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From amongst many states in western Central Asia Bukhara was the oldest and outshone and surpassed Khiva and Khoqand in many ways. Known all over the world for its golden history and marvellous culture from the hoary past to glorious medieval period, Bukhara emerged a rendezvous of fine arts, learning and culture with a highly developed urban culture from early sixth century A.D. As centuries turned, Bukhara which is said to have acquired name originally from "Vihara" — the religious centre of Buddhism hence the name gradually acquired the status and fame of "abode of Islam" or stronghold of Islam i.e. (Qubbat-ul Islam). This complexion and constitutional position of Bukhara continued to exist till 1920 when the last Amir was dethroned and interestingly enough, another metamorphosis took place turning Bukhara into an altogether new entity or form i.e. the Soviet Republic of Bukharan people. It was dissolved in 1924 in the "national delimitation" of Central Asia, according to which most of its territories were allotted to the newly founded Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan. The then Khanate of Bukhara had comprised greater part of today's Uzbekistan, whole of Tajikistan and parts of Turkmenistan. Bukhara town lies on 39° 45' North latitude and 64° 38' East longitudes and is 300 meters above sea level. The Khanate had covered an area of about 83,000
sq. miles, equal to the area of Italy. It extended over eastern banks of Amu Darya — from Russian Pamir to the vast Khivan desert. Before the Russian war with Bukhara in 1868 and Bolshevik occupation in 1920, it extended to Qizilqum desert in north and the channels of Syr Darya and Khanate of Khoqand in the west, Afghanistan in the south and Turkmen towns and Khivan desert in the east.

The view that the earliest literary mention of the name had been found in Chinese sources of seventh century needs reconsideration as this particular name had existed centuries earlier and the Persian sources and geographical works do mention it. Regarding the etymology of the word "Bukhara" we have several different views — some say it is derived from the Soghdian word 'Bukharak' meaning a good and powerful place. The other view is that it is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Vihara' which means monastery. The derived word Bukhara does not appear to be improper. In spite of linguistic complexity there is reason to believe that Bukhara is derived from "Vihara" as there was a village of the same name, near the monastery in Numijkas. Later it turned into town, which ultimately was referred to in the books as the state.

The mountains of Bukhara lie on its frontiers. On eastern and southern sides, they form its boundaries while in
the inner part there is no mountain with the exception of few low-lying ridges near Shahr-i-Sabz and Samarqand. The highest mountains of the world crown the eastern part of Bukhara. The height of these mountain ranges reach up to 5500 to 6100 metres. The mountain ranges stretch from Darwaz to Pamir.

The climate of Bukhara represents two distinct air forms the western region is extremely dry and hot in summer with severe cold in winter. The Amu Darya, which lies in this region, is occasionally frozen for two to three weeks during extreme winter. Between winter and summer there is a break up of heavy rainfall from February to middle of March, which is followed by a short period of spring in which there are rays of hot sun. The other region lying between 2500 feet to 5000 feet above main sea level is warm and mild in summer while winter is marked by severe cold. The period of extreme cold lasts for about four months.

There are several large and small rivers out of which two are important namely the Amu (Oxus), and the Syr (Jaxartes). Besides, there is Zarafshan, Murghab, Kohik and the rivers of Qarshi and Balkh. Since there is no fixed season for rains, which are usually scanty, and since much water coming down from the snow on the mountains, is consumed by seepage and evaporation it is always difficult to get
sufficient water for irrigation. Even the Aral Sea about which Jenkinson had once expressed the fear in the sixteenth century that its water would soon disappear due to excessive use was gradually losing its original gush and flow till Obruchev found it drying. The irrigational canals dug out from these rivers therefore, served, as the source for irrigation and thus the rivers become very important for the people of Bukhara as they rendered some portion of these dry lands cultivable and therefore hospitable to its inhabitants. The Bukhara town was supplied water from Shahr-i-rud canal, fed by Zarafshan (gold scattering) River. The lack of fresh water for drinking purposes, made life difficult for the people, as a result of which several water borne diseases were common in Bukhara.⁸

The soil of Bukhara was texturally either a rich yellow loam or sandy waste and the later is ever encroaching. In the western part of Bukhara the land except the banks of Amu Darya is not good for cultivation. Contrary to that the area around the river is highly cultivable. The inhabitants of Qashqa Darya, Surkhan, and Zarafshan and Kafirnahang were engaged in farming. The soil in general being fertile⁹ was quite suitable for the high agricultural yields of various grains, fruits, silk, cotton and dyes. As a result of which large varieties of grapes, peaches, apricots, melons,
watermelons, plums, apples and pears are cultivated. Henry Lansdell was struck by the enormous size of apricot trees. According to Meakin "the apricot of Turkistan had a fame of its own." In the Syr Darya region it was found in abundant. In Bukhara there were cultivated thirteen different kinds of vines. A particular kind of greenish variety was called *Kishmish*. There were two kinds of plums — yellow and black. The pomegranates were abundant at all seasons, a peculiar kind of which was called *bidone*, seedless or with small seeds only. Bukhara was also famous for its melons. Karki and Charjui rivalled each other in producing melons. The flavours of which were so exceptionally good that they surpassed every region except Khiva. Meakin refers to a certain kind of fruit called *alu-i Bukhara*, which resembled a plum without a skin or a strawberry without a stone.

The cattle breeding was extreme in the villages of Hisar and Alai ranges and in Darwaz. The cattle's especially the horses were famous for their excellence throughout Asia. The horses of certain breed *qara ba pir* were of great importance, which proved its superiority in the battle of 1914. It is reported that several thousand heads of this kind were given to Russia by Amir Alim Khan as a token of friendship. Camels of Bukhara were supposed to be superior to any other Asian region. Small breed of goats, covered with a very long
and coarse hair, reaching almost to the ground was found in Qarategin. The Tibetan cows which Lansdell supposed a crossbreed, was introduced in Bukhara by the Russians. Arab sheep were kept for its wool. Qaraqul sheep was reared chiefly to obtain the black curly lambskins. Bukhara was known for the trade of qaraqul skins and manufacture of leather goods—shoes, saddles. Bukhara was chief place for the culture of silk and the place for its fame was Vardan Zigi where the best kind and quality of it was produced.

The Khanate of Bukhara was rich in mineral resources. The hilly area in the east and south of Samarqand was the prominent mineral rich belt. Balkhi mentions that iron, ammonia, quicksilver, tin, slate, gold, naphtha, pitch, vetroil and a rock type used for fuel, i.e. coal was in abundance. Alim Khan writes that in Bukhara mines of gold, silver, copper lead, iron were found especially in eastern part, most of which were still to be excavated. Also there were to be found naphtha, live coal, sulphur and salt-ammonia. Copper was found north of Sherabad. Iron was found in Nurata in the form of red and brown ironstone. Iron mines were also reported in Hisar. In the hills of Sherabad and Wazirabad mountains, were found sulphur and saltpetre, which were sold in Bukhara.
Seymour Becker provides an account of the population of Bukhara. He says at the close of nineteenth century the population of Bukhara was about 2.5 to 3 million. Amir Alim Khan himself reports the population of Bukhara was 3.5 million. Two-thirds of whom lived in the western oases. Of the total population 65 percent were sedentary, 20 percent were semi-nomadic and 15 percent nomadic. Between 10 to 14 percent of the population was urban. The largest town of the Khanate was the capital itself with 70,000 to 100,000 persons while Qarshi was next with 60,000 to 70,000, Shahr-i Sabz and Charjui with 30,000 each followed by a dozen towns between 4000 to 20,000 population.

Distribution of population was mainly based on races, which fell in two divisions, one of the Turkish extraction and the other of Iranian origin. From amongst the Turks the Uzbegs were the most prominent. While the Iranian category belonged to Tajik group. Also there were Jews, Afghans, Persians, Arabs, Armenians, Hindus and others in smaller number. Except Hindus and Jews all were Muslims. The Tajiks had clear olive complexions with black eyes and hair, polite, hardworking and intelligent. Moreover they possessed considerable skill of business. Uzbegs possessed high courage with inborn dignity of the Turk. Apart from these
two major groups there were Sorts or sartawals who were settled people skilled in business.17

The history of Bukhara may be traced back to sixth century B.C. It was ruled by the Persians between sixth and fourth centuries B.C. It was then said to be inhabited by the kind of population called as Aryans. It was conquered by Cyrus in 540 B.C. Alexander the Great captured it in 327 B.C. Until the second century B.C., the land was under the Greek rule. Then Kushanas got success in establishing its sway over the region that probably ruled till the Turks came there. The Altai Turks came here in sixth century A.D. They gave the region a Turkish character. In the early eight-century the Arabs conquered it. Earlier the Arabs appeared in the region under Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad in 674.18 Qutaiba ibn Muslim established the Arab rule on firm footing. He built in Bukhara a great Mosque and announced to give to the people two dirhams that came there for Friday prayer.19 He further maintained a garrison in Bukhara. Thus Bukhara started to be both military and religious centre. In the ninth century the Samanid family under Ismail Saman captured Bukhara and ruled there till 999. In the tenth century, Bukhara was known as centre of culture at that time. The Samanids were followed by the Qarakhanids who ruled the region till 1141. Then came the Qarakhitais whose hegemony over the place continued till
1206. For sometime, Bukhara remained under the powerful state of Khorezm till Muhammad bin Khwarazm Shah was first befriended and then attacked by Chengiz Khan who is said to have devastated it on mass scale in 1220 as evidenced by Juwaini, Rashiduddin Fazlullah and Banakiti, all of whom had written their account century later. The contemporary chroniclers like Shahi and Sam however seem to contradict this. Seemingly, when Marco Polo and other travellers visited the place the region seemed to have recovered its original glory as they described "it as the city of higher grandeur". In 1370 Bukhara fell to Timur who preferred to rule from Samarqand. Thus Bukhara lost its importance for some time. After the death of Timur in 1405 Bukhara emerged as a separate Khanate a provincial state. By 1500 it came under the control of Uzbegs. Under the Shaibanid dynasty, which was established in 1506, Bukhara again regained its importance. During the sixteenth century thrice it remained the capital of Bukhara under Ubaidullah Khan and Abdullah Khan. Bukhara acquired its lost importance and became a centre of art, culture and learning. Rich library and majestic schools of paintings were established here and in the words of Jenkinson "sumptuously built" paces bathhouses and mosques added to its grandeur. In 1598 Abullah Khan died and his son Abdul Momin was murdered, hence Abdullah's
sister Zuhra Begis husband Jani Beg was given the reins and his three sons namely Din Muhammad, Wali Muhammad and Nazar Muhammad became the rulers. Since Jani Beg happened to be the ruler of Astarakhan from where the Russians had thrown him out. Thereafter as a fugitive prince he had taken shelter with the Uzbeg ruler Iskandar, the father of Abdullah Khan. After the takeover of Shaibanid dynasty through female line, the new name of Janids or Astarakhanid was given to the dynasty, which lasted for over a century. The death of Subhan Quli in 1707 heralded the disintegration and downfall of the dynasty. The Qachar conqueror Nadir Shah invaded it in 1740 and gave death blow to the remnants of Chingizi power and to the Janid state. While leaving the place after his conquest, he had appointed Muhammad Rahim as his governor. Thus was founded Bukhara's last dynasty i.e. Manghit dynasty. The Manghits ruled Bukhara from 1753 to 1920.

Shah Murad (1785-1800), Muhammad Rahim's grandson expanded the Khanate up to Iran and Afghanistan. He restructured the central bureaucracy of Khanate and reorganised provincial administration. He used the title of Amir instead of Khan to stamp the beginning of a new era of Muslim rule. His son Amir Haider (1800-1826) was successful in enjoying the support of urban population and
religious groups and *Ulema*. He successfully established Amir's central authority, which had started decreasing during later years, and curtailed the powers of Uzbeg tribal aristocracy, which had become strong for the past few decades. Haidar's son Amir Nasrullah (1826-1860) virtually crushed all probable potential challenges, which could place a hurdle in his way. He was less dependent on tribal support. Having reorganized the Bukharan army to some extent on modern lines, he made attempts for military expansion, which were generally unsuccessful. His constant warfare against Khoqand made both the states so weak that neither was able to check the Russian advance later.

Under Nasrullah's successor, Amir Muzaffar, Russians started their attempts to give a practical shape to their centuries old dream. The Central Asian region with all its resources had always excited their cupidity. As soon as they managed to come to Tashqand in 1865, the gates of Central Asia seem to be opening for them. The Amir was defeated in three successive battles and finally had to sign a treaty with the Russian Governor General of Turkestan, A.P. Von Kauffman on 18 June 1868. According to the terms of treaty, the Amir had to accept vassal status giving secession of Samarqand stay of political residency in Bukhara and providing special privileges to Russian merchants. Although
there was no significant change apparently during his reign, under his son, Amir Abdul Ahad (1885-1910) Russian influence was seen spreading in Bukhara's economic, social and political development. The construction of railways through the Khanate in 1887 increased the Russian influence in different spheres. The last two rulers namely Abdul Ahad and Alim Khan (1910-1920) witnessed the opposition of liberal reformist circles inspired by western political and social thought. They were successful in suppressing these oppositions. However, Amir Alim Khan had to flee from Bukhara following an uprising against the Amir led by the Communist party in September 1920. The Red Army troop took the city after four days fighting. Thereafter Bukhara became People's Republic.
Reference

1. According to Ibn-i Hauqal "Among the lands of Islamic World no town better than Bukhara was seen or heard". *Surat-ul Arz*, Tehran, 1365 H, p.191. See also Muhammad Taqui Khan, *Tarikh-i Mawaraunnahr*, Bombay 1310 H, pp.23-24


6. Khatira, p.33,


12. Khatira, p. 34.


14. Khatira, p. 34.

15. Ibid, p. 32.


23. A detailed account may be found in *Zafarnama-i Khusravi* compiled by an anonymous writer in 1279/1862-63 who served at the court of Bukhara ruler Nasrullah.
