

PERESTROIKA
AND
WOMEN LABOUR FORCE
IN
SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA

AJAY PATNAIK



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PERESTROIKA
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FOREWORD

The Central Asian Republics of the USSR have figured only in handful of area studies in this country. The focus has been invariably on the Soviet nationality policy in a limited perspective. In fact, there are several aspects of the Soviet Central Asian Society which are comparatively little known outside the USSR. Ethnicity is indeed an important aspect of the Soviet nationality policy. However, there is also a complex interrelationship between ethnicity and the regional development policy in the USSR. The institutional mechanism behind the interrelationship has clearly evolved over the decades. And finally there are a variety of resultant achievements (or non-achievements), which have their own specific character and levels. These, and a host of related issues, have seldom figured in a comprehensive study.

I am happy that I was able to motivate Dr. Patnaik into doing a meaningful research work with regard to the four Central Asian Soviet Republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenia, Kirghizia, and Tadjikistan. The task of socialist transformation in these Asian republics was not only unique but also more complex. His effort to club together the four republics is methodologically justifiable from the standpoint that they share a common Turkic ethnicity, a common Muslim tradition, a similar level of socio-economic development, and a similar history. Apparently, the focus of the study is the women labour force. This is in a sense misleading. The parameters of his research, and analysis, are considerably wider. While pinpointing the broad direction of the on-going social transformation, he seeks to bring out the specifics, such as the cultural tradition, and its impacts on the mode of a population, which is still largely rural in character. His treatment of a variety of problematic issues, namely, high birth

rate, low mobility, low skills, insufficient urbanisation, etc. is fairly competent.

This is indeed a lucid presentation, which will go a long way in bridging a vital gap in Soviet area studies in India. The events, the achievements, and the problems of a society, seeking a socialist transformation, have all been chronicled in a scholarly fashion. Dr. Patnaik's book is a valuable contribution to the history and sociology of development in Soviet Central Asia.

New Delhi
September, 1988

R.R. Sharma
Jawaharlal Nehru University

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The issue of participation of Central Asian women in social production presents a number of complexities. The book focuses on the role of non-economic factors like demography and culture in the process of growth of the women labour force. It also presents a perspective on the social, economic, historical and cultural context in which perestroika is to be situated in the case of Soviet Central Asia. By seeking to place the issue of female participation within the perspective of perestroika, the book visualises the problems that restructuring might encounter in Central Asia and also spells out the emphasis to be given to certain aspects of restructuring.

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