The eighteenth century was an age of political transformation in India, Afghanistan and Iran. The Mughals and the Safavids began to lose hold over their Empires. From their base in Kandahar, the Abdalis under Ahmad Shah succeeded in creating an Empire that incorporated Afghanistan, parts of Iran and Central Asia, Sind, Punjab and Kashmir. In Central Asia, independent principalities emerged in Kholoom, Kondooz, Andkhvoy, etc. This chapter studies the developments in the caravan trade in the background of these political changes to examine their impact on it.

The political scenario of North India

The early decades of the eighteenth century witnessed the gradual disintegration of the Mughal Empire. The court became the centre of factional struggles and provinces began to break away from the empire. Several communities like the Jats, Marathas and the Sikhs rebelled against Mughal authority. The uprising of the Sikhs and others created insecurity on the routes in
the Punjab. Nadir Shah’s invasion of North India in 1739 had a catastrophic effect on the people of Punjab and Delhi. Thousands of lives were lost and property worth millions looted. All commercial activity came to a halt. The subsequent invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali worsened the situation. In 1752, Punjab passed into the hands of the Afghans who failed to suppress the Sikhs. Within a few years, the Province was divided into several principalities ruled by the Sikh chiefs.

The earlier held perception of the eighteenth century being a period of political anarchy and economic decline has been replaced by a view that sees it as a phase characterized by the emergence of effective regional states that continued to promote agriculture and trade. Satish Chandra notes that the dislocation caused by the invaders did not have lasting results. The wealth looted by Nadir Shah was hoarded wealth which was not in circulation. Moreover, the loss was made up due to India’s positive balance of trade. Shah Nawaz Khan, the author of the well known *Maasir-ul- Umara*, wrote in 1780 that Delhi had regained its prosperity since Nadir Shah’s invasion and its manufactures and industries were

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4 Satish Chandra, ‘Cultural and Political role of Delhi, 1675-1725’ in Frykenberg, *Delhi through the ages*, p 213.
flourishing. Five years later, an observer counted forty-six bazaars in the city and added that there were several others in the various muhallas. According to the Muraqqa-i-Delhi, Delhi’s bazaars were stocked with objects brought from different parts of the world. Precious stones from Badakshan were prominently displayed in its shops. A visitor to the city in the 1780s remarked, ‘This is the most important city for trade in Asia, from the countries of which there come Persians, Bukharans, Kashmirians, Armenians, Greeks, Tibetans, Chinese and others.’

The Trade with Iran

The situation in Iran in the early decades of the eighteenth century was very similar to the events in India. The uprising of the Ghilzai tribe, which began at Kandahar in 1709 and spread to other places, made trade routes unsafe. Conditions worsened during subsequent years characterized by the Afghan occupation of Persia and Nadir Shah’s rise to power.

There was an improvement in conditions once Nadir Shah had established himself. A traveller to Mashhad, the new capital of Iran noted that it received

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7 Khan, Dargah Quli, Muraqqa-i- Delhi, translated by Chander Sekhar and Shama Mitra Chenoy, Delhi Deputy Publication 1989, p 23.
8 Filip Yefremov in Kemp, Russian travelers, p 85.
caravans from several places like Kabul, Kandahar, Bukhara and India. George Thomson, another visitor to the city, wrote in 1741:

In time of peace it is a place of great trade, caravans are employed daily from Bokhara, Balkh, Biddukshan, Kandahar and India; as well as from all parts of Persia. The Bazars or market places, are large and well built, filled with rich merchandise, and frequented by great numbers of people of different nations. There are computed about ninety caravanserais in this city, all in good repair.11

This statement should not be taken to imply that Iran had returned to the same level of prosperity that was the characteristic of the Safavid period since Mashhad's rise to prominence was at the cost of other cities and regions from where people were relocated to populate the new capital. But it does highlight the fact that trade with India was continuing. Our inference is supported by the testimony of Van Mierop that Lahore indigo was imported to Mashhad by the Indian merchants who also traded in cloth manufactured in Reshd.12

The trade between Iran and Persia was interrupted for a period of ten years after the death of Nadir Shah leading to great shortage of Indian cloth. With the revival of commerce, Persian merchants began to arrive in large groups to India and Indian merchants similarly proceeded to Persia. The export of Indian cloths was so high that in less than fifteen years, the gold and silver carried away

by Nadir Shah came back to India by the way of Multan and Bandar Abbas. Multan was the destination of the caravans arriving from Persia. It produced large quantities of printed cloth which sold well although in the opinion of Modave, it was not as good as the variety made in Masulipatnam. In the 1780s, Peshawar was described by Forster as a large and rich city and an important mart for the trade with Persia and Afghanistan. The town was the residence of several merchants, especially those dealing in Kashmir shawls. They preferred to buy them in Peshawar rather than undertake the difficult journey to Kashmir. The transit trade of Indian goods through Iran to regions lying west was also strong. At Basra arrived caravans carrying Indian goods. Pilgrims passing through the city on their way to Mecca were important buyers of these products.

The Central Asian Trade

Commercial relations with Central Asia also continued to be maintained during the eighteenth century. As in earlier times, Kabul was the chief mart for this trade. Its bazaars were said to be full of merchants from Bokhara who came down to it to sell horses, hides and fur and to purchase indigo and textiles. Kabul also imported cotton cloth and sugar from Peshawar for its own requirements.

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14 Forster, *A Journey*, Vol 2, p 50. There was also a colony of Jews in Peshawar.
Kandahar was an important market for indigo and other commodities supplied from various parts of India.\(^\text{16}\)

Central Asian and Afghan merchants also frequented several markets of Upper India to buy and sell goods. Modave mentions that during winter, merchants of Kabul used to bring several types of fruits like raisins, pears, prunes, apples, etc. Grapes used to come packed in small boxes made of wood. The fruits arrived in a fresh state in spite of a long journey of three to four months. These were sold in Delhi, Agra, Allahabad, Lucknow and Faizabad. Dried fruits like apricots and pistachios that were grown in and around Kabul were also imported to meet the great demand for these products. Wine, made in Kabul was also brought to Delhi and Lahore. Modave also notes that melons of Kandahar were available in Delhi. The Kabul merchants would return after buying cotton cloth.\(^\text{17}\) Another source informs us that large quantities of cloth were procured by the Afghan merchants from a settlement near Attock. As there is no record of textile production in the Attock region, the textiles must have been transported there from some other area, most likely the Punjab.\(^\text{18}\) Faizabad, a major urban centre under the Nawabs of Awadh was a major market where the products of Turan were available along with

\(^{17}\) Modave, *Voyage en Inde*, p 324, 326, 335.
\(^{18}\) Abdul Kadir Khan, 'Memorandum of the route between Delhi and Cabul', p 24.
those of China, Persia and Europe. In the late eighteenth century, Delhi was visited by a yearly caravan that brought horses and fruits.

The horse trade with Central Asia did not witness any downturn on account of the decline of Mughal authority. The new regional states like the Rohillas, the Sikh chiefdoms and Awadh imported a large number of war horses for their cavalry needs and for breeding purposes. Other powers like the Marathas and the Rajputs relied mainly on local breeds. According to Modave, the trade in horses that came from Persia, Turkestan, Kandahar and Samarkand was very lively. The animals were first brought to Lahore from where they were taken to the markets of Delhi, Jaipur and Kota. They were further transported to different parts of the country. The cost of the horses ranged from Three to Four Hundred rupees whereas the indigenous horses were available from Fifteen to Fifty Rupees.

Detailed information about the pattern of the horse trade is available in early nineteenth century accounts of British officials. The main areas from where horses were procured were the regions of Balkh, Bukhara and the Turkoman country on the banks of the Oxus River. The horse bred in the first two regions was known as Turki or the Uzbeki. Though it was not very big, it was said to be

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22 Modave, Voyage en Inde, p 327.
well suited for hard work. The horse bred on the banks of the Oxus was larger and was therefore considered appropriate for war needs. Afghan merchants bought horses from the markets of Bakh, Bukhara and Herat at a cheap rate. They subsequently took them to Kabul where they fattened them in nearby pastures and then took them to India. 23 Most of the stock was sold in cattle fairs that took place in several places like Pushkar, Balotra and Mundwa in Rajasthan, Ummedganj in Malwa, Haridwar in the northern plains, etc. These fairs also served as outlets for the sale of local breeds.24

It is difficult to estimate the volume of the horse trade as we don’t have any statistical information on it. Using contemporary estimates of the size of the cavalry kept by the Indian states and assuming that half of the cavalry consisted of local breeds and the other half comprised of imported varieties, Gommans calculates that the annual import around the mid eighteenth century was of thirty Thousand horses. He notes that this figure is lesser than that provided by Modave who estimated in the 1770s that Forty Five to Fifty Thousand horses were annually imported from Iran and Central Asia.25

23 Elphinstone, An Account, Vol 1, p 387; Hafiz Muhammad Fazil Khan, Tarikh-i-Manazil-i-Bukhara, p 24. Babar had noted that the pastures of Kabul were good for horses, Babarnama, p 204; some horses were also imported from Yarkand. Moorcroft mentions a caravan of 25 horses coming to Ladakh from Yarkand. A local trader had bought these horses for the markets of Punjab. The horses were of the Kirghiz and Kazakh breeds, Travels, Vol 1, p 252-3, 357.
24 Gommans, Indo-Afghan Empire, p 80-83; B.L. Gupta, Trade and commerce in Rajasthan during the Eighteenth Century, Jaipur 1987, p 81-83; Horses of Kutch, Kathiawar and Multan were sold in Pushkar and Balotra. The fair at Mundhwa was held in winter and it lasted six weeks. In Bikaner, the chief fairs were Kolayat and Gajnair. Here locally bred cattle, camels and Punjab horses were obtainable, Sale of various other goods also took place in these fairs. Tod, Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, Vol 2, p 125, 129, 159.
25 Gommans, Indo-Afghan Empire, p 89.
A large part of the commodities sent to Central Asia were further transported to Russia due to its growing demand for Indian commodities. In chapter three we took note of Russian efforts to promote trade with India through Central Asia. Scott Levi is of the view that Russia was successful in this endeavor and large quantities of Indian goods were bought to Orenburg from Bukhara by Bukharan and Indian merchants. In 1813 it was observed that Four to Five Thousand camels went from Bukhara to Russia every year carrying chintz and yarn. The return cargo consisted of gold, silver, iron and copper.26

There was however, an important shift in the route used by merchants for the trade with Kabul. In the 1780s, Forster noted that the route via the Punjab was avoided due to the disturbed political conditions of the province. Merchants now preferred the route via Rohilkhand and Jammu to reach Kabul.27 Another contemporary, James Brown observed that the trade of Punjab had reduced as it was not easy for Merchants to travel through the territories of the several independent chiefs.28 William Francklin reported 'an open commerce with this country from every part of Hindustan has long since ceased but petty merchants by applying for passports from the respective chiefs of the Seik countries previous to

26 Mir Izzat Ullah, Travels, p 59.
27 Forster, A Journey, Vol 1, p 190. The road from Delhi to Kashmir through Punjab had also fallen into disuse. The route via Jammu was now preferred even though it was more difficult and expensive. The ruler of Jammu, Ranjit Dev encouraged the settlement of Muslim merchants in his territory and granted them full religious freedom in spite of opposition of his Hindu subjects, Forster, A Journey, Vol 1, p 245-7. Similarly, the Jat dominated area of Northern India was avoided and a route through Malwa was increasingly used by those going to the Western coast ports. As a result, the importance of Banaras increased, Satish Chandra, Essays on Medieval Indian History, New Delhi Oxford University Press 2005, p 86.
entering their boundaries are generally supplied with them and by this means still continue trifling commerce. According to another source, native merchants and merchants from other areas who supplied goods for the local markets enjoyed the patronage of the Sikh chiefs while foreign traders and travelers were plundered. Many towns of the province like Attock, Rohtas, Aurangabad and Sodhra had also fallen into decline by the late eighteenth century.

There is evidence to show that even during this period, production and trade in Punjab had not come to a standstill. Multan, described as a decaying city continued to produce cotton textiles. The countryside around it produced cotton and indigo. Lahore's manufactures included fine and coarse cotton goods and woolen textiles. Articles like cloth, indigo, rice, wheat and sugar were exported from the province to the 'countries west of the Attock' while the imports were swords, horses, fruits, lead and spices. Amritsar had emerged the main trading mart of the province. In the early nineteenth century, it was described as the largest city of the Punjab and the home of merchants from several places including the Khatris of Lahore. There was a route from it Amritsar to the town of Patiala. From Patiala two routes led to Delhi and Rajasthan. The town of 'Necoder,'
located between Ludhiana and Lahore was famous for Chandeli and other types of textiles. Merchants from Kabul and Peshawar used to come to the town to procure them.\textsuperscript{35} Another important centre of textile production was Hoshiarpur. The inexpensive varieties of cloth manufactured here were exported to Kabul while the finer varieties were sent to Central Asia.\textsuperscript{36} Good quality cloth was manufactured at Patiala.\textsuperscript{37}

Shahabad, Patiala, Sirhind, Thaneshwar and Lohgarh were said to be large towns.\textsuperscript{38} Older towns like Wazirabad, Rawalpindi, Gujarat, Sialkot, Bhera and Batala were revived by the Sikh chiefs who also founded new towns like Gujranwala, Jalalpur, Qila Sobha Singh, Hallowal, Kapurthala, Fatehabad, etc. Merchants and other people were encouraged to settle in these towns.\textsuperscript{39}

The region of Rohilkhand, so named due to the migration of Afghans from ‘Roh’ or the region from Kabul and Kandahar in the west to Hasan Abdal in the east developed as the focal point of the northern trade. Its rulers took several steps to promote its economy and trade. Several new towns were built to attract traders. Ali Muhammad Khan, the founder of the Rohila principality, established

\textsuperscript{35} Maulawi Abdul Kadir Khan, ‘Memorandum of the Route,’ p 19.
\textsuperscript{36} Moorcroft, \textit{Travels}, Vol 1, p 84.
\textsuperscript{37} Francklin’s account in \textit{Sicques, Tigers or Thieves}, p 188.
\textsuperscript{38} Francklin, \textit{History of the reign of Shah Aulim}, p 74-5.
\textsuperscript{39} For instance, about Wazirabad, Ganesh Das says that it was in a flourishing state till the reign of Muhammad Shah. Its population declined in the early period of Sikh rule but Sardar Gurbaksh Singh Waraich and Jodh Singh repopulated it. Rawalpindi became a large town under Sardar Maha Singh in this period. Gujranwala was earlier a small village before it was made the capital by Charhat singh and later by Mahan Singh. It soon emerged as a major town. The chief of Jalalpur, Chaudhuri Rahmat Khan Waraich encouraged migration to the town, Ganesh Das Vadera, \textit{Char Bagh-1 Punjab}, p 42,93,68,105; Sachdeva and Grewal, ‘Urbanisation in the Mughal province of Lahore,’ p 111-4, Veena Sachdeva, \textit{Politics and Economy of the Punjab in the late Eighteenth Century}, New Delhi Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers and Distributers, p 136-8.
the city of Aonla. It was a large city with many gardens, mosques, and palaces. The town of Pilibhit was developed by Hafiz Rahmat Khan (1749-1774) in the 1760's. Markets, bridges, Mosques, etc were built in this town and merchants were encouraged to settle there; a process promoted by the security available in the state. Bareilly, located at the conjunction of two streams was chosen by Hafiz Rehmat as his capital. Another town, Hafizganj was built by him between Pilibhit and Bareilly. Hafiz also took the step of removing all duties on trade. His fellow chiefs objected to this measure as they lost out on revenue but Hafiz was keen to promote trade in his dominion. Najib ud-Daula (1753-1770) who played a central role in the politics of Delhi for some time, founded the town of Najibabad to take advantage of the shift of the trade of Kabul from the Punjab and Delhi route to the Rohila region. The town soon became an important commercial centre in spite of being located in an area that was low and surrounded by swamps. The town had a market, gardens and schools.

There were several other towns in Rohilkhand that were commercially important. Writing in the last decade of the Eighteenth Century, William Francklin observed:

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40 Francklin, History of the reign of Shah Aurum, p 58.
41 Iqbal Ghani Khan, 'Afghan forts and towns in North India (c.1720-1800) Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 1991-2, p 314. The city was known as Shehr Panah and was four miles in circumference. Francklin, History of the reign of Shah Aurum, p 59
44 Forster, A Journey, Vol 1, p 190.
The great cities of Shahabad, Shahjehanpore, Bareilly, Bissowlee, Bedaon, Owlah, Mooradabad and Sumbul, formerly kept up a constant intercourse with the caravans of the north. By them were exported into Cuttair, the products of Lahore, Cabul, Cashmere, Candahar and Persia, rubies, precious stones, tuteneage, iron, copper, tin, lead, borax, drugs, Cashmerian shawls, Carmanian wool, mules, horses and camels; in return they received coarse cloths, sugar and tobacco. 45

Pilibhit received articles like borax, wax, drugs and honey from the Kumaon-Garhwal region and exported timber, cloth and sugar. 46 Products of Tibet also used to arrive via Kumaon-Garhwal. The town of Haridwar, a prominent pilgrim centre was also a major trade mart. Timber, bamboo and metals came from the hills. It also had links with Lahore, Kabul and Kashmir in the north and north-west and with other parts of India in the south and south-east. 47

Apart from the route via Rohilkhand and Jammu to Kabul, other routes that came into prominence in the eighteenth century were through the Thar Desert. Like the Rohilkhand route, they offered the advantage of bypassing the Punjab. Merchants from Kabul first brought horses to Bahawalpur and then crossed the desert to reach Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Jodhpur. 48 The city of Jaipur, founded in the early eighteenth century also prospered as a result of the growing importance of

45 Francklin, History of the reign of Shah Alum, p 57.
46 William Francklin, History of the reign of Shah Alum, p 59.
48 John Griffith’s account in Early European Accounts, p 90.
the desert routes. Caravans also came to these cities from Shikarpur and Multan. Apart from horses, other articles brought by them included fruits and asafoetida.

While some quantity of the goods that arrived at the marts of the Rajput states was meant for local consumption, most of it was passed on to other parts of India. Pali, situated in Marwar is a prime example of the role of the Rajput cities as entrepots. Here products of India, Persia, Arabia, Africa, Europe and China were exchanged. Likewise, Rajgarh in the state of Bikaner and Jaisalmer were vital transit points. They received goods from Punjab, Kashmir, Central and Eastern India. These were taken via Sind and Multan to other places. The exports of these places were indigo, tobacco, opium, salt, woolen products, etc.

During this period, the Rajput rulers offered several incentives like exemption from taxes, free land to traders from other regions in order to persuade them to settle down in their territories. A large number of Multani traders took advantage of these concessions and shifted to capitals of Jaipur, Bikaner, Jodhpur, Kota and other towns like Churu, Nagaur and Pali. Some of the migrants were from Qandahar and Sind.

Trade links with central Asia were also maintained through Kashmir and Ladakh. The manufacture of shawls, the foremost export of Kashmir, however,
had reduced considerably by the late eighteenth century due to the heavy taxes imposed by the Afghan authorities on artisans and the frequent attacks on caravans by neighboring states. Forster was informed by the Kashmiris that there were Forty Thousand looms in the state during Mughal times but the number had come down to Sixteen Thousand. The production of other commodities like paper, lacquerware, and cutlery too had come down. Nonetheless, merchants from Persia, Turkey and Central Asia still visited Kashmir to buy the highly valued shawls.53 A traveler to West Asia in the 1790s noted, 'One million piastres worth of Kashmir shawls arrive each year in Bagdad by caravan and are distributed throughout Turkey. Sent by the pasha, they often go to Constantinople by way of the Tartares'.54 Kashmiri merchants carried the shawls to the markets of Bokhara.55 In the 1770's, Tibet and Kashgar also received the products of Kashmir. The commerce with China had been interrupted for some years.56

The Caravan Trade in the early nineteenth century.

We have seen that the overland trade was lively during the eighteenth century. From the late eighteenth century however, the import of war horses, the single most important item of trade with Central Asia saw a sharp decline due to

55 Kemp, Russian Travellers, p 83.
56 Modave, Voyage en Inde, p 361, According to Modave, the crafts of Kashmir like manufacture of wooden articles and ivory work were thriving.
the replacement of the rule of Indian states by that of the English East India Company. The annexation of Rohilkhand by Awadh with the support of the English meant an end of its long distance trade connections. After the death of Nawab Asaf ud- Daula, a big buyer of horses, in 1797 demand in Awadh reduced. There still remained considerable demand in the Deccan states and in Punjab. In the rapidly growing British territories, demand was low as their military system was based on the infantry and due to the British preference for Arab horses. 57

The restricted demand for war horses in the early nineteenth century was met by Afghan merchants out of the stock bred in Afghanistan rather than by bringing costly varieties from Turkestan. Some of these horses were sent from Afghanistan to the Baluchistan coast from where they were shipped to Bombay. Arthur Conolly, an English official who traveled from Heart to India in the company of horse merchants, reported that Six Hundred ‘tolerably good horses’ passed by the town of Quetta every year. Some of the best were purchased by the Amirs of Hyderabad while the rest were sent to Bombay. The expenses of the journey like transit duties, payment for fodder, etc had significantly reduced the horse merchant’s profit margin. 58 C. J. C. Davidson, a visitor to the Haridwar fair in 1843 noted that merchants from Kabul and Bukhara had brought horses that

57 Elphinstone, An Account, Vol 1, p 470.
58 Conolly, Journey to the North of India, Vol 2, 166-9.
were strong but old and imperfect. These merchants complained of the high taxes imposed by the Afghan government and the state of Punjab.\textsuperscript{59}

An inevitable consequence of the decline in imports of Turki horses was the deterioration in the quality of local breeds. The famous Lakhi and Kutch breeds almost became extinct and were no longer seen in the cattle fairs of Rajasthan.\textsuperscript{60} Another cause of the declining quality of the Indian breeds was the interception of the Trans-Indus supplies by the Sikhs.\textsuperscript{61} In Rohilkhand too, the end of Afghan rule led to end of its flourishing horse breeding industry. Later on, the British government made efforts to improve quality of Indian breeds by importing horses from Arabia, Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and even from England and Australia.\textsuperscript{62}

While the trade in horses had declined by the early nineteenth century, there was still substantial amount of trade in other commodities. In the first decade of the century, Elphinstone made a detailed survey of the trade between India and Durrani Afghanistan and noted that though the trade had declined, it was still considerable. Several textile items like coarse cotton cloth, muslin, brocades and silk cloth were imported from India. Other main items were indigo and sugar while minor articles of trade included ivory, tin, musk, coral, drugs and sandalwood. Spices were also exported in large quantities but they were not sent

\textsuperscript{59} C. J. C. Davidson, \textit{Diary of Travels and Adventures in Upper India}, London Henry Colburn 1843, p 84, 100, 112.
\textsuperscript{60} Watt, \textit{Dictionary of the economic Products of India}, Vol 4, p 292-3.
\textsuperscript{61} Tod, \textit{Annals and Antiquities}. Vol 2, p 125.
\textsuperscript{62} Watt, \textit{Dictionary of the economic Products of India}, Vol 4, p 293.
via overland routes. They were instead shipped from Bombay and other ports to Karachi from where they were transported to Kabul and Kandahar. Textiles made in Masulipatnam also came via the sea route. From Kabul, imports from India like white cloth, turbans, indigo and items manufactured in Durrani controlled territories like Kashmiri shawls and Multani chintz were then dispatched to Central Asia and Persia. Among the Indian items popular in Central Asia were books on Islamic law and theology. The returning cargo from Bukhara to Kabul consisted of some horses, raw silk, coral, turquoise and Chinese articles like Tea and porcelain. Russian articles like cutlery, needles and broadcloth were imported for local consumption. Large amounts of Gold and silver was carried from Central Asia by Indian merchants. From Kabul, dry fruits like almonds, pistachios, hazel nuts and walnuts and fresh fruits like apples, grapes, and peaches, asafoetida, and madder were carried to India. Kashmiri shawls also arrived via Kabul. Raw Silk and saffron were also imported from Herat. Fraser, who was in Mashhad in 1821-2, noted that there was a large export of turquoise stones from the vicinity of Mashhad to Bokhara and India. The best quality stones did not arrive in the market of Mashhad but were smuggled to India via Herat and Kandahar.

63 Elphinstone, *An Account*. Vol 1, p 464-6; Mir Izzat Ullah, *Travels*, p 69; Muhammad Fazil Khan, *Tarikh I manazil I Bukhara*, p 27-8. In the 1830s, Conolly observed that Fruits from Kabul were supplied to Delhi, Bombay and Madras. Apples, Grapes and quinces were likely to get spoiled on the way but pomegranates, almonds, figs and raisins made good profits and demand for them was certain, *Journey Overland*, Vol 2, p 227-8. In the same decade, C J C Davidson visited the fair at Haridwar and found ‘tons of raisins, almonds, pistachio nuts’ being sold there. *Diary of Travels and Adventures in Upper India*, New Delhi Munshiram Manoharlal 2004.


65 Fraser, *Narrative*, p 469.
In the 1830s, three Lohani caravans used to proceed from the Derajat to Kabul every year. The first carried coarse cloth from the town of Mughdiana, situated on the Chenab and salt to the markets of Kabul, Kandahar and Peshawar. The second carried indigo from Multan and Bahawalpur and chintz from North India. A part of this cargo was meant for Bokhara. The third caravan transmitted textiles manufactured in different places of India as well as those imported from Britain. Most of this merchandise was for the markets of Central Asia. Apart from the Lohani caravans, there were five to six other caravans that set off for Bokhara and other towns of Central Asia. Burnes, a reliable source on the caravan trade, had noted that in 1836, 5140 camels of the Lohanis had passed to Kabul. He also recorded that up to 3000 camel loads of textiles were transported from Punjab to Dera Ismael Khan from where Afghan merchants carried it to Kabul. Elsewhere he estimated that the yearly consumption of Indian textiles in Kabul was around One Thousand camel loads while the same quantity was sent to Bokhara. Indigo was the second most important export to Bokhara with Five Hundred camel loads being dispatched every year. Some of this cargo was for Yarkand where the art of indigo cultivation was unknown. Sugar was another Indian item carried to Turkistan but it did not enjoy much demand since the richer sections of society

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65 Vigne, A Personal Narrative, p 68-70.
67 Burnes, Cabool, p 78, 93: Travels, Vol 2, p 416, 429. One Indian or Afghan camel could carry around 500 pounds weight. So the volume of the textile imports into Central Asia and Afghanistan works out to around 5,00,000 Pounds each.
preferred Russian sugar and the poor used a cheaper substitute called
Turunjbeen.68

Indian commodities reached the Khanate of Khokand, situated in the
Farghana valley through Kabul and Bukhara. The reason for this circuitous route
was the prohibition imposed on direct communication between India and Khokand
by the Chinese authorities, who had established control over the neighbouring
country of Kashgar since 1759. The Khanate was also the mediating point for the
trade between China and Bukhara. Tea and other articles were brought here from
Kashgar and sent to Bukhara. The commodities sent to China were raw silk,
woolen articles and European manufactures.69

Multan had re-established its commercial importance during this period.
With the decline of the Afghan state and the rise of Sikh power in the early
nineteenth century, many merchants who had made Shikarpur their base shifted to
Multan and Amritsar. Burnes mentions that forty money changers had migrated
from Shikarpur to Multan. Masson observed that contrary to the perception of
Multan having suffered under Sikh rule, its markets were well stocked with several
commodities. The city had a large number of bankers and manufacturers of cotton,
woolen and silk textiles and its trade connections with regions west of the Indus
were extant.70

69 Wathen, ‘Memoir’, p 376.
70 Masson, Narrative, Vol 1, p 354, 395; Burnes, Travels, Vol 3, p 111.
During this period, Bokharan silk had emerged as a big import into the Punjab. Silk worm rearing was an important activity of the Kingdom of Bokhara where it was carried out along the banks of rivers and streams especially along the banks of the Oxus by nomadic tribes. Silk was also produced in Khokand but it was not of very high quality. Being an article of low weight and high price, silk was suited for overland trade. It was estimated that merchants who supplied Multan and Russia with raw silk from Bokhara made a profit of 200,000 Tilas or around twelve Lakh rupees every year. Three types of silk were made in Bukhara. They were purchased at the price of seven, nine and twelve rupees and were sold in Multan at the rate of Ten, Twelve and Fifteen rupees. It was the supply of Bukharan silk, according to Mohan Lal, which was responsible for Multan becoming 'the rival of the markets of Hindusthan, the Panjab and Khorasan'. The silk textiles made here were popular in Punjab and Sind.\textsuperscript{71} Shawls and scarves made of Bokharan silk sold well in other parts of India where the weavers were unable to make products of similar quality and hardiness. The prices of silk goods varied from twenty to One Hundred and Twenty Rupees. Ranjit Singh, the ruler of Punjab had kept duties low to encourage silk manufactures.\textsuperscript{72} Multan had 150 silk textile workshops. About 700 ‘maunds’ of raw silk was imported every year from Bokhara and other places of Central Asia to meet their requirements.\textsuperscript{73} Multan also

\textsuperscript{71} Mohan Lal, \textit{Travel}, p 83-4, 240-2.
\textsuperscript{72} Burnes, \textit{Travels}, Vol 2, p 179-80, Vol 3, p 111.
\textsuperscript{73} Vigne, \textit{Personal Narrative}, p 21-2. Silk was also imported from Herat to Shikarpur. Mohan Lal, \textit{Travel}, p 168.
manufactured woolen and cotton textiles. Its chintzes and other varieties of fabric like Taimur Shahi and Shuja Khani were exported in large numbers to Khorasan and Turkistan. It was estimated that textiles and indigo worth Five and a half Lakh Rupees were exported every year from this city.\textsuperscript{74}

The town of Dera Ghazi Khan also imported Bokharan silk for the manufacture of plain and striped cloth which was in demand in Sind and Punjab. It also made coarse cotton cloth, chintz, and other varieties known by various names such as gulbadan, hindai, alaicha, shaherezeh, etc which were sold in Central Asia.\textsuperscript{75} Cochineal, used for dying raw silk was brought to Punjab from Russia via Central Asia. By this period, however, the imports from Russia had gradually declined and had been replaced by supplies from Bombay and other ports. Wool was also another import from Central Asia. Coarse shawls were made from it in the Punjab.\textsuperscript{76}

The shawl trade of Kashmir was still considerable. In 1824, Moorcroft, who collected information on the trade of Kashmir and Ladakh, estimated that Eight Hundred loads of wool were annually supplied to Kashmir from Rodokh and Chan-than, outlying districts of Ladakh. The participants in this trade were the ruler of Ladakh himself and the merchants of Kashmir and Turan. Export of this commodity to any other region was prohibited.\textsuperscript{77} The value of the annual shawl

\textsuperscript{74} Mohan Lal, Travel, p 243.
\textsuperscript{75} Burnes, Cabool, p 81; Mohan Lal, Travel, p 248.
\textsuperscript{76} Vigne, Personal Narrative, p 22; Burnes, Travels, Vol 2, p 434, 440.
\textsuperscript{77} Moorcroft, Travels, Vol 1, p 346-7.
production was Thirty Five Lakhs but in 1822-3 it had come down to around half of it. By this period, the export of shawls to Persia and Turkey had declined while exports to Russia had increased significantly. Central Asian merchants used to bring wool from Yarkand and Khotan to Kashmir and exchange it for shawls that were sold in Russia. 78

Several other commodities were involved in the Trans Himalayan trade besides shawl and wool. Large quantities of Chinese Tea came via Tibet and Yarkand to Ladakh where the demand for it was considerable. It was also exported to Kashmir and Punjab. Other imports from China to Ladakh were expensive cloth like silks, velvets, brocades and Silver lumps. Kashmiri shawls, textiles, grain and copper vessels from Punjab were exported to Tibet. 79 The main imports from Yarkand, described as ‘the great emporium of the commerce between Turkistan, China, and Tibet and the seat also of an active traffic with Russia’ to Ladakh were felts, dried sheepskin, wool, horses, drugs, tea, silver, steel, melons, Russian leather, brocades, broadcloth, velvets and silk. Most of these goods were further transported to Punjab. Some trade was also maintained with Khotan, which lay east of Yarkand. According to Moorcroft, this trade used to be very important earlier and there was a road from Najibabad to Sarikia which lay between Khotan and Yarkand via Gardokh but the trade had become negligible by the 1820s. 80

78 Moorcroft, Travels, Vol 2, p 166,194-5. In the 1830s, a merchant named Mullah Rahim Shah took Kashmiri shawls worth Rs 17,000 to Moscow and sold them for a sum of Rs 34,000. Mohan Lal, Travel, p 84.
Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show that the overland trade continued to be resilient during the eighteenth century. Political developments—the Ghilzai rebellion in the Safavid Empire, the Sikh uprising in the Punjab and Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah’s invasions of North India disrupted the trade but did not put an end to it. During the reign of Nadir Shah, trade relations with India were re-established. Indian products continued to be exported to Iran in the subsequent period of political turbulence though the volume of the trade was probably not as high as in the seventeenth century.

The trade with Central Asia remained as active as before. The demand for Turki horses was considerable due to constant military warfare of the period. There was a corresponding high demand for Indian textiles and indigo in Central Asia. These products were also sent to Russia to satiate its growing demand for them. A crucial change in the pattern of the overland trade was that Punjab was largely avoided by traders due to its insecure conditions for most of the century. The trade to Kabul and beyond was now routed through the Rohilkhand- Jammu route and the routes across the Thar Desert. The Afghan rulers promoted this development by establishing market towns, by stimulating horse breeding, etc. The Rajput rulers of Jaipur, Bikaner and Jodhpur induced merchants from other areas, especially the Punjab to settle in their territories. Even Punjab was not totally cut
off from the overland trade. By the late eighteenth century, it seems to have recovered from the turmoil that had affected it for most of the century. The Sikh chiefs promoted urbanization and commodity production in the last quarter of the century.

The connection to Central Asia via Kashmir and Ladakh was also maintained in this period. Through this channel, Kashmiri shawls were exported in increasing quantities to Russia and items like Tea and silk cloth from China, fruits, horses, drugs, Russian cloth and leather were imported.

From the late eighteenth century, the import of Turki horses into India began to decline as a result of the replacement of local rulers by the British Company. Silk emerged as the main import from Central Asia in the early nineteenth century. Large quantities of this article were brought to Punjab every year to meet the requirements of its textile industry. Central Asia continued to rely on Indian cotton textiles for its requirements.