

All about russia



Every society in the world with its embolic powers of coexistence with the nature's upheavals and society's turbulence is always on the move towards growth and development for assuring the maintenance for the generation next. This typical feature of the Society is its Character by which it is recognized. This Character is further determined by the interaction of traditional culture, its Land and its social and political tendencies, which since centuries are digging deeper roots in the consciousness of the citizens and their intellectual attitude towards life and society.

In 989 when St. Vladimir accepted Christianity, Russia took its first step forward to take over the heritage of Constantinople. Again in 1453, when New Rome of Constantinople had fallen to Turks, Moscow emerged as a "Third Rome" and the Soviet Union after taking its own course became a new synthesis of the dialectic of history and its Duke became the "Tsar of All the Russians". The history of Russia begins with the East Slavs, an ethnic group, which was eventually split into Russia, Ukrainian and Belarusians.

This group emerged from the Vikings who were the barbarian tribes and illiterate pagans indulged in the activity of raping and pillaging, but they were technologically quite advanced and had stable organizational set up. These Vikings entered the Black sea through the Russian river systems known as "Varangians" (from their name in Slavic, now Varyag in Russian), but when they settled in the area, they came to be known as Rus. Primary Chronicle even says that, "These particular Varangians were known as Russes." (Ross, Successors of Rome: Russia, 862-Present, Grand Princes of Kiev, Para.

1). Kievan Rus was the first East Slavic state that was converted to Christianity in 988(Online, Russian Church Architecture) and they brought with it the Cyrillic alphabet, which got authenticity by the Soviet Union along with the other unrelated languages like the Turkish of Central Asia. Poland and the Baltic States brought Latin alphabet characteristic of Francia and the Jews of Poland wrote Yiddish in the Hebrew alphabet. And with the passing time, the small nations of the Caucasus like the Armenians and Georgians started using their own alphabets.

(Ross, Successors of Rome: Russia, 862-Present, Introduction, Para. 2) After the 13th century, Moscow became the vast cultural centre and by 18th century, the Grand Duchy of Moscow formed the huge Russian Empire, stretching from Poland towards the Pacific Ocean. By 19th century, development in the Western Countries created an incredible influence on the Russia, which led Russian regime to make the way for reforms for the overall growth and development. As a result, Russian serfdom was abolished in 1861 but it proved to be fruitless for the peasants that led to the building of revolutionary pressures.

With the abolishment of Serfdom and the beginning of World War I in 1914, Russia saw numerous changes in the economy and politics. The most prominent reform was the reform of Stolypin agrarian reforms, which transferred the archaic obshchina form of Russian agriculture towards more progressive and capitalist oriented form of agriculture, giving private ownership rights to the farmers, second was the First constitution of 1906 which was also known as fundamental laws and was enacted on April 23rd, thirdly there was the establishment of State Duma.

A State Duma constituted one of the several representative assemblies of modern Russia. These reforms brought about numerous changes in economy and even in the politics of Russia, but still the autocratic rule of the Tsars did not vanish completely and the result was the Russian Revolution in 1917. There were two revolutions in Russia: First Revolution was the overthrowing of the Tsar and formation of the Provisional Government and the other was the October revolution in which Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government.

The life in Russia during Revolution saw the immense change and uncertainty. On one hand cities and industries were mushrooming whereas on the other hand there was great level of uncertainties. Rural population began to migrate more and more towards the industrially centered areas, middle class of white-collar employees, businessmen, and professionals like doctors, lawyers, teachers, journalists, engineers, etc. were on the rise. Nobles too were undergoing through different stages, finding ways to adjust themselves in this changing economy.

Two types of classes emerged- proletarians and capitalists, who were divided along the lines of status, gender, age, ethnicity, and belief. There was emergence of different groups- migrating peasants, worker intellectuals, gentry professionals etc. which changed the whole texture of the life of people inculcating themselves into the world of materialism. This rapid industrialization led to the over crowding of the urban areas and poor conditions for urban industrial workers.

A new proletariat was formed between 1890 and 1910 due to the increase in the population of the St Petersburg and Moscow from 1, 033, 600 to 1, 905,

600. Thus there was unrest everywhere which was the ground enough for the Russian revolution to fuel. The Russian revolution brought the coalition of liberals and moderate socialists to power on the one hand and then Communist Bolsheviks on the other. Between 1922 and 1991, there was the beginning of the new era in the history of Russia when Soviet Union came into existence, a union that held the roots of ideological thoughts and perceptions.

The beginning of the post-Stalinist in 1919's saw the growth of media and intervention of TV and radio programs in its vicinity, which led to the real awakening among the Russians in all the social, political and economic spheres. Stalinism with this Marxism and Leninism approach replaced the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the year 1920 with Five Year Plans of 1928 and collective farming, which by the end of 1930 led the Soviet Union to be emerged as the major Industrial power in the world, but this had adverse effect on the peasants due to the collective policy and the repressive measures of the Government.

The repressions and political, social and economical upheavels led to the "era of stagnation" in the 1980s. But by the late 1980s, the weaknesses in the economic and political structures led the Communist leaders to embark upon the major reforms, resulting in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the Russian Federation. By the mid of 1990 when Yeltsin came to power he adopted most unpopular Yegor Gaidar's shock therapy for putting an end to the price controls, cutting in state spending, and starting of the open foreign trade regime in early 1992.

These reforms were the blow to the living standards of most of its citizens, especially for the groups who were enjoying the benefits of Soviet-era state-controlled wages and prices, state subsidies, and welfare entitlement programs and consequently Russia suffered an economic downturn much more severe than the United States or Germany had undergone six decades earlier during the Great Depression. On the other hand these economic reforms opened the doors of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, for the largest and fastest privatization in the world.

The big enterprises were acquired by the old managers, leading to criminal mafias and Western investors, and at the bottom level there was inflation, unemployment, prostitution, and crime. Tax revenues had collapsed and Russia's economy was further plunged into the Financial crises in 1998. Russian Economy again recovered in 1999, due to the increase in the world price of oil and gas. (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, Russian Federation, para. 5) By 2000, Yeltsin gave his resignation, and gave the reigns of the government to the Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin.

The whole of the character of the Russian Industry was dependent on the combined efforts from the various spheres of economy. Russia did not rely on the European powers but leaped towards the development on its own efforts, the separate branches made tremendous progress, which rose with extraordinary speed especially between the first revolution and the war and made the Russian historians say, “ We must abandon the legend of backwardness and slow growth. ” When the war was at its peak the tsarist Russia had prospered to considerable degree; as for every one hundred square kilometres of land, Russia had, at the time of war, 0.

4 kilometers of railroads, Germany 11. 7, Austria-Hungary 7. (Trotsky, Peculiarities of Russia's Development, Para. 17). The Financial Institutions had also developed in Russia to implement the growth of Industrial Revolution but the heavy industries such as metal, coal and oil were all under the control of foreign finance capital, which had created auxiliary and intermediate system of banks in Russia, and it was true for light industries also. The other nations were holding 40 per cent of the stock capital of Russia, but in the leading branches of industry this percentage was much higher.

The Russian industry even influenced the social character of the Russian bourgeoisie and its political physiognomy and the concentration of the industries meant that there was no hierarchy of transitional layers between the capitalist leaders and the popular masses, but the ownership of the foreign hands led to un-stability. All these factors along with the concentrated oppressions of czarism led the Russian workers towards the revolutionary thoughts. Russia at the onslaught of the twentieth century had a population of about 150 million, out of whom more than 3 million were in Petrograd and Moscow, from which emerged social differences.

From the artisans and independent peasants of the army of Cromwell and through the sansculottes of Paris – to the industrial proletarians of St. Petersburg, the revolution deeply changed its social mechanism methods, and its aims. (Trotsky, Peculiarities of Russia's Development, Para. 24). Thus this Russian Revolution made the czarism to fall and the bourgeoisie became economically more powerful. In the beginning, the Russian revolution was

called as the democratic revolution but caused the problem of political democracy.

Once Vladimir Lenin says, “ If you have no opportunity to implement the proclaimed slogans, revoke them! And in fact the Bolsheviks lacked the skill to do that” (Birshtein, Russian Character In The Aspect Of Reflexive Comprehension, Para. 27) Russia’s character now lies in its perusal of regional policies for nationalistic, strategic and for the development of economic resources, but there never emerged the need for reducing regional and income disparities in the standard of living of the people.

Even Lenin said once, “ Russian Empire was a “ prison-house of nations” but so was the Soviet Union and so is the Russian Federation of today”. (Watkins, Economy of Russia, para. 1) Russia by now is not just a geographical space but its citizens by inheriting their ancient traditions have cultivated new behavioral and spiritual moulds. The number of Billionaires has grown up-to 53, which makes Russia in the third place of Forbis list with billionaires of the world. Russia is also the second biggest Oil manufacturer after Saudi Arabia. The estimated growth rate of Russia is 6.

6% in 2006 and now above 6%. Its foreign debt is totaled 8% of the GNP but it is also true that majority of the Russian population is crushing under thepovertyline, there is hindrance in the expression of civil liberties, centralization of power and decline of all societal values. (Stanfel, Social Unrest In The Land Of Billionaires, Para. 6) On one hand there is an upsurge of Billionaires whereas on the other hand for common citizens, life in Russia is a struggle. Even though there is a considerable reduction of the inflation rate it is still on the higher rate, which goes up-to nine percent a year.

The average salary of the citizen amounts to half the average salary in Croatia. Russian peasants are below the poverty line whereas Billionaires are using expensive yachts to cross the rivers because of the slow traffic on the roads. (Stanfel, Social Unrest In The Land Of Billionaires, Para. 8.) Looking at the social life in the 20th century, and with the advent of the new technology in Media and cultural affairs it was analyzed by the Intellectuals that the role of Media could exert a negative impact on the social ideologies and evolution of human beings in capitalist and socialist countries.

The advocates of the socialist ideologies consider that the penetration of western social ideas and artistic values into the minds of Soviet people can lead the Soviet youth towards the violence and pornography of bourgeois pop-art which has started spreading like wild fire and is taking the rich culture of Russia in its vicinity. As expressed by Ashin: " one who approaches the analysis of `mass culture' predominantly from the assumption about its content and social functions is compelled to deny it in the conditions of socialism".

(Yerofeyev, Youth and The System of Cultural Reproduction: Rethinking the Critique of Mass Culture in the Soviet Union", Para. 6) Thus, in the past ten years, the life of Russia has considerably changed in all the economic, political and cultural spheres. The contemporary younger generation Russians are growing up in a pluralistic, westernized society and does not recognize themselves with the totalitarian government and are following the free market rules in all their business activities.

The biggest group of Russians participated in the democratization and glasnost movement. The oldest group are finding themselves outplace and with communism enshrined in their blood, they are more conservatives and are finding very difficult to adjust to the fast pace Russia. The changes in the business arena also are going on at a rapid pace but there is no clear-cut rule. Younger generation is not allowing the rule of central planning and bureaucratic structure to enter in economic field and on the other hand the older generations are against capitalist way of thinking.

Though it is a Patriarchy society, women are making their mark felt in the economic development in the large numbers though they have to involve themselves in the domestic chores. They can work, own property and sign contracts. The soul of Russia is hospitality of its people. Their openness and friendliness with which they welcome the strangers cannot be forgotten in the generations ahead. (Olga Ivanova-Nuss and Katrin Franz, *People and Life in Contemporary Russia*, Para. 8-10).

Thus the character of Russia as said by classical philosophical thinker Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948), who was persecuted in Soviet Russia and was emigrated in 1922 to Berlin and then to Paris said that the spiritual structure of the Russian people is their attribute towards the Westernization, basically Russia is the Christian East. “ This contradiction-filled nature of the Russian soul was determined by the complexity of the Russian historical destiny, collision and antagonism of the Eastern and Western elements in it....

Among the Russian “ the nature” is a spontaneous force stronger than among the Western people”. (Birshtein, *Russian Character In the Aspect of Reflexive comprehension*, Para. 20) WORKS CITED 1. Birshtein I. B “ Russian

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