of Central Asia's position of colonial dependance. Turkestan was the backward colony of a backward country. Russia's military campaign was not accompanied by the influx of capital into the region, which might have allowed a change in economic relationships and affected social attitudes. Russia was unable to effectively exploit the new colony due to its own lack of capital and capital only came to Turkestan - and with great difficulty at that - due to the policy 'Turkestan is for Russians'. Comparing the colonisation of Central Asia with that of India or Canada, the import of capital into this region was clearly paltry, particularly in the area of manufacture. The insignificant capital that did reach the region by the beginning of the century came almost entirely from foreign investors who had somehow managed to overcome the obstacles placed in their path. As a result, the local industrial bourgeoisie was in its infancy and thus the strongest section of colonial Turkestan society was the bureaucracy, including the local bureaucracy. The Account of Palens' Inspection,(2) a report by the Tsar's Department of Education, notes:

"The existing order is not only unfit for realising the government's reform plans but has the added disadvantage that it also holds back the political and economic development of the local population".

A major factor in the stagnation of Central Asian society was the coinciding of interests of the local trading and financial bourgeoisie with the bureaucracy. The former was engaged in speculation, while the latter was corrupted and as Palen noted

had "...a special form of corruption", the education system being the education of the pre-colonial and pre-religious type. RESISTANCE forms, particularly in the raising of the first conservative slogans, was left to the "...other element".

The outlook of Turkestan was the central question. Less in the way of a political movement, more in the way of a literary and cultural movement, it created a society of its own and the "...other element" on the "...other side".

prevailed and a "...national spirit, literary, and artistic" emerged. Abdulla Khan was an active and enlightened figure who set out to defend the cause of Turkestan and its people, women and children.

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Central Asian society was the trading and financial former was engaged in noted and as Palen noted had "massive illegal incomes" from bribes and the sale of government posts, which they invested in trade. Progress in the form of an emergence of dynamism and new western values in the economic, social and political spheres did not take place, leaving society dominated by medieval attitudes, just as in the pre-colonial period. One consequence was that the position of religion became unchallengeable.

RESISTANCE to colonial dependence in Central Asia took two forms: one demanding the restitution of the 'old order', the other raising the slogan of enlightenment and national progress. The first emerged as a rural movement protesting against the dispossession of lands by the colonial Russian settlers. Under the slogan of glauza (those victorious in holy war), this movement was led by the clergy and aristocracy who had lost their lands.

The other movement known as jadidism emerged at the turn of the century among the lower and middle urban bourgeoisie. Less influential, it essentially had no programme and its actual work focused on establishing new method schools and promoting modern knowledge; the ultimate aim of the movement was the proclamation of cultural autonomy and the development of local schools and languages. One of its leaders Fayzullah Khodjaev, formulated the aims of the jadidi movement, which sought the secularisation of Central Asian society: "jadidi propaganda is aimed at promoting development, and the flourishing of democracy and capitalism along western lines". The jadidis not only stood up against colonial dependence on the Russian state, but also against the feudal relationships prevalent in Central Asian society, feudal land structures, the native colonial administration and the clerics. Through their literary works jadidi authors such as Abdurauf Fitrat, Abdumamid Sulaimon-ugli Cholpon, Abdullah Kadiri who were active in the first three decades of this century, declared themselves to be against the oppression of women, persistently defending women's right to determine their own lives, to dignity and individuality. This enlightened literature reflects Muslim women's yearning for another, intellectually stimulating life.

One influential jadidi writer was Hamza Hakimzadeh Niazi, who was an ardent supporter of women's emergence from seclusion and their induction into the fold of modern knowledge. The following extract, written in the form of a dialogue between a youth and a girl, illustrates his stand:
Youth: Our girls do not study, the wisest of them do not know science. Women sink into ignorance, fear forever in their eyes. Like pathetic prisoners, as if imprisoned in their homes, do their hearts await enlightenment, do they remove the scales from their eyes? Girl: You say that women have long become accustomed to ignorance, and that we seem to have no inkling about our situation. We are meek prisoners, tears fogging our gaze. The dust of the mizzars of our mentors has blinded our eyes. Knowledge is light, but for women there are still no schools. Do you really think that we will not emerge from out of the multitude of our dungeons into the light? Let our holy mentors answer the world, Whether women prisoners have no access to knowledge?

The Jadidi movement recognised that progress was unthinkable without a dynamic society and without educational reforms. It was necessary for the people not only to be educated in the humanities but also to receive technical education. They wanted to lead the organisation of 'new method' schools which girls would also be encouraged to attend, but progress in this direction was very slow. The Russian rulers created Russian-native schools, and the syllabus of the maktabs was expanded to include new disciplines, but the world outlook of the graduates remained exclusively founded on religion. The attempt to organise similar schools for girls was not successful: conservatism was too strong. Nevertheless, certain educated people still found ways of educating their daughters and sent them to study in the handful of Russian gymnasiums.

In 1897 the Tashkent girls' gymnasium had only 8 Uzbek girls out of 277 students. Thus, the social basis for the penetration of western ideas, including modern concepts about women's education, was very weak. The development of women's education was also hampered by the fact that the evolution of capitalist relations and an influential middle class had been obstructed. 'Respectable folk', the qazis, the preachers and defenders of the 'true faith' regarded capitalism's ability to sweep away feudal society with great fear and above all blamed the Russians for what they believed would be the collapse of the
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The following extract from the Correspondences of the Governor General which was dispatched to the War Ministry in 1908, to some extent explains the reasons why the majority of the local population clung to the Muslim way of life.

"It should not be forgotten that we also introduced to the Central Asian peoples many negative aspects of European culture; bars, restaurants, opium dens, brothels and similar establishments to be found not only in the cities but also in rural settlements. The native youth flooded to them for physical and spiritual debauchery and to the horror and grief of the elders committed unheard of violations of the Qur'an and centuries old laws of eastern traditions of decency. Youngsters became robbers and murderers, there was open debauchery and hooliganism; with startling rapidity, the belief in God, respect for elders and adherence to law disappeared. If a similar decline in morals continues to take place, it is difficult to imagine, what subsequent generations of natives will turn to.

"Today's older generation, mullahs, qazis and elders look at this decline of customs with regret, blaming everything on the Russians, and probably, many of them have often secretly hoped to somehow or another overthrow the yoke of the 'crafty pale-face'. This side of native life also needs to be taken into account as it may lead to an outburst of the people's dissatisfaction, with profound consequences because the people would be convinced of the righteousness of their deeds."

Among the masses, what was perceived to be a Muslim way of life became an important manifestation of national identity. But this tendency did not permit Central Asian society to develop and prevented the penetration of the better aspects of European and foreign cultures.

Rights and responsibilities within the family

ACCORDING to the theologians' interpretation of shariat, Muslim marriage is a form of contract, and men and women
entering into marriage can lay down mutually acceptable conditions to the contract such as limitations to the husband’s right of divorce and so on. Every woman entering into marriage in accordance with the laws of shariat must receive from the husband a predetermined sum of money or some other valuable as a form of pledge. When and what must be given is agreed upon by the parents of the groom and bride. But theologians do not consider this security to be the purchase of the bride, for this dower remains with the bride as her own property. Entering into marriage, a woman retains her right to own property independently. In the event of divorce, the husband and wife have equal rights before the law. If the divorce is initiated by the wife, she is required to return her dower, but a husband divorcing his wife, cannot legally demand this money or property back from her.

Thus say the theologians. But in the feudal society of Central Asia in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, in spite of the existence of religious courts and qazis, the rights of women were severely restricted. At the beginning of the century, the principle of elected courts was introduced, overturning the pre-colonial practice of nominating judges. The superior judiciary was elected, which then appointed judges and periodically certified their decisions before the Emirs and Khans. The flourishing of corruption led to the development that the qazi judges usually discriminated against women, invariably interpreting the shariat to suit the stronger party.

While religious laws have always had a particularly strong impact on the family, the written laws of Islam have been overridden by unwritten prohibitions and taboos which question women’s value. Responding to such an attack, the poetess Akbar-atin was a passionate advocate of women’s education and defender of women’s rights as individuals. At the end of the 19th century she bitterly addressed men:

... about women it is contemptuously said that it is their destiny to give pleasure.
Men, you are fools just like them, dripping with wolfish malice.
They are the buds of flowers in the garden, barely strong enough to live.
My friend, with all your might help them not to meet a dark end.
And if you respect your mother, you will on all people
Islam, Education and Women before 1917

bestow love,
Behold! twixt them is a multitude of beauties, they are bright and luminescent.
Mother and sister are dear to you, but in obscure crowds
Women have little value to you.
You should know - they are beauteous and not faceless!

Marriage was essentially a matter between parents, who negotiated the conditions of the marriage contract. Marriage was usually contracted within one's own circle and social group, and although marriage within clear-cut castes were not observed, grooms and daughters-in-law were chosen on the basis of descent, the material circumstances of the parents, age, and only then individual qualities. Matches that were unequal in age or the parents' material circumstances were usually due to the mercenary interests or ambitions of the bride's parents or when her family was financially weak or the bride did not have a father. In certain families the parents, unconcerned about their daughter's happiness, did not even investigate the groom, often leading to long years of humiliation and grief for their daughters. Even though such marriages were contracted under Muslim law, they were recognised as being of necessity by the majority of true believers. Such marriages, which took women to be a commodity, became ingrained in Muslim Central Asian society.

Dower, which was fixed for the women before marriage, was usually interpreted in practice as an outright purchase, particularly because in poorer families the bride's dower was appropriated by her parents. Women in a polygamous marriage were particularly burdened. If in rich families the elder wives stipulated the conditions allowing the husband to enter into a second marriage - for example, that the new wife would have no inheritance rights - then the younger wife, usually the daughter of poor parents who sought to alleviate their financial hardship through the marriage, came under a double oppression. The bitter tears of women forcibly given in marriage are reflected in folk songs:

With a black beard, in a black cloak,
himself riding a horse as black as darkness,
who came to us and with such persistence,
staring at me so darkly?
Near the stream screams the night owl,
seeing the snake in his nest,
What should be done, I myself do not know!
Scream! Who can help me in my misfortune?

Polygamy is a practice closely associated with the Muslim way of life. It was permitted by Islam as a means of providing security to widows and orphans, who thus received the husband’s protection. Many researchers of the East consider Islam’s standpoint to be a humane and honest acknowledgement that by nature men are inclined towards polygamy, and therefore consider it a positive feature of Islam as a religion. But there are others who analyse polygamy from the women’s point of view, regarding it as degrading to women, brushing aside their feelings, causing them a psychological trauma and transforming women into a commodity.

I spoke to some women who remembered stories about polygamous families and almost all who survived the experience of being one of many wives, and especially their daughters, recalled it as an evil, which had made their lives hell.

Sparks of dark eyes glow
The old pir (holy man) now comes
He who sinks in the vortex
perishes in his turn
Here in the harem, behind doors
Bitterness lashes the soul.
Behind the heavy doors
Life is hard for the girl Nazmi.

Abdullah Kadiri

Women were forced to come to terms with life in a polygamous marriage as there was no other option, and although according to shariah the husband is obliged to provide each wife her own home, frequently the wives lived under one roof. A description by Abdullah Kadiri in his novel Bygone Days of the poisoning of one wife by another was not a rarity. Often the casualties were innocent children.

Fatima Bibi Jalalova, a woman now over 80 years old from Kokand in the Ferghana Valley describes domestic life at the beginning of the century:
My father married me off when I was 14 years old to a man who was past forty and who already had two wives. One was barren, her children had died in childhood. The other had two daughters, not much older than myself. My husband was a rich trader and owned many stores in the city. Father received a rich kalim for me and thus also opened a store.

My husband’s home was large and each wife had two rooms and a terrace (airon). The house was constructed with burnt bricks and had modern latticed windows set in European styled rooms. It was divided into three sections: a courtyard, where there were rooms for trade and guests, as well as the stables and a place for the carriage. Then there was the men’s part of the house, the tashkeri, and the women’s part, the ichkeri, where the kitchen was also accommodated.

There were often guests. Even though we had female as well as male servants, we wives also had many household duties, which were supervised by our mother-in-law. She was always accorded honour and respect. Family members and neighbours visited her, and I being the youngest wife, was always at her side and running errands. Lunch was prepared, if there were no guests, by the female help. The wives each had their meals in their own quarters, the eldest usually with our mother-in-law and my husband with whoever took his fancy. If there were male guests, they had their meals in the men’s part of the house, while female guests were served their meals in the guests rooms. When there were no guests, and I was not needed to prepare the food, I would have lunch only after I had finished my work.

My husband had a whip and whenever Mother-in-law complained about anyone, it was brought out and used. But this was very rare. All of my youth was filled with the fear of displeasing someone, therefore I tried to give as little cause for anger as possible. But I was given a lot of grief by my husband’s daughters. They called me ‘beggar’ and ‘vagabond’, but it was not so terrible. When I gave birth to a child, one of them, taking the child in her hands, hurt it before my very eyes. I was terrified of them and only when they were
eventually married could I breathe easily.

"Three or four years after my arrival in my husband's house the eldest wife died. She had been sick for a short while: the servants gossiped that she was poisoned, but I did not believe it. She aged early and I think suffered much. I respected her very much, but was rather afraid of her. She was not talkative, prayed much, went on *ziyād* to holy places. She was also not close with her parents. She was a good embroideress and presented a kerchief to my small daughter. I have never seen such embroidery again.

"During the summer we all went to our country seat. There was freedom because I had my own farmland. Even though it was small, there I was the master. With me also went my maid, who helped me in the house and in looking after the children. Often my husband came on his horse, but did not remain for long. In 1922 the state took our country farmland and later began the new hardships."

This tale provides insight into the life of the city elite and was typical for families of rich traders, judges, clerics and land holders, where medieval attitudes within society stimulated patriarchal relationships within the family.

At the turn of the century, the majority of families were patriarchal, often with several generations living together as an extended family. The older generation in a majority of cases consisted of the mother and father, and the second of married sons with their wives and children. The economic basis for the undivided family was the retention in the hands of the father (the head of the family) of ownership of the family's movable and immovable assets and means of production (if it was a family of artisans). Sons were wholly dependent on the head of the family and incomes were not divided. Patriarchal traditions were especially strong among the upper classes and the social elite made up of land owners and traders, so sons automatically worked in their fathers' business as colleagues, directors or younger partners. However, in the second half of the 19th century it became common for sons to live independently. Often this took place after the marriage of the first grandson of the head of the family. In lesser placed families the sons worked alongside their fathers on the land or in the crafts. In poor

families...
families the father would hire out his son as a farm labourer, or place him as an apprentice to a master or send him to work, retaining control over his salary. The division of the father’s property usually took place only after his death and sometimes when the interests of the family was connected with large enterprises, the deceased head of the family’s place was taken over by the eldest or most capable of his brothers, who wielded the most authority. The second authority in the family was the mother or the father’s eldest wife, with all domestic matters coming under her direction.

Segregation and purdah

THE social status of Muslim women and their way of life in pre-Revolution Central Asian society was above all premised on the segregation of the sexes, ordained by shari‘at, and was explained by the claim that woman is the weaker creature (zaif), that she should be under the protection of men, that without him she may become a victim of rape or insult. Outside the home it was prescribed that she hide her face and figure under a cover and in Central Asia women observed purdah by wearing a kind of cloak called a parandjia and covering their faces with a kind of netting. The segregation of women assigned them the role of humble daughters, patient wives and respected mothers. Their lives revolved around bringing up and educating their children, around concern about the prosperity of the family and around strengthening of their own and their children’s spiritual and moral character.

In the middle and lower classes polygamy was rare and thus women in such families shouldered greater responsibilities; they also played a quite significant role in the material support of the family. A woman skilled in the crafts was greatly respected by the entire family and she could pass on her skills not only to her daughters, but also to the children of relatives and neighbours taking payment for their instruction. In the cities, women were largely self-taught and commonly practiced silk weaving, silk embroidery and weaving of quality rugs. A literate woman, even if she did not work as a teacher, usually had students under some understanding with their parents and taught them subjects from the primary school syllabus. While a Muslim woman could have her own source of income through handicrafts, teaching crafts or reading and writing at home, only men could work
outside the home. It was not until the beginning of the 20th century that women began to work picking cotton in instances where the family needed their income. But even here women did not work the whole season but for a few days, being paid for each day they worked, and they retained little control over the income they generated for the family.

Seclusion, in general terms, did not allow women to go out of the house, to move freely in the streets or to visit relatives without men’s permission. Thus all that was connected with the outside world became the responsibility of men. Restricted to the four walls of their homes, seclusion condemned women to degradation, led their mental potential to stagnate, suppressed their individuality, lowered their worth, led to physical exploitation and their being treated as child-bearing machines. Nevertheless, women brought up in the Muslim tradition largely accepted this without question, restricting their lives to the realm of home and family. While women interacted with female relatives and neighbours, men on the other hand spent most of their time outside the house, even preferring to spend their leisure not with their family but in male company. Although the internal dynamics of families from the urban areas, the nobility and the fahikan(3) obviously were not identical, generally the children’s upbringing was the responsibility of the mother. She upheld the male head of the family as the final authority, seeking his involvement only in special cases. Hence children usually had a deep affection for their mother, and regarded their father as an indisputable authority, being frequently afraid or in awe of him. Custom dictated that women be gentle towards children while fathers were expected to be particularly severe, strict and terse. An important factor regulating intra-family relationships was the adherence to social custom, which was instilled in all members of the family. This stressed that elders and men be respected, that junior members were subordinate to senior members: women to men, and children to their mother. No one had the right to right act independently and without first seeking the advice of the elders. The most junior members of the family, usually the young daughters-in-law, were expected to fulfil all tasks assigned them not only without question but also with suitable scruples and bows to the senior members. The most senior female in the house headed the running of the household and had a representative function, attending all important gatherings, such as marriages, funeral banquets and festivals hosted by relatives and neighbours; the junior women in the
family only attended the gatherings of very close relatives. Only when her children had grown up did a woman's position in her family strengthen and she became more independent and able to influence her husband.

Custom dictated that in public husbands were completely undemonstrative towards their wives essentially ignoring their existence, although undoubtedly in many families its members were deeply attached to and loved one another. Men were expected to hold their feelings in check and could not hug and kiss their wives in front of relatives, brothers and sisters-in-law, even if meeting after a long separation. This custom has survived up to today, even though now it is not as strictly upheld.

The young wife could not complain of her hardship to her husband, even less so to her mother-in-law. She could not count on his protection and support. Women of varying ages and outlooks and with no possibility of doing the kind of work they were interested in were materially tied to one another in the family. Often women were forced to suppress their desires and feelings, envying one another, jealously comparing themselves with others but rarely sharing their opinions. Thus at home tension prevailed. The outlook of the inhabitants of the ichtkeri, the women's half of the house, was narrow, with each taking out her resentment towards life, her husband and mother-in-law on one another. It was an atmosphere of petty intrigues, cunning deeds and bitter words which oppressed women and which often led them to develop emotionally negative perceptions of the world, finding an outlet in cruelty, infidelity, quarrelsomeness, scandal and lies. Society labeled these traits "women's nature", considered women to be lower beings and thus justified their lesser position, requiring men to be scornful towards all women, which simply made their lives even more difficult. Today we can see the results of the past oppression of eastern women's individuality in their character: impetuousity and competitiveness cloaked in good manners and gentleness.

Theologians were forced to acknowledge the lack of women's rights in this Muslim society. But they were of the opinion that this had not been Islam's intention. According to theologian Tahir Mahmood:

"That such a situation exists today, is the fault of us men and women, who believe in Allah. Muslim women have not demanded recognition of their rights,
and Muslim men have interpreted the law to their own benefit, using it for selfish motives. We are all guilty of this."

The primary difference between modern legislation and religious laws on the position of women in a Muslim society, is that religion above all recognises the rights of a mother, but not her individuality. The indisputable fact is that in pre-colonial and colonial Central Asian society women had no rights. Women’s status was as low as the social group to which they belonged and this was reflected in the formation of their character: here devoted and sacrificing, submissive and patient; there resourceful, witty, greedy and envious, but in neither instance complete persons capable of having a positive influence on society and on the moulding of the younger generation. The children of slaves were raised as slaves. The denial of women’s rights was both the consequence and the cause of conservative, narrow religious attitudes, which were reflected in the superficial observation of the rituals of Islam, rendering impotent its spiritual aspect and thereby condemning society to backwardness and poverty.

TRENDS within religious-philosophical thought in the theocratic states at the beginning of the century, the policies of spiritual isolationism in the colonial period, the concentration of the education system on the humanities, the resistance to colonisation at the price of preserving an outmoded way of life, and adherence to customs and traditions were not appropriate responses to the times. All this was realized by the progressives among the Muslims.

The development of capitalist relations in Central Asia led to the general weakening of the interconnections between political and religious attitudes. The patriarchal family, for example, slowly collapsed with the rise of capitalist relationships with smaller families emerging in which the position of women improved significantly. But the new capitalist relations introduced into the feudal society were still too weak to significantly influence the development of a secular national culture. The national consciousness remained closely linked to religion, and was supported by the hold religion continued to have over interaction within the family. These customs were identified with the national culture and hence women, as the up-bringers of children and the guardians of the Muslim way of life in the
home, were expected to be the most virtuous and have the strongest faith within the family. Any rejection of the established forms of conduct and custom was looked upon as a departure from Islam. This also explains the psychological and social opposition by the majority of men to the emergence of women from seclusion.

In their policies, the colonial rulers took into account the practice of seclusion and considered this part of the Muslim way of life. Only a very small section of the population was drawn into the emerging capitalist relations and had the opportunity to gradually assimilate western cultural values. Meanwhile for the overwhelming majority, the external attributes of European culture may have gradually crept into domestic life influencing furniture, clothes, the layout of the house, but in essence lifestyles and family relationships changed at a much slower pace, remaining strongly influenced by patriarchal attitudes. The seclusion of women was strictly preserved; even the few men who had wives from European backgrounds, continued to practice the strict seclusion of their Muslim wives.

As a result of Russian rule in the pre-Revolution period there emerged two cultures in Central Asia; the one to be found among Russians, and the other, which insisted education and upbringing be instilled within the framework of Islam. It was the latter that dominated Central Asian society which, in spite of the emerging capitalist elements, remained rooted in the Middle Ages. This is why women remained entirely and completely subject to the laws of religion. An attraction towards European, or rather Russian, culture was to be found within a narrow layer of the emerging middle class. But although this class adopted its superficial manifestations, it still did not turn to the spiritual values of the modern West. Among those who favoured secularism there was interaction with the new culture and protest was expressed against the obscurantist aspects of medieval lifestyles, including the seclusion of women. While the secular elements sympathised with women’s yearning for education and defended their rights as individuals, the influence of their ideas on society remained insignificant.
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Chapter 2

The Sovietisation of Central Asian Society and the Emergence of Muslim Women out of Seclusion

On the eve of the 1917 Revolution, the national freedom movement in Central Asia had reached its peak, taking the form of a peasant movement and an uprising in 1916. The October Revolution, which called for a civil war in Russia, divided the national freedom movement in the colonial Turkestan region and thus led to a civil war in Central Asia. This pitted, on the one side, the majority of the peasants, later joined and led by the aristocracy and the clergy who had lost their class privileges, against, on the other side, those who believed Soviet slogans about the right of the nationalities to self-determination and a section of Jadidis who had joined the Communist Party.

As the Civil War in Central Asia escalated, the involvement of Red Army contingents became increasingly prominent. The final rout of the peasant national freedom movement, the Basmatch, took place in 1928 while the following decade saw the annihilation of even those who had supported the Bolsheviks in the fight against the Basmatch. This betrayal of the Revolution's democratic slogans permitted the consolidation of Soviet power in Central Asia, and later those who had stood for the right to form autonomous republics in Central Asia were eliminated, charged with nationalism and spying on behalf of western countries.

Central Asia returned to its colonial status, now merely exploited through new methods. All profits from the region were pumped out by communist Moscow through the new colonial administration consisting of the Party apparatus and repressive organs. But the absence of a typical indicator of colonial status, such as a clearly identifiable class which enriched itself at the cost of the colony's resources, gave strength to the

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The national freedom movement reached its peak, taking the form of a civil war in Russia, divided the colonial Turkestan region in Central Asia. This pitted, on the one hand, the Bolsheviks, who believed in the right to self-determination and autonomy, against the Communist Party.

The situation escalated, the involvement of Western powers increased. The national movement, the Basmachi movement, did not work to the advantage of the Bolsheviks in their betrayal of the Revolution's promises. Consolidation of Soviet power, unity of the region, was achieved through the use of a typical indicator of a typical identifiable class which enriched the region, giving strength to the impression of sovereignty in Central Asia. First was the establishment of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) in April 1918 and then, following the conquest of the Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara in 1920, the People's Soviet Republics of Bukhara and Khorezm. However the unity of Turkestan lasted only until 1924 when the old colonial administrative division was broken up and in the period 1924-36 five new Union Republics attained the external attributes of statehood.

Communist ideology, which needed to uphold the illusion of free socialist states, took firm root using the methods typical of religious instruction. Communist Russia retained its imperial ambitions and its breakthrough into the industrial era of its history was realised at the cost of imposing a uniform political process throughout the territories of the empire, and by the intensive exploitation of the muscle-power of all its subjects and the rapid assimilation of all natural and human resources. Essentially, Russia lacked the capital to modernise its economy.

This situation led Soviet power, dominated as it was by Russia, to take the women's question very seriously and its resolution was taken to be in the state's interest. The women's movement in Russia itself did not have a broad base, given that pre-Revolutionary Russia had been unable to rid itself of feudal social structures. The middle class only became strong after the 1905 Revolution, while in 1917 democratic institutions and modern urban society were still in the process of formation and were therefore relatively quickly dislodged by the Bolsheviks.

Existing women's organisations were destroyed after the Revolution, with Lenin regarding as unacceptable the existence of independent women's organisations even for communist women; just as all other social problems, the solution of women's problems was monopolised by the Bolshevik Party. Pre-Revolutionary Central Asian society, which had lived according to Muslim laws, was completely devoid of the social institutions which could have formed the basis of a women's movement, and those who supported the emergence of women out of seclusion encountered strong opposition which charged that the concept of women's participation in public life came from 'infidels'.

The imposition of a uniform political process, known as 'sovietisation', was promoted through Lenin's slogan: "Communism equals Soviet rule plus electrification." The first
part of the slogan was put into practice by the Decree on the Separation of the Church from the state and Schools from the Church" (Decree of the Soviet Peoples Committee of the Turkestan ASSR, 20 November, 1918). The aim behind this decree (which mirrored an earlier decree issued by the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets) was the nationalisation of the Muslim clergy’s massive property holdings, the reform of the religious courts and schools, and confiscation of the waqfs. This expropriation took place in a region whose population was almost without exception deeply religious; Central Asian society was simply not ready for the imposition of secularism.

The Revolution, the Civil War and the sovietisation of society affected the destiny of almost every family. Life’s formerly measured pace was gone forever and the rapid events of the 1920s led everyone to doubt their very survival. There were only two options: either fight or adapt. Zumrad Inusova, a woman of my own generation, describes the changes the Revolution brought in the life of her grandmother:

"My grandmother Jamilakhon, daughter of Rahimuddin-khodja, was born into the highest ranks of the noble Khodjas, who after the conquest of Turkestan had preserved their lands and privileges by working in the service of the Russian rulers. My great grand-father’s real name was Zainabdeen, but he was known as Rahimuddin, 'the Merciful' on account of his fairness. He was among the few who had not suffered in the uprising of 1916, even though he was the vice-regent of the Margilan area.

"After the Revolution my grandmother’s three brothers escaped to Tashkent so as to hide their origin, and Great Grandmother after her husband’s death took her daughter to the village, where they had had land before the Revolution, and almost immediately married a simple peasant, so as to give her minor daughter some protection. During the Revolution and the Civil War the house back in Margilan and in the village were ransacked. As the fortunes of the warring parties changed, the women of the house would hoist sometimes a red flag, sometimes a green one and thus they were spared.

"The family then returned to Margilan where later
Jamilakhon's stepfather married her to a former merchant, who had bought land in the city centre and constructed a new house. He was 25 years older than Jamilakhon and she was his second wife. His first wife, a Tatar, had gone to stay with relatives during the upheaval of the Civil War. Thus the family fell apart.

"During the NEP (New Economic Policy) period (1921-late 1920s) Grandfather Suleman Kori started his business again. It was a wealthy household. Jamilakhon wore European dress. True, she wore a parandja on top but it was without a chachvan, the net to hide her face. The house had European furniture, a library and, of course, gold. After the NEP ended in the late 1920s the house was searched and everything valuable was confiscated but my grandmother managed to hide some of the gold ornaments with Russian neighbours; this gold later saved my mother and her sister. So that he was not dispossessed or exiled, my grandfather escaped to the hills with his sons. And grandmother went to work.

"At that time the Khudjum campaign was in progress, which required working women to abandon the parandja. Even though Grandmother discarded the parandja, she wore a large white scarf with which she hid her face whenever she met men. But mother on the other hand only wore a parandja at her marriage, as expected of a bride, when she was being conducted to her new home.

"Till the end of her life Grandmother did not recognise Soviet rule. She considered it anti-God and was very bitter when we, her granddaughters, recited poems about Lenin and the Party and what we had been taught at school. So she told us about the Qur'an, the Prophet and the ahadith, which we looked upon as some sort of fairy tales like the thousand and one nights. She herself was a profoundly religious person and believed that charity was the main feature of being a Muslim. During the war, when the family although poor and hungry had some income and ration cards, every day she would stand at the window with a bowl of food so that at least one hungry soul was fed. My mother often spoke about this whenever she was..."
trying to instil in us an understanding about Islam, about its essence and principles. She was greatly perturbed by how distorted people's understanding of religion had become; while preserving all the external rituals and practices they were losing its true content: charity and goodness.

"Even though Grandmother was a religious person, she believed that knowledge should be brought everywhere, wherever possible. So she supported Mother, so that my sister could study in Leningrad and I in Tashkent. She also believed that to hate anyone, no matter who, was a big sin. And now when I frequently meet aggressiveness and boors I often remember what she used to say. My grandmother had seen poverty and riches, fear of death and hunger, had witnessed changes in power, the persecution and ruin of the old world; how did she, although unable to accept and adapt to the new ideas, succeed in remaining good? What helped her keep her footing in this stormy world and become the rock against which her family and children leaned? I ask myself this question and, having lived through quite a lot, I see the answer in that religiousness, which gave her faith. It was not based on the dark side of our nature or on superstition but was truly exalted. I now feel that there's not enough of such faith among us".

It is impossible to properly analyse the state's policy towards the women's issue without a discussion of the Soviet attitude towards religion in the 1917-1930 period. Confrontational right from the start, it had the ultimate goal of destroying the Muslim religion which was considered an ideology opposing sovietisation. But this policy was implemented through subtly misleading tactics, deceiving both the religious masses and the intelligentsia. While slogans regarding freedom of conscience were pronounced by the Soviet authorities, there were secret directions ordering repression of the clergy's addresses.

In the decades immediately preceding and following the Revolution, the emerging Central Asian intelligentsia had begun substantial reform of Islam, as it existed in Turkestan and the Caucasus. However, the process of sovietisation in Central Asia opposed all currents in Islam without exception. Over a period of more than ten years lasting until the mid-1930s, the state
gradually suppressed, discredited and ultimately annihilated the nationalist and secular-reformist ideas emerging in Central Asian society at the beginning of the 20th century. With the death of the religious reform movement by the end of the 1930s, what was left of Islam in Central Asia was led towards the path of aggression, impatience and fanaticism. The irony is that Soviet rule itself thus strengthened the influence of the reactionary section of the clergy over the believers while dooming the secular tendencies in Soviet Islam to annihilation. Islam began to stagnate, later crushed by the conformists in the Official Islamic Administration (consisting of four Muslim Spiritual Boards) formed in the 1940s by the state. Created with a view to securing a compromise with religion, the policy was in line with efforts to increase the population’s confidence in the authorities.

But in the 1920s the concepts forwarded by the secular movement within Islam were used by the Bolsheviks especially in its work with women. The secularists, mostly former Jadidis, entered the Turkestan Communist Party, some becoming members of the official Muslim administration, while the majority became newspaper workers, set up new schools, headed national education institutions and libraries, became organisers of the national theatre, local artisans unions and initiated the formation of women’s clubs and artels (traditional collectives).

Early Soviet policy towards women’s emancipation

LOOKING at Soviet policies regarding the women’s issue as a whole, one of the first acts was the decision to grant working women full equality with men, strengthened through the Constitution of the RSFSR (Russian Socialist Federation of Soviet Republics) in 1918. Bolshevik policies towards women were outlined by Lenin: “Soviet rule, the first and only of its kind in the world, has destroyed all the rotten old bourgeois laws which accorded women unequal status with men... Soviet rule, the first and only of its kind in the world, as the dictatorship of the workers, has abolished all advantages associated with the individual” [emphasis mine - M.T.]. At the same time, the famous Russian feminist, Alexandra Kolontai wrote: “The women’s question is in the final analysis all about a scrap of bread... To be able to decide they are going to demand equal rights with men, women must above all become economically independent...”
Let me explain why I see a contradiction in these two statements. In conditions where private property had been abolished, the proclaimed equality of men and women turned out in practice to mean the equality of non-rights before the state. The abolition of both men and women's economic independence paved the way for the contradictions and problems in gender relations in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. This is why it is impossible to use globally accepted democratic concepts when analysing Soviet-style women's liberation, which was in fact exposed as simply introducing previously unknown methods of economic enslavement. One recalls the words of George Orwell: "Peace is war... Love is hatred".

Thus, the changes in women's status in the USSR need to be regarded not as bringing emancipation, but as bringing a new form of women's dependence both in society and in the family. Broadly speaking, feminist struggle in the West has been directed against men's claim to have rights over women as a form of property. But in the Soviet Union the question was about the state's rights over women and here the state used its mighty power, competing with men in the exploitation of women.

In Central Asia the solution of the women's issue was dictated by Moscow's attitude towards its colony, regarding it purely as the main source of virtually gratis raw cotton for Russia's textile and light industry. Thousands of workers were needed for work in the fields. Before the Revolution, Central Asia had exported 300 thousand tons of cotton a year, but, due to the Civil War and the large scale peasants' movement, by the start of the 1920s cotton production had been drastically curtailed, with large areas returning to grain cultivation. Yet Soviet Russia needed and strove for self-sufficiency in cotton. To this end, new land was brought under cultivation by expanding irrigation systems. Cotton production demanded the replacement of the working hands lost in the Civil War; and cotton production demanded people who were hard-working, patient and skillful. Such working hands were to be found only in the Muslim family, and they belonged to women. If at the beginning of the 1920s the issue of women's emancipation was a political question of 'wrestling women from under the control of a hostile ideology', then at the end of the 1930s this became an economic question linked with the objective of creating cotton plantations in feudal-style estates called kolkhoz (collective farm).
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In Turkestan, the Soviet authorities issued a directive ordering local civil laws to be based on the civil laws and acts of the RSFSR. They were introduced through the decisions of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People’s Commissars of the Turkestan SSR(4), which had been given the power to alter some clauses of central Soviet directives in accordance with local conditions.

Although the Soviet decrees on ‘The Dissolution of Marriage (16 December, 1917)’ and ‘Civil Marriage, Children and Civil Registry (19 December, 1917)’ were duplicated in Turkestan, nevertheless as in the past, personal law matters were in practice regulated by Islam. The core of the population did not recognise marriages conducted under Soviet law and in questions of family law they turned to the qazis even though their adjudicative functions had been abolished.(5)

In October 1918 at the 6th Congress of the Soviets of the Turkestan ASSR, its Constitution was approved, reiterating the RSFSR Constitution’s clauses regarding the equality of rights between men and women. In the Turkestan Constitution, equality was recognised as entailing equal voting rights in Soviet institutions, equal rights in the work place and the equal rights of partners in family matters. But these rights remained on paper due to the stagnant medieval nature of society. Even though the Congress urged the people to struggle against the domination of shariat over the family and women, Central Asian Muslim society was hostile towards Soviet declarations regarding women’s rights.

On the basis of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) Programme approved at the Eighth Congress (March 1919), a new resolution ‘Work among Women Proletariat’ was passed leading to the formation of women’s sections (zhenotdel) throughout the Party and including the Party in Turkestan.(6)

One of the first measures taken to promote the local Party’s policy towards women was the holding of the First Regional Congress of Working Women and Peasant Women of Turkestan and the First Congress of the Peoples of the East held in Baku in September 1920. At the latter, women delegates publicly discarded the parandija. With hindsight it is difficult to say whether this was a voluntary act, but clearly the idea was to show Muslims that women’s liberation begins with the discarding of the veil. The following year at the First All-Russian Conference of Women’s Organisations Working Among Women
of the East, there were 45 delegates including women from Turkestan.

The Turkestan Communist Party used the intelligentsia as a means of gaining access to the Muslim population and to conduct propaganda in the local language against the nationalist freedom movement’s armed groups. They continued to propagate the secular ideas of the Jadis as well as concepts about the unification of all Muslims, about the continuity of culture and political contacts with Muslims abroad.

Hostility in Turkestan forces a reassessment of sovietisation

BUT the implacable opposition in the Ferghana area, where war continued to rage in the mountains, took a different position. They appealed to the workers of Turkestan: "If you do not take measures to rid yourselves of this filth, then you will have drifted from your true path which you have held for centuries; you will have forgotten your religion, nationality and history. You will become morally answerable for such crimes and will bring the wrath of our God and his punishment down upon yourselves".

Despite legal provisions introducing the secularisation of the education system, the Soviet rulers' attempts to attract the local population to Soviet schools met with strong resistance. Official records blamed this both on the reactionary clergy as well as on the lack of teachers who agreed with Soviet education policy, and the lack of resources and ideologically correct textbooks. As a result it was not feasible to separate schools from religious institutions in practice, giving the clergy an opportunity to continue its work. The people's prejudice against the new schools, particularly schools for girls, was linked with the anti-religious propaganda which formed part of their syllabus.

Women's newly proclaimed rights within the family and marriage were equally rejected and attempts to encourage local women to join the Party's women's sections were strongly resisted. The Soviet rulers again explained women's inability to sever themselves from the Muslim community by the influence of 'reactionary clergy'.

THE weakness of Soviet authority in Turkestan forced the local Communist Party leadership to re-assess its policy. In April 1922
the local Communist Party was jolted by the holding of an illegal Congress of Muslims of Turkestan in Samarkand. This adopted a manifesto calling for the creation of an independent Turkestan-Turkish republic and raised the question of the reintroduction of private property and the *shariat*. In response the Soviet authorities, within the framework of land reforms, took a decision to return confiscated lands and restore the qazi courts and religious schools. The earlier Decree on The Abolition of Class and Civil Ranks in Turkestan had led to the abolition of all privileges used by the Muslim clergy while all income from *waqf* property had been proclaimed an absolutely inalienable form of state property. Now however, the clergy was returned all madrasahs and mosques previously shut down, and all income from confiscated lands was once again passed on to the clergy.

These policies towards religion postponed the resolution of the question of women's emancipation to an unspecified later date, and those communists who had forced women to abandon the *parandja*, who had insisted on co-education and who had closed madrasahs and mosques, were either punished or sent to work outside the borders of Central Asia. As with other policies introduced during the New Economic Policy period, the relaxation in Soviet policy towards the Muslim clergy was necessitated and explained by the simple desire to hold on.

At the same time, the number of Red Army contingents in Turkestan was dramatically strengthened, witnessing an increasing number of punitive operations in the rural areas against those who were active in the Basmatch. Often the pretext for such raids was the need to rescue women from the clutches of feudal barons. Particularly singled out for punishment were members of the qazi courts who ignored Soviet law and took decisions according to *shariat*, or who failed to take action against the marriage of minor girls, enforced veiling, polygamy, and efforts to stop girls and women going to school. In the decrees of the Turkestan Central Executive Committee(7) of 1924, polygamy and compelling of marriages against the women's will were established as criminal acts liable to prosecution.

In 1925 Women's Congresses were held at the regional, district and republic levels, and the same year saw the First Congress of the Uzbek Communist Party.(8) Here a number of issues central to women's participation in the new system were raised; these included women's participation in elections to the soviets,
women and land reforms, and Party work among women. There was also the question of creating female Party activists, of expanding the recruitment of women into the Party and Komsomol (Communist Youth League), and of increasing the number of deputies to the various tiers of Soviets.

At the beginning of the 1920s, work among Central Asian women was mainly carried out by Russian women, later joined by Tatar women. Although in 1924 local women also appeared in the Party's women's sections (zhenotdel), in those early years Muslim women rarely took part in Komsomol activities. It was only when the first graduates from the girl's schools emerged that Muslim women became active, focusing mainly on the areas of education and organising artels, being made members of the Party and Komsomol through these activities. Although statistics show a sharp increase in the number of Uzbek women and women of other local nationalities in the Party and Komsomol cadres, this must be attributed more to the obsession with impressive statistics rather than an actual rise in the number of politically conscious women. For example towards the end of 1924, there were 80 women of local nationalities in the Party, which registered a quantum jump to 270 in 1925. The policy commitment towards drawing women into public life was also reflected in the sharp rise in the number of women deputies to the Soviets.

But Party work among women faced numerous obstacles, not least the totalitarian regime's own questionable goal of securing obedient and poorly paid cogs in the state apparatus. Fatima-apa Buransheva tells the story of her mother's experience as a organiser of cooperatives in the Andijan region:

"My mother Zuleikha Buransheva was born in Rostov-on-the-Don. In 1924 she was introduced to my father, who had studied outside Uzbekistan, married him and went to live with him in Andijan. She found herself in a patriarchal family, where she had all the responsibilities of a daughter-in-law, was under the complete control of her mother-in-law, and was expected to serve and obey her husband. To end her slave-like existence she left her husband and went to work in a school, joined the Party, and then worked as a women's organiser. She became the organiser of a silk weaving artel and we still have photographs of her with the women working there. From personal
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In 1936, Mother became the organiser and teacher of a training centre preparing cadres for artel leaders in Andijan city. She understood that it took great courage for girls to work or study in defiance of their parents, so she tried to help them settle in, especially helping those who needed to find somewhere to live. Girls who came from the villages didn’t even know how to find basic necessities. They were intimidated by people, who regarded them as if they were somehow rotten fruit or disobedient, and they really needed support. Many of them had left home to avoid being forced to marry older men, or in the hope of securing an education or of leading a fulfilling life. Many dreamed of finding true happiness. But in reality life could give them little except poverty and hard work. Women like my mother gave them genuine sympathy and moral support, and this became for them a raft in the sea of life. Many of them were able to become independent, while others returned to their patriarchal families seeking the protection of husbands and parents as they were unable to withstand the pressures of an independent life. But not all those who were part of the new life treated them with respect; they were also harassed by those men whose responsibility it was to help them, something which intimidated and insulted them.

In the years before the Second World War Mother worked in the Party’s regional committee but during the war she went out to the rural areas, working in the district committee. I remember, how winter and summer she went riding out to the kolkhoz to organise help for the front; from their meagre resources people collected money for clothes and food for the soldiers. After the war she was brought into the Party regional committee where she headed the section dealing with Party work among women. She was always led by the principle ‘The Party has ordered it - it must be done’. She never observed a regular working day, but worked
holidays. All her life went in my mother, but now, really feel sorry for her; beauty, her strength I agreed, I still wonder whether of life we women are living consisted of hard work which providing neither material fulfillment, nor the joy of usefulness.

The labour force

NEP (New Economic Policy, 1921-1928) rule in Central Asia, they the emancipation of women in the their male bread winner were the equipment and seeds, and most trailing households were legally their families, and by virtue of this participate in decisions affecting pasture and water, and the works. In just four regions of land, allowing these women to

method, cooperatives, as a form of truly useful in raising living in their families. The voluntary into cooperatives, where economic on the ball, hard-working and into active life. An organisational nature turned out to be a peasant women. Initially, women, responsibility for their family's 4 artels, but subsequently women their menfolk's incomes also joined organisations included women not only but also from nearby ones. The right together women involved in net weaving, or women who got ducts or supply raw materials to socialisation,(10) these economically

well-established artels were incorporated in the kolkhoz, which then operated according to centrally dictated plans and quotas, quashing initiative and enterprise. Cheap female labour, slaving on the endless cotton fields, became the basis for the state's appropriation of all agricultural produce, including the cheap raw materials to be used in the textile, silk spinning and carpet manufacturing units of Russia.

In the cities, massive unemployment obstructed the emergence of women from seclusion, and there was little possibility of women attaining economic equality and entering the industrial work force. Thus the Soviet authorities sought to encourage women to work in handicraft manufacturing units. Central Asian women were immensely skilled at carpet-making and silk spinning, and in embroidering scarves, headgear and shawls. The most suitable method of converting these skills into work which could be incorporated into national production was to organise master craftswomen into artels. Initially, when the artels emerged in the early 1920s, women worked at home, while the state took responsibility for providing them materials and patterns, and for selling the finished products. Subsequently they began to be given industrial premises and to pass on their skills to young women, and were helped to sell their products for miserly returns outside Central Asia. Handicraft artels were usually formed at women's clubs and schools and it was in this period that the first nurseries and day care centres were organised. The organisation of cooperative handicraft artels was carried out by the women's sections of the local and regional Communist Party Committees.

At the all-Union level, the question of attracting women into the work force became one of the most important ideological tasks of the Communist Party Programme and state policies. Like other issues, this question was expected to be solved by means of directives. In earlier theoretical critiques of the women's issue, Social Democrats had largely focused on the status of women working in capitalist production, their main objective being to secure equal pay for equal labour. But this research proved of little use to the Soviet rulers in Central Asia where there was no capital available for investment and where, in conditions of widespread unemployment, initial attempts to attract women into low paid, unskilled manufacturing work met with little success in the cities. However the characteristic Soviet tendency of passing off dreams as factual reality led to a system and
statistics which grossly exaggerated achievements in the area of increasing women's work force participation. Meanwhile the new artels and semi-skilled manufacturing sector largely used home workers and although this allowed women a degree of social contact with the world outside their homes and consequently some measure of political enlightenment, in general such home-based work was poorly paid and had no fundamental effect on women's way of life.

Many Soviet authors regard the induction of women into manufacturing and industry as an important consequence of women's liberation in Turkestan. They quote statistics stating that the number of women of local nationalities engaged in manufacturing more than trebled in the period 1923-1933. But in reality women had to go out to work in industrial and manufacturing units for economic reasons, and not as a result of a rise in their own political consciousness.

In families with male breadwinners, women preferred to subsidise the family income by working at home, or in artels close to their homes or in those manufacturing artels which allowed part time work. Factory work was unskilled, based on shifts and fulfilling piecework quotas with frequent days of unpaid 'volunteer' work on Saturdays and Sundays. Nevertheless, heavy physical work brought higher wages and guaranteed some social security (for example, coupons for basic necessities). This kind of work was as a rule taken on by women who, having lost the family breadwinner, had become household heads; occasionally even educated women were to be found working in the factories, a phenomenon supporting this contention. Thus, a sizeable part of the increase in the number of women workers was in fact simply a manifestation of the political repression directed against men who were or were presumed to be members of the nationalist counter-revolutionary organisations and the armed opposition. The number of women workers from local nationalities again more than doubled between 1935 and 1940 - precisely the period of the greatest repression in Central Asia.

The *Khudjum* - the 'Offensive' against purdah and segregation

ACCORDING to Soviet historians, sociologists and philosophers, the culmination of the process of freeing women from the long-term given to them by the traditional marriage and family organisation as having a natural relationship, a social status, a responsibility; they began to offend the 'Collar' and change their consciousness.

The Party and the state organised a modernisation of the traditional life. The Alim's authority was challenged by a new type of, often organised, female organisations from the major population groups. In the Kazakh society, women were devoted to their duties. They were more Musulman than their husbands. Saidbaev writes in his study of the Komsomol movement that women were emancipated and that the Komsomol should not stand by while the women of the country were 'left down'; 'I do not want to hear of women oppositions, but on the contrary, might not struggle with the male generation to enrich the country'.

Mumina-khanum is a typical activist during the Khudjum movement.

"We live in the era of enlightenment. We are not what our forefathers were. We are on the debate concerning the problem of family, literacy, prospects and the like. We are Propagandists, not only by verb, but also by social activities."

We therefore have two things, social and mental. In a word..."
from the fetters of the past was the *Khudjum* (Offensive), the
term given to the Party's campaign calling for all women to
abandon the veil. The campaign against *parandja* was regarded
as having played a leading role in the fight against all forms of
relationships (supposedly dictated by Islam) which were
responsible for women's subordinate status. In reality it was an
offensive against Islam, as an ideology of nationalist
consciousness.(11)

The Party's campaign for the abandonment of Muslim women's
traditional dress began in March 1927. On March 8th,
International Women's Day, mass meetings of women were
organised by the women's councils (*zhenskoye sobraniye*) in all cities and
major population centres in Central Asia. At the meetings all
kinds of veils used to hide the faces and figures of Muslim
women were burnt on a pyre. Later, May Day slogans were
devoted to the emancipation of women in an effort to attract
more Muslim women into the movement against *parandja*. T.
Saidbayev records some of the slogans: "In the Party and
Komsomol there is no place for those opposed to women's
emancipation"; "Without the active involvement of women
themselves the struggle for their emancipation will be slowed
down"; "In the land of the Soviets there is no place for
oppression, slavery and violence against women"; "Men who do
not struggle for the new order, obstruct the growth of the
country"; "Women, free yourselves!"

Mumina-khanum Khakimova, who was a young Komsomol
activist during the *Khudjum*, shared with me her memories about
the spirit of those times.

"We had great faith in the new life. I was born in
Bukhara and personally knew many figures of the
enlightenment movement. For example the *Jadidi*
author Fitrat was our neighbour. He had great
authority and often gave speeches. Women's clubs
were opened in Bukhara where meetings, public
debates and performances were held. They were also
literacy classes. There was a great thirst for knowledge
and women willingly attended these clubs.
Propaganda sessions were enthusiastically conducted
by very young women who dragged their friends into
social work, happily sharing everything they knew.
We thought a new and different life was going to begin
in a week, a month or a year. Women working at
administrative posts sincerely tried to help those they knew. Whenever there was a literate energetic girl, she was recommended to a post where she could show her worth. This happened with me. I was still a schoolgirl when I started attending the women's clubs. As my father was a worker I knew the women workers at the silk weaving units well. I read them newspapers at the club, told them about Soviet laws protecting women's rights and, as well as I could, explained them the laws. After graduating from school I was recommended to a post in the regional Komsomol.

"During the Khudjum campaign I was still a schoolgirl. I remember when Jehan Abidova, one of the first Uzbek women to secure a top Party post, came to Bukhara. She held a meeting at the women's club, encouraged the women to discard the parandja, stating that parandja is not a Qur'anic injunction but came later as a tool to restrict women's rights. Throughout 1927 parandjas were burnt, but for unveiled women it was very difficult; they were insulted, murdered by their own brothers and husbands. I myself witnessed the murder of a young woman in broad daylight in the city centre, not far from the Liab-i-Hauzi. Polygamy had not yet been eliminated. Life behind the walls of the home was often terrible. Women were in fact slaves to their husbands and mothers-in-law, subjected to fear and humiliation.

"During collectivisation a great many mistakes were committed by the local authorities; even very small farmers were declared kulaks. At the time I worked in the regional Komsomol committee. The process of collectivisation was carried out by complete illiterates, who wanted to report back on their successes as quickly as possible. Thus, the people became really afraid. No sooner did they have to switch over to the Latin script than people began to burn all their old books written in the Arabic script or throw them down wells.

"My husband was a member of the atheist club. The Komsomol were desperate people and their boys used all sorts of theatrical performances to push their ideas. Only those with great courage could carry out atheist
propaganda in such a religious city as Bukhara, where there were so many clerics.

"It was at that time that people began to be particularly interested in theatre and the arts. Whenever theatre groups came to the city, almost the entire population tried to attend the performance. People's interest in the new form of social interaction was linked to their faith in the ideas the new art forms propounded. There was a huge surge of energy leading to many changes. There was a great change in people's outward appearances, especially among women. The intimidated girls of yesterday disappeared, replaced by the smiling faces and energetic gait that I remember among the girls of my age group. Among them were many talented and interesting individuals. Many of these later headed the women's sections and worked in Soviet institutions, in the Republic's Council of Ministers and even in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. Others became doctors, teachers and lawyers. They worked hard and considered their work vital above all to their women friends. This was in stark contrast to those who became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, because in the early days the main criteria for the selection of women cadres was their individual qualities. Women activists of those times faced open hostility and threats to their lives. To overcome all this, they needed personal courage, initiative and faith in what they were doing - there were no hidden motives.

"All my life I worked in the area of professional technical education. I was also involved in Party and trade union work, but my calling was still to be a teacher. I was really proud of my female students; many of them became particularly talented in their fields. For many of them I became an older friend. I am pleased not so much by their gratefulness, but by the fact that many of them developed the need to do good for those around them."

During the course of the year-long Khudijum, paranjjas were burned in cities and villages across the region, involving over one hundred thousand women according to Party records. The campaign was extended to practically the entire territory as local
administrators in the Party bodies were under strong pressure from above to produce facts and figures about the campaign’s success. Women were banned from attending schools and women’s clubs in a paranđa. Husbands were also pressurised and although many male communists were against their womenfolk abandoning the veil they were forced to send their wives to the meetings. And many women themselves did not want to abandon the veil as they saw that unveiled women were the objects of scorn. Although general social opinion and the social environment were anti-women, not many women took the step of abandoning the veil consciously and there were few who actually felt that the future of their country lay in abandoning the veil. Moreover, while the segregation of women as a function of religion was liquidated in the fires of the Khudjum, it was replaced by a new Soviet segregation of sexes in all spheres of life.

The organisers of the Khudjum were invariably Party functionaries who had only recently arrived in Central Asia, and who were often unfamiliar with Asian conditions but who saw in their posting to Turkestan a way to rise up the ladder. In their enthusiasm for career advancement they became the unwitting executioners of hundreds of women. Many of the women who had become puppets to political volunteerism later died tragically at the hands of their brothers, fathers or husbands, for whom the concept of women’s honour was linked with their modesty. In 1927 in Turkestan 203 women were murdered, and in 1928 in Uzbekistan alone there were 226 registered cases of abduction and murder, with the number of such cases doubling in 1929. Not surprisingly even those who had burnt their paranđa at meetings soon took to the veil again. Thus in Margilan out of 3000 women who had abandoned the paranđa, 2000 later started wearing it again. In order to further the success of the Khudjum, Komsomol and communist women activists were attached as protection to women who had discarded the paranđa, ironically attracting even greater hatred towards their wards. Muslim men openly accused unveiled Muslim women of being prostitutes and apostates.

The path towards freedom for women of the East was undoubtedly bloody, and led to a new form of enslavement for the majority of dehkun women. For all but a few the doors remained closed to science, to other cultures, to social equality, and to representation in the state and government. And for the
majority who experienced this forced liberation, the compulsory form of 'equality' that it introduced brought much bitterness, misunderstanding and resentment. It was an agonising historical process which gave premature birth to a puny form of freedom, infirm and defective, whose impact is still being felt today by all women of the former Soviet East.

This was not the freedom that reformers and the secular intelligentsia had dreamed about. Women intellectuals too were made to pay for their freedom, being rejected by that very society which they could have served. Perhaps a more accurate term might have been 'outcast', but this applies more to today's situation than to the 1930-1950s, when the state effectively insulated the few educated women from the real attitude that the majority of the population had towards them; they lived as if glass walls separated them from the rest of the people.

Those Soviet historians who until recently judged the Khudjum to have been an apolitical policy which played the leading role in liberating the women of the East, today regard it as having had an extremely negative impact. For example, historian Dilorom Alimova, the author of many acclaimed articles about the campaign, recently wrote:

"In the process of the Khudjum many distortions were tolerated. The failure to take into account local religious values, for example, meant that neither Soviet Party workers nor ordinary people were prepared for the appearance of unveiled women.

In 1927, out of forty thousand members of the Communist Party of Turkestan, twenty five thousand were from local nationalities. They were expected to set an example, but all that happened was that one day they brought their wives into the public square to throw their paranjda onto the pyre, and the next day made them wear a new one. Among those in authority all the old customs relating to women survived. For example, out of 258 Party workers in Kirghizia in 1927, eighteen paid a huge kalim(12) to get their wives, three inherited their wives(13) and two had polygamous marriages. Side by side with Party propaganda work and attempts to strengthen people's faith in Soviet rule, reigned an atmosphere of intimidation and punishment in the area of the women's issue. Party
work in this field was initially only carried out among women, with Party leaders only calling for awareness-raising work among men much later.

"The Khudjum started to assume such a pace that two republics, Uzbekistan and Turkmenia, had a competition over the number of women abandoning the veil, known by their contemporary label, 'The Competition of Millions'. The judicial bodies, who were given the task of settling each divorce case within a single week, also jumped into the fray. From the onset of the Khudjum, the courts received a large number of applications about divorce, polygamy, the forced marriage of minors, the payment of kalim and so on. And the courts, in accordance with instructions and without any particular judicial procedure, pronounced their decisions".

Effectively, the political resolution of the women's issue became one more ground for increased Soviet repression of the clergy and other class enemies, largely former participants of the nationalist movements. And thus in turn the Khudjum became one more ground for the people to mistrust the rulers. In the eyes of Muslims, the Bolsheviks and their allies came to be regarded as something alien to true believers and a means of spiritually subjugating the local population and annihilating the laws of their forefathers' faith.

After the Khudjum, there was a sharp fall in women's participation in clubs for women, amateur societies and cooperatives. But at the same time, lower administrative bodies came under great pressure from above to increase the number of women working in manufacture, heralding a new stage of compulsion.

The Party particularly demanded an increase in the number of women represented in the pseudo-elected Soviet bodies and in 1927-28 their number increased from 820 to 2294. A further 5202 women were 'elected' to judicial bodies. It was a gross distortion of a development which should have been cause for celebration - i.e., the growing participation of women in public life. There were instructions from above ordering the establishment of quotas for women's promotion, orders which were carried out without regard for the true abilities of those promoted; the main criteria for selection was the candidate's social origin. Thus
women deputies and delegates, just as their male colleagues, were often uneducated and mediocre favourites of the officials who controlled people's destinies, and in the subsequent years of repression were effectively rubber stamps endorsing each and every Party decision. This political process killed women's very essence: their capacity for pity and compassion.

This is not to say that there were no ruling women who were loved by the people. There were those who consciously pursued freedom, believing that an educated woman could influence the destiny of her people. These women remained a product of the local Muslim culture with its traditional quest for spirituality. They regarded modern knowledge and the modern professions - doctors, teachers, artists, etc., - essential for their people. Sadly, the first generations of Uzbek women to enter the worlds of science and administration turned out to have greater sincerity and integrity than the later generations of women leaders, who had completely lost their spiritual and cultural roots.

The policy of 'women's liberation' did not have social support from the grass roots, and like all policy measures ordered from above, was carried out against a background of quiet resistance on the part of the basic core of the population and the small armed opposition. Collectivisation and the introduction of the Latin alphabet in education in 1929 added to the resentment.

Special attention should be given to the connection between the Khudjum and the latinisation of education. The Party had understood that its tactical policy retreat regarding the clergy, religious schools and land reforms had allowed early Soviet rule to consolidate. But subsequent goals necessitated the elimination of the influence of religion in all spheres of life. The future was to be built on the foundations laid by the Soviet school system, with education based on communist ideology. As part of this, the syllabus of the humanities was curtailed and teaching of the subject was based simply on the criticism of all past cultures, distorting and omitting historical detail. The educational reforms were achieved through a destruction of books that was unprecedented in modern times and that is sometimes compared with the devastation of the Medieval Crusades. Not only were books with a religious content destroyed, but all others written in the Arabic script. Anything written in the Arabic script was considered to be a 'holy writing' which could facilitate the emergence and replication of religious sentiment.
By 1930 in Uzbekistan, two years after the Latin alphabet was introduced in Central Asia, the switch over was complete in all schools, newspapers and other publications, and the campaign for universal primary education began. Those members of the intelligentsia, especially school teachers and people working in the field of the humanities, who opposed the latinisation policy were labeled anti-Soviet activists and nationalists, and faced massive repression, disappearing into the gulag or losing their jobs. Central Asian society thus lost people who had been potentially ready to accept and synthesise European culture within their own. They were replaced by Komsomol activists, young Commissars from the army, and graduates from the Party schools, most of whom were semi-educated young men and women filled with the enthusiasm of the newly converted and only recently arrived from the villages where feudal attitudes still held sway.

All this caused the people of Central Asia colossal economic, spiritual and cultural losses which were to be felt for decades to come. The lack of cadres, and particularly the absence of systematic teacher training meant poorer standards in native schools as compared to Russian schools, and as a consequence led to lower educational levels among children of local nationalities, dooming them to a subordinate role in Soviet society.

The Khudjum and educational reforms were different aspects of one and the same objective: the destruction of Islam's monopoly over the cultural life of the society as a whole. This was dictated by the perceived need to uproot the seeds of all future types of resistance to Soviet rule and deprive the peoples of Central Asia of national consciousness by relegating their culture to second place. Although history records that the Republic's communist leadership put its full weight behind this goal, religion did not disappear; it simply went underground, surviving in the people's subconscious.

But this development not only allowed the positive aspects of local Muslim culture to survive (in a somewhat truncated form), but also cultivated prejudice and mistrust of everything outside the immediate boundaries of the local culture. This also explains today's subconscious rejection of all the positive gains of the Soviet period, during which there was an attempt to reach out to global science, to cultivate within Uzbek society an interest in western culture and values, as well as progressive forms of political and economic organization.

From the beginning, the campaign was closely linked with the thrust of the communist ideology: to disintegrate society. But in its turn, the society, which took on the appearance of a vast open field, bore witness to the success of the people's ingenuity and guile.

Religious and social life, which for a long time was seen as a religious phenomenon, though the parallel between the two interaction, continued to be a part of the Soviet ideology. If a religious community remained in a semi-closed period because of the repression, it became a productive social unit, which survived in a semi-underground, semi-Christian, semi-religious form.

Without the correctness of the problem of Islam's integration, but in its turn, the environment maintained an illusion, observing the conditions of Muslim women.

Concluding this long analysis of the political and social conditions following the dissolution of the empire, there was no unification without a delicate political process, not for its material or intellectual unity, nevertheless...
The Sovietisation of Central Asian Society

years after the Latin alphabet was switch over was complete in all publications, and the campaign began. Those members of the teachers and people working in who opposed the latinisation policy activists and nationalists, and faced losing their status by the gulags or losing their souls. Lost people who had been and synthesise European culture replaced by Komsomol activists, many, and graduates from the Party's semi-educated young men and women of the newly converted and the villages where feudal attitudes.

Central Asia colossal economic, which were to be felt for decades to end particularly the absence of poor poorer standards in native schools, and as a consequence levels among children of local to a subordinate role in Soviet

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political and economic development.

From the historical perspective, women's liberation was closely linked with the process of the secularisation of Central Asian society. But it is vital to avoid simplistic analysis of the process which took place between the 1920s and 1940s in Central Asia.

Today global developments have demonstrated that the laws of history cannot be changed just as the law of gravity cannot be changed; thus the secularisation of a society cannot be achieved through proclamations and leftist slogans. In Europe, under the evolutionary process of social development, secularisation took more than two centuries. New forms of social interaction, improved communications, increased information and mobility, the appearance of secular culture - these are the conditions under which religion yields up its role as the regulator of people's inter-relationships. Yet none of these conditions pertained in the Central Asia of the 1920s.

Religious norms were a particularly significant factor in people's lives, which is explained by the specific characteristics of Islam as a religion and by the society's historical backwardness. Even though the sovietisation of society promoted new forms of social interaction, nevertheless in essence these remained grounded in ideology - the ideology of the new communist religion. Society remained religious, but in contrast with the pre-Revolutionary period became 'bi-religious' i.e., the internal religion of Islam became dressed in the outer communist religion and under such conditions could neither develop nor reform. It was able to survive in its most arachnoid and conservative form, steeped in prejudice and guided by the local, poorly educated clergy, who gave their blessings to the clan system, submission before destiny and the subordination of the weak to the strong.

Without the secularisation of society, the women's issue as a problem of individual equality, could not have been resolved. But in its turn, women's emancipation also proved to be an illusion, obscuring the true picture about the lives of Muslim women.

Concluding this chapter, I want to perhaps pause on the following thought: although the break with the past was painful - there was much bloodshed and many casualties - sovietisation without a doubt changed society, giving it the impetus needed for its modernisation. Women played an albeit unwilling but nevertheless leading role in this modernisation of the Soviet
empire. Soviet laws recognised women's legal rights, a step forward from the medieval reality of the past. The new world outlook brought social change in its wake including the emergence of more widely educated classes. But Soviet policy regarding the rights of the women of the East was contradictory and often inconsistent, springing from short-term objectives and the introduction of ideology in all spheres of life. The Soviet solution to the women's issue was unable to provide true equality and instead brought numerous contradictions into women's lives. In the process of the revolutionary restructuring of society there remained no stable social base for the support and development of women's equality and sovietisation did not free Central Asian society from medieval patterns of human relations. A certain section of women, patronised by the state, began to occupy high-profile positions - but because of this role no longer influenced society. Women became vital participants in the country's modernisation, their participation in the agricultural production of Central Asia was essential - but their tools differed little from those of the Middle Ages. The contradictions between their aspirations and the reality affected women in their choice of paths, and determined the conflicts they faced in their lives. From their forced 'liberation' stem both the problems women face in contemporary society and the justifications used today by those opposed to women's equality.

Inside the parandja it is dark, like night
A parandja is dark, like night,
So as to see light with my own eyes
I discard the parandja intentionally.
I don't care how much abuse I hear,
let me be battered and bruised -
but unveiled at the meeting
I shall appear among my fellow villagers.
So as to be born anew,
to be able to see broad daylight,
so that I may shine, like all who work -
I have no other path.

Folk song

Chapter 5

Society

The family, culture and the political culture and within the family women's roles, the women's liberation and the women's issues are reflected in the future of Central Asian society. The institution of the family is facing the crisis of the post-Soviet society.

The emergence of the sovietisation process in Central Asia, and in the family, as well as the priority status of the family created by the socio-economic developments, thus a dominant concern in Central Asia. The Kolkhoz and the sovietisation process has tripped of the kolkhoz, the USSR true state created a new individual, individually, surely different, approach and Ph.D. of the sovietisation support policies, the family, the children of the family, the women's issues in the family affairs and
Chapter 3

Society and the Family

The family has always been one of the custodians of traditional culture and in order to understand the true status of women in society it is necessary to look at how women feel about their role within the family, traditionally regarded as the sphere of women's realisation. Moreover, social phenomena, indeed all the changes which a society undergoes are to varying degrees reflected in the family, where the foundations of the nation's future are laid. Thus a crisis in society is manifested as a crisis in the institution of the family, a fact illustrated by the problems facing the family in Central Asia during the Soviet and now post-Soviet periods.

The emergence of Central Asian women from seclusion under sovietisation in the 1920s and their induction into the production process imposed additional responsibilities on them. In response and in the name of preserving the family as a basic social unit,(1) priority should have been given to addressing the problems created by the qualitative changes taking place in family relationships. But while the state took the multi-faceted socioeconomic development of society upon itself, it disassociated itself from the solution of domestic problems and thus a double burden lay on the shoulders of million of women - from kolkhoz (collective farm) workers to professors. Soviet historians and sociologists, delighted at women's achievements, tripped over each other in their eagerness to insist that 'In the USSR true equality for women has clearly been secured with the state creating all the prerequisites for the blossoming of the individuality of women as workers and women as mothers'. But surely deceptive figures about the number of women engineers and Ph.D.s, and demagogic arguments regarding the material support provided to single mothers and women with several children could not have blinded them to the primitiveness of women's daily lives. While in bygone ages the home, domestic affairs and children were the basic preoccupations of women,
women in the past lived in multi-generational, patriarchal families with the women of the family sharing domestic responsibilities among themselves. As can be seen from the previous chapter, life was not easy for women. But in today's nuclear family the responsibilities of wife, mother, domestic and 'working unit' all fall on a single woman.

Sociologists would prop up their assertions about women's equality with their favourite fact: that women in the USSR spent an average forty hours a week on domestic work. I suggest (unfortunately I do not have any statistics) that Uzbek women spend even more time, because 60% live in districts where there are no gas lines, and 70% live without municipal heating and water supplies. Apart from that there is the traditional way of life, in which special place is accorded to huge weddings, funerals and even ordinary traditional forms of social interaction, all of which involve the preparation of special dishes either for entertaining guests or to be given as gifts. This squanders a woman's free time and the money she could have utilised for her personal development and relaxation. The shortage of all kinds of goods, including basic necessities, has turned the lives of most women into a perpetual race in which they are doomed to constantly carry loads for great distances. Robbing them of time and energy, this unproductive, monotonous and unpaid domestic work dampens and deforms women's individuality. These colossal physical and physiological burdens have reflected on women's relationships with their family members who, in turn, receive little true spiritual interaction, care, love, involvement and support.

Nevertheless, the family remained the most reliable bulwark in the struggle for survival. Oriented as it was towards a colonial form of agricultural production in the region (which doomed the majority to labouring on plantations producing a crop introduced by the colonialists), the state system alienated the people. Only traditional relationships enabled the people to survive the particularly difficult conditions which prevailed throughout the Soviet period. This also explains why the traditional family, despite all its negative aspects, is accorded such high status in the social consciousness of Central Asians. Thus while the sovietisation of Central Asian society rocked the religious and cultural foundations of the family, its basic patriarchal features were preserved.

According to perceptions of Muslim tradition, marriage is regarded as part of the family duty; recruiting an acceptable outlook, and the family continued to take responsibility for child rearing as conditions prescribed.

The problem of the family regarded as a system, was clearly illustrated by the slogan 'the village supplied 200,000 soldiers to the areas of defence, succour, and resettlement, and what do they get from society on the way for many years?'

Soviet society, however, is at least supposed to be based in the ideology of a throw off productive forces, productivity, and production conditions. The state created the state itself, and the state itself is only a manipulation, albeit conscious, of historical contradictions.

These contradictions are at the root of the fact that the state was able to exploit the population in the superficial and evocative manner it was clearly

Despite the fact that the Soviet period saw the family as an institution, the traditional family is still predestined
multi-generational, patriarchal family sharing domestic tasks. As can be seen from the survey for women. But in today's society, women's contributions to family life are not always appreciated. Their assertions about women's rights in the USSR spent on domestic work are often overlooked. I suggest that Uzbek women, who live in districts where there is no municipal heating and there is the traditional way of offering gifts to family gatherings, traditional forms of social preparation of special dishes or to be given as gifts. This and the money she could have spent on clothes and relaxation. The including basic necessities, has into a perpetual race in which women's roles in the economy, unproductive work dampened and deformse colossal physical and mental health, on women's relationships to, in turn, receive little true volvement and support.

But this is not the case, as it was towards a colonial period in the region (which doomed the plantations producing a crop the state system alienated the landowners enabled the people to cultivate conditions which prevailed). This also explains why the negative aspects, is accorded a sense of distaste for Central Asians. Central Asian society rocked the foundations of the family, its basic norms.

Muslim tradition, marriage is regarded as the means of procreation and a person's religious duty; rejecting it is thus perceived as contradicting the world outlook of those who have been brought up as Muslims. An interesting manifestation of this aspect of society is the continuing importance attached to the family as an institution responsible for the socialisation of children; divorce is regarded as condemning children to a life without a father.

The protection accorded by Central Asian society to children was regarded as one of the manifestations of the Muslim way of life - was clearly demonstrated during the Second World War. The slogan 'You are not an orphan!' was coined when more than 200,000 orphaned children were evacuated and resettled from the areas of the Soviet Union under German occupation, finding succour, protection and love in Uzbek families, who shared with them what little they had. Such a large-scale demonstration of generosity had never been seen before and this kind of resettlement only took place in Uzbekistan. This act of kindness on the part of a people who were themselves poor and deprived, for many revealed the moral strength of their Muslim traditions.

Soviet society, even though it experienced industrialisation and at least superficially bore the markings of urban culture dressed in the ideological cloak of socialism, in essence was slow to throw off the powerful remnants of medievalism in the non-productive sphere. This situation is clearly illustrated by conditions within the Soviet family. The strong arm of the state created the shell of an industrial society, but to achieve this the state itself utilised medieval methods of compulsion and manipulation of human relations, preserving in the social consciousness the stereotypes of the past. From this stems the contradictions in Soviet society and its institutions.

These contradictions are also found throughout Central Asia, where the contours of industrial society are even hazier; here the state was unable to achieve a significant mobilisation of the population, secularisation of social life proved to be purely superficial, and the new culture was not born out of an evolutionary process of societal development. All these factors are clearly reflected in the patriarchal Central Asian family.

Despite the breakdown of the family which occurred in the later Soviet period, the family is still accorded the role of an institution which defines social values, above all for women who are predestined to live out their role as the nurturer of children,
family and husband. An Uzbek proverb says: 'If the father is stupid it means a house with someone stupid in it; if the mother is stupid it means the whole household is stupid.' From this one can clearly see the double standards for men and for women: from her is demanded the strictest account of her conduct and deeds; but men's business is not supposed to concern women. I know of families where the father was a teacher of scientific atheism, while the wife said her prayers five times a day and observed Ramadan, so as to 'as she put it' alone for her husband's sins. Such a 'division of labour' was also found in relation to other family duties. Responsibility for all the unseemly mistakes of the family's members lies upon the woman. People still cite another Uzbek proverb: 'Who makes a man out of a husband? The wife. Who makes the sea out of a puddle? The wife.'

Village traditions dominate lifestyles

INDUSTRIALISATION and urbanisation in Central Asia carried the price of the European population's domination in these processes, with both natural and forced migration to the region taking place. Meanwhile, the local population for the most part remained concentrated in agricultural production. Thus the Uzbek village did not become the primary source of labour for Central Asian cities; indeed the state used the villages in their traditional, agricultural role for the development of typically colonial cotton plantations. Such plantations needed people whose way of life prepared them for persistent, laborious work, people essentially of a medieval society. The long established way of life - which included adherence to the authority of elders, mutual support - the ruling elite's patronage of the socially weak and the practice of placing faith in one's patrons, women's subjugation, and having several children, was how the nation survived under the primitive conditions of an almost subsistence economy. As a consequence, the pattern of strict religious regeneration of life, which preached submission to one's fate, remained undisturbed.

But Islam, as a constantly evolving religion, as a civilisation and culture, began to disappear from the life of the peasantry, preserved instead only in its superficial form. Nevertheless, for the majority of the people of Central Asia, adherence to Islam even in this form was a symbol of cultural identity. Doomed to a demeaning existence on the poverty line and denied the
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A proverb says: 'If the father is bone stupid in it; if the mother is led is stupid'. From this one can judge for men and for women: the account of her conduct and supposed to concern women. I was a teacher of scientific prayer five times a day and (put it) alone for her husband's was also found in relation to it for all the unseemly mistakes in the woman. People still cite a man out of a husband? of a puddle? The wife'.

Lifestyles

Colonisation in Central Asia carried population's domination in these forced migration to the regional population for the most part cultural production. Thus the primary source of labour for the state used the villages in their development of typically large plantations needed people for persistent, laborious work, cultural society. The long established deference to the authority of elders, the patronage of the socially weak with one's patrons, women's all children, was how the nation's conditions of an almost subsistence the pattern of strict religious preached submission to one's fate, belonging religion, as a civilisation and from the life of the peasantry, superficial form. Nevertheless, for Central Asia, adherence to Islam of cultural identity. Doomed to a poverty line and denied the possibility of any spiritual and cultural development, the only means by which Soviet peasants could manifest their national consciousness became not just religion as a philosophy or world view, but also the conservation, nurtured through the routine of daily life, of forms of social interaction, rituals, habits, etiquettes and set of prohibitions, stemming from the pre-Revolution period; work on the land and having several children in effect became symbols of cultural identity. Thus, in spite of the slogans of Communist doctrine, what is identified as the Muslim way of life has been preserved, even if in an incomplete, shrunken form.

Another factor ensuring the preservation of traditional lifestyles was the environment created by the totalitarian state, where the absence of opposition parties, movements and free trade unions restricted the political and cultural horizons of the Central Asian people. Meanwhile the sphere of cultural interaction remained limited, often due to poverty. For example, tourism, the most popular pastime in the second half of the 20th century, was in practical terms beyond the reach of a large part of the population and was available to only one family member out of 1 in 3,000 families per year in the USSR. People's energies and the desire for meaningful social exchange, thus all found an outlet in the observance of ceremonies, rituals, popular holidays and sports competitions; but even these were used by the authorities to their own ends. Knowledge of the interrelationship of the laws of history and the broadening of outlooks did not seep into the people's general consciousness, and turned out to be characteristic of only a very small, and influential, section of the national intelligentsia.

Meanwhile, the working class in Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, appeared weakly developed in the face of the large-scale migration from within the USSR. The first-generation national working class, while also adopting aspects of urban culture and superficially interested in the new temptations of the mass culture, had strong social ties to the villages and were psychologically unable to break away from their affinity to village traditions. They had not yet formed into a class aware of its economic, political and spiritual interests, and there rapidly appeared a sorry layer of essentially de-classed and deceived people created by the Soviet political experiment. This experiment both camouflaged the rule of the Soviet nomenklatura (the administrative and Party elite) with the name of the
'working class', and also cruelly exploited the worker's labour. This is why, in the eyes of the Uzbek worker, working on the land still seems preferable, and as a consequence the lifestyle of the worker's family in the towns displays a distinctly visible attempt to reproduce the stereotypical village lifestyle.

Eastern affairs scholar, Sergei Panarin, made some interesting observations about the influence of the village way of life on Central Asian politics and society as a whole:

"Central Asia is the only region in our country, (3) in which society's basic social structure remained the peasantry. The rural population unquestionably constitutes the majority in the region; in 1985 it formed 60.4% of the population compared with 59.3% in 1975. The peasantry gives a nation its human face, and can be the strongest social grouping, if it constitutes half or one third of the population. But for this to happen, this half or one third must preserve its attachment to the land or to agricultural pursuits, so that the immediate environment, network of family ties, dwellings, daily life, value system and models of social conduct facilitate the (albeit relatively diluted) reproduction of the peasant way of life. If these conditions are fulfilled, then the village will noticeably have a gradual but powerful influence even on the cities.

"For example, through the process of urban migration, what ever little took place, the social environment became 'peasantised', establishing between those back in the villages and the migrants innumerable close social ties, and unexpectedly influencing even those who were urban by heritage. The peasantry would not allow the city to break away in terms of its level of civilisation, political culture, pretensions and so on. The position of the peasantry directly or indirectly influences all spheres of Central Asian life; in economics, from the resource crisis to the failure of techno-scientific cadres to emerge from the provinces; in social development where centuries of feudalism have ensured that instead of providing workers state protection the authorities encourage the social dependence of subordinates; in the political sphere, through the creation of the system of independent principalities, run by senior or lower Party
exploited the worker's labour. The farm worker, working on the collective farm, a consequence the lifestyle of the village displays a distinctly visible agrarian village lifestyle.

Tanin, made some interesting observations of the village way of life on the collective farm. In our country, (3) in the village structure remained the same, but in 1985 it formed an agricultural region with 59.3% of the population in the rural areas. This human face, and can be seen in the region, if it constitutes half or more of the population, and for this to happen, this region has a significant percentage of its inhabitants, so that the immediate family ties, dwellings, daily life, a model of social conduct, and a gradual (diluted) reproduction of new generations are fulfilled, and the village has a gradual but steady growth.

 daycare and urban migration, the upper social environment with its back to the countryside, which is innumerable close to the urban environment, and the peasantry directly or indirectly influences even the peasantry itself. The peasantry not only in terms of its level of education, but also in terms of its pretensions and so on. It has a special role in the state of Central Asian life; in some sense crisis to the failure of the mix of the peasantry state and the urban areas; in the political sphere, the system of independent branches or lower Party families, whose power is based upon their control over the rural economy."

Once the basis of the national freedom movement in the 1920s, peasants in the Soviet era were transformed into cotton slaves. Repression and the kulak, as organised forms of suppressing peasant autonomy, as a means of alienating peasants from economic autonomy, turned them into passive people, incapable of open opposition to the appointed Soviet lords - the presidents of the kolkhoz, the secretaries of the district committees, and senior representatives of the authorities.

This environment cultivated generally negative attitudes towards a person's individual value, even more so when it came to women. Insignificant in society, men sought importance within their own families, to be master at least in their own home.

Large families as a means of survival

For the bulk of the population, which led a village lifestyle associated with work on the land (even under city conditions), having several children was a means of survival, a means of social protection in old age, since throughout the Soviet period state social security provisions for senior citizens were very poor, not even matching minimum living standards.

Nargiz Kasimova, who works as a cook in a hospital, tells about her life in a large family with many siblings and the support it offered in times of crisis:

"Our family is very large - there are thirteen of us children. Father was a worker, he spent fifteen years at the factory, and was afflicted by the occupational disease of textile workers - asthma. Now he works as a janitor. Mama was a laboratory assistant in a chemical laboratory and is now retired. Our grandmother lives with us. Seven of my brothers are married, out of which four live with us. Four of my sisters are married, whereas I was widowed two years ago and live with my parents along with my children. Our youngest brother is still unmarried."

"The house in which we live was part of great grandfather's country estate. Before collectivisation his
sons had constructed the house, which is why when the kolkhoz was created the land was not taken away. Later, when Tashkent expanded this household came within the city limits. All of our neighbours are our relatives, which is why we have always helped and supported each other. The land always fed our family and the cattle. We have a vegetable patch, an orchard, and livestock. With us, everyone began working around the house when they were small. I remember myself, from dawn to dusk, either working in the orchard, or the kitchen-garden, or looking after my younger brothers and sisters. All of my brothers are workers and my parents made it their duty before everything else to give them a trade. Whenever any of the brothers married, the others all got together and constructed him a house; with our family we hardly needed to think of hiring someone! I believe that having several children is very good. My elder sister married into a family where there are only two brothers and the parents. With us all work is shared among many, but with them almost everything is shouldered by one person (my brother-in-law’s brother works in another city). In our household, if some one is unable to do some work for the house, then a craftsman is not called in; my brothers can do almost everything: bricklaying, carpentry, ironmongery, and diary farming, and they also know everything about working on the land, with livestock and trees.

"My husband’s family was also large, we were crowded. I had to do everything in the house including looking after the vegetable patch, and the livestock. My husband died in a car accident and I went back to live with my parents; psychologically I couldn’t stay with my in-laws, so father took me in. My brothers support me, are guardians to my sons, teaching them a trade, and I myself started to work as a cook in a hospital.

"At present three brothers have separated from father’s household and live in a block of flats. It is very difficult for them there without land; whatever they grow around the house, without fail someone either uproots or breaks it; the children only watch television, and are growing up without skills, which is why my sisters-in-
law send the children to their grandfather for the holidays. Here, they can learn some trade, and even better, here they are also fed and looked after properly. The bad thing about life in multistory housing is that they have only their salary to live on, which must also cover clothes and food - the children hardly ever see fruit which is rarely brought from the bazaar. My brothers dream of buying just a patch of land, even if it is outside the city.

"Our upbringing was strict. My brothers and sisters got married according to my parents' choice. Of course, every family has its problems, but luckily my sisters-in-law are well brought up and good workers, respectful to our parents and are happy with their husbands. My brothers have lived with my parents as an extended family for the past five or six years. In this time my sisters-in-law have come to understand the work routine in our house and they don't find things that difficult. Almost all of them work, but there is almost always one of them at home, either on maternity leave, or paid child leave.

"Especially when my husband died, relatives helped and supported me a lot. What would I have done without them! My mother thinks about everyone. I marvel at her energy - she manages to look after the children and keep an eye on the kitchen, and visits one or other of her children. I can barely cope with three, and she has been able to bring up thirteen good, hard-working children, never allowing any of them to stray. All of this is thanks to the strictness of Father and his authority. I feel sorry for women who do not have children or only one. They really have shortchanged themselves. No success can replace the love of someone near, which can only come from one's children. Even at work women are not spared - no matter how much a woman struggles, breaking through is very difficult!"
cultivating and picking cotton. Children were a stable, organised mass, spending much of their time meant for study on the kolkhoz fields. Youngsters of 9-12 years old often made a significant addition to the family budget, sacrificing valuable education to the needs of the state. Thus emerged generations of people unprepared for their involvement in modern production and alienated from all that was new and progressive which nevertheless developed in Soviet society.

Just as for the peasantry having many children was a means of survival, also for the ruling elite having several children was a means of reinforcing their existing position. Alliances created through the marriages of their children was the preferred method of strengthening their influence, in effect allowing the establishment of a ruling nobility in Uzbek society in the 1970s and 1980s, when power became stabilised. A person's nomenclatura appeared linked not only to their class interests, but also to their ties of kinship. Among the upper layer of society such a structure has been preserved even today.

**Lifestyles among the new Soviet intelligentsia and the nomenclatura**

DURING the Soviet period particular distortions appeared within the 'third estate', which in pre-Revolutionary Central Asia had constituted the bulk of the urban population. The old intelligentsia, which had evolved from the clerical section of society and the trading bourgeoisie, was swept away by repeated waves of repression. Its fragments were scattered: some emigrated abroad, some migrated to the villages, and some became absorbed in the new workers' intelligentsia.

Although new intellectuals invariably evolve into social groups which realise their historical destiny and socioeconomic role, the weight of the Soviet system provided no such opportunities. From the 1950s onwards, by which time the generation educated under the Soviet system had come of age, the new Soviet intelligentsia lost direct contact with the older intelligentsia and was instead forged in the Soviet ideological training schools. The new intelligentsia faced a question of cultural identity. While for the majority of the population cultural identity is not an issue (they simply consider themselves Muslims who are Uzbek, Kirghiz, Tajik, etc.), for parts of the intelligentsia the propaganda
concept of 'the new historic community - the Soviet nation' has proved attractive. And then there is the remaining section of the intelligentsia which experiences a contradiction in its cultural identity; on the one hand, feeling part of the nations of Central Asia and, on the other, using Russian as a medium of social interaction.

Despite the fact that in the twenty years spanning the 1960s to 1980s the national intelligentsia developed into a stable social group, it proved to be split along various lines. Firstly, there was the fact that one section of the intelligentsia was left behind by the ties of kinship, by the clan system, by marriage ties to the ruling nomenklatura and appeared to exist purely for the convenience of the top cadres; the other section was crushed by the authorities and had practically no links with village life. A further factor for division was that the national intelligentsia was fed from below by a first generation of intellectuals to emerge from the villages and the lower strata of urban society, and from above by youth from the ruling clique, seemingly second-generation intellectuals. The intelligentsia underwent a stratification, not only on the basis of origin, but also on the basis of level of education, with significant implications for lifestyles and the structure of relationships within the family.

The education factor divided the intelligentsia according to the quality of education: between those educated in Russian schools, and those educated in vernacular schools. People educated in either of these systems can be found both among the topmost as well as the lower sections of the intelligentsia. lifestyles above all depend on the type of education, and the lifestyles of that section of the intelligentsia which emerged from below differed little from that of the basic mass of the native population i.e. the peasants, even though they had a better - albeit insignificantly so - standard of living. The power elite and intelligentsia, meanwhile, partially changed its way of life in line with a superficial adoption of the new way of life.

The educational label turned out to be the major factor dividing the intelligentsia, leading to a profound mutual distrust. This situation has been exploited by functionaries, who count themselves among the intelligentsia and proclaim themselves to be the sole spokespersons of their people's interests, the 'driving force' behind progress and achievement of national sovereignty.

Inextricably linked with the education factor, the language issue
remains an extremely controversial topic in Central Asia as Russian and Uzbek were respectively seen as vehicles for the new Soviet identity and the preservation of national identity. For many centuries multilingualism has been common in Central Asia, and not just among the educated sections of society. At different times and in different areas the region’s inhabitants spoke a variety of language combinations: Turkish and Persian or Arabic, Uzbek and Kazakh, Uzbek and Russian. Uzbek-Russian bilingualism became a feature characteristic of urban Uzbek families. There emerged a circle, albeit very small, of Uzbeks for whom Russian alone was the language of communication within the family; this occurs much more widely in Kazakhstan and Kirghizia. Among rural families bilingualism occurred in the form of knowledge of two local languages and men, having served in the army, have at least some command over Russian. But in most families women seemed to be monolingual.

The sovietisation of society was achieved under the banner of the Russian language. While in the pre-Revolution days there were the beginnings of interest in Russian language and culture, in the post-Revolution period Russian became an important mark of the educated. In the cites bilingualism became imperative for those who wanted white-collar jobs, for those who sought to join the ranks of the powerful or for those who chose intellectual labour as their profession. To know Russian opened the doors to science, culture and the organs of power, significantly limiting the importance of local languages not only within the field of work, but also within the family. At the same time, while Russian language and culture became associated with technical progress, with Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, it was also associated with the Commissars and Party functionaries, the destroyers of all that was sacred to Islam. Equally, the poor quality of education led to the fact that in the rural areas Russian was perceived as alien, in spite of propaganda claims regarding its acceptance across the Soviet Union.

Later, through the Russian language new forms of social conduct began to be assimilated; among some it was in the form of the negative norms of the lumpen; among others, Russian culture began to open the doors to European civilisation and its spiritual values, which began to influence all aspects of their lives, including the family. The Russian-centered education in the middle and high schools was behind the weakening of contact with the rural areas and the loss of their influence, and these developments led to the trends of national awareness and rejection of foreign influence.

In the family the relationship was one of correspondence, and correspondence among the relatives of the family found an echo in the language. There was a synthesis of the two, and they made themselves at home.

"My mother and my father both worked in the local school. Their mother and my grandmother were of Tajik origin. We lived in a large house in a poor neighbourhood not far from the Tajik market. We went to the Tajik market twice a week. The children of the family were the same, we were the same. We did not want to be different. We were like the Tajik mother. Mother taught us our national prayers, and the national songs. My grandmother sacrificed her life for her children."

"When I was growing up, I noticed a difference between the children of the 1940s, and the children of the 1950s. They were not as educated as we were, and they did not want to be like us. They wanted to be like the Tajik mother."

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with the culture of the Muslim East. This situation was detrimental to all of the peoples of Central Asia and specifically their intelligentsia, which broke away from its roots and became acutely aware of its own inferiority. In the Soviet period these developments began to be manifested in the contradictory trends of inordinate and perverse praise for the markers of the national culture and, conversely, in national nihilism and a rejection of one's own culture.

In the family these phenomena began to be manifested within one section as the conservation of the patriarchal family with its corresponding forms of relations also affecting women; and among the other section as the assimilation of the Soviet lifestyle found among Russian families, including the use of the Russian language. But those people and families which gradually synthesised the values of Muslim and European cultures found themselves tragically isolated as Rabiha Usmanov's story relates:

"My father, a Tatar, came to Turkestan in 1914 and worked at the cotton ginning factory in Khojent. I studied at the city's first Soviet school, where Russians, Tajiks, Kirghiz and Uzbekks grew up together. Here I met my future husband, Mavlyan Vakhhabov. He was from a mountainous Tajik village. Girls in the senior classes for some time wore parandjas, but gradually stopped. All of us were in the Kommunal, but at home we followed the Muslim way of life; Father and Mother observed the forty-day fast, said their prayers five times a day, celebrated Ramadan and the sacrificial festival of Kurban. They did not compel us children to follow this.

"When I got married, my family's lifestyle was different. My husband became a Party worker and had a successful career, which is why I left work - I was a seed selection expert. Those days, in the 1930s and 1940s, Party workers used to work from dawn to dusk, he often had to go away on business. I had to devote myself to the family, the house and the children. For eight years in the 1940s my husband worked as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. Times were difficult, we lived simply; in those days people in senior positions lived like the rest of the people. We never had servants or indulgences; there was no question of any luxuries. I
knew very few of my husband's colleagues, there were no meetings or celebrations in those surroundings. Two of our daughters studied at the Russian school. Gradually our lifestyle began to sharply differ from that of our parents, where we frequently met relatives, near ones, neighbours and friends. In our own environment there was little social interaction and this depressed me, because domestic duties always took up so much time. In those days gas still wasn't available; I cooked on an oil stove or kerosene gas in summer and on the wood stove in winter. I was an ordinary housewife who was completely occupied with the household. I only got help once my daughters grew up.

"My daughters got married, and for them it became hard to adapt to the type of life which their husbands adhered to. Their family life turned out to be difficult. Now one has a son, the other two. After the death of my husband I live alone and this depresses me."

Rabiha-khanum did not mention one of the main factors obstructing normal relations in her environment: an atmosphere of general fear which dominated the country, especially among the top echelons.

The fate of 80 year-old Umri-nisa Rahimov's daughters, who were brought up to be part of the brave new world, illustrates the problems the new Soviet woman confronted.

"From a peasant family, I got married early and according to my parents' choice. My husband was an exceptional person. He understood that I had little education and tried hard to help me see more, broaden my outlook; he read books to me and took me to the theatre. He himself was from an educated family and had studied in Leningrad. He very much wanted us to live differently. My husband was the real head of the family, not one whom everyone feared and whose every whim was fulfilled, but whom we all loved. He was a good, just and learned person. I looked after the house and did not work (before marriage I worked as an embroiderer), and he took care of the children's upbringing. My husband discussed lots of things with them, told them various stories, took them for rides,

Meanwhile, in the villages, the same was true of their adopted families. From the address, furniture, and Russian utensils..."
taught them, even did their homework with them and plaited our daughter's hair. This is why the children worshipped him and went to him with all their problems, not to me. He became a senior academic, Pro-Rector of the Political Institute in Tashkent. Then he had less time for the family.

"My husband very much wanted all our six children to study in Moscow or Leningrad to allow them to receive a good education. Three graduated from central higher education institutions, the younger ones from Tashkent. This has complicated their later lives; they seemed to be unprepared to accept everything as it is. Things have been difficult for them in their personal lives. For example, when matchmakers came to us, our daughters reacted as if this was some kind of insult. Many of the eldest daughter's suitors were boys who had studied with her at the institute. She was amazed at why they did not ask her themselves, but sent their mothers; why she had to be paraded before them like a horse. Thus she let time slip by when she could have married someone she knew. At the age of 27 she eventually got married, through a matchmaker, to a person to whom she was introduced only later. With the others it was even more complicated. One got divorced after having two children, the other after having one child and the third did not marry at all. When sometimes I reproach them for their obstinacy, they retort that it is easier for them like this. All of them achieved success in their careers, but I saw what a burden this was. If they had been boys, all this would have been easier. Now they come home to an empty house completely drained and exhausted. No one apart from me, their mother, pitied them. The neighbours do not understand them and say they themselves are responsible for their divorces and loneliness. No one stops to consider whether this is easy for them.

Meanwhile the local nomenclature, the bulk of which was from the villages, retained the same old patriarchal lifestyles, despite their adoption of the outer forms of European lifestyles in their dress, furniture, style of conduct on official occasions and the use of Russian as the means of communication between the younger
members of the family. Just as among the peasantry, the families of senior officials of Uzbekistan were characterised by tradition and having several children. Going to school with the children of some of the then leaders of Uzbekistan I remember that their families displayed the very same patriarchal traits and in the majority of cases, the parents arranged their children's marriages, traditionally sanctioned through a religious ceremony. In their homes there were always hordes of poor relatives who received protection in return for serving their suzerain.

Gulchehra M.’s recollections about her family and its way of life illustrate the reasons behind the endurance of the patriarchal way of life among the educated sections of modern Central Asian society.

"I am 47 years old, and all my life it seemed to me that many mistakes had been made in it. My father, a known scholar, died not long ago at the age of 80. He was a fantastic combination of the struggle towards the new and an attachment to the old way of life. He came from a religious family, but broke away from it very early. Father was a confirmed Komsonol believing in the new society, but at the same time, as the head of our family, he appeared a strict authoritarian. My mother he met as a 20 year-old girl and married her without kalim. They began life if not with nothing, then in great poverty. Father loved mother very much, but treated her as if she were something inanimate, inferior to him in every aspect and was also very exacting towards her. She could not leave the house without his permission, she prepared separate meals for him from the best foodstuffs while she and the children were expected to be satisfied with what remained.

"He attained a certain position and influence (at a relatively young age) - becoming director of the largest industrial complex in Uzbekistan. Father was of the view that Mama should learn to live with his new position and with the fact that he lived a life which he thought best, and that she should be a model housewife and mother, respect his parents with whom he had reconciled, carry out their instructions, and help out the many relatives, young and old. This was physically very difficult for my mother, but all her life she loved Father madly and accepted his attitude
Among the peasantry, the families were characterised by traditional attitudes to marriage and the children of Pakistan. I remember that their marriages were arranged through a religious ceremony. 

Out her family and its way of life was the endurance of the patriarchal tradition in the sections of modern Central Asia. 

My life it seemed to me that was made in it. My father, a teacher, died at the age of 80. He was the head of the struggle towards the old way of life. He came from a strict authoritarian. My 12-year-old girl and married her life if not with nothing, then lived mother very much, but she was also very exacting. She leave the house without his separate meals for him from what she and the children were left behind. 

Position and influence (at a coming director of the largest industrial companies). Father was of the opinion that he lived a life which he should be a model for his parents with whom out their instructions, and his younger brothers. This was for my mother, but all her life and accepted his attitude towards her as a part of life and his demands did not get her down. Her entire life was dedicated to the service of her husband; we children received care, attention, love from her, but the main person in her life was her husband. Thus she somehow neglected our upbringing. 

"We studied at the Russian school, and through it learned of other forms of relationship between husband and wife. We were brought up on Russian and European literature, most of which was from the 19th century, and so we spent our childhood and adolescence in a make-believe world, alienated from that which surrounded us. In the end we did not understand much, especially as school instilled one set of values in us while in real life we saw another. This contradiction and our childlike yearning to avoid decisions about life's problems took us into the world of books, which to us appeared more real than the one in which we actually lived. 

"Our mother had only very basic education and saw nothing wrong about, in fact very much respected, our attraction to literature. But even though she had a woman's real-life experience it never entered her head that she should sometimes turn our attention to the realities of Uzbek women's lives. There was only one and a half to two years age difference between us sisters and brothers and when we grew up then it seemed as if we and our parents spoke different languages (in the real sense also - they in Uzbek and we in Russian) and looked at the world with different eyes. 

"Father understood this when we were almost grown up, and decided to take us in hand. The first thing he did was to choose a wife for his eldest son. We looked upon this marriage with fear and misgiving, as the bride chosen by father was not only not a good person, but was also completely different to Brother both in education and areas of interests. And most importantly, he did not love her. But Father's will was unbending. My brother, even though he suffered for some time, ultimately accepted his fate - men easily adapt to double standards in their lives at home and
outside. It needs to be said that this marriage was a stable one, even though not a very happy one.

"Father said he was deeply worried about his son, who was to be his heir (not in the material sense - how much could a Soviet person make! - but in the spiritual sense), the future head of the family, the protector of us younger siblings. Father worried that he would break away from the relatives, having married according to his own choice. Knowing our brother's gentle character, Father was afraid that he would choose a girl who was russified - just like himself - and that this would lead him to relegate ties of kinship to last place. And he was right!

"My sister got married early choosing for herself a person who shared our education and outlook on life. She is lucky! But she lives in Moscow, a completely different life and in different surroundings, completely broken away from us. Sister's marriage made Father give considerable attention to the upbringing of us younger ones. He was strict, we were unable to go anywhere at night and he demanded an account of everything we did. Father took control over what we read, our circle of friends, our clothes and our expenditure. He thought that even though there had been lapses in our upbringing, there was still time to put things straight. Mother did not allow us to even think about the possibility that we could marry according to our choice. She considered that we, as well-brought up Muslim girls, should wait until someone knocked on our door and selected one of us and then the other; but for our younger brother she herself would go knocking on doors.

"But when they knocked on our door, my younger sister and I ridiculed this method of constructing our fate, and we refused to be introduced to the prospective bridegrooms, and thus I was in danger of becoming, as my parents perceived it, an old maid; I was then 23 years of age and had graduated from the institute. Even though, according to everyone, I was beautiful, I was also very proud and boys were rather afraid of me. As I saw it, not one of my contemporaries matched up to my imaginary ideal. I was not
particularly concerned about getting married, dreaming instead of a career as a great scholar, about discoveries and so on. Father felt that I was either committing some foolishness, or would become an old maid, hindering the marriage of my younger sister. (5) He took to solving this question himself - in a characteristically dictatorial manner. Tell me truthfully, he asked, if you have someone in mind, and hearing a negative answer, suggested a candidate, my present husband. I hadn't expected someone like him - he was my diametrical opposite, and I did not like him at all. Father said "You will learn to love him, and your career can wait. Even better, you could support your husband's career".

"When I got married, it seemed like I had landed in prison. The never-ending duties of the young bride oppressed me. I did not love my husband, which is why everything in this house, including the numerous relatives, was doubly burdensome. I understood that I had not been prepared at all for marriage. Even though my husband and his relatives respected me, life itself in their house did not resemble life at home, where there was plenty. Here poverty ruled, with which I did not want to reconcile myself. For me it was difficult to speak in Uzbek, not simply speak, but observe that nuance of etiquette - this I simply was unable to do. Thus, at the age of 23 concluded my extended childhood and began a difficult life. I understood that this was how all women lived: in search of one's daily bread, torn between work and home, caring for the husband's relatives, going on visits to newborn relatives, attending the innumerable weddings of third cousins, funerals of fourth aunts, and anniversaries of the husband's colleagues. And each time the obligatory gifts, for which one had to spare resources from the sparse family budget. I thought I would die of exhaustion, that I had become incapable of anything except baking interminable cakes and pastries. I had only one dream: not to see anyone, not to go anywhere and for once have a full night's sleep.

"From my point of view, this marriage was unequal. My husband had his own interests in the marriage: to
become the son-in-law of a famous scholar, with all the
benefits this would bring. Yes, and I attracted him. If it
had not been for Father, my marriage would have not
lasted long. Here he used his power, and now I am
grateful to him. He effectively became my husband's
father, helping him as much as he could, pulling him
along - all this he did because of me. Father bought us
an apartment, which lifted me out of a medieval
existence. Of course, my husband was a person not
without talent, but could he have become the academic
he is today without Father? To rise from the depths
and particularly to become a Ph.D. is not possible
without backing. And this made our marriage endure,
in spite of the fact that for about ten miserable years
our marriage was childless. Only when I had children
was I happy and my life took on colour, meaning and
hope.

"Now my elder daughter is 14, the younger one 12 and
my son is 5, and I live in the hope that their life will be
happier than mine. At present I teach at the institute, a
Ph.D. and an associate professor; here too my father
and brother helped me. In spite of my many domestic
duties, I, on my brother's insistence, succeeded in
writing my thesis and became a member of the
Communist Party. My career would have continued
successfully, but the birth of the children relegated
everything else to the backseat. Thus I did not achieve
anything particular in my profession, because in our
routine life a career is not a synonym of freedom and
independence, in fact quite the opposite - it is a
synonym of even greater dependence.

"My wages were not the main family income; the basic
household expenditure was done by him. I spent my
wages on myself and the children and my husband did
not require an account of how I spent my money. As
Father had said, over the years of living together we
developed an attachment to each other, full of respect
and warmth - and this, in fact is true love. Particularly
with the birth of my children my eyes became opened
to the better side of my husband. And then the plenty
which has appeared in the house ironed out the
contradictions which were there in the early years of
our marriage.

Such unions, which remained stable out of necessity, were the rule rather than the exception in cases where the marriage was arranged by the parents. Gulchekhra's story illustrates the sources of conflict within many families: an absence of love, and the failure to prepare girls psychologically for the unending labour of married life. The primitive conditions of domestic life in Uzbek families - the lack of space, the absence of elementary comfort in traditional homes and poverty - combine to sap women's beauty, strength, youth and health. The battle against poverty denies women the opportunity for self-development; women do not have the time for reading nor the energy to look after themselves. Moreover, the traditionally Central Asian pursuit of conspicuous consumption is an additional factor exhausting women; they, and their families must not fall behind others in the quality of their home decor, their clothes and especially in the celebration of family occasions, on which all their savings, collected over years of work, are spent. And today, when the concept of women staying at home and being only housewives and mothers has become popular, there are in reality few men who are able to support their wife and children alone. Without the income of women the already impoverished Uzbek family would simply become beggars.

In the absence of real social institutions, stagnation and hierarchy reduced the people to replicating the habitual old Muslim norms in their conduct and way of life. While these placed tremendous burdens on working women, those who rejected such norms were doomed to isolation. Nafisa Akrimova's personal account illustrates the problems confronting women who understood that there was a world beyond tradition:

"I got married when I was 23. In the villages, an unmarried woman this age is considered an old maid. I am a graduate, but my husband does not have higher education. We were betrothed from childhood, which rarely happens these days. However, if such a betrothal is made, it is strictly observed; breaking the engagement is a great sin. Even though in my own home I did not shy from work, in the beginning it was very hard for me in my husband's family. I had to do everything. My mother-in-law was a person with old-fashioned ideas (and there are many like her). She
spends her time attending weddings, religious gatherings, often going to nearby holy places. She reasons that if she was in the service of her mother-in-law and her husband's relatives, then she should do the same. She has nothing to do because I work. Also in the accounts department where I work, one has to stay the full working day.

"Now that my children have grown up, things have become easier for me both spiritually and physically. I now have some one to talk to. With my mother-in-law and husband the only form of conversation was orders from their side and "Yes" from my side. They do not understand the words "No" and "Cannot", "Not this way". They have only one contention: that I am to listen and respect them. It is better then to talk with them as little as possible, as any refusal on my part is taken as an insult, with any valid reasons being ignored. When I was a student in the city, I read, went to the cinema, to concerts - all of this I now remember as if it was a dream.

"Our domestic life is ruled by laws which are left over from the olden days and which nothing can ever change. Soviet rule, no matter how it struggled to free us women, in the end failed to do so. We women have little desire to be free, because we are not allowed to cultivate such a desire. And now things are getting even worse: times are hard, which is why at home I have cattle, birds, a hot house and a kitchen-garden. The children help, but mainly I am alone. My husband is a driver and works at the bus depot in the city. Sometimes he does not come home at all; in the village there is unemployment.

"Most alarming is that we live a dull, spiritless life, with every step regulated by some custom. All of this is called the observance of religion, faith. I think the tenets of Islam are more than just a set of prohibitions. But in the village there are few who know what true Islam is - there is simply nowhere for them to find out about it".

Saodat Tursonkhodjaeva, by education an economist but at present not working, makes a forthright assessment of the role of
tradition in Uzbek families and has some particularly acerbic comments to make about life with one's in-laws:

"I got married in 1985. It was only when living with my husband's family that I came to understand how much influence the surroundings have on family life. My husband, an engineer, is a wonderful person, independent and the father of our three children. We share the same outlook on life. I grew up in an intellectual family; my father and mother were college teachers and considered education our sacred duty.

"But here in my husband's house, an educated daughter-in-law is treated like some perverse, coarse and insignificant creature. I never thought that our nation had such a strong cult of wealth. My husband's family highly respects, for example, the daughter of a butcher or some small trader. They consider us educated people little better than beggars because we work for our living, just like our parents did. In contrast, the butcher's daughter does not work, and the husband is forever bringing home things, sometimes foodstuffs sometimes gifts, from the father and mother. My parents would also have gladly done the same, but they cannot allow themselves to do so - they don't get anything for free, they have to earn everything through hard work. My mother-in-law is always visiting our neighbours and naturally makes unfavourable comments about me. She is forever going on about how she should have had a daughter-in-law from a rich, respectable house; no one, neither my husband nor I, can change her psychology. At my in-laws' little value is given to true goodness and tenderness, tactfulness and loyalty to the family. Here the most important thing is wealth.

"I sometimes wonder why such people consider themselves true believers; how they respect those with power, and disdain the poor because they are poor, irrespective of their individual qualities. This is a manifestation of a complete lack of religious faith. Is it really a sign of faith to make the pilgrimage to Mecca using stolen money for the air fare or to hold extravagant celebrations with hundreds of guests? Why do they push their children along the path where
fortunes are made due to one's relatives, and not on account of knowledge and expertise? Is this the path along which the people will flourish? One can generalise that today a wealthy family is not evidence of real work or education, but that one of their members was one of those involved in distribution, someone who managed to rob us, we who are poor even though we work and work well.

"When you live with your in-laws, you can't live as you would like to. Whether you like it or not, you have to take part in all of their celebrations. In this house, the young daughters-in-law are also obliged to 'wait on everyone. If someone comments to my mother-in-law that her daughter-in-law refuses to do something, or did not do something the way she was told to, there would be no peace in the house. Such social interaction does not provide the spirit any sustenance; it is just a duty. One gets little happiness from all this except that you can show off your new dress. When I listen to the conversation at such gatherings, I am always amazed at its narrowness; gossip about relatives, acquaintances, spicy rumours about crime. More recently, stories about extra-sensory perception, extra-terrestrial and like nonsense have become especially popular. It is a pity that time is wasted on such 'socialising', time which is the essence of life. Sometimes I want to wash my hands of everything and not go where I do not want to, but we Uzbek women are taught that the most important words for women are 'You have to'. So that my mother-in-law doesn't get on my nerves, I submissively do everything that is demanded of me. This is a contradiction that I come up against every day, making my life in the family very difficult; I am not content.

"I often ask myself: what type of mother-in-law will I become, won't I also become a slave to custom, like my husband's mother? I want to say to myself No! but I am not convinced I won't become such a mother-in-law; the surroundings and social pressures can gradually crush anyone. I am very sad that even among women the opinion reigns that women are objects, without any value what so ever. They
Society and the Family

Is it a relative, or not on one's resume? Is this the path they will follow? One can argue that the family is not evidence of authority, but that one of their involvements is in distribution, too, since we who are poor do not ask for too much.

Thus you cannot live as a family, or not, or you have your obligations. In this house, you are also obliged to 'wait on guests' to your mother-in-law because she does not do something, or she is not told to do so. Immigration is a sustenance; it is just a fact of life that you have all this except that you can talk about it. When I listen to the testimonies, I am always amazed at the slip about relatives, but it is about crime. More than an idiomatic perception, extra-personal, have become especially aware of what is wasted on such men, the essence of life. The words of everything and everything, but we Uzbek women very important words for women. When the mother-in-law doesn't get her way, she doesn't do everything that is said. In the tradition that I come up with life in the family very much.

The family in the post-war years

By the 1930s the urban family had begun to experience a change in the old patriarchal way of life. During the Stalinist years, repression made it necessary for the family to unite to the lot of women. Indeed, some women took charge of their fathers and brothers while their children were supported by male relatives, or in extreme cases, were sent to orphanages - a phenomenon previously unknown to this society. Women greatly resisted this development as the children lost all contact with the traditions of family life. But parents, even fathers, went through what was the point of view of devout Muslims a sacrilegious step in the name of their physical survival.

Zarif Turgumbekov relates:

"I was brought up in a children's home in Tashkent. Our father brought myself and my brothers from Kirghizia. There, just as throughout the country, collectivisation was taking place. My father was threatened with dispossess - he was from the Manapsoy family (nomadic Kirghiz feudal who owned pastures and livestock). Mother was in despair, she ran after us for as long as her strength allowed. We never saw each other again..."
The Second World War substantially changed the structure of the urban family by either temporarily or permanently transferring the role of the head of family to women. Forced to take responsible decisions on their own regarding their children’s future, many women became independent. In the post-war period education standards among women rose, while the experience of life outside the home broadened their moral outlook and increased their mobility. Thus urban families began to display the characteristics prevalent in families of industrialized societies with a tendency towards fewer children and modern forms of relationships. But even here women did not attain independence, just greater economic freedom.

There was a flip side to these essentially positive developments: the gradual disappearance of traditional support mechanisms whereby male relatives provided protection and support for their widowed sisters, daughters and nieces, weakened the socialisation of children. The tremendous burden of productive labour, coupled with the responsibility of bringing up children virtually single-handed had a severe psychological impact on Uzbek women.

While the structure of urban families began to undergo substantial changes, in the villages, patriarchy has retained its hold over family life. Architect Khairinso Khadieva has spent many years planning village settlements in the Ferghana Valley area, and has observed the life of village women:

"Although general standards of living in the villages have risen, this is basically in areas where there is vegetable farming. Condition facing women kolkhoz workers are still very tough in the cotton-producing areas. No one anywhere is interested in the feelings of women who are obliged to toil without a break. Women are constantly suppressed as individuals. The authorities and their husbands don’t give a damn about them; in patriarchal families women are dependent on their in-laws and their own parents. Their single joy is their children, and they have some power over them, but women themselves instill the same patriarchal attitudes in their daughters. Village boys are given preference in the family and, as far as possible, the road to education remains open for them. Women physically age early, but remain infantile all their lives. For the majority it doesn’t even cross their
minds to think about their rights. It is the women who become the big traditionalists.

"I often saw women working in the fields while the cafes were full of men. Many of their little fancies and their favourite pastimes - taken as proof of their manliness - are at the cost of women's labour. Men, so as to win respect among their friends, throw away hard-earned money on having a good time, while the family is literally living on bread and water. And there is so much hidden polygamy, especially among the village leaders. In more than twenty years, I have never come across a single case of someone being prosecuted for polygamy.

"Work did not give village women economic independence; their labour is appropriated, and they remain materially dependent upon men and therefore, even if they wanted to they couldn't demand their rights. Although there are women in high posts in the village authorities, few of them are really concerned about their sisters. Unfortunately it is not the best women who are in these leadership positions; they are more concerned about their rosy reports about the prosperity of kolkhoz women. That is why in the 1970s and 1980s this trend of suicides among women developed; in despair, denied even the possibility of complaining about their desperate financial situation, and not finding protection among their parents and their nearest, they took this extreme step."

The lack of spirituality

MEANWHILE, the stagnation of the totalitarian society, its aggressive atheism and the fact that all but material interests had been squeezed out of family life meant that the family gradually lost its function as an institution involved in spiritual upbringing. The family, having partially adapted itself to the system, is now incapable of teaching independence, a sense of self-worth, and individuality; this development was furthered by the propaganda of the 'primacy of society over the individual'. While in the 1930s and 1940s this idea had broadly corresponded to the beliefs of the majority, the subsequent
degeneration of the system and emergence of hypocrisy in society led to widespread disillusionment with this idea. The consequence was the emergence of the primacy of personal interests over public interests, giving rise to the corruption of society from top to bottom.

In both urban as well as rural families, the growing cult of conspicuous consumption, the pompous and ostentatious observation of rituals set the tone for all forms of informal interaction. The average family is oppressed by this environment's primitive and garish 'public opinion' which brooks no deviation. Informal forms of social interaction offered the opportunity of material gain and attracted large numbers of people. The power of money turned out to be stronger than formal forms of interaction, such as Party meetings and parades, and the ideologically-based commemorative days and gatherings such as The Decade of Russian Art in Uzbekistan, Russian Literature Day, etc, which provided access to another culture.

By the late 1950s, the weakening of totalitarianism permitted the emergence of a parallel shadow economy, which gradually became linked with the corrupted authorities. Large numbers of women were drawn into the structures of the shadow economy, impacting on the family in an unexpected way. Their association with the underworld meant that many of these women, who were traditionally responsible for bringing the first elements of spirituality into their children's upbringing in the patriarchal family, became the source of a destructive lack of spirituality.

A general lack of spirituality in post-war society was a factor behind another phenomenon: adultery. This increasingly led to the breakup of families and to the widespread emergence of single-parent families. This corrupted environment, side by side with the preservation of those traditions from the former way of life which suited its purpose, began to assimilate the poorly developed mass culture.

A personal story illustrates some aspects of this environment. I cannot print the woman's name and surname, as understandably I did not reveal the reasons for my discussion with her.

"We are cultured people, observing both old and new customs. My husband tells me that only through generosity can one capture people's hearts. So that's how come we observe Kurban - and sacrifice a goat and
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observing both old and new tells me that only through people's hearts. So that's - and sacrifice a goat and
distribute sweets - so that everyone would comment about how well we live, even though now times are hard. 'Every bird does what it learns in the nest of its parents', says a proverb. And so do I. My father was the manager of a restaurant and I learned from my mother; she knew how to behave with people who could be useful as well as how to give alms on the occasion of religious festivities.

'I got married to a person chosen by my father and have no regrets, even though he is older and shorter than I am. But I am comfortably off, unlike my sister who married her class fellow out of love. She labours in poverty - imagine, after living our lifestyle! When there is money - and influence - one can get whatever one wants. Every day I can change my dress and shoes - wear them for a little bit and then sell them, even for a profit. At work everyone is jealous of me. My husband says 'Why do you work?' but I cannot live without it - after all, one has to show oneself off, or else one's youth flies away. And what about home? I have someone to look after the children. How I envy women who stay at home; they have only one worry - that their husband doesn't go off with another woman. Mine has lots of money, he also does foolish things, spends money on women, he's a scoundrel. Of course all men are like that. When I go alone on the road, every private car stops and propositions me. I could wind anyone round my little finger if I wanted to.

'Take my boyfriend, a handsome, unmarried guy. He is interested in my soul. My husband has these fits of jealousy - it's so tiresome - so I decided why should I listen to these never-ending insults? Earlier I hesitated, but now when my husband has a jealousy tantrum, my soul is happy: it serves you right! After all, he himself pushed me to taking this step. I get an even greater kick out it all because he monitors my each and every movement. In these matters the main thing is desire; it is not for nothing that even purdah-observing women were able to lead their husbands by the nose.

"You now fear parandjas, but I don't. I could really set the fashion with them; I have a very beautiful parandja handed down from my great grandmother. Men, the
more they want to enforce their authority, the easier it is to deceive them. Here parandjias are no obstacle and I am not afraid of staying at home. Do you think someone will come, like in Iran and protest against clothes that cover you up? No, it won't be like that here."

Thus the new ideologues of national identity regard a return to Islam as being embodied in the resurrection of the ideal Muslim woman: a believer, protected by and submissive to her husband. The wife's self-effacing attitude, her submission before her fate, and respect for her husband is manifested both publicly, and, in the majority of families, in the daily reality of a wife's life. On the streets you can see the husband, walking ahead with raised head, and then the wife who follows the husband two steps behind with her head bowed, as if bearing some heavy load. Therefore for the majority of educated women it is understood that a return towards the Muslim way of life means not a return to spiritual values, but an open form of suppressing women's individuality.

The practice of polygamy persists

WHILE sovietisation introduced civil laws, civil society in the Soviet Union and especially in Central Asia was a fiction, largely because these written laws were always poorly implemented. Denied protection by the statute law, people had to fall back on traditional norms. Thus those who reject the family, be it through divorce or through remaining unmarried, are regarded extremely negatively by contemporary Uzbek society. The condemnation of the single has in turn led to an unspoken acceptance of polygamy, which is found in a variety of forms. Although the practice is banned by law, over the last ten years not once have polygamous men in positions of authority been called to account. The most widespread form of polygamy, more commonly found in the rural areas, is where a man, officially married to one wife, enters into practical married relations with another. The second wife usually lives in the same village or city, even through in a different place. The man differs from an ordinary adulterer in that he takes responsibility for the children from both marriages, providing equitable maintenance to the wives and support for the children. Such marriages, especially the second marriage, are solemnised through a Muslim ceremony.
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National identity regard a return to resurrection of the ideal Muslim; and submissive to her husband. While her submission before her fate, manifested both publicly, and, in reality of a wife's life. On the hand, walking ahead with raised follows the husband two steps as if bearing some heavy load. Educated women it is understood way of life means not a return form of suppressing women's

"Nobody compelled me to become a second wife; I was fully aware when I took this step and am sure I did the right thing. I met my current husband two years after divorcing my first. I had a six-year-old daughter. From my second marriage I have a daughter and a son. My husband already had a wife and four children. He is a highly placed person and has considerable opportunity to help me and my children.

"I won't say I married him for love. I was thirty two, had a degree, had and still have good work and was able to feed myself and my daughter. But it is very difficult for single women to live in our society, especially in the provinces - people look at you as if they somehow suspect you are dishonest. In practical terms you are excluded from society, you are not invited anywhere, even by your married girlfriends. And then relatives condemn you as an outcast, even though my husband was to be blamed for everything; I found out that he had started using narcotics and was an addict. Coming home under their influence, he was capable of doing absolutely anything. After my divorce I got some proposals but the men were all very elderly. My second husband offered a marriage according to Muslim custom, promising to support my daughter, which played no small part in my decision. Among our people, a girl without a father usually doesn't get any proposals and they have great difficulty in getting married well. I do not even expect her to be given higher education - this costs a lot of money. My parents did not object, even though initially they didn't want to hear of such a marriage. My husband promised to buy me a house. His first family lives in
the village. He said that he was married very young to his cousin, at his parents' insistence; that he respects her as the mother of his children and would never leave her. He said he had noticed me long ago, and now finding out that I was divorced he suggested a union about which I would never be sorry. We had a simple wedding, after which my daughter and I went to the new house. Now I have been introduced to his eldest son, who sometimes comes to our house with his father. I think his first wife also knows about me."

In 1992, the parliament of Kirghizstan took up the issue of polygamy. The inclusion of a clause about polygamy in the law on marriage and family fell short of just twenty votes - really very little; just a few more now...

The continuing influence of tradition is also felt in the upbringing of children. The preference for male children is found everywhere: with a son is linked the future of the family, its success and prosperity. On the other hand, parents consider marriage the main event in a daughter's life and there is considerable pressure for daughters to marry early, and avoid becoming 'old maids'. According to the law, the minimum age of marriage for girls in Uzbekistan was one year lower than the Soviet standard of 18. This was what was behind the large numbers of girls who dropped out of school, reflecting on the general educational and cultural level of young women. In Central Asia, for every 10 girls graduating from secondary school, there are 16 girls graduating in the Ukraine and Russia; and 17 boys of the same age graduating in Uzbekistan. Even then a significant portion of girls graduating from local secondary schools are of European origin. This is the true reason behind the social passivity, the immaturity of Central Asian women, and ultimately their growing social inequality.

Unable to break the vicious circle of discrimination within the family, in the social consciousness of the majority of Central Asian people, women are considered to differ from men in their roles, their potential and abilities. Naturally all female abilities are accorded lesser value than male abilities. 'Women have long hair, but are short on wisdom' is an old proverb, yet such thinking is characteristic of all layers of Central Asian society; according women negative qualities is the result of not only the general psychology, but also family upbringing.

Society and the Family

From this it is not difficult to understand why women are generally considered second-rate citizens, similarly with respect to their own work. Freud's observations about women in the present situation seem no less valid. As families, women have not only worked for themselves but also for the family. A feature of today's women's work in Central Asia is that it is usually physically demanding, takes place in the household and is not remunerated. In the past, Soviet central planning institutions were strict monitors of women's work, and the academic profession was one area where women simply were not employed, and later cleared through the system of the Middle East.

An example of this is the work of Salimova, a 62-year-old peasant woman in the village of Lurega, contributes to a 1990 study of Central Asian women. Evidently simple social roles and uncomplicated life causes an awareness of economic and social loneliness, and the research described in the article:

"Is it true? Why do you think so?" I asked. She looked at me, as if she was speaking only to herself; I don't know if she answered me.

"Giving a woman the status of a child is why for a long time the fate of women has been unmanly. It has caused both in the orphaned young women's social status, and in the murder of children. The idea of the woman linked to the destruction of the family has been destroying the family. There was a number of women who felt that their moral and cultural values were to be swept away."

"You envision the woman returning to the family."

"Yes, you are correct, but some women have returned to the family, but others have not."

"Why is this so?" I asked.

"It is because the woman has the rights to return."

"And if she doesn't?"

"She is the one who has the right to return."

"You mean the woman who has the right to return?"

"Yes, she has the right to return."
Society and the Family

From this also stem the different attitudes towards immorality in women and men, placing the burden of guilt only on the woman, even where both should be held responsible; and similarly, there is the very strong tendency to identify women purely with their biological and especially sexual functions. Freud's beloved maxim, 'Anatomy - this is fate', is a reality present in the principles governing the lives of Central Asian families, depriving women of the opportunity to consider themselves truly a person. This situation has always been a feature of Muslim civilisation, beginning with the Qur'an. Woman as an object of delight existed both in poetry and in life, in the harems of the rulers and so on. Meanwhile for its own part, Soviet society which preached repressive and extremely strict morals, was bigoted. In the absence of honest, objective academic studies of gender issues, conservative and sometimes simply reactionary stereotypes about women were circulated through the mass media.

An example comes from a contribution by journalist Sharifa Salimova - 'The Single Woman - Who is She?' - which appeared in a 1990 edition of the women's journal Saodat, read by millions of women in Uzbekistan. Instead of analysing the by no means simple social phenomenon of the single woman, identifying its causes and effects, the author directs the full force of her anger against the women themselves. She equally fails to draw a distinction between two independent social phenomena: loneliness and prostitution. The following are extracts from the article:

"Is it worth pitying the single woman? Crudely speaking, she can use her defect as a kind of privilege, thanks to state protection.

"Giving them certain privileges - such as allowances for a child born out of wedlock, or an apartment out of turn and similar benefits - increases the number of unmarried mothers. In our society there are too many orphans with living parents, thieves, drug addicts, murderers - and their increasing number is invisibly linked with the phenomenon of single mothers. The destruction of the health of the family, the rising number of single women living in sin, tarnishes the moral environment. And so that there should be a healthy moral atmosphere in our society, they need to be swept away. Our paper receives many letters about
the distressing situation of families with several children, such as this: "...Our family is over-crowded; for each person there is less than half than the accepted norm of square metre space. I have appealed to various official departments for a new apartment, but their doors appear to be closed to me."

"The press receives many letters with a similar content, some of their authors receive help, but many wait for their turn which never comes because they are not used to approaching the authorities. But the single woman? She acts very differently in such a situation! She is confident in herself, she knocks on all doors and firmly states, 'I am a single mother, you must provide me social security benefits and an apartment!' Just try not complying with her demands; she achieves her goal with the help of shouting and insults. Her singleness becomes a weapon the state has provided her. The fruit of this policy is in the form of repeated occurrences of the phenomenon of single motherhood...

"I myself have not once seen an unmarried mother without an apartment. Yet on the other hand, I have met many clean women who have been deserted by their husbands, who left for just such a single woman. I felt sorry that she, left alone with the children, suffers both materially and morally, and weeps bitter tears.

"I try to convince myself that a single woman is a sacrifice to the games of destiny. But from the depths of my soul I answer myself, NO! A woman should not allow herself to be turned into a plaything, should not have to bear the cursed label of single mother; there are reasons for this phenomenon in our society and we should not pardon ourselves for it ... A woman who does not uphold her own honour - if she allows the sale of her flesh, then this should be curtailed with the help of laws. The right to live in a society is given only to those who do something for its development. Wherever one goes, everywhere there is the problem of single women and other problems are left to drift. Clearly the antidote to such a phenomenon is the law. There are so many thousands of single women at present in society. But no one is interested in what they
are up to; are they a benefit or a danger to society? And there's no one brave enough to deal with them. After all, near the entrances of apartments where single women live, cars are stolen. Drug abusers, alcoholics, various types of thieves - the invisible people - ruin someone's healthy life by feeding on immorality. Thus the upbringing of children is being corrupted...

"If the conditions for sin are created, then society's sickness will never end. Society has lost contempt for evil. Here is a letter which came to the Party district committee: 'I am a single mother, I have five children and the state gives her an apartment, although she's also getting alimony from the five fathers, and most strange, this is considered justified!"

"So, who is she - the single woman? It is possible that in this article I was unable to give a complete portrait, but you, respected readers, are familiar with them yourself. Are the current laws justified?..."

This article is characteristic not only of a woman's journal; a similar attitude towards the solution of society's problems is to be found in the mentality of the majority of the national intelligentsia, who fail to see behind each separate phenomenon the general and profound social causes. Unfortunately, the intelligentsia furthers the preservation in the social consciousness of patriarchal, medieval attitudes towards women, reinforcing discrimination against them and taking society towards the idea of a return of women above all to their biological destiny. One is forced to recall the unforgettable author of the ideology 'Kitchen, Children, Church' - this is women's destiny.

ordinary believers but of the nouveau riche: corrupted elements, with little education and an aggressive attitude towards the progressive tendencies which had begun to permeate the life of modern Uzbeks through interaction with European value systems. These elements strengthened traditional society's impatience with the alien culture and its manifestations in the life of Central Asian Muslims. In particular they opposed the education of women and their desire for economic independence. They cultivated the ideal of a patriarchal family with a secondary position for women. And the realisation of such an ideal in real life led, at the end of the 1970s, to the
phenomenon of a rising number of suicides among women, notably among poor, rural families. Caused by their repression within family, such suicides took a most terrible form: self-immolation. Is this not a retort to those who call for the type of family where the ideal is an authoritarian, steely head of the family whose will is indisputable? According to statistics given by Hafiza Nasrullaeva, one of the makers of the powerful film Plamen, (The Flame),(6) in 1991 the number of suicides through self-immolation was 788. Is this not evidence of the crisis in the old patriarchal family, just as divorce is evidence of the crisis within the urban-style, semi-patriarchal families?

Despite these very real problems, the family has still not appeared on the social agenda, and is especially unlikely to do so given the current preoccupation with the economic crisis. Today not every woman can find in the family a refuge from the inclement economy. The Soviet state failed to provide equal opportunities for growth and self-realisation of the individual, both in society and in the family and was unable to do so for the reason that this necessity must first be recognised by a woman herself; women themselves must formulate the social agenda regarding women. But the absence of women's organisations which could work for the protection of their interests in society does not permit an optimistic prognosis; gender will remain a factor in discrimination.
Chapter 4
The Dictatorship of the Workers

Labour was one of the facets of life under socialism that was coloured by ideology. Soviet cities, enterprises, schools, universities and even prisons were decorated with slogans and posters about labour, which Soviet ideology regarded as the most important aspect of a person's life. One of the main objectives of the Soviet state was the mass induction of the population, including women, into the production process.

Industrialisation, achieved through medieval labour-intensive methods, necessitated a work force which was completely dependent upon the state, and which could be launched into action at any given moment and wherever needed by the state. In addition to the compulsory labour of convicts in the gulags, the state utilised the rest of the population as a cheap labour force. There was a ban on increasing wages above a particular sum, and even the maximum salary was little more than a living wage, while the minimum salary met no more than a person's physical survival. Such wage policies and the distribution of products through the coupon system(1) made the War Communism slogan "He who does not work, does not eat" a reality for every Soviet citizen, and drew practically the entire adult population into the production process. The elimination of all types of economic independence based on private ownership, including independent agriculture, led almost the entire Soviet population to become dependent on the state. "Whoever does not submit to his fate, is doomed to die of starvation" wrote Trotsky in exile.

For a brief period in the 1920s, land reforms gave farmers the opportunity to revive agriculture devastated during the Civil War, and to improve their economic circumstances. Land reforms had also given Muslim women a chance to gain economic freedom, display their initiative and energies. But with the collectivisation process, men and women lost not only their
property but also their personal liberty. They became chained to the kolkhoz, economically as well as physically.

The abolition of the little economic freedom that had existed during the land reform period hit the traditionally discriminated woman hardest and as the totalitarian regime strengthened, the principle of equality proclaimed by the Soviet Constitution revealed itself to be fictitious.

For the majority of the population, workers' rights in reality came to mean low-paid hard labour and the denial of choice in employment (once a kolkhoz worker, always a kolkhoz worker), a lack of material incentives for producing quality work, and a lack of opportunities for professional growth and promotion. During the 1930s the USSR Council of Ministers proclaimed a ban on job changes for those employed in heavy industry, mining and textiles. For certain categories of workers and salaried persons, those who sought to change jobs had first to produce a character certificate from their previous employment; in some fields workers had to pledge to remain at their post for a minimum number of years. The right to work was restricted for certain sections of the population, not least kolkhoz workers, whose passports(2) were safeguarded by the kolkhoz administrator; without a passport and military service record a kolkhoz worker could not find work anywhere. Meanwhile, the option of working outside the state structure simply did not exist.

As we have seen from previous chapters, the so-called 'liberation of women' was in fact just a loud political campaign to induct the mass of women into the production process. Under conditions of totalitarian rule (and taking into account that directives cannot abolish women's domestic responsibilities in a society where the patriarchal tradition is strong) women's legal equality in effect signified their double exploitation. The right to work did not become a means of economic independence for women but simply a new form of enslavement, ensuring their right to exploitation on the cotton plantations or the right to perform heavy physical labour rejected by men.

At the same time, the state effectively abolished whatever socioeconomic support mechanisms had existed for women as mothers; pre-natal leave did not exceed one month and post-natal leave was only 56 days. A woman leaving her job to look after her baby was dismissed. Her pension would only be

Unequal

THE development of the land reform period found, despite the many holidays, that women were usually working around the clock with an interminable series of ragged clothes. The work became exhausting, and any given piece often required them to work at a rate running from 12 to 15 hours and sitting and sitting, as these farmers on the Labour were not fulfilling their

Emancipation
The Dictatorship of the Workers

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calculated for a continuous period of work, with dismissal in

connection with maternity leave not considered recognised

grounds; she also lost working experience which was crucial to

all state social security benefits. This policy lasted almost until

the final years of the Soviet Union's existence, when to have

earned the maximum pension one had to have twenty years of

continuous service in a single place of work; and even that

maximum did not exceed the established minimum wage.

Policies affecting women were formulated with the state's

interests in mind; above all women were duty bound to give the

state cheap working hands and children. And in order to ensure

that women would continue to have children even in such
difficult circumstances, divorce and abortion were banned from

the 1930s until the mid-1950s. This is how the state 'freed'

women from the 'bonds of domestic slavery'.

Unequal pay for unequal work

THE destiny of peasant women living and working in the Soviet

period was to toil from dawn to dusk in all seasons, with no

respite for pregnancy, child birth, children's needs, sickness or

holidays; relief only came with death. The older generation of

women remembered the pre-Revolution era, when a woman

usually only went to the fields to take lunch to her husband, as

some sort of Paradise Lost. In order to cover up the harsh reality

with an attractive facade, there was the widespread promotion of

rags to riches tales about a small section of women who

became deputies to the Supreme Soviet and members of the

leadership. But even they remained slaves of the state which at

any given moment could displace, replace or destroy them if

they appeared to disagree with the authorities. They were show-

pieces designed to prove that women were being involved in the

running of the country. Decorated with their medals and orders,

and sitting in legislative halls rubber-stamping every decision

taken by authorities and the Politburo, it was only here that

these female Stakhanovites,(3) these female Heroes of Socialist

Labour saw another life, one that was both plentiful and

fulfilling.

Emancipation above all represents the creation of conditions

where women have equal opportunities to realise themselves as

individuals. The ways in which they choose to do this in turn

depend upon a woman's intellect, her level of education, cultural
surroundings and family's economic status; some may choose to realise themselves in the family, and some in society. But the specifically Soviet contradictions between family and society, between motherhood and production, meant that it was impossible for women to realise themselves either in the family or on the production line. With the Soviet state and the male half of the society in most instances surviving at the expense of women, women's work barely left them the physical strength to survive, and left them nothing to spare for the family. Women's interaction with their surroundings became extremely stressful, and they were dogged by fear of their superiors, of accommodation problems, and of being constantly short of money, food and clothing. Moreover, women did not even have a say in decisions regarding such essentially female concerns as motherhood, children's health and the education of the younger generation.

Once in the French journal Elle I saw a report on Soviet women. The journalist reported that the photographs were taken during the course of one week in Moscow at a period when Moscow was considered a model city. The women had tension on their faces, drooped with exhaustion, heavy shopping bags in hand. Prematurely aged, on the whole badly dressed, and unhappy, there were women in cafes, in shops, on the Metro. Even more tragic were the photographs depicting women at construction sites, at machines, on road construction brigades.

And Soviet men? Their smiling pictures are to be found in Soviet journals: managers at all levels of the administration, qualified workers of the Higher Political Committees, presidents of the kolkhoz, directors of factories; they make up the major portion of the organs of repression, the army and politicians. In Uzbekistan women are only kolkhoz workers, performing the lowest paid work; agricultural workers carrying out unmechanized tasks in the sovkhoz (state farm); subordinate workers in manufacturing, construction and transport; sweepers, sanitary workers, road workers, sales girls, nannies and sitters, weavers, seamstresses, waitresses, librarians, teachers, staff at daycare centres, general engineers and technicians in planning organisations, nurses, district doctors, and social workers. Women's wages are on average one third less than men's wages. Even among women with higher education the discrimination in salaries remains. I studied the salaries of men and women with higher education in three major planning institutes of Tashkent and found that every...
second woman earns 30-40% less than a man with similar experience and qualifications.

Soviet propaganda and pseudo-historical studies created a myth about the joy free women have found in their work and contrasted it with the darkness of Muslim women's pre-Revolutionary past. The happy eastern woman, gathering cotton, and rewarded by the attention of leaders, medals and the title Hero of Socialist Labour, became the theme of reports, articles in newspapers, cinema documentaries, poems and novels written in the style of socialist realism. From the 1930s to 1960s mass information was used to hypnotise the Soviet people (and the world outside) into accepting the mythical freedom of Soviet Asia, symbolised by a smiling young woman collecting cotton with a medal on her breast.

Today, little has changed. Just under half of the women in the Central Asian Republics work or study, out of which 38% are engaged in agriculture, while 49% work in industry. They confront the legacy of the backward socialist economy, where women workers were cheaper than automation and mechanisation in factories, fields and construction sites, and now find themselves in increasingly difficult circumstances in the struggle to earn their livelihood.

The harsh reality of the cotton fields

THE cotton mono-culture ruled rural Uzbekistan. More than two-thirds of the native population of Uzbekistan lives in the villages and in 1979 over half of the female rural population in the 15-50 age group was in one way or another involved in cotton production. While the 1930s were the years of all-out collectivisation, then the 1960s and 1970s were the years of all out 'cottonisation'. Trapped by the limitations of mono-culture, the two generations that grew up in the villages from the 1930s onwards were unable to raise the level of their education and culture, failing even to meet the low standards of the Soviet average. A major gap emerged between rural and urban standards of living, education and culture.

In such a situation women were on the very lowest rung of society - serf, wife, daughter and mother of serfs. The slender pale-faced beauties of old folk songs; the mischievous girl who cheats the greedy ogre in old folk tales have been replaced by the
hardened female machine operator, blackened by the burning
sun, winner of ‘socialist competitions’(4) and secretary of the
district committee on ideology, thrown as an extremely young
girl out into the snow covered fields to collect the last semi-
closed cotton bolls. What happened to all those women so
glorified during the First Five-Year Plan of 1928-1932? And that
famous young cotton picker, Mamlikut, who was decorated at
the age of 16, what of her fate? I suspect the same thing
happened to them as happened to the mother of Karamat H.
from Kokand:

"My mother Mubarak Karimova was from a peasant
family. During the land reform period, because he had
several children, my grandfather received land in
addition to our house and farm buildings. They were
considered well off. All my mother’s brothers, hard
working and strong lads, farmed together keeping
milk cows, cattle and sheep, while part of the land was
given over to cotton and beans. When collectivisation
took place, the brothers all merged their entire
inventory with the kolkhoz which later went into cotton
production. Tractors appeared in the 1930s and
working on tractors was considered very prestigious.
My mother married a handsome young tractor
operator from the same village when she was 17. All
members of the family were kolkhoz workers and were
expected to help out in the fields. My mother worked
in the cotton brigade, and from early spring to late
autumn worked in the fields; cotton required constant
care: hoeing and weeding in spring and summer, and
picking in the autumn.

"Mother was considered a good picker even before
marriage and the president of the kolkhoz convinced
her to become a shock worker; articles were written
about her in the local paper. But in 1937 she was
expecting her first child and was six months pregnant
by the beginning of the cotton harvest. She fulfilled,
even over fulfilled the plan, but there was an order
from above that the kolkhoz should beat all the others
so the harvest was to continue till the last boll. Her
husband requested the kolkhoz president to allow her to
not go to the fields - she was soon due to give birth and
it was the beginning of November - but permission
was refused. She stayed at home two or three days, but the brigade came and threatened her so she went back to the fields. The weather was now cold, her dress thin. Her labour pains began in the field. She reached home in time to give birth to a stillborn child. She herself developed a fever and was only just saved.

This affected her entire future. Her health was undermined and she had two more miscarriages, following which her husband divorced her as barren. She went to the city to study, and there married my father, who was much older than her and had three children. But she never worked anywhere; even though we were not very well off, she considered that her decade of work in the kolkhoz was quite enough. So she never earned herself a pension, but brought up good children and we are grateful to her.

My own mother recalls an encounter with a young Uzbek kolkhoz woman at the end of 1949:

"We were coming from Kubasia in Ferghana when the bus broke down. As night was falling and you were still a five year-old, your father decided it would be better to spend the night at the nearest settlement. Towards night we reached the village and knocked on a door asking to spend the night. The lady of the house invited us into a dark courtyard. Either the electricity had been disconnected or perhaps there was not any at all, for the room was lit by a lamp which was just a twisted piece of cotton dipped in oil.

"In the dim light we examined everything. The house was of mud, walls with an earthen floor, covered by beaten zinc sheets on top of which lay a small carpet. There was no furniture in the house, other than a low counter. We had obviously arrived at the house of newlyweds, as the walls were covered with needlework decorations sewn from silk, linen and patchwork blankets.

"Receiving us, a young man of 25-26 years of age apologised that he could not offer us tea right then as he and his wife had just returned from the fields and hadn't yet got the samovar going. After a while they gave us tea. The young wife went to the kitchen to
prepare dinner. I went with her so as she would not be afraid there at this late hour; it was then eleven at night. She said they had still not had their dinner. The kitchen was nothing but a shed with a small enclosure and a hearth heated with dry stalks of cotton; I couldn't see any wood. The courtyard and the kitchen garden were covered with bundles of cotton stalks clearly used as fuel. Inside the house it was very cold; by the end of November the Ferghana Valley freezes. In a corner of the room lay a large heap of semi-opened and closed cotton bolls. The wife explained that today they had collected all the bolls so they could later clean the cotton from them; the kolkhoz had fallen short of its plan. Even though she also worked on the dairy farm, every autumn she helped her husband pick cotton. She served a meagre dinner.

"It was impossible not to pity this young woman. She was lightly dressed with galoshes on her bare feet and a long padded smock on top of a cotton dress. Tied on her head was a light scarf. She talked about herself and her work. She and her husband were friendly and carried themselves with great dignity. The wife laid before us the best of everything in the house (unselfish hospitality is an Uzbek custom): home-made black flat cakes. Early at dawn, the wife had to go to the dairy farm. I looked at her and thought, poor thing! She is not more than twenty, but looks much older; wrinkles on her sunburnt face, coarsened hands. She said that in the morning she first had to feed the animals at home, then run to the dairy, return to help her in-laws at their home, then go to the fields to collect dry cotton stalks for fuel and then finally clean the cotton bolls. Her husband also had to get up early because he had to take the tractor out to plough the autumn land, as here too the kolkhoz had not fulfilled its plan."

From the 1960s onwards large numbers of women became involved in mechanised work on the cotton plantations. Thus up until the 1950s the decorated Heroes of Labour from the villages had been cotton pickers, while subsequent award winners were women machine operators.

One celebrated 'beacon of labour' was Tursuna Akunova, one of the first villagers to drive a cotton combine harvester. Her face adorned the state films 'A Life of Life, a Cause', which were only the first of many cost effective films of the workers.

A native of the Tursun territory, she was a young kolkhoz active combative activist of the modern generation about whom much was written in the 1970s.

I wanted to meet Tursuna and the Soviet writer...

"O. Kirkorov, 'A Woman's Kolkhoz', Pravda, 3rd July 1984; G. G. Kompanets, 'Kolkhoznitsa', a..."
The Dictatorship of the Workers

When so as she would not be cold; it was then eleven at night and they had not had their dinner. They started with a small enclosure in the cotton fields; I couldn't wait and the kitchen garden was in the cotton fields clearly not in the vegetable garden; how it was very cold; by the time the cotton was harvested the whole of the valley was covered with cotton." She explained that today they could later clean the cotton fields and the combine harvester had fallen short of its work. She had worked on the diary farm, and her husband was a pick cotton. She praised this young woman. She was tall, slender, and dressed in a cotton dress. She had been talking about herself and her family, and the people around her were friendly and respectful. The wife laid out the table in the house (unselfish and kind); home-made black flat bread and vegetables. She had to go to the dairy to fetch milk and water. She looks much older; wrinkles on her face and hands. She said that in the morning she fed the animals at home, and in the evening she helped her in-laws at their plot. Her husband collected dry cotton stalks from the cotton bolls. Her husband worked because he had to provide for the family, as he had promised. His was Tursuna Akhunova, one of the most outstanding workers of the cotton plantations. Thus up to the dates of Labour from the villages and the subsequent award winners were presented.

I was Tursuna Akhunova, one of the most outstanding workers of the cotton plantations. Thus up to the dates of Labour from the villages and the subsequent award winners were presented.

The Dictatorship of the Workers

A naturally gifted girl, hard working and full of energy, with an interest in the new, Tursuna was just another Cinderella whose name became a propaganda tool used to attract thousands of young girls to the heavy physical work of driving the cotton combine harvesters, work which even men often balked at. Tursuna gave speeches at Party Congresses, at meetings of activists, women's and youth forums. She was turned into a modern epic heroine facilitating the spread of the Soviet myth about the happiness people had found in their work - which by the 1960s had begun to fade noticeably.

I want to quote an illustrative excerpt from a speech made by Tursuna at the annual meeting of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party in 1959:

"Comrades:

"Allow me, in the name of the workers of the Kirov kolkhoz collective in the Chinazskov district of the Tashkent region to extend to you, members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, and all participants, warm greetings.

"In our kolkhoz this year with the help of 16 cotton harvesting machines, machine operators gathered 100 tons of raw cotton and fulfilled their norm.

"I pledge to grow 50 tons of cotton with a yield of 50 centners (100 kg bales) from each hectare. We harvest all the cotton with machines. I myself pledge to harvest 250 tons. The value of one 100 kg cotton bale will be 80-90 roubles.

"Uzbek women are very grateful for the cotton harvesting machines as they have been freed from the heavy manual labour of picking cotton. I, a simple Uzbek woman, am delighted to be taking part in the..."
Plenum meeting of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party.

"Many thanks for inviting me here. Allow me, with all of my heart, to thank the Communist Party and the government for your continued concern for our cotton labourers."

The absurdity is that such words of thanks usually took up more than one third of the speeches made by workers and peasants at such illustrious forums. So this was how peasant women ruled in the land of workers and peasants! They were thankful to those who despised them. Every one of the carefully chosen heroes were for Party functionaries mere stepping stones in their careers. There is great truth in the Uzbek proverb: "Notice and remember not he who brought the water, but who broke the pitcher".

But the lives of kolkhoz women even in the 1970s and 1980s failed to witness any dramatic improvements, as 27 year-old Tutikhon Aminova relates:

"I was born and raised on a kolkhoz. My father was a semi-skilled carpenter and mother worked on the cotton brigade. We were many children. I was the eldest and there was always something I had to do. From childhood I had dreamt of studying. At school I learned easily, but conditions were such that I couldn't study further. At home, no matter what I was doing, there was always a book in my hands.

"Only later did I come to understand that not all books are good, that not all - especially our Uzbek writers - tell the truth about life. They write little about the burdens on Uzbek girls in the villages. For the majority of them there is only one destiny: work in the fields and endless work at home. There is little love in our lives and nobody wants a girl, even parents. All these dreams about a fair share in life end in restrictions. My parents did not allow me to continue my education. They said they had no money for sending me to an institute, and added that even if they had had the money, I had many brothers and it was better to spend it on them. They saw life in the city and in the hostels as a road to depravity and said a girl could easily be led astray."
"Soon after finishing school I was given in marriage to a distant relative in a neighbouring village. I have been married for ten years and have four children. I work on the kolkhoz, and my husband is a driver and works in a car factory in the city. My in-laws are a big family. My father-in-law divided up the extended family only two years ago when the state began giving workers in the kolkhoz plots of land to build a house. Luckily in the first year we were able to put up the walls and cover the roof.

I work in the field preparation brigade. On our kolkhoz it is now the practice to work on leased land. Our income has increased somewhat, but everything is becoming expensive, so instead of living better, we have become worse off. And my work is physically tough: there's the house, the garden, the children, the greenhouse, livestock and work in the fields. And what I earn in the kolkhoz is only one fifth to a quarter of the family budget. Basically we live off my husband's earnings and what he also earns from selling vegetables from the garden and the greenhouse. We are actually fed by our own land (actually not our own, but the kolkhoz divided the farmland not under cultivation and leased it out), our cattle and other domestic livestock and fowl".

Karamat H. from Kokand, whose mother was an award-winning cotton picker, has some bitter comments to make about the tyranny of the cotton mono-culture and the restrictions kolkhoz life placed on Uzbek women:

"As a school girl I picked cotton. Our city, a district centre, became a ghost town at harvest time when all schoolchildren, beginning with the Vllh Class, labourers and office workers took part in the harvest. Our school was on cotton duty from the end of September to the middle of November; one year we were still picking cotton in the middle of December. Every year our school year was cut short. As a student in the teaching institute in Tashkent every year I went picking for seven to eight weeks. My daughter, a student of the polytechnical institute has been cotton picking almost as often. One year winter began early and the students sat in barracks while it snowed. The
big supervisor from Tashkent, the then chairman of the Soviet Ministry, came and ordered the students to go out to the fields saying: 'Cotton is just like war, so you have to go out and fight no matter what the conditions. Even if stones fall from the sky you have to pick cotton.'

'Today the leadership of independent Uzbekistan want to make Rashidov(5) a national hero but wasn't he the one who turned our lives, we ourselves and our children into cotton slaves? Every year hundreds of young boys and girls died on cotton duty from fever and accidents, while his children studied in Moscow getting a good education, and ours wasted their health and lost the best years of their education.

'And you tell me that we should have equality, that a woman should realise her potential. But do you really think a woman can get any satisfaction from working under the burning sun, from picking cotton, when her hands swell red with pain, when her back can't straighten, when all she can think about is how to make the day end faster, and go to bed earlier, no matter whether it's in a windswept barrack or a poor kolkhoz home. Millions of our compatriots have just such a life. All this, apart from the fact that they drink poisoned water and breathe poisoned air; even the little food they have is poisoned. Meanwhile men are our brigade leaders, chairman, head accountants, secretaries of the Party committees. What kind of equality is this?

'At home the wife, not the husband, has to feed the children and wash the clothes, and also bear her husband's complaints about dinner being late or the house being unswept. Just like before the Revolution, men treat women as an object; nothing has changed. In spite of the fact that women work so hard, they receive so little in return; just as in the past, the breadwinner is the man. You see, a kolkhoz woman cannot take fruit or grapes to the city market to earn some money for the family. And she is given compulsory work on the kolkhoz for a pittance, so that the man can go out to earn. You see, if someone from the family did not work on the kolkhoz then that portion of land which feeds the
family could be taken away.
Ruling over us from time immemorial
White cotton, black days!
Heaven beyond the grave, but for now
All we get is work, while others grow rich!
The white cotton grows tall,
But our wage packet is small.
God is in heaven, but for now
All we get is work, while others grow rich!
Honey is sweet but the bee stings
There we shall be rewarded, but for now
All we do is sweat while others grow rich!
Still ruling over us from time immemorial;
White cotton, black days...
Folk song

Women in the industrial work force

The induction of women into the factories and industry played a major role in the country's modernisation. In the years of industrialisation, women toiled side by side with men on the communist state's construction ventures, performing some of the heaviest manual tasks. The Second World War played a major role in the induction of women into the production process, when women and minors replaced men who had left for the front. Extensive development in the former USSR meant that with every Ten-Year Plan the number of women working in industry increased, the major portion of manual labour falling to the lot of women.

In Uzbekistan, women workers have traditionally been concentrated in the food industry, in garment and textile factories - professions with tough and dangerous working conditions but low prestige and wages. Less than half of the Republic's workers are women of local nationalities, with Uzbek women remaining concentrated in the communes, trade, the service sector and in the canteens - essentially the least qualified work. Uzbek working women have largely failed to raise their average professional qualifications and there are very few women in highly paid fields such as radio-electronics. Such sectors, which were under the control of the VPK (voennii-promishlennii kompleks: the military-industrial complex), came under Soviet
departmental jurisdiction and were staffed by women chosen from outside Central Asia, even though employment levels among women of local nationalities remained low.

The poorly remunerated and uninteresting work available to Central Asian women, coupled with their lack of professional training and high unemployment levels, led to their induction into the shadow economy from the beginning of the 1960s onwards. Considerable prestige began to be accorded to work associated with the black market and other areas of the shadow economy, opening up access to semi-legal distribution networks.

The induction of women into the production process in the cities faced a number of obstacles. Until 1917, medieval means of production remained dominant in the cities of Central Asia. Meanwhile the small-scale, light industry that had developed in the region was based on the family unit; conditions which did not lead to the voluntary shifting of women into the capitalist sector which had slowly developed in the European part of the city. During the first decade of Soviet rule, there was no significant increase in the volume of manufacture in Central Asia and there was little capital investment available for the development of new production units. However massive numbers of Russian workers entered the local work force having migrated from famine-struck regions along the Volga. With unemployment ruling the cities of Central Asia, the economy did not need women, especially from the local nationalities who were only ready to work in the handicraft sector. Until 1926, state policies regarding the utilisation of women workers in industry thus focused on women of non-native nationalities, who made up an insignificant portion of the female population, and was aimed purely at providing them work in existing industry.

However, in the mid-1920s, as part of the sovietisation process, the policy of inducing women of native nationalities into production was introduced. With little capital initially available for investment in industry, Party organs initiated the formation of cooperative artels, which brought together artisans engaged in handicraft production and which became the main form of utilising the skills of craftswomen. The economic incentives for joining the artels included the fact that through them women could have access to goods that were in short supply in the general market; raw material supplies were guaranteed and were available on credit; and the sale of their produce was

assured. The policy included the establishment of the fact that in order to work, artisans were required to have the consent of the artel members, and in some cases education.

But the fact that women were the subject of these policies on the self-help production process had foremost during the 1930s and 1940s, the process of industrialisation of this region, the textiles, and other large capital investment had been directed towards the factories of refugees, the urban, and central areas. The trip through Central Asian regions was constructed in the beginning of the decade, and all who were employed in heavy and medium industry recorded the establishment of new factories. (See Chapter 5) (1) While women were total employed in industry, 1930.

In 1930, however, the Party Congress called for force production, in line with the goals of the collectivisation and the increase of the influx of women into the industrial sector.
were staffed by women chosen though employment levels remained low.

The interesting work available to women with their lack of professional training, led to their induction in the beginning of the 1960s. Women began to be accorded to work in other areas of the shadow economy and mini-legal distribution networks. The production process in the cities continued until 1917, medieval means of production in the cities of Central Asia. In the industrial part of the territory, until the 1920s, women who had developed in the textile industry that had developed in the textile industry, were employed in the textile industry to produce textiles, foodstuffs, and garments made possible by capital investment in the Central Asian economy. This investment had been directed by the need to provide employment for the waves of refugees who continued to flee the famine raging in the Volga and central Russian regions for Tashkent - 'The City of Bread'. The tripling of capital investment in the economies of the Central Asian republics from the late 1920s to the 1930s led to the construction of a textile industry in Tashkent, with cotton ginning factories and oil factories expected to guarantee jobs to all who had flooded in from Russia. Women were employed for heavy and manual labour in these factories and Party documents record that there were attempts to attract local women into the factories and industries. For reasons discussed earlier in Chapter 2, these efforts began to meet with notable success and while women of local nationalities made up only 9.5% of the total engaged in manufacturing in 1923, by 1933 this had risen to 28.6%.

In 1930, in accordance with decisions taken at the Communist Party Congress, a plan was drawn up designed to expand labour force participation in various branches of national production, in line with the planned expansion of Soviet industry in particular and the economy in general. The plan specifically provided for the increased utilisation of the female work force. The major factors attracting women to the artels included the possibility of working at home, or of working in establishments where discarding the 'parandja' was not obligatory; the fact that their management was truly elected; and the straightforward practice of payment for work done. The women working in the artels had initiative, were independent and were able to look after their own interests. An additional benefit was the consciousness-raising work conducted among the women in the artels, who were given courses in basic health care and education.

But the compulsory measures imposed during the Khudjum, and the subsequent backlash against women's emancipation, brought the self-organisation of artels and women’s own attempts to set up production establishments to a standstill. At the same time, a fundamental change took place in the nature of the artels when, during the years of the First Five-Year Plan (1928-1932), the state began combining the artels into state establishments (a similar process of collectivisation was taking place in the villages). Out of this emerged new forms of manufacture in areas such as textiles, foodstuffs, and garments made possible by capital investment in the Central Asian economy. This investment had been dictated by the need to provide employment for the waves of refugees who continued to flee the famine raging in the Volga and central Russian regions for Tashkent - 'The City of Bread'. The tripling of capital investment in the economies of the Central Asian republics from the late 1920s to the 1930s led to the construction of a textile industry in Tashkent, with cotton ginning factories and oil factories expected to guarantee jobs to all who had flooded in from Russia. Women were employed for heavy and manual labour in these factories and Party documents record that there were attempts to attract local women into the factories and industries. For reasons discussed earlier in Chapter 2, these efforts began to meet with notable success and while women of local nationalities made up only 9.5% of the total engaged in manufacturing in 1923, by 1933 this had risen to 28.6%.

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portion of the male work force (excluding that 30% of men of working age who were either in the gulags or were employed by the prison system), was to be found in the army, the administration and in heavy industry, and thus in the 1930s and 1940s the shortage of male workers in other productive sectors was to be made up by women.

In 1931 the Decree of the Central Asian Bureau of Trade Unions on the Induction of Women Workers into Production removed restrictions on the use of women workers and recommended the expansion of the range of professions which they could take up. This effectively legalised women's right to perform heavy physical labour. It was also proposed that previous wage structures for women be changed, bringing their salaries into line with those of male workers.

The following figures detail women's participation in the region's industrial production. In 1931 in textile manufacturing in Central Asia there were a total of 7,000 women workers, 3,000 of which were from local nationalities. In the Tashkent leather industry there were 9,800 workers, out of which 5,800 were women, half of which were from local nationalities. In the Ashkhabad silk farming factory out of 1,107 workers, 514 were women. In the Faktoratsk railway depot out of 11,311 workers only 80 were women, and in the road construction department out of 266 workers 72 were women, 12 of whom were from local nationalities. Evidently, women were being employed in low-skilled jobs. For example the president of the Commission on Labour of the Uzbek SSR Sovarkom, A. Bolni explained in his report to the authorities that in the metallurgical and wood-work industries "10,000 workers will have to be trained, out of which 15% will be women." But Bolni clearly envisaged a greater proportion of women workers being drawn into lower skilled areas, going on to say: "The Republic needs 7,000 drivers, out of which 50% must be women; and 27,000 tractor drivers, out of which 20% should be women". Such employment policies made a mockery of 'equality'.

At the same time, women workers began to work their way up to supervisory posts and moved into fields previously closed to them. There were the first women pilots, the first women steam engine drivers, the first women combine operators. In 1991 journalist F. Salimov wrote about the fate of one such 'first'.

"Basharat Mirbabaeva was first heard of on August 1,
1935, the day on which a modest working woman from the telephone exchange of the Central Asian Railway Lines's political department, rose on a U-2 crane to a height of 750 metres and jumped off with a parachute. Mirbabaeva became the first Uzbek girl to 'rise towards Allah higher than the highest minaret'. Her mother wailed loudly, begging her daughter not to do such a thing. She stood there for ages shouting and waving, condemning the girl for this breach of tradition. But Basharat jumped. Because of her own shaky conviction, because of the Komsomol's recommendation, and most important because of the orders of the political department whose president told Basharat, 'You have to do it, my daughter. The Party believes in you, it orders that it be done...'

"Later, she was given numerous similar orders, and always this was at someone else's behest and not because of her own needs. She became the first Uzbek woman pilot, the first steam engine driver, the first woman in the USSR to sit behind the controls of a diesel locomotive, the first honorary member of the Uzbekistan Railways..."

There was glory: newspapers were filled with Basharat's photographs. She went to the war front on numerous occasions, bearing gifts for Uzbek troops. Shock workers and trendsetters such as Mirbabaeva became a privileged section of the working class, a sort of workers aristocracy based not just on their salary.

But just as in the cotton fields, in industry, too, the Heroes of Labour faced years of exhausting work. Khafiza Lutfullaeva, a former worker at the Tashkent textile machine building factory, tells about the daily reality behind such women's achievements:

"I started working in 1941 when I was 16. It was the war and all Komsomol girls had been called to work in industry and factories, where women replaced the men who had left for the Front. I started to work in one of the ordinance factories where I became a lathe operator. As I was short, I had to stand on a wooden box to reach the lathe. A mine factory, ours was one of the first establishments to be evacuated. In the beginning our lathes were placed on the ground, there were no roofs. Luckily, in Tashkent it doesn't rain till
October. We worked in shifts, sometimes we remained for weeks at the factory, working and sleeping. Only in 1943, when German and then Japanese POWs were brought into the factory, could we go home after finishing our shift.

"After the war, the factory began making machines for textile production and became one of the city's major industrial establishments; at one time our products were even exported. I continued to work as a lathe operator. I was already a Grade IV operator, at the time the highest rank, and then later I trained as a Grinder, which was less tough. I was awarded the Order of Lenin and six medals for excellent work.

"After the war I got married. My husband was a war veteran and an invalid. We did not have any children. I spent my whole life in that factory. I lived in my husband's small house and when it was demolished in 1984 I was given a one-room apartment in the suburbs. By then I had retired and my husband had died. I've got many awards and certificates but for all that I didn't get a flat from the factory I worked in.

"My salary at the factory during and after the war was not very high, but we got goods on our ration cards; we could at least earn our daily bread. I was also able to help my parents. Production quotas rose, one's work load intensified, but the technology remained old. A change of equipment took place only in the 1960s, which is why our work was so exhausting. My earlier enthusiasm didn't exactly disappear, but was slowly extinguished as exhaustion grew, and in the end I only worked so as to earn myself a meagre but independent life. The various kinds of awards I received somehow flattered my vanity, and bolstered my self-respect. My work was worse than other kinds of work, it was heavy and dirty. But there was nothing else. I couldn't do anything else because I had little education.

"That's how we lived, millions of women workers. Working conditions improved in the 1960s, when rooms became heated, floors were cemented, and spacious changing rooms were built. The trade union tried to improve conditions, but essentially it was in
The Dictatorship of the Workers

leagues with the administration. It did not protect us when production quotas were raised. The working person did not have a say in the running of the factory and as people say now 'workers were alienated from the products of their labour'. We were the proletariat. Half of our life passed in the hope of a brighter future. When will the day come when we can rejoice that tomorrow will not bring higher prices?"

The failure to modernise industry

In the 1930s, financial incentives for increased productivity were reduced with the phasing out of piece-rate labour and the fixing of maximum wage ceilings. (Ironically, there was a sharp increase in the number of staff on the management side, whose salaries were paid out of the budget for workers' salaries.) At the same time there was growing moral stimulus for increased productivity with workers being awarded titles such as Shock Worker and Stakhanovite. 'Socialist competitions' were held between sister establishments, brigades, sectors and individual workers where the winners were presented plaques of honour and medals. There was also a practical aspect to the state propaganda about worker heroes; they were used to justify the raising of production quotas for assembly line workers without renovating equipment and production technology. Moreover, the fact that there was little technological progress meant the state was not interested in the workers improving their skills. Industrial workers thus faced low-skilled, arduous and dangerous conditions as related by Nasiba P., who, until she got married and had a child, worked in the dyeing section of a textile factory:

"I was an average student at school and therefore the question of higher education did not arise. I know that girls with even worse grades get into college, but they have some backing. I was told by my mother that I should earn my own dowry; it is normal for us Uzbeks to spend a great deal on weddings. My work was difficult, dangerous, and poorly paid. The level of mechanisation was low, and safety measures non-existent; many people suffered burns and injuries. In our section the temperature was very high which made things especially difficult in summer; there was
humidity and a dreadful smell. People cannot work there for more than five years."

Instead of protecting the interests of the workers, the trade unions became involved in promoting productivity and, along with the administration, the trade unions became the dispensers of material encouragement, such as paid family vacations in holiday resorts, free accommodation and subsidised goods. Even during perestroika and the post-Soviet periods, despite greater input from the trade unions, there has been a failure to effectively tackle issues leading to the exploitation of industrial workers, and specifically female workers. In 1991, journalist Natalya Polyanskaya writing in Pravda Vostoka reported on the Congress of the Trade Union of Textile Workers, where the problems of workers' safety and 'accelerated' work methods were discussed:

"According to T.B. Mursalieva, President of the Women's Light Industry Trade Union, the trade unions need to recognise their responsibility for allowing the high levels of exploitation of labour. In stitching and shoemaking factories, quotas have been raised so high that even highly skilled cobblers cannot cope without Black Saturdays(9) or extra shifts. Under such conditions it is difficult to produce quality. Senior trade union officials were forced to repent under pressure from the newly formed Trade Union committee elected during perestroika. They at last started to defend workers' rights. They were able to show with actual statistics that the tremendous successes of those trendsetting combine machine operators who received so much publicity, brought them not only glory but also caused significant damage to their own health and that of all other workers. The race to be a trendsetter and break records attracted a repeated upward revision of work quotas, ultimately up to an impossible maximum.

"Women workers were pushed to the limit, they [the authorities] wanted to extract the maximum - and even more - out of them. Recently, new pay scales have been introduced and in all establishments there has been an increase in the administration's salaries but not in the workers' pay. Today, although textile units are superficially more prosperous, the average wage
The Dictatorship of the Workers

...well. People cannot work

...cost of living, productivity and, along with it, the dispersions of the unions have been paid to the workers in terms of wages and salaries. Even so, the trade unions have remained the dispensers of good and evil. In 1991, journalist Pravda Vostoka reported on the situation in Textile Workers, where the so-called 'accelerated' work methods...

Nasiba P., quoted earlier, went on to make a number of observations about the role of the management in workers' exploitation during the latter Soviet period and about her hopes for the future following the post-Soviet economic reforms:

"After I had my child, I became a seamstress. In recent years I have been working in a cooperative. Until very recently our wages were good, because there were fewer bosses and superfluous staff members. But now there are problems with raw material supplies and we are idle much of the time. True, the president of our cooperative promises that it will be made a joint company, but for now these are just plans.

"The girls like working in the cooperative, even though standards are high and only top-qualified seamstresses are selected. Our girls are very hard working and..."
quickly mastered the new machinery and technology. When there are economic incentives, things go well. Here we have understood that our wages depend upon us, and not on how the administration completes the order.

"Working at the textile factory, and later at the sewing establishment, I saw both carelessness and thievery. I do not think this was right, but I do understand the reasons. Women workers were paid a miserly salary yet out of the income they had generated massive amounts were spent on running the establishment and on the over-staffed management. All this lay on the shoulders of the worker who had no say in these matters. It is a matter of shame that such plunder became almost legal in the years of stagnation. (10) For example, to get a job at a food factory, one had to know people in the right places or give bribes, because many people supplemented their incomes by stealing from the work place.

"If our cooperative becomes a joint stock company, I hope the work will give me the same economic independence I have felt in recent years. If the state were to encourage producers and not speculators, as happens at the moment, then life would also become easier. But for now, those who lived well and worked less are still better off than those who work hard."

White-collar workers and the intelligentsia

WOMEN with a university education, (11) for all their superficial prosperity and superior social status, were still exploited in other forms. In absolutely all spheres of work (even those where women traditionally work such as basic education and primary health care), the main decision-making positions have always been, and are still held by men. Every second man with university education is a manager of this or that rank, while only 7% of women with identical educational qualifications hold such posts. Meanwhile women make up almost half of the specialists with secondary education in Uzbekistan. The difference in women’s and men’s professional achievements is explained by the different demands society makes of them in identical circumstances. The passive role of women, the cult of gentlewomen.

In order to strengthen equality, an essential role of leaders, according to Khadija Siromonova, who has "liberated" women leaders, is to convince the masses of the importance of women, as the only way out of stagnation, the only way to modernize the economy and society. Women, in her view, are not to blame for the conditions that exist, but are the main factor in the development of the economy, and society in general.

The hero of the story is, Khadija Siromonova, the Aminova family. In the period when the Uzbek women were educated lawyers, doctors, engineers. But in their profession, though the women were technical specialists, women still had to take the position of the head of the household, and also the family. Thus, it has not been solved how to incorporate society. The economy and the means of livelihood.

Although there has been progress, and women have begun to play a significant role, they have not yet become a significant force in society.
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Intelligentsia

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circumstances. Women are invariably delegated the role of passive workers, explained by reference to women's 'natural qualities' that are identified by society and men as passivity, gentleness and emotionalism.

In order to prove its commitment to the concept of women's equality, the state created the facade of the 'Soviet way of life', an essential element of which was the phenomenon of female leaders, parliamentary deputies and senior academicians. Whereas in the 1930s to 1950s these three hypothetically 'liberated' categories of women emerged in the form of Party leaders, trendsetting kolkhoz workers or labourers, and learned lawyers or ideological specialists, from the 1960s onwards often all of these aspects were incarnated in a single face: a Party leader or some kind of parliamentarian or deputy with some higher degree. With no other outlet for its talents, the highly educated, known as 'the worker's intelligentsia' became deeply dependent both on ideology and on state structures. The new intelligentsia thus became the source of cadres for the ideological bureaucracy. In the 1930s to 1940s women's education (especially in the ideological sphere) had been greatly encouraged, and subsequently the society's particular path of development meant that large numbers of girls were attracted into the fields of natural sciences and technical education.

The heroines of the 1930s and 1940s were learned women, like Khadija Suleimanova, a legal specialist in state law, and Rahima Aminova who specialised in the history of women's liberation. In the period from the 1940s up until the mid-1960s, a number of Uzbek women became renowned as doctors, orientalists, lawyers, philologists, historians, professors, and philosophers. But in the later period of stagnation lasting into the 1980s, even though the number of women employed in the sciences, applied technical science, higher education and medicine rose, few women stood out. The cause was not only the poor status of intellectual work in the so-called 'workers-peasants state', but also the fact that the state regarded the women's issue as having been solved. It was no longer considered vital to convince society of the necessity of educating women; the broader economy was more in need of working hands.

Although the state claimed to promote scientific and technical progress, capital investment in science was ineffective due to the way in which the sector was organised. As a result, intellectuals became a surplus work force, leading towards stiff professional
competition which was based not on filtering out those who were less capable but those who were socially less influential. Patronage and nepotism flourished and women, who may have had a sound education and been capable but did not have such influence, were exploited; their knowledge, their academic research, their ideas were appropriated by their supervisors - who were men. Often women scientists, and not their male superiors were the originators of new ideas. Women's professional growth was often deliberately obstructed so as to squeeze more out of them. The impossibility of self-realisation on the one hand and wage levelling on the other led to psychological stress, inertia, and a parasitic attitude towards the work of others.

Although women make up 46.1% of those generally working in the field of science in Uzbekistan, only 4% of academicians and professors are women. The state - in the form of male decision-makers - emphasises 'the peculiarities of women's character' when it comes to the distribution of power and resources. The salaries of women working in the intellectual field are less than those of female labourers and are not much higher than the minimum wage. Educated women's experiences have led society - in the form of parents - to begin obstructing their daughters' efforts to pursue higher education in areas where intellectual work entailed tension and responsibility. Rejection of the concept of higher education for women has been particularly noticeable among the lower strata of society whom higher education was in any case not easily accessible due to their material circumstances. In effect higher education for women has now lost its prestige.

The frustrations confronting women scientists in the former Soviet Union are clear from the experiences of F. Rustumzada:

"I graduated from the Tashkent University Faculty of Chemistry in 1966. Two years later I began my Ph.D. at the Bio-organic Chemistry Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences in Moscow. My coming to Moscow gave me many things; I worked in one of the country's best scientific laboratories, expanded my circle of interests and my outlook on life. I made contacts with professionals in cities throughout the former Union. I received my first Author's Certificate. My academic research pushed the frontiers of science, and in essence I received a whole new education."
"Returning to Tashkent I began working in one of the institutes of the Uzbek SSR Academy of Sciences, where my research skills attracted the attention of my superiors when I presented my article at an international conference.

"By law a Statement of Expertise has to accompany any academic paper if it is to go beyond the walls of an institute. Although it only has to state whether the paper has any content of a classified nature or if it involves any innovation or discovery, the Statement of Expertise is a means by which the author of a paper is forced to become a co-author. Thus almost all of my papers, author's certificates and patents, which are the results of my own labour, have been appropriated by my supervisor at the laboratory, by the deputy of the Institute and by the director of the Institute himself. All of them appear as co-authors on my work. My attempts to resist resulted in my being unable to publish anything; articles without the Statement of Expertise are not accepted by any publisher. I have come to accept this as a necessary evil. Almost all the directors of the institutes I have worked in, including one of the former presidents of the Academy of Sciences, have attended international conferences as co-authors of my papers.

"I came to the Institute as a Senior Scientific Worker and left it with the same designation, while men rose up the ladder. This was justified to me by the fact that they were the heads of families and the main breadwinners. Meanwhile I could only move horizontally. In the beginning I went to another laboratory, and later to a different institute. Whenever I attempted to claim my right to recognition or to demonstrate my competence, administrative steps were taken against me: my access to the library and sister institutes was restricted; I was hauled up for coming late and so on, so as to counter my claims regarding my competence with my 'bad' character or lack of discipline.

"The situation was the same at another scientific institute, where I not only wrote a paper, with the director of the institute as co-author, but also
translated it so he could read it in Japan. Promises to create a new laboratory for work on a topic I was interested in came up every time one or another supervisor needed my brains.

"My attempt to get a post at the University was also unsuccessful. A younger person, without a Ph.D. and with less than half of my research experience was given preference. I was told directly: we need a man; he will go with the students for the cotton harvest and you won't.

"Now I work in a cooperative in a field that is not my speciality. Here I am better paid. The material side of one's work is very important; for years I worked in the name of scientific endeavour, but the fruits of my research were used by others while my wages remained low. Now I am 50 years old, my son is only 12 and I need to think of him, too. That is why I left science".

Among people working in the intellectual field there has been the particularly absurd pursuit of all kinds of titles conferred by the state: Honoured Scientific Worker, National Architect, Honoured Artist... This method of dividing people up into categories and ranks is not based on their true success, and has created among those working in the intellectual field a hierarchical atmosphere similar to that of the bureaucracy, preventing truly creative competition from flourishing. These artificial divisions also permitted the exploitation of subordinates not only in the pursuit of self-interest, but also for the sake of the children and friends of superiors. And not unexpectedly, women were least likely to benefit from the advantages of these state titles, being three to six times less likely to have such titles than men at a similar stage in their profession.

Those women working in the field of art and culture have faced similar frustrations with little changing even in the post-Soviet period as Dilbar, an Uzbek ballet dancer, recounts:

"It was often written about the fact that there were many scholarly women, actresses and artists. But no one knew how difficult things were for Uzbek women in the arts, and anyway who needed their creativity? Very rarely do we have a full house at the ballet or opera, and there are few Uzbeks in the audience.
"The first Uzbek actresses paid with their lives for their appearance on the screen,(12) and even today being an actress commands little respect in society. It is hard for an actress to get married and even her daughter carries the stigma of having a mother who's not respectable. Of course the status of famous actresses and their families is very high, especially if the husband does not work in the arts.

"The world of the arts generally has an ugly, hidden side, which in the Soviet situation led to great bitterness because success depended not upon talent and determination, but upon patronage and other factors. Is it normal for young girls entering the dance academy to be crudely pressurised into enrolling in the Party? They had to fawn upon and grovel before the lead dancers, the choreographers, the chief ballet master, the costume designer, the Secretary of the Party Committee and trade union, the director of the theatre, because on each one of these people depended their fate. There is only one theatre - and many of ballet dancers. Singers are in an even worse position."

Women in the health and education sectors

MEANWHILE working conditions for women in the education and primary health care sectors, traditionally women's areas of intellectual endeavour, continue to remain poorly paid and with little prestige, and thus fail to attract men. Paediatrician Rashida Tulidjanova:

"For twenty years I have been working as a district doctor. Doctors' wages at the polyclinic are low; I earn one and a half times the regular rate as I have a large district to cover. For three hours I see patients at the clinic and then for three hours I'm out on calls, but during epidemics this can be six hours, on foot and in all seasons. Overtime hours are not paid, but as a doctor I cannot turn away small children. This is how all our doctors, most of whom are women, have to work. It's not always their fault that children are sick so often; there are the problems of unwholesome children's food, poor living conditions, single-parent
families, low quality daycare centres and schools, in other words, there are bad conditions for bringing up children. And it is not because the mother doesn't stay at home with the children or because the doctors are bad, as newspapers write these days.

"There has recently been a particularly noticeable deterioration in social conditions. The medical bureaucracy, mostly staffed by men, has long kept quiet about the true state of affairs in the primary health care sector, leaving us to patch things up. It's alarming that among the younger generation so many diseases are due to the poor quality of foodstuffs, water and the environment. Now male doctors have begun working as cooperatives, where patients have to pay for their treatment even though the quality is no higher. This has left mostly women in the state health care sector. The health system needs reform, but by the time this happens much will have been lost. It is at the moment only functioning thanks to women's kindheartedness, sense of responsibility and unselfishness."

Teacher Mavluda Khodjaeva has been working in a school for the last fifteen years, teaching the national language and literature. According to her, working in a school is like working in a forge:

"When I started working at the school, at night my ears would ring with that din which is typical only of school buildings. In the beginning I was afraid of the class, but then I grew used to it all and children started to love me. I taught the VIth to Vllth Grades. At this age children are going through puberty and become extremely self-centred and highly-strung, which is why one needs to be sensitive to each student. In our school there were only four male teachers. Men are reluctant to work in schools, even when working at double rates, because the salary is not very high. Just this year, when unemployment has begun among scientists and college teachers, seven men have started working in the school, but I think this is only a temporary phenomenon.

"I work five days a week, six hours a day. I have been
exhausted not only by my work with the children, but by the system of accountability, by Party training (luckily this no longer happens), by the teachers' councils and the orders of the district committee. Social work among school children should be voluntary, and it should not be a supplementary duty of the teacher to organise children in action groups or squads.

"I am satisfied with my work and would have worked more effectively, if only working hours were a little less and if I was paid more. There is not enough time for reading new things or for introspection".

CULTURAL stagnation during the latter Soviet period and the poor development of social consciousness in what was a totalitarian society, combined with the patriarchal traditions found in Muslim families made gender a tool for suppressing women and elevating men. This was no less true in the area of women's employment than in the domestic realm. Granting women the right to work, including work in the intellectual sphere, led to a conflicting situation. Better educated and legally equal, women as individuals now had greater opportunity to realise themselves. But they did not have flexible support mechanisms either at home or at work. The levelling of rights - that celebrated step towards the emancipation of women in the Soviet period - led to women being caught between a false dichotomy of choosing between work and motherhood, a choice which was in any case non-existent, given economic conditions. Not surprisingly, a process of irreversible social crisis was the result. But while the working conditions of the majority of Uzbek women have given rise to negative attitudes towards women's participation in the production process, the conditions which would actually allow women to return to the hearth do not exist.

In the Soviet past, women played an albeit unwilling but nevertheless leading role in the modernisation of the Soviet empire. With the advent of independence, Uzbek women today again face the challenge of participating in the modernisation of their homeland. Lessons should be learnt from the past, not only looking at the negative consequences of women's involvement in the productive process but equally assessing its positive aspects. Work, which gives women satisfaction, economic independence and the possibility of self-realisation, and which is based on the
principle of economic incentives backed up by a social security system, is possible only under two fundamental conditions: firstly, a change in the economic foundations of the state, and secondly, a change in social attitudes towards women. But this is a matter for the future. Today, Uzbek women have the task of battling against growing discrimination in the face of efforts to restrict their right to work.
The Female Work Force in Uzbekistan 1928 - 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1989</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(percentage of total work force)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media &amp; Information</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Sectors</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the formation of this table, women were not disaggregated according to nationality and it thus does not include any breakdown of the comparative percentages for the various nationalities. From other sources one can gather that out of the number of women working in agriculture, more than 92% consisted of women of local nationalities, while in industry they made up just 38% of the female work force. There are effectively no statistics detailing the various fields local women are working in.
Chapter 5

Women at the Top

The entire population of the Soviet Union was divided in two unequal parts: the people and the 'servants of the people'. The people, irrespective of nationality, were without rights, and, under the wise leadership of the 'servants of the people', they constructed the bright future. Soviet society was thus not a society of equal opportunities and the consolidation of the totalitarian regime did not lead towards the emergence of a classless society as claimed by official propaganda. Instead, it led to the establishment of a class society composed of, on the one hand, a small nomenklatura elite which possessed unlimited power, and on the other hand the socially subordinate millions: the suppressed, exploited, and voiceless peasants, workers and so-called 'worker's intelligentsia'. In the period when the totalitarian regime was consolidating itself, the sharp divide between the two layers of Soviet society was essentially social. But from the 1960s onwards - the period of stagnation - this divide assumed a material expression, seeing the emergence of the nouveau riche among the nomenklatura.

The main criteria for the selection of cadres in the Soviet elite was conformity and unquestioning loyalty to the totalitarian system. This was expressed by political affiliation, specifically important being membership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), or participation in the Party or Komsomol bodies. Given that the Party held a monopoly over all positions of power, specifically over posts involving executive and distributive functions, any failure to meet the requirements of political affiliation meant a career doomed to mediocrity. Hafiza Nasrullaeva, a member of the opposition party, Erk, relates an interesting story about the criteria of Communist Party membership.

"When I was a student, I was very keen on studying social issues. My tutor was pleased with my academic
Soviet society was thus not a society composed of, on the one hand, a tiny ruling elite which possessed unlimited power and the socially subordinate millions: the voiceless peasants, workers and intelligentsia. In the period when the totalitarian regime had achieved its finality, the sharp divide and the end towards the emergence of a new democratic society was essentially social. In the period of stagnation - this was the period of stagnation - this expression, seeing the emergence of the intelligentsia.

A successful career thus depended not on an individual's professional abilities but on whether one happened to be included on the list of candidates and the so-called 'leadership cadre inventory'. This was formulated above all on the basis of a system of vetting, in which, apart from political affiliation, the other significant factor was family background. Other qualities, such as professional abilities and the skill to carry out concrete tasks in a specific field - criteria generally accepted throughout the world - were of secondary importance. I remember, when I was still a college student, there was an announcement that one of the posts of First Deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Republic had fallen vacant. The Secretary of the college Party Committee outlined how difficult it was to select the candidate because they had to be: a Komsomol activist, from a workers' background, aged not over twenty, from the provinces, not higher than a graduate, experienced in production work, and preferably from a family with several children. The poorly qualified young girl from the provinces who would match these rigid job qualifications would, after ten years, probably become a very highly placed Party functionary who was to be given the right to decide the fate of those who were more educated and talented, to assess the professionalism, competence and experience of those about whose work she couldn't have had the
foggiest idea.

Thus, a particular trait of almost all those in power was that they were not actually suited to their posts. Had this just been applicable to certain individuals, it could have been considered a coincidence, but this illogical situation was evident in all aspects of public life. It was accepted as a natural phenomenon in Soviet society that each person was expected to feel that their appointment was above all courtesy of the leadership, and had nothing to do with the strength of their own individual qualities. Those who forgot this rapidly lost favour and were easily replaced. Not surprisingly the nomenclatura was dominated by hierarchical concepts, where fear of the authorities and the institutions of repression formed the constant background to their activities. There were those rare characters whose professional abilities actually corresponded to their position, but their service record showed repeated conflict with their superiors and a rather rapid end to their careers, either facing major unpleasantness or terror, repression and criminal proceedings.

But while in the early days when the totalitarian regime was emerging, the basic criterion for appointment had been political affiliation, in the period of stagnation, there was the additional qualification of complete personal loyalty to superiors who expected payments and gifts from subordinates. Over a period of seventy years one can trace the passage of three generations of the Soviet leadership starting from loyalty to their proclaimed ideals, passing through hypocrisy, and ultimately reaching the wholesale rejection of earlier ideas - all in the name of the preservation of power and their position of leadership in society.

Another characteristic feature of the Soviet hierarchy was the existence of quotas, supposed guaranteed the representation and participation of people of local nationalities, women, senior citizens and so on. Between fifty to eighty per cent of the 'servants of the people' in the Union Republics were made up of representatives of local nationalities. But this highly planned approach to the selection of cadres resulted in power being concentrated in the hands of large numbers of opportunists who strove to control the all-important posts involved in distribution. Many of them attracted the people's hatred, their significance defined only by their position of responsibility; once deprived of it they were nobodies.
Women at the Top

Female cadres, appointed through the quota system, occupied a special place in the nomenclatura. The facade of social unity which they were expected to display was supposed to substantiate the conclusive resolution of the women's issue (the achievement of complete emancipation and of total equality in practice), illustrating Soviet society's democratic nature. But while in the lower ranks the quota for women was comparatively higher, in senior ranks the quota shrank, often resulting in the appearance of token women in selected fields. Women who formed part of the power structure came under particular scrutiny from below. The condemnable qualities of the nomenclatura, that self-serving nature that is typical of all ruling elites, seemed to stand out among women precisely because there were so few of them.

Nevertheless, in the 1940s and 1950s a number of exceptional women emerged within the Uzbek Republic's leadership, women who were confident of their destiny, courageous enough to fly in the face of prevailing social mores, and hard-working enough to remain at the top for quite a long while. This contradiction underlines both the strength of the concept of women's equality and the deformities of the totalitarian system. The story of each woman who entered the corridors of power was complex, often entailing compromise and a rejection of their best qualities. As a result, many of those pursuing careers suffered a form of moral bankruptcy and lost their individual identity.

There was a Soviet film *The Shining Path* whose theme focused on the unpretentious history of a simple young girl, who became a shock worker, a Komsomol activist and who eventually became part of the leadership, an elegant ruler of the highest level. There were many such stories in real life, an example being the weaver E. Furtsheva who became a Minister of Culture and member of the Politburo; there were others such as textile workers Zinaida Pukhova and Valentina Tereshkova. The moral of such films was: if you work hard and have complete faith in your senior comrades in the Party and follow their advice faithfully, you too will become a princess, in other words a minister or member of the Politburo. But the path to the top was not nearly as straightforward as depicted in the film. And even if, for some, getting to the top was straightforward, then staying in power remained an altogether more taxing task.
Women in the Central Asian leadership

THE appearance of women in the Central Asian leadership had its own particular features. In the 1930s to 1940s, the women who emerged in public life did not come from a traditional background, because social attitudes obstructed, rejected and judged those who openly broke from traditional concepts regarding the role and position of women. The female cadres as a rule came from the de-classed, where women's traditional dependence on the opinion of father and family, as well as their economic dependence, had weakened as a result of their life circumstances or political convictions. The de-classed section of society had no doubt lost their background, but they possessed - as a result of their bitter post-Revolutionary experience - a more realistic outlook on life, and consequently were also more detached from the prejudices of the past. These included young women who had lost their parents and relatives, who were raised in boarding schools run by the State Women's Department. From these women emerged a number of strong, outstanding figures whose careers were formed under the guardianship of the authorities. But even these women needed great individual courage and determination to pursue their chosen path in life. They rose to the top despite opposition from male colleagues, the vast majority of whom were still inhibited by traditional social attitudes regarding male superiority. They did not want to see their female colleagues as equals, even less as competitors, which is why they used their influence to circulate highly dubious gossip about women in the cadres, degrading them by raising suspicions about their chastity and so forth.

The entry of Uzbek women into the various levels of leadership was without doubt to the advantage of the Soviet powers, activating great human potential. It was equally a process which profoundly shook prevailing stereotypes about women. This chapter is about some of these extraordinary women.

But the totalitarian system tried to deprive each one of these women of their individuality. To survive at the top, one had to do unto others as was done unto oneself. This hateful system led to the cyclical rise and fall of members of the nomenclatura, each new cycle beginning with a change in the country or the Republic's leadership. The meaning of life was not to put one's principles into practice by using one's position of authority, but to preserve one's position for the sake of one's own prosperity. For many this led to a tormented double identity, the loss of youthfulness, and the loss of all hope for the future.
Women at the Top

Leadership

Central Asian leadership had its roots in the 1930s to 1940s, the women not coming from a traditional cadre of parents, but from a new class of cadres as a result of their life spans. The de-classed cadre of background, but they possessed - evolutionary experience - a more consequent aspiration of being top despite opposition from those of whom were still inhibited regarding male superiority. They as equals, even less as they influence to circulate men in the cadres, degrading their chastity and so forth.

The various levels of leadership stage of the Soviet powers, it was equally a process which re-types about women. This ordinary women.

To deprive each one of these survive at the top, one had to oneself. This hateful system led members of the nomenclatura, each change in the country or the life was not to put one's one's position of authority, but to sake of one's own prosperity. And double identity, the loss of youthful illusions, and later to regrets about the degradation of their personality and doubts about their chosen path in life. The system did not permit those who had worked in the higher ranks of the Party and state structures to leave painlessly and to realise themselves in other spheres, because other spheres of social activity and productive life were not available in this monopolised country; the state was everything, a person was nothing. All that was left was family - if one had one.

Women cadres too witnessed this rapid ascent to the apex of power and a similarly swift fall into disgrace. An example was the career of one of Uzbekistan's most famous women: Yadgar Nasriddanova, who for more than thirty years was part of the top ranks of the Uzbek and Soviet leadership; she was President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR and President of the Council of Nationalities in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Her career, initially so successful, later became dramatic, if not tragic. The personification of the Soviet system, she became one of its sacrifices.

In her own words, she describes her early life:

"My name is Yadgar, which means 'upholder of a monument'. I was given this name because my father died just before my birth. My mother was then only 15 years of age. The family lived in a small village not far from Kokand. When Mother remarried, I was placed in a children's home in Kokand. I have particularly fond memories of Maria Konstantinova, a graduate of the Bestuzhevski Women's Courses in Petersburg. These were the people who helped me find my way in life and helped me get into the workers' high school. From the age of 14, I combined work and study as I had to support myself and help Mother. Graduating from the institute, I became a civil engineer. I worked on the construction of the Great Ferghana Canal, as head of a section during the construction of the Tashkent-Angren railway line. I was the only woman engineer at the site, so I was noticed.

Yadgar was nominated (elections were a formality) as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, and later, during Yusupov's time, she was made Secretary of the Central Committee of Republic's Komsomol. While at this post, she organised the evacuation and resettlement of orphans from
regions under German occupation.

Yadgar Nasriddinova was not yet 35 when she became the vice-president of the government of the Uzbek SSR and was only 40 when she became the president of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic. True, the Supreme Soviet (which is equivalent to a parliament) was a pseudo-elected body and played a largely decorative role; the real source of legislation and the final authority in the lives of ordinary Uzbeks was the Party Central Committee. Nevertheless, at that time the Supreme Soviet had, in the eyes of the people, significantly greater authority than the current structure. The fact that a woman occupied such a post was also of definite significance; her high position had to be an affirmation of the positive aspects of a state which called itself socialist. But Yadgar Nasriddinova proved not to be a mere Cinderella who became a princess overnight, but a real leader for whom the role of being a decoration piece became suffocating. She was one of those who sought and struggled for real political power.

Power structures within the Union Republics were completely controlled by Moscow. Within the Republics the local *nomenklatura* consisted of people from various provinces, with the centre controlling the balance of power between their representatives. Top-level officials in the republics were nominated by Moscow and the nomination of candidates to the so-called elected bodies was never openly discussed. Nomination to the top ranks of the pseudo-parliament meant automatic confirmation. This is why senior officials sought patronage from those highly placed figures in the Politburo; often their rivalries were reflections of feuds within the Politburo. While their patrons did not particularly interfere in their rivalries, they received no small gain out of it.

Commanding considerable personal authority and having supporters in various provinces, Yadgar Nasriddinova had a strong public image and constituted a significant threat to the real authority of the Republic - the First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee of Uzbekistan, Sharaf Rashidov. Yadgar's personal courage, the breadth of her outlook and her organisational talent, combined with the typical characteristics of the *nomenklatura*, helped her hold onto the power - no small feat given that she was considered to be one of Nikita Khrushchev's protégées. Immediately after his fall in 1964 attempts were made to compromise and remove Nasriddinova. The arguments in
such a struggle can never be proven; everything begins with hints, rumours, and speculation regarding the victim. A list of 'compromises' supposedly made by the rival are gathered, and under the conditions of a totalitarian state where laws usually do not work, a single infringement was always enough. Given that all leaders abused the 'telephone privilege' and other material facilities, the nomenclatura was in essence perpetually criminalised. While it was difficult for ordinary Soviet people to judge the veracity of all the accusations against Yadgar, it was absolutely obvious that their objective was the removal of a dangerous opponent. She was, in any case, no more morally corrupt than her opponents and was if anything even less so.

Journalist B. Kamilov, in a 1992 article in Pravda Vostoka wrote:

"In 1970 she was elected president of the Council of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. By this time Nasriddinova's relationship with the leadership of Uzbekistan had become complicated. She came out against the practice of singling out individuals for public denunciation(3) and the groundless promotion of others. She often spoke to President Leonid Brezhnev, and wrote to the Politburo about such matters and many besides."

In September 1974 Rashidov obstructed the Politburo's move to recommend Nasriddinova for a second term as president of the Council of Nationalities. After refusing to become Soviet Ambassador to Austria, she was nominated as Deputy Minister of construction material production for the USSR. Then the open campaign against her started."

In 1974, criminal proceedings were initiated against Nasriddinova who was accused of taking bribes from various job applicants and of abuse of her official position. The investigations were weighted against her. Journalist A. Gavrilyuk lists the names of twenty people who were compelled into giving false statements against her or who were made to sign compromising documents. He also revealed the methods used by investigators from the State Prosecutor's office against these people (and for this he was subjected to criticism and public condemnation). In 1975 the matter ended on the personal orders of the Soviet President, Leonid Brezhnev. In 1985 the case was re-opened, but in 1989 it was closed "for lack of evidence".
With corruption generally being an integral part of Soviet life, all moves to expose the phenomenon usually had clearly defined political motives and formed a part of the struggle for power.

B. Kamilov goes on to note:

“Yadgar Nasriddinova’s struggle to establish her honesty covered more than twenty years. She conducted the campaign single-handedly and not only was she subjected to threats, but so were members of her family, many of those she had worked with, and a number of her acquaintances. No one came to her aid in those terrible days. When her only son died, he lay in the municipal morgue for four days. The Uzbekistan authorities did not give permission for him to be buried in Tashkent alongside his father’s grave. Only on the fifth day was he buried at a Moscow graveyard. And till now only this grave prevents her from returning to her homeland”.

A number of people have told me about efforts by her political opponents in Moscow to have her physically eliminated. One is forced to believe these allegations given the disclosures in the press made by P. Voschanov, former Press Secretary to current Russian President Boris Yeltsin, regarding the linkages developed between the country’s most powerful institutions and the criminal world during the period of stagnation. Yadgar Nasriddinova was a creature of her own times and her own people. Her inherent abilities opened doors for her, while the power system enabled her to overcome her shortcomings. She survived thanks to her courage and faith in herself, and among the mediocrity stood out as a true leader. Many women are obliged to her for their careers, and term her their mentor.

One is Mamlikat Vasilova, who for fifteen years occupied a high post in the Republic’s Ministry of Justice. The description she gave me of her career reiterated the fact that all women in positions of power, even those in the hot house conditions of the nomenklatura, felt a dichotomy between their supposed position of power and the reality.

“I was from a simple family and was the first to be educated. To some extent the start of my career was accidental. When I graduated from school in 1941, there was the question of how I could help my family materially. For about three months I worked as a
seamstress, and later I happened to see an advertisement about short courses for secretaries to the People's Courts. When I went to join, the supervisor of the course, on seeing my certificates, suggested I get admission to the University law faculty and said that if I did well I could get a scholarship. At the time women did not have to pass an entrance examination to get into college, and I got in. I was excellent at my studies and became the first holder of the Stalin Scholarship, thanks to which I was able to make a significant contribution to my family.

"When I completed my studies, I was presented to Khadija Sulemaneova, the first female Uzbek jurist, a tremendous scholar and Chair of the Department of Criminal Law. That meeting was the start of my academic career. Khadija became my mentor, whose name I cannot say without shedding tears of gratitude. She suggested I work with her and prepare myself for postgraduate studies.

"Times were difficult - it was the post-war period. I had four different jobs at a time as there was no one else to help the family and I also had to earn money for the journey to Moscow where I was to become a doctoral candidate at the Institute of State and Law. It took almost a year to save up the money, write up my study proposal, collect my materials and prepare for the academic work.

"I arrived in Moscow, and Khadija, who was then doing her post-doctoral thesis, met me and helped arrange a place for me to live. She introduced me to people who advised me about my work. In a year and a half my thesis was ready and I defended it at the Institute of State and Law of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1947. At the time I was a very thin girl with long hair. The members of the academic council were surprised when I went to the dais. As one of them later said my presentation dispelled the impression created by my appearance.

"At home I was given a hero's welcome. Relatives and neighbours were very proud of my success, guests came to our house for months afterwards to..."
congratulate me and my parents. I returned to the University on a teaching assignment. After some time I was summoned before the Central Committee of the Republic's Communist Party and nominated a Deputy Minister of Justice in Uzbekistan. Thus began my career as a civil servant. At the same time I got married and became a mother. My parents and my husband helped me all they could as my working day sometimes lasted over twelve hours. In those days, maternity leave was just one month before and after the birth, but even that I couldn't fully utilise - for my first child I was taken to the labour room straight from work.

"Later, I worked as deputy president of the Supreme Court of the Republic. Just fifteen days after my second child was born I had to go back to work, when a colleague told me there was a lot of work and it would be very good if I returned 'of my own initiative'. I was exhausted, it had been a difficult birth, but I couldn't allow myself the luxury of a good rest.

"Soon I was nominated president of the Legal Commission of the Supreme Soviet. It was here that I was introduced to Yadgar Nasridinova. There were many women on the staff of the Supreme Soviet who were there by right of their work with the Komsomol and the Party as well as women like myself who were there because of their speciality. She took great care of us, though she was also strict and demanding. Nasridinova was an honest person and expected the same of us. We worked well together and colleagues on the staff retained their friendships over the years, even when we went to work at different places. Nasridinova carefully followed our futures and extended us all possible support.

"In 1967 I was nominated Minister of Justice. This happened when for the first time in my life I had fallen seriously ill and had had to be hospitalised. Just three days later I was summoned to the Central Committee and informed about my new appointment. I understood what a responsibility this was and expressed reservations about my suitability for such a post. But [First Secretary] Rashidov only praised me
for my modesty and expressed confidence in my abilities and potential. Soon my nomination was confirmed by Moscow and for fifteen years I was the only woman Minister of Justice in the USSR."

In what was an unjust state, the Ministry of Justice was in fact a low-priority state institution, hence a woman came to be at this high post. This was essentially an imposing office and not an active and influential organ of state power. Nevertheless, in the post-Stalin period the Ministry carried out some serious work, albeit theoretical, about the implementation and strengthening of legal Codes and Acts.

The circumstances surrounding the end of this remarkable woman's career underline the weakness of the law in the Republic, as throughout the former USSR; no legal justifications were given for the dismissal of the Republic's Minister of Justice. Mamlakat Vasilova considers the abrupt end to her career to have been a great injustice:

"After Rashidov's death, sweeping changes took place in the ruling cadres of the Republic. There was a whole campaign; criminal cases were filed against numerous former members of the Uzbekistan leadership, who were accused of taking bribes and abusing their official positions. The commissions, one after another, also looked into the affairs of the Ministry of Justice, but nothing was found against me and I carried on working. But one day I was summoned to the Party Central Committee and the Second Secretary suggested I apply for early retirement. Naturally no explanation was offered for this proposal. I only asked who had been selected in my place, to which there was equally no answer given. I wrote the application, and the same day collected my books and things and left my office for ever. I was replaced by a person who had been dismissed from the USSR Prosecutor's Office for misusing his official position, but he fitted in with the new leadership. Not one word of thanks did I get for my contribution and my honest hard work. Luckily I had not abandoned my academic work and in 1975 I had successfully defended my dissertation for the title of Doctor of Sciences. So I returned to my academic career and at present am a Professor and Head of Department at the Tashkent University of Economics."
Looking back on her own career and assessing the future for women in Uzbekistan, Mamlakat-khanum commented:

"I believe my personal and professional qualities were responsible for my success. My career was not planned, but it was a happy one and it took me very high. I met a lot of interesting people, did a lot of work, and often achieved what I wanted. My post did not influence the independence of my judgement and sometimes I did not agree with Rashidov and others. My career gave me fame and authority, but I did not use it to make myself rich; I lived on my salary, like all Soviet people. I don't have my own house or a dacha,(4) only a state apartment but I have other riches: my children and a happy family.

"I believe that Soviet power was favourably inclined towards women. It enabled me to get an education and attain high office. In the post-Soviet period I hope Uzbek women will retain their equal status. The legislative base exists, but I am distressed by how few women remain in the higher echelons. The state should retain 'quotas' for women in the ruling cadres. I hope that the leadership of independent Uzbekistan will show some sign of concern about women, about improving their lives, and will give them the possibility of working fewer hours and spending more time on family and home.

"I think separate syllabi should be introduced for girls - better to prepare them for family life. Women should strive to actively participate in society and for those who want to have a career, I have the following advice: high office is a huge responsibility which is why one's motivation should be not ambition but the desire to change and improve one's surroundings. For this one has to do a lot of boring, petty work. There's never any time for getting made up, looking after yourself; placing your own interests above the state's is a crime."

ALTHOUGH power raises certain individuals above us, it places heavy responsibilities on them and muzzles their hearts and tongues, creating a form of self-censorship. In Soviet society this internalised censorship was above all due to fear and was
responsible for the failure to utilise society's most precious resource: human potential. For those at the top, the precise source of this fear was far more evident than for us ordinary people.

While I have known Ikbolkhon Tokhtakhodjaeva for years - we are distant relatives - we were divided by the fact that she was part of the nomenclatura. Only now that she is retired were we able, for the first time, to have a detailed and interesting discussion. Retirement does not suit her at all. She is just as young, elegant, energetic and full of strength as ever. It is a pity that her exuberance did not find a proper outlet. But such was life; the state, which regulated everything and everyone, treated all people as cogs which could be added to and removed from the state machinery in a completely arbitrary way. Such people suffered the greatest stress and have been doomed to live in the past. It has been particularly hard for those who were once at the top, for whom power gave their lives meaning. They often tend to idealise themselves, highlighting their unselfishness and personal modesty.

For ten years Ikbolkhon was the president of the Uzbek Society for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. She has personally met Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, the Jordanian Prime Minister and other dignitaries. Her description of her career illustrates both the typical career path of nomenclatura women to the top and the subsequent obstacles they faced when seeking to put their position of authority to some positive use:

"We were poor, it was the post-war period, so I had to go to work at an early age. I had finished Russian school, so I was able to find work easily - in the District Committee of the Komsomol. That's where my career began; I became a secretary in the District and City Committee, and I also worked in the secretariat of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic. My introduction to Yadgar Nasriddinova was a stroke of luck. For all young women who worked with her, she became something of a mentor who helped us and promoted us to more senior positions.

"In 1964 I became a Deputy Minister of Public Education and was responsible for the boarding schools. The area had been neglected, there were little
funds, which had to be constantly monitored to avoid pilferage. I had to travel frequently throughout the Republic. I was also then married and had a small child. It was only in 1950 that I got a state apartment which was supposed to accommodate the entire household: my relatives and my husband were all my responsibility and I tried to help them as I could. Even more so because their old house had been torn down.

"About the children of the 1940s and 1950s: I was a child and was then unable to understand the depth of Father's suffering. Father did not talk about it, possibly because he was afraid for us. So my understanding of the world and my surroundings was developed at school which gave us a sound knowledge and an active attitude towards life. We all grew up patriots and truly believed in the ideals which were instilled in us; we were on the winning side, while our predecessors and the lives they represented were the losing side. We never thought about whether our ideals were right or not; what is now referred to as Stalinist totalitarianism was our choice: it felt right and we could not forget that it was precisely for this that our fathers and brothers had fought.

"Even now, when I think about the past, it appears to me bright and illuminated by our faith - sincere and unselfish. This faith made life easy, gave one passion for one's work and it seemed to us that we were building the future. I was elected president of the Uzbek Society for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. My work became the reason for my existence, and I gave it my heart and soul. I felt it was a great responsibility as it was through the Society that the world found out about my homeland. I wanted the House of Friendship to become a symbol of my city. I chose an old turn of the century house as our office and personally headed its restoration. Its setting, the furniture, interiors, light fittings, crockery and garden - I took a personal interest in it all calling in specialists to help out. The most important dignitaries could be received here. The atmosphere of the old house was cosy and beautiful. Working here, I learned a lot, discovering my own style. I selected a staff who..."
could become my co-workers, not simply underlings. This is why foreign guests were able to meet people here who they found interesting. My reward was the fact that the vast majority of them had a good impression of my homeland which they either expressed verbally or in writing and through their newspapers back home.

"But things changed in Uzbekistan. Women like myself, who got into positions of power thanks to their energy, honesty and their usefulness, were replaced by those for whom the main thing was their position. They were extremely jealous of people like myself whom they took to be competitors, threatening their importance. One example was Rano Abdulova, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. She only wanted toadies, intrigurers and flatterers around her. I was neither a Deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic nor a member of the Central Committee. This in itself shows that the previous leadership had not pampered me. Effectively, I was held at a much lower rung than was normal in the unwritten laws of the Soviet hierarchy. Several times a year, various commissions would conduct unending enquiries into my financial affairs, each finally having to acknowledge that my record was unblemished. The only way to remove me was to retire me, which was done the day I reached 55. There is no forum for appeal against decisions of the Central Committee - that's the way it is. 'No one is irreplaceable' say the top ranks. No one publicly thanked me when I retired, I didn't even get a bunch of flowers.

"Rano Abdulova was very cruel to me. My mother was seriously ill, and that time a Plenum of the Committee of Soviet Women - of which I was a member - was scheduled. Beforehand I telephoned Valentina Tereshkova, informing her that I could not attend and she accepted. But Abdulova called me into her office and insisted I fly to Moscow, and did not want to listen to anything I had to say. I was forced to go, and Mama died the next day. On the day of her burial an order came from the Central Committee:
keep tabs on things, make sure Muslim rituals aren't observe at the burial, and two policemen were deputed at my house. I only managed to reach home the day after the burial. Even now I cannot forgive myself for not staying at home with her, nor can I forgive Abdulaeva for hating me so much. Those in power were really heartless and she was one of those who were thoughtlessly cruel - basic morals were alien to them.

"The new leadership nominated their own person. I have been truly saddened to see the Friendship Society collapse. Even the gifts which guests presented me personally have been stolen or lost. Most regretful is that those who worked loyally and well are leaving. The Society has been called a shop window where Uzbekistan was displayed at its best. Is this such a bad thing? Thanks to the Friendship Society, Uzbek scholars, artists and painters travelled the world, introducing their art, gaining fame, friends and finding colleagues with whom they could share future projects. How many of those who worked in the Soviet Cultural Centres abroad passed on information about Uzbekistan?

"Now that the Republic is independent, the Society could have done much to develop the Republic's diplomatic influence by reestablishing close cooperation with our old friends and acquaintances. Perestroika did not bring us democracy - there is still no open competition for job appointments. I would have liked an independent Uzbekistan to have taken the best rather than the worst from its past and to have taken its rightful place in the world. This can happen if the women in the Republic can retain their rightful place in society and in the family.

"Still I have been lucky: I have a good husband and children. I realised my potential even though this did not bring me riches. I believed in what I did and did what I thought necessary. The Soviet Union's past contains many terrible things, but one of the gains made by Uzbek women was the right to an equal place in society. The loss of this right would be a tragedy for my sisters and our nation. My fear is not unfounded.
Today there are many like myself who are now without work and overall there are now fewer women at all levels of leadership. As propaganda insists, work is the meaning of life. Whether or not this is really so, it is ultimately becoming increasingly less so for educated and truly emancipated women.

I listened to Ikbolkhon's monologue with interest, knowing that much was unsaid. She kept up her image, likeable and democratic despite the environment of the nomenklatura. Occupying one of the top posts, she knew the rules of the game, but her artistic nature enabled her to do much good work. An awareness of the psychology of those in the leadership - and not commitment to the Party - was the guiding factor behind the success of her actions and decisions.

Thus we have been introduced to three women, different in character, origin and destiny, who found themselves in the very highest ranks of the Republic's leadership. The presence of women in such positions was invariably used to illustrate the claim that women were truly participating in public life. Yet their life story shows that the Constitution of the USSR's proclamation of equal rights for women was mere theory.

There were quotas for women at various levels of the pseudo-elected government bodies, and even for acceptance into the CPSU cadre. But women even in the leadership were delegated a subordinate role; usually women were one of the Secretaries of a District Committee or City Committee, and rarely found as secretary of a Regional Committee or deputy president of a District Executive Committee. Women comprised between one third to one fifth of the strength of legislative, Party and Komsomol bodies.

**Post-Soviet efforts to push women out of the public realm**

IRONICALLY, the democratic trends witnessed during _perestroika_ have led to a reduction in women's representation in the structures of power. Effectively, the loss of the CPSU's monopoly over cadre policies laid bare society's true attitudes towards women's participation in public life. Given women's relatively high labour force participation rate in the Republic (approximately half of the able-bodied female population work), their representation in structures which run the state and its
economy is clearly inadequate and it has become clear that the proclaimed equality of the sexes had in reality never carried the support of Central Asian society. This once again underscores its medieval essence, the poorly developed political culture of its citizens, the endurance of cultural-religious stereotypes about women in the mass consciousness, and the weakness of public institutions.

The attitude of the new authorities towards the women's issue resulted in a drastic cut in the number of women candidates forwarded during elections to the Supreme Soviet of the Republic. Women now hold less than one ninth of the seats (46) in the Uzbek Parliament, with many of the elected coming from single-mandate constituencies. The elections proved that women's legal equality was not reflected in social reality. The Soviet system of promoting women on the basis of factors other than personal qualities, the alienation of the nomenclatura - including women within the leadership - failed to change social attitudes towards women. Tenacious cultural attitudes, justified with reference to religion, have meant that society as a whole did not accept that women were capable of being leaders, of being independent and objective visionaries. This is a matter of grave concern because the outcome is that women are being actively driven out of public life. These tendencies are growing and they can have unpredictable consequences for the political life of the young Uzbek state.

The regimentation of social perceptions regarding the status of women gave birth to the stereotype: women are gentle and submissive, their role being to actually get the work done while men are decisive and strong, their role being one of leadership. Women who did not imitate the male style of leadership were perceived negatively by the very people who nominated them to such high posts. Thus loud-mouthed, coarse and pitiless female leaders were not unusual, a phenomenon which in itself compromised the idea of women as leaders.

This is where the opponents to women's equality in the higher echelons of power step in. Much of their argument constitutes a justified criticism, but conclusions that women should return to the domestic realm and give priority to their role as mothers and housewives speaks volumes about the real motives behind such attacks: the removal of female competitors, portraying women's participation in public life as ridiculous, and ensuring their subservience to men and the exploitation of their labour and
It is appalling that such statements appear in *Saodat*, the only women's journal of Uzbekistan and edited by a woman. But even more condemnable is that the journal also utterly fails to provide any analysis of such viewpoints.

The following are excerpts from an interview with writer Nurali Kabul which appeared in the journal *Saodat* in 1990:

Q: Sir, does the induction of women into the public sphere help increase their worth?

A: First of all, for both men and women one's true worth is created by the person themselves. In any case, the force which had set those stars shining was not everlasting and without its strength to support them, those stars fell from the sky. I feel sorry that the stupid mistakes which we regret today did not teach us anything. Our forebears are responsible for this: having confessed that they were unscrupulous, they failed to draw any conclusions.

Secondly, I want to underline the fact that what we - and not just women - are currently going through is, as you put it, a result of their [the forebears] 'social activity'. Everything should evolve naturally. Those who came to power thanks to their own abilities could be used by those who were dependent upon that power, and who derived satisfaction from its usage. Others, for whom this was not the case, were unable to foresee what tomorrow would be like.

Today, for example, England is in the hands of two wise women. Such a development I consider natural. If we take Margaret Thatcher, she heads the government yet does not think it beneath her to get breakfast ready every morning for her husband or to put up wallpaper at home with her daughter on her days off. But with us, a woman just has to come on television twice and she's off expecting her mother or husband (if she has one) to make her tea. The historical roots to traditions of upbringing and manners are of great significance. These traditions - our roots - we have lost, buried and disfigured. Customs are handed down from generation to generation, which is why those that have survived are the true measure of one's conduct. Yet we have abandoned and forgotten them.
Here people believe if a woman, a mother, is appointed to a senior post, then this somehow lowers her dignity. This is really vicious! Earlier when it was a question of participation in elections, enrollment in the Party and the allocation of executive positions, quotas for women were set up; all Party and Soviet bodies quickly sought out candidates. They selected women not even capable of telling their children fairy tales. Thus a simple woman engineer came to head activities on a regional scale, deciding various issues of social significance. And then she was promoted even higher. Such a position destroyed not only her female essence but also her individuality.

I myself have witnessed women who, having failed to achieve personal happiness and being unloved and incapable of loving, often go to any lengths to have a successful career. Often they come to a bad end. I know one leading woman who was to be promoted, but the obstacle to her nomination was the clause in the background departmental enquiry where it was written - 'unmarried'. High placed friends hinted at the problem. Two days later the lady married her former chauffeur (of course this is her personal affair). But isn't such a strange coincidence suspicious? What kind of a family would they make, established on such an unequal basis and trampling over higher human values?

Q: A woman should above all be a woman - this is a general notion. One can visualise her as a woman and housewife - tidy, faithful, hardworking. Is it possible to be a mother by halves? The family is the building block of society. What is your assessment?

A: If both men and women had fulfilled their responsibilities well then everything would have been different. For example, I cannot stand it when there is a woman at the wheel of a vehicle or in trousers. The reason: by nature, women should be delicate and gentle and do that kind of work which suits her nature. If a woman has to drive a car to do the shopping then her husband is to be condemned. It is the husband's job to do the shopping; the wife's job is to prepare the meal from the things he brings home and to lay the table.
Her task is to transform the home into a paradise.

Q: What would you wish for the women of Uzbekistan?

A: Only that they always have the protection of God and husband. And that the husband should never have to bow his head inside his own home!"

The answer speaks for itself. Both the interviewer and the interviewee are members of Parliament and consider themselves democrats, authors, people who are concerned about the lives of their countrywomen. Yet they are unable to rise above medieval stereotypes about women. In conclusion I want to reproduce one more question put to the honourable lady author in the interview: "Your favourite proverb?" "Stupidity does not depend upon age" was the answer. Perhaps this gem of folk wisdom not only applies to age but gender also!

So, those who call themselves democrats are against career women and against the active participation of women in the life of their homeland. They are silent about the fact that the men found in senior positions were no different, and were - if not worse - often incompetent flatterers and manipulative survivors, it was not surprising that the higher echelons of power consisted almost entirely of men. Where exactly do these opponents of women's involvement in the public sphere want to lead us by denying women the right to determine their own lives and the future of their children? They have forgotten or do not know that by sidelining women from active participation in public life they will be turning the clocks back. Worse than their communist predecessors, they are leading us towards a new dictatorship.

I showed Nurali Kabul's interview to Ikbolkhon. She commented on it with the passion that is unique to her:

"You think there were fewer such blatant misogynists in the past? They always existed but were not able to speak so openly, they could have lost their jobs. But now they can insult women even in women's journals. The mothers of our nation, its sisters, daughters and wives do not deserve this kind of a slap on the face from a person who considers himself a democrat and a writer - real men do not talk like that! I could tell you numerous examples of base conduct by men, but will not firstly because this does not necessarily apply to all
men and secondly it is beneath my dignity. Better to
tell you about Mr. Obaidullah Khan, Minister of
Religious and Minority Affairs in one of the previous
governments of Pakistan - he cannot be reproached for
not understanding Islam! During a conversation he
asked me whether I was a Muslim. I answered that of
all the five pillars of Islam(6) I hold faith in my heart,
both because I respect the memory of my predecessors
and because I am the daughter of believers. He said 'I
thank you for your frankness and for the fact that you,
a Muslim woman, hold such a high post in your
country! Belief should be within a person, in his soul. I
like your magnanimity and openness'.

"We met once more: he came to the Friendship Society
with some doctors, who had done their post-graduate
studies from Uzbekistan and who had later returned to
Karachi and opened a medical centre where they were
also applying the methods of Abu Ali Ibn-e-Sina
(Avicenna). He said he had especially brought these
people to Tashkent so they could be introduced to me.
I had almost never seen such respect towards a
woman. I think it was precisely because there were
such people in that country that Benazir Bhutto could
become Prime Minister and another woman, Abida
Hussein, could become the Ambassador of Pakistan to
the USA. I am afraid that if people like Nurali Kabul
are allowed to educate women through women's
journals, then it will be a long time before Uzbek
women will be appointed Ministers or Ambassadors
under the new government. I really do not understand
the attitude of Halima Khudaiberdieva, the journal's
editor and the President's Adviser on Women's Issues.

"I am convinced that women need to support the effort
to resolve the problems confronting the nation.
Restricting them to the narrow sphere of domesticity is
also harming men themselves - they are turning into
mini-tyrants. And about the statement that female
leaders are unloved and incapable of love: this is
untrue, particularly because there are also people like
this among the male leaders. If a woman is single, then
as a rule it is men who are responsible, but for her it is
a tragedy and blaming her for it is a great sin."
And so with fewer women in the leadership, the large number of women exhausting themselves on the cotton fields remains unchanged. Is this normal for a society, which wants to become upright, democratic and humanistic? Women are striving to participate in political life, in the sphere of government. It is particularly important that this desire has society's support as men and women are the two hands without which it is not possible to construct a new state.
Chapter 6

History Through the Eyes of Women in my Family

A feature of the Uzbek way of life is the large network of relatives which is preserved by maintaining family ties and upholding traditions such as attending family occasions and death anniversaries. Even though the patriarchal way of life was significantly undermined in the Soviet period, elder women in the family usually saw to it that contact was not broken and that children knew all their relatives. It was from relatives who were better off or who were in positions of authority that the needy got support. Thus the lower a person found themselves on the ladder of society, the more significant association by descent became.

Ironically, the totalitarian system itself, by obstructing interaction between different strata of society and people of different ages and interests, was unable to destroy these traditional ties. This in turn facilitated the trend whereby people in Central Asian society generally grouped themselves not according to interests and attitudes but according to origin and descent. This was also ultimately the cause of the increasing influence of the clans.

Families which in pre-Revolutionary times had been among the social elite or had lived in the capital were generally the first to be drawn into the process of social change taking place in Central Asia and were equally often those most affected by the new forms of social interaction. Mine was just such a family.

In the family album I see many faces known to me only through stories told by family elders; there are others who I have met only rarely, and I am sad that there are so few men and women of my age. But in the process of working on this book I came to know many of my younger relatives better. As for the older generation, their fates were very varied: some were successful,
while others had dramatic lives.

The yellowing photographs depict the faces of my relatives: young beautiful girls in national dress, surprised or happy at their youth, with carefree or mischievous smiles; others exhausted, eyes downcast, apprehensive, prematurely aged, grief-stricken and in despair, wizened and aloof from the cares of the world. Most of them were housewives, some were famous in society and the Republic. Life was hard for almost all of them: it deprived them of much, but also brought them many surprising discoveries. Each of them is a part of my nation’s flesh, their fates and lives cannot be separated from its history. But instead of describing their own fate, they narrate how, and in the name of what 20th century Uzbek women lived.

Mother’s side of the family

MY ancestors, at least on my mother’s side, lived in Tashkent from the middle of the 19th century onwards. My mother’s grandfather, Jaffar-khodja, witnessed the Kazakh occupation of Tashkent, and my father’s grandfather, Abdusamad-khodja, was one of those who supported the establishment of Soviet rule in Turkestan. In my family there were artisans, traders, land owners, members of the clergy, communists and Basmatchi, victims of the repressions, participants in the Second World War, teachers, engineers, doctors, judges, scholars, peasants and workers. The men were hot tempered, sometimes also adventurist; some were despotic and some kindhearted. Most were womanisers, rarely faithful to their wives, but devoted to their children. The women were dreamers, sometimes forced to be decisive and staunch, sometimes irresponsible and scandalous, loved by their children and ready to do anything for them.

Ikbolkhon Tokhtakhodjaeva, who discussed her career in the nomenclatura in the previous chapter, gives a brief introduction to my mother’s side of the family:

“...My ancestors were excellent entrepreneurs with a keen sense of survival and a feeling for the new. At the beginning of the century, three brothers - my grandfather Hoshim-khodja, his elder brother Jaffar-khodja and younger brother Toshkhodja - had significant land holdings in the rapidly expanding...
Tashkent area. They were the first to build houses specifically for sale and profit. My grandfather, Hoshim-khodja, had studied at the commerce school in Kokand. Being businessmen, they understood the value of a good education and they sent their sons to the local Russian schools.

"My father was given basic religious instruction and later also went to the local Russian school in Tashkent. Immediately after the February Revolution, (1) he became interested in social democratic ideas and warmly welcomed the new revolution. He became a member of the Communist Party of Turkestan and actively participated in the establishment of Soviet rule. In 1920 he forced my grandfather to give his capital and his beautiful double-storied house to the Soviet authorities. Mama told me about this house made of baked bricks, with its Venetian windows and white tin plate roofs. There were few such houses in old Tashkent; all of them belonged to the emerging local bourgeoisie and were situated on Tashkent's main trading street, Tash-Koocha, which linked the old and the new parts of the city. Later, when the street was straightened, the house - which had become some Soviet office - was torn down. Grandfather's entire household had left everything they owned in that house, just taking the clothes on their backs when they went to his brother's farm where they set up house in a former stable.

MY mother recalls the senior-most of my grandmothers from her own side, Nuri-nisa-khanum:

"Nuri-nisa-khanum was born into a family of landowners in 1887. Her father Jaffer-khodja, had some land holdings and orchards in Tashkent and its surroundings. He also had a house in the Shahi Khantaura area - one of the city's holy places. He had a son and two daughters. The son studied at the Russian native school, and the daughters at home where they were taught handicrafts and even Russian. My mother got married late at the age of 18 (in those days one was already an old maid at that age) to a poor person, an orphan, but, as they say, from 'a good family'.

Grandfather gave her a rich dowry and Father attempted to set himself up in life by opening a store. So Mother had to fight off poverty by attempting to support the family through her handicraft work. She sewed silk hangings (suzani), and later, when she started taking students, she began to develop her own drawing and designs and began earning more as an artist rather than as a simple seamstress. She was educated which is why she could take on students and teach them to read and write. My parents were able to build a new home which consisted of three parts: the front courtyard with stables and stores for goods; the living area itself, with its surrounding rooms and galleries; and the terraces and gardens.

"They had two daughters and five sons who soon became their parents' assistants. It was a strict household. The children knew the value of a kopik. After Soviet rule dispossessed the store, the older children started to work. In the city there was little work, especially after the New Economic Policy (NEP) ended in the late 1920s and collectivisation began with the dispossession of the kulaks and the expulsion of the rich.(2) Many neighbours, especially those who had had caravan trade with Afghanistan and Turkey, suffered greatly. They were expelled from the city and their property and houses were handed over to cooperatives, schools and industrial units. Father was very afraid that he would be declared a kulak; he stopped working and Mother supported the household.

"In the 1930s the famine started and Mother sold all of her gold ornaments given to her by Grandfather to buy bread for the children. At that time the family library was also destroyed. The books were burned after the policy declaring war on religion was announced; any book in the Arabic script was considered to be a religious book. Only two copies of the Qur'an were saved. When the children grew up things became easier, but then the war started and two of my brothers left for the front.

"My mother, Nuri-nisa-khanum lived for 82 years. I was the youngest, and she always told me that she felt
guilty as she had paid scant attention to me and that the best of her years had already passed her by. Whenever I faced any problems, she tried to stand by me, but never interfered in my family affairs, and always observed purdah from my husband. She demanded very little for herself. In my dowry she gave me a few wall hangings and a paranda with beautiful designs, all of these she had made with her own hands. Now when I see these things I remember her: small and indefatigable.

In summer I sometimes stayed with Grandmother Nur-nisa-khanum for days. At night she would usually gather her granddaughters and read her book of miracles by Muslim saints. They were fantastical tales but she was very angry if one of us seemed to doubt their veracity. In summer the old house was splendid; in the courtyard there were wonderful flowers and a huge tree. At night, when the courtyard was sprinkled with water and it became dark, it appeared that in the galleries of the second floor another world existed, quite unlike ours with beautiful fairies and magic lanterns...

Later, during the reconstruction of the city, the old brick house was torn down when offices and a hotel were planned for this area. Only the beautiful hand-carved door with its brass decorations was saved and was put up at Grandfather's new home. When I open this door, the past stands before my eyes: the courtyard decorated with flowers and the tree with ripe pears.

Grandmother had a sister, Bunisa-khanum, who was four or five years younger and completely different in appearance and character. It is said that she was among the first to wear European dress. People remember her as a very independent and enterprising woman who surprised many. But she was also greatly respected. As a child I visited her. She was by then very old and sick but I was struck by her appearance and her home. It was not like our simple Asian homes where there was almost no furniture. She was dressed like a Russian and was not wearing a scarf. Sitting around a large round table with a very beautiful table cloth and napkins, we had tea from cups and not out of bowls as is traditional.

My uncle recalls:

"Aunt Bunisa-khanum was Jaffer-khodja's favourite daughter and he spoiled her. She was very able and
therefore was not only taught reading and writing, but also Russian and mathematics. Grandfather dressed her like a young Russian lady whenever he took her to the new city. Rather than having an arranged marriage, she married her cousin out of love. He was an only son and had a construction business in the city. They had a large European style house and even went together to Kazan and St. Petersburg.

"But after the Revolution their happy years became part of the past. Her husband went with the Basmachi and the house was nationalised, but she was left three rooms to live in with their two sons. Initially she was supported by Father, but later she went to work. Since she was educated, she worked in a state institution. She had already given up wearing the parandja. The house was looked after by the housekeeper, a German who had been with the family since before the Revolution.

"When the land reforms began and an amnesty was declared for those who had participated in the Basmachi movement, Aunt Bunisa's husband returned to Tashkent, but with a new wife, Boni, who he had abducted from Chusta while he was a Basmachi. As a consequence he was re-arrested [on charges of polygamy] and sent to prison; he died in the Khersonskots region.

"Bunisa-khanum worked hard and in her thirties became the director of a large supermarket. Her Soviet career was long and successful. Then the war began and her sons went to the front. The elder, Adil-khodja, was killed and the younger, Yousaf-khodja Sharif-ogli, went missing and Aunt, till her very death, refused to believe he had been killed. She said that Yousaf-khodja knew German very well (thanks to the housekeeper) and if he had been taken prisoner then he must have remained alive. But at that time no one could look for missing relatives who had gone missing. She died with his name on her lips.

"When already quite sick, she was taken by her sister to Grandfather's old house so she could be looked after by relatives living nearby. She believed the war had
destroyed her life and only the faint hope of seeing her son had given her the will to live."

My mother has her own memories to add:

"Aunt Bunisa-khanum loved her husband deeply. She said that Sharif-khodja was a highly educated man and would have been able to do much good had there not been a revolution. She could have even forgiven him the second marriage. Her work did not give her any satisfaction, in spite of the fact that she was respected. She only sought success so that her sons would not be labelled 'Sons of a Basmatch'."

Father's side of the family

On the side of my father Saidumar-khodja, I had two grandmothers because Grandfather had two wives. Both lived in the same compound but in different houses. Children called the elder 'Big Mama' and the younger, my real grandmother 'Little Mama'. I never met 'Big Granny' and know about her only from one of my male cousins:

"My grandmother was called Mukharam-khanum and my grandfather got married to her very young. She was the daughter of a land owner, who had large vineyards. Sometimes Father, Grandmother and I would stay as guests at his place. She was born in 1876 in a small village, which is why she had little education but at least knew how to read and write. The household was supported by Grandfather and by her own work - she could embroider beautiful waistbands. Grandfather was a master saddler. A wholesaler from Chimkent would buy his saddles and also take Mukharam-khanum's waistbands. It was a a large house. Uzbek houses are considered to consist not only of the building but also the attached land holdings; here Grandmother Mukharam-khanum looked after the apricot garden. She had a son and three daughters when Grandfather thought of marrying again. Grandmother was against it. The reason for the second marriage was her supposed disobedience and back biting; the qazi regarded this as sufficient reason."
"I presume that it was Grandfather's second marriage that ultimately altered her character for the worse. Hot tempered, energetic and a strong person, she could not come to terms with the second marriage. She would pick a quarrel and then accuse the 'Little Wife'. This is why Grandfather gave the summer house completely to Mukharam-khanum, and from March to October she lived there with her daughters. My parents also often lived there with her.

"When my father, Usman-khodja, was arrested, Grandmother believed that God's anger had fallen on her son instead of her husband. She took her son's fate as atonement for his father's sins and she repented also for being quarrelsome. She lived a hard life and the death of my father finally finished her, when she was not yet 60. Even though I was attached to our 'Little Grandmother', I always felt sorry for and loved 'Big Granny'. Our men have little consideration for their wives' feelings. The trend away from polygamy is a big achievement, but it has not made our women happy because the laws did not change the nature of our men whose attitudes towards women have changed very little."

My arms are bent, my head is bent, everything is covered by cap and gloves.
I have now become a yellow straw, I am barely alive from grief.
Did you ever once ask about me?
Did you listen to my weeping in silence?
I have now become a yellow straw, You are guilty of my yellowness.
I kept my word, my Dear:
and keep my hair in braids.
It seems that the liar and unfaithful one
Was you, wearing a scarf(3) around your waist.

Uzbek folk song

Jamal-khanum, my grandmother from my father's side, was born in 1896 in Tashkent. Her father, Abdusamad-khodja was not a rich man and was a cleric who worked at the Shahi Khantaur, one of Tashkent's holy places. As his relatives recall, he was an unbalanced and self-centred character. At home he
was stern and despotic and was the cause of his daughters’ unhappiness because he saw them as expensive products which could be sold at a profit. Thus he agreed to marry off the young Jamal to a 40 year-old artisan, my grandfather. Even though he knew that the groom was already married and had a son and daughters, my grandfather considered this marriage an honour. This second marriage brought much suffering to the women of the family of my grandfather, Tokhta-khodja. My grandmother, Jamal-khanum, even though she respected and in her own way loved her husband, was of the view that only her children brought her true joy and happiness. Only fear of the husband kept peace in the household, where each woman experienced sorrow, resentment and degradation. Attachments between the children of different mothers only came later when they were adults. It was only thanks to my father, who as a man, protected and worried about his sisters and nephews, that peace was brought to the family.

My grandmother Jamal-khanum could read and write but had not received any formal education. Nevertheless, when a Russian school for girls was opened in the 1920s she started teaching reading and writing there and herself studied to get her diploma. In 1924 when Lenin died, the communists at the school’s commemorative meeting made speeches and proclaimed the leader of the Revolution to be the new prophet, who showed people a new way of life and a new faith, and they suggested the teachers instill this idea in the children. Jamal-khanum was upset. A devout Muslim, she could not accept this; to call anyone except Muhammad a prophet was against her beliefs. She left the school and so did not get her diploma. They tried to persuade her to return but she was unbending. But it must be said that some of the women who had worked and studied with her played an active role in the movement for the emancipation of women. Many became activists in the Women’s Committees, their names entering the history of Soviet Uzbekistan.

But in 1930 Jamal-khanum’s life changed dramatically. Firstly, her husband, my grandfather, died - of grief. His eldest son Usman-khodja had been arrested and convicted of being an enemy of the people. Soon after, Grandfather’s brother also died, leaving a large family - two widows, an unmarried daughter, a daughter-in-law with children and a minor son - without a breadwinner. The survival of the children then depended upon
the Eyes of Women in my Family

was the cause of his daughters' grief as expensive products which he agreed to marry off the young men to his grandfather. Even though he had already married and had a son and daughter, this marriage an honour. Much suffering to the women of the mullah's family. My grandmother, respected and in her own way the view that only children's husbands. Only fear of the husband where each woman experienced suffering. Attachments between the only came later when they were young father, who as a man, protected and nephews, that peace was.

When she could read and write but had no education. Nevertheless, when a stepfather's death in the 1920s she started to study and herself studied to get her education. The communists at the meeting made speeches and revolution to be the new prophet, a new life and a new faith, and they didn't have the idea in the children. Jamal-khanum's, she could not accept this; she had a prophet who was against her and she did not get her diploma. They were in disarray but she was unyielding. But it was the women who had worked and played a role in the movement for the women became activists in the Women's Movement's history of Soviet

Life changed dramatically. Firstly, the father died - of grief. His eldest son died and convicted of being an émigré. Grandfather's brother also died, he was an unmarried daughter, a widow, and a minor son - without a family. The children then depended upon

the women, so the young women went out to work.

Soon afterwards, 'Big Granny' died, leaving Grandmother Jamal-khanum and Uncle's wife, Aziza-khon, to run the household. Grandmother brought work home: embroidery, sewing and quilting of blankets. The period of mass repression began and the women took refuge in religion, finding in it the strength to live, hope and bring up their children.

Men were swept into the gulags. Convinced that their people were free and having complete faith in the future, the new intelligentsia had shown its dissatisfaction with the policy of latination and abandoning of the Arabic script. They were now accused of nationalism. Their death or imprisonment left their families feeling impotent and afraid of the new era. In addition to the medieval acceptance of the insignificance of man before the powerful, circumstances pushed many young women to seek refuge in Islam, in the belief of their ancestors and its values which provided them support in their life struggles. But even conveying the meaning of holy books to these women required courage - which Jamal-khanum possessed. She was known by all to be a learned woman, an 'otin-ol'; her entire wealth consisted of some old books kept in a trunk. Having suffered herself she was ready to give her time, strength and heart to those who without the words of God could not have borne their sorrows, the loss and trauma of widowhood. She did this not for money but for her conscience; she subsisted on her skills as an embroiderer.

When Father grew up and was able to earn for the family, she continued this difficult task with great zeal, and no amount of persuasion could make her abandon her mission. So as not to affect the career of her elder son, she did not live in our house but separately with her younger son.

When my father fell victim to the new wave of repression in 1952, she came back to live with us, and our small family together suffered the loss. We would spend days sitting in office waiting rooms (Grandmother went there together with me). What humiliation and indifference we had to face! Her decisiveness, belief and energy filled our loss with hope. Relief came not through the offices of the powerful, but from history - Stalin died. So once again her faith in God's providence was reinforced.
THE tragic fate of my aunt Aziza-khon, Uncle Usman-khodja's wife, illustrates the lives of the many who became victims of circumstances. Her son, my cousin, tells her story:

"Aziza-khon married into the family in 1920. My father Usman-khodja, the son of Tokhta-khodja, received a good education having studied at a madrassah and a 'new method' school. Later, he worked as a teacher in the school. My parents married out of love. My father was her brother's friend and the two had worked together. My mother, even though she was literate had not gone to school; her parents had died early and she and her brother had grown up in her uncle's house, and one had to pay to go school.

"In 1924 my father became the Director of the old city branch of the national education system and set up many new schools in accordance with the new Soviet programme. In September 1929 he was arrested, accused of forming nationalistic terrorist groups. This was very hard to believe. I was young and do not remember Father but your father, Uncle Saidumar-khodja says that Father was a very gentle and intelligent person, a scholar rather than a fighter. Even our 'Big Granny' often reproached him for his gentleness and said that Rikhshikhon (her elder daughter) was the one who should have been born a boy. At home he was good and kind. In the old city even elderly people respectfully called him Teacher. Mother was happy with him and when he was arrested, she was completely stricken and felt totally defenceless. I was five and my sister, two. Uncle Abduwahab was also arrested at the same time. Soon Grandfather died, followed a year later by 'Big Granny'. Mama was forced to work in a dyeing cooperative, which later became a factory. We were left to our 'Little Granny'.

"She and Aunt Marta, Uncle Abduwahab's wife, together pursued their husband's cases. They soon found out the court's decision: 10 years without right of correspondence.

"Work and children took up her whole time. She did not want any free time; tears and depression would
torment her. Thus my sister and I would desperately try to keep Mother's attention and busy her with our problems. Her work was unhealthy and arduous, her health soon became poor; she constantly sought more than the required work so as to earn more, and this was very dangerous for her.

"Then my sister got sick. This was during the war when the iron discipline at the factory did not allow for the possibility of having time off for looking after children and when rations were very frugal. My sister, Saidakhon needed good food as she had tuberculosis. When she died Mother completely lost her mind. Despairing, she lay down and died at the age of 41. Our family was destroyed. In 1962 I received notification from the KGB that Father had died in 1938 in prison. The place of death was unknown. I think this was just a formality and that they themselves did not know when and where he had died. In 1959 my uncle, my mother's brother, returned sick and aged. He also knew nothing of Father's fate".

Pitiless gardener of our years, who lopped off the tops of my flowers.
You went young, my gorgeous flower, and I was left alone, for years, for centuries!
Feather eyelashes I bathe with tears, but write to, and send to whom?
And I lie on the withering rye, alive - but rotting at my roots...

_Uzbek folk song_

A similarly tragic fate befell Aunt Marta, the wife of Abduwahab Murod, my uncle once removed. I was able to gather very little about her; there is not even a single photograph of her, and all those who knew her have died. Again my first cousin once removed helped recreate her life:

"Uncle Abduwahab was a very able young man. The congregation at a mosque collected the money for him to go to study in Turkey, where he stayed for two years (1924-1925). Then the Soviet government sent him to study in Germany where he received a diploma in agronomy and married a German girl, Marta. She
was a gynecologist and when the family returned to Tashkent with their two year-old daughter Putti, she attracted great curiosity among our women, and later - once she could communicate with them - she also commanded their love. She quickly made friends with everyone. They lived in a small house next to our old home. I can imagine how hard it must have been for her to adapt to Asian domestic life, without running water and heating. Nevertheless their home soon became the most beautiful one in the area. It was decorated with all kinds of hangings and napkins. She had, what was for us, a huge library. She worked at the maternity home and her husband at the seed selection station.

In 1930 Uncle Abduwahab was arrested; I do not know exactly what he was accused of. My mother and Aunt Marta together often went to the city to knock on the doors of the influential; but later they were told that it would be better if they stopped pestering the authorities. Aunt Marta carried on working at the maternity home but she aged a lot and looked much older than my mother. Her daughter was my friend. She was very fair, but with dark eyes. I am not sure, but I think in 1930 or 1940 she and her daughter were arrested and taken away. Nobody knows what happened to her. There was no one to look for her - everyone was afraid. And then nobody knew her maiden name.

Later, in the 1960s, I was told about an Uzbek who was in prison in Kargopol. He was shot on the day the war began along with all those who were suspected of being German spies. They did not remember his name, but said that he always talked about a daughter with a strange name, Putti... I think that it was Uncle Abduwahab Murad*.

No sooner do red roses blossom in the heart
Than someone plucks them out of spite.
In my breast is a fatal sickness
which no doctor can cure..."

Folk song
History through the Eyes of Women in my Family

From my mother's side, Ikbolkhon Tokhtakhodjaeva's family suffered similarly during the years of repression and the women of the family had to take some innovative steps to protect the household. Ikbolkhon describes the period:

"I was still a schoolgirl when Father was arrested in 1937 as an enemy of the people.

"My mother was courageous and wise, and so as to prevent the family from being resettled more than one hundred kilometres away from the capital and to save our poor house from confiscation, she begged the neighbours to vouch that she had divorced Father some years back (luckily my parents' marriage had not been solemnised under Soviet law). The neighbours had known us for years and agreed to help.

"Mother worked in an embroidery artel. In the period when there was a brief respite in the repression, after the arrest of Yezhov,(4) Father was set free. His legs broken, he was left on a tarpaulin in front of our door. I remember how early one morning they knocked on our door. Grandfather, bedridden and almost blind, told us, "It's him - my son". My brothers carried him inside. It was almost impossible to recognise Father - emaciated and sick, but we were lucky that he was alive and with us. Then the war happened...

The family and the nomenclatura

A completely different destiny befell Rakhabkhon, my cousin twice removed but almost the same age as my father. In character she was like our 'Big Grandmother' - inexhaustible, sharp, decisive, self-willed and beautiful. She talks about herself as if discussing a third person - distanced and with some criticism. I know that her life was turbulent. She reached the pinnacle of success, and was discarded in the abyss, but she always believed in herself: pride does not allow her regret. Almost no one ever saw her tears.

"I was self-confident and could even throw myself into doing things about which I hadn't the faintest idea, especially if I felt someone doubted my ability. In the 1930s anyone who could do anything was a Komsomol
activist. Our ideals were clean, our enthusiasm was capable of overturning mountains. There were many like myself and the spirit of competition was strong; who is better, who can go further, higher? It seemed to us that we actually were building a new world, but in reality our energies were directed towards deceptive goals. The many meetings, conferences and congresses to which we were loudly welcomed and where we noisily participated, were in some ways like the theatre: like good actors playing a heroic role on a dazzling stage, coming home drained, exhausted and not capable of understanding and accepting our everyday and petty problems. It seemed that work was the most important thing, the rest secondary.

"One day I brought home my future husband, a young man from the village. My mother, with her love of riches and need to be respected in the eyes of our neighbours, dreamed of a rich and sumptuous wedding, about gifts which my husband could not give me. In her eyes he was unworthy of me, a fact which cast a shadow over my relationship with my parents.

"In those days too there were people who managed to use the achievements of others for their own advancement. Those who caught the eye of the leadership could find themselves moving up very fast. I was a Komsomol activist and joined the Party young. I was the president of an artel, supervising tens of people. I was elected a deputy, and articles were written about me and documentaries filmed. I was part of the female leadership and I liked all of this, it seemed like this was what life should really be about. But what it was really about was other things: my husband, children and home. My official car and position as supervisor, the flattering and self-centered friendship of highly placed women all came to an end, just as if someone had waved a magic wand, when someone from the top ranks decided they didn't like my independent judgment, my honesty and disgust of dirty dealing. I understood all of this later, when I separated from my first husband, because of Mother and my career.
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"Then with my second husband, who did not like the
fact that I would lose myself in my work, there was
jealousy, quarrels, walking out of the house; but at
work I had to work even harder, Thus I was left alone
with the children. I brought them up myself and gave
them a good education. My son is a journalist; one of
my daughters died young, this was my fault, it means I
was unable to save her! The other daughter works and
is a good mother and a good housewife. A woman’s
best career is her husband’s career".

In her seventies, Rakhbarkhon is still beautiful with vestiges of a
regal air not hidden by her twisted spine and difficult gait. And
it seems that much in her soul aches with unspoken words and
thoughts and she brooked no discussion of her life.

The sacrifices made by early Soviet women

THE story of my mother, Maksudakhon, illustrates the great
sacrifices that so many Uzbek women of her generation have
had to make. Perhaps she is ordinary in other people’s eyes, but
my love for her makes it very difficult for me to describe her.

In 1941 she finished school and enrolled in the medical institute.
These were times of war and after the first year of study girls
were sent to the front as nurses. Grandmother, whose sons were
already at the front, begged Maksudakhon to drop her studies.
Thus her education ended, but Mama has always regretted this
decision. Later came marriage and children. The war years were
very hard, poverty was a way of life for Soviet people. Father’s
wages were just enough for food. Clothes, furniture for the old
Asian house and crockery remained the young housewife’s
dreams.

When after the war Father went to work as the director of a
factory in a forgotten Ferghana Valley settlement, the family was
allocated a two-room, furnished state apartment. There was even
the luxury of an armchair, a radio and a lamp with a shade. It
seemed like heaven to the young housewife, not withstanding the
fact that the oven had to be heated with coal and for water
one had to go to the municipal well.

Mother recalls the economic conditions facing the populations of
small-town Uzbekistan in the 1940s to 1950s:
"In those days in the worker settlements, the barter system prevailed. Foodstuffs like bread, sugar and grain were rationed. The shops were bare and the people had to fend for themselves. The market was poor as the kolkhoz workers were robbed by the state. From dawn to dusk they worked in fields and farms. Even what they grew on their subsidiary plots was barely enough to keep them going. In worker settlements, the people had small tracts of land which they used to feed themselves and their children. Luckily the land was fertile. Some had chicken, rabbits, sheep or cows. Only when one had to buy something absolutely essential did people go to neighbouring Kirghizia, to the mining city of Kizil-Kia, where it was possible to 'obtain', on arrangement, pure butter, canned fish or preserves. But this was a rare event.

"Our settlement consisted of a single street. It started with the settlement council building and ended at the municipal baths. People conducted their lives in full view of each other. Everyone worked at the factory. Most inhabitants were Germans and other prisoners, now freed from the camps. Later on in 1952 I came to know many of them better when my husband was arrested after being denounced. People treated us with great sympathy and shared their camp experiences, telling us how to get letters and other things into the prison. Even before this I had learned a lot from these people, and later many of them became my friends. I owe them much.

"My life in Kuvasi taught me a great deal. I lived among people of other nationalities, and from a variety of backgrounds. I had some spare time during which I read a lot and tried to study, but was always interrupted by domestic responsibilities. I started to accept the European way of life, my Russian improved and I was introduced to European music, culture and cooking.

"After my husband was released, we again left for the rural areas, this time for Angren, where my husband became chief engineer in a cement factory. In comparison to Kuvasi this was a relatively larger city, where there were many factories and mines. Angren was..."
History through the Eyes of Women in my Family

was also a city of prisoners and people who had been re-settled: Crimean Tatars and Chechens. But conditions were somewhat worse, because there were many coal miners.

"People had tough lives: there was not enough housing, so they lived in cold barracks; fuel (and this in a coal city!) was not available. Here, too, everyone relied on barter, chopped firewood and kept livestock. The squalid housing, difficult working conditions, and shortages of everything made the atmosphere of the city very strained. Disillusioned, the people were easily led to crime; murder and theft were common. This is why one was afraid to go out even at dusk. Our house - consisting of one room and a kitchen - stood alone, and so the whole time we lived there I was very frightened. My husband worked a lot; the factory was old and there was always some crisis; a breakdown, emergency repairs, an unfortunate accident. The chief engineer answered for any failure to meet the plan with his head, and my husband had still not been rehabilitated (this was the period before the Twentieth Congress)(5). I wasn't able to complete my studies; if I had also worked we would have surely starved because we lived off what my work on our plot and with the livestock gave us.

"Later, we lived in Bekabad, where my husband worked in the Khilkovsk cement factory. Although these three years were also spent far from family, these were very happy times because life was now more normal. My husband joined the Party, the factory worked better, there were more specialists here and the equipment was newer. The people became more at ease - here, too, there were many people who had been re-settled or exiled, but they had since been rehabilitated. After the Twentieth Congress the people breathed freely, their ideals had still not been lost. Interaction between people became more open and they often gathered together to have fun. During this period, we had our first exposure to foreign films, fashion and true relaxation. For the first time my husband and I went to a summer resort and saw the sea. We were still young and had faith in ourselves. I
did not work - and here I had not only a plot of land but the apartment was also larger. For the first time we were able to buy our own furniture, good and comfortable."

An excerpt from a letter written by Father to his mother in 1964 reveals just how hard things had been for his wife.

"Respected Mama and Dear Daughter, in the very first lines of my letter I want to inform you that we have safely arrived in Moscow and are doing fine...

"I wanted to give your daughter-in-law a gift: three days in Moscow in a good hotel, in a "deluxe" room. But she has got frightened: there is an adjoining sitting room, with a wonderful carpet, sofa and divan. She sits on its very edge. The moment we were given supper in the room, she said we should return home the very next day. Poor thing, she has got so used to denying herself everything, that a normal vacation for her appears to be an extravagans and an unnecessary expense which she feels she does not deserve. Poverty has become part of our nature, and women have become used to only hard work and worries. When they see something just a tiny bit better, they do not want it for themselves..."

My mother's modesty and selflessness remain with her to this day. Her undemanding nature and desire to do things for others sometimes irritates me, but I know she simply cannot be otherwise. She very much wanted to work, but Father was against it as he greatly pitied working women, especially those doing manual labour where they were often subject to the coarse and boorish behaviour of supervisors.

What were you, Mama, for me?
A bow with a singing bowstring,
I, your only arrow,
Was let fly towards a faraway goal by you.
I sometimes think in alarm:
Mama, what would happen to poor you,
If I - your cherished shot -
Did not reach the goal you set?
Alas you do not have another arrow!

_Halima Khudaiberdieva_
The struggle to assert one's own worth

KHOLISKHON Usmanova, the wife of my cousin, was a woman who refused to join the grey and meaningless life to which millions of working women were doomed. Her son, who was only 14 when she died, is presently collecting her notes and writings. He says few valued her as they should have. At home, she was a faithful and exemplary wife, but her husband gave her much grief and distress; at work, she was a wonderful teacher, but was made to do administrative work; in her spare time she wrote poems, fables and riddles, but not one of her lines have been published. Her husband tells us about her:

"She was a born poet. Everyone she came into contact with became an object of love, so for her every event was full of meaning and she experienced everything keenly - both joy and despair. She was always able to find words of comfort and support for people. But when she needed help, there were few people around.

"She grew up in a religious family and herself was a devout believer. Being of a wise and strong nature she never reproached others for whatever weaknesses they may have had. I felt her supremacy in everything, and perhaps this was the source of family conflicts which could have been avoided. It was very difficult for me to match the superior level of interaction that she was capable of.

"We started family life in abject poverty. I was an orphan when we got married. The house, in which both my mother and sister had died, was for me hateful and gloomy. The memory of my arrested father, sick sister and mother, drove me away from it. I was a street urchin, and later during the war had worked in a factory where everyone else was of a similar age; we lived and slept in between the machines. As a consequence, I developed some pretty perverse habits and attitudes towards women, regarding them as meaningless creatures, which are only good for momentary but guilt-ridden pleasure. Fearful for my future, my aunt started to look for a wife for me. She was the one who found me Kholiskhon.

"She was as if from another world; she made my house
cosy, she wanted me to study. It required enormous effort on her part to make me abandon my previous way of life, to leave my meaningless and dirty work, and to start studying and acquire a profession. Our life was happy though difficult, but our happiness was clouded by the fact that for years we did not have children. She loved children - there were always the neighbours' and relatives' children in the house - she would do anything for them.

Being of the same age we were good friends and I spent a lot of time with Kholiskhon. She introduced me to Georges Sand - not as a novelist and the author of extraordinary stories and romances, but as a woman who was one of the first to speak about the position of women and their role in society. All of this was strange to our traditional way of life. One could discuss many things openly with her. Generally, in traditional families there are taboos about certain topics, and grown-ups did not talk about these issues with children. The things she shared with me about her experience as an adult helped me a lot later on.

I loved the fact that she wrote poetry. This seemed something beyond me: to find just the right words that could convey one's feelings and meaning, and that too in a specific metre. Her relatives convinced her to send her compositions to a journal, which she did, but they got 'lost'; sometimes she would with bitterness recognise her own lines in poems by the journal's famous editor or one of its staff. She was advised to write poems in honour of some official holiday or a cycle of poems about the leadership and Party, so that her name would at least be published, but she did not do this. She tried, but in the end gave up because she felt that since it didn't come from the soul the lines were clumsy and pitiful. The school drained her of energy, involving her in all sorts of undertakings and plans. Writing poetry was an escape from reality, which is why her lines often contain dialogues with poets and sufis.

She died young and there were few who understood that the world had lost a Poet.

I leave Namangan and my home -
Who cares about me?
I died in an alien town -
Who cares about me?
In life I found the intoxication of love,
History through the Eyes of Women in my Family

I boiled like a cauldron with passion,
I in this perishable world came
Who cares about me?
Love is bitter and weighty:
Having put a vicious burden on me, it
Named me a madwoman -
Who cares about me?
And I can't stand it any longer,
And I don't have the strength to get out of here,
Whether to suffer here from the burning wound -
Or go back in Namangan,
Or go to some distant country -
Who cares about me?
How bitter is this fate, Mashrab,
People do not know how weak you are,
Go away from here; but where to? -
Who cares about me?

sufi poet Baburahim Mashrab

MINOVARKHON, Pro-Rector of the Tashkent Pedagogical Institute and a Doctor of Sciences, is closer to my generation in education and outlook. Her story is typical of modern educated women who are struggling to find an outlet while preserving a sense of their own worth, and who are seeking to occupy a position commensurate with their knowledge and abilities.

"I studied in a Russian school, considered one of the best in the city. It was from there that my love of the Russian language and Russian literature developed and later also became my profession. I had to start working when I was young and so I studied at night and during the day I worked at a school. At that time, there were few who knew Russian well. I believe this knowledge was very useful, because in an isolationist state this was the only means of coming into contact with western civilisation. Even in the olden days, Uzbeks were bi- or trilingual.

"I was a bookworm. Books allowed me to live dozens of other lives. In those days life was unstimulating. People around me seemed to pity me for being an old maid (my younger sister was already married). I did not notice, as I was distant from all the values of those around me. I was perfectly happy with something else
- with what was inside of me. Finally I got married - in their opinion very late.

"I became divided between the real world and the world of books. Although the exalted world of literature, which bore no resemblance to reality, continued to entice me, I went for science, which allowed me another means of self-realisation apart from motherhood and family.

"I had not chosen an easy path; I had to face prejudice and hostility. There were some spheres which had been monopolised by certain individuals, people who had a different perspective and who felt that the new things being produced by what they saw as a completely raw, young research woman dented their self-esteem. They took this as a challenge to their authority. The world of science was authoritarian and everything depended upon a few famous names. In this sense the appearance in Moscow of the new central research institutes helped us young people on our way. At the age of 30 I got my Ph.D. and started teaching at the University. Later, I became the Head of a department at the Higher Party School. Here the sphere of my activities expanded; I started to engage myself with the problems of oratory art and political logic.

"The Party school had a very high status. Here one had access to relatively reliable information which allowed me to expand my horizons. And also from the point of view of academic research there were greater opportunities: I participated in scientific conferences and meetings of scholars from all over the Soviet Union and abroad. At one such conference I was introduced to the Rector of the Tashkent Pedagogical Institute who offered me the post of Head of Department. I started working there in 1972, and was the Academic Secretary of the Council for the Defence of Dissertations and was consequently appointed Pro-Rector of the Institute. These years brought both great happiness and sorrow. One of the major events was the defence of my own doctorate, which I did within one year of submitting my doctoral dissertation. Once again the defence took place in Moscow, because in

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The Eyes of Women in my Family

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Tashkent there was great opposition from my male
colleagues who were jealous of my success and
attempted to impede my work. Even after I had
defended my dissertation, anonymous letters were
sent to the Supreme Attestation Commission. Such
manoeuvrings were common in academic circles in
those days - it was how defiant or dangerous
competitors were removed from people's paths. The
fact that their activities were directed against a woman
didn't stop them at all.

"During perestroika, democratic processes began that
shook up the establishment. This included the issue
of electing the Rectors of Higher Educational Institutes.
As Pro-Rector of the Institute, I was among the
candidates for the post of Rector. In the process leading
up to the elections the old methods of competition
were often used. I not only lost the election but made
myself many enemies by openly declaring myself a
candidate to the post of Rector. The new Rector
unsuccessfully attempted to deal with me, but all
enquiries into my activities as Pro-Rector failed to
uncover any sort of impropriety, incompetence or
illegality.

"The change in the political situation and the ensuing
economic crisis have affected the performance of
students. As Pro-Rector, I was even accused of being
guilty of neglecting the students and was given a
warning. So I became something of a heroine in the
eyes of the youngsters; even though I had not met
many of their demands, I was against taking strict
action against them. This again turned the Rector
against me. And that's how I live, dragged into an
unending struggle to retain my identity."

THESE life stories cover two generations of women from my
family, lives which have witnessed the most difficult years of the
Soviet state: the Civil War, the years of repression, the Second
World War and the post-war period. I have not included any
women from my own generation because from the 1970s
onwards there was a weakening of family ties as part of a
general trend of declining human interaction. Totalitarianism
sought to turn the population into automatons, alienated from
each other, each concentrating on their own problems, hostile to each other, not wanting to understand each other nor share the sufferings of one's nearest. It almost succeeded. Even though we knew one another we rarely socialised. Meetings were more ritual than sincere expressions of attachment and more out of respect for the memory of our ancestors than actually for ourselves. Our lives consisting of work, the search for food - in the literal sense - and unending housework that left no room for a break from mundane trials and tribulations. Our children have grown up and do not know their cousins. And then, today's children have little desire to meet their relatives, with slogans like 'bratro po idee' ('brothers - according to ideas')(6) pushing out of our lives responsibility towards those tied to us by blood. This is why the memory of the past is so rapidly and easily fading from our consciousness.

In my generation's lifetime joy and sorrow have been levelled by the poverty of moral concepts. Hypocrisy is silencing our souls, either filling us with self-loathing or inflating us with a false sense our own importance. Life goes on as a constant struggle with one's better qualities, as they prevent one's survival in a society where violence against the individual is pervasive.

Chapter 2
One...

When work was no longer a matter of survival, but to her a new way of life. The war had its questions and problems, but it was our new society, untouched by anything that had happened in the past and governed by rigid norms of conduct and housework. Women of my generation did not question themselves. Women went about their daily lives, working, raising children and managing their homes. They never asked: 'Where do you come from?'... 'Where do you go?'... 'Do you have any work?'... 'Where do you have offices?'... 'Do you have any special business?'... 'Do you have any particular skills?'... 'Are you going to the station today?'... 'What do you want to do?'
Chapter 7

One Hundred Answers to Five Questions

When I conceived of this book, I wanted above all for the reader to hear the voices of Uzbek women. So I distributed a questionnaire to elicit women's own attitudes towards their basic problems. There was an attempt to survey women from various social strata and different age groups. But there were completely unexpected difficulties in finding willing respondents; many government officials, industrial workers, kolkhoz farmers and housewives refused to answer. Their reasons, which are themselves highly illustrative of the problems currently facing women, included:

"Who needs your book now when we are living in difficult circumstances. Our answers and your book would change nothing in our surroundings."

"The women's issue can be raised when society is stable. But today these questions are not our first priority."

"Your questions do not concern me in particular. I do not like abstract debates."

"I don't take part in politics. Aren't you afraid for yourself? Don't you know what happened to Salman Rushdie?"

"I cannot answer because the questions are hard. I do not have enough knowledge to be able to suggest any specific changes."

"Women who want to speak in the name of all females are careerists, therefore I shall not answer."

"My husband would not like it if he found out. I do not want to explain it to him or fight with him for something meaningless."
"I am worried about how to feed my family. I do not and will not think about a topic which needs time and alarms the soul."

"I would have loved to respond, but I am very busy."

"If the book is to be published abroad, I am afraid of answering your questions; I do not know how you would misinterpret me."

"You want me to answer your questions about my personal life frankly, but I’m afraid that you would also draw conclusions from them with which I would not agree. I do not want to be a guinea pig."

Out of the 100 people in Tashkent who agreed to fill in the questionnaire, only 78 actually returned their forms. Eighty percent of the questionnaires were distributed to women; 70% of the respondents were Uzbeks and the remaining 10% were Tatars, Russians and Jews. For the large part, women of other nationalities did not reply to the questionnaires claiming that they did not know enough about Uzbek women. I consider this answer unsatisfactory and probably not true, but can understand their position as people shy away from touching on the nationalities’ question. Equally there were unfortunately few interesting respondents from the younger generation; their responses reflected a general narrow-mindedness and banality.

Out of the nearly 80 responses received, I am reproducing here only those which stood out on account of their content or the information they contained, their depth of analysis and strength of emotion. In all there are 27 responses, including five from men of various ages and nationalities who appear concerned over the fate of their female compatriots. The majority of written responses come from women with a high level of education, working in the arts and sciences: engineers, doctors and teachers. These are women with considerable experience in life, generally covering the 30-50 year age group. With an above-average intellect, I think their answers are also interesting in that having been raised in Soviet society, these women had never before expressed their personal views. I believe that they accurately reflect women’s problems, their interests and their personal lives, and act as the voice of the new country which little known to the world.

Although I do not agree with many of the answers, I am grateful
for the respondents' frankness. They helped me learn more about the people of my country and some gave me much food for thought.

**Mirrors of a Society in Flux**

The respondents were asked to provide a little information about themselves: their age, profession, education, nationality, surname, forename, and any other information they felt relevant. The following is the respondents' own description of themselves:

**Adalet, 31,** Tatar, university degree, teacher, one child.

**Arbek, 44,** my father is an Uzbek, mother a Jewess, I am a Soviet person; university degree, a mechanical engineer, born and lived in Uzbekistan until two years ago when I left.

**Anonymous, 55,** Russian, university degree, engineer, living in Uzbekistan since birth.

**Anora Togauceva, 21,** Uzbek, a student and future historian, living in Uzbekistan since birth.

**V. Asadova,** Uzbek, university degree, married, three children, designer.

**U. Azimbaeva, 18,** student at Tashkent University, Uzbek, born and living in Uzbekistan.

**Dilbar, 39,** ballet dancer, Uzbek, permanently living in Uzbekistan, no regular employment at present, one child.

**Dilorom Marasulova, 49,** Uzbek, galvaniser, two children, living in Uzbekistan since birth.

**Elmira Turgunbekova, 37,** Kirghiz, scientist, living in Uzbekistan for the last 10 years, no children.

**Flora Pirtazarova, 51,** graduate from the University of Tashkent, chemist, Ph.D., married, one daughter, apart from 15 years in Moscow always lived in Tashkent.

**Guilena, 36,** Uzbek, doctor, Assistant Head of Department, Ph.D. in medical sciences, married for twelve years with two children.

**Hakima Makhmudova, 38,** Uzbek, architect, living in Uzbekistan since birth, one child.
Hamidullah Asatullaevich Salahuddinov, 55, Uzbek, Ph.D. in architecture, Dean of the architecture faculty in Tashkent, born and living in Uzbekistan, worked for eight years in Algeria.

Khairullah Tadijevich Sultanov, 49, Uzbek, university degree, Ph.D., archaeologist, Head of Department in a research institute, born and living in Uzbekistan, father of four children.

Maftukha Faizieva, 45, native of Uzbekistan, born in Tashkent, according to my nationality I am Uzbek; work as a civil engineer shift supervisor, mother of three children.

Malika, 30, Uzbek, architect, born in Uzbekistan, three children.

Mirakbar-ogli Mirzarahinov, 37, Uzbek, architect, head architect of a project, born and living in Tashkent.

Mukhbat, 41, Uzbek, university degree, not working these days due to domestic responsibilities, living in Tashkent since 1956.

Nadir, 29, Uzbek, university degree, doctor working in a paediatric hospital, born and living in Uzbekistan, two children.

Nailiya, 50, Uzbek, Scientist, living in Uzbekistan since birth, divorced, mother of two sons.

Rawshan, 23, Uzbek, student, living in Uzbekistan since birth.

Tamara Kalandarova, 19, Uzbek, student, born and living in Uzbekistan.

Tamara Tursunkhodajeva, 47, Uzbek, university degree, teacher of engineering, living in Uzbekistan for the past 34 years.

Valeria Elyukhina, 53, Russian, power engineer, born and living in Uzbekistan, mother of two children.

Zamira, 44, teacher, Ph.D., Uzbek, born in Leninabad, living in Tashkent since the age of 4, engineer-physicist, unmarried.

Zuleikha Sabirova, 29, worker, mother of four children.

Zumrad, 25, Uzbek, unmarried, salesgirl in a commercial store.

One Hundred Answers to Five Questions

1. How do you define marriage?
How does it work?

GULNAZ: Marriage is a holy status, the relationship which comes into being in the marriage, important part of life.

NAILY: About this I have heard about the marriage, the marriage of the staunch Islam, which is among other things equal. It is not available the footings for the marriage, the education of the young people, in my marriage, it was part of the desire to be equal. The whole qualification, the whole burden of the marriage must be to be compatible. If you do not have a common life, seemed it is not right.

Now it is not easy. You are suffering, and the other in your labour and teaching.

In the Soviet Union, marriage actually was a burden, for the burden and the husband and the wife, the male depended on the female, sharp division of labour. Thus, the competition for a job was unfettered and the bitterness in the development of the fact of marriage is not achieved.

There are
1. How has the status of women changed in the 20th century? How do you regard the women's issue?

GULNARA If one specifically talks about a change in social status, then in my view it has deteriorated, especially when it comes to Uzbek women. Women have lost their previous importance and all those who go against Nature are doomed to fail.

NAILYA It is difficult for me to make any sweeping judgements about the lives of all Uzbek women, as I grew up in a family of staunch Party activists and my family had the kind of privileges which made our life better. My mother, a firm champion of equality for women, received the best education that was available in her days and within the family she was on an equal footing with Father. We two children were given the best education and our problems began only after we got married. In my married life there was no equality. Our circumstances meant it was possible for me to stay at home and not work. But my desire to work to my full ability and not to waste my qualifications meant it became difficult to cope with the double burden of work and home. And at the same time I was expected to be completely emotionally dependent upon my husband; I did not have the right to decide anything independently. To me it seemed absurd to observe all the traditions of a Muslim family. Now it is clear that I suffered nothing in comparison to the daily sufferings of a kolkhoz woman: hard labour in the fields and hard labour at home and still emotionally and materially dependent.

In the Soviet period the desire to improve the position of women actually created these immense psychological and physical burdens. Women became doubly dependent: on the state and on the husband. While in the olden days women had accepted dependence as being proper, in the Soviet period there was a sharp divergence between notions of her status and the stark reality. Turkmen, Tajik, Uzbek and Kazakh women had to compete at work with their Slavic sisters who were relatively unfettered and more liberated. Many of them had to suffer the bitterness of being outsiders: their upbringing had not facilitated the development of a spirit of competition. More comforting is the fact that nevertheless there were determined women who achieved success in the field of science and in their professions. There are many such women in medicine, in secondary and
higher education, but few in the leadership hence women do not have much influence in society.

U. AZIMBAEVA The main event for Uzbek women in the 20th century was liberation from the *parandja*. It was proclaimed that women, who were previously considered inferior to men, had rights equal to men. However, women were also given equal rights to perform hard physical labour; at present women work in all sectors alongside men; in fields, on tractors and behind machines. In Soviet society, women were above all a labour unit.

ADELA Globally, in the 20th century the status of women has changed for the better. Women became economically more independent, and less tied down by prejudice and the past; they became more active and better educated. But the status of Uzbek women changed only on paper. There were so many Russian and Tatar women from outside Uzbekistan who took part in the emancipation of Uzbek women who for their own part did not in the least bit want to part with their *parandja*. This was not so much because Uzbek women have no yearning for freedom, but because they were inert. Even today, they are submissive and do not like to be independent because they do not like responsibility. They don't look after their bodies or their souls, and only do up their faces. Uzbek women's lifestyles are very tough, but they themselves are much to blame. They blame their misery on everything except themselves.

The standard of education in Uzbek schools is very low and parents do not make any effort to help their children get better results. Many think it is not absolutely vital for girls to do well at school. Most important is that girls are compliant, enabling them to withstand all the pressures of the Uzbek way of life. Uzbek women are conservative, and even though they suffer much abuse they act in exactly the same way as their predecessors did. At work Uzbek women are somehow regarded as second-rate - often relaxing on duty, gossiping about their husband's relatives and friends - because at home no one allows them to be lazy. But heaven forbid if an Uzbek woman becomes a supervisor: she immediately gives herself airs. Due to the nature of my work I have often had to go to the District Committee. The Secretary of our District Committee doesn't feel at all awkward about swearing and shouting. She treats people as if they were insects. The status of Uzbek women in the Communist Party was really high.

ALIBEVA in Central Asia in life and in religion a woman cannot be the equivalent of a man. This means that a woman is conditioned for work and family, not a full, independent person in society. It is because of this that the family is the safeguard for the woman. A woman is when she is married, where she was born, in the villages where she grew up.

It's not that women are less linked to society, but they just lack freedom. They have to follow large movements, rules of the bureau.

TAMALI In the 20th century women's role became more prominent with their work and education, while even rural women are junior compared to men. In villages women's status is much lower.

ZUMRAI Unfortunately, women do not feel equal. Not the same as men, not even what they enjoy. Everyone always has different expectations.

MUKHRAI Women have been excluded from the workplace, and a woman needs good education.
One Hundred Answers to Five Questions

ANORA I think it's wonderful that there are stateswomen, women who are political and social activists in today's world. But sadly among Uzbek women there aren't any activists of the same quality as they have in Europe. I see the cause as the fact that Islam regarded women as weak and helpless, and needing a guardian, and in Soviet society such attitudes towards Uzbek women were preserved.

ALIEK The status of women in Europe and women's equality in Central Asia are different things; equal rights under law and in life are not one and the same. In an impoverished society there cannot be equality. What is called equality in such a society means dependence on something or somebody. True freedom for women in Central Asia never existed, because their dependence upon men was preserved within the family and society. This is not because of lingering feudal prejudices but because women's autonomy was not given any economic safeguards. What kind of women's freedom is it where even when women work, they can barely feed themselves; even when they work just as hard as their husbands, especially in the villages.

It's not a coincidence that in the West the women's movement is linked with the middle class. We can only move towards true freedom of women and their equality when there is a sufficiently large middle class and not just a thin strata consisting largely of bureaucrats and just a handful of the educated poor.

TAMARA K. In its true sense the condition of women in the 20th century has undergone some fundamental changes. Women became equal in rights with men, but on the other hand along with this freedom women became doubly enslaved. Both at work and at home they have to work with all their strength, while even men who can't fit in anywhere are made senior and junior officials. I very much feel for our women, especially the villagers.

ZUMRAD It has changed for the worse as women are now equals behind the conveyor belt, behind the machine and so on. Not the husband but the wife provides for the family. No matter what the place: home, factory, there's suicide and prostitution. Everyone makes do as best they can.

MUKHABBAT If they had wanted to and had material support from their family, women could become individuals i.e., get a good education; and if they had the determination, they could
have risen high in life. But for this they had to be a communist. The process of emancipation had many negative aspects: it was not their own free choice; constant need forced them to work. Only when both husband and wife worked could they ensure a more or less normal standard of living for the family (if, of course, the husband isn't in the blackmarket). This is why many women do physically tough jobs, on night shifts, and at work which is very dirty and dangerous for their health. Propaganda only talked about those who were successful and who were prominent. But the life of an average Soviet woman was not all blue skies and happiness.

DILOROM This depends on their financial status. The situation of Uzbek women? Most of them work in fields, breathing in the dirt and have sick children; everything involves influence and self-sacrifice. One couldn't get anything through honesty.

MAFTUKHA According to stories told by my grandmother, who to a point was literate, women didn't have a bad life at all. Even though it is now considered that Soviet rule emancipated the women of the East, in my opinion the present position of women is very tough. Instead of bringing up our children, we drag them off to kindergartens and day-care centres and then run to work. For women who live in the villages things are even tougher. They work on the cotton plantations, in 45°C heat, leaving their babies in the care of children who are little older. A handful of women were inducted into supervisory posts, but these were very few.

HAKIMA The social status of women in the 20th century has improved immeasurably. In Soviet society the position of Uzbek woman was different; basically degrading, tough and inequitable.

DILBAR Even though the social status of women has changed due to legislation strengthening the equality of the sexes, in Soviet society, and especially in the republics of Central Asia, their status remains lower than in developed countries. All the achievements of Soviet women which magazines and newspapers wrote about is only one side of the coin. The other side can only be truly understood by women themselves.

VALERIA Uzbek women in almost all families (particularly the younger generation), have been transformed from oppressed and unequal beings into competent housewives and have secured a position for themselves in society and at work. A
profession, education and material independence all have become possible. But like all Soviet women, Uzbek women became overloaded, exhausted and harassed by the burdens of daily life and the shortages.

KHAIＲULLAH Broadly speaking, the status of Uzbek women has not changed. If in the pre-Soviet period they were domestic slaves (I am talking of women in the Uzbek masses) then in the Soviet period the state policy of ‘emancipation’ turned them into state slaves toiling on the cotton plantations, in factories and in industry. Now their servile position makes them socially very vulnerable; most are on the very bottom rungs of society, performing the lowest paid, least qualified, dirtiest, most physically arduous and monotonous work. This is why for many of them being a domestic slave appears preferable and less exhausting. It is no coincidence that the topic of women’s return to the domestic realm now swamps the mass media: radio, television and even the women’s propaganda journal Saodat. This is condemnable.

MALIKA The social status of women has undoubtedly changed radically. But the issue has two aspects. It is said that women have equal rights with men; perhaps this is only from the point of view of their right to work, that there is no task a woman cannot perform because of her nature. Poor woman, she even forgets that she is a woman and becomes the driver of a cotton harvesting machine, a builder, a crane operator, the driver of an excavator. I do not mean this is bad work, but it is very hazardous for the female anatomy.

On the other hand, Uzbek women have become educated; they have higher degrees and important state responsibilities, are directors and presidents. This is unquestionably a good thing. There had been outstanding women (poetesses, rulers) in our country’s history, but in the 20th century these are no longer exceptions. But in the Soviet period there were many women whose conduct and character and not just their type of work make it difficult to call them women. On the whole women’s psychology has changed, as well as their appearance; they are losing their specifically feminine qualities such as compassion and gentleness, working as hard as, sometimes harder than men. The state is least concerned about lifting women’s burdens at work or at home.

RAVSHAN The social status of women in the 20th century has
changed immeasurably. But as far as the place of Uzbek women in Soviet society is concerned, one can take various approaches. The long established face of Uzbek motherhood started to be lost. Not aware of their fate, Uzbek women plunged themselves into the process of emancipation under the slogan of the 'Offensive' (Khudjum). This later had negative repercussions when the kolkhoz were formed and Uzbek women were forcibly sent to the fields, and during the war worked behind machines and so on. Attitudes towards women changed. The trappings of national culture were almost lost. Families began to break up. But the positive aspect was that intelligent Uzbek women emerged. They proved that they are no lesser than their sisters in developed countries.

ANONYMOUS The status of Uzbek women has changed superficially. The majority of women work, many of the leaders are women. But in their essence Uzbek women have remained Muslim women, with a hidden domestic life which is not revealed in public. Most Uzbek women consciously accord themselves secondary roles. Of course, there were some truly Soviet women, who lost not only their traditions, but also their basic femininity - especially women bosses, who would shout, swear and throw things about. It was ghastly when a beautiful, elegantly dressed woman would do this.

ZAMIRA My grandmother had lands and a mill, which she had inherited from her father, and had nine children; Mother had a house, which she built with my father and her four children. I have nothing except clothes and books. I do not have children and live in my mother's house. My grandmother was literate and a master craftsman. Girls came to her house to learn to read and the basics of Islam. She commanded great authority among women. She was invited to strangers' homes to grace their discussions. My mother started studying using the Arabic script, then the Latin script and ended up with the Cyrillic alphabet which is why she remained semi-literate. She wanted all her children to be educated. All of us went to university and, with the exception of myself, have two bedroom apartments in different parts of the city. I have a Ph.D. and have had nothing other than work all my life. My greatest regret is that I wasted years in Komsomol and Party activities which diverted me from my profession, which is why I did not go far. So, the status of Uzbek women has changed, but good or bad I cannot say.

HAMIDULLAH The status of women during the Soviet period,
in spite of the proclaimed equality, changed for the worse: the state forced women to work for a crust of bread. They became slaves of the state. They had to perform heavy physical labour, which women never did in the past. Is it normal for a woman to do backbreaking work in the cotton fields from dawn to dusk? She is also responsible for the home. The husband is just as helpless and cannot protect her.

ELMIRA There has been a fundamental change in the social status of women in the 20th century: women travelled the road from parandjas to being cabinet ministers. In the Central Asian Republics there have been a few women Ministers: in the 1960s K. Yunduchalova was Minister of Culture in the Kirghizia SSR, Z. Rahimbaeva was Minister of Culture in the Uzbek SSR, M. Vaskova was Minister of Justice in the Uzbek SSR, R. Atunbaeva was Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kirghizia and there were others. But this was just the tip of the iceberg: women's problems remained invisible.

Communist ideology and its implementation allowed society to make great leaps but an evolution of psychology did not take place in neither society's general consciousness nor women's own consciousness (in any case with the majority). This is why Central Asian women (I am talking of the majority) remain subordinate. Soviet society was patriarchal, the 'Father of the People' dictated his will to one sixth of the world; the 'Father'-Supervisor to his subordinates, and the 'Father' to the family. In all families no matter what the social status, the eastern woman to a greater or lesser extent conformed to tradition: within the family the men were the most important - the father, the husband, a grown-up son; women were financially dependent (women even gave their salaries to the husband as head of the family); the father makes all the decisions regarding the presentation of daughters for their betrothal. I myself do not think this is very bad but such relationships deprive members of the family, especially women, of initiative and even responsibility. This passiveness leads to complete dependence and even parasitic attitudes towards life. Such women make constant demands on their husbands or sons: "You are the husband (son) therefore you should...". Often there is no correlation with the reality facing the husband (son or father), thus pushing them towards corruption, and one has to pay for such transgressions.

But still there was progress in society. Many women have a
profession and education. There are those who are wise, independent, bright and talented specialists, but their life is difficult; individuals who are out of the ordinary have trouble being absorbed into the traditional family. They can only have a happy marriage if their partner is of their own choice and their family is moulded along European lines. But unfortunately their choice is limited: because the men they could have married prefer to marry Russian women.

The worst effect of women’s emancipation was that children were denied maternal attention. There were times when women had to go back to work within three months of giving birth, otherwise they would lose their full old-age pension. Meanwhile the poor Soviet children, spending their childhood in day-care centres, became the focus of perverted ideological training. Children completely brought up in day-care centres and schools, almost without the involvement of their parents who were busy with work, were often strangers to their parents in outlook and interests.

TAMARA T. Tradition and the old way of doing things permeated the lifestyles and domestic circumstances of Uzbek women. Nevertheless not everything new and progressive passed them by. Women’s internal reserves of identity forced them to take steps which brought them into contradiction with their parents and husbands. This was manifested in the fact that they attended the schools set up for women in secret. Later (after 1917), bright individuals distinguished themselves in the fields of art, science, technology, medicine and so on.

The emancipation of women gave them the opportunity to prove themselves. However, in spite of this, tensions within the family often left them in limbo.

FLORA In the 20th century the status of women has significantly improved in all areas ranging from family relationships to society as a whole. A re-evaluation of women’s role in society has allowed women to recognise their individual worth, not only as wives and mothers but as members of the human race.

There have always been outstanding women in Central Asia. Just in the last century there were fifteen popular Uzbek poetesses whose works are known in every Uzbek home. But on a mass scale Uzbek women attained social consciousness after the separation of state from religion, the abandonment of the 
parandja, and the appearance of free education and health care.
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Of course, women from the second and third generations - daughters of the first wave of the Uzbek intelligentsia - have been able to attain even higher levels of culture, education and mastery in the arts. But in the Soviet period Uzbek women, even the most educated, got a mouthful of primitive 'emancipation' and equality.

The usefulness of realising one's own intellectual and moral capabilities was awoken by Soviet rule, but the opportunities were not provided. Thus women, and of course not only they, were deceived by official ideology and propaganda. The totalitarian system in itself, due to its primitive approach towards evolution and development, proved to be disinterested in fostering people's individuality. Women as the weakest and unprotected, proved to be first sacrifices of the regime.

V. ASADOVA In spite of declarations about emancipation, women are without rights and this is getting worse. Women with children, instead of respect face degradation in the form of poverty. Inflation has eroded salaries, while social security payments are so small that one can only buy 500 grams of butter with it. Our mothers survived famine and war, they had one smart dress and one for everyday. There was always the question of how to feed the children. We seemed to live better lives, but now we face the same situation.

NADIR A In Uzbekistan almost half of the health professionals are women: doctors, midwives, nurses and sanitary staff, working at various levels of the health care system. Uzbek women carry a great responsibility for the health of the people, devoting their lives to the most needed profession. This is without doubt thanks to Soviet society and the policy of women's emancipation. To forget this and to deny women the opportunity to work for the health of the nation would mean a return to the past and history would not forgive this. The same is happening in the area of basic education. It is a different question that women are overloaded at work and at home. It is difficult for them to cultivate their professional talents and they are poorly paid for their work. But it is not emancipation which is to be blamed for this situation, as people now tend to think, but the state's mismanagement and thoughtlessness. People working in the government and other power structures unfortunately think more about how better to serve themselves than about how to govern.
As a doctor I find it unforgivable that the state and our men allow women to perform heavy labour: in the factories, on construction sites and in the fields, while they themselves (even in the villages and on the *kolkhoz*) work in offices where the work is lighter and the pay better.

MIRAKBAR Not only here in Uzbekistan, but all over the world, in the 20th century women struggled to secure their rights in society, taking part in all kinds of social movements and parties. There are active opponents of the women’s movement as well as those who are misleading women. Nature itself has given women an honourable duty: to give life to healthy children and to bring them up. These rights and duties have been taken away from them and this took place due to the social and economic structure of the state, where men found themselves in such a shameful situation that they could not meet their responsibilities to the family as laid down by Islamic injunctions. This forced women to shoulder the burden of the family’s economic problems. Women of the world, including Uzbek women, have been forced to work hard and nevertheless remain dependent. In Soviet society the situation was aggravated by the slogan: “Improve the situation of women: give them broad rights” which led to the most extreme exploitation of women.

ZULEIKHA The situation of women from the masses has not changed. Only educated women have achieved economic independence. They don’t have to be afraid if their husband leaves them with the children even though, of course, their life would also not be easy. If I remember what kind of a life my sister, mother and grandmother lived, they were very dependent on their husbands. Material dependence has also made us dependent in everything else, which is why we have been taught to be patient. If we weren’t so long-suffering things would be even worse.

GULNAR The state’s desire to bring Uzbek women into the market place are gaining support.

NAILY The situation for women is improving. In the villages was very poor and many women were poorly paid but this is changing. With women’s qualifications improving it would be better for them, although it seems this area of support for women development is not as yet understood.

U. AZIZ The years 1985 and 1986 were very important for women. Women’s participation in party *Elm* and women’s participation in family was increased. Women are now a part of the life of the masses. Women took part in the meetings into questions of their work. Women’s participation in the life of society is increasing and worse, it is improving. Women are also improving.

ALIBERI Women, in our opinion, are determined, but they need some cutbacks, need to have better conditions of work. Women need rights. Women need improvement in the law. But actually, the state looks at the *kolkhoz* and the *sovkhoz* and puts them off. Men still believe their work is more important than women’s. The major part of the law is not yet fulfilled. Women are not as equal as they should be.

I do not know.
2. What are your predictions about the position of Uzbek women in the post-Soviet period?

GULNARA Going by an analysis of the political situation in Uzbekistan the prospects are very gloomy; it seems the clergy are gaining the upper hand.

NAILYA In the post-Soviet period the position of women cannot improve because society is going through a crisis and people are very poor. Some people are calling for women to stay at home, and many of them are psychologically quite ready to do so. But this is difficult for those with a university education, advanced qualifications and who do not want to leave their jobs. I suppose it would also be difficult for society to become well off if it loses this army of female labour. In civic society, democracy attracts women out of the home, but the question (to which the answer is as yet unknown) is - would women develop in a Muslim society?

U. AZIMBAEVA I find this difficult to answer.

ADELA Things have not changed at present, but many people want women to stay at home; even democrats from the political party Erk believe women should concentrate on bringing up the children and not work. They do not understand that if there are actually any well-educated Uzbek women, it is only because the masses are educated and there is the chance of turning quantity into quality. If women are excluded from social life or their participation is limited, then society would deteriorate, and even worse, it would give rise to obscurantism.

ANORA I find this difficult to answer.

ALIBEK In the post-Soviet period the position of certain women is deteriorating: those who work in the state sector are facing cutbacks, dismissals or are made to move from qualified work to unqualified posts. For other women, perhaps their position has improved; peasants, if they become farmers and work on contract or leased land (this is better than working on the kolkhoz); women workers, if their unit is privatised or auctioned off. Men are not allowing women to enter business. Given that the majority of Uzbek women are peasants, then their situation is now better than it was during the Soviet period, but not by much.

I do not agree with those who believe Islamisation worsens the
position of women; to the contrary since the withdrawal of a portion of women from the labour market would improve the quality of the female work force. Only those who want to and can work well would work. Women would attempt to increase their qualifications and not wait for other means to advance their careers.

TAMARA K. I would like it if women could stay at home and be housewives, but I don't think that in the post-Soviet period this will happen immediately. But sooner or later we are moving towards this.

ZUMRAD I don't expect anything good in the near future. For now everything is staying as it was. It's all just window dressing. Civic society - for the present this is still not open to women; they are not citizens but subjects.

MUKHABBAT I think it would be dangerous for society to exclude women from public life in the post-Soviet period. The Islamisation of society must significantly reduce the kind of chaos and lack of spirituality we are witnessing today. This would facilitate the resurrection of morals and the preservation of cultural traditions; Islam also protects weak women from having to do heavy physical labour in factories. But it is vital that women retain the right to choose. The primitive type of Islam being promoted by semi-literates and fanatics with a narrow world outlook, who select only that which concretely advances their cause, may become dangerous for women because it could entail new restrictions on them.

DILOROM Extremely depressing. I do not see how women are to be attracted into public life because it is dominated by animosity and a lack of civility and spirit of kinship. And how can they, when their heads are filled with the question of what to feed the children and what to put on their feet? Moldavian women sat on the railway lines to protest, but what can stir Uzbek women if even the situation in Afghanistan cannot stir them. Perhaps it will take some extreme stress. Perhaps the kind of public protest like self-immolation(1) would do the trick. But I think even that cannot stir our women.

HAKIMA I do not see any significant change in the position of Uzbek women and nor, given the current developments taking place in our country, do I envisage any in the near future. To draw Uzbek women into public life will require not just radical reforms but the actual fruition of these reforms, such as a rise in

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1. DILOROM: "...self-immolation."
living standards and the level of consciousness.

DILBAR If one talks about the general situation in the performing arts, it has definitely deteriorated, although a few talented actresses have greater chances of success and earning well. Many of our singers, our own ballet troupe and some individual ballerinas, have had the opportunity to take performances abroad, but it's also a question of finances. The commercialisation of the arts may be the death of the theatre; the performing arts academies, musicians and people in theatre would face poverty.

And for Uzbek women as a whole, their situation has also deteriorated. My acquaintances lose their jobs, facing one of the typical complications of our way of life - inflation. There are newspapers in which people write that women should devote themselves to the family and just concentrate on their own lives. There are subtle comments that the art to which I have given my life is alien to native culture and is immoral. The theatre cannot exist without women, and theatre is important - as a form of interaction, as a means of joy, and finally as a mirror of society.

VALERIA I think the social status of women will gradually fall. Those who support such a development explain that this is what women themselves want as they wish to strengthen the family and devote more time to their children. But I find the assumption that a return to the family would raise their 'status', problematic; it would in fact be the opposite.

KHAIROLLAH The position of women in the post-Soviet period is not favourable. Against the backdrop of general economic decline they remain trapped in a double slavery - state and family; the kolkhoz still hasn't been abolished. Thus even if economic reforms take place, women cannot compete with men. This is because they are unfortunately mostly still less qualified, particularly in the professions. They are becoming the victims of large-scale unemployment and the strengthening of conservative tendencies could cut off avenues to a good education and to those Soviet ideals which are now being discredited. The new ideals involve a return to the past for women. I do not mean that the ideals of Islam are bad; but what is bad is that these ideals are turning out to be limited and primitive in the tradition of communist directives from the Soviet period. It seems to me that a focus of democratic movements should be the women's issue, otherwise half of the population would remain excluded from
civic society which would mean this cannot be a democracy. The Islamists have already started bringing women under their influence through the religious schools and are attempting to restrict women's world.

MALIKA About the future of women in the post-Soviet period, I foresee a desire among women to return to a way of life in which they were valued for their modesty, gentleness and morality. This would be facilitated through the inclusion of religious norms in their education. I think this would enable women to become more stoical in times of disaster and allow them to retain their feminine essence.

RAVSHAN Following the abandonment of Bolshevism, the current situation of Uzbek women is very complex and there are no clearly defined ways out of the emerging situation. Chaos. All these little reforms attempting to take us into this wonderful, colourful abstract future!

ANONYMOUS A return to tradition is taking place, above all taking the form of religion. In the city I see many young women and girls in Muslim veils. Certainly one shouldn't be biased about this. As to the induction of women into civic society, like all citizens of the former USSR they need to be given some form of basic moral education. This does not mean that they would be active in social life, but that leaders due to their force of character and individuality would emerge irrespective of whether they are men or women.

ZAMIRA The prognosis is not favourable: the values which were cultivated for seventy years, including women's equality, were not backed up materially. In the face of the current revisionist efforts, everything associated with the Soviet epoch is judged negatively, and I think much will gradually be lost. Women like myself are not needed by society. While five years ago we were respected, tomorrow they will despise us.

To bring women into public life, one will first have to build a civic society.

HAMIDULLAH In the post-Soviet period the position of women is no better. There is hope that independence will allow the Republic to improve living standards for its citizens and then women's lives will also change.

The induction of women into public life would become a reality
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if it had a legal foundation, stimulating a rise in the level of women's education and their active participation. Without this their equality would be just an empty declaration.

ELMIRA Given the current economic and political instability, the outlook is highly pessimistic. Only those who can make some smart moves, only swindlers and those who are strong and cruel will survive the current chaos. These are hard times for the arts and for science. Competition will force women out of the labour market. Today the family is a refuge from misfortune, but only a few are capable of completely taking the backseat to their husbands. This is why women have to reassess their attitude: will they be indifferent or will they struggle.

Who is going to bring women into civic society? For now no one wants this. The existing women's organisations are just one another creation of the bureaucracy.

TAMARA T. During the transition to a market economy almost all administrative posts are being given to men. Cutbacks will affect women, especially Uzbek women, who due to their upbringing are not used to demanding their rights (I am talking about the masses), although many modern Uzbek women have now learnt to.

In my view, given the current environment women need even greater levels of protection from the state. Women are the keepers of the hearth and in order that there should be a healthy future generation and peace in the house, it is vital that they be given the option of a shorter working day.

In the post-Soviet period things will be noticeably tougher for women. They will not always manage to comprehend the situation which can be dangerous for them.

The growing role of religion, old habits (especially in the limited environment of a woman's world) is leading to women's enslavement both by religion and by their husbands who want to be in charge.

FLORA Given the development of Islamist tendencies in society (based on primitive interpretations of Islam) and also given the commercialisation of medicine, education, science, and the arts I do not have any positive predictions regarding women's situation. At the same time, without the active involvement of women in public life, society will not achieve its fullest potential.
A humane and democratic society can be attained only when women and their interests are provided state protection. The need for measures to protect (and realise) their interests and rights is drawing women into public life.

V. ASADOVA My predictions are pessimistic. The future for our daughters is very alarming.

NADIRA In my sphere of work the situation has certainly deteriorated. The health sector depends on the state budget which is why our salaries remain low compared to inflation. And we are told there won't be any raises. If this forces women to leave the health sector, then the existing poor standards of medical service, which are due to the poor equipment at hospitals and polyclinics, will fall even lower.

I have heard that those who want to strengthen religious upbringing say that women should not be allowed to study medicine because women students who study medicine lose their modesty and supposedly become perverts, especially when they have night duties. If they regard women doctors like this then this is obscurantism. They do not think about their own children, about their loved ones and even about themselves: wherever do they go to be treated when sick? As doctors, women, even if they are from the upper classes, bring into their work a certain tenderness and are better able to communicate with the sick, infusing them with hope and tranquility.

MIRAKBAR Politics in Soviet society was the politics of infidels, depriving the family of a spiritual foundation and leading to the loss of moral values in children's upbringing. The result was a generation of embittered people lacking any noble goals in life. In such a society the position of women became insultingly pitiable, effectively their rights were infringed upon.

ZULEIKHA In my opinion, nothing in the post-Soviet period has changed. Only people have become even poorer. If this carries on, things will be even worse because one can lose one's job and the facilities one gets at work.
3. Do you consider yourself committed to the equality of women in the family and society? What form of social support should there be for women?

NAILYA Previously I was convinced of the need for equality, but today I am not sure I was right. But neither am I convinced that the opposite holds, this is why I am glad I have two sons.

Regarding social security: above all everyone (men and women) must earn enough to be able to work well and not so little that they just manage to avoid dying of starvation. Qualified work must be better paid. Only then will people be interested in improving their level of education and qualifications. And then women would also have a choice: to work or not. At present even with both husband and wife working they just manage to make ends meet. If the woman would work and have a properly paid profession then her income would enable her to hire help for the housework - and then much would change. Greater investment must be made to stimulate businesses run by women and enterprises where women work. Social security is essential for single-parent families (widows, divorcees and single mothers).

U. AZIMBAEVA Even though it’s been seventy years that women have been regarded as equal, within the family they do not have equal rights with their husbands. Having worked as hard as her husband in the factory, the wife then goes home to start a second working day. Only when the husband shares some of these domestic responsibilities will it be possible for women’s position in the family to become less burdensome. Equality in the family would also improve general conditions in society. These days, when the majority of families are suffering due to the economic crisis, women find themselves facing severe psychological stress: no matter how hard they work, things just get worse and worse for them.

ADELA I believe equal rights are vital, but society and the state should see to it that men should have greater work opportunities and better wages, and not the opposite.

ANORA Perhaps women don’t have to have equal rights in the public sphere, but they shouldn’t have to be without rights. There must be equality within the family and their right to perform heavy work should be rejected; I am against women
being stevedores. It would have been wonderful if they had had more time for family and children.

ALIBEK Women’s equality within society and the family is the precondition for a civilised society. But this can only be guaranteed in an economically developed state. While domestic life is made easier by technology and abundance, in their absence women remain unequal within the family, domestic slaves, for whom no amount of help from their husbands can lighten their burden. Social security should not be in the form of monetary allowances but in the form of the legally guaranteed right to choose physically less demanding work.

TAMARA K. I believe that in public life women should have equal rights, but at home the husband should be the head of the family and in charge.

ZUMRAD Yes, to equality in society but not in the family. Within the family the husband should be in charge of everything. I am against social security but I am for protection from neighbours because of whom one has to suffer.

MUKHABBAT Yes, I consider equality essential both within society and within the family. Without it women would feel dependent upon men in their work, and like servants at home. It would be difficult for women to protect their worth, their views and family. If a woman is respected and has equal rights, she can work and bring up her children well, and be responsible for her own actions. If she is relegated to second place, she might tell lies and become lazy while in the family she would constantly create problems for her husband and reproach him for his failures which are often unavoidable; and sometimes she might even be unfaithful.

Women should have state protection in the form of the right to work, education and participation in political and social life, and security of health, while single mothers with children, be they widows or divorcees, should have supplementary support from the state.

DILROM Yes I think equality is essential. Social protection should be in the form of a four-hour working day at full pay. Then every woman would work.

MAFTUKHA Equality for women in society is essential. There has also to be equality within the family. This does not mean that
the husband should wash the clothes, do the dishes or sweep the floor; the husband should respect the wife and discuss things with her. As an Uzbek woman, I believe that a woman above all should be a woman. Men should provide materially for the family so that women do not want for anything. Most of our men are not capable of fully providing for their families, not because they do not want to or are lazy, but because our society has placed them in such a position. Women should not have to work for more than four or five hours a day. For women the main thing is the family and the children. In our Republic there are many large families, women who are bringing up five or six children without husbands. Those children whose parents have abandoned them, live in children’s homes and orphanages for which the state sets aside specific funds. But for mothers who raise five or six children by themselves the state does absolutely nothing.

HAKIMA Nature has created women completely differently from men, and eastern women even more so. This is why it is not absolutely essential that they have equal rights, particularly when it comes to work involving heavy physical loads.

Women’s basic role is to give birth and raise children, run the household, and in our times they also want to see themselves as modern people in the best sense of the word. Our society, on the other hand, is not ready to provide women such a ‘luxurious’ life. But women’s efforts should reap both moral as well as material reward for them.

The intellect and talent of Uzbek women should be judged according to the same criteria used when judging men. In fact life has shown that Uzbek women with their mental abilities and natural love of order can match men in the pursuit of higher interests. Women do not need any social security for themselves, but for their children who should develop mentally and be healthy. Whatever so-called social security there is for women should be provided for in law and become their legal right; this includes a shortening of the working day, material support, and compensation for the effort involved in raising children. Today our parliament is not only unwilling to solve these problems, but is not even willing to discuss them.

DILBAR There should be equality in society and in the family - love and mutual respect. Friction within the family has an impact on the children’s upbringing.
Social security, of course, is essential for women as mothers.

VALERIA I believe that equality in the family and society are essential, but I have found that Uzbek women do not share my view and do not value what has been achieved.

KHAIRULLAH Yes, I regard the proclamation of social equality for women essential; without it there would certainly be stagnation in society. Women play a major part in raising future generations, in the physical and spiritual health of their nation. Educated women constitute a massive intellectual resource, one which was poorly utilised by Soviet totalitarianism.

Yes, women need social protection. Society should protect their health and give them privileges in the form of a shorter working day and earlier retirement with pension. But the most important form of social protection must be guarantees of women's right to make their own choices in life, their right to education and to choose their sphere of work. Society must encourage men to choose women with higher education and qualifications as their companions. Now, as in the Soviet period, women with a profession and education seem to be outcast by traditional society, often without families, given only silent approval by their circle of relatives and those around them.

MALIKA Women must have equality of choice both in public matters and within the family. Even more so as unfortunately the majority of our men are uncivilised, and are loath to give up their claim to superiority.

RAVSHAN We are trying to create a democracy with just a single party monopoly. Under such conditions it is undoubtedly impossible to improve the position of women.

The working day should be shortened from eight hours to four hours. This would allow women to take care of their children and the housework and there would also be some time for social work.

ANONYMOUS Soviet-style equality is certainly not necessary, when it means women lose all their femininity. But I think that if women could bring in a different style of leadership, using their superior feminine qualities such as patience, supportiveness, flexibility of thought and tact, it would be wonderful. But there were no such leaders in the past and I doubt it is possible even now.
Within the family mutual respect is essential, but this kind of equality can only happen when the functions are distributed between husband and wife. The point is not that both should do everything but that each should do their own task and do it well; each has their own role.

ZAMIRA To create equality it is necessary to change the structure and consciousness of society. This is a lengthy process and would take at least one and a half centuries. In the foreseeable future there won't be any equality either in society or in the family. State protection is vital for women, but not as a miserly pittance in the form of some grant, but as a combination of legislative, social and health measures.

HAMIDULLAH Yes, I regard equality as essential. This has a great impact on the children's upbringing and on the younger generation.

ELMIRA Equality in society - yes. And within the family, not in that the husband does the washing or sweeps the apartment, but in that there should be no mistreatment. I feel that it is important to uphold the authority of the father as this makes it easier for the mother to bring up the children.

Regarding social protection: women should have a shorter working day, and be paid enough to live on and not just enough for a crust of bread. And then legal protection: women have to put up with drunken and wayward husbands for the sake of the children. If women go to court - then it leads to divorce; things are even more difficult for women when they are divorced or the husband is failed. The question is how to expand the legal protection of women? There are people who are of the view that polygamy gives legal and material protection to women and children. I find it hard to agree.

TAMARA T. There must be equality for women with men in society. Within the family there must be a deep mutual understanding and respect towards women as mothers.

However, the basic responsibility for conditions - both material as well as moral - within the family must be borne by the man.

FLORA I consider it essential that women have absolute equality within the family and in society. If society wants to have a physically and morally healthy future, capable of absorbing in its entirety the spiritual heritage of our ancestors and of developing
this further and higher, then this society must value women.

Social protection above all means the upholding of established legislation and a reliable system of protection for the honour and worth of girls, women, mothers and grandmothers, guaranteed by the state. What form this protection should take is for legislators to decide.

V. ASADOVA I regard equality between men and women as the precondition for a healthy society. Women are not commodities or donkeys designed for endless labour, but humans who must decide and answer for themselves and their actions.

Social protection is necessary in order to protect a woman's health, give her the possibility of bringing up her children herself and providing for her old age. In the day-care centres the children pick up many negative habits and are constantly suppressed. I do not know a single day when my children wanted to go to the day-care centre.

NADIRA Yes, I consider equality essential. My husband is also a doctor and he often helps me with advice and understands my problems. We got married of our own choice and not that of our parents. At my parents’ home domestic circumstances did not permit Mother to work. She had to be in constant attendance to Father’s parents. And he could not and did not want to protect her from their tyranny. They were even jealous whenever my parents spoke together for long periods. It's a pity that few valued her abilities.

Women must be provided social protection, above all in the form of protection for their health and for motherhood.

MIRAKBAR Today, in the post-Soviet period, the tough situation facing Uzbek women has not changed. But once a Muslim environment (in the spiritual sense) is created and every family bases itself on Muslim teachings (i.e., follows the laws regarding ethics and morals), then gradually the whole society will become healthy again and would be guided by moral values, and then women's true rights will be recognised by society. Women would be able to fulfil their role without detriment to themselves - bringing up their children to be physically and spiritually healthy.

If one talks about equal rights, in a Muslim society men and women cannot be equal, because that which women do in many cases, men cannot or cannot do. If they cannot, it is for the state to protect against.

It is we women who are responsible for taking care of the home, providing a spirit to it, and so on. If there is no home, how can there be family? A family has the root of society.

ZULEIKHA You are right. We are such women who drink alcohol and what is alright for us is alright for them, but if she is a Muslim, and a little bit of wine makes her sleep, she has to give up her spending. She has to find pity for the poor. Or, in her case, she must find pity for the state. A divorce, according to relatives, is a pity, a pity make a majority, a pity. She is a servant and the husband is not her husband. A Russian woman is a wife, because the husband is not from a dark and sinful past. She does not give top priority to her feelings, she think about her children. The number of women who take their children away from their husbands or something...
cases, men can never do and vice versa: there are things which cannot be done by women. Forced and compulsory equality is against nature and leads society towards a crisis.

It is women's right to demand that men fulfill their manly responsibilities. A wise wife should demand that the husband provide the necessary conditions for bringing up the children in a spirit of morality and justice and equal participation in the home. If such conditions exist, then women should have the patience to bear the hardships of life. If not, then the husband has the right to teach her this.

ZULEIKHA No matter how much I want to be equal, I cannot be so. We can't change our husbands can we? They don't give any importance to their wives, but listen to friends like themselves, who drink, take drugs and go gallivanting. They believe that it's alright for the husband to take his frustrations out on the wife, but if she complains to someone, then they say she's shameless and a libertine. Our men have very primitive interests: to eat, sleep, show off in front of their friends, hold extravagant dinners spending the family's entire budget for the month. Men have no pity for their wife and children. She might die in the process but she must serve her husband. Uzbek women are afraid of divorce. A divorcee is degraded in the eyes of her neighbours and relatives. Everyone says she herself is to blame, was unable to make a man out of her husband. A wife has to be a nanny, maidservant and cook all in one. She should also be beautiful so that her husband doesn't go off with another woman. At work, Russian women tell me that Uzbek men love Russian women because they are clean and beautiful whereas Uzbek women are dark and dirty. This is an insult because Uzbek women always give top priority to their loved ones, the children and only then think about themselves. Men try to surround them with a large number of children so that they become tied to the home, but themselves do what they want. If she raises the issue of abortion or something else, it ends up in a beating.
4. In your personal experience, what can you say about the character of Uzbek women, their ideals and the level of their self-consciousness as citizens?

GULNARA In my view all Uzbek women can be sub-divided into two groups. The first group are the ground-breakers, progressive, educated and with a high level of self-awareness; the second group is the complete opposite of the first and doesn't seem to have a clue as to what consciousness means. Unfortunately the second group makes up more than 90% of Uzbek women.

NAILYA It is difficult for me to make any sweeping judgements about Uzbek women. There are major differences in outlook, understanding, temperament, upbringing. One's surroundings, education and family all have an unquestionable influence on one's character. But as a whole the family attempts to inculcate diligence and submissiveness in the Uzbek woman. She faces a multitude of 'Don'ts in which lie both her worth and her inadequacies. Often girls do not struggle to achieve independence of thought and to develop their individual identity, even though this helps them become good wives and mothers. In life outside the family Uzbek women often appear infantile and helpless, lacking in any competitive spirit and initiative, and at times even envious. Emotional deprivation in youth becomes the cause of despotism in their old age. But I have often met women who are outstanding for their exceptional spiritual qualities and intellect. I consider this the result of a combination of traditional upbringing - which includes respect for the individuality of the daughters in the family - and good education. However, they really suffer from the duality of their situation and the primitiveness of their lifestyles.

As to people's ideals, they are also very varied. Because this is generally a poor society, for most women their goal is to ensure that their household has the basic necessities, that their children are educated and are prosperous; for themselves they want very little, although I do know of women who are materialistic and the struggle they have had to face in their careers has led them to ignore many of the Muslim values respected by honest people. To achieve their goal, they are even tougher taskmasters of talented women than men. Such careerists only swell the ranks of those who oppose women's equality and who then paint all
educated women as having the same negative qualities.

U. AZIMBAEVA Uzbek women, from time immemorial were expected to be patient, soft spoken, modest and gentle. But not all women were like this, even when in namudja. There were those (no doubt few) who were also immoral and shameless. After the emancipation of women and their liberation from seclusion regrettably the number of this kind of women increased.

Regarding women's social consciousness: modern women must fully understand politics and be up to the mark both in terms of aesthetics and ethics. This is what the times demand and women's lives depend on paying heed to these questions. For example, in Uzbekistan, rural women are noticeably lacking in self-awareness because their lives consist of unending and exhausting labour and they do not have the opportunity to read and to look after themselves. Thus they cannot challenge their exploitation and demand their rights.

And regarding ideals: Uzbek women, above all, dream of family happiness, of having children, hoping that the children are well-educated and well-brought up.

ADELA Uzbek women are politically immature and so they are in favour of extreme measures. This has been shown by their participation in the fight for a state language.(2) Now that the law has been passed, even Europeanised families are sending their children to Uzbek-language schools, even though they know very well that their children's education will be of a poorer standard than their own.

The majority of Uzbek women dream of wealth and outdoing their neighbours; of never having to take offence and of seeing themselves in a better light. I don't say this because I think they're bad, but because I feel sorry that because of the extent of their spiritual stagnation they do not regard 'ideals' as something very elevated and refined.

ANORA I don't have enough experience of life, but it seems to me that Uzbek women are inculcated with a sense of responsibility for their near ones and thoughtfulness.

As far as the level of women's consciousness is concerned, I can say that among the majority it is not very high. Uzbek women's ideal in life is worthy children.
ALIBEK Within my family our attitudes towards each other were European. It looked like I was going to have to find a wife from a European background. But I wanted to marry an Uzbek girl. This did not happen because I was of mixed blood and the parents of the girl I liked did not agree to her marrying me. So whatever I say is subjective.

The way Uzbek girls act is strongly influenced by family opinion, what neighbours, acquaintances and relatives say. This shackles their will and character, which only really develop after marriage. The character of Uzbek women doesn't always match their parents' expectations that they turn out submissive, patient and hardworking. They usually turn out like this if the father respects the mother. But if the opposite holds, then the girls turn out to be uncontrollable in terms of both their words and deeds. The hot temper of Uzbek women is reflected in emotionality. The most attractive aspect of their character is their love of children and feeling of duty towards their loved ones. I find it difficult to answer your question regarding their level of social consciousness but given the fact that it was equally suppressed in everyone, I assume there are few who possess it. Only those who are highly intelligent and who have ideals may have any social consciousness.

TAMARA K. If we take the present times, then Uzbek women are well-educated and well-brought up. Each woman wants to be attractive and beautiful. The ideal is to have a good family.

ZUMRAD Their level of consciousness is quite high. Within the family, the ideal Uzbek woman is kind, hard working and concerned with cleanliness; within society - energetic, sparkling and everybody's favourite.

MUKHABBAT Today a significant portion of Uzbek women have achieved a high level of intellectual and spiritual development. I think there has been a positive interaction between the West (school and education) and East (family). These women are of the 35-45 age group. Women who are below 35 grew up in the age of stagnation, when spirituality was lost and society was openly cynical and hypocritical. They are less socially active and not as well educated. They are more concerned with themselves, their individual lives. Hypocrisy has made them more focused on material well-being rather than spiritual values. These negative—social trends unavoidably influenced women's personalities. The democratisation of society
is essential but at present the same old Komsomol and
Communist Party figures are shamelessly riding this wave. They
are now brokers and directors. A new category of 'hunter
women' has emerged consisting of those who go to the Muslim
schools in the hope of making a living out of religion.

If we speak about ideals, then each woman faces a choice
somewhere along the line. I believe - and perhaps I am wrong
one should not for the sake of some ambition or some 'idea'
forget one's nearest and dearest. I would not like to generalise
my experience. Perhaps it is possible in life to move rapidly and
more effectively without making sacrifices. But all too often
family responsibilities demand some sacrifice from women and
this most commonly happens in a poor society.

DILOROM Uzbek women are humble. Their level of
consciousness is low. The ideal Uzbek women takes
responsibility for her children, is educated and respectable.

MAFTUKHA My ideal among my own compatriots is the
poetess Gulchekhra Noorulaeva. This woman, in spite of all the
depression she had to face, struggled for our happiness, our
sovereignty and for our Uzbek language. Today she is fighting
for the establishment of a democratic society in Uzbekistan.

HAKIMA The character of Uzbek women today has an inherent
artificiality perhaps due to a lack of confidence and freedom. But
if one takes off this mask, then their characters can be quite
varied and greatly depend upon a woman's particular material
circumstances. But even then one can still make out their very
limited circle of interests.

The general level of social consciousness is not low, and there
are a number of Uzbek women who have tremendous potential
and who could, if they wanted to, take the country out on to the
world stage. If this were to happen, it would have a great social
resonance in the consciousness of all Uzbek women.

As to the rest, the ideal Uzbek woman is silent, submissive and
hardworking. In my opinion an ideal Uzbek woman, above all, is
a woman with a feeling of national pride, a mother capable of
raising an educated modern generation, worthy of our ancestors,
creative and hence free, but of course with a sense of proportion.

DILBAR This is a difficult question. I know little about life
outside the theatre; ballet involves tremendous hard work and
we ballerinas virtually don't see the outside world. If I concentrate on women in the performing arts, then here the national character doesn't seem apparent. We are all singularly ambitious and this begins even in childhood, in dance school. We have only one goal; success and politics do not interest us. The only difference between us is that some seek patronage and others not.

VALERIA I think Uzbek women are gentle, although this may only be superficial. Many women lack confidence in themselves and their potential. Often they seek support from others. This is why they are more defenseless against oppression. They are not always ready to stand up for themselves, especially at work. This hampers them and they remain in the shadows. Their level of consciousness has risen and now has reached its peak; from here it will decline.

KHAI'RULLAH Uzbek women are good-hearted, orderly and devoted to the family. True, their level of consciousness is not very high given the strength of the Eastern upbringing. Uzbek women's ideal is a strong family, a good standard of living, a thirst for knowledge, a struggle for equality in all spheres of economic and intellectual activity. They love to wear bright clothes. They are devoted to husband and family.

MALIKA In my opinion Uzbek women are diligent, adore children and are devoted to their families. Their civic consciousness is still poorly developed as the most important thing for them is the family.

I do not know what others' ideals are, but my dream is for everyone to be well-educated, good at their profession, and to love others, and that there should be many people who work with pleasure and are conscientious.

RAVSHAN This is a very delicate issue and giving any categorical answer is difficult. One has to approach this question from the point of view of Islam, national traditions and modernity. In recent times, Uzbek women's consciousness has strengthened; but in general, it is poorly developed.

Speaking about the ideal Uzbek woman, she should above all recognize her national identity, be the embodiment of national traditions, global knowledge and Islam.

ANONYMOUS A lack of contact with Uzbek women prevents me from giving an answer that the Uzbeks do not preserve this family.

They put a lot of energy into preserving family life rather than explaining a point, because they don't deserve it, and they strive for their upbringing and education.

The Uzbek women's support for the family consciousness.

HAMID I have a strong sense of the family tradition. For us part of Uzbek consciousness is the family, which directly applies to moral education.

A desire to see women's education, women's education.

ELMIRA I think it's Kirghiz who is why those see women in families in family traditions, the optics and institutions of the Good Europa. Women are demanded to be the economic and for theirstandard, for themselves to be the respect in...
me from giving a definitive answer. But I would like to point out that the Uzbek women I do know are modest, friendly and well-mannered. They are not vulgar, even if they are from very poor families. Uzbek women's ideal is a strong family and children. They put up with a lot from their husbands just for the sake of preserving the family. Uzbek women prefer to remain spinsters rather than marry people of other nationalities; this is difficult to explain as being inherent in their character.

ZAMIRA Uzbek women are reserved. They are forced to suppress all their desires in the name of duty. Hence they deserve to be praised, but when passion tears down the walls of their upbringing, they fall very low and no one helps pick them up.

The Uzbek woman's ideal is home, children and husband; support and respect from those around them. The level of social consciousness is equally low among men and women.

HAMIDULLAH Uzbek women are hard-working and have a great sense of duty towards their loved ones, they are devoted to the family and faithful to their husbands. However, for the large part Uzbek women do not have a developed social consciousness. This is not their fault, but because of a society which did not need citizens; it needed submissive soldiers - this applies equally to men.

A desire to achieve their ideal - knowledge and beauty - is in women's nature but the poverty of society and the dictate of traditions does not allow women to display their full abilities.

ELMIRA Among the lower strata of society, the consciousness of Kirghiz and Uzbek women is different, but it is similar among those sections of society where women receive good education, in families where the parents are of a high social status and used the options open to them to educate their children in universities and institutes in Moscow and other prestigious academic institutions. These women are characteristically independent. Good European style education led them to western values: they are democratic, exposed to new concepts in the areas of politics, economics and lifestyles. These women's ideal is a better future for their people, progress and the achievement of a high standard of living based on western criteria, and they see themselves among those who are bringing in change. They respect individuals such as Benazir Bhutto and Corazon Aquino.
But for the majority, who have all their life been denied their rightful share of pretty things and a comfortable home, who are exhausted and constantly nagged, the ideal is just to have enough, to have less arduous work, pretty clothes and some spare time.

In the Kirghiz context, Islam does not have very deep foundations and is manifested only in superficial aspects of people’s lives. Bringing up children in the spirit of Islamic traditions, in the sense of a total world outlook and as the rules governing one’s ethics, in effect does not happen. This is why in the matter of morality, the lower Kirghiz girls’ social level, the more they are subject to base desires. In the orphanages, half of the children are of Kirghiz nationality, half Russian. Nevertheless, even girls who are morally wayward rush off and get married quicker than educated girls who are upright. Here their marriages are arranged by parents, friends and relatives.

Uzbek girls are brought up strictly. The traditions of Islam are strong and as a result they have a greater sense of morality. Since childhood girls are prepared for marriage as a lifelong commitment, demanding of them a great variety of qualities.

The ideals of the majority of both Uzbek and Kirghiz girls is a good sober husband, healthy children, a wealthy household and, if possible, not to work in the fields or in the factory and if they have to work at all then not at the expense of the family.

TAMARA T. My personal experience indicates that Uzbek women’s ideal lies basically in family life and in the future well-being of her children.

FLORA As far as the state is concerned, today it has forced its citizens to the brink of destitution, while women face the question of their very survival. All spiritual aspirations have been sidelined. First place is now given to the problem of securing basic necessities, essential for the building of a family and bringing up a healthy generation.

For almost all educated women, education - as the means of achieving economic independence and material security - is recognised as their main objective. Only a very small and materially secure portion of highly educated women think about their usefulness to society, about putting something back in.

Uzbek society is generally consumerist. This is instinctively
expressed in attitudes towards women. Traditionally they are seen as a commodity: 'the more you pay for her, the more you value her'. Women's value is defined by how much is paid for her, in material or spiritual terms.

My ideal is a woman in harmony with herself, able to realise herself at the individual and social levels, asserting her sense of worth - both as a woman and as a human - every hour, day and year of her unique life.

V. ASADDOVA Even if (as many insist) a woman has a poorly developed civic consciousness, she feels the sickness of society in her heart like no man can. Women need to be given the opportunity of participating in public life.

It's a shame that the women in parliament sit silently, where it is possible for them to protect women's rights, to speak out about their problems. They're just there for show; only those who suit men, who are good little women, get to sit there.

Uzbek women are very feeling. If they love their work, they do it with a great sense of responsibility.

Uzbek women's ideal is to master a craft, and also to be knowledgeable, wise and patient. They use these qualities to instill in their children a love of toil, as a happiness of creation. And also to be smooth-tongued as part of the art of discussion.

NADIRA The women in my environment are characterised by optimism. They try to appear less worried than they really are, and even jolly because the mood of their patients depends on them. They appear to be emotionally stronger than they are in reality. I get irritated with the mothers of my little patients because they do not have enough understanding about the body; they don't read anything about bringing up children, about how to look after them, and often are themselves responsible for their child's illness. They are not very loving because they themselves are suffering.

I think the level of social consciousness is high among educated women.

Uzbek women's ideal is to gain the respect and love of their loved ones, to be needed by them and be respected by society.

MIRAKBAR Among Muslims they say that 'The husband - this is the wife's religion' and this is not a coincidence because in a
family the financial circumstances and way of life is linked with the character of the wife. If the wife is a non-believer, then the members of the family cannot be strong in their faith. If there is immorality in the family, then only the wife can rectify the situation, although the husband should also be a part of this.

It is women's duty to strive for knowledge! This is one of the main injunctions of Islam. Thus women have the right to education and with the help of their knowledge they can take their rightful place. But work should come second.

ZULEIKHA Uzbek women are varied: some are good and sincere, but there are also some who are crafty and envious; some are faithful and some wayward, just like in all nations. Only, Uzbek women are very oppressed and long-suffering. They have no one else to rely upon except their children. I think there must be many unhappy Uzbek women because when I see our young men who have mastered the art of drinking, of playing reckless games, of swearing, and who have no intention of mastering a good trade, I pity the young girls who will be their wives.

Uzbek women's dream is to rise out of poverty, give the children an education so things will be better for them than it has been for us. Also, that educated women would treat us like sisters who need their help, and that women in the leadership try to change people's lives, so that our men become more cultured, conscientious and educated and were real men whom one can rely on.

5. Have you ever been discriminated against?

GULNIZA There is slight discrimination. But I am sure if I were anti-patriarchal, just as I am, for instance, I would have never been discriminated against. I would never have been treated as an enemy of the state. Why is there discrimination? Men are considered to be better qualified, and women are considered to be inferior. It is very unfair.

The situation for women is improving. However, through the years of their tutelage, their lives as a whole have improved. If we look in the despotism of the past.

NAIL She can be a hidden wife, not have any abilities, not be independent, not have any education, not do anything. Women are subject to all that.

Discrimination! It is not that, that is the reason because it is degrading, it is, as an example, because of all that, it is very unfair. Women would be very much, as much as men.
5. Have you or women around you ever experienced gender discrimination in society or in the family?

GULNARA Without question there is discrimination, whether slight or significant. Men are even more prejudiced than women. I am still amazed that even educated men have such a profound antipathy towards educated and intelligent women, even in instances where they acknowledge their worth (generally they never accept women’s superiority). They attempt to find some fault or other with them and often discuss it with glee. They never take an intelligent woman as a woman. Their attitude towards them is even worse than their attitude towards a male enemy, while she’s done nothing against them. This is the reason why really intelligent, educated and talented women achieve success with such difficulty. Their talent is only forgiven if they are corrupt and depraved. Pretty bimbos, or women who are contemptuous of and who ridicule other women are not discriminated against because in this way they prove men’s case and underline male superiority.

The same thing happens within the family. They do not pity women and in simple families they uphold their superiority through the use of force. Many men even when they are good to their women, do it not as a manifestation of love or respect but as a means of showing their superiority. They could really improve their own - and our lives - if there was not that male despotism, egoism, crudeness and barbarianism!

NAILYA There is no open discrimination but it exists in a hidden form. Uzbek men show a lack of faith in Uzbek women’s abilities and often obstruct the job promotion of honest and independent women. Those who are encouraged are just toadies, and cunning flatterers who offer men no competition in terms of wisdom, education or other professional qualities, and only surpass them in terms of craftiness and duality.

Discrimination is manifested in the fact that the state does nothing to lighten the burden of women’s daily lives. I say ‘state’ because just as before it still regulates everything. At present, for example, if there were incentives to encourage the development of all kinds of domestic help, then a whole new field of business would open up which would not require large investments or extensive qualifications. But instead the state has reorganised the
service sector in such a way that it has effectively become inaccessible to the majority of women.

U. AZIMBAEVA Men who do not respect women's honour and their rights are the ones who discriminate against women's individual rights. Women are the victims of hypocrisy. The husband can leave the wife with two or three children, but her family instead of protecting her, humiliates and condemns her.

ADELA There is discrimination. Not only in the Uzbek context. The Soviet leadership, including both men and women, always believed that under Communism, and now in capitalism one could only get to the top by exploiting women.

ANORA I myself have not witnessed discrimination against women in the family or in society, but I presume it exists.

ALIBEK There is great discrimination - especially in the scientific field - against women who are capable of competing with men. They treat them really badly, believing that men are the head of the family, and this is why promotions are available even to men who are not talented.

TAMARA K. There is discrimination everywhere, if one assesses discrimination from the widespread violations of equal rights in society, education, promotion, and participation in politics. There are no legal obstacles to women, but they face obstacles in the form of almost every individual person upon whom their destiny depends. People are full of prejudice regarding women. Often women, too, believe that girls and women should know their place - which is usually behind men. Women are not forgiven for things which are easily overlooked in men or are even considered part of being a good man: energy, will, quick reactions and a desire for success. I think this is the reason we have absolutely no sportswomen and that there won't be any in the near future. In the social consciousness the roles of men and women have remained unchanged for the past two or three centuries even though society itself has changed. Women's role in society is considered unchangeable and those who want to move beyond the boundaries of this role unavoidably face discrimination. Good laws are still no guarantee of protection from discrimination; people's consciousness has to change and this is very difficult. Even men who treat their daughters and wives well are often not equitable in their treatment of other women or any abstract woman, especially if she demands her legal rights. Often women themselves do not protest against the
In infringements of their rights. Most of them are passive. It even seems to me that women prefer to suffer rather than protect themselves.

ZUMRAT I have personally experienced it many times. At my job the men there openly say this is not women's work. Father does not trust me with the keys to the family car because I am a woman. Generally in Uzbek society a youth or a man is allowed to do everything even if he is not very wise, not completely normal physically or psychologically.

MUKHABAT I witness discrimination as an everyday phenomenon and as an indication of one's gender; there was discrimination if you were not a communist, on account of one's age, if your documents weren't in order, if you weren't born in the right kind of family - very important for a woman - and also simply because it didn't suit someone or they didn't like the way you were dressed. Ours is a society in which everyone is discriminated against and this has still not changed.

DILOROM Mine is a dirty, arduous and dangerous job - this is discrimination. In the families I meet, the men want to make their wives wear the parandja - a degrading position to be in.

MAFTUKHA For Uzbek women it is more difficult to rise up the job ladder compared to men, or women of other nationalities. They constantly have to prove that they are not inferior; they are forgiven little and no one has confidence in them. There are families where the husband mocks his wife, but Uzbek women, brought up in the spirit of national traditions, suffer everything in silence. Thankfully there are no such families amongst my acquaintances.

HAKIMA Yes, one comes across this quite often. Discrimination existed and it is still being practiced by means of invoking the phrase 'public opinion' or by reference to a single individual's opinion when nobody is capable of countering or contradicting them. But there are also blatant forms of discrimination, such as interfering with the promotion of women. One of the reasons for this is the tendency to overlook Uzbek women's ability to think, their need to have their own opinions and feel that they too are human beings.

DILBAR I think there is discrimination. There were certain occasions when some were given greater opportunities.
VALERIA Of course there is discrimination, even though not in an open form.

KAIRULLAH In view of the inadequacies of many laws and also the fact that the legal system functions in Russian, many Uzbek women were not able to work in state establishments. They were unable to prove themselves as specialists. Uzbek women educated in the Russian schools not only surpass those who are native Russian speakers but even outdo them in the matter of professionalism. But confidence is not reposed in them, not only by Russians but also by Uzbek men. This constituted discrimination against Uzbek women.

Within the family, eastern norms predominate, especially in the rural areas and among the poor. A lack of means always affects relationships within the family, the children's upbringing and whether they are properly educated.

MALIKA I see this every day. Men trample on women even for the smallest thing: it doesn't enter their heads to let a woman pass, to help her get on the bus or give up their seat to a girl of the same age.

RAVSHAN One can meet this at every step one takes.

ANONYMOUS There always was and shall be discrimination. The problem is that the laws are inadequate.

ZAMIRA There is discrimination against women, and it is especially strong now that society is undergoing a transformation. Business is a particularly male affair in the East. Men get out and about and mix more. It is easier for them to use their personal contacts to get orders, information, carry out exchanges, sell, get credit and so on. They are more mobile. This is why women are rapidly being displaced from all spheres of business activities.

There is also discrimination within the family. Among the lower strata of society in the form of beatings and abuse; in the middle classes it takes other forms. There are laws, but what woman would take her parents, husband or the state to court?

HAMIDULLAH I have not actually witnessed any blatant discrimination against women in society. There were quotas for enrollment in the universities and colleges, and in the elections to those state bodies which were elected. Many directors of schools, head doctors at hospitals, directors of state farms,
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, directors of state farms,
kolkhoz and volunteer brigades were women. But discrimination
in terms of the rights of individuals within the family existed.

ELMIRA In those families where the parents were able to give
the newlyweds some material foundation, there is effectively no
discrimination. But if not, the material needs are accompanied
by reproach and abuse. Even the husband may face this
although it is generally the wife who suffers. Particularly when
the husband's educational level is lower than his wife's, he tries
to make her feel dependent both emotionally as well as
materially. Often such dependence is heightened by words and
deeds aimed at humiliating her. There are also beatings:
especially in the villages. The husband gets pleasure from
manhandling his wife.

The hidden discrimination against women in society is
manifested in various ways. Many men are of the view that
women are not capable of anything more than coquetry. They
easily ignore those women with very high professional
abilities and dismiss their opinions. So as to justify their attitude
they label educated women as 'difficult', considering them
arrogant and overly proud. Yet I have found that Uzbek women
subordinates never allow themselves to be abrupt, express
themselves subtly and avoid direct conflict. Such tactfulness can
be taken to be a lack of self-confidence, a lack of principles, but is
more often regarded as weakness and people attempt to
pressurise them. It is extremely unfair, and in the wider
perspective unprofitable, to overlook talented women. Men who
are self-centred and untalented, who have made it up the ladder
easily because of nepotism, clerks and petty officials these are the
ones who discriminate against women.

TAMARA T. I haven't met any examples of discrimination
against women in society. All the women I have met in my life, if
they wanted something very much and had the money for it,
they got it. My own relatives and acquaintances do not give me
any foundation for asserting that women are discriminated
against in the family.

FLORA I have noticed discrimination everywhere - within the
family and in society. The reason for discrimination in society is
the absence of rights and real social protection: in the false
slogans and the dissonance of ideas; because of the
unquestioned assumption that men are wiser and more
knowledgeable. And in the family because of the harsh life and
men's treatment of women as servants: she is supposed to fulfil her husband's every need. Women, as competitors, are at once sidelined. The totalitarian society needed women (and also men) as cogs in the machine, this is why people who would silently carry out orders were preferred and survived. Individuality, even in the case of the highly flexible and resourceful female mind, was doomed to isolation at the very best. To survive under the totalitarian regime one had to be super-flexible, fickle, capable of deception, great cunning, seduction and of being an informer.

V. ASADOVA There is and always will be discrimination because it is not possible to reconstruct men's brains. They respect their own mothers but do not respect their wives. They always consider themselves better than any woman.

NADIRA I did not note any discrimination against women at work. But discrimination exists in society and does not depend upon one's gender. I, for example, got into medical school only on the third attempt. People should be doctors out of their own choice and not because of their parents' decisions. Within the family there is discrimination against women, and this is particularly strong in the lower strata of society. This is why many, notably rural women, even at the age of 30 look at least fifteen years older. They are suppressed by need, and by arduous labour at work and at home. I also know many girls who want to study at the institute, but whose parents forbid it, hoping to get them married off quickly; and then later there is no time for studies.

MIRAKBAR At the state level there is currently no country which persistently follows the laws of Islam. If such a state existed then people would have all-round protection from all heretical measures carried out in the name of the state. It would have protected families from alcoholism, thievocracy, bribery and greed. The country at present is pursuing policies which are creating economic conditions where even with the husband and wife both working, the family only just survives. No matter how hard the husband tries to improve the family's economic circumstances, he is unable to secure the basic necessities. Because of poverty, all sorts of conflicts arise within the family, abuse takes place, yet this is ascribed to Islamic traditions.

To conclude: in Muslim society women are greatly respected. Among those who fought for the establishment of Islam there were many women; and the Arab society today was freed by women.

The wives of the Prophet were administratively purdahed, and yet everyone and every woman were freed above and below. Women were升 and were allowed in society. Women were productive and had their own personalities.

ZULEIKHA A woman is a person, and a person is everything. A woman is a person, and hence women are people. Women, though women, are free and had freedoms which were not belief according to their faith. This is not understood by many when they refer to women for them and for their needs in life. Every woman is an earning member of the family and has a role to play in society, just as every earning member of the family is a part of that person's personal life.

There is a saying: "If a man lives two storeys above the ground, women live on the ground." Here it's said that women are of lesser importance and are not equal to men. Every man has a personal and complete life.

THESE AND MANY OTHER SAYINGS about the Arab society reflect society.
were many women. History records that during the attack on one particular city a number of men were surrounded, but were freed by their wives who took up arms.

The wife of the Prophet, respected Bibi Khadija, when the Prophet was travelling or on campaign, herself ran the administration of the state, and that too while remaining in purdah. Now the state has taken it upon itself to make believers of everybody - with the help of directives. This is not right, people should voluntarily come to an understanding of the Qur'an and of their own choice unite with the Ummah. Islam above all must enter the family and gradually be embraced by people. In such a situation, women would be able to participate in society just as men. And then the Islamic path would be their personal choice.

ZULEIKHA I do not feel any discrimination at work; here I am a person, and at home with just the children it's even better. In everything else I am put down. I often wonder why men and women have different attitudes towards life and the family: even though we live in the same city, we studied in similar schools and had similar mothers. My own answer is that because women believe more in God and fear His wrath, but men have lost this faith. They only observe the superficial aspect of religion and do not understand that such an approach is a sin. They turn to God when they are either sick or old or when things are going badly for them. So I am glad Islam has started to occupy a larger place in life. It's bad that many people see religion as a means of earning money or showing off one's wealth. Few people have any conscience. This doesn't depend on one's nationality, but on one's purity.

There is also discrimination because men are physically stronger. One has to have a man in the house even if one lives in a multi-storey apartment block where there is less physical work. Can women really do things in the house without the help of a man? Here it's not like in the West, where it only needs a telephone call and repairs are done and the tap is replaced. Here we have to do everything ourselves. This is why men consider women completely dependent.

THESE are the voices of men and women who are concerned about their nation's future. I suppose their replies adequately reflect society's opinions regarding the position and role of
women. While the replies differ in their analysis and emotions, and reflect a broad spectrum of notions regarding the role and place of women in the newly independent state, the respondents all clearly regard the women's issue as a very complex problem, closely linked with issues of cultural development.

The majority of female respondents expressed clear dissatisfaction with their existing status. Side by side with replies which simply recognise the fact of women's equality, there are both direct and indirect replies expressing the opinion that equality did not become a reality. They point out the existence of discrimination against women within the family and in society, giving their own explanations of factors behind this discrimination. The replies of those respondents who oppose women's equality are also interesting for their diversity. There are attempts to reconstruct the concept of equality both from the point of view of biology and from the point of view of religion. However, their arguments are cloaked in concern for women and they appeal to the fact that in reality there is discrimination.

The majority of the respondents recognise that it was precisely the legislation proclaiming women's equality which formed the main foundation for the solution of the women's issue in Soviet policy. But the women's testimonies prove that the reality did not match the proclaimed goals. Nevertheless, many believe that a rejection of the concept of women's equality, the attempts to ignore the problems facing women, and the gradual retreat from the legislative principles of security for women proclaimed in Soviet times, are an alarming trend for a society which currently faces a profound crisis, political and moral. They note that this is evidence of the weakness and lack of adherence to principles of humanism and democracy, of society's short-sightedness and immaturity.

That Uzbek women's ideals focus on the family is explained not only by Muslim traditions, but by the fact that Soviet society, poor as well as totalitarian, did not give women great opportunity for involvement in public life. But in contrast with the pre-Revolutionary past, the entry of women into the productive sphere, science and the arts led to divisions among women themselves (and not their families) on the basis of material circumstances, social interests, moral principles and religious outlook; in the final analysis, the most divisive factors were not necessarily related to women's political awareness.
Studies have shown that the process of women's politisisation is continuing. Respondents on the one hand expressed dissatisfaction with the state's approach to the solution of the women's issue and noted the resistance of the ruling structures to the resolution of this pressing issue; on the other hand, they were equally aware of the weakness - or rather absence - of effective social organisations capable of defending women's interests. Both women workers and professionals note the alienation of women from power. This is not directly reflected in their replies, but is revealed in comments which speak about the fact that while the process of women's self-organisation is growing, political apathy and a lack of faith in social activism currently impedes this process. The saddest aspect of the findings is the political pessimism of the majority, determined by the objective circumstances of the present crisis. Moreover, the uniformity of replies regarding the question about Uzbek women's character raises the worry that women's efforts to organise themselves, to defend their rights and to struggle for raising their status in society will happen only slowly and they will not depend upon the emergence of new leaders. The task is not how to draw more women into the process of discussing their problems and of familiarising them with a global movement, but of preserving the processes of raising the educational and cultural levels of a wide section of post-Soviet Central Asian society. What is equally clear is that women's efforts to organise themselves will take place within the confines of their various social groups.

Unfortunately, given the level of political consciousness among the majority of women in the post-Soviet period, religion may easily become the ideological basis for unity among women. Muslim concepts emphasise male domination and assign men the role of breadwinner, a fact recognised by the majority of Uzbek women who are themselves content to occupy a lower rung in the social hierarchy. This is evident from the contradictions in women's answers. While women declare themselves to be for equality, in many cases they try to lay responsibility for the family and its material well-being on the men, thus according themselves lesser rights. This indicates that Muslim laws are still an important social and cultural factor in women's development. In Central Asia, the concept of women's equality is regarded as a feature of the western (in the Russian sense) way of life and it has not penetrated the society's innermost culture. The concept is even not foundational to those
generations which grew up in the Soviet period. This is precisely why the cultural setting of Islam will be difficult to change. In connection with this, the majority of educated women expressed their sense of adversity and spoke of the great resistance they face to their displaying their potential abilities. Hence the blatant and growing tendency in society to force women, above all those capable of competing with men, out of the active public sphere.

The obstruction of the democratic process’s momentum prevents a broad and multi-faceted study of the problems facing the women of Central Asia. Within the state and political structures there are none who have taken the trouble to recognise the very real problems confronting women, a fact which is extremely alarming. The questionnaire was circulated in the beginning of 1992 at the start of the economic reforms, which began with the removal of price ceilings. At that time there was great optimism and faith in the new leadership. Today answers to the questionnaire would have been even more pessimistic.
Chapter 8

On the Threshold of the Future - Or of the Past?

The last empire has fallen apart and on the territories of Central Asia five independent states have been formed. As the communist past fades away, the 'achievements of October' (1) which were linked with the ideology of the Soviet empire are now gradually evaporating. The question remains: what will take their place?

Just as in the past an attempt was made to regulate life through communist slogans and doctrine, today there are those who seek to transform life in accordance with the laws of Islam, turning it into a new Procrustean bed. One of the tenets of the new way of life is what is seen to be the absolute necessity of making changes in the status of women.

The various branches of the opposition opposed Communism - as an ideology of colonial rule over Central Asia - through nationalist concepts based on their Muslim past. The Opposition's social base was the nationalist intelligentsia, linked through its origins with the peasantry. Given that among the peasantry, national identity was more closely associated with Islam than among the urban population, a resurgence of Islam became a central feature of the Opposition's political and cultural programme. The ancestral religion, although persecuted in the Soviet period, remained in the general consciousness as an obligatory part of national identity and remained strong among the majority of the population of Central Asia, independent of nationalism.

But today it must not be assumed that all feelings of national identity are manifested in an identical manner. The policy of 'divide and rule' has achieved its objective and thus Islam is no longer a concept capable of unifying the peoples of Central Asia as it had been at the beginning of the century. As indicated by
the recent civil war in Tajikistan, aggressive nationalism, which is now supplanting Communism, poses a major threat to peace and unity within Central Asia.

The idealisation of Muslim values, the turning towards Islam, is taking place in very primitive forms. National independence, above all, is envisaged by present ideologues as superficial changes in the field of culture and as new social relations supposedly providing linkages with the history and culture of past eras. During the Soviet period, western culture, which penetrated the region via Russian migrants, was discredited by the totalitarian system and hence the outlook of the nationalist intelligentsia, specifically those working in the field of the humanities, focused on their medieval past.

At the same time, the local ruling elite recognised the tremendous resource potential of their country. For them, nationalism emerged as a reaction to the republic's relative backwardness which persisted despite the rapid growth in the economic potential of the region's republics in the post-Revolution period. The concept of independence, coloured by nationalism, began to automatically take the place of the same old ideological power structures and began to manifest itself in precisely the same forms of coercion.

**Calls for a return to women's 'natural role'**

SINCE the beginning of the 1990s vociferous and didactic calls have come from the pages of the mass media for a return to the 'natural' role of women, and for women's conduct to follow the Muslim norms of modesty. 'Women and Islam' is a popular topic in both the official and opposition press. The authors link the current crises in the institution of the family, social problems among youth and women, and the rise in crime with the process of women's emancipation; giving women equal rights is considered to have had a distinctly negative impact. The call for women's return to the domestic realm - a role upheld by centuries of practice - is coming from the mouths and pens of writers who are supposedly worried about the future of the nation. Such comments come from both clerics and former communists.

Although for the most part it is men who talk about this, women have also not raised any objections at the prospect. There is no
On the Threshold of the Future - Or of the Past?

Aggressive nationalism, which poses a major threat to peace

One of the turning points towards Islam, is

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as at the prospect. There is no

one to speak out about the fact that there never was true

equality; and that the present moves are an attempt to legitimise

inequality and exploitation, spiritual and intellectual servitude;

about the fact that men seek a resurrection of the Middle Ages.

The views of men which have appeared in the press indicate that

they regard the status of women in Muslim society as high, as

being in accordance with women's nature and, therefore, as

indicative of true equality. There has not been a single counter

argument. Not one politician, male or female, has reacted to the

current trend; not one political party has indicated its position on

the issue nor have the numerous officially registered women's

organisations and associations. Not a single top-ranking member

of the present leadership has expressed an opinion about this

opposition to women's equality. Silence is a sign of consent. This

also influences society, and significantly so: girls of 10 years and

above dressed in the Muslim veil are now a common sight in

Uzbek cities; girls dropping out of Soviet schools and enrolling

in religious schools is a development with serious implications

for the economy of the young state.

The women's question has truly become a litmus test of the

direction of today's undisclosed policies, with the political

climate manifesting itself in the suppression of those who are

weaker or do not share one's views; first in line for this kind of

treatment are educated women, who by their very existence are

excluded from the new political ideology which seeks to use the

Islamic card.

I am reproducing here the full text of a highly illustrative

interview with Rahmatullah-kori Kasimjan-ogli, head of

Department of Tahafuz-Qur'an (Protection of the Qur'an) and

member of the Supreme Council of Religious Organisations of

Saudi Arabia (Kharijul-Igosa) and of the Spiritual Board of

Muslims of Central Asia. The interview focused on the place of

women in society. It was conducted by journalist R. Akbarali-

ogli and appeared in the newspaper Erk of April 22, 1992, under

the title "Freedom Lies in Morality".

Correspondent: Mr. Rahmatullah-kori, our elders tell us

that in the olden days some girls and women became

shameless and ill-bred; obscenity increased and such

developments became more and more frequent. Praise

be to Allah, today our land is independent and the

influence of our religion is strengthening day by day.

The youth now have greater faith, feelings of national
consciousness have been strengthened, and in this situation we are confronted by the problem of whether our women will become true mothers, faithful wives, well brought up and gentle sisters, chaste and good as prescribed by the laws of Islam And what should be done to train them in this direction?

Kasimjan-Ogli: Praise be to Allah, everyone knows that we have a popular proverb 'A wife makes a husband a man'. Well, I think the opposite holds: that the husband makes the wife a woman. The domination of the European way of life over the past seventy years has deprived our women of their charm and modesty and men of their manliness. Everyone tried to adapt to European habits and to become 'cultured'. This 'culture' has led us to the stage where if today a male stranger comes to our house we allow our wife or grown up daughter to meet him; at weddings, men and women sit at a common table and drink alcohol. In the pre-Islamic era it was like this among the heathens. Islam curtailed such acts. According to the laws of shariat women must have their husbands' permission before going out into the street, where a woman must protect herself from the gaze of unknown men by wearing the veil. Men should control what their wives wear.

Correspondent: Among the youth there is a debate about the fact that religious activists once again want to dress women in parandjas. After all, freedom from purdah was not easy. It was at the risk of their lives that our mothers freed themselves from the parandja, and remember how many innocent victims there were. What do you have to say about this?

Kasimjan-ogli: One has to bear in mind what those who raise such questions mean by 'freedom'. For my part it is completely evident that this much-vaulted freedom long ago plunged us into a deep moral abyss. Today aren't those shameless girls and youngsters who roam the streets, arms around each other and laughing loudly, aren't those women who wear unseemly clothes, exhibiting all their charms, the fruits of that same 'freedom'? No one is going to get together and force women to wear parandjas. The parandja is the...
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dress of a righteous woman.

Correspondent: You earlier mentioned paganism, which influenced women...

Kasimjan-ogli: Yes, our Prophet Muhammad was of the view that before Islam people erred in faith; there were idol worshippers and fire worshippers. When a daughter was born to these pagans, they would bury her alive. Slaves were burdened with the heaviest work and when they could not complete it because of exhaustion they were tortured. Men entered into relationships with any woman; no one said this is mine and that is yours. Women even competed with each other to see who could have the greater number of relationships; this was a matter of pride. Whenever a woman became pregnant and a child was born, all men with whom the woman had had a relationship gathered and the father was determined according to who the child resembled. No one knew what was pure and what was sinful. Men and women drank wine, played games of passion and surrendered themselves to vices. Such was the mire in which they lived.

The last Prophet, to whom Allah addressed Himself through the Angel Gabriel, turned the people towards the true and pure faith with the help of the Holy Qur'an, in which the commands of Allah are revealed in every sura and ayat, and it is through the Qur'an that the faith began to be spread...

There were also women among the followers of Islam, but the higher Will and the means of its realisation were not revealed to them. For this reason the great Prophet Muhammad authorised them to visit mosques (standing behind men) and to hear with their own ears the word of God and accept it. The Qur'an was revealed over a period of 23 years and during this period paganism - a time of 'communism' - was destroyed. Those who accepted Islam chose the path ordained by Allah. The road which from birth to death is illuminated by the beacon of the Qur'an, is the life of every believer.

Correspondent: Sir, what do you think should be the first step for all those who want to begin living a chaste life
according to the laws of Islam? How can today's youth be made honest, conscious of their responsibilities in life and to society?

Kasimjan-oğli: Clearly, a Muslim girl from the age of 9 and a Muslim boy from the age of 12 must say their prayers five times a day. At present, girls and boys in schools and higher education establishments study together which needs to be stopped. Everything must start with the schools. If we do this, then both girls and boys would be conscious of their responsibilities at an earlier age. From school age, girls should receive instruction about handling family and domestic duties, while boys should learn a trade, science and economic affairs.

Recently a well-known poetess wrote in a popular journal: "While we have ended our material dependence on men, our psychological dependence on men remains. This is dependence - this means giving importance to men's opinions - and it binds our hands and feet and often closes our path to a better future".

The 70 year regime has made all of us equal. Here we 'achieved' a great deal, one of the 'achievements' being that women also started to work in production, as equals, and in some cases even took up work that was heavier than the men were doing: working in the fields with hoes, carrying bricks at construction sites. Islam condemns such a thing. When heathenism is put to an end and the rule of Islam is established, women (in keeping with the šari'at) would handle the household and also take on the upbringing of the children as their responsibility. This does not mean that they would be completely dependent on their husbands. The man before he marries is required to set up a house and earn enough to buy some household equipment for his wife, and when he marries then he would be responsible for her clothes and other needs. If he cannot do all this, a man should not marry. Can a man who cannot feed a wife himself take on this responsibility? Islam censures a man who says 'I feed you - you must do every thing that I say', or who compels his wife to do unseemly acts.
But the opinion of our respected poetess can be understood, because many among the educated do not understand the essence of goodness; they are distanced from Muslim concepts which is why they talk like this. We are a people who have forgotten about the norms of shariat, about our history and about our spiritual ideals. We have forgotten who we are; true, they wanted to force us to forget. We surrendered our will, deprived our men of their pride, and women of their modesty, girls of their charm, and children of love and faith. We forgot where lies innocence and where lies sin. Robbery, murder and illegitimate children were the result. Brother insults brother, sons and fathers quarrel, and this is an almost common occurrence. The pagan era has returned.

It is only possible to extract ourselves from this mire through repentance and a mass-scale return to the faith of our ancestors, because our Prophet Muhammad was the final prophet and no others will come. According to the will of Allah, we shall afresh lead the people to the Qur'an. This holy book, each of its words, each of its signs have been preserved by the faithful; preserved for our children and their descendants. If we overcome our inadequacies and our pessimism, we would of course be saved from immodesty and obscenity. Let us separate good from evil and lead a clean life. Let us foster a spirit of humanism within ourselves, and to be able to do this, it is necessary to follow the divine injunctions.

Many young men now prefer to start a new life not with a 'cultured lady' or with a girl with a diploma, but with a girl who is well brought up, chaste and domesticated, whose father is the head of the family and whose mother is the mistress of the house; with girls who are modest and who want to begin family life as innocents. (3) This is to be expected, because such girls, brought up according to the ideals of a Muslim family and undoubtedly familiar with the laws of the religion, prove to be faithful wives. If things were thus, then every woman would strive to preserve her honour. Her thoughts and deeds would only follow the laws of Islam. Freedom lies in morality.
The article is accompanied by photographs of veiled girls studying at a religious institution. Also accompanying are selected quotes from the *ahadith*: "If a woman should decorate herself so as to attract the attention of an unknown man, then she is a sinner, and the man who looks at her is also a sinner".

**Aliens in their own land**

THE creation of the Soviet Union led to the development of strong economic links between Central Asia and Russia, increasing their mutual dependence. Meanwhile, as has been shown in preceding chapters, the process of modernisation in the Soviet Union led to the destruction of the traditional way of life. The attributes of the civilisation which penetrated Central Asia gave birth to a social polarisation previously unheard of in that backward society: on one side the rulers and on the other those without rights; on one side the ruling elite's cultural orientation towards Russia, and on the other the conservation of elements of the Muslim way of life among the lower strata of society. The russification of lifestyles, education, upbringing and the adoption of new norms of social interaction spread, above all, among the educated segment of society. Given that under the conditions of totalitarianism this segment remained unconsolidated, it only superficially assimilated that which was new. Thus the old Muslim way of life was strangely combined with new forms of interaction. At the same time those lower on the social ladder regarded the superficial russification of the educated segment of society as an unpardonable breach of national traditions, and a betrayal of religious ethics and morals.

This polarisation became particularly pronounced in the post-Stalin period, when the educated strata of society consolidated itself and the way of life peculiar to the industrial epoch began to be increasingly assimilated. Today, the divisions within Central Asian society are clearly visible in the response to the current rise of Islamism.

I showed the interview of Rahmatullah-kori Kasimjan-ogli to the art critic G. Babadjanova asking her to comment about the current process of Islamisation of society and in this light, about what personal problems she anticipates confronting in the future. Her response is a pessimistic prognosis for the future of independent-minded and educated women in the new Uzbekistan state.
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Uzbekistan:

"My attitude towards Muslim society is of course negative. This is linked above all to the fact that Islamisation proposes the enslavement of women. The fundamentalists, if they have their way, would have all women clothed in parandjas. The prevalence of white shawls in the cities and villages of Uzbekistan today is not a superficial phenomenon but the manifestation of a profound internal process; of a return to the past. (Here an interesting question arises: why has the parandja appeared specifically in Uzbekistan and the valleys of Tajikistan, and in other Muslim regions where the chuchwan was not practiced even in the most reactionary of times?)

"The current developments in Tajikistan illustrate the negative impact of religion being mixed with politics: politicised forms of Islam. The distinguishing features of Islam as a religion are the deliberate denigration of women as creatures who are low and unclean, fit only for service and pleasure.

The supposedly 'Golden Century' in Uzbek history were the times of Timur and the Timurids. They are idealised as the period in which architecture, the decorative and applied arts, miniatures, and poetry flowered and when science is perceived to have reached a level similar to that of Renaissance Europe. But this is far from the truth. Women in the 14th and 15th centuries were similarly without rights and there are no examples of a Muslim society where women are accorded a high status, no matter how progressive that society is.

"As a result of the idealisation of the past, the works of two poetesses - Zeibunisa and Nadira Begum - are taken to indicate the equality of female leaders with men and the superiority of the culture that flourished in that era. Yet in their works these poetesses literally weep tears of blood about women's bitter fate, about their trials and tribulations in the struggle for their rights to be considered human and not to be demeaned.

"The present position of women in the face of the crises
in Uzbekistan has facilitated the propagation of Muslim attitudes, and, arising from that, the attitude that women should not have their own opinions, even more so if their opinions contradict those of the top officials; a woman must not have any sense of individual worth, must not argue with her supervisors and so forth.

"The crisis of culture which has enveloped today's society in Uzbekistan, has on the whole negatively impacted on women, especially on those who are working. The russification of culture which was taking place until now, certainly at times had greater advantages for women than the present developments. The nationalist trend in contemporary society does not offer the hope of a feminist movement among the women of Uzbekistan.

"Given the current developments, I am also not optimistic about my personal prospects, despite the fact that I now have twenty years of continuous experience in an art research institute.

"The desire for openness, for justice, constantly forces me to speak out against directives about how an Eastern woman should be submissive and obedient. But the western mentality, acquired over years of development, will not allow us to return to the ichkeri and become humble fulfillers of that which is imposed from above.

"My plans to write a thesis (the outline of which has long been maturing in my mind) are linked to problems which contemporary society have not yet come to face with. Firstly, there is the problem of regionalism in the development of Central Asian culture. I encounter great resistance to the presentation of my ideas at all levels and this has obstructed me, even though I know I am right about the fact that for some time to come this process of regionalism will be foundational to the liberal arts culture.

"The second problem is connected with my son, who is now 14; the recent developments - changing work structures and the Uzbekisation of higher education - do not offer him very good prospects."
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"The third problem is connected with the fact that since 1974 I haven't been able to solve the problem of getting an apartment. I was one hundred and fiftieth in line for a state apartment, and I do not expect to get one before I die; but neither do I have sufficient means to purchase one.

"My pessimistic attitude towards the future is not an exaggeration, but the reality facing Europeanised women of Uzbekistan, people one could perhaps call 'aliens in their own land'.

Confrontation between career women and those seeking to push them back into the domestic realm has already been taking place since the late 1980s. Architect Dilora K. relates the following personal story about an argument with a cleric on the issue of women's dress:

"Four years ago I took part in a project which some clerics were also involved in. It happened that I frequently came into contact with them, they helped me by giving me vital information, and we often had discussions. I must say I had a very good impression of them, but once one of them pointed out the village women wearing white headscarves, and said that I should cover my head. I replied that I do not see the need, I am still young, why should I walk around dressed like an old woman, and then I also added that the depth of a person's faith does not depend upon their dress; faith is a matter of one's own conscience and it is not necessary to demonstrate its observance with the help of superficial symbols. We began to argue. He spoke about the fact that our grandmothers and great grandmothers wore Muslim dress and that they didn't find anything wrong in it; why shouldn't we do as our ancestors did. I retorted, 'But you see they did not work in government service, like us who have to come into contact with many people. I would find it a bit funny, for example, to appear before the city committee in Muslim dress and to hide my face from my colleagues who have reviewed my projects.'

"The argument continued:

'But you shouldn't even be working: what you do is men's work!'"
'Are you judging my work to be of poor quality? Do I do work of a poorer quality than that of my male colleagues?'

'I am not concerned whether your work is good or bad, but it's a great pity that here we are in a strange city while your family needs you at home and you are not spending your time on your husband and children. The work you do could have been done by any architect, but nobody can replace you in the family.'

'Exactly the same can be said about a man; he is also a father and no one in the family can replace him and therefore his absence also affects the home. And I am not convinced that just any architect could do my work better than me.'

'Nevertheless, ten years from now our women will take up the responsibilities prescribed for them by shariat, and not run around the dusty streets of strange cities surrounded by men unknown to them.'

'I lost my cool. For all of his superficial courtesy, he revealed such hostility, perhaps even hatred, towards women like myself. I found his narrow-mindedness regarding the modern world difficult to understand and unpleasant. I did not try to convince or contradict him any further as I saw it would be pointless. I answered that I too did not find the prospect of being in a strange city a happy one, but without me they would not get what they wanted, and as to the scarf(4) I would think about it and perhaps wear it. Thus ended what I had found an unpleasant discussion.

'And today when I see this general rise of Islam; young girls not only wearing scarves, but in white or black long dresses, I fear for my daughters, for their future. What awaits them? Will it be what seemed natural for me - higher education, having a profession, the joy of accomplishment and some degree of economic independence. Would the women of the next generation not be deprived of this? This is a return to the past, this is degrading!'
On the Threshold of the Future - Or of the Past?

However, there are women who support a return to the shariat. At a recent gathering of relatives and friends to celebrate a religious festival, I met some women and teachers from the religious schools and listened to their arguments against Soviet education and culture, especially against television, and their calls for a return to the shariat. The educated women present objected to their aggressive and didactical sermon, but did not take part in the discussion as they did not want to offend the host (who had invited the protagonists to read the prayers) and thus mar the festivities.

Sixteen year old Salima O. is one of the many who now attend religious schools, wear Muslim dress and link their future with religion:

"My parents are believers. When the religious school was opened for girls, Father suggested to me that I enrol there. Since I was little I have known how to say my prayers and Mother taught me to say my namaz (prayers) five times a day. When I finish school, I can, with the blessings of Allah, convey the teachings of our Prophet Muhammad to women when they gather for religious holidays, sacred ceremonies and so on. Many can say their prayers but they do not know the meaning of the words because they say it in Arabic. My task shall be to explain to the audience the meaning of this or that surah of the Qur'an, relate hadith from the life of the Prophet Muhammad, and to provide explanations of phenomena and rituals connected with Islam; most importantly, to strengthen the audience's faith and show them the path towards serving their belief.

"In school I came to learn that the path towards faith is a complete science and there are few here who are acquainted with it."

Salima O. also attends secondary school where, in her words, she is an average student.

"In the secular schools there is no equality of opportunity, no matter how well a person studies. Only the children of parents with influence or money get a chance to enrol in college. For children from simple families the only path open is in the blue-collar professions. If they do enrol in a college even then they
have few prospects. I know of many such girls among our relatives and acquaintances. When she gets married, usually to a young labourer, her life does not differ from that of a girl who is a manual worker.

"I hope my life will be different. I will be able to earn well, but this is not what's most important. A girl who has received religious education is in the public eye; she has better chances of getting married well. Our culture values knowledge of Islam in a girl's education. Graduates of religious schools are well trained to respect their elders and husband, and such a wife can be a good guide for her children. My dream is to perform haj to Mecca. Many women, who are now spiritual tutors and come from various cities of Uzbekistan have already performed the pilgrimage. These women are highly respected and honoured. They are often invited to conduct celebrations and funeral feasts at the homes of respected people - this is a great honour. They are better known among people than any recognised female singer or professor and are more respected because they serve the Almighty."

I asked her whether she reads much secular literature, newspapers and journals.

"Even though our reading habits are not controlled, I read little, less than I did in the past. But now I understand how many lies there were in Soviet publications, especially in the newspapers and magazines. To study in a religious school is difficult. Much has to be learned by heart, aloud so as to train the voice; this is an important quality of a reciter of the Qur'an. We are not taught philosophy as this is not necessary for us. We are taught history, but not much - this is not an important part of our education.

"What do I think about healers and clairvoyants? I believe in them: Allah is all powerful. His goodness is infinite, He blesses true believers with His own gifts, the nature of which cannot be explained by science. But there are also dark forces which seduce and lead one astray. I, for example, am very afraid of the evil eye. There is a sura in the Qur'an which can protect one; I found out about this while studying at religious institutes."

Factors affecting women's education and the role of Islam in their lives. The educational system in post-Soviet states is undergoing significant changes. While some Asian countries have traditionally placed a strong emphasis on education, the revolution in Afghanistan has brought new challenges. Women's education has been undervalued, and there is a need for better educational opportunities. The role of Islam in the education of girls is significant, with many girls receiving religious education to prepare them for marriage and domestic responsibilities.

There is a growing concern about the attitudes towards women's education in traditionalist communities. The role of archivists in preserving and documenting the history of architecture is crucial, whether it is in the preservation of architectural heritage or in shaping the opinions of a new generation. The question of the relevance of traditional architecture in modern society is a pertinent one.
of many such girls among the rest. When she gets married, her life does not end. She is a manual worker.

I will be able to earn money. It is the most important. A girl who is in the public eye is not respected and honoured. She is expected to conduct celebrations and entertain guests. She is known among people. She is a singer or professor and is well respected. She is a daughter of the Almighty."

As much secular literature, habits are not controlled, I know in the past. But now if there were in Soviet society, it is not allowed. Religious school is difficult. I am afraid of my heart, aloud so as to train it. It is the quality of a reciter of the Qur'an. I am afraid of the philosophy as this is not taught in history, but not much of our education. Are they clairvoyants? I am powerful. His goodness is explained by science. I am very afraid of the evil spirits which seduce and lead me. I can protect myself while studying at religious school. A person is insignificant and Allah reveals His mercy to those who are seized with pride and think they can oppose His will: 'Where did they disappear, those who wanted to make us pagans - into nothingness, and their sins lie on their descendants'."

Factors impeding the rise of Islamism

NEVERTHELESS there are also serious factors opposing the rise of Islamism. In Uzbekistan, there is the presence of secular political parties as well as the assimilation of the Soviet way of life. The fundamentalist Party of Islamic Resurgence, which works both legally (in Tajikistan) and underground (in other states of Central Asia), has alienated people in other Central Asian states by its policies and activities in Tajikistan. Even in the traditionally poorer regions where it has some influence, people prefer not to openly support the party. The majority of working women, who fear for their future and for their rights in society and in the family, are particularly suspicious of this political force. In spite of the fact that the mass media says little about the issue, women are becoming conscious of the attacks being launched by the clergy and fear that this may lead to an escalation in the number of restrictions the clergy imposes on women, notably in the field of education; the press has already brought to light cases where girls, studying in religious schools, have dropped out altogether from general education, which undoubtedly calls for alarm. Thus speeches by local officials who express their preference for the Turkish model of development may attract women's support, but do not fully dispel their fears.

There appears to be little prospect of a change in the clergy's attitude which holds that it is a basic principle of religion that women are lesser creatures. A colleague who works in the field of architectural restoration, on hearing that the Spiritual Council of the Muslims of Central Asia was looking for an experienced architect to work on a restoration project, asked the Mufti whether the Council would agree to work with a female architect. He replied in the negative, saying that in his personal opinion what was needed was a good architect and gender was irrelevant, but that the staff of the Council and the clergy, on whose opinion the Council depends, disapprove of women architects and could even accuse him, a mufti, of failing to adhere...
to the principles of Islam.

The post-Soviet strengthening of the clergy's influence has manifested itself in a deeply negative attitude towards Soviet culture, and especially those of its aspects which involve women's participation in the public sphere. Much of the clergy is against the Turkish model of development. Their arguments include the appearance on Turkish television of actresses and singers wearing revealing low-necked dresses, and their sermons at the mosques clamour for a religious censor.

Attempts to fill the spiritual vacuum

The clergy is attempting to fill the spiritual vacuum, but it itself is not ready for the task, being infected with the very same sickness as the rest of society: impatient, narrow-minded, and, most unpardonable, self-serving. The clergy is treading the same path as yesterday's ideologues by giving priority to the superficial aspects of worship. The spread of religion among the youth, especially among young girls, is more a social manifestation than a true search for God.

A lack of confidence in the days to come has led people to turn towards mysticism; a special place has come to be given to soothsayers, clairvoyants and those with extrasensory perception. Mysticism is a result of the lack of individual freedom and society's political immaturity; dependent people, deprived of everything except the false hope of a bright future, are ready to believe in and ask for support from any adventurist who prophesies, heals or makes promises. Women seem particularly inclined to believe in miracles, extra terrestrials, and forces from the beyond. Those seeking to exploit people's spiritual needs have appeared in both the cities and villages, among the uneducated as well as the educated, the young and the elderly; the sheer number of them bears testimony to the number of women who believe in them. Reports have appeared in the press that these spiritualists conduct mass seances. The precise nature of this phenomenon needs to be evaluated by psychologists, but personally I see this as evidence of the degradation of a society, which is afraid of the bitter reality of today's world.

Women who have lost their jobs are prominent among those who have become obsessed with the supernatural. Threatened
with the possibility of losing their source of income - and
survival - many women are psychologically traumatised and all
of a sudden find within themselves unexplained qualities, which
help them acquire a new circle of acquaintances, attracting
attention towards themselves and serving as a new source of
income; a whole new business field has opened up. For example,
in Tashkent, Alma Ata and Bishkek, (the capitals of the
Republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kirghizia) almost half
of the small enterprises offer the services of spiritualists and
specialists in the supernatural. And, most surprisingly, business
is thriving.

The economic crisis

AND so we come to unemployment, the most painful topic of
today. In times of economic crisis, women are its first victims.
The concept of women returning to the hearth is simply a means
of justifying a situation which is already taking shape: women
are rapidly being squeezed out of the labour market. According
to employment exchange statistics, the 70% staff cutbacks that
have taken place in organisations over the last four years have
been at the expense of women. But in reality the number of
women losing their jobs is significantly higher. In recent statistics
a new line has appeared: "out of the number of employed
women..." which distorts the real picture.

Until 1987, Central Asia remained the region recording the
lowest levels of labour force participation among women in the
USSR,(6) a phenomenon explained by their having to look after
large families and the fact that there was hidden unemployment
among women. Now even the minority who were engaged in
production are being pushed out. Current levels of
unemployment among women are estimated from employment
data from the year 1989. Even in 1990 out of the total 700,000
unemployed, 86% constituted women, while the incomes of 30%
of women working in agriculture consisted of only thirty roubles
- 25% of the Soviet minimum wage for 1990.

Hidden unemployment among women has long existed and is
one of the factors behind the low standard of living in
Uzbekistan. Rural unemployment was linked to a variety of
factors including the land and water shortage, the introduction
of mechanisation which displaced farm labour, and the low
levels of migration to the cities due to the poor qualifications and low educational levels among the village population. Thus even during the period of stagnation in the USSR, there was already a crisis in Uzbekistan. But while perestroika and glasnost allowed a spade to be called a spade in the political arena, changes in the economy did not take place. Indeed, the crisis has deepened over the past seven years and unemployment, as a stark fact, now affects all sections of the population.

The decline in production is leading to job cutbacks at state enterprises. Meanwhile the process of economic reform has set the provinces in motion, where initiatives undertaken by certain people have already led to the creation of job opportunities in newly established enterprises producing foodstuffs, clothing and so on. This has helped to significantly reduce unemployment among rural women and many Uzbek girls are doing well working in cooperative enterprises producing fashion garments and tinned vegetables. The provinces are now moving ahead, as they face fewer restraints and have a more flexible approach to working conditions.

Today, unemployment generally affects larger industries, economically tied to other regions of the former Soviet Union. Modernisation of production is hampered by a lack of adequate state incentives while privatisation currently faces resistance. Thus unemployment continues to surge in major urban centres, mainly affecting qualified and educated workers and specialists. Particularly unfavourable conditions face women working in the fields of science, administration, higher education, project-oriented technical institutes, industrial enterprises and culture. The often unspoken motive for forced redundancy among women is that jobs must be preserved for men as they are the family bread winners.

The attitudes and problems encountered by working women in times of economic crisis are clearly illustrated by Nilofar M.'s experience:

"My husband and I worked in different departments of a higher education institute. The Rector called me and said: "Decide among yourselves which of you is to leave the institute. We have to lose thirty staff members. I have no complaints against you as such, but it would be better if you left as you have a school-going child who needs looking after. Now that we are
changing over to the contract system, why should you have the strain of working”. And so I left.

“But my husband’s income is not enough. I did not go to the employment exchange because I would have been ashamed to go there with my academic qualifications and so began to look for work in a school or in the commercial sector. But I was unable to find work. Not working was difficult not just for economic reasons but also psychologically. Earlier I always had money at hand and I never had to ask my husband for any. Now when I spend money I always worry what my husband will say. This is why when I was offered a job tidy up the apartment of an entrepreneur, I agreed, even though a sense of humiliation did not leave me for a long time. I am telling you all this on condition that you do not mention my surname; it would be extremely unpleasant if my friends and former colleagues came to know about this work. For one day’s work a week I am paid the same amount I would have received for a six-day week at the institute. For what did I study twenty years?

“arly miss our socialist past when I had confidence in the future. I was lucky that I became unemployed two years ago, and not at the worst time, as I have now pretty much adapted to the situation. But what about those struck by this tragedy today or tomorrow, when there are going to be mass layoffs? My neighbour is a doctor of biological sciences who has not yet reached pensionable age, and who was laid off a few months ago. She would gladly do the same work I am doing. It’s not a matter of choice. How many educated women who have lost their jobs are now working as seamstresses, knitters and car park attendants just to earn a livelihood! At the employment exchange jobs are mostly offered to men and the demand for women workers is very low, especially in the field of intellectual work.”

Conditions today indicate that a family’s standard of living closely depends upon women’s incomes. Unemployment among women has led to a deterioration of living standards among many families, worsening existing poverty. While two years ago half of the population of Uzbekistan lived below the poverty
line, today the number of those below the poverty line has certainly increased.

There are few women who have been able to retain their former lifestyles, in spite of the fact that they now have to work harder than before - not mentioning those who have altogether lost the opportunity to work. The vast majority of women have not adapted to the free-market economy. Only former functionaries who used to supervise funds have been able to establish themselves in the new commercial structures and on the basis of the former Party school management courses have become publishers, stock brokers, managers of sports clubs and small enterprises.

Factors limiting the potential for a women's movement

WOMEN in Uzbekistan have not been able to rely on the official women's organisations such as the Committee of Uzbek Women to take up the issues of unemployment and other problems currently confronting them. Funded by the state, the Committee is staffed by former Party and trade union workers. It is currently headed by the poetess and Lenin Komsomol laureate, Halima Khudaiberdieva. Chief Editor of the women's magazine Sodat, she is also an adviser to the President of the Republic, and a deputy of the Supreme Council of Uzbekistan.

I asked Deputy President of the Committee, Dilbar Ghulamova, about the Committee's work, its stand regarding the trend of Islamisation of society and its position on unemployment among women.

"Of course, the issue of unemployment among women is a very real one and recently women who have lost their jobs have begun appealing to us. We are trying to help them, referring them to the employment exchange for assistance as many women have never even heard of the exchange. Women have greatly benefitted from the Law of Employment passed in June 1992. Those we are unable to help remain on the exchange's files, are categorised as unemployed and receive an unemployment benefit. According to labour exchange statistics, women make up more than half of the registered unemployed, but I suppose the real number of unemployed women is significantly higher."
The staff of the Committee consists of only twelve people, and we are swamped by the problems women bring to us; we are not even able to prepare documents which could help our friends nor to accompany them to the authorities demanding that attention be given to these issues. But the Committee has the right to initiate legislation and we are currently preparing two drafts for consideration by the Supreme Council of the Republic: on "Social Security for Motherhood and the Family" and a "Law for the Rights of Women", which must correspond to UN conventions regarding the protection of civil rights and an end to all forms of discrimination.

But the question is not just of passing legislation but also that laws should work in practice. Today there are almost no women left at the top decision-making level. Even the female presidents of the kolkhoz have been sidelined, yet society still expects women to be tied to factory machines and the cotton fields. If this is what society expects, then women must also be included in management structures. If this does not happen, who will take up women's concerns? What is happening now is discrimination.

The Committee has entered into a dialogue with the clergy. We cannot and must not return to the past. Religion is a matter for each individual's personal conscience and should not be a political force. That is why we believe that religious education should not be given to the detriment of secular education. We are against women being given a lesser education; women should be equal members of contemporary society with equal rights and responsibilities. I am confident that a return to the past shall not take place. Women themselves will not allow it.

The reasons for the persistence of discrimination is the strengthening of men's feeling of superiority over women, treating women as if they were creatures of lesser strength, wisdom and intellect. It is believed that women above all must fulfill men's desires while suppressing their own, and men only value that in women which is convenient for them. Such an attitude cannot be changed suddenly, just through directives;
this will take many years of re-educating society.

"I believe that for the present the Committee cannot take on global problems, we have too few resources for this. But we can still provide women some concrete help. For example, we have found a sponsor and have bought a technology line for the production of ready-made meals for children. It will be the first of its kind in Uzbekistan. We also welcome the creation of independent women's organisations such as the Association of Working Women. The more such organisations there are, the easier it will be for us to work. Then a material base would exist for the Committee, which would draw women into its work, undertake different activities, and use women's initiative for their own benefit."

But even though the Committee of Uzbek Women is trying to find a way through this complex situation, there is still little faith in its leadership because they are identified as yesterday's 'Party-crats'.

During the Soviet era, the various Party organs each had a section devoted to working with women, known as the women's councils (zhensyovety). Given that officially 'in the Soviet Union the women's issue has been resolved', the zhensyovety's work focused on organising all sorts of 'socialist competitions' between those working in cotton production, weaving and so on, and on the resolution of the domestic and family problems of individual women who turned to the zhensyovety for help. In the various state industrial and service units, the zhensyovety were incorporated within the Party Committees and their influence was insignificant. Periodically women's congresses were held but their function was purely to highlight the 'successes in the construction of Communism'. The last Congress of Women of Uzbekistan was held in 1987 in the best traditions of the past and the work of the zhensyovety has remained unchanged. The Committee of Soviet Women, to which women from Uzbekistan were also elected, was, despite its proclaimed role as the protector of Soviet women's rights, largely designed as a propaganda tool to promote the 'peace-loving politics of the Party and the state' abroad. After independence from the Soviet Union, the Republic's Women's Council became an independent Committee of Uzbek Women, but women have still not heard its voice publicly speak out in defence of our future.
A number of factors currently impede the development of political consciousness among women and the emergence of an influential, independent women's movement in Uzbekistan. The objective process of politicising women's consciousness finds itself coming into conflict not only with the propaganda promoting the Islamisation of society, but also with the male-dominated structures in the government and bureaucracy as well as in the field of business.

In recent years there has been a noticeable strengthening of the clan system in society. Encouraged by the hierarchical Soviet system of government and accountability, ties of kinship came to be particularly important in the power structures. Reforms in cotton production management launched during perestroika are an example: accountability for the cotton harvest tied together the secretary of the Party regional committee and the president of the kolkhoz. In such a situation, working with one's kinsmen had clear advantages.

Journalist K. Bayalinov details the leadership of the Jalalabad community, which the 'democrat' Bekmamat Osmanov has already placed himself at the head of, and which resembles developments taking place in other states of Central Asia:

"Over thirty direct relatives of B. Osmanov work in the region's ruling group. Among them the president of the Regional Consumers Union office, the head of the Directorate of Internal Affairs, the head of Farm Services, the chief of the Fuel Depot, the leader of the Regional Administration's Staff, Chief Editor of the regional newspaper, and the president of the regional television station. Other relations are either in, or members of, commerce institutions. It is not just those from the clan's native area who make use of the clan's services; among those receiving gifts, jewellery sets and automobiles are also officials on the staff of the President and Cabinet of Ministers."

The clan power structure, rooted as it is in medieval and patriarchal traditions, excludes women. It regards women as liable to destabilise working relationships; they are unreliable business partners, poor managers and are generally considered lesser beings. Thus women are being squeezed out of the ruling structures. Posts, which according to the old quota system, should have been given to women now lie vacant. Even the
formal participation of women in power structures was sharply curtailed during perestroika with the trend continuing subsequently after independence. Women are increasingly alienated from power at all levels and effectively their influence in society is becoming negligible.

There are now few women among the leadership of the ruling party - the successor to the Communist Party of Uzbekistan - and equally few women among the opposition parties. During perestroika a number of women's organisations sprang up, such as Adolat whose aim was to raise awareness regarding women's existing rights guaranteed by legislation, and Tomaris, a collective of soldiers' mothers. But they attracted only limited membership from a restricted layer of society and are now falling apart. Women's professional associations are little known to most educated women; most in practice exist only on paper just as in the Soviet period when social organisations were largely created to promote some nomenklatura lady. The old fears, the mentality of dependence and mutual mistrust still impede the formation of social organisations and movements. A legacy of the totalitarian system is the devastating lack of well-known, authoritative and independent figures, capable of winning the confidence of women. This is why the question of alternative women's organisations, capable of representing the interests of women from various social groupings, remains open.

Additional factors obstructing the emergence of an influential women's mass organisation include women's lack of experience in participating in voluntary activities aimed at protecting their social interests. Closely related with this, there is the lack of faith in the effectiveness of social activism, and the lumpenisation of society. Given that stability in Uzbekistan has at present been achieved at the cost of restrictions on various civic freedoms, social organisations have been left with an insignificant role. This is all the more important since state organs have failed to introduce policies protecting women which could have mitigated female unemployment, and could have addressed the issues of social security for families and mothers, and protection of women from discrimination. While women should not be seen as social invalids, their rights must be protected by the law and the state. Attention from the state could also have highlighted the contradictions between existing legislation and irresponsible statements calling for the removal of women from the production process and for their economic dependence on the
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Meanwhile, various forces have led to growing economic and political divisions among women. Firstly, while necessity forced the majority of women to lead a life which was an exhausting and monotonous pursuit of a crust of bread, it drew other women into the shadow structures. They thus became part of the often wealthy and influential new social groupings which became legitimised during the period of stagnation. These include former functionaries of the Soviet trade unions and sales girls, who today are business women operating in the fields of commerce and wholesale trade. They have the means for organising their own associations, through which they express their economic interests and protect their capital.

At the same time the clergy is actively canvassing young women through their religious schools set up under the aegis of socioreligious organisations. These have appeared in Kazakhstan and especially in Tajikistan. Given that in Uzbekistan the Islamic Party has not been registered, there is conflicting information regarding the activities of the pro-Islamic women’s organisations, but the danger of a radical resurrection of Islam in the form of fundamentalism certainly exists. The usual preconditions for the strengthening of Muslim fundamentalism exist: the spiritual vacuum resulting from the rejection of communist ideology which has been discussed earlier; the economic crisis and poverty among the people.

THUS we stand on the threshold of the future... We bear the burden of yesterday’s unsolved problems and to these have been added new ones. Contemporary Uzbekistan reminds one of Anderson’s fairy tale about the evil troll and his magical mirror which shattered into hundreds of pieces, each broken sliver carrying the force of his evil; the shattered past still sits strongly in each person. Women are still a passive part of society. Women’s silence is being used by the male elite of the new leadership. Superficial appearances and the new slogans proclaim that society has somehow changed. True, but this change is not in the way that the new leadership insist. Instead, society is gradually losing its uniformity as the polarisation becomes a reality. Thus while the depth of the social problems facing women should have awoken them to the need to unite to protect their interests, today women are divided according to their material circumstances, their social and cultural interests,
according to nationality, their religious and political outlook.

Meanwhile men are strengthening their hold over all levels of the administration. Discrimination against women, in the right to work, in the family and in their rights as individuals remains a regrettable reality as the sidelining of women from political life deepens their social problems.

The democratic movement, riding on the wave of perestroika, has had the wind taken out of its sails following the events in neighbouring Tajikistan, where the concept of democracy was exploited by the Islamist forces in their struggle for power. Meanwhile the removal of price controls in the name of economic reform has meant that the majority of the population is condemned to concentrating on their physical survival. And finally, the absence of an active and independent intelligentsia has dramatically reduced the politicisation of society and there is an increasing lack of faith regarding all official proclamations and promises.

But there is no going back: Uzbekistan is independent and I am convinced that both the people and the government will soon come to understand that apathy, scepticism, and passivity is not the answer. Only a people who are free, independent-minded and full of initiative; only democracy which includes the full participation of women will allow Uzbekistan to be brought out of the crisis which totalitarianism plunged it into, and flourish as an independent state.
Conclusion

"It is not given to us to foresee,
With what our words will be answered..."

F. Tutech, 'Izbranie', 1976

I think about these lines as I conclude this book. To write it was both easy and difficult. Easy, because I am confident that it fulfills a need. I have still not come across an objective evaluation of Muslim women's lives under Soviet rule. Within the Soviet Union, there was so much false enthusiasm when assessing the happy lives of Uzbek, Turkmen and Kazakh women, and so little said about their real problems. Easy, because I myself am a woman and know about the problems women face from personal experience. Yet I also know how much this revolutionary period gave me. I know how many factors prevented and continue to impede our movement forward. I know what I lost, as a woman and as a person, because of that system, and what I gained thanks to the access it gave to knowledge.

This book was also easy to write because I was helped by my friends, male as well as female, who believed that the rosy portrait painted of eastern women's lives during the Soviet era needed to be redrawn and they hoped that was what I was doing through this book.

But writing this book was equally difficult because people's social consciousness is filled with illusions and prejudices preserved from the past. While I was afraid of following the path of Soviet researchers who often allowed their wishful thinking to cloud reality, I was similarly concerned that criticism of women's current position in Uzbekistan could lead to the resurrection of medieval forms of discrimination. These were the Scylla and Charybdis between which I had to pass. It was impossible to be objective because I am a product of my times, and to be partial is an inherent human quality.

It was difficult because for too long our hearts have been
constrained by fear, disunity and mutual distrust. The tongues of those with whom I talked froze before the truth, their eyes sought refuge from my constant gaze and their soul shrank from everything new, unable to comprehend what this new world would bring. It was also difficult because I did not want to pander to my fellow citizens' pride by extolling their virtues. But at the same time I did not want to insult them by pointing out their inadequacies and weaknesses. It was difficult because a search for the truth bears a formidable responsibility; because speaking out loud is frightening since many listen. My discussions strengthened my conviction that freedom and equality are essential. They give women many new responsibilities; but to be dependent, to be oppressed would be even harder. It is a difficult choice, but then, a lack of choice oppresses us.

We are still a long way from harmony between the sexes. But a solution of the women's issue requires the support of men. Can a man be happy when his mother, sister, wife or daughter are suffering? Or vice versa. What a pity that today there is no Abdullah Kadiri, Abdurauf Fitrat and Hamza Hakimzadeh, "jadidi" authors who in their works and life were great advocates of women's equality. Men cannot and should not resolve their individual social problems at the cost of women. In oppressing women they lose their dignity, yet there are few men who think about this.

Without women's participation there can be no democracy, and political parties which neglect women's interests cannot command true confidence and influence. But there is still not a single party which has addressed women or has a women's wing: women are not even seen in Parliament. Does this not reveal much about the attitudes towards women among today's politicians?

In Tashkent there is a monument to the freedom of the women of the East. Will this monument remain just as a reminder of the communist era or will it remind each and every woman about the need to defend her rights as a citizen and an individual. Only time will tell. Everything depends upon how quickly a women's movement emerges, one which can influence changes in society and lead it in the direction of democracy. Everything depends upon those of us who think about our own fate and the fate of our children.
Conclusion

in mutual distrust. The tongues of fire before the truth, their eyes to the earth and their soul shrunk from a prehend what this new world will be like. I did not want to be the first by extolling their virtues. But to insult them by pointing out their mistakes. It was difficult because a considerable responsibility; because hearing since many listen. My conviction that freedom and give women many new opportunities, be oppressed would be injustice, but then, a lack of choice.

mony between the sexes. But a marriage requires the support of men. Can a man, wife or husband be a pity that today there is no Hamza Hakimzadeh, and life were great advocates of rights and should not resolve their case. In progressing there are few men who think.

There can be no democracy, and women's interests cannot influence. But there is still not a mentioned women or has a women's group in Parliament. Does this not point towards women among today's generation.

To the freedom of the women of men just as a reminder of the truth and every woman about a citizen and an individual. Only emerges upon how quickly a woman's influence changes in society. Everything depends on our own fate and the fate of

Glossary

'ahadith (pl.)
sayings attributed to the Prophet

'alam
a learned person; a doctor in Muslim jurisprudence

'aritl
a traditional form of cooperatives where a group of people work together; found in both production, supply and distribution activities

'ayat
verse of the Qur'an

Basmach
national opposition movement in Central Asia

chuchvak
a specifically Uzbek form of veiling which consisted of a thick, mask-like veil made from horse-hair placed on top of the parandja cloak

deškan
small-farmer; kolkhoz worker

glasnost
literally 'openness'; Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of allowing the public airing of views and criticism of the past

gulag
state prison camp

ichkeri
the women's section of traditionally arranged Uzbek houses; inaccessible to outsiders

iman masjid
leader of the prayers at a mosque

dkolhaq
collective farm
Komsomol
the All-Union Lenin's Young Communist League

kopek
small unit of currency: 100 kopeks to the rouble

kulak
wealthier small farmers who were the target of repression in the collectivisation period of 1928-38

Kurban
Eid; a Muslim religious festival

jadidi
derived from the Arabic for 'new', this was the general term given to a loose association of intellectuals who sought the reform of Islam and the modernisation of Central Asian society at the turn of the 20th century

madrassah
Muslim high school

majlis/majalis
literary meetings; also, meetings where holy texts are read and discussed

muktab
Muslim primary school

mazur
shrine of a saint/holy person

mufti
a specialist in Muslim jurisprudence

nomenclatura
the ruling elite; the system of appointing and vetting personnel by Party bodies

parandja
heavy cotton veil traditionally worn by Muslim women in Central Asia

perestroika
literally 'restructuring'; the post-1985 policy of political and economic reform

qazi
judge of a shariat court
Glossary

Ramadan
The Muslim month of fasting

shariat
literally, a clear straight path; a flowing stream. The broad framework within which Muslims are to live their lives and govern themselves, derived from the Qur'an, the hadith, the Sunnah (the practices of the Prophet), and the body of Muslim jurisprudence

sovkhaz
state farm

Stakhanovite
an exemplary worker; one who overfulfills the norm

Sufism/sufi
a mystical movement within Islam

sura
chapter of the Qur'an

tashkeri
the men's section of traditionally arranged Uzbek houses; accessible to outsiders

ummah
the Muslim community

wawf
property willed to religious foundations as a trust; land held by the Muslim clergy

ziarat
visits to holy places
Notes and References

Introduction

1. In the former Soviet Union, the concept of 'citizen's rights' is more commonly used than the term 'Human Rights'. The former carries the implication of a slightly greater emphasis on law as a rights instrument, as well as focusing more closely on civic rather than basic rights. - Ed.

Chapter 1

1. The Russian colonialists had a high regard for the indigenous education system in the Caucasus. - Ed.


3. The original meaning of the term dehkan was a small-farmer with his own land. However, at the time of collectivization under Soviet rule all peasants came to be referred to as dehkan.- Ed.

Chapter 2

1. The Basmatch was led by feudals, Muslim clerics and a section of the urban intelligentsia and emerging bourgeoisie. It reached its height in the period 1918-20 in the Ferghana Valley area.- Ed.

2. Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (1924); Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic (1924); Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic (1929); Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic
Notes and References

(1936); Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (1936).

3. The Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was the Soviet Central Asian mega-republic before its break up in 1924. - Ed.

4. This 18-member Council, which established Soviet political power in Central Asia was formed by the Third Territorial Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, 15-22 November, 1917. - Ed.

5. The qazi courts were restored in 1922, but their functions were gradually restricted through decree until they were finally abolished in 1927. - Ed.

6. Often staffed by women who were passionately dedicated to women's emancipation, in Turkestan the ženotdel attempted to provide some of the social support badly needed by Muslim women who broke away from tradition; the ženotdel ran hostels and refuges for run-away child-brides, divorcees and widows. In 1930, as totalitarianism triumphed, the ženotdel were abolished as a distinct component of the CP Secretariats throughout the structure of the Soviet Communist Party. - Ed.

7. Known as the Turk Ts.I.K - Turkestan Tsentrnii Ispolnitelnii Komitet. - Ed.

8. As opposed to the First Congress of the Communist Party of (undivided) Turkestan which had taken place in June 1918. - Ed.

9. For example, J. Abidova who worked among Uzbek women between 1920 and 1930 joined the Communist Party in 1927; T. Ibragimova who joined the Communist Party in 1924 had fought in the Civil War in the Ferghana Valley and was one of the first Uzbek women to take part in the work of emancipation. - Ed.

10. Collectivisation which began in the late 1920s, involved the forced incorporation of all agricultural land holdings into state farms (sovkhoz) and collective farms (kolkhoz) as part of the effort to amass the capital desperately needed for the Soviet Union's industrialisation. - Ed.
11. Part and parcel of this policy was the abolition in 1927
of the qazi courts, which adjudicated on the basis of
shari'at, as well as adat (customary) laws. Similarly,
most maktabs and madrassahs were closed by 1928,
while by 1930 all waqf property had been nationalised.
- Ed.

12. Kalim is the traditional bride-price that an Uzbek
groom's family would pay to the bride's family;
officially abolished in 1924, along with polygamy,
forced marriage and dijat (bloodmoney). Although
according to custom kalim was only money, in the
Soviet period kalim could be in the form of both money
and kind. - Ed.

13. According to custom, when a man dies leaving a
widow, she is remarried to his (usually younger)
brother. - Ed.

Chapter 3

1. It was common for Soviet policy and official
statements to refer to the family as the basic unit of
society, justifying for example legislation upholding
the sanctity of the family. There was however no
concept of protecting women's rights within the
family. - Ed.

2. An ideological subject taught at schools and colleges:
NON-religious studies. - Ed.

3. Panarin is referring to the USSR. - M.T.

4. In most of the Muslim world, the Ramadan fast is only
for 30 days.

5. According to local custom, a younger sister cannot get
married before the elder, especially if she is an 'old
maid'. - M.T.

6. The film was made on the issue in 1991, apparently
after a chance comment by President Gorbachev
during a visit to Uzbekistan. Sponsored by the
Uzbekistan authorities it was directed by liberal
filmmakers. Video copies of Plamen have been relatively
widely circulated within Central Asia. - Ed.

Chapter 4

1. Coupons, providing access to produce and goods that were often in short supply, were only available to those in state employment. - Ed.

2. The identity documents necessary for travel within the USSR. - Ed.

3. On August 31, 1935 Alexei Stakhanov, a miner in the Donetz Basin area hewed 14 times the average shift rate. Workers who overfulfilled their norms were subsequently given the honorary title of Stakhanovite.

4. The term refers to competitions organised between work units, factories, etc., which was designed to introduce (for the state's benefit) an element of excitement and competitiveness into a system which effectively discouraged people from excelling. - Ed.

5. Sharaf Rashidov was the First Secretary of the Uzbekistan Communist Party for some thirty years dominating the republic from the beginning of the Khrushchev era in the mid-1950s to the beginning of the Gorbachev period. - Ed.

6. In winter 1928–29, the first large-scale hunger riots took place in Central Asia. Anna Nukhrat, a Party organiser in Central Asia, called them 'women's riots'. The demonstrators were mainly destitute Muslim women. Nukhrat repeatedly warned that official emancipation policies, which were unaccompanied by alternative support systems for women, were indirectly responsible for the dramatic growth of homelessness, destitution and unemployment among local women. These imperatives were among the factors leading to a significant reassessment of Soviet policy in Central Asia. - Ed.

7. The Sovmarkom, which stood for the Sovet Narodnikh Komissarov (the Council of People's Commissars), was the ruling government body. - Ed.
8. All Soviet offices, factories, farms, etc. had political supervisors. - Ed.

9. These were days of unpaid extra work, used to complete ambitious production quotas and avoid a shortfall in the overall Plan. - Ed.

10. The period roughly running from the 1960s until perestroika began in 1985. - Ed.

11. The Soviet education system had the following stages, which were not necessarily exactly parallel to the stages in education systems in the West:

   primary
   intermediate secondary
   (up to VIIIth Grade)
   secondary
   (Xth Grade completed)
   university degree
   post-graduate
   Ph.D.
   post-doctoral
   nachalnii
   nepolnoe srednoe
   polnoe srednoe
   vishii obrazovanie
   aspirant
   candidatsvo
   doktorskii
   - Ed.

12. One of the most famous early Uzbek actresses, Tursunoi Saidazimova, was assassinated. - Ed.

Chapter 5

1. In the Soviet system, the roles of the legislature and the judiciary were largely secondary. Meanwhile the highly centralised nature of the economy and frequent shortages meant that practical power lay in the hands of those who controlled the distribution of resources. - Ed.

2. A woman wearing trousers in much of the former Soviet Union carries a number of connotations, not least that she is independent-minded. There is a phrase in Russian, 'kto nosit bryuki?', literally translated as 'who is wearing the trousers?' and used to ask which of the spouses in a marriage is dominant. - Ed.

3. There had been talk that the first in line for such
4. A country home. Members of the nomenklatura were famed for their country retreats, which were often extremely lavishly furnished invariably using funds diverted from the state. - Ed.

5. During the Gorbachev period, the first free elections were held under an extremely complex voting system which combined elements of the proportional representation system (party lists with seats being allocated according to percentage of votes polled) with the first-past-the-post system (in single-mandate constituencies candidates stood for a specific seat). In the first elections, many candidates from the single-mandate constituencies stood unopposed, an apparent carryover from the previous method of elections. - Ed.

6. Regarded among Muslims as the indicators of being a believer: belief in the oneness of God (tawheed), saying one's prayers, observing the Ramadan fast, going on Haj pilgrimage to Mecca, and paying the obligatory charity tax, zakat. - Ed.

Chapter 6

1. In March 1917, the Tsar abdicated and was replaced in Petrograd by an uncomfortable system of dual power with the Provisional Government (combining the aristocracy, professional middle class and industrialists) on the one hand and Soviets (workers' and soldiers' councils) on the other. - Ed.

2. In the 1920s and 1930s, wealthier families were expelled from the cities and relocated to villages often hundreds of miles from their original homes. - Ed.

3. Part of a youth's dress.

4. Head of the KGB's predecessor organisation, the NKVD. - Ed.

5. At the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956 (the first which followed Stalin's death) Khrushchev
effectively announced the abandonment of terror as a state weapon. - Ed.

6. The implication being that ideas are more important than blood ties. - Ed.

Chapter 7

1. See note No. 6, Chapter 3.

2. An extremely contentious issue, post-independence Uzbekistan adopted Uzbek as the state language, rejecting Russian due to its identification with colonial domination. - Ed.

3. In Central Asia, the term 'west' has connotations quite different to the political concept of West as capitalist democracy and East as communist. The connotations in Central Asia are closer to the cultural concept of West as atheist, urban, non-family oriented and East as spiritual, family-oriented. For Central Asians, therefore, Russia and Russian culture are regarded as 'western'. - Ed.

Chapter 8

1. i.e., the Revolution.

2. This is an oblique reference to prostitution, reflecting a thought process common among Muslim obscurantists. In other words, a man who is unable to support his wife himself leads her to prostitution. It is a short step from this to the view that all working women are perforce prostitutes. - Ed.

3. i.e., as virgins. - Ed.

4. This refers to the large, square scarf that is traditionally worn by women in the villages. - Ed.

5. Generally understood as a secular, capitalist path of development.

6. In the USSR, 92% of able-bodied women were engaged
abandonment of terror as a

...as more important

... but true, post-independence

... as the state language,

... and identification with colonial

... has connotations quite

... the concept of West as capitalist

... and communist. The connotations

... the cultural concept of

... family oriented and East as

... for Central Asians, culture are regarded as

... prostitution, reflecting a

... common among Muslim

... man who is unable to

... or to prostitution. It is

... view that all working

... - Ed.

... a turban or scarf that is traditionally

... - Ed.

... particular, capitalist path of

... and women were engaged

... in production, whereas in Uzbekistan the figure was

... only 47%.

7. The term refers not just to the blackmarket economy

... and not to the specifically criminal underworld, but

... to all aspects of life bound up with the parallel

... system which emerged in the Soviet Union. - Ed.
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The women of Uzbekistan today stand at a crossroads. But in order to choose their path to the future, they have first to analyse their highly contradictory past. While Soviet socialism brought education and an end to segregation, it also placed great pressures on women, not least the double burden of job and home. If the feudal and patriarchal traditions of Central Asia, reflected through the mirror of Islam, have remained a source of women's oppression, then they have also provided support systems which enabled women to survive in times of adversity.

Concerned that the future may be shaped by choices made by others, an Uzbek woman, Murtza Tokhtakhodjaeva, explores the historical context and women's perspectives on the status of women in Uzbekistan. By sharing with a wider audience the fears and hopes of these women, this book seeks to help them determine their own destiny and Uzbekistan's future. This first history of Uzbekistan's women published abroad, provides a unique counterpoint to the political and economic focus of analysis of post-Soviet society.