

Foreword

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Foreword

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Mongolia is known to the outside world by the greatest empire ever raised that spread over the Asian and the Eurasian continent under Chinggis Khaan. Empires have risen and fallen in the course of history. After the fall of his empire, very little remained to be talked about Mongolia except the incredible stories of extensive campaigns and conquests made by her warriors.

Centuries after centuries passed: Mongolia returned to the normal life- pattern of great Central Asian region and her society was back to its equilibrium.

The authors of this work has focused on Mongolian woman after the fall of the empire down to the times of the rise of Soviet power in its neighborhood in 1917, then the implosion of Soviet Union in 1991 and finally the emergence of contemporary Democratic Republic of Mongolia.

These are varying eras of Mongol history. Historians will compile the historical data of those eras but understanding Mongol society through the life and work of their women folks will give interesting insight into that society. This is precisely what the authors of this work have done.

Around the middle of 13th century AD when Chinggis the great conqueror embarked on vast campaigns in Asia, the Mongol women enjoyed greater amount of freedom, at the same time leaving space for men to fight, to conqueror or to get killed on the battlefield. This has to be taken into consideration in the broader spectrum of the status of women in other parts of Asia. For example, this was the time when a woman of Turkic descent namely Razia Sultan ruled over the vast Indian kingdom of the Slave dynasty. Almost in the epoch and in the spiritual realm, we have a female hermit of great popularity in Kashmir, named Laleshwari (Lalded) conveying message of peace, harmony and love among human beings. The impact of her message of humanism is still held in great respect not only by her own people but peace loving people all over the world.

However, the long medieval period saw the Mongol women enslaved to home chores allowing them no space for growth of independent personality.

Nevertheless sustaining social structure of Mongol society remained integral to Mongol woman's life activity side by side with men folks. She became partner in population mobility, nomadic settlements, cattle breeding and petty agrarian activities. She was a partner sharing responsibility and performing duty as desired

by the contemporary society.

In an over-all assessment, her life pattern was very close to what obtained in the wide region of Central Asia where we find a combination of nomadic and tribal life style flourishing. The rise of Soviet State in close geographical proximity impacted Mongolian society and its institutions including governance and political system. Though like the Central Asian states Mongolia was not under the suzerainty of the Soviet Union, yet in a sense Mongolia could not escape Soveitization.

Transformation of Mongolian society by her women from medieval to modern life and thought, was undoubtedly brought about by Mongolia's close cooperation with Soviet Union. For the first time, after the revolution of 1921 in Mongolia, the Mongol woman got equal rights with man. She became partner in all productive activity contributing in strengthening economy. Doors of education from lowest to highest levels including professional and technological were flung open on her. She became active, vibrant, and creative. Her talent flourished because of exposure to all walks of life. She became not only a political activist but also a stakeholder of power, in all organs of state. Mongol men folk found a new healthy and pragmatic role awaiting Mongol woman. She exercised the practice of trade and commerce and within six decades of Soviet influence it helped Mongol woman cast aside her age-old backwardness and isolation, and rose to become a teacher, a doctor, a technocrat, a bureaucrat a diplomat and a jurist.

The collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 inevitably snatched away from Mongol women all those privilege and concession, which the Soviet system provided to the Soviet Central Asian States. Education, medical health assistance, employment and social security suddenly stopped. Now the Mongolian women had to fend for themselves. A life of new responsibilities and compulsions began for her.

The consequences of cessation of Soviet era privileges almost shattered Mongol society with worst impact on woman and children.

The transition period from communist model to democratic model was painful. There were no jobs; there was no free education and there was no health support. It is this phenomenon that the present study brings into focus. It tells us about new social institutions that had to be forged to take care of unemployed women and youth, errant kids turning into begging and bullying street kids and woman striving to put a break to this situation.

The interesting and educative part of the writing deals with the role women in Mongolia are playing in rebuilding and shaping their country in new political dispensation. Her problems are enormous but at the same time, institutions are created for women to play active role and hasten the transformation.

The best possible way to estimate and evaluate their role and the methodology adopted by the authors is to interviewing and recording interviews with ten

prominent women working in different walks of social reconstruction. The interviews have been faithfully recorded and are open for any researcher to examine and draw inferences. This gives credibility to the assertions and inferences made by the authors.