

Soviet Land

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MARCH 8 — INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



1968 Nehru Prize Winner

Soviet Land

LETTERS

CHAMPION OF PEACE

Sir,

Your esteemed magazine **Soviet Land** is not only a symbol of Soviet-Indian friendship but also a champion of world peace for which both the USSR and India have always been striving. This sincere striving for peace is, I think, the strongest bond of amity between the two countries. The USSR

EDITOR'S COLUMN

*HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS
TO WOMAN-READERS ON THE
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S
DAY—MARCH 8*

Dear Reader,

There are 60 crore women in the world today who are devoting their energy, their wisdom and their talent to the creation of material as well as spiritual values. But still not in every corner of the world are women given

LEARNING MORE ABOUT EACH OTHER

Is it possible to learn a great deal about a person during one brief meeting? It is, if you make the effort. A delegation of the Indian Union of Housewives visited Moscow's Maternity Hospital No. 19, and learnt many things. The Indian women were particularly impressed by the hospital equipment. They were surprised to learn that the hospital treated, for instance, charwomen and professors of philology alike. Treatment, meals and maintenance of babies are free of charge. The Indians talked with young mothers who frankly answered all their questions in a simple manner, even the most private ones.



CLOCKWISE:
Shakuntala Kushvaha, member of the Women's Committee ● *At the exhibition of Svyatoslav Roerich's paintings* ● *Shakuntala Kushvaha entertaining guests.*

Members of the Women's Committee who accompany Indian guests try to organise as many meetings and get-togethers as possible so that Indian guests could learn more about the Soviet way of life. Once a group representing the National Association of Rural Women was invited to a wedding at a Moldavian village. They were keen to attend a wedding ceremony and were glad to see it. They talked with people at the wedding and learnt that there were no match-makers in the Soviet Union and that young people were free to make their own choice. The tradition of paying price for a bride or receiving dowry no longer existed in the USSR. As a rule, relatives of a young couple help them in arranging a wedding party and buying the household essentials. The guests enquired as to where the newly-weds were going to live. As the bride and the bridegroom were the best workers, their collective farm had built a house for them. In most cases young people build their houses themselves, and the farm advances them the money and building material on credit.

A group of representatives of the Study Centre of Indian Women

accompanied by Soviet-Indian Friendship Society members visited several Uzbek educational establishments—colleges, and general vocational and technical schools. The Indian guests wanted to know how the Soviet Central Asian Republics, where nearly all women were illiterate, have managed to eradicate illiteracy. Today, Uzbek, Kirghiz, Tajik and Turkmen women hold responsible positions and contribute to technological and cultural progress of their Republics.

Members of all Indian delegations like to hear about Soviet women's role in socialist construction. They are eager to learn about it from people themselves rather than get some general information on the subject. No formal reports were delivered at a get-together held under the motto, "One United Family". The get-together was held by the Women's Committee. Several Soviet women gave short accounts of their life and work. They were from different constituent republics and had come to Moscow on business trips: Meta Vannas, Vice-President of the Supreme Soviet of Estonia, Margarita Rakhimova, a university professor

from Kirghizia, Nuri, A Tajik poetess, Natella Logidze, a Deputy of the Supreme Soviet of Georgia, and Lyudmila Kalinina, a former member of the tank crew and recipient of many military orders. Though each of them spoke about their own life, they gave the Indian guests a good idea of the role of women in the society.

CONSTANT CONTACTS

When I described meetings between the Committee's members and Indian women I didn't mention contacts with Indians living in Moscow. The Soviet-Indian Friendship Society and the Women's Club at the Indian Embassy maintain very close contacts: they organise functions, excursions and tea parties at home. These relations have developed into genuine friendship and have long-standing traditions. Spring seminars, for example.

Every year, in the month of April a joint Soviet-Indian seminar is held on some subject. It may deal with culture (Traditions and Innovation in Indian and Soviet Art), social matters (Family Planning), religion (Religion Today) or international relations (USSR and India Upholding Peace). Eminent public figures, scholars and experts

from both countries address such meetings.

The seminar on artistic traditions was attended by Devika Teja, Vice-President of the Women's Club, Vera Bocharova, Soviet choreographer and Svyatoslav Potabenko, a psychologist and art critic. Two Moscow University students, Shangi and Indra, performed Indian dances and the Moscow folk dance company performed national dances of the peoples of the USSR.

Another tradition established is to hold the children's festivals held on the birthday of Jawaharlal Nehru. One hundred Soviet and Indian children, in the age group of seven to fourteen, come to the Women's Club to sing, dance, play games, watch films

and slides and take part in the children's drawing competitions. They all become good friends.

A house with a porch covered with snow with the moon shining above—this is how the young Indian winner of the competition sees the Russian winter. Among the Soviet children, the prize went to a young girl for her painting "Indian Flowers". The most important thing about both the paintings is that they convey children's interest in a foreign country.

Every year the Moscow Clara Zetkin Sewing Factory holds a party to celebrate the International Women's Day, March 8. All its workers, 80 per cent of whom are women, look forward to that day. The management gives presents and diplomas to the best workers. And no one is surprised to see there bright-coloured saris as the factory has a branch of the Soviet-Indian Friendship Society and many of its workers are activists of the Women's Committee. Every year they invite their friends from the Women's Club and Indian associations in Moscow. This is another long-standing tradition of friendship between Soviet and Indian women. **



Visiting the Rabindranath Tagore Club at Moscow's School No. 26.

EXTREME LEFT:
LEFT:
The standing Women's Committee of the Soviet-Indian Friendship Society held a meeting in the Museum of Oriental Art.

BELOW
 (from left):
The Women's Committee has quite a few Indians among its members. Some of them are seen in the photograph.

Teacher Valeriya Bykova, Chairperson of the Rabindranath Tagore Club.



of Indian Women and other Indian women's organisations.

"I've visited that wonderful country many times", Kibirskhtis said. "I remember the meetings held in dockers' clubs in Madras and in a village near Salem, and also the mass meetings, particularly the one held in the Tagore Club in Calcutta. Whenever I speak of Soviet women I make mention of their great respect for their Indian friends. We all know and revere the memory of India's national heroines—Rani Lakshmi Bai and Sarojini Naidu. Many of us know Aruna Asaf Ali and we remember with great love Indira Gandhi who has become the symbol of India."