



Coverage Of Women's Issues In The Periodical Press During The Perestroika Period

Shaimkulov Azamat Xolmuratovich

Director of the Gulistan Regional Branch of the Academy of Public Policy and Administration under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the coverage of women's issues in the periodical press of Uzbekistan during the Perestroika period. Particular attention is paid to the socio-economic status of women, their participation in public and political life, difficult working and living conditions, maternal and infant mortality, family problems, and cases of self-immolation among women. The study analyzes how the policy of glasnost enabled the press to discuss previously concealed social problems more openly and critically. It also highlights the role of journalistic articles and essays in revealing the social, economic, and political causes of women's problems and in shaping public opinion regarding women's rights and their position in society. The findings show that the periodical press of the Perestroika era became an important platform for bringing women's problems into public discourse and strengthening attention to their social protection and rights.

KEYWORDS: Perestroika, women's issues, periodical press, women's rights, social problems, self-immolation, public opinion, glasnost, Uzbekistan, women's social status.

INTRODUCTION

During the Perestroika period, the women's issue was put forward as one of the important state tasks. At the 19th All-Union Conference of the former CPSU, M.S. Gorbachev emphasized that the status of women was a barometer of the democratization of any state and an indicator of respect for human rights [1].

During this period, women of Uzbekistan actively participated in all spheres of the republic's socio-economic life – production, politics, and cultural life. In particular, in 1987, women accounted for 43% of workers and employees engaged in the national economy of Uzbekistan. At the same time, women constituted 51.2% of specialists with higher and specialized education in the republic's national economy, including 57.5% among doctors, 76.5% among librarians, and 59.2% among teachers. Eight thousand women headed enterprises, organizations, and institutions, while 88.2 thousand managed workshops, sections, departments, and other structural units [2]. During this period, women deputies constituted 35.9% of the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR and 47.8% of deputies of local Soviets.

The Soviet system elevated women to the status of equal members of society alongside men and created conditions for their active participation in social life. Nevertheless, the situation and living conditions of women in Uzbekistan, especially in rural areas, remained extremely difficult. Under the conditions of the cotton monoculture, when all strata of the population were involved in hard labor, the heaviest burden fell on women. While the share of manual labor in Uzbekistan's agriculture amounted to 70%, 90% of those engaged in it were women [3].

Along with women's role and achievements in public life, their problems, difficult living conditions, family divorces, and the resulting situation in which children became living orphans were widely brought to public discussion in the press [4].

One of the acute problems directly related to the women's issue in the republic was the increase in mortality among children under the age of five. In particular, while 31% of every 1,000 infants born in 1970 died before reaching the age of one, in 1987 this figure amounted to 45.9%. According to data from 1987, 46.6% of every 1,000 infants born in Jizzakh region died, while in Olot and Gijduvon districts this figure amounted to 53.4% and 72.8%, respectively. The maternal mortality rate in the republic was also high.

Another of the most pressing problems raised in the press during the Perestroika period was the issue of suicide among women. Cases of women setting themselves on fire as a means of bringing a personal problem to the social level had also occurred in earlier periods. However, in the 1980s this phenomenon became widespread: according to information published in the press, in Uzbekistan 270 women in 1988 and 250 women in 1989 committed suicide by setting themselves on fire. It was only during the years of Perestroika that it became possible to speak openly in the press about such tragedies. Uzbek intellectuals, poets, and writers attempted to raise the issue of suicide among Uzbek women at various levels, including the highest platforms of the country [5].

The article "Victim of Indifference," published in the newspaper Yosh Leninchi on April 9, 1988, presented distressing statistics on cases of women setting themselves on fire: "...while 31 cases of self-immolation were registered in Samarkand region last year, criminal proceedings were refused in 24 of them. In Kashkadarya region, criminal proceedings were not initiated in 23 out of 37 cases, and in Bukhara region, in 10 out of 16 cases. Last year, in the republic as a whole, criminal investigations were refused in 88 cases related to self-immolation... Cases of punishing those responsible remain rare; moreover, they are often given unjustifiably lenient sentences without taking into account the social danger and severity of the crime" [6].

Publicistic articles and essays devoted to this topic attempted to interpret the essence of the phenomenon and reveal its socio-economic causes. The articles demonstrated that the tragedy of women who set themselves on fire was not merely the result of remnants of the past, but a rebellion of helpless women whose fate had been forgotten, who had been left without faith and hope and without protection because of the totalitarian system, economic deprivation, and violations of human rights.

At the same time, the press also criticized the Tursunoy movement organized in the 1960s, which did not proceed from the fundamental interests of the people and contradicted the objective needs of social development. The Perestroika press demonstrated the consequences to which hard labor and unfavorable working conditions for women had led.

In conclusion, during the years of Perestroika, the press brought the women's issue, along with many other acute problems, into broad public discussion. This played an important role in shaping public opinion regarding the place of women in the development of society and in strengthening the struggle for women's rights.

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