CHAPTER-1
INTRODUCTION

The human history has been a witness to unique and protracted periods of socio-cultural transformation. But the "great socio-cultural transformation of all" such as the abolition of private property in the means of production and the consequent exploitation of man by man constitute the essence of socialist theory. For the first Socialist State- the Soviet Union- the experience of socialist transformation was not only unique but was also much complicated. It required not only efforts to "generate a vast development of productive forces" but also to create an altogether new socio-cultural and economic order. The parameters of the transformation were obviously influenced by the strong legacy of history and culture. Therefore, the reference point has to be the Soviet Union. Specifically in the context of Soviet Central Asia, the experience in socio-cultural as well as economic transformation is unparalleled in human history.

Central Asia, formerly known as "Turkestan" under the Tsars, had been under various regimes for centuries. In the sixth century, Arab Muslims brought Islam to Central Asia. The region and its people presented a sort of "ethnological museum". Barthold observed "the sedentary in Central Asia regarded itself as being in the first place Muslim and then as inhabiting a town or definite region".¹ There were not only many ethnic groups, but also they were further subject to the division of clans, tribes and others. Nationality consciousness was hardly given importance. However, at the

economic level there was a distinct division between the nomadic economy and the agricultural economy of the sedentary regions. So a combination of social, economic, cultural and ideological elements influenced the development of productive forces. According to Barthold "Turkestan on the eve of the Russian conquest was the most backward country in the Moslem world."²

In the middle of the 19th century when the Russians entered into Central Asian region, it emerged from the shackles of a feudal economy and developed a number of characteristics of a "colonial economy". Deutscher aptly described the region as "half empire and half colony".³ The abundant natural resources of Central Asian region were an attractive proposition for imperialist Russia. It provided the need for establishment of new markets for the promotion of Russia's capitalist trade and formed the main reason for the conquest of the region. Lorimer was of the view that the feeling of "land hunger in European Russia was in the main intention due to the character of the Russian economy rather than the absolute relation of population to natural resources".⁴

The Anglo-Russian Treaty (1907) helped to extend Russian sway over Central Asia and Tsarist Russia became the second largest colonial empire after Western Europe. The military conquest of Central Asia was followed by its colonisation. The Russian government was motivated by a number of reasons in its policy of colonisation.

² Ibid, p.3.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
Central Asia’s incorporation into the imperial Russian empire was primarily necessitated by the needs of the developing capitalist economy. The indigenous, primitive feudal economy of Central Asia was quite different from Russia, qualitatively as well as structurally. Tsarist Russia sought to integrate and exploit Central Asia within the framework of capitalist order. According to Lyashchenko “the economic assimilation of Central Asia displayed from the beginning a more decisive capitalist character”. To fully exploit Central Asia, it was necessary to develop the means of transport and communication. This helped in other ways to overcome its physical isolation from the rest of the empire. Russian capitalism at that time was in dire need of raw materials and colonial markets while the Central Asian region with its abundance of raw materials and natural resources were fit for structural integration and exploitation.

However, the Russian capitalist class evinced a kind of subdued interest initially in the development and exploitation of the indigenous resources. The leading capitalist groups of Russia were chiefly interested in the Khanates of Kokand, Khiva and Bukhara, which were mainly carrying trade with Russia. The produce of Bukhara, Kokand, Tashkent and Samarkand were sold in the peripheral countries of the East and in the Russian Empire. Though Central Asian region was rich in natural resources they had no large-scale mineral extracting industries. During the colonial period, Central Asian people were predominantly depended on agriculture. In 1913 only 19 percent of the total population lived in towns and urban settlements. According to the Census of 1917, about 5.4 million people were engaged in

5 Ibid.
agriculture in Russian “Turkestan” of whom nearly 3.4 million were settled agriculturalists and the rest being nomadic cattle-breeders. However, cotton cultivation became main occupation in the colonial period.

After the Tsarist conquest over Central Asia it was converted into a raw material supplying base for the metropolitan industries. So the Tsarist government paid great attention to cotton cultivation and encouraged it at the expense of wheat and other cereals. The fertility of the Ferghana Valley and the successful introduction of American cotton in 1894 made cotton a key product of Central Asia. The area under cotton cultivation grew from 13,200 hectares in 1886 to 597,200 hectares in 1914. The Director of Land Administration in Turkestan wrote in 1913: “Every pod of Turkestan wheat means competition with Russian and Siberian wheat; every pod of cotton means competition with American cotton. Hence it is better to import food grains into the territory and free the irrigated land there for cotton production”.7

During Tsarist rule, Turkestan did not have a mechanical industry and the existing factories were of processing type. The chief industries during that period were artisan workshops and small-factory type enterprises to process agricultural raw materials. Extractive industry in the region witnessed very little development. There was a small mining industry engaged in the extraction of coal, oil and certain ores. The extractive industry in 1913 included 28-coal mines, more than 10 oil fields, 3

6 Devendra Kaushik, Socialism In Central Asia, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1976, p.54.
7 Ibid, pp.55-56.
copper mines and several small enterprises. There were no large-sale manufacturing and metal-processing industries.\(^8\)

However, the new mode of production ushered in changes in the social structure as the region comprised different clans, tribes and feudal nobility. The new forms of rent paid in labour and in kind existed on the eve of revolution, though money rent had come into use with commercialisation of agriculture.\(^9\) Before the October Revolution large number of farm labourers were landless and the policy of least investment in agriculture by both the Russian colonisers and the local feudal lords encouraged the existence of smallholdings by the use of *Chairikari* system of farming. This resulted in a sharp class differentiation in the Central Asian agriculture: at the lowest extreme were the rich landlords, usurers and the kulak class.\(^10\) The rapid impoverishment of the large number of peasants in the process of transition from primitive natural economy to commercial farming highlighted the growth of landless and increasingly indebted poor peasantry. In the cotton district of Turkestan, for example 30 percent of the population was landless, 40 percent had one head of cattle per family and 30 percent had no property and was homeless.\(^11\) However, the Tsarist purpose was to extract the raw materials, not to support in modernising the social structure in each and every field of the society. Therefore, the attempts to develop the education, health, women empowerment and cultural fields were not of much use when the native population could not reciprocate accordingly.

\(^{8}\) Ajay Patnaik, *Perestroika And Women Labour Force in Soviet Central Asia*, New Literature, New Delhi, 1989, p.4
\(^{9}\) Ibid, p.1
\(^{10}\) Ibid, p.2
\(^{11}\) Ibid, p.4
In the field of education, the Tsarist government first opened a Russian school in Samarkand in 1870, with the secular and scientific curriculum. Another Russian-native school was established in December 1884 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan to make the native student comfortable by giving the importance to native culture. By 1911, there were 105 such schools. The school curriculum was divided into two parts, viz., Russian language and arithmetic, etc., taught by a Russian teacher and Muslim religious instruction by a Mullah.\textsuperscript{12}

Even then, the literacy rate was low. The local people were left to the care of the religious institutions, which neither taught modern curriculum nor encouraged girls to study. The Russian students attended the modern schools to which the indigenous students were rarely attracted. The region’s old cultural and educational patterns prevented the native students from attending such schools. The native students were culturally entrenched with the Muslim religious education, while Christian religion was taught to Russian students. The old Maqtabs and Madrasahs continued to play a major role in spreading education. Gradually their numbers increased, for example, there were in Tashkent in 1876, 11 madrasahs and the number grew to 22, by 1910. The total number of madrasahs in three oblasts of Turkestan grew from 313 in 1900 to 328 in 1911.\textsuperscript{13} There were many other obstacles in penetrating the progressive Russian culture into the life of the masses of native people. On the one hand, Tsarism and Russian bourgeois dominating according to their colonial policies and on the other hand, native exploiting classes, Muslim

\textsuperscript{12} Devendra Kaushik, Central Asia, In Modern Time: A History From The Early 19\textsuperscript{th} Century, Progress Publisher, Moscow, 1970, pp.75-76
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
religious leaders and feudal nobility who were becoming rigid in retaining their orthodox culture.\textsuperscript{14} This transitional process prevented the growth of an educated and skilled labour force among the indigenous population.

\textbf{Table: 1}

\textbf{Literacy Level Among Men and Women in 1897, (Percentage)}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSFSR</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Tsarist Russia failed to make concerted efforts to transform Turkestan’s feudal patriarchal society. A host of tradition, customs, sanctified by religion, kept women away from having a life outside the household. They contributed their labour mostly in domestic production. The traditional nature of the society prevented women from competing with men. Dependent on men, crippled by a society, which denied them any access to education or culture, women in Central Asia lived a life without human dignity.\textsuperscript{15} However, Tsarist Russia tried to usher in some socio-

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Devendra Kaushik \textit{op. cit.}, 1976, p.10
cultural reforms, which lead to a movement of popular enlightenment in Turkestan. In the seventies and eighties of the 19th century a group of intellectuals had emerged to propagate the Russian language, culture, secular schools and reform society. But the nascent national bourgeois of Turkestan began to use the movement of cultural awakening in its own interest. In due course, they formed an ideological and political movement named Djadidism in order to oppose the Russification process. This lead to other revolutionary movements: The Worker’s Revolutionary Movement in 1905-07, National Liberation Movement in 1916, and the February Revolution of 1917, which left a remarkable revolutionary legacy for the native population. Thereafter, many uprisings and revolts against the Tsarist regime occurred during the colonial period. At the time of October Revolution the polarisation of class forces was complete. A developed and mature revolutionary situation had led to the outbreak of socialist revolution in Turkestan.

The period of Civil War (October Revolution) was remarkable for the economic and cultural changes in the life of native Turkestan people. It led the native people to cross a transitional revolutionary phase with several ups and downs. The difficulties faced by them, along with the new socialist economic structure of the Soviet system transformed the socio-cultural life of the people.

The first step of Soviet state was the socialist transformation of industries. The workers’ control over all industries was established in the beginning of 1917 up

\[16\] Devendra Kaushik, op.cit.,1970, p.79-80
to the middle of 1918, and the nationalisation of the banks, transport and land was carried out.

A state monopoly in food grains was created and land reforms were implemented. In agriculture the developmental process took time to implement some changes as discussed in the following section.

Agriculture and Land Reform Policy During Soviet Period

Land had been taken over by the Russian Land Reforms process initiated after the revolution on the basis of post-revolutionary Soviet policy intended to reorganise agriculture and its institutional bases. The policy aimed to abolish landowner’s rights to own land and all lands, including equipment and livestock came under the “Land Committee” and the Local Soviets of Peasants. The land reforms had two-fold focus for they sought to:

- Purge the Central Asian society of its colonial functional ethos.
- To liquidate feudal forms of socio-economic relationships, which lead to less productive utilisation of land and water resources.

The Soviet government made serious efforts to mobilise the local peasantry, while the land reforms process faced protests from various sections. These protests were overcome with the help of indigenous peasants organisations called koschi. The land as well as water reforms were carried out in following sequential years, 1921-1922 and again 1924-1928. The land was taken away from immigrants and
redistributed. Started in 1924, the second phase of reforms was completed over a period of three years, which intended to complete the bourgeois - democratic revolution and clean out the medieval forms of land ownership policy. By 1927, the land belonging to big landholders, Beiys and bourgeois were redistributed. In a true sense the Soviets took initiatives to proceed towards the socialistic transformation of the rural structure and build equal and homogenous societies. As a result, the middle class peasantry emerged as the largest single group (61%) while the poor peasantry constituted only 38 percent.

However, the rural landless proletariat of Central Asia, which now received its share in the land, became the socio-economic base of the co-operative movement. The co-operative meant the gradual co-operation of small farmers, with the simplest forms of co-operative organisation to sell the farm produce, supply the goods to peasants and take the initiative for an agrarian credit system. The Soviet government’s plans to raise the number of these small peasant co-operatives went into effect in the early 1920s and many rural co-operatives appeared in Central Asia. These co-operatives of the simplest types became popular and the peasants in large numbers joined them. Various co-operatives were asked to help the Central Asian peasants to strengthen the modern technical base of agriculture and diversify the range of their operation, which were to include the mass dissemination of new cultural values. As time passed the specific focus of the co-operative movement

18 Ibid.
centred on the problems of peasantry in the socialised sector of agriculture when they were pooled into large collective farms.

Bypassing the stage of large-scale capitalist farming based on the exploitation of farm labourers, the state put an effort to convince peasants of the need for Socialist transformation of agriculture. This was necessary to make them feel in practice that the state was genuinely concerned about improving their economic position.

- It was essential to carry out land and water reforms;
- To provide irrigation facilities;
- To supply peasants with modern implements, introduce new agro technical methods and advance credits to make these improvements possible.

For the Soviets, the major problem was to transform a technically backward, partially patriarchal peasant economy into a large-scale mechanised collective socialist economy.

As Turkestan's agriculture based on cotton production, just after the October Revolution, the Soviet government passed a decree on February 28, 1918 Sovnarkom Turkestan Krai, for confiscation of cotton and announced that cotton was the property of the government of Turkestan. Along with cotton ginning and oil crushing industries were nationalised through a decree of Sovnarkom Turkestan on March 5, 1918.19

The Soviet government concentrated its attention towards the fertile lands of Central Asia for its maximum utilisation. Later on, the land of the Uzbek SSR formed the heart of the Central Asian cotton belt, though cotton was also grown in southern Kyrgyz SSR and in parts of Turkmenia SSR and Tajik SSR. It was estimated that during 1928-41 the average investment in the agricultural sector was about 42 percent of the total state investment in Central Asia. This large investment was clearly reflected in the high growth rate of agricultural production, particularly cotton production during 1913-40, which increased by more than three times (it increased over six times by 1961).\(^{20}\)

The Socialist project in the Central Asian regions can be divided into three basic stages:

- Preparation for transition to the Socialist path during the period of 1920-29,
- Mass collectivisation of agriculture from the autumn of 1929 to mid-1939
- Consolidation and development of the collective farms system from the mid-1930s to the initial period of full-scale communist construction,\(^{21}\)

These reforms improved the percentage of agricultural production and the peasant’s position considerably, by putting an end to feudal land and water relationships existing in Central Asian regions. The state granted them credits to purchase implements and draught animals and reduced taxes. As a result the Kulaks, Bais and Moneylenders of Central Asian regions bitterly opposed the Soviet government’s reform polices. They realised that expropriation of surplus land and

\(^{20}\) R. R. Sharma, op. cit. p.22.
water resources, expansion of the network of state machine-hire stations and easy
term credits were depriving them of their weapons of campaign against the
government.

Soviet state co-operatives became popular among the Central Asian peasants. The peasants joined them because they were getting priority in granting credits and selling machines on easy terms. In 1929, agricultural co-operatives in Uzbek SSR and Turkmenia SSR united 80 percent of the peasants. The simplest forms of agricultural co-operatives and the system of state contracts for farm produce prepared the peasants of Central Asian regions for transition to socialism. 22

In Central Asian regions the first collective farms were organised in cotton growing areas, called *tozs* an elementary stage of collective farming, belonging to the individual farmers who were paid not only for their work but also for their animals used in cultivation by the farm. *Tozs* were only mutual aid teams formed for the purpose of jointly cultivating land. In 1930 *tozs* converted themselves into *artels*, which were collective farms with collective ownership of agricultural implements and draught animals. In 1930, there were 14 big state farms (*Sovkhoz*) in Uzbekistan, which helped the collective farms (*Kolkhoz*) in tilling their lands with tractors and helped them in preparing their farm implements. 23 According to the Stalinist constitution of 1936, the collective farmers of each individual farm formally owned the collective farm property, though they are not able to dispose their property.

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23 Devendra Kaushik, op.cit, 1976, pp.132-133.
Collective farms were permitted to sell their agricultural surpluses on the collective farm market, while state farms must sell their produce to the state. In October 1929, about 3.4 percent of the peasants families had joined collective farms in Uzbek SSR and towards the end of the year it increased to 10.08 percent of peasant families. For this purpose, Uzbekistan’s plan was worked out by a special commission of the Executive Bureau of the Central Committee of the Party. The collectivisation of agriculture continued to make rapid strides in the subsequent years. By the end of 1932, 61 districts of the Uzbek SSR out of 79 had become districts of intensive collective farming. In Uzbek SSR collective farms united 74.9 percent of the peasant families. At the end of the Second Five-Year plan, collective farms in the Turkmen SSR united 95.4 percent of all peasant families and 99.4 percent of the entire cultivated land. In Kyrgyz SSR towards the end of 1930, 28 percent of peasant families had entered into collective farms. In Tajikh SSR by 1937, 89.9 percent of the collective farms covered 98.3 percent of all the land under cultivation.24

During the Second World War, the mobilisation of half a million or more Central Asians and the need for foodstuffs, had led to a reduction in the area of land sown with cotton, but by the end of 1940s cotton again became a dominant crop.

Table: 2

Cotton Output Growth In Central Asia (In Thousand Metric Tonnes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Crop Cotton</th>
<th>Yield per hectare (100kg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>1,396</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1,958</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1953 under Khrushchev’s guidance, the Virgin Lands campaign was launched and throughout the decade there was an increase in crop production. By the late 1970s Central Asia produced about 95 percent of the USSR’s cotton and fibres, and that in Uzbekistan ‘white gold’ accounted for something like 65 percent of the republic’s output and employed the services of around 40 percent of the labour force. During the years between 1928-79 cotton output increased some eleven times as against grain production two and half times in the four Central Asian republics.\(^{25}\) The Central Asian agriculture developed apace, substantially increasing the output of all sorts of agricultural produce-cotton, grains, silk, fruits, wool, meat, karakul further raised the living standards of the peasant families.

Industrialisation During The Soviet Period

During the Tsarist period, lack of communication, local markets and financial resources confined the natural resources within the republics. Besides cotton, a limited quantity of copper, oil and coal show extremely low levels of industrial development in Central Asia. Communication difficulties were great because of the vast distances to be covered in desert and semi-desert areas. Therefore soon after the October Revolution the Soviet government issued a decree of Sovnarkom Turkestan on March 16, 1918 to nationalise the oil and coal industries. Subsequently to facilitate the accessibility of communication the government nationalised the rail transport, printing and lithography on March 29, 1918.26

A raw material processing industry arose in Central Asia. Cotton ginning and cotton oil, soap, beer, brick manufacturing and wool cleaning industries began to be established in Central Asian regions. By 1914, there were 818 primitive workshops and factories working in Turkestan, out of these, 425 were located on the territory of modern Uzbekistan and 266, in the Trans-Caspian region of modern Turkmenistan.27 At the same time the Second Economic Conference of the Central Asian Republics took place in April-May 1924, to study various problems related to cotton cultivation and the cotton industry.

The financial assistance extended to the Central Asian people by the Soviet government was quite substantial and vital for their economic development. Between

\[26\] R.G. Gidadhubli (ed.), op.cit., p.166
\[27\] Devendra Kaushik op. cit, 1976, p.59.
1924 and 1931 subsidies from the central budget to the Turkmen SSR and Tajik SSR averaged more than 50 percent and about 80 percent of their budget respectively.\(^{28}\) There were some years when Union subsidies covered 80-90 percent of the expenditure of the Central Asian republics. Central Asia was supplied with technical equipment and machines for industrial establishment and agriculture. Experienced political functionaries and specialists of Russia went to assist Central Asian people. The more the people of Central Asia advanced economically the more they were in a position to contribute to socialist construction of the Soviet Union as a whole. The increase in the cotton output of Central Asia freed the Soviet Union from dependence on imports of this product. The Turkmen SSR and the Uzbek SSR began rapidly to raise the output of oil and gas products, which was needed by the fast growing Soviet industry. The working people of Central Asia began the industrialisation of their republics in 1926-27. In 1927, the Uzbek SSR with the financial assistance of Soviet government established a textile industry and new branches of agricultural raw material processing industries. It also carried out electrification plan and organised the production of agricultural machines and implements.

During the period of 1917-29, certain steps were taken towards the industrialisation of Kyrgyz SSR. The Kizilkie and sulikil coalmines were expanded, a cotton cleaning plant at Kara-su, a silk spinning factory at Osh, and two leather factories at Frunze were erected during the period. In Turkmenia, industrial activities were confined to opening of new silk- spinning and weaving factories in Ashkhabad. But in Tajikh region significant industries were built before the First- Five Year plan.

In the republic 20 percent was invested in industrial development during the First plan, while in agriculture the investment was 50 percent.²⁹

Table: 3

Gross Industrial Production (1928-1940)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Republics</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1940</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uzbek SSR</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmen SSR</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadjik SSR</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyz SSR</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A large-scale construction of cotton ginning and other industries connected with the agricultural products took place. The First-Five Year plan paid attention to the foundation of heavy industries such as oil, chemicals and construction materials. Textile chemicals and food industries were approved in Turkmenia during this five-year plan, which provided for an investment of 270.4 million roubles in the republic’s economy.³⁰ Of course, the fertile lands of central Asian regions demanded agricultural production than setting up industries for other purposes. Even the industries set up in that region concentrated fulfilling the requirements of the agricultural needs. However, rapid changes took place in the economic and social structure of the

²⁹ Ibid, p. 111.
³⁰ Ibid, p. 113.
Central Asian republics. Socialist industrialisation helped to bridge the gap in the level of development of the central regions of Russia and Central Asia. Industrial growth in the central Asian republics between 1940 and 1983 was 23 times for the USSR as a whole, while for Central Asian republics this increase was: Uzbekistan 19 time, Kyrgyzstan 42 times, Tajikistan 20 times and Turkmenistan 12 times. The production of electricity in 1940 was only 0.7 billion Kwh in these republics accounting 1.4 percent of the total output of the USSR. In 1983 the production increased to 74.2 billion Kwh accounting 5.2 percent of the total production.\textsuperscript{31}

This new Soviet policy modified the social structure of the indigenous people. Beginning from the family structure, the Soviet government tried to influence the policy of education, and family structure.

**Family Structure During Soviet Period**

During Soviet period the Central Asian societies were plagued by the archaic customs, superstitions and traditional values. Social traditions and attitudes were regulated by male dominated patriarchal societies where women were suppressed in each and every field. Early marriages, fewer divorce, existence of large families confined socio-occupational mobility and low women’s participation in social production. Early marriages lead to more children with bigger families, which propagated traditional values and cultural entities. The average family size in Soviet Central Asia was about six to ten as compared to the European republics, where the

\textsuperscript{31} R.G. Gidadhubli (ed.), op.cit., p.172
average size of family was only three. Family planning supporters believed that large families affected a women's activity in the public spare such as in education and participation in social production. It was accepted that as number of children increase the educational levels of women drop, which also lead to unemployment and high birth rate.

However, the level of modernisation among Soviet Central Asian women was low. The proportion of intelligentsia or white-collar personnel was also very low. Due to continuation of traditional division of labour within the family the women, who participated in social production hardly had any functional specialization. Women were deprived of all rights, ignorant, isolated from the sun by the feudal household wall and the thick horsehair veil *paranja*. Also, the women were limited within agriculture, collective farms or the state farms. Almost 99 percent of the manual workers in the state farms were women. The rate of women's participation in labour activity did not exceed 40 percent in any of the Soviet Central Asian republics. The existence of large families and high birth rate had a negative impact on economy and on the quality of labour, which affected the education and skill levels of women. Before Soviet power due to lack of family planning policy and education, the rural population increased in absolute numbers. In 1988 the rate of population growth was more than three times higher in the Central Asian republics than in the country as a whole. According to Joseph S. Berline, "the higher the educational level of women

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specifically lower was the size of the family". Thus lack of education is an important factor in the republics lagging behind.

**Education During Soviet Period**

Mass education and mass campaign is another important socio-cultural aspect, which shapes society. Mass illiteracy and ignorance act as a brake on economic and socio-cultural progress.

A man not knowing to read and write cannot operate complex modern machines or properly appraise socio-cultural developments. Uzbekistan before the October Revolution had only 2 percent of literacy and in other parts of Central Asia it was even lower. This reflects the extreme cultural and educational backwardness of the native people. To solve these problems it was necessary to have large number of national teachers, for there were almost none in Central Asian regions. After revolution in April 1918, the Turkestan People's University was opened in Tashkent. A number of highly qualified professors and scientists from Moscow reached Tashkent to work at the university. This university took up the important task of preparing qualified national cadres for the whole of Central Asia. In the same year many Soviet schools began to educate children in their own language.

By 1920, there were 2,022 primary schools in Turkestan with 165,122 children on their rolls, among them 97,000 children of local nationalities. Short-term courses were introduced for the training of local teachers. By the end of 1920, as

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34 Devendra Kaushik, 1976, op.cit., p.147
many as 1,049 persons had been trained to become teachers after finishing such courses in 11 batches. There were 31 vocational and technical schools functioning in 1920 imparting skills to 5,500 persons. Between 1918 and 1920, 11 newspapers were published in the Uzbek language beside several other languages.\(^{35}\)

Gradually the Central Asian people became aware of the value of education. A mass campaign to eliminate illiteracy was launched in the autumn of 1929. A large number of volunteers took part in this movement called kulpokhod. Many small literacy circles and groups were formed in towns and villages.\(^{36}\)

Within two years (1929-1931) more than a million people, mainly peasants, were taught to read and write. Illiteracy among adults was a thing of the past. On 25th July 1930, the Central Committee of the Communist Party introduced compulsory primary education for teacher’s training. This was a great success and there were enough teachers to provide compulsory primary education to the children. In 1937, about half a million of people in Turkmenia were attending the schools.\(^{37}\)

Table: 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Literacy in the Central Asian Republics (Age10-49) (In Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Republics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadjikistan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{35}\) Ibid

\(^{36}\) Ibid, p.140

\(^{37}\) Ibid.
Before the October Revolution, there were hardly any institutions of higher education in the entire Central Asia. In 1968, there were 59 higher educational institutions in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with 307,7 thousand students. Following table presents the number of schools during the 1960s.

Table: 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Uzbekistan 1965-66</th>
<th>Kyrgyzstan 1963-64</th>
<th>Tajikistan 1963-64</th>
<th>Turkmenistan 1963-64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-year schools</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>986.7</td>
<td>218.3</td>
<td>203.3</td>
<td>146.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1255.1</td>
<td>255.7</td>
<td>312.6</td>
<td>189.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


By 1970, 99.7 percent of the country’s population (between 4 and 49 years of age) was literate. In the field of education in the Soviet Union had taken the following steps in general and in Central Asia in particular to spread education:

- After the October Revolution, more than 40 nations acquired their alphabets.

- While the pre-Revolution Turkestan had only 346 general secondary schools attended by 32,400 pupils, by 1970 the republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan had 26,000 schools with an enrolment of 8.6 million.

38 Ibid
At the end of 1971, out of 985,000 researchers in the Soviet Union, nearly 7 percent were in the Central Asian republics.

The progress made in the field of education was tremendous during the Soviet period due to the determination of the Soviet government.\textsuperscript{39}

With time a sizeable national intelligentsia came into being in Central Asia and most of them came from the working class. The intelligentsia was giving new ideas to the people. The creative intelligentsia of the Central Asia was gifted and dedicated to the people. The Tajik historian B. Gafurov, poet Mirzo Tursun-Zade, Uzbek writer statesman Sharaf Rashidov, Kyrgyz writer Chinghis Aitmatev were well known personalities all over the world.\textsuperscript{40} Thus, the introduction of mass education and the emergence of highly qualified intelligentsia put an effort in developing a scientific look in Central Asia. As a result, many academics of sciences were set up in the "forties", and "fifties" in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. The 568 research centres in the Central Asian republics were staffed in 1979 with 66,629 scientific workers including 1,207 with a D.Sc and 17,315 with a Ph.D degree working in all branches of modern science including Kazakh SSR.\textsuperscript{41}

The massive success in mass education enhanced the availability of Newspapers, Magazines and Books in national languages. In 1962, 4,138 titles of books running into a total of 39 million copies were published in the Central Asian republics. Out of these 2,441 titles with a print order of 25.4 million copies, i.e.,

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\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{40} Devendra Kaushik op. cit, 1976, p.140.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, p.142.
about 65 percent were published in the four languages of the republics. Almost 261 journals and periodicals with a circulation of 29.3 million copies were published in the region. At the same time 296 papers with a circulation of 2,931,000 copies were published in national languages. Along with these, in the beginning of the 1960s Central Asia had 41 theatres, 29 Museums, 6,801 large public libraries, 4,809 Cinema halls and 6,000 Clubs.

Women Empowerment During Soviet Period

Emancipation of women was another task for Soviet government. For this, it was necessary to make them socio-culturally as well as politically conscious and convince them about equality with man in each and every sphere of life.

In the 1920s, mainly through a campaign of education and propaganda, the Central Asian women were inspired to participate in social production and government. The Russian Communist women led this campaign. As a result, a group of heroic local women joined the campaign. The land and water reforms also played their part in the emancipation of women. Socialist industrialisation and collectivisation of agriculture contributed to the success of the movement. The establishment of textiles, garment, food and other light industries enabled more women to join the labour force. In the Uzbek SSR more than 157 women were Deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and more than 30,000 Deputies to local Soviets.

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42 Ibid.
44 Ajay Patnaik, Central Asia: Between Modernity And Tradition, Konark Publisher, New Delhi, 1996, p.109
The chairman of the USSR Soviet of Nationalities, Yadgar Nasriddinova, was a distinguished Uzbek woman leader. Uzbek actress Sara Ishanturayeva was a remarkable stage actress who acted in Uzbek, Russian, and other plays. Tamaro Khanum, the celebrated Uzbek singer and dancer was one of the first Uzbek women artists to make a triumphant world tour. Mukkaram Turgunbayeva, Khalima Nasirova and Saodat Kabulova, Bellerina Galiya Ismailova were other well known women personalities on different professions. According to the 1959 Census the number of women workers engaged in public health exceeded that of men (women 300.6 thousand, men 227.1 thousand).\textsuperscript{45}

While creating the necessary conditions for free development of the socio-cultural aspects in the Central Asian Republics, it became essential to pay attention to the better health for women as well as children of the republics. Epidemics, which always took a heavy toll of human lives had to be eradicated. So many medical institutions such as polyclinics, hospitals, mother and child consultation centres, crèches, sanatoriums, holiday homes were established to take care of the Central Asian people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Doctors</th>
<th>Hospital beds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914-15</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{45} Ibid
Medical services were free. Before the revolution, hardly any doctors were there in the Central Asian regions. But after coming under Soviet government, number of doctors and media auxiliary comprising midwives, nurses and pharmacists have been increasing in the Central Asian regions. The number of hospital beds per thousand of population were five to twenty times higher than in Asian countries and almost equal to that of the advanced West European countries and the United States. The number of hospital beds rose from 3,240 in 1913 to 213,400 in 1961 in Central Asian republics. The increase in hospital facilities reveals the importance given to improve people’s health. This trend is evident till disintegration.

Culture During Soviet Period

Soviet writers and researchers gave a new life to many great monuments of the Central Asia’s ancient culture. In Soviet period the epic tales of the Central Asia like the “Manas” have been put down in writing and published. The Central Asian classical poems, fairy-tales and folk songs were published in the original language and translated into other languages of the Soviet people. The Uzbek, Turkmen, Tajik and Kyrgyz people produced their own national drama, opera and ballet. Now they have their own theatre troupes and other performing ensembles and celebrities in drama, musical, vocal and choreographic art. In 1970 the Central Asian republics had 83 theatres including 6 operas houses and 9 theatres for children. Since the development of the Central Asian people was hindered by the dogmas of Islam before revolution, but today the large continent of painters and sculptors and graphic artists

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of these republics are making a worthy contribution to Soviet art. The radio and T.V became a part of their life. Each republic has studios for making features or documentary films. In 1970, the Uzbek film studios released 10 films, Kyrgyz 13, Tajik 27, and Turkmen 18 and the number of film production units increased from 52 in 1914 to 15,561 in 1970.48

Religion During Soviet Period

Another problematic area was related to Central Asian religious institutions. Central Asia is a Muslim majority area. It was another challenge for Soviet authorities to have moderate policies in their dealings with Muslims, such as adoption of legislative measures, setting up of Soviet power, nativisation, and creation of national state formations and expansion of education. The most important decree on “separation of church from the state and school from the church” issued on 23rd of January 1918, called for demolition of all pervasive influence of religion on socio-cultural and political life. This decree made religion a private affair.49

Another ordinance enabled the state to confiscate properties of religious institutions and organisations. In addition, the indigenous Arabic script was changed to Latin and then around 1940 to the Cyrillic script. This reduced the ability of indigenous populations to read religious literature emanating from Saudi Arabia, Turkey or Iran.50 In 1958-64, the Khrushchev’s anti-religious campaign compelled

48 Ibid
49 R.G, Gidadhubli (ed.), op.cit. p.64.
50 John Anderson, op. cit., p.44.
many mosques to close down and reduced the number of legal Muslim worshiping places to 150. There were many harsh attacks on illegal holy places in many parts of the region. In the cities the mullahs lost their economic functions and were physically uprooted, yet they resurfaced in the modern apartment block with its neighbourhood committee regulating many aspects of life in conjunction with mullah, sheikh and bibiotun (a cross between a female mullah and wise woman, who served to educate women and children and ensure the maintenance of ancient customs). From the late 1960s the official Muslim spokesmen visited abroad and portrayed the economic advancement of Central Asia. From 1968 the Muslim Spiritual Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan published a glossy journal about Muslims of the Soviet East, published in six languages, which mentioned the life of Soviet Central Asia in glowing terms and maintained contacts with the foreign religious leaders.51

All records of religious groups holding the death, marriage and birth ceremonies were handed over to the local Soviets. At the same time the Soviet government emphasised on spreading of education and campaigning for changing the outlook of Muslim women. Besides industrialisation and collectivisation of agriculture and attempts to introduce new festivals and customs, the Soviet Union could slowly and gradually suppress the rise and spread of Pan-Islamic tendencies. This transformed the socio-economic, political and cultural arenas in Soviet Central Asia.

However, such developments faced protests too. The reactionary Mullahs, bourgeois nationalists, Bais and Kulaks were all against new Soviet schools, and

particularly against educating girls. Throughout this struggle, there were many changes from the Arab script to the Latin script and adaptation of a national script on the basis of the Russian alphabet. These script reforms brought about a popular Cultural Revolution and helped the Central Asian people draw nearer to the socialist culture of Russia.

Within half a century, many socio-cultural changes transformed the Central Asian mind. The Soviet government invested all kinds of resources to the improvement of education, health system, and women empowerment and to reform the traditional culture. Training, family and health matters represent a long-term process. So their fruits in terms of higher productivity are seen only after a considerable delay. The attentions to the long-term effect of these changes were drawn by a report on Soviet Central Asia by the United Nations Economic Commission. It comments:

"Resources devoted to the improvement of education and training as well as health represent a long-term investment in the sense that their fruits, in terms of higher productivity, are reaped only with considerable delay. It may therefore be expected that the impressive achievements in these fields will contribute much to the increase of productivity over the next one or two decades. A higher level of education is not only a source of higher productivity within the given occupational pattern, but it is also apt to exert pressure for further change of that pattern, in the direction of industrialisation and urbanisation. It is important in this respect, that cultural change has affected the rural no less than the urban population... The
revolution in cultural patterns already carried out in Central Asia therefore contributes to make the long-term economic prospects for the region favourable.\textsuperscript{52}

The Tsarist rule had given birth to forces and socio-economic conditions which aspired for radical change. These were blocked on either side by the interests of the colonial rule on the one hand, and by the inner contradictions and the traditional interests of the native power elite. Therefore, the efforts made in these directions proved more productive, impressive and result-oriented since the early 1950s. The changes brought about the basic socio-cultural structures and the national-state delimitation created the basis for a speedy removal of economic and socio-cultural backwardness. By eliminating the grounds for national antagonism it enabled the people of the Central Asia to be drawn into the historic task of building a socialist state.

Till active Soviet intervention, Central Asian Regions was extremely backward. The 1936 constitution turned the Central Asian region into separate republics. Even under Soviet rule, the republics strived to maintain their unique identity. The transition after independence since 1991 has not been easy, with economic crisis, political problems and social upheavals. The region’s experience with market economy had very tragic consequences for the people, especially the women.

The study focuses on socio-cultural changes in two republics, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan after independence. In order to reflect on the socio-cultural changes

\textsuperscript{52} Devendra Kaushik, op.cit., 1976, p.149.
after 1991, the nature of Soviet experience is also discussed. The two republics benefited from the Soviet policies, yet at the same time their resources helped to maintain the gigantic Soviet state apparatus, without the republics getting adequate compensation.

The introductory chapter looks into the progress of Central Asia, under Soviet Union prior to 1991. It deals with measures adopted by the USSR to transform the region. The Soviet state’s attempts at a demographic policy, national question, modernisation of social structures etc. are discussed here.

After the break up of the Soviet state in 1991, the two republics had to go in for massive economic restructuring. This dismantled the welfare state, with tragic consequences for the public. The second chapter debates on the effects of the post-Soviet phase in education and cultural arenas.

The focus of the third chapter is on the experiences of women during the transitional phase. To further clarify this process, the women’s position prior to 1991 is also looked into. In both the processes, changes in education and health played a vital role.

The fourth chapter takes up the delicate issues of inter and intra-ethnic tension in these two republics. Ethnic tensions erupted during the perestroika period and resulted in the ethnic riots of 1989 and 1990. What are the causes and consequences of these ethnic conflicts are discussed here. How such conflicts are managed in the post-Soviet period is also discussed in this chapter.

The concluding chapter attempts to summarise the discussion of the previous chapters.