CHAPTER III

CULTURAL CONTACTS

Due to the geographical contiguity between Afghanistan and Russian territory as well as existence of strong trade ties between the people of two regions, the traditional cultural relations continued to remain in full strength. It was more so because cultural similarities across the borders with common traditions, ethos and beliefs have clearly been manifested among the people of Afghanistan and Russian Central Asia. Besides, having cultural affinity in terms of religion, customs, dress and food habits, both sides used similar languages such as Persian, Dari, Pashto and Tajik Farsi and other Tukri languages. Places like Kabul, Bokhara, Samarkand, Tashkant and Khiva occupied attention far and wide due to their being main centres of trade and Islamic culture. Mosques were the centres of all religious activities and the holy Quran and Hadith were read by the people of both Central Asia and Afghanistan. Sufism made its headway into Afghanistan from Farghana, Samarkand and Turkistan and religious teachers like Syeds and Pirs of Bokhara were greatly revered by the people of Afghanistan. The Haj pilgrims from Russian territory of Central Asia travelled via Afghanistan on their way to Mecca for performing the Haj
pilgrimage. Common names on Islamic pattern were often used by the people of the two regions and such titles as Chughtai, Beg, Shaikh etc., were adopted in Afghanistan under Central Asian influence. Even construction of buildings did not remain isolated from this influence. Almost all the minarets as well as domes of mosques and tombs located in the cities of Herat, Kabul, Balkh, Bokhara, Samarkand and Tashkant have close resemblance.

Religious Affinity:

Generally speaking, religious teachers and leaders as well as scribes and poets in Afghanistan who wished to have further education, attached themselves to renowned teachers and studied in the Madrasas of Peshawar or Bokhara.\(^1\) It is evidenced by the fact that most of the nineteenth century writers from Afghanistan had studied in Bokhara\(^2\). However, according to Vartan Gregorian, until the end of the nineteenth century, everything they learned, whether in Afghan Madrasas or those of India and Bokhara, was


\(^2\) Ibid.
essentially the same. Their learning of Quran, Islamic law, logic, theology and meta-physics were based on Muslim scholastic sources. As a result, the people of Afghanistan and Central Asia the scientific knowledge. Moreover, Afghan literature of the period, which was written in both Persian and Pushto and cultivated in such centres as Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Bokhara, Samarkand and Khiva, dealt mainly with personal rather than social themes. Only lyric poetry with them of love and nostalgia as well as didactic moral lessons dominated the literary Diwans (collection of poetry) of the time. Gregorian laments that there were very few Afghans, except for Syed Abdul Hassan, who was educated in Badakhshan, Mecca-Medina and Egypt and became aware of the general conditions of the Islamic world.3 Significantly those few scholars, "who customarily travelled from Afghanistan to Bokhara, did so mainly as pilgrims or to study such subjects as Arabic and Muslimc jurisprudence".4 With the result, Afghanistan appeared to have lacked modern scholars and schools.

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
Common Shrines and Festivals:

Common shrines and festivals played an important role in developing close cultural interaction between Afghanistan and Russian Central Asia. On the occasions of "Eid" and Eid-uz-zoha which were common festivals, the people of Afghanistan used to send good wishes to the people of Russian Central Asia, and vice versa.

When the anniversary darbar of Zia-ul-Millat-Uddin was held on 18th August 1898 at Bag-i-Bala by the Amir of Afghanistan, it was largely attended by ulemas from Afghanistan, Waziristan and Tirah Jonaid. The Russian Muslims also attended the darbar. In northern Afghanistan, Mazar-i-Sharif the most venerable shrine among the Muslim holy places was regularly visited by the devotees from Balkh, Badakhsham, Russian Turkistan, Khiva, SamarKand, Tashkent, Ashkabad and Kabul. In 1875, a Russian subject, Aishan Khawja Gujur Samarkandi and an envoy visited this holy place along with four of his servants. A festival Gul-i-Surkh was celebrated every year in


Afghanistan. It was also celebrated and enjoyed by Russian Muslims. On one occasion a Russian military officer who had friendly terms with Sardar Abdullah Khan, Hakim of Turkistan, expressed his desire to visit Mazar-i-Sharif. For this purpose he sent a letter to Amir of Kabul seeking permission. But unfortunately he was denied permission and so could not visit the place. Bokhara was also the centre of attraction for both the Russian Muslims and Afghan people. This place was the home of great "Pirs", where people from Afghanistan went to pay their homage. It was Bokhara from where Shara Bai had communicated to the Amir of Afghanistan that "I prayed at the Shrine of Shah-i-Nakshaband Bokhara that the Al-Mighty God, may please preserve your Highness's shadow on my head and on the heads of the people of Islam." People from both sides were so enthusiastic to visit each other's religious places that they did not relish the barrier imposed by either the government or the officials. This is testified by Marques of Landsdowne in his despatch to C. Hardinge. He wrote that, "when the people of Russian Central Asia were refused permission


to visit religious places in Afghanistan, an amount of unrest was being manifested there.\textsuperscript{10} As far as, the routes for pilgrimage were concerned, "the Haj Pilgrims" from Russian territory travelled via Afghanistan on their way to Mecca for performing the Haj. On the other hand, Afghan pilgrims undertook the way of Russian Central Asia to reach Mecca though it was not frequent. In order to show his courtesy and extend facilities to Russian Muslims, who used to go to Mecca for Haj, the Amir of Afghanistan exempted them from the payment of tolls.\textsuperscript{11} Besides, they were not molested in any way throughout the journey. Murad Beg, an Uzbek resident of Central Asia, who served as a deputy inspector of Russian police availed this facility and went to Mecca for Haj via Kabul. Another pilgrim, Mirza Ali, an Uzbek belonging to Kan-i-namak in Kokand of Russian territory, went for Haj via Shahr-i-Mazar and Kabul.

\textsuperscript{10} Foreign Dt. Secret F. May 1905, Nos. 242-295, The Marques of Lansdowne to Sir Hardinge Foreign Office 5th September 1904.

Captain Sultan Beg of Samarkand who visited Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul, received the status of State guest of the Amir for about twenty days. At the time of his departure from Kabul, the Amir presented him a gold decoration and also sent through him some gifts for General Vrevsky and his Deputy, Esumovitch. In October 1892, the Amir of Kabul sent four sealed covers - one for the Tsar, one for the Governor-General of Turkistan and one each for Commissioners of Tashkent and General Bibikoff of Samarkand as a goodwill gesture for them. The Russians too reciprocated by sending 16000 Roubles as a gift to the Amir. In yet another case, sixty Astrakhan furs were sent to colonel Pkoloff through Abdullahjan. When Abdur Rahman Khan was in exile in Russian territory, the Russian govt. gifted him 18000 gold Tillas. In 1895, two Russian officers came to Afghanistan to meet Sardar Abdul Majid Khan whom they presented a decoration from the Russian government. Taj Nazar Ishan, a Russian official sent a box containing tea set, six cups and saucers and a looking glass to the Governor of Heratas a presentation from the Russian government. 12 The Afghan Governor accepted and sent suitable gifts in return. 13

13. Ibid.
That some Afghans had developed interest in learning Russian language is evidenced from the fact that in 1895 one of the four Daghistanis who returned from Mecca to Herat, brought with him Russian papers. Besides, some publications in Russian language were also found with him. That means, he had sufficient knowledge of Russian language. 14 In another case, Haji Ziauddin a native of Ghorian (Herati), lived for many years in Russia had learnt Russian language. 15 Russian language did make some dent into Afghanistan and in 1899 even a Russian teacher was appointed to teach the language to Amir’s slave boys. 16

The contributions made by Russian newspapers and journals, which carried numerous articles on Afghanistan also helped in strengthening the Russo-Afghan relations. They carried numerous articles on Afghanistan from Novae

15. Foreign Deptt. Secret F October 1897, Nos. 362-391
16. Foreign Deptt. Secret F. Progs September 1899, Nos. 118-319

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Vremya", "Viedomosti" and "National Zeitung" regularly published articles concerning Russo-Afghan political, social and cultural relations, beside commenting upon the respective policies of Russia, England, India and Afghanistan.

Settlement of people in Afghanistan and Russian Turkistan:

As a direct result of close trade and cultural ties between the two sides, considerable number of Central Asian people particularly Uzbeks and Tajiks settled down in northern Afghanistan and finally got assimilated in the Afghan Society. Those families bearing such names as Qadri, Pirzada, Akhun, Beg Kashgari, Turki, Bukhari, Nakshabandi, Mughal, Ghani, Mirza Qazikash, Baba, Jilani, Hamadani etc. 17 Were the living examples of this cultural assimilation which was the outcome of immigration from Bokhara, Samarkand, Tashkand, Khiva and Russian Turkistan into Afghanistan. Amir Abdur Rahman Khan made Aishan Rahim Khawja of Tashkant his Pir (spiritual adviser), 18 during his long stay at

18. Foreign Deptt. Secret.F. July 1885, 640-41
Tashkant and Samarhand. The Pir played an important role in cultural interaction between the two countries.

Afghanistan's external contacts were carried on chiefly by three cosmopolitan minorities of the country - the Hindus, the Jews and the Armenians. Members of these groups, who were dispersed throughout the Middle east, Central Asia and India, "served as the middle men between Afghanistan and Europe and handled most of the country's Transactions with Central Asia and India." However, this practice gradually became limited due to the stiff competition of trade with European Companies. The Jews, and the Armenians, unlike their sister communities in the Ottoman empire and Persia, had become isolated and in many respect culturally rigid, unable to sustain, enrich and transform the social and structural make up of their own communities. This was the clearest indication of the degree to which Afghanistan had become economically and culturally isolated. Yet the Jews in Afghanistan were constantly

20. Ibid.
rejuvenated by immigration from Bokhara, Persia and Georgia." The Jewish merchants who had monopoly in the business of money changing and drugs, were mainly helped by the Muslim pilgrims in maintaining communication between Afghanistan and Russian Central Asia. However, the economic monopoly of Jews gradually started eroding due to stiff competition offered by Hindu Merchants. Soon the business of money changing and the trade monopoly in drugs was taken over by Hindu merchants thereby forcing the Jews to follow new occupations. Some of them became shopkeepers and others joined such occupations as doctors, druggists, distillers or traders in lamb skin.

22. Ibid. p. 63.

23. Ibid. p. 64.

24. Ibid.
Geographical contiguity between the two countries facilitated the mutual visit of people to towns and cities for job opportunities. There is frequent mention about several Afghans going to Russian territories in search of services. One Mahmud Yusuf Khan, a resident of Herat, was in the employment of the Russian Consul General. He worked "as a spy for the Russian government in Afghanistan." However, in most cases Afghans were employed in various imperial services. An Afghan, Sikandar Khan, was inducted in the Russian army in Turkistan. Another Afghan, Mirza Ali Akbar Kazwini, was employed in the Russian consulate, and his brother, Mushin worked as a "Russian news writer".

The Peshawar diary of 21st June, 1896, reveals that the Russians engaged Afghan labourers to excavate ruby mines in the Gharan mountains on the Badakhshan border which had been lately included within the Russian limits after the demarcation of the boundary." In the same way, a Muslim resident of Bokhara, who had formerly served in the

25. Foreign Deptt. Secret F. Prog. June 1895, Nos. 610-633,
27. Foreign Secret F.
Pros. July 1896. 119-131 Peshawar Confidential Diary No. dated the 21st June 1896. Russian army as a drill instructor, was appointed by the Amir of Afghanistan on a salary of 600 Kabuli rupees per month to train his third son, Sardar Aminullah Jan in driling work.

Since labour was scarce in Russia, an announcement was made inviting Afghans for employment in the Russian railways. 28 As H. Burnes writes, this announcement resulted in a large number of Afghans from Herat District proceeding towards Panjdeh in the hope of obtaining employment, as the Russians were engaged in the construction of the railway between Panjdeh, Merv and Shaihu Junaid. According to the figures recorded in Meshed Diary of April, 1902, about two thousand Afghans were employed as labourer, at Merv alone. At first they were required to produce their passports but soon passport requirement was relaxed and they were allowed to work merely by registering their names.

The Afghan people often crossed the border and settled down in Russian towns and cities. The reason for this migration was either the oppressive policies of the Afghan government or the search for jobs. The Khyber political diary dated 14th October 1894 recorded a proclamation announced by the Russian authorities in which it was promised to grant sites to Afghan migrants for building their houses.

and shops in the town of Kakan, lately founded by the Russian government in the vicinity of Bokhara. As a result of this announcement many Afghans went there to obtain lands for that purpose. 29 Besides, several Afghan chiefs too along with their followers migrated to Russian territory at times of distress at home. One of the Hazara refugees, Mehmud Beg Kahkah, who lived at Panjdeh informed that Sardar Abdul Majid Khan of Afghanistan was well received by Russians and all the Afghan refugees, who accompanied him including those who joined him afterwards received one and half roubles per day for meeting their daily expenses. The Herati Khans who were in services of Afghan Turkistan also found that several of their horsemen (sawars) escaped to Russia due to non-receipt of their salaries. 30 Besides, a great number of soldiers belonging to the Afghan army also crossed the border. So much so, the Amir had to send his troops to prevent them from deserting the province.

Many Afghan Sardars and officials who took shelter in Russian territories did not feel isolated and were treated


well by the Russian government. Considering the case of Afghan Sardar Mohammed Ishak Khan and his son, Mohammad Ismail Khan who had gone to Samarkand and resided there, it was reported that "the Russian government provided them an allowance of 7,000 Tangaas". Later, Sardar Mohammad Ishak Khan was joined by about thirty members of his adherent group who were deported by an order of Amir from Turkistan and Mazar-i-Sharif. Sometimes, the tribes or the inhabitants of Afghan villages like, Shitkarb, Patub, Pamik, Warang, Zang, Kikhan Namadgut, Ran, Nath and Gharan refused to pay taxes to the government. It was simply, because "they wished to become the subjects of Russia." Following their wishes, sixty members of Jamshedi family crossed the border and settled down in Russian territory. In 1897, the Secretary of Russian embassy disclosed that an Afghan noble, Sardar Mohammad Azim Khan appeared at St. Petersburg and implored the Russian government for his protection. He was then sent to Tashkent where he received an allowance of 120 Rouble yearly from the Russian government. As far as question of engaging Afghan labour was concerned the Russian officers also procured their services in various kinds of developmental works. About 12000 families of Kataghanis and Badakhshanis also left Afghanistan and finally settled down

32. Foreign Secret P. 1896. 93-137, Gilgit Agency Diary, 14th December 1895.
in the Russian territory. Russian subjects too stayed in Afghanistan particularly. Three Russians, Nelcut, Wardelon and Barkeiles came to Kabul and settled there. Jews from Russia were also permitted to reside in Afghan territory. Such a cross-border movement of people from both the sides helped in developing social and cultural contacts between the two sides.

Abdur Rahman Khan’s long stay in Central Asia and his harmonious relations with Russian authorities there further improved friendly relations between the two countries even at critical times. Kabul. Following the failure of Abdur Rahman Khan in the power struggle with Sher Alikhan at Kabul he took refuge at Samarkand,33 where he was kindly received by the Russian authorities. He lived at Samarkand for almost a decade from 1870 to 1880 during which he was provided with a house, garden and also a subsistence allowance. The Russian government granted him 18000 gold Tillas (one tilla was equivalent to Rs.6-8). 34 However, granting asylum and other amenities to Abdur Rahman, Russians never encouraged him in his adventures against Sher Ali Khan, the then ruler of Kabul, thereby maintaining cordial relations with Afghanistan. Abdur Rahman was given the

34. Foreign Political. A August 1870, 25-37. Kabul Diary from 6th to 9th May, 1870 inclusive.
the position of Mir Akhor Bashi (chief master of horses) in the Russian services at Samarkand. By the time, he returned back to Kabul and became its ruler, he had become wiser in political affairs. It was more so due to his continuous interaction with the Russian officers in Central Asia. The political wisdom he had acquired during his stay in Russian territories enabled him to give mature leadership and stability to his country. Even in critical times, he remained cool and calm and used the occasion in pressing his British masters to finalise the demarcation of Afghanistan boundary with Russian Turkistan, thereby consolidating and defining Afghanistan's properties.

**Russian Medical Assistance to Afghans**

Medical Assistance extended by the Russian doctors to the people of Afghanistan did play no less a role in further strengthening of cultural relations between the two sides. The Russian newspaper *Novoe Vremya* dated 23rd August (5th September) 1903, reported that "the Afghan subjects were freely provided medical assistance."35 Earlier in 1897,

Russian doctor at Karez treated a party of about 170 Hazar refugees who were crossing the frontier from Afghanistan. 36 In the following year (1898), a doctor came to Afghanistan to meet the Amir, and expressed his desire to give medical service to the Afghan people. In the year 1904, many Afghan patients were treated at the camp hospital of Russia. 37

Russian help was greatly appreciated, particularly when there was fear of the outbreak of plague in Afghanistan. On hearing the reports about spread of plague in Bombay (India), General Kuropathin sent a despatch to the Governor of Herat expressing his concern over the danger posed by plague. Since plague was thought to be worse than cholera, he lamented that the government of India did not take effective measures to prevent the spread of this dangerous disease. Kuropatkin further enquired "whether the Afghan government had taken necessary steps and measures to protect their country and prevent the spread of this great calamity. 38

He reminded the Governor that four years ago, the plague had already caused great loss of lives in Afghanistan.

36. Foreign Secret F. 1897, 641-658, Meshed Political Diary for the week ending 10th September 1893.
37. Foreign Secret F. Nov. 1898, 276-284 (extract from Peshawar Diary No. 8, dated the 25th May, 1898).
suggested that the frontier should be guarded with troops and travellers or goods should not be allowed to cross it. More importantly, he showed his eagerness to provide "any assistance in matter of the protection of Herat in case of the appearance of plague". 39

RUSSIAN ENGINEERS IN AFGHANISTAN

Exchange of technical knowhow between Afghanistan and Russia was carried out in friendly manner and on principles based on their mutual understanding. Afghan Amir established direct links with the Russian engineering department. Whereas Afghanistan lacked the modern (engineering) technical knowhow, Russia had developed expertise to a great extent. So, there were several occasions when Russia shared its information and knowledge with Afghanistan. For instance in 1898, a group of five Russian engineers including the chief engineer Gaudaroff paid a visit to Afghanistan. 40 The group was taken care of by the Amir of Afghanistan himself and was accompanied by Abdul Subhan, the Amir's engineer, who learnt a lot of things from the Russian experience.

Exchange of commodities

Various commodities of daily use as well as raw materials were exchanged between the two countries which also helped in enriching the social contacts between the two sides. Russian gold ducats were commonly used in Afghanistan.

39. Ibid.
40. Foreign Secret F. November 1898. 276-284.
and were also being worn by Women. Russian gold dust was mainly used for making ornaments. Similarly, Russian pistols and muskets were used by Afghan Sardars and nobles. Other Russian commodities of daily use like gun locks, pad locks, knives razors, iron copper ware and brass wares for making strings of guitar, and Santoor were freely used in Afghanistan. Russian boxes and snuff bones, kneedles, glass spectacles, mirrors porcelain consisting of pots, cups, saucer plates, bowls, dishes for drinking water etc. were also used."41 Beeds and coral were used for women's ornaments worn as necklaces. Fishbone was used in making handles of knives and dagger. 42 Two kinds of Russian paper, polished and unpolished were imported into Afghanistan. The tea that came from Russia was called Bankabha which was of a superior quality with good and pleasant flavour. Slabmisree, a medicine, which was considered as a nutritive came to Afghanistan from Russia.43 Besides, Kimsan, a kind of prepared leather, was used for making bags and saddles. The people of Afghanistan used Russian broad cloth and chintz

41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
as dress materials. Russian Kalabatun and Siemgot were commonly used for ornamenting their apparels. The Russian "Atlas" or satin was very much liked by the local people. Khoodbalf, a silk cloth made in imitation of shawls came from Russia. Handkerchiefs too were imported from Russia."

From the Afghan side, home made shawls were exported to Russia. Mulla Rahim, a trader used to go to Russia with Kashmiri shawls which were in great demand there. Lapis lazuki of Badakhshan were exported to Russia in considerable qualities.

However, despite the fact that the Amir of Afghanistan had prohibited the export of wheat to Russian territory, Afghan traders used to export it to the Russians. The same was the case with Ringhan (ghee) sheep and camels. The Social ties between the people of both the countries were so deep rooted that the Russian government had even opened a bank at karez on Herat border. The bank lent money to Afghans.

44. Ibid.
OFFICIAL EXCHANGES:

Whereas the cultural contacts between the two regions continued on traditional lines, they were consolidated only during the reign of Amir Dost Mohammad Khan (1837-1863) of Afghanistan. He engaged in frequent exchange of letters with general Kaufmann, the Russian Governor General of Turkistan. Both the Afghan mercenaries and artisans had free access to the Russian territory and the same was true of Russian subjects in Afghanistan. The Afghans were employed in the armies of Tzarist Russia while Central Asians were taken into the Afghan army. Russian despatch of "scientific expeditions" 45 to Afghanistan as well as the arrival of numerous travellers also played important roles in fostering cultural relations between Afghanistan and Russia.

The cordiality of relations between the two sides is further evident from a letter dated 11 November 1894 sent by the Russian Governor, Kuropatkin to the Governor of Herat. General Kuropatkin informed the Herat Governor about the death of Tsar Emperor Alexander William III, and the ascension to the throne of his eldest son Nicholas. 46


46. Foreign S.F. Prog. May 1895, Nos. 76-114, (Translation of a letter from General Kuropat Kin to the Governor of Herat, dated 11th November, 1894).
Through his letter, Kuropatkin expressed the hope that "Afghanistan will sympathise with the Russians in their sorrow." 47 But in some cases the exchange of correspondence by Afghan officials with the Russian authorities provoked punishments. For example, Mirs of Shiberghan in Turkistsan were arrested by Sipah Salar Ghulam Haider Khan Orakzai, on suspicion of their being in correspondence with Russian authorities and were sent to Kabul. 48

Though the cordial relations between the two countries were impeded due to the political turmoil within Afghanistan and also due to increasing British influence, the bilateral exchange of communications and friendly visits continued. For example, a Russian Muslim officer of Shaikh Junaid was in regular communication with Afghan officer, Sarhang Mahmud Khan 49 and the Russian consulate interpreter, Mirza Taki Khan established cordial relations with Afghan official Abdullah Khan. 50 The Russian Ambassador to Afghanistan also contributed a lot in

47. Ibid.
48. Foreign Secret F. December 1895, 152-163, (Peshawar Confidential Diary No. 19, dated the 23rd October, 1895).

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maintaining these relations. The Russian officials despatched two communications to Sad-ud-din Khan, the Deputy Governor of Herat, one being from Polkonik Arandar Yenko, the Governor of Merv, seeking release of two persons who had fallen into the hands of the patrol guards in Maimena in December 1898.  

The two men named Aman Geldi and Yanes belonged to the Turkoman tribe, who were arrested while going to recover money which some of the inhabitants of Maimena owed them. The other letter came from Lieutenant General Bagoluboff, who was appointed as the commander of the troops in Transcaspian, in place of Lieutenant General Kuropatkin. Bagoluboff who was entrusted the task of guarding the frontier posts, make arrangements for the extension of trade and build a caravan saral at Kushk, got in touch with the Afghan authorities expressing his desire to "act in the same good neighbourly manner as General Kuropatkin used to do."  


52. Ibid.
He also informed about the steps to build caravan sarai at Kushk so that Afghan subjects would be able to transmit their goods and merchandise directly by means of railway, without any difficulties. He invited any Afghan wishing to visit the interior parts of Russia, to do so for which all the necessary assistance was promised.

It had become usual practice for even the frequent visitors to get official letters of introduction, to facilitate their travel and stay. In 1899, when a Persian came to Chihil Dukhtaran bringing a letter from the Hakim of Ashkabad (Russia), he was treated well and provided lodgings in Karta Bagh. A police guard was also given to him and an official was entrusted to make necessary arrangements for his food and other needs. All the expenses incurred during his stay were met by the Afghan government. In another case, on 16 May, 1899, when a Darbar comprising the Governor, the Commander in-Chief and a large number of military officers was held at Chahar Bagh. A Russian messenger came to meet the Governor. He was warmly welcomed and assured by the Governor of a prompt reply from the Amir.

53. Ibid.
Peshawar Diary of 15 March 1904 reported that "The Amir and his brother, Sardar Ghulam Alijan, land Sad-ud-din Khan, Governor of Herat were in continuous correspondence with the Russian government." 54 According to Colonel Whyte, the Governor of Bala Marghab was in almost daily receipt of letters from the Governor of Panjdeh, and kept answering most of them himself.55 The letters were usually brought by Turkoman messengers.

The ruler of Bokhara was also in correspondence with the Amir of Afghanistan. He had endeavoured to bring about cordial relations between the Amir of Afghanistan and Russia. In 1905, the Governor of Sheikh-Junaid sent a letter to the Amir along with five newspapers giving accounts of Russo-Japanese war.56 Tash Fulad, a merchant and a member of Municipal Committee of Samarkand also brought with him an official letter addressed to the Amir of Kabul.57

Although exchange of letters was carried out for the betterment of relations between Afghanistan and Russia, sometimes it was misused for personal interests. For instance, Colonel Mohammad Khan, who was deputed at Herat

54. Foreign Secret F. June 1904, Nos. 1-12, (Extract from Peshawar Diary No. 4, dated 15th March 1904).


57. Foreign Secret F. February, Nos. 64-66.
sent a letter to the Russian authorities expressing his desire to settle down in Russia if he was given shelter. Unfortunately, the letter was intercepted on its way and an arrest warrant was issued to Colonel Khan. Later on, he was imprisoned by the Afghan Amir. Same was the case with Ghulam Haider Khan, the Orakzai of Turkistan, whose letters addressed to the Russian Officials were also intercepted by Afghan officials. This ultimately led to his arrest.58 General Kauffmann, the Governor General of Russian Turkistan used to exchange friendly communications with the ruler of Afghanistan, which resulted in the establishment of good personal rapport between the rulers of Kabul and the Russian authorities. The cordiality in their relations is also evident from the fact that Kauffmann continued to inform Amir of Kabul about important events taking place in Russian Central Asia. On December 1, 1874, he informed Amir Sher Ali that after the conquest of Khiva, the Khan of Khiva was

58. Foreign Deptt. Secret F. Proceedings May 1894, No. 11-34, Translation of a Diary of Nawab Mohammad Afzal Khan, Khan Bahadur, British agent at Kabul, No. 18, from 28th February to 2nd March 1894.

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asked to set free all slaves including the Afghans. The order was observed strictly by the Khan of Khiva and almost all the slaves were released including 400 Afghans who had been detained there.\textsuperscript{59} After their release, Afghans returned to their native country, some through Bokhara, some through Balkh and some through Maimena.

The reciprocal visits of embassies and government officials also contributed to strengthening contacts between the two regions. It was during the region of Dost Mohammad Khan and Sher Ali Khan, that two Russian missions led by Vitkovitch and Stoliletov visited Kabul.\textsuperscript{60} The two missions during their stay in Afghanistan developed close relations with the Kabul authorities. On his return to Samarkand, Stolletov was accompanied by an Afghan mission consisted of Mirza Magdazam,\textsuperscript{61} the Minister of War, two colonels and a Secretary along with an escort of twenty one Afghans. From Samarkand, the Afghans further proceeded to Tashkant, where they were received warmly by the Governor-General.

\textsuperscript{59} Foreign, Secret F. March 1874, Nos. 52-62.

\textsuperscript{60} Foreign Secret. F., 1 August 1938, No. 22 (The details of their visit have already been dealt with in the first Chapter).

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
Amir Dost Mohammad reciprocated by sending his emissary, Haji Hussain Ali 62 as an agent with his message. Hussain Ali spent some time in Russia where he was treated well. In 1902 General Kuropatkin while visiting Kushk rode even up to the Afghan frontier. Accompanied by a large staff and carrying with him the Russian flag he visited Mahmud, the Afghan Officer-in-command of the Afghan post at Karatapa where he was given a warm reception. 63 During the conversation with Mahmud, Kuropatkin expressed his desire to extend the Kushk railway.

The people of both Afghanistan and Russian Central Asia shared their sorrow and happiness with each other. From Russian Central Asia pilgrims used to come every Friday to Afghanistan to visit the tomb of Colonel Shahab Murad Khan who was killed at Panjadeh. Their visit was to testify their admiration for bravery of the Colonel. In 1904, when the Afghan prince Ishak Khan was in exile, he went to Tashkent and put a wreath on the tomb of late Governor-General Ivanov and afterwards met his widow. 64 Expressing his deep

62. Foreign Political, May 1839, 826.
63. Foreign Frontier B, July 1902, 121-143.
64. Foreign, Frontier-B, 1904.
regret were also shared equally by the majority of the Afghan nation. 65 On this occasion the Amir of Kabul too sent a deputation headed by his brother to Tashkent to lay wreath on the tomb of the late Governor General Ivanov.

Exchange of gifts between Afghan rulers and their Russian counterparts also facilitated the continuance of close relations between the two countries. On February 15, 1892, when Afghan envoy Sarhang Mahmud Khan visited the Russian camp at Sheikh junaid, he was presented with two bottles of wine, a box of sweet meats and some biscuits. In the same manner Taj Nazar alongwith his attendants also visited the Governor and Commander-in-Chief at Chahar Bagh, where they were received graciously. A Khilat comprising a dress and a carpet was presented to him and lungis for his attendants by the Governor. 66 In 1897, Indian Government received information from its agent in Baluchistan that two Afghans who had gone to Russia, were given warm welcome by the Russians. On their return, the Russian officers gave them 6000 Krans to be distributed among the Maliks and the people of Anardarra and Kalah Koh. They were also given two

65. Ibid.

66. Foreign Secret. F. April 1896, 403-437. (From the agent to the Governor-General in Baluchistan, to the Secretary to the Govt. of India, No. 1386, dated Quetta, 20th February, 1896).
pistols and a horse as a present. 67

A British news writer, Dilawar Hussain reported from Kandahar that six Bokharans were sent to Afghanistan on deputation with a gift of two hundred horses and other articles to be presented to the Amir. 68 The other report made in 1906 said that a packet was prepared at the Russian consulate General in Meshed by M. de Gierce, the Acting Counsul-General who handed it over to Ghulam Raza, the Russian trader, to be presented to Jar Mohammad Khan Baluch at Kandahar. The packet consisted of three gold watches, three gift snuff boxes and three hundred Roubles. 69

In 1895, Amir of Afghanistan sent a crown estimated to be worth Rs. 30,000 to the Tsar as a gift. 70 In 1897 the Russian government sent 80 loads of Russian gold coins to the Amir of Afghanistan through Sardar Abdul Aziz Khan. 71 In 1898, Sir N. Oconor informed the Secretary of State in London that he had learnt about the gift by a Russian official, Shakovski over a million Roubles to a Turk subject of Amir of

67. Foreign Secret F. August. 497-520, (From the Agent to the Governor General in Baluchistan to the Secretary to the Govt. of India).
68. Foreign Secret. F. March 1902, 156-159.
69. Foreign Secret F. Sept 1906, 328-337.
70. Foreign Secret F. August 1895, Nos. 276-300.
71. Foreign Secret F. February 1898, Nos. 1285. (Extract from Political abstract of intelligence. Punjab No. 31, 7th August 1897)
Kabul named Hussain for taking to Kabul. 72.

The cultural contacts between the two countries were rich and varied. The Russian dimension in the traditional cultural contacts between the people of Afghanistan and Central Asia enriched the experience of Afghans in social and political spheres.

To conclude the cultural relations between Afghanistan and Russia, though restricted by the Anglo-Russian rivalry, did continue during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Traditional relations based on common religion, ethnicity, customs, dress and food habits remained as effective as before and both sides cooperated with each other in areas of their immediate concern. Cross-border activities and fraternisation of the peoples of the two sides further strengthened their cultural contacts. There was a clear imprint of Central Asian society and culture.