

A Study on the Transition of Women's Social Status in Contemporary Russia

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Abstract. It has been more than 20 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, during which the successor States of the former Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, implements a series of reforms. Russia has developed greatly at all levels of social life, and Russian women's social status has changed as well in the transformative period. In this paper, changes of the Russian woman's social status in the past 20 years have been combed entirely and deeply analyzed.

Introduction

It has been more than 20 years since the Soviet Union collapsed, and the contemporary Russia is now being in a transformative period of social system. Russia has transited from planned economy to market economy in economy and has carried out the democratic election system in politics. The Russian women's status has experienced a process from sudden deterioration to gradual steadiness and even steady rise in political, economic, and cultural life.

A. The Transition and Its Reasons for Contemporary Russian Women's Social Status in the States

1) The Russian Women's Political Status Has Experienced a Process from Deterioration to Gradual Rise in the Past 20 Years

In the early period of the Soviet Union's collapse, to the situations of the women's post in Russian Federation and every main area of legislation, justice, and enforcement, the political status of Russian women was worsen seriously.

Russian Federation and Local Legislatives

At the beginning of the Soviet Union's collapse, the quantity of female deputies in the Upper House of Russian Federation is very low. Among the 178 members in the Upper House, there just was only one female deputy in 1993 and 1995 as well as 1999, there were 3 female deputies in the Upper House.

In the Lower House (the State Duma)'s three elections before of Russian federation, the proportion of female member also have a successive decline of 13.6%, 10% and 7.6% respectively. In some organizations campaigning for party seats, only the first session had the women's organization called the Russian women's campaign, which never appear again in the following several sessions.

In the Duma's kinds of committees, female leaders often belong to some softer committees instead of the decision areas of national development in politics and economy as well as their latter signatures on many lists of vice-chairman.

In the 89 main local Congress of Russia, the number of female deputies is similar to Congress of the Union, for there is even no any female deputy at some regions. In the third session of local Duma, the female deputies were not only few but also responsible for the social education work, etc.

2) Federation and Local Judicial Field

In the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 20th century, the judicial authority of the Federation, like the Russian Federal Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court of arbitration, there were only two women among the 40 highest leaders and no female leader in the Supreme Court of arbitration's leadership. In the leadership of local judicial authorities, the situation of female leaders is similar to the Federal Government, and some regions' were even worse.

3) Federation and local executive authorities

In the third session of Russian Federal Government, there were a total of 74 officials among the ministerial level while only 3 women, including a Deputy Prime Minister. Neither the among 7 special representatives of the president in 7 Federal Districts dispatched by President Putin nor the 89 Russian main local chief executives have no women.

With the stability of Russian politics and the speeded-up pace of economic development, Russian entered in 21st century. The Russian women's economic status has been raised significantly, and their independence consciousness has been strengthened, as well as their requirements of politics have been increased. According to statistics, at present the Russian women's organizations of different level are more than 400, including 5 national levels, 17 international levels for the rest of local levels.

Russian women have been struggling persistently for their rights. According to statistics, in the fifth session of the Federal Council (Upper House), female members accounted for 4.9 % (0.5% in 1998). The female members of the State Duma are 61, accounting for 14 % (10% in 1998). The female members of federal main local meeting accounted for 12%. There is a significant increase in the number of women in politics. By 2011 there have been 3 female ministers among the Russian Federation 26 ministers.

In administrations of all levels, women also are in majority. (Women account for 58% in the legislature, 70% in executive organ and 79% in procuratorial authorities). Female senators in political parties of the State Duma increase by years as well. Female senators account for 41.12% in local elections in 2012, with an increase from 39.78% in 2011.

As what have been mentioned above, despite some improvement in Russian women's political participation, there still is a long distance from political equality between male and female. Generally speaking, women in Russia have not acquired high political status, and when compared to women in Europe and U.S., there is still a huge disparity between them.

B. The Reasons for the Changes of Russian Women's Social Status in the Recent 20 Years

1) The Effect of Social Traditional Thoughts

In the Soviet Union's first constitution, it determined the equality between men and women and women had the right to vote and be elected. In the construction of socialism, women's cultural level and status in the society increased day by day in Soviet Union. The proportion of women participating in government and political affairs was higher in Soviet times, especially in the late Soviet Supreme elections. The proportion of female members promoting the election ever reached 34.5%. The number of women cadres in government agencies also accounted for a proportion, but these women leadership, which represented through the women of the communist party committees. They had political power in theory, in fact, they lacked of political power, for women rarely entered the decision making power--the Politburo, in the practical politics.

After the social transition, the original system of selection was displaced by free competition. The female politicians who have never gained the rights of participating in government and political affairs are at sea, and the social groups are difficult to understand why the female should participate in the policy making and executing. In the meantime, the group of women themselves also doubts the female politicians' capacity. Social and women consciously consider that female should be the participator of social politics and construction rather than the decision maker.

2) The Incomplete Economic and Social Insurance System Make Women Have No Overwhelming Interest on Their Political Status

In the early of the collapse of the Soviet Union, social transition result in the Russian economic downturn, and the poorer classes started to appear. The group of women was shocked at first. A large number of women lost their job, even reached 80% of the total unemployment. The government reduced the investment of education and health, making the mother can not get the social insurance. Women did everything just for lives, so they were unconcerned about political.

3) The Effect of Women's Organizations

At the same time, a lot of Russian women's organization and non-governmental organization appeared. From 1993 to 1995, they had registered women's organization about 400. They seldom participated in political campaigns and coordinated and cooperated with other women's

organization in different areas. They just worked to help women get back to work and improve their living conditions.

In recent years, Russia women's organizations have already realized it, and they have attempted to unite all sectors of society to fight for the equality of men and women.

Russian Women's Status in the Economic Life in Recent 20 Years

A. Russian Women's Pauperization in the Early of the Soviet Union's Collapse

In the 1990s, planned economy transformed into market mechanism, Russian women became the biggest victim, unemployment stayed higher. From 1991 to 1998, the women accounted for two thirds of the 12 million unemployed populations, 8 million, and some area's proportion even reach up to 90%. Therefore, the working women had higher education level than the man, but women and man had the unequal employment opportunity, they faced the bigger threat of losing their jobs.

There are many aspects to explain the reasons why it's hard to improve the economic statue of women in Russia. Firstly, large-scale privatization reforms have made the national economy declining. A large number of state-owned assets concentrated in the hands of groups of men, and women have become a drag on business transformation. Therefore a lot of women leave their jobs, and lose a stable source of income. Many women earn a living by doing odd jobs, and others go back their home and part as a housewife. Secondly, the social conception, which holds the discrimination and rejection to women entrepreneurs, also press the difficulty of women's business. Thirdly, the state is lack of supporting re-employment measures, the stipulations of law about gender equality in the economic sphere are destructed for many times. The equal thoughts of employment between men and women don't gain the social recognition.

B. The Contemporary Russian Women in the Workplace

1) The Significant Increasing Employment Rate of Russia Female in Recent Years VS. Their Low Position in the Workplace and Lower Salary than Men

For the employment situation of women in the early period of Soviet Union's collapse, Russian women and women's organizations in all walks of life take measures actively to minimize the impact of the reform as little as possible, and help women to get out of trouble. In recent years, the condition of Russian women in the labor market has been improved apparently.

PhD in Sociology, Kryshantovskaya says that Russian Women has made a breakthrough in business. Many of them get the high positions and high wages, which have a deep impact on Russian society. Family condition, which is dominated by man, has been a past. In 2009, the operational ratio of All-Russian citizens with labor capacity: men 73.7%, females 62%.

In addition to traditional "male" occupations: construction, fishing, mining, etc., and the employment rate of women in other industries accounts for the vast majority.

Average monthly wage of men and women: Male: 240,000 roubles, female: 156,000 roubles.

The unemployed, women accounted for 7.9%, men accounted for 8.4%.

Russia female received a high level of education, but there is still low proportion of female in leadership positions. Most of them engage in some less demanding on technology and low paid jobs, and even some of the dirty work. On the other hand, the average monthly wage of men and women also confirmed this point.

2) Some Russian Women Begin to Run a Small Business and Succeed.

Female are careful and meticulous to the work, and have a flexible attitude toward cooperation, also Russia women receive higher level education, which determines that women have made great achievements in the business under the same conditions. According to the Ministry of Labor of Russian Federation, women, and children, in recent years, 70% of Russian women are studying economics and management, and they are striving to develop their own business. For the needs of society, there was a large number of training courses nurturing the future women entrepreneurs, especially at photographic enlargements, sewing, hairdressing, food and other aspects. The number of female workers in financial industry is up to 70%. Also, a lot of women are engaged in trading company managers and agents. Because of enduring hardships and working hard, many Russia

women obtain the success through struggling by themselves under the condition of lacking funds and loaning hardly. These small and medium enterprises are mostly concentrated on light industry, service sector, art and other traditional "female" sections.

3) The Share of Female Senior Managers Is Increasing.

Recently, a survey, which includes 76 companies, shows that the share of female leaders is increasing from 2008 to 2010. Female account of the vast majority on Chief: (91%), 65% of HR managers, 49% of financial managers. At the same time, the number of female chairman is increasing. The number of female chairman of the 2010 is double than 2008.

The features of the female determine that the female staff is more loyal and reliable. In 37% of the interviewed companies, female employees work longer than men on average. 42% of the interviewed companies show that the female candidates accept higher level education and possess more necessary vocational skills. Fourth companies consider that the female can display higher level working ability and hard-working spirit. 20% of companies think that women have psychological preparation on low pay.

Since the increase of female managers, companies begin to focus on the protection of women's rights when they develop policies. In the interviewed companies, there are 8 % of companies having stipulations to protect the women's rights. More and more companies allow mothers of infants with flexible working hours. According to survey, such companies account of 25% in 2010, and 39% in 2011. 9% of the company developed a regression of women when they finish the maternity leave and more than half of the women care for 1 to 2 years old children at home.

The Change of Contemporary Russian Women's Status in Marriage and Family

A. The Changes of Female Status in Family in the Past 20 Years

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, female become the main provider of the family. Former Soviet subverted the traditional patriarchal society, women were given equal rights with men, so that women are no longer a men's appendage. In the former Soviet Union, raising a family is no longer the men; women's wages has become an important source of household income, which plays an important role in family income.

After the Soviet Union's collapse, great changes have taken place. Many companies with high wages, good payment and good prestige shut down suddenly. A large number of men working in these sectors lost their job. Not only had they lost wages but professional skills, so that women feel a great sense of responsibility. They have to fight to feed their families; Russian women's tough, hard-working tradition has been the greatest play. The Russian women adapted to social change with the fastest speed, they did not care about social status, whether the work was decent, the most important thing for them was to support the family.

The younger generations of Russian women are affected by democracy politics, their values change with the changes of economic status, and they have a stronger sense of independence, a greater emphasis on equality and extend individuality. They worship personal struggle and success. They are no longer satisfied to marry a rich husband, be a full-time wife at home, help the husband and teach the children.

They know freedoms and rights are built on economic foundations, so they rely on their own labor income, and spend their money according to their willing. In their view, work not only can bring economic income, but more of a way of life, which is a way to obtain social status and social approval.

B. The Diversification of Family Pattern

Compared with the former Soviet Union, there has been a diversified trend of family patterns in today's Russia, and women are free to choose lifestyles suited to them. For Russian women, children are the most important components of the family; raising children reflects a woman's greatest value. Compared with the Soviet period, the marriage rate in contemporary Russia falls while divorce rate rises; In addition to the reason of deterioration of family economy, the consciousness of male members supporting the family lessens; "sexual liberation" becomes more prevalent with sexual need is not fully consistent with marriage; non-marital cohabitation,

premarital sex and other relatively common phenomenon, also, prevail. So the women no longer consider that marriage is the only way to raise children. According to the survey from Casino Victor Company in 2008, 56% of women think that if they can't find their right husband, they should at least raise their own children. It is not to say that husband is not important, but children are the symbol for Russian women's highest value. These ideas also show a growth in Russian women's awareness of female independence. From Casino Victor Company's report in March 2008, we get the knowledge that 90% of women believe that unmarried women can make greater achievement in their career.

Highly educated and hard-working, Russian women's social status and role of the workplace become increasingly significant. At the same time, the men who suit them are rare, so the more achievements they get, the more loneliness they get. If portrayed, the contemporary Russian women should be: hard-working, kids first, eager to get lovers' care and attractive.

Conclusions

According to the 2010 census results across the country, Russia's population is 142.905 million, with 66.205 million men, accounting for 46.3% and 76.7002 million women, accounting for 53.7%. Female population increased by 0.3% compared with that in 2002 in which men accounted for 46.6% of the total population and women accounted for 53.4%. In aspect of population, Russian women have been dominant all the time. But Russian women are still in a subordinate position in many other aspects of life. Economic advancement, changes of traditional values and enhancement of independent consciousness have caused a great contradiction for Russian women with the real social status of them. Thus, there still have a long way for the Russian women to go to eliminate discrimination and campaign for equality.

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