

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is based on an analysis of the Pre-Soviet Kazak and Uzbek society, the Soviet Union and post-Soviet developments as well as Field Trip to the Republics of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Patriarchy, conservatism, traditionalism and authoritarian government were structured to exclude the experiences and concerns of women. On examining the two societies; it is evident that gender inequality was prevalent. Both Kazakh and Uzbek society were traditionally patriarchal, with much respect being given to men, especially elderly men. Symbols in the culture often represented the power and warrior like behavior, associated with men. This was seen in many households. In villages and small towns women were confined to household responsibilities.

However among the two republics, the Kazakh society was nomadic and relatively egalitarian and the Kazakh women worked alongside men herding animals were unveiled, and dressed similarly to the men (Hiro, 2009). The Kazak women did not have a history of veiling and as nomadic women, enjoyed a relatively greater extent of freedom than the sedentary. The traditional Uzbek society was sedentary in nature, where women were enjoying less amount of freedom compared to their male counterparts. The Uzbek women had a history of veiling and they were limited to the household responsibilities. The first hypothesis “The nomadic and egalitarian nature of Kazakh society and the greater impact of Soviet policies account for more freedom and equality for women in Kazakhstan than Uzbekistan” has been validated. However another point that I found during Field Trip is that status of women in Kazakhstan has been influenced not just by the Soviet policies but more because of the greater impact of Russian and European Culture.

In contrast to the sedentary farmers, the nomadic herdsman lived in *yurts* to facilitate moving with their herds of sheep and cattle (Roudik, 2007). As a part of this nomadic way of life, they sought to minimize their impact on the land. The nomadic lifestyle impacted most facets of daily life. It inhibited too much religiosity, as it made the practice of regularly praying at a specific location difficult. As a result, religion has

not been very influential for nomadic people in the region. The role and status of Kazakh women differ from Uzbek due to the historical conversion of the nomadic Kazakhs, the almost total absence of dogmatic traditions among them, and the strong influence of Russian and European cultural attitudes and practices. On the other hand Uzbekistan is following their traditional way of life and is less influenced by Russian and European cultural attitudes and practices. Uzbekistan inherited from the Soviet period aspects of gender equality that are more advanced than many other countries in the world.

The Pre-Soviet Societies were not concerned with women issues and therefore women didn't enjoy their rights. An inadequate women representation in the state institutions existed in the Kazak and Uzbek society. The society operated to legitimate understanding of sexual differences that rest on a model of (male) domination and (female) subservience within society as natural and undeniable. In fact, the absence or under representation of women from state institution was the reality. By excluding women, these institutions succeeded in keeping women's concern or outlook out of decision making. With the coming of Soviet Union came changes and opportunities for women otherwise denied in Pre Soviet Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan societies.

In Soviet times women enjoyed equal rights to an extent. The Russian revolution recorded a tremendous change in the attitude towards gender and gave boost to women's liberty by supporting the equality for women in the Russian society. The Russian Revolution brought major change in the socio-political and economic condition of the women by advocating equal opportunities for the women.

V. I. Lenin, the organizer and leader of the Soviet State, always devoted much attention to the problems of women. He thought that the Socialist ideal, which was in process of being realized in the Soviet Union, demanded the abolition of all kinds of exploitation of man by man, and thus of all forms of social inequality, including the inequality between man and woman that existed in every society divided into classes. The Soviet authorities took as their aim the removal of woman's age-long inferiority and the achievement of complete and real equality between woman and man. These principles underlie all Soviet legislation that affects the position of women and the conditions of female labour.

The Soviet Union women enjoyed advantages, from state-supported childcare, full abortion rights, to employment in a wide choice of trades and professions, and a degree of economic equality with their male counterparts unmatched anywhere else, in short, a status in some ways far in advance of capitalist societies today. To sum it up I would conclude by quoting Iankova's (Soon-Tay1972:689) argument on women during the Soviet period:

In the years of Soviet power, woman has come to fulfill in the family qualitatively new roles as educator, organizer of the home, of family leisure, etc . . . These new roles are fully consistent with [woman's] contemporary social roles. As social [roles] they also form her personality, assist in the unfolding of her creative potentiality. The appearance of these new roles is a manifestation of the overcoming of the former inequality of women in domestic life, creating conditions for the formation of families of a new type, of a familial collective, members of which are bound to each other in relations of comradeship, mutual help and mutual understanding.

With independence of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan the position of women improved further. Independent Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan continued with the process of women welfare and have taken steps toward women empowerment. Going through the Constitution of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and analyzing the implications of legal provisions for women it appears that there exists an attempt to understand the need of gender equality in both the society although in the constitution of Kazakhstan not any specific article is mentioned related to women rights. All articles in the Constitution of Kazakhstan are gender neutral and available equally to all citizens while in comparison in the Republic of Uzbekistan it appears that there exists an attempt to understand the need of gender equality in the Society and the Basic Law of the Country, that is constitution of Uzbekistan, stipulates specific articles related to women rights. This shows that the republic of Uzbekistan is more concerned about the protection of women rights and gender equality. Thus there are no clear cut provisions in the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan which guarantee equal status for women as we find in many other liberal Constitutions or even in the Constitution of erstwhile Soviet Union and in the Constitution of Uzbekistan.

Even if there is an inherent traditional stereotype about the role and place of a woman in the society the Constitution of both the republic still aim and have even achieved to break these stereotypes and have stuck to the national policies as well as international commitments for the empowerment of women. Realization of the need for gender equality by the government bodies is evident from the beginning. Formal equality of men and women are all characteristic of the Kazakh and Uzbek states. However, paucity of effective mechanisms for achieving real equality of men and women has rendered society not absolutely free of gender biases.

The Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Uzbekistan have achieved institutional mechanism to protect women's rights and improve their status. Further fine-tuning and improvement of the mechanisms takes place on an ongoing basis taking an increasing account of the realities of today's life. Kazakhstan with its greater resources and bigger GDP has been able to invest more on social welfare measures and on health and education. This proves the second hypothesis "Better economic position and social status explain greater women's empowerment in Kazakhstan than in Uzbekistan."

The concepts of gender policy are integrated into the national legislation in full and do underlie all legislative and normative acts adopted in Kazakhstan. But the realization of gender-equality goals remain a top-down process characterized by high-level declarative strategies. However, the country's progress toward gender equality has not kept pace with its other accomplishments. The republic of Kazakhstan scores consistently high in terms of other areas but limited progress in women's political participation (Kazakhstan Gender Assessment Report 2013: x). On the other hand the government of Uzbekistan has not yet adopted an official policy on Gender Equality. However, the country has achieved gender equality in selected priority sectors such as in education and health, but these scores are tempered by the limited progress made in women's access to political participation.(Uzbekistan Country Gender Assessment 2014: x). The Government of Uzbekistan also introduced "the Gender Quota system" for gender equality in 2004 Parliamentary election. In spite of this, Uzbekistan the government is consistently taking initiatives for gender equality and political participation of women, which show gradual improvement. Thus the performance of Uzbekistan towards women rights and Gender equality is quite good. In addition,

some laws, for example the labour law, break the principle of gender equality by providing for traditional division of labour. On the other hand some laws providing for women's rights do not fully comply and sometimes disagree with international treaties and conventions that Kazakhstan has either acceded to and/or ratified. There is a need to continuously explore new methods for overcoming gender inequality as well as gender "blindness" in an institutional context (UNDP: 2005: 55).

There is certainly a requirement for women's increased role in decision-making processes for the democratic and constitutional declaration of equal citizenship and rights in the Constitution to become an actuality at the operational level. Citizenship is associated to political participation and representation and therefore lack of ability and opportunity to participate in the political system reduces the possibility of full association in the system. For proper equality to become an actuality for women, the distribution of power on equal basis with men is crucial. But the reality is that women continue to be marginally represented even in areas where the various policies have a direct impact on them. There is still a great gap between constitutional certification and the genuine representation of women in the political system in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Kazakhstan's political system cannot be said to be non-receptive to the emergence of women leaders even though the political representation of women has not particularly registered a significant increase over the period. While on the one hand most women politicians have found it difficult to rise within male dominated party hierarchies, on the other hand some women have managed to become leaders and occupy high offices.

Whether an improvement in number of women in the political process and decision making bodies surely leads to a greater transfer in authority and whether women on equilibrium give better consideration to the concern of women more than male politicians is a matter of debate. It leads to the questions of the possible tokenism to give visibility to women. Therefore women's rights and responsibilities to contribute equally in political life should not be treated as an alternative issue. The political space must belong to all citizens – women and men. If there are lesser women in public life then there are less probability of characteristically female values, priorities

and concerns finding space. Hence women's involvement in political process and decision-making in greater numbers can make a significant difference.

The question should not only be to bring women to positions of power. It is similarly indispensable to sensitize those in power whether men or women about gender. Besides, with this the significance of women's financial sovereignty, education and consciousness and their development in the socio economic sphere can hardly be stressed. The streamlining of gender relations within both the family and society is an equally important step towards freedom, equality and justice.

It is important to point that like the equal right to vote, participation and representation in legislative bodies is not in itself sufficient for women's political empowerment or to cure the problems of inequity faced by women. Only by high representation of women in legislatures and other public bodies the targets of equality with equity is not achieved. It has to be reinforced by other encouraging actions and therefore certain challenges still remain.

Thus in a nutshell, I would argue that a historical glimpse at the evolutionary process of the Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan society from traditional to the present day Republican form of the government it appears that women with the growth of opportunity have shown improvement in political participation. The Representation of women in Parliament of two Republics has been increasing gradually. However it is limited by women occupying important position only marginally. This appears to be the effect of the conservative societies which have been holding women in the shackles of traditionalism. With the coming of the Soviet regime and thus the legislation passed by them in favour of political participation of women, the improvement is only limited and therefore a set of stricter and more affirmative legislation needs to be passed to be able to get a larger proportion of women in the mainstream. The present situation may not serve as the 'ideal mode', but there remains hope of Kazakhstan's and Uzbekistan political system further evolving and implementing laws that would bring women at par with the men in the society and polity.