Introduction
HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE
ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TRANSITION
The disintegration of the former Soviet Union created a new political reality in the Eurasian region. Five new independent republics of Central Asia - Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan emerged lying at the crossroads of Russia, the Middle East, South Asia and the Far East. Central Asia is located at the centre of Eurasian region surrounded by the Russian Federation in the north, People's Republic of China in the east, Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey in the west and Afghanistan and South Asia in the south. Geostategic importance of the Central Asian region and its abundant hydrocarbon reserves (minerals, oil and natural gas) have attracted the global attention. Big power rivalry over rich natural resources, especially hydrocarbons; the perennial flashpoint of Afghanistan, religious fundamentalism, cross border terrorism and arms and narcotics trafficking underline the complexity of the overall situation in Central Asia.

The new Central Asian Republics emerged, each with its own problems of national identity, politics and economy. The contemporary international significance of these new states reflects their economic and demographic potential, geographic location, the character of their relations with other states, primarily with neighbouring ones. As open market is a precondition for entering the modern world economy, these Republics are in search of market oriented or market driven economic reforms, which would augur well for their socio-economic development and political stability. The geo-political and geo-economic importance of Central
Asia attracted some external powers, including the US. India, keeping in view her close socio-cultural and ethnic closeness with the Central Asian region since ancient times, has considerable interests and stakes in the region.

Table 1

General Profile of Five Central Asian Republics and India

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<td>2,965</td>
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* PPP stands for Purchasing Power Parity.

India showed keen interest in Central Asia as a neutral actor underlining the age-old relationship between the two regions that had evolved through historical and cultural interaction. In contemporary times, the importance of Central Asia to India does not remain merely civilizational, cultural and historical, but also geopolitical and economic.
Former Indian diplomat, Rajiv Sikri, summarises the Indian interests in Central Asia in the following words:

- To encourage the development of stable and secular regimes in Central Asia, lest weakened, unstable states with centrifugal tendencies become bases for terrorist, separatist and fundamentalist elements which could link up with counterparts in Afghanistan and Pakistan;

- To ensure that any instability and chaos in the region does not lead to a 'domino effect', of which there is a serious danger;

- To be watchful of the possible impact of developments in Central Asia on the Xinjiang region of China that would have a direct bearing on India's security interests;

- To have a firm foothold and exercise influence in Central Asia along with other great powers so that this strategically located region does not become an area dominated by forces inimical or hostile to India's interests;

- To track any military presence in the region that could potentially threaten India;

- To gain access to the region's rich natural resources, including oil and gas, uranium, rare earths and minerals, copper, gold, diamonds etc.; and

- To acquire, if possible, some specialised defence technologies and defence production facilities. (Sikri, 2007)
India has strong historical relations with the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan). Both India and Central Asia were two powerful centres of ancient oriental civilization with a great deal of interaction. The historical past of both the regions has strong foundation of exchanges in cultural, political and economic spheres. Indian epics (both the Mahabharata and Ramayana) and the Puranas have numerous references of the region, its topography, mountains, rivers and the people. Many communities of Central Asia participated in the Mahabharat war. Shakas and Yavanas (Greeks) have been described as degraded Kshyatriyas by the Mahabharata and the Manu Smriti. (Kumar, 2007, p. 4) According to the Puranas, India and Central Asia are parts of Jambudwipa.1

At the third India-Central Asia Conference in Tashkent in November 2003, External Affairs Minister Shri Yashwant Sinha, in his keynote address, said that India’s connection with Tashkent, Bukhara and Samarkand has deep roots in history. Trade between India and Central Asia pre-dates the Silk Road by at least three thousand years and Aryans provide a link between both the regions. In India, the Saka Calendar is still in use as a sort of daily reminder of the deep bonds

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1 Jambudwipa, also known as Sudarshandvipa, is said to be circular in shape. It was surrounded by sea on all sides. It has six mountain ranges – Himalaya, Hemakuta, Nishadha, Nila, Sveta and Shringavat and nine zones such as Hari, Bhadrashva, Ketumal, Bharata, Uttar-Kuru, Sweta, Hiranyak, Airavata and Havrita. According to Markandeya Purana, Jambudwipa is depressed on the south and north and elevated and broad in the middle. The elevated region is known as Ilavrita or Meruvarsha. The nine divisions, according to Matsyas Purana, are Ilavrita, Ramyaka or Ramanaka, Hiranmaya or Tirnaka, Uttara-Kuru or Shringashaka, Bhadrashva, Ketumal, Hari, Kimpurusha and Bharata. For details see Kumar, B. B. (2007), “India and Central Asia: Links and Interactions” in J. N. Roy and B. B. Kumar (eds.) India and Central Asia: Classical to Contemporary Periods, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, p.11.
between Central Asia and India. (http://mea.gov.in/speech/2003/11/06ss01.htm)

He further said, in recent times, few regions have changed as dramatically as Central Asia has since 1990s. The transition from communism to democracy has been made without major convulsions. It will be fair to say that this was expected of a region where the literacy rate is over 98 per cent and where the constitutional liberty carries with it secularism as an article of faith. India and Central Asia share these national strengths (http://mea.gov.in/speech/2003/11/06ss01.htm). Mr. Sinha continued that "India’s cooperation with Central Asia includes cultural, economic, defence and security relations. For India, Central Asia is our ‘immediate and strategic neighbourhood’, we are currently engaged in setting up, with our aid funds, Institutes of Excellence in Information Technology education in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. A Fruit Processing plant is being set up by India in Tajikistan. Earlier in 2003, a complete Industrial Training Centre was commissioned and handed over to Government of Turkmenistan. Currently India provides 1,000 man-months of training to senior Central Asian professionals every year (http://mea.gov.in/speech/2003/11/06ss01.htm). Mr. Sinha also said, “the Vedas are a blend of the adventurous Central Asian spirit and the cultural genius of the Indus Valley Civilization. India’s use of the Saka Calendar is still a daily reminder of the deep bonds between Central Asia and India.” (Sahai, 2005, p. 45)

In the second century BC, the Saka tribes are believed to have migrated from Bactria to north across the Pamirs. (Kaushik, 1997, p. 63)
Close socio-economic and cultural ties, which existed at that point of time, were strengthened by i) the ideological and religious forces of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Islam and Sufism; ii) due to the influx of Aryans, Sakas, Kushans, Turks and Mughals; and iii) due to high mobility of statesmen, scholars, spiritualists, artists, craftsman, litterateurs, merchants and traders. The people-to-people contacts, exchange of trade and ideas, and the reciprocal cultural influences enriched the horizons of human development and left an indelible imprint on the political, economic and social life of the entire region. (Warikoo, 2008, p. 144)

Indo-Central Asian interaction was most intimate during the Kushan period. During this era, the ancient relations between India and Central Asia reached their zenith. The incorporation of northwestern India and Central Asia into a common state under the Kushan rule resulted in freer flow of men, ideas and institutions between the two regions. A Kushan inscription from Taxila attributes the construction of a Buddhist Chaitya to a Bactrian devotee and the name Kharapallan mentioned in the Sarnath inscription among the two Kshtraps as Buddhist donors is believed by scholars to be of Bactrian origin. (Kaushik, 1997, p. 63) India and Uzbekistan were part of Bactria that initially was the main core of the Kushan state and reached the peak of its power in second and third century AD, when it included Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Indian territories up to the Narbada River. (World Mass Communication, p. 28) The cult art of Kushan Bactria was discovered in the temples of Dalverzintepa and Buddhist complexes
of Termez such as Airtam, Fayaztepa and Karatepa, where Buddhist art with figures of Buddha in nirvana mudra, Bodhisatva and adoration in monumental sculpture and wall painting are found. (World Mass Communication, p. 20)

The Kushan era was a period of close cultural relations and mutual enrichment of cultures of India and Central Asia. It was a time of great synthesis of cultures as is manifested by the Kushan coins testifying to the coexistence of Zoroastrianism with the Indian religions of Buddhism and Shaivism. During the Kushan period, Central Asia flourished materially. (Kaushik, 1997, p. 63)

The languages of India and Central Asia had profound impact on each other. Genesis and development of Urdu and Turkic languages in Hind are the results of Indian and Central Asian contact. Sanskrit has also the profound impact on the languages of Central Asia. The Shaka and Slav languages, which were spoken largely in Central Asia, were intimately linked with Sanskrit. Sanskrit, which was known as Arshi or Arya in Tokharian, was methodically taught in Central Asia. Ashwaghosha's Budhha Charita and Saundaranda Kavys were found in Central Asia. Almost all the Buddhist texts were translated in all the major languages of Central Asia. The relation of Turkic languages with the Aryan languages is very ancient. Robert Caldwell, in his masterpiece A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian of South Indian Family of Language, has given data and detailed analysis of the links between the languages of Central Asia and the South Indian dialects. (Kumar, 2007, p. 26)
The archeological discoveries in northern India and Central Asia reveal remarkable parallels in stone and bone tools and equipment, pot forms and styles, and other artefacts, which clearly prove a rare intensity of communication across the Himalayas since pre-historic times. Whereas the sculptures excavated at Khalchayan and Dalverzin-Tepe (both in Uzbekistan) depict the influence of Indo-Buddhist traditions, the discovery of a Buddhist cave monastery at Kara Tepe provides another example. (Warikoo, 2008, pp. 144-145)

Considerable geographical information about India and its neighbourhood in Central Asia is available in medieval Indian literature. *Kavyamimamsa* of Rajshekhar, Kalhan’s *Rajatarangini*, some lexicons, Sanskrit and Buddhist prose narratives and fables provide valuable information in this regard. Besides, Gunadhya’s *Brihatkatha*, Somdeva’s *Kathasaritasagar*, Kshemendra’s *Brihatkatha Manjari* and its Jaina adaptation, *Vasudeve-Hindi* provide insight for understanding the geography and other information about India and its Central Asian neighbours. (Kumar, 2007, p. 14) Remains of hundreds of Buddhist shrines, stupas and monasteries of designs inspired by India. Buddhist texts in Brahmi and Kharosthi, and Sanskrit dramas and texts on medicine, astronomy and astrology written in Brahmi, hundreds of documents of administrative, commercial, legal and miscellaneous kinds, draft in Sanskrit, Prakrit or Central Asian dialects written in Indian scripts and tablets of complete Brahmi scripts have been discovered from Central Asian sites. 764 Kharosthi documents in Prakrit language on wooden
tablets, leather pieces and silk fragments throw much light on the social, religious and political situation in Central Asia during the early centuries of the Christian era. (Kablukov, 2007, p. 79)

India and Central Asia were linked through many land routes. The Indian traders, at the close of 1880s, started bringing goods to Central Asia through Persia (now Iran). This new trade route was less dangerous and cheaper. They asked for and received permission from the Tsarist authorities to use even a more advantageous route to Central Asia after the construction of trans-Caspian railway. The route was from Bombay port to Black Sea Port of Batumi and then across Caucasus to Central Asia. Taxila and Peshawar on either side of the Indus river were connected with Indian trade routes on Indian side and Central Asian trade routes on the other. Taxila was the terminus of several major inland routes and the starting point of the trade routes connecting India and Central Asia. (Kumar, 2007, p. 9) The ancient Silk Route was a strong linkage between the Indian subcontinent and the Central Asian region whether it was trade or people to people contact. In the present times, India is seeking to evolve a similar and strong relationship with each of the Central Asian countries. There are a lot of common grounds for building and strengthening this relation. Secularism and democracy are two features that are shared by the Central Asian countries and India. Moreover, Central Asia has a positive and extremely friendly disposition towards India. (Mavlonov, 2006, p. 25)
The vast territory of Central Asia was connected with India both through land and sea-routes. Seafarers first reached the Persian shores and then took the land routes to the north of the Amu Darya across Khurasan. The principal routes on the mainland went through the Khyber and Liolan passes. Lahore, Multan, Kabul and Qandahar were the major entry points of these roads. In addition, there were the Kashmir routes which led through the Kara Koram to Yarkand (now in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region), where the routes from Ladakh, Tibet, China and India were joined by those leading to Kashghar. (Alam, 1994, p. 203)

Trade and business has been an important part of Indo-Central Asian contacts. Indian traders brought into Central Asia commodities like textiles of varied range, multi-colour chints from Khairabad, plain coarse calico Vota and fine cloth of Thanesar, silk brocade, and fine calico, coarse and fine calico from Bengal, silk brocade from Gujarat, Kashmiri shawls as well as napkins and handkerchiefs of Lahore. The kinds of cloth imported from India in Samarkand and Bukhara included fine whites and all other kinds of whites, which serve for apparel made of cotton wool and Crasca. Spices, sugar, indigo, several types of drugs, medicinal herbs, precious stones, nutmegs, cloves, mace, ginger, sugar as well as animals were other important trade items brought by Indian merchants into Central Asia. Indian goods manufactured in Bengal and Khambayat also reached in Central Asia, Tartary, Persia (now Iran) and Turkey. (Alam, 1994, pp. 205-206)
Later in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when Indian traders reached as far as Moscow and St. Petersburg through Astrakhan, sables, bird feathers, white fur coats, red yuft, mirrors, copper and iron became those Russian items in demand in Indian markets. Horses were imported to India in very large numbers right from the early middle ages. Throughout medieval times, Central Asia remained the principal source of supply of horses. In sixteenth century, according to Moghul ruler Babur, seven to ten thousand horses arrived in Kabul every year. During the seventeenth century, the demand rose enormously and the Indian traders, according to a report, sometimes purchased as many as a hundred thousand Central Asian horses at Kabul. In the fourteenth century, there was an estimated at 2,500 per cent profit in the horse trade. (Alam, 1994, pp. 208-209) Besides, cotton was a precious export item from Bukhara to India. Zandana village near Bukhara was the production centre of an expensive variety of cotton, which was named after the village as Zandaji and sold at the prices of silk in Fars, Iraq, Kirman and Hindusthan (India). India also received a large supply of dry fruits from Central Asia. Fruits from Persia, Balkh, Bukhara and Samarkand were available in the markets of Delhi. In the seventeenth century, when caravan routes began to be more frequently used, fresh fruits from Central Asia reached Indian markets. The Mughal Emperor Jehangir (1605 AD-1626 AD) received melons from Karis and grapes and apples from Samarkand. (Alam, 1994, p. 210) During the 18th century, raw silk from Bukhara and Khokand was brought to commercial
centres in Indus Valley, especially Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Bahawalpur, where it was manufactured and then exported to India. (Gommans, p. 42)

Textiles continued to be the chief export from India. The Special Envoys of the Uzbek rulers in the court of the Mughal Emperor Aurengzeb (1658 AD-1707 AD) were entrusted with the responsibility to procure varieties of cloth suitable for the royal establishment. Some Indian merchants had brought Indian master weavers (Husayn, Ustid Rajab, Ustad Kajar from Multan and Jitkar from Lahore) and stonemasons and encouraged them to settle in Samarkand. (Alam, 1994, p. 206)

Horses, dry fruits and fresh fruits and musk, furs, falcons, corals were the principal imports from Central Asia. The Mahabharat linked the people of Central Asia to their main assets by calling them asvaka (horsefolk). This name occurs again in a somewhat altered form as asvapati (Lord of the horses). (Gommans, p. 42)

Khatris, Hindu Multanis were known as traders and moneylenders in Central Asia. In the sixteenth century, many Multanis, both Hindus and Muslims, figured in a variety of monetary and commercial transactions in Samarkand. By the end of the sixteenth century, traders from almost the entire subcontinent participated in India’s trade with its northwestern neighbours. Hindu traders from the farthest parts of India, including Bengal, Sindh, Gujrat and the Gangetic plain
and merchants from Deccan found their way to Khurasan, Transoxiana and Turkistan. (Alam, 1994, p. 211)

India had traditional cultural links being built during the days of thriving commerce and culture of the old Silk Route period. The fabled Silk Route, which was the first trans-continental commercial and diplomatic route in the history of mankind, (Kaushik, 1997, p. 63) facilitated bilateral and multilateral exchanges between India, Central Asia, China, Middle East and Eurasia. Indian art, culture and philosophy made a profound impact in the pre-Islamic Central Asia.

The Sultanate and Mughal rule witnessed migration of people from Central Asia due to various reasons such as deterioration of socio-economic and political conditions and recurrence of natural calamities and to some extent due to anarchy and tyranny. During 1730s, some 12,000 people from Central Asia migrated to India due to famine in Transoxian. (Kumar, 2007, p. 17) Some luminaries and 274 poets from Bukhara, Samarkand, Nasaf and Badakhshan migrated to India. Poets from Bukhara and Merv stayed at the imperial court of Akbar. Khwaja Parsa, Makhfi, Mirza Sirajuddin, Furqat, Hamza Hakim Zadeh and others came from Central Asia to India in 19th century. Poets like Nasim, Nasafi, Maharam, Mushrib and Shaukat popularized Indian style of poetry in Central Asia. (Kumar, 2007, p. 18) Some similarities have been found in the paintings of India and Central Asia. The unique blending of Indo-Turani style in miniature painting was noticed at the turn of 16th century. The Mughal painting owes to Central Asian masters for its
evolution. Many miniature painters and calligraphers came from Central Asia to serve the Mughal Courts. The prominent of them were Farukh Beg, Muhammad Nadir Samarkandi and Muhammad Murad. (Kumar, 2007, p. 19)

The Central Asians generally love Indians- as for them India is a *skazka* (fairy land) where only millionaires live, each person has a melodious voice and can sing and dance; where rich girls opt for poor boys and where only ad pure love reigns. For them Indian films, Indian songs, Indian cine stars are a source of perpetual joy. (Uzbekistan 2006, p. 26)

**INDIA-CENTRAL ASIA HISTORICAL RELATIONS**

The following paragraphs discuss India’s historico-cultural ties with individual republics of Central Asia in the pre-medieval period.

*Republic of Uzbekistan*

Relations between Uzbekistan and India have a continuous history, spanning through several thousand years. Since the second half of the second century BC, the Great Silk Route as a direct route connecting all great civilizations such as China, India, Near East and Europe. Over 1500 years, this route has been a big system of caravan routes. Along the Silk Route, significant trade was conducted with cities like Tebriz, Ormuz, Bukhara, Samarkand, Khorezm, Otrar, Kashghar, Turpan, Hotan and Dunhuan as the main trade and transit points. (World Mass Communication, p. 28)
The city of Samarkand, together with Bukhara, was the centre of the Indian merchants for their trade in Central Asia. In a late sixteenth century manuscript collection of papers, numerous Multanis were reported to have been involved in commercial and monetary transactions in the city of Samarkand. As early as 1326 AD, Indians were the third largest visitors to Samarkand, next to Turks and Tajiks, as reported in a waqf-nama. In the fifteenth century, lands, villages and rest-houses of the Hindus were mentioned in the sale and purchase deals from the Samarkand region. (Alam, 1994, p. 203) There were also traces of the business of the Indian merchants in the Shaybnsi territory. Samarkand, situated on the bank of the Zarafshan river, was the important centre of Silk route system and a major urban centre of erstwhile Sogdian empire. It was the capital of Tamerlane (1372 AD-1402 AD). The Registan Square at first sight evokes the feeling of awe and splendour. The grand and imposing scale of three madrasas that form the three sides of the square, their exteriors decorated by intricate calligraphy and mosaic, make Registan a unique sight in Central Asia. That the main gate having two lions with sun painted on its top, is still called Sher Dwar, is ample testimony to close historical ties with India. In the Bibi Khanam mosque, in Samarkand people are still seen to be tying cotton tags to the mulberry tree asking for a boon, reminding us of similar practices in India. (Warikoo, 2008, p. 145) In the Uzbek territory too, the Hindus had their own leader to take care of their needs and maintain community cohesion. The leader appointed by a royal order, enjoyed the ruler's
support to deal autonomously with the affairs of his community spread over the towns of the Uzbek Khanate. (Alam, 1994, p. 219)

Samarkand school of painting and calligraphy grew popular in India, making an impact on the art traditions. Sanskrit works of Indian scholars like Aryabhatta on astronomy and mathematics and Charak and Susruta on medicine were known to Central Asian scholars like Al-khwarezmi and Ibne-Sina through their Arabic translations. (Kaushik, 1997, p. 65) The ancestor of the celebrated Indian poets (1252-1325) and Mirza Ghalib (1797-1869) were from Uzbekistan. (Puri, 1997, p. 237)

Being situated in the heart of Central Asia and deriving its name from Sanskrit word Vihara (monastery), Bukhara retains its reputation as the holiest city with hundreds of mosques and madrasas. The Chor Minar madrasa at Bukhara is a crude and miniature form of Indian Char Minar at Hyderabad. Masjid Kalyan and Mir Arab madrasa in Bukhara continue to be the centres of important religious and social activities. Kalyan Minar is a prominent feature of Bukhara. One tall pole with a yak tail in the Kalyan minaret is reminiscent of old traditions. (Warikoo, 2008, p.145) In 1558, Anthony Jenkinson of an English Company, met a number of merchants from North India and Bengal in Bukhara. (Alam, 1994, p. 203)

Similarly, during Mughal era, traders and the production centres of almost the entire subcontinent were involved in trade and the merchants from Central-
Asia-Khurasan and Turkistan reached as far south as Malabar Coast. (Alam, 1994, p. 225) In Bukhara, it was generally believed that a successful way that a lover could meet the exorbitant demands of his beloved was to locate and plunder the fabulous wealth of a rich Hindu merchant. (Alam, 1994, p. 203) According to Akbar's historian Abul Fazl, poets from Bukhara and Merv stayed at the imperial court and a number of high-ranking mensabards were of Central Asian origin. (Kaushik, 1997, p. 65)

India and Uzbekistan have shared a geo-cultural affinity and a long tradition of historical contacts which date back to antiquity. The history of close economic, cultural and diplomatic contacts between the two regions are discernible from the type of habitat, foot and drinking habits, ornaments, arts and crafts prevalent in this region. The archaeological findings in Northern India and Uzbekistan reveal remarkable parallels in stone and bone tools, pot forms and other artifacts which suggest a rare intensity of communication across the Himalayas since pre-historic times. (Warikoo, 2008, p. 147)

The relics discovered in the archaeological excavations at Khalchayan in southern Uzbekistan display strong local Bactrian traits with a marked secular trend which deeply influenced the Gandhara School and the Kushan art. The influence of Indo-Buddhist traditions was traced with the discovery of lotus motif in the architecture of a Buddhist monastery at Kara Tepe and the existence of Brahmi/Kharoshthi inscriptions on the artifacts in this area. Frescoes found in
Panjikent and Varakhsha also bear testimony to this effect. For instance, a painting depicting a blue dancer with a trident and body draped in tiger skin is linked to the legend of the blue necked Shiva Nilkantha. Another painting shows a king hunting a tiger on elephant back, which is obviously based on Indian experience. Indo-Uzbek contacts developed further during Uzbek times. The Khawarezmian scholars, Al Beruni and Abdur Razak Samarkandi not only visited India but their writings also helped the political history of India. (Kaushik, 1997, pp.63-64)

Panjikent is a commercial town with bazaars, covering an area of 13.5 hectares, in which around 130 houses and shops have been excavated in the recent days. The structural remains of the buildings and houses here have produced the remains of many sculptures and paintings. In these remains, the representations of Hindu gods and goddesses as well as many decorative elements and narrative scenes have been found. (Gupta, 2007, p. 58)

Three hundred years of Mughal rule – established by Babar of Andijan in the Ferghana valley the better part of which is in Uzbekistan - changed the social complexion on India and led to further growth of Indo-Islamic culture. Due to its central position on the Silk Route, Uzbekistan with its famous cities of Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent became an important cultural and trading center of Asia. Traders, travellers and pilgrims from Uzbekistan and adjoining areas prefer real to follow the Bukhara-Kabul-Psehawar-Punjab route or the now that traversed
through Ferghana, Kashgar, Yarkand, Ladakh, Kashmir and Punjab, as they were shorter and more established routes. It has been established that hundreds of Indian traders hailing from different parts of India stayed for several years in Bukhara, Karshi, Samarkand, Tashkent and other Uzbek towns for trading purposes even as late as the nineteenth century.

Indian exports to Uzbekistan included shawls, books (printed as well as calligraphed), tea, muslin, brocades, spices, herbal medicine, indigo and core. Indian imports from that quarter comprised mainly of Bukharan and Kokandi gold coins (tillas), silks, carpets and coarse cotton goods. However, the incorporation of Uzbekistan and India into the Russian and British empires respectively restricted the trade and cultural movements between the two regions. (Warikoo, 2008, p. 145)

Republic of Kazakhstan

Stretching over 1,600 kms from north to south and over 2,000 kms. from the Caspian Sea in the west to China's frontier in the east, Kazakhstan in terms of area is the largest of the Central Asian Republics and the ninth largest country in the world. Its strategic importance is not only due to its central position in Eurasia sharing borders with Russia in the north, with Caspian Sea in the west, with China, with Kyrgyzstan, with Uzbekistan and with Turkmenistan, but also due to its abundant oil, gas and mineral resources. (Editor's Page, Himalayan and Central Asian Studies, April-June 2003)
Ethnic-cultural and trade contacts between Kazakhstan and India have lasted for many centuries and go back to migration of Aryan tribes from steppes of Eurasian to the plains of Indian subcontinent. Vedic literature such as Rigveda, Atharvaveda, Samhitas etc. contains information about the presence of Indian tribes on the territory of Kazakhstan. (Abuseitova, 2007, p. 43)

The traces of India-Central Asian cultural contacts are also found in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The local museum in Chimbent town of southern Kazakhstan has a number of artefacts, particularly farming tools, household items, yurts, stone items etc. which closely resemble the lifestyle in the Indian Himalayas. Some Zoroastrian artefacts are also preserved here. It would be relevant to mention about the artefacts preserved in Sairam, another ancient Kazakh town on the Silk Route. There is an ancient pillar with Sanskrit/Kharoshthi inscriptions in a local mosque at Sairam, which is also a Mausoleum of the mother of a well known Turkestan saint, Ahmad Shah Yasavi. In the small local museum, one found another such pillar, old plough, spinning wheel, and other antiquities. One such pillar is reported to be in the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad. Recently, an ancient Buddhist site has been discovered in Sairam, where a lamp of XII century was found. The Mausoleum of Aisha Bibi (12th century) in Dzhambol (Taraz) has a twelve-cornered dome like the Indian temple roof tops. Symbols of octagon and swastika are found to be engraved in
some stone pillars. At another mausoleum of Karakhan (in Taraz), stone images and human figures were stored. (Warikoo, 2008, pp. 145-147)

Buddhism played a great role in development and intensification of contacts between India and Kazakhstan. The spread of the religion in Kazakhstan and other parts of Central Asia started a new era in the relationship between the two regions. The influence of Buddhism was so strong, intense and diverse that a new vibrant culture was formed in Central Asia and Kazakhstan. The Buddhist temples and centres of learning in Kazakhstan can be a nice example of mutual contacts between the two regions. Spread of Buddhism under the aegis of the Kushans was accompanied not by the acceptance of the ideas of ancient Indian cultural ethos in Kazakhstan. The most prominent archeological discovery is written Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts in Brahmi and Kharoshthi, which have similarity to the Gilgit manuscripts of Vinayapitaka literature dated back to 6th-7th century AD. (Abuseitova, 2007, p. 46)

Republic of Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan - the land of Tien Shan is a land locked country having coterminous borders with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. After having gained independence in August 1991 following the collapse of the former Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan chose the path of democratic civil society based on market reforms. Nearly 94 per cent of the territory of Kyrgyzstan has altitudes of more than 1,000 meters above sea
level, imparts its own peculiarities of a nomadic society having a distinct philosophy and traditions of mountain people. (Editor’s Page, *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, vol. 10, nos. 2-3, p. 1)

Kyrgyzstan’s ancient Silk Route connections with India have been established on the basis of archeological sites existent in Naviket, Sujab, Ak Beshim, Balasaghun etc. in Kyrgyzstan (Editor’s Page, *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, vol. 10, nos. 2-3, p. 2). That Navikent resembles the finds of Ajina Tepe, Fayaz Tepe, Kara Tepe and Merv in other Central Asian Republics, offers the conclusive evidence of close historico-cultural links between India and Central Asia.

In Kyrgyzstan, there are a number of historical places and monuments, where Indian influence is found. Talas is the birthplace of Kyrgyz epic hero Manas and celebrated Kyrgyz litterateur, Changiz Aitmatov. Large stone pillars and some stones with human figures locally known as Bal Bals which have been preserved in the Manas precincts, are the irrefutable proof of the pre-Islamic heritage of Kyrgyzs. Manas has become the symbol of renaissance of the Kyrgyz cultural and historical heritage in independent Kyrgyzstan. The hillock locally named Karal Chaku overlooking the Manas mausoleum is considered sacred by the Kyrgyzs universally. Top of the Manas mausoleum is also like that of Indian temple top rather than being dome shaped. Large numbers of local people, both young and old, throng the place as pilgrims and climb the hill top. No alcohol is served or
taken within the Manas complex. Ancient tradition of worshipping hillocks, trees, rivers, sun, images and legendary heroes continues in Kyrgyzstan. (Warikoo, 2008, pp. 146)

Buddhism was prevalent in Kyrgyzstan mainly in urban centres and towns along the Silk Route. The symbol of sun that occupies a central place in the national flag of Kyrgyzstan only reinforces the view that Kyrgyzs continue to worship nature and its elements. Ancient town of Tokmak is the site of 21 metre high Buran tower. Here one comes across the remnants of pre-Islamic and Buddhist heritage of Balasaghun, which used to be a flourishing trading and cultural centre on the Silk Route. This historic site, spread over an area of 36 sq. kms., was declared as the Balasaghun National Park in 1977. The Buran Tower was first restored in 1967-68 and again in 1978. Whereas this Tower was constructed in 11th century AD to commemorate the ascendancy of Islam in the region, the totems (stone figures locally called Bal Bals) lying throughout this area act as a reminder to the pre-Islamic past. These totems, the sculptures carved out in the likeness of the deceased persons, were erected in the memory of the dead. Interestingly, this tradition still continues albeit in a modernized form of erecting concrete graves with stone pillars carrying portraits of the dead. This peculiar tradition would be an anathema in the puritan Islamic countries. About eight kms. away from the Buran Tower, there is the Ak Beshim archeological site, a standing testimony to the Buddhist settlements in this area. (Warikoo, 2008, pp. 146-147)
According to Kyrgyz archeologists, Voropoeva and Goryacheva "direct contacts between northern India and Tian Shan in VIII-IX cc, represented the golden age of Buddhist-Hindu culture in medieval Kyrgyzstan." (Voropoeva and Goryacheva, July-December 1998, p. 73) Soviet archeologist, Bernshtam discovered (1933-54) at a number of "ancient sites of Chui valley – Ak Beshim, Krasnaya Rechka, Karadjigach, Novopavlovka, Sokuluk etc., works in the style of Gandhara art, which indicate the main contours of historical-culture relationship among Tian Shan, Xinjiang and India since first century up to XII century." (Voropoeva and Goryacheva, July-December 1998, pp. 74-75) Bernshtam found "powerful influence of Buddhist culture of northern India on the culture of Semirechye." (Voropoeva and Goryacheva, July-December 1998, p. 75) Other Soviet archeologists, Kyzlasov and Zyablin excavated two Buddhist temples in 1950s in Ak Beshim. (Voropoeva and Goryacheva, July-December 1998, p. 75) Both temples were found to be burnt and their sculpture destroyed around VIII century, and not yet restored. (Voropoeva and Goryacheva, July-December 1998, p. 76) In 1961, a sculpture of sleeping Buddha was excavated here, which is reportedly lying at a museum in Moscow. A Kashmiri bronze sculpture of Boddhisatva Avalokiteswara of VIII century was also reportedly found here. (Voropoeva and Goryacheva, July-December 1998, p. 76) Many such Buddhist images (Sixth-Seventh century) and Brahmi/Kharosthi literature found in Naviket are housed in the Archeological Museum in the Kyrgyz Slavonic university, Bishkek and Museum of Institute of History, Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences.
Bishkek. (Warikoo, 2008, p. 141) In Osh city of southern Kyrgyzstan, there is a place called Takht-e-Suleiman, which is a hill regarded to be a sacred place for local Muslims. This place has similarity to Jesus Christ’s grave in Kashmir bearing the same name. (Kablukov, 2007, p.81)

Ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kyrgyzstan in 1992, important and constructive developments have taken place in the political, economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres. Both the countries have exchanged several visits at the ministerial and other high levels. Kyrgyzstan and India have shown their commitment to secularism, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, territorial integrity and peaceful resolution of all problems. They have also been expressing their determination to increase the level of trade and economic cooperation and to devise new spheres of mutually beneficial cooperation in sectors such as information technology, mining, engineering and food processing. (Editor’s Page, Himalayan and Central Asian Studies, vol. 10, nos. 2-3, p. 2)

Republic of Tajikistan

Findings of Indian imprint in several other settlements in Chui valley (Sokuluk, Shish Tube, Kara Djigach, Burana etc.) testify to a wide settlement of Buddhists along the Silk Routes system. Fragments of Brahmi or Kharosthi script on birch bark were found in Krasnorechensk temple. These texts are believed to have originated from Kashmir-the main center for copying of Sanskrit MSS.
Significantly literature in Brahmi/Kharosthi found throughout Central Asia (Kafyr Kalan in southern Tajikistan, Merv and Bairam Ali in southern Turkmenistan and Zang Tepe in southern Uzbekistan) are reported to have similar handwritings. (Voropoeva and Goryacheva, July-December 1998, p. 79)

Many great India literary works like *Panchatantra* and *Hitopadesh* reached Central Asia and left an indelible imprint on the creative works of several Tajik writers and poets. Works of great Central Asian scientists Ibne-Sina and poets Rudaki, Jami and Novai were well known to the Indian people. Bedil, one of the greatest Tajik poets, was born in India and lies buried in Delhi. Both Tajiks and Indians consider him to be their own poet. (Kaushik, 1997, p. 65)

An Islamic Geographer Yaqut noted in the 12th century that a prosperous merchant of Merv had one warehouse on the Volga river and another in Indian state of Gujrat and he owed his prosperity to his role as a middle man in trade.” (Times of Central Asia, 27 January 2000)

Navikhet temples are similar to sites discovered at Ajna Tepe, Fayaz Tepe, Kara Tepe and Merv in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Findings of bronze and stone artifacts, ceramic bowls modelled with Boddhisattvas etc. in ancient sites, testifies to the location of monasteries along the Silk Route and also to the constant flow of Indian traders, artists, craftsmen and monks from India. (Voropoeva and Goryacheva, July-December 1998, p. 80)
Republic of Turkmenistan

Archaeological finds in Altyn-Depe, not far from Ashgabat, have revealed contacts between the cities of the Indus Valley Civilization and the Bronze Age settlements in the south of Turkmenistan. (Kaushik, 1997, p. 63) According to historian V. V. Massan, the ancient population of Southern parts of Central Asia was proto-Dravidian and spoke the Dravidian language. Archaeological discoveries indicate that close cultural links existed during the Kushan Empire. A Sanskrit Buddhist manuscript, found in a sealed jug together with coins and a stone statue of Buddha in the ruins of Merv in Turkmenistan suggested links in the 5th century. Turkmenistan, lying on the famous great silk route, has been known to Indian traders. The presence of Turkmen Gate in Delhi built ostensibly in honour of Turkmen serving in the Mogul Army also testifies the age old links between India and Turkmenistan. The existence of Turkmen Gate in Aligarh and several other north Indian cities is indicative of the strong influence of Turkmen nobility, which also founded a ruling dynasty in Hyderabad in the south. (Kaushik, 1997, p. 65)

Some of the Delhi Sultans who ruled before the founding of the Mughal rule by Babur are considered by historians to be the scions of the Turkmen tribe. (Kaushik, 1997, p. 65) Bairam Khan, the mentor of King Akbar was a Turkmen and represents the link between Turkmenistan and India. His son, Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khana, a renowned philosopher/poet was one of the Navratnas in the Court of Akbar. (www.indianembassy-tm.com)
INDO-CENTRAL ASIAN RELATIONS IN MEDIEVAL ERA

The establishment of Islam in Central Asia and its spread to India in medieval times gave new dimension to the existing ties between the two regions. Influx of Muslim artisans, traders, Syeds and mercenaries from Central Asia reshaped the geopolitical history of India. The Mughal rule that lasted for 300 years changed the societal composition in India and led to the growth of an Indo-Islamic culture. (Warikoo, 2008, pp. 146-147) The coming of the Mughals to India in the sixteenth century deepened the pre-existing links between India and Central Asia. The two regions drew closer in terms of trade, population and culture. Material life in both regions was deeply affected by the accelerated movement of goods and people, while institutions of learning, religion and politics in each area bore the imprint of the other. (Warikoo, 2008, p. 147)

After the consolidation of Islam in Central Asia, contacts with the Hindu Kingdom of Kashmir developed further. Both the Central Asian mercenaries and artisans had free access to the courts of Hindu rulers in Kashmir. Kalhana’s reference to the hospitality provided by King Kalasa (1063 AD-89 AD) to one Turuska artist (Warikoo, 2008, p. 150) and also to the grant of favours upon hundreds of Turuska captains by king Harsa (1089 AD-1101 AD) is an indication of the influence enjoyed by Central Asian Turks in Kashmir during the eleventh century. (Warikoo, 2008, p. 150)
The Kashmir ruler Sultan Sikander sent his son Shahi Khan, who later became the Sultan in 1420 AD, to Timur’s court at Samarkand. Shahi stayed there for seven years. The horizon of socio-economic and cultural ties with Central Asia expanded particularly during the benevolent rule of Sultan Shahi Khan, who was also known as Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-70 AD). He made a great contribution to the further growth of music, gardening, carpet making and silk manufacturing. The Central Asian musical instrument rubab was introduced into Kashmir’s folk music during this period. (Kaushik, 1997, p. 64) He not only maintained friendly relations with Shah Rukh, son of Timur, and Mirza Abu Said – the Timurid ruler of Trans-Oxiana, (Warikoo, 2008, p. 146) but also used the same for the material benefit of Kashmiris. By providing all sorts of facilities to the master-craftsmen of Samarkand and Bukhara, who came to Kashmir during his reign, he helped in popularizing their skills among the Kashmiris. He also sent some Kashmiris to Central Asia to get trained in the art of book binding and papier-machie, (Warikoo, 2008, pp. 146-147) thus reviving those industries in Kashmir.

Hundreds of Syeds and Sufis who travelled over long distances from Central Asia to reach Kashmir as a result of Timur’s atrocities in their homeland, were instrumental in establishing Islam in Kashmir. Consequently, numerous Sufi orders were carried from their place of origin at Suhraward, Gilan, Yasi, Bukhara and Samarkand to Kashmir and other parts of India. (Warikoo, 2008, p. 150) The
founder of the Naqshbandi order Baqi Bilah lived in Samarkand for many years and came to Delhi from there through Kashmir. (Kaushik, 1997, p. 65)

Whereas Central Asian missionaries like Syed Ali Hamadani, Muhammad Hamadani, Syed Hilal, Syed Habibullah Kasani, Qazi Habibullah, Jamal-ud-din Bukhari, Sheikh Baba Ali Wali, Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi Nakshbandi (Warikoo, 2008, p. 150) propagated their doctrine in Kashmir, numerous Kashmiri scholars and saints like Sheikh Suleiman (Warikoo, 2008, p. 150), Mullah Mohsin Fani, Sheikh Baha-ud-din popularly known as Ganjbuksh, Sheikh Yakub Sarfi travelled to Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva to learn more about Islamic theology and also to have religious discourses with their spiritual guides. After his return to Kashmir, Yakub Sarfi composed among other works *Muqamat-i-Murshad* in which he describes the life and miracles of Sheikh Hussein of Khiva. (Warikoo, 2008, p. 151)

Numerous other arts such as window-cutting, stone-cutting, silk, shawl and carpet-weaving flourished in the valley during his reign. Such cultural interaction received fresh impetus under Mirza Hyder Dughlat. Being a man of letters and lover of music himself, Mirza Dughlat encouraged the development of music and fine arts and popularised the use of latticed window work and various musical instruments like lutes, dulcimers, harps and flutes in Kashmir. (Warikoo, 2008, pp. 150-151) During his stay in Kashmir, Mirza Hyder Dughlat composed the famous *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* - the contemporaneous history of Mughal Khans of Central Asia.
The Mughal rulers of India who gained supremacy in Kashmir (1586-1753 AD) after Dughlat and the independent Kashmir Chak rulers, contributed much to the enrichment of its natural beauty by laying out numerous gardens. Combining the indigenous features of beautiful landscape and the Central Asian garden traditions of flowing cascades, fountains and terraces, the Mughal gardens of Kashmir have remained a powerful attraction for both the local people and the tourists. (Warikoo, 2008, p. 150-151)

The fame acquired by Kashmiri artisans in their art of wood-carving, door and window panel-making (panjras), ornamented ceilings (Khatam bandi), papier-machie like pen cases (kalamdans), flower vases etc, brick and tile works, namdah, carpet and shawl-making is partly due to their adoption of Central Asian patterns. Even today the Kashmiri carpet manufacturers find it more convenient to introduce their goods in the market as Bukhara, Samarkand and Ferghana carpets. Numerous such sign-boards are displayed in Srinagar by the Kashmiri artisans. The polished tiles used in the tomb of Madin Sahib near Srinagar, painted ceilings, carved doorways and latticed windows that are still visible in various mosques in Kashmir, have their parallels in the tombs and buildings of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva. Though shawl making was not unknown to ancient Kashmir, such innovations as the weavings of colour pattern on the loom itself and needle embroidery are commonly attributed to the immigrant Central Asians. Seeing that a loom could produce only one patterned shawl in about a year's time, one
Armenian merchant Khwaja Yusuf is reported to have introduced a low cost process of needle embroidery with the help of Kashmiri artisan, Ali Baba, in the early nineteenth century. (Warikoo, 2008, pp. 150-151) This resulted in large scale production of shawls. Occupying an admirable place in the Central Asian and Russian nobility, Kashmir shawls formed an essential ingredient in the tray of presents exchanged between the ruling classes on various occasions. That shawls in different sizes and ornamented patterns were commonly used in Bukhara, Kokand, Turkestan and Russia as turbans, handkerchiefs, stockings and leggings, door and window curtains, waist belts, quilt covers, shrouds for tombs etc., that is in every walk of life, becomes clear from Moorcroft’s account of shawl manufactures of Kashmir. (Warikoo, 2008, pp. 151-152) The Central Asian merchants of Kokandi and Andijani origin, who thronged the markets of Ladakh and Kashmir even up to later years of the nineteenth century, made it a point to purchase small quantities of shawls for their use as turbans. (Warikoo, 2008, pp. 151-152)

The trade with Central Asia had an important impact on the history of the Indian subcontinent. A major impact of the trade was the emergence of an ideology in the Punjab which was expressed in a language borrowed from the world of trade. Sikhism represented the traders' worldview during that period. In some passages of the Sikh scriptures of the Guru Granth Saheb, the value system
appears to be strongly influenced by a consciousness intimately connected with trade and commerce. (Alam, 1994, p. 221)

The visible growth by the sixteenth century of big and small towns in the Punjab, Multan and Sindh and the areas north of Delhi was another significant feature of North-Indian history. All these towns were connected with each other through roads and river routes. The entire area then came to be linked, on the one hand, to India's eastern and western seashores, while opening up, on the other, to Central Asia and Persia through Kabul and Kandahar. Sher Shah Suri (1530-1545) made an attempt to improve growing commercial connections between India and Central Asia through his road building activity. He built a road with rest-houses which commenced from the fort that he had constructed in the Punjab and it ran up to the town of Sonargaon, which lay situated on the edge of the Bay of Bengal. He built Agra-Burhanpur, on the borders of the Deccan. He made Agra-Jodhpur-Chittor, Lahore-Multan. In all, he built 1,700 rest houses on the roads which lay in various regions and in every rest house he built apartments for both Hindus and Muslims. (Alam, 1994, p. 221)

Urban centres in the Punjab and in its neighbourhood began to emerge and thrive in two lines running along the roads, Attock, Hasan Abdal, Jhelum, Gujrat, Wazirabad, Sialkot, Emanabad, Bajwara, Machiwara, Rahon, Phillaur, Nur Mahal, Govindwal, Sultanpur Nakodar, Ludhiana, Sirhind and Ambala, Thanesar and Karnal all lay astride the grand road to Kabul. These towns emerged in the late
sixteenth and seventeenth century, following and accompanying the great building activities of the Siirs and the Mughals. Lahore, chosen to be the provincial headquarters in the sixteenth century, kept expanding under Jahangir, Shajahan and in the early years of Aurangzeb's reign. Many of the goods in demand in Central Asia then began to be produced also in these towns themselves. Lahore, Bajwara, Machhiwara and Sialkot were noted, among other things, for textiles. In Lahore were manufactured shawls and in particular the mixture of silk and wool. The Punjab towns were also stocked with indigo, both locally produced and from other parts of the country. Lahore served together with Agra as "the chief market for indigo. (Alam, 1994, p. 222)

By the time the Indian National Congress came into existence in 1885, Russia had already established its control over Central Asia. After conquering and annexing the Emirates of Bukhara in 1868, the Khanate of Khiva in 1873, the Khanate of Kokand in 1876, the Turkmen region on Merv in 1885 and Pandjeh in 1886, it was ready to knock at the doors of Afghanistan. While at the beginning of the 19th century more than 3,000 kms. separated the Russian Empire from the British Empire, by the end of the century this distance shrunk to a few hundred and even as little as about 30 kms. in parts of the Wakhan ridge. In order to preempt any chance of conflict breaking out, an Anglo-Russian Convention was signed in 1907, delimiting their respective spheres of influence and consequently relegating the London-Moscow rivalry over Central Asia to a secondary position.
The extension to Central Asia of the colonial rivalry between Tsarist Russia and the British India led to the dispatch of several emissaries from both sides. Several missions sent by Indian princes and the Namdhari Sikhs reached Tashkent to seek Russian aid against the British and a few emissaries from the Khans of Central Asia came to India to solicit British support against Tsarist authority. After the October Revolution in 1917 AD, a host of Indian nationalist revolutionaries found sympathy and support for their cause in Tashkent, which later became an important centre of their activities under the leadership of Manbendra Nath Roy. (Kaushik, 1997, p. 67)

INDIA-CENTRAL ASIA RELATIONS IN MODERN PERIOD

The incorporation of Central Asia and India in the Russian and British empires respectively and the subsequent Anglo-Russian rivalry in the region restricted the contacts between India and Central Asia. It was only after India gained independence in 1947 that her relations with Central Asia were renewed in the overall spirit of Indo-Soviet relations. When Central Asia had ceased to be an area of interest for the world, India was in constant touch with the people and developments there. (Warikoo, 2008, pp. 150-152) India had an upper edge over its near and distant neighbours in reaching out to Central Asia. Indo-Central Asian contacts developed in diverse fields of trade, culture, science, technology and media, thereby creating a greater mutual understanding in the two sides.
Jawaharlal Nehru was impressed and influenced by the Central Asian region. Nehru wrote a letter to his father Motilal Nehru from the Lucknow District jail on 1 September 1922 requesting to send him books on Central Asia. He informed of his desire to undertake a pilgrimage to the famous cities of Central Asia as soon as self rule is attained. (Kaushik, 1997, p. 66)

In his famous book *Glimpses of World History*, in September 1933 Nehru contended that the British and gave the example of Central Asia where “a dozen years ago this part of the world was perhaps the most backward and superstitious. Women there were kept in a hopeless state of subjection. Today the country has progressed amazingly. Women are not only free but are taking great part in education, in medical and sanitary work as well as in other occupations. There are innumerable schools and colleges, hospitals and dental clinics all of them manned largely by the people of the country themselves.” (Nehru, 1982, p. 850) In mid-1950s, Nehru, during his visit to Uzbekistan, was enamoured with the lifestyle of that country. (Teshabaev, p. 172) During the days of the Soviet Union, India used to maintain a Consulate in Tashkent, which was also selected as the venue for the famous Indo-Pakistan summit of 1965 and the signing of the Tashkent Agreement thus concluding the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965.

During Tashkent visit of late Prime Minister of India Lal Bahadur Shastri in January 1966, the historical peace treaty between India and Pakistan has been signed. After his untimely death in Tashkent, his name has been commemorated –
a street and school have been named after him and there are both a statue and a bust in Tashkent in his memory. Even the some of the streets in Tashkent has been named after Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindra Nath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru. (World Mass Communication, February 2007, p. 13)

During the post-1971 era of close Indo-Soviet relations, cultural exchanges flourished between India and the Central Asian region. Historical links between the Indian subcontinent and Central Asia were close until the mid-19th century, when the Khanates of Bukhara and Khiva were incorporated into the Romanov Empire. During the Soviet period, especially the signing of Indo-Soviet Treaty in 1971, cultural exchanges between India and Central Asia increased, and Indian culture and films enjoyed considerable popularity in the Central Asian Republics. (Anita Inder Singh, 1995, p. 77)

INDIA-CENTRAL ASIA RELATIONS IN POST-SOVIET PERIOD

The dissolution of the Soviet Union forced India to devise new policies to deal with the political situation in post-Soviet Central Asia, its “extended” and “strategic neighbourhood”. On 26 December 1991, India formally accorded diplomatic recognition to all the states. Former Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee described these nations as “new states but old nations.” (Sahai, 2005, p. 41)

India’s growing interest in Central Asia is not confined merely to the linked threats of terrorism, separatism, drug trading, and incitement to civil violence. It also
has deep and long-standing strategic and economic roots. Retired Brigadier General V.K. Nair, a leading strategist, told the U.S. National Defence University in 2001 that “India needs to evolve a broad-based strategy that would not only ensure the security of its vital interests but also provide policy options for effectively responding to developing situations in the area. India’s geo-strategic location dictates that the primary focus of its security policies must be its relationship with the neighboring countries and the countries that form part of its “extended security horizon,” which, in one official publication, is defined as “regions with economic, social, cultural, and environmental linkages [that] result in overlapping security interests.” (Blank, 2003, p. 140)

Central Asia is explicitly cited as one part of this “horizon.” This policy, called the “Gujral Doctrine” after Foreign Minister and then Prime Minister I. K. Gujral, maintained that India, as the dominant regional power, should unilaterally grant its neighbours concessions in trade and economics without expecting strict reciprocity. (Blank, 2003, p. 140) Gujral noted in 1997 that much of India’s foreign policy revolves around economic and infrastructural needs. He outlined a vision of regional economic development including Central Asia which he called “our near abroad.” Gujral emphasized investment in infrastructure: railroads, roads, power generation, telecommunications, ports and airports, informatics, cross-border investments, energy exchanges, up to and including “Trans-Asian pipelines,” strengthened regional organizations, tariff reductions and freer trade, and meeting “an exponential surge in energy demand” through the cooperative development of all forms of energy. (Blank, 2003, p. 148)
For India's bilateral relations in Central Asia, the main priority now is to develop military and political ties with Tajikistan. India is moving toward Central Asia in order to find the new sources of energy and some new forms of fighting against Islamic terrorism. India is building an airbase near Ainy, a town in northwestern Tajikistan. By the end of 2006, squadrons of MIG-29, made in Russia and guided by Indian Air Force (IAF) pilots, are to start the test flights. At the same time, Indian pilots will provide flight instructions for their Tajik colleagues. The project was in 2006, when Tajik President Rahmonov visited India and the two countries signed the respective agreement. The airbase in Ainy is the first real force presence of India in Central Asia. In view of the Indian experts, the airbase is to facilitate operations against the Taliban and Al Qaeda, which strive to return to Afghanistan. Besides, the airbase can be used for the offensive at the militants' camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and can play an important role in the improving relations between India and Afghanistan. At the same time, India's interest in Tajikistan is growing in connection with possible use of its rich natural resources.

Besides, Central Asian countries and India have a common stake in countering religious extremism and terrorism. India has been making its contribution to the development of the region by promoting trade and investments... India and Central Asia have a common stake in peace and stability in the region. (Brar, 2005, p. 28) India's policy objectives in this sensitive region try to make India an integral part of the expanded trade network and to establish
mutually beneficial economic ties apart from maintaining peace and stability in the region by eliminating terrorism.

India’s relationship with the Central Asian countries now is underpinned by the historic and cultural bonds and since the independence of these countries, high-level visits were exchanged on a regular basis. These were complemented by industrial and consumer goods exhibitions, besides visits of trade delegations. India’s economic relations are, therefore, showing a continuing positive upward trend. Efforts are now being made to encourage Indian investors to enter the manufacturing sector in these countries through joint ventures, commensurate with their preferred policy. There is ample awareness in the Central Asia of India’s strength in a number of areas including small and medium industries and human resource development.

Considering the potential that the Central Asian region offers and Indian insignificant presence in that market, Focus CIS Programme was launched by the Commerce and Industry Ministry, Government of India in 2003 at the time of announcement of the EXIM policy on 31 March 2003. The programme aimed to focus at the countries of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) with greater emphasis on Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. With a view to enhance India’s trade with countries of the CIS region, including the Central Asian region, the scope of the Programme has now been extended further till the 2007-2008 financial year.
Under this programme, the Government of India extends assistance to exporters, business chambers etc. to visit these countries, organise trade fairs and exhibitions, invite trade delegations to visit India and undertake various other market promotional activities. The initiatives taken under this programme have received an encouraging response from the Indian trading community and are likely to further boost the bilateral trade in the forthcoming years.

In the recent past, economic liberalization measures adopted by the countries of Central Asian region and India, establishment of institutional mechanisms for mutual interactions and development of fast/direct links to the Central Asian region have contributed to increased economic interaction between countries of the Central Asian region and India. However, the full potential is yet to be realized. Recognizing the need for enhancing trade and to stimulate interest among the businessmen of both sides, a number of high level visits and a range of initiatives.

On 1st April 2003, the Government of India announced that the year 2003 would be the ‘Focus CIS Year’. Central Asia has, therefore, been the centre point of Indian exhibitions, buyer-seller meetings, seminars and special studies. The main emphasis of this initiative was to enhance bilateral trade and investment through increased mutual direct interactions among businessmen. (Sahai, 2005, p. 50)
The Year 2004 was declared as the “CIS Festival Year”, where India was provide facilities to Central Asian countries to project themselves. This should pave the way for the increased cooperation in the tourism sector. In India, knowledge on Central Asia is still not commensurate with its strategic importance and steps need to be taken to involve the media in disseminating information. The Indian Council of Cultural Relations organized a programme of Folk music and Dance, “Kaleidoscope 2003”, which presented the different cultures and art forms of Uzbekistan and some other CIS countries. Visits by cultural troupes from Central Asia to India, including one to Chandigarh, during 2004 helped in generating awareness on similarities in our culture. (Sahai, 2005, pp. 50-51)

The Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) of Government of India at Indian capital New Delhi has been providing ten scholarships every year. Two senior researchers from each Central Asian state would be invited to undertake projects on regional cooperation and security related issues in the IDSA. This new dimension to India-Central Asia cooperation would provide a diverse and long term perspective to India’s relations with Central Asia. From 2003 onwards, 30 full scholarships are being provided by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations to students from Central Asia. In order to boost the cultural links between the two regions, a Festival of Central Asia” in major cities of India was organised in 2004. (http://mea.gov.in/speech/2003/11/06ss01.htm)
Two books, one by B. R. Basu *Land of Timur, Land of Manas* and another by Prof. Barun De titled as *Secularism at Bay: Uzbekistan at the Turn of the Century*, published in 2005, have contributed largely to the cultural relations between India and Central Asia. The first book contains a brief account of the historical and cultural relations between India and Central Asia over the centuries and detailed information about the current places to visit in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The second book describes the situation in Uzbekistan during the last several years, the challenges and difficulties facing the Uzbek society. (Uzbekistan 2006, p. 13) Several Indian journals and magazines, including the one published by the Himalayan Foundation, New Delhi *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* publish regular feature and Special issues on Central Asia to disseminate the ideas about Indo-Central Asian contacts and India’s interests in the region.

Despite existing commonalities and friendly ties, the challenges which lie before India and Central Asia are how to promote these common interests for mutual benefit, mutual assistance to ensure peaceful, stable and cooperative framework. The trade and economic relations between India and Central Asian Republics have so far been not up to the mark. Both the regions should move together in partnership along with their shared concerns, common problems and the varied economic and trade opportunities. As there is no land access between India and the Central Asian Republics, both the regions should work together for viable land routes through with trade and commerce between could increase ushering in a new era of progress and prosperity in the region. The problem of land routes between the two regions is discussed in the next chapter to highlight the issue further.