CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CENTRAL ASIAN - INDIAN RELATION
Central Asian states consist of five former Soviet Central Asian Republics, namely Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kirghizia and Turkmenistan which occupy a vast territory extending from western Siberia in the north to Caspian sea in West to China in the East. Nearly 54.0 million people live in Central Asian States.\(^1\) Collectively they cover an area of 17 million sq. Km or almost one sixth of the territory of the former Soviet Union.

The entire Central Asian region has extremely varied climatic and natural condition. In the west and north, there are extensive plains, in the east and south a considerable part of the territory is mountainous. A great mountain chain from Kopet-dagh in the south-west to the Pamirs and Tien-shan in the east divides Central Asia from the rest of the continent. These areas are full of striking contrasts-enormous plains, depression dropping to below sea level and tall mountain eternally covered with snow, densely populated areas surrounded by almost uninhabited deserts, Arctic frosts in the mountains and tropical heat in the lowlands. The large and small rivers of Central Asia which are permanently fed by snow bring life to its areas.

\(^1\) Asia Year Book 1992.
Three important lakes of the region are the Aral Sea, Lake Balkhash and the Lake Issyk-kul.  

Geographically Central Asia and Kazakhstan can be divided into four regions. The steppe consisting of Northern Kazakhstan or the Virgin Land Regions. The semi-desert, roughly constituting the rest of Kazakhstan. The desert, region extending up to the Persian frontier in the west and the Chinese in the east; and the mountain region of the Pamirs and Tien-shan. The geographical location of Central Asia and Kazakhstan has been of decisive importance for traders. Before the discovery of sea routes, all the main trade routes connecting Eastern Europe and countries of the Near East lay across this territory. 

**Central Asian - Indian Relationship: A Historical Overview**

Between Central Asia and India close socio-economic, commercial, political, cultural ties had existed all through the ages dating back to the ancient and medieval times. In ancient times Central Asia was the region through which pilgrims and traders passed on their way from China to India and vice-versa. Likewise, trade routes between the west and


3. Ibid.
the east lay through this region which was an important cross-road of civilisation and commerce before the discovery of sea routes.\textsuperscript{4} Strabon wrote about the flow of Indian goods along the Oxus, the Caspian Sea, Trans-caucasia and further west along the Black Sea coast.\textsuperscript{5} The ancient monuments discovered on the territory of erstwhile Soviet Central Asian Republics and Sinkiang region of China also indicate the close ties that existed between the two civilization of Asia.

Recent excavations by Soviet archaeologists have highlighted the intimate contact between the people living in north-western region of the Indian subcontinent and the south-western part of Central Asia going as far back as the second millennium B.C. The Teitum-Tepe Turkmen agricultural settlement replaced by a new cultural complex at Attyn-Tepe at the end of the third and the beginning of second millennium B.C was discovered by Soviet archaeologists. The relics of latter culture point to the existence of close ties between the towns of the Indus valley and the

\begin{footnotes}{\footnotesize
\item[5.] P. Stobdan, "Central Asia: A Region of only Peripheral Importance", \textit{Strategic Analysis}, vol. xiv, no.8, November 1991, pp. 1015-1024.
\end{footnotes}
settlements of south Turkmenia.  

Some of the finds from Altyn-Tepe, like metal and iron articles, pottery and beads bear a close resemblance to articles discovered at Harappa. A silver seal with a three-headed monster is comparable to figures in Harappan seals and many Turkmen terracottas have their counterparts in the Indus Valley terracottas. While scholars are still faced with the task of determining the specific features of the culture discovered in south Turkmenistan, it is obvious that there were reciprocal influences working between India and Central Asia. It can be assumed that northern India, Afghanistan and the southern parts of Central Asia constituted a zone where painted ceramic pottery of similar rural cultures were fairly common and where proto-urban civilisation developed through similar processes.

In the post-Harappan epoch too, strong cultural and historical ties existed between the two peoples. Some scholars view Central Asia as the starting point of

Indo-Aryan migration while others believe that the Indo-Aryans reached India from the west through the Caucasus with continuation of close contacts between India and Central Asia in the post-Harappan period.  

These contacts became more intimate during the period of the Achamenid Empire and Alexander the Great, when some regions of Central Asia like Bactria-Soghd, Parthia and Khworezm became parts of a common state system together with such territories of north-west India as the Gandhara region and the Indus valley.

It was, however, in the Kushan period that the ancient relations between India and Central Asia reached their zenith. The incorporation of North-Western India and Central Asia into a common state under the Kushan rule resulted in a free flow of men, ideas and institutions between the two regions.  In the early period of the Kushan rule the main direction of cultural interaction was from Central Asia to India which began to change increasingly against the background of spread of Buddhism which had a great impact on the cultural traditions of

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Central Asia. In the early period the strong influence of Central Asian traditions can be seen on the weapons and dress of the Kushan sculptures from Mathura. The Indo-Scythian helmet in these sculptures is rather an unusual head-dress for India.\textsuperscript{11}

The Kushan epoch was a period of close cultural relations and mutual enrichment of cultures of India and Central Asia. During the Kushan period Central Asia flourished materially. The great silk route connecting China and Far East with Europe and India lay through Central Asia. It was the first trans-continental commercial and diplomatic route in the history of mankind.\textsuperscript{12}

Bactria and Soghd in Central Asia were important economic and cultural centres. This status attained by material culture in these lands found its expression in the rise of the Bactro-Turkesenism school of art. The relic in Uzbekistan embodies the influence of Indians [Particularly of Mathura and Gandhara] on the local Bactrian art. Cultural interaction between India and Central Asia continued, albeit on a smaller scale, in the post-Kushan


\textsuperscript{12} P.N.K. Bamzai, \textit{Kashmir from lake Success to Tashkent}, Delhi, 1966, pp. 28-40, 46.
period as well.\textsuperscript{13}

The excavations at Penjikent, Varakhsha and Adzhina-Tepe are of great interest as they throw a new light on the direction of the contacts between the two regions.\textsuperscript{14} The archaeological discoveries discussed above clearly show that contacts between India and Central Asia-two major cradles of world civilisation-arose at an early period and acquired a durable character. These contacts played a significant role. Yet notwithstanding the considerable mutual interaction and cultural impact, the cultures of people have preserved their distinctive character.

The political, commercial, socio-economic, educational and cultural ties which existed between Central Asia and India in ancient times further developed during the middle ages. The friendly visits of the Khworezm scholar, Al Beruni and Abdyrazzak Samarkandi symbolized such relation between two peoples that grew further during the course of the three hundred years rule of the dynasty founded by Babar.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} P.G. Galuzo, Turkestan Koloniya, Tashkent, 1935, pp.72, 90-95.

\textsuperscript{14} Narody Srednei Azii, Kazakhstana II, Moscow, 1963, pp.177-81.

\textsuperscript{15} N. Muravyov, Puteshestviye v Turkmeniya k khiva v 1817-20, Godakh Moscow, 1922, pp. 45-47.
Central Asia (Tuchar) is mentioned in Kalhan's Rajatarangini (a work of twelfth century AD) as holding the post of Chief Minister in the court of king Lalitaditya (AD 733-769) of Kashmir. The painted tiles unearthed in Srinagar in an excavation bear the famous shalimar garden depicting the figures of men wearing long-flowing Central Asian robes. The figures and sculptures of the period of the Karkota dynasty of Kashmir rulers is clearly influenced by Central Asian art traditions.\textsuperscript{16} The friendly visits of the Khworemian scholars Al-Beruni and Abdurazzak Samarkandi form a glorious chapter in the history of the contacts between Central Asia and India. At the end of the fourteenth century the Kashmir ruler Sultani Sikandar sent his son Shahikhan to Timur's court at Samarkand where he stayed for seven years. Shahikhan who later became the Sultan in AD 1420 and ruled over Kashmir under the title of Zian-Ul-Abidin for half a century made a great contribution to the further growth of contacts between India and Central Asia, in such fields as music, gardening, carpet-making and silk manufacturing.\textsuperscript{17} The musical instrument 'rubals' was introduced by

\textsuperscript{16} N. Muravyov, ibid., pp. 30-31.

\textsuperscript{17} M.I. Ivanin, \textit{Khiva i Reka Amu-Darya}, Morskoi Sbortik, No.8-9, 1964, p.169.
Zain-Ul-Abidin into Kashmir's folk music from Turkistan.\textsuperscript{18}

It is interesting to find such an extraordinary flow of both men and ideas between India and Central Asia leading to a cultural interaction between these two regions despite the poor means of communication. Samarkand school of painting and calligraphy became popular in India and made quite an impact on the art traditions and the stone-cutters brought by Timur from India made their contribution to the construction of several magnificent buildings in Samarkand.\textsuperscript{19}

During the mediaeval times the movement of men and commodities between Central Asia and India also attained fairly high levels. According to Akbar's historian Abul Fazl, poets from Bukhara and Mery stayed at the imperial court and a number of high-ranking Mughal mansabdars were of Central Asian origin. The commodities exported to Central Asia from India were dried fruits and precious stones which were in great demand. They were carried by the horses imported from Central Asia by the Indian merchants. According to the author of Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi, affluent


Central Asian merchants residing in Delhi used to send books among other articles for sale in their regions. Trade relations with Central Asia were never disrupted during the mediaeval period even though relations between the ruling dynasties were at times far from cordial. Melons and grapes from Samarkand came regularly in abundant quantity during the reign of Akbar and Jehangir.\textsuperscript{20}

The cultural ties did not disappear even in the midst of the Anglo-Russian rivalry of the modern period (19th century). An important step in this direction was taken with the establishment in Tashkent on April 14, 1901 of a branch of Russian Society for Oriental Studies. Indian language text books and the Russian-Hindustani dictionary appeared.

Along with Russian orientalists, Uzbek scholars also took keen interest in the study of Indian languages and cultural heritage. In this connection, the names of said Rasul khoja, Said Aziz Khojazer, Tahirbek Kaishbekor and Khaliduddin Ahmed are worth mentioning. Some Uzbek specialists were also sent to India for practical training.

\textsuperscript{20} B. Nolde, \textit{Peterburgskaya Missiya Bismarka 1859-1863}, op. cit.
in Indian languages. The study of Indian languages was facilitated by the presence of Indian emigrants in Central Asia at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.

Indian traders brought along with them a large number of lithographed books published in India to Central Asia. In Kokand alone 2000 different books published in Delhi, Bombay, Lahore, Kanpur and other towns of India were received in A.D.1913.

Anglo-Russian Imperial Rivalry and its Repercussions on Central Asia-India Relations

By the middle of the 19th century, Britain had assumed paramount power in India after it annexed Punjab in 1849. This brought her empire in India in direct contact with Afghanistan and Central Asian region. Thus the two great powers expanded from two opposite direction without engaging themselves face to face in Asia, separated only by a thin wedge of the pamirs. This Anglo-Russian rivalry, which was constantly alive throughout the 19th century but for brief


pauses, put restraints on the conduct of normal political, commercial and cultural intercourse among Central Asia, Kashmir and British India.  

By 1895, British had completed their expansion upto the Hindukush. This activity had not gone unnoticed by the Russians. The political rivalry that followed was reflected in the trade relations between Central Asia and India. The British interest in promoting Indian trade with Central Asia through the Srinagar - Leh - Kashger route with a view to extending their influence in Central Asia was countered by the Russian authorities, who were equally determined to keep the Indian trade out of Russian Turkestan and the protectorates of Khiva and Bukhara. The Russians even underpriced their goods in Chinese Turkestan in a bid to keep British-Indian goods out of their markets. It was usual for both Britain and Russia to dispatch the native agents to Central Asia and India, including Kashmir, to obtain information of economic, commercial, political, cultural and military values. In a bid to prevent the entry


26. D. Kaushik, India and Central Asia in Modern Times Delhi, 1985, p.60


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of such agents each power imposed stringent curbs on the overland journeys of strangers from Central Asia to India and vice-versa.\textsuperscript{28}

From 1890s onwards the Russian desire to explore the strategic overland routes to India via Leh, Gilgit, Humza, and Chitral became irreversible. The British who too were keen to send their officers to restricted zones in Russian Central Asia on similar pursuits, utilised the Russian requests for obtaining reciprocal permission for British officers and thus numerous Russian military officers, like Novitsky, Snesarev, Plotsov, Shershy-Kunzentsov, Kormita and other specialists succeeded in obtaining British permission to travel down to India via the Karakoram, Maintaka and Kilik passes. Whereas British wanted to know about Russian weak spots in Central Asia, the Russians still regarded India as the sensitive nerve of the British Empire.\textsuperscript{29}

A flicker of friendship was established between these two rival imperial powers during the First world war. But this brief period of cordiality came to an abrupt end soon after the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia.

\textsuperscript{28} Surendra Gopal, \textit{Indians in Russia in the 17th and 18th Century}, New Delhi 1988, pp. 239-41.

\textsuperscript{29} GOI to G.F. Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, London, 15 April 1896, Cited from \textit{Foreign Frontier.B.} May 1896 pp. 1-16.
Due to its geographical proximity to Central Asia and the existence of overland caravan routes linking the two regions, Kashmir played an important role in the process of Central Asia's intercourse with India in the political, commercial and cultural domains throughout the ages.

As early as the first century AD, pilgrims and traders travelled from Central Asia into India and vice versa, when Central Asia and much of north India formed parts of a single state under the Kushans, who ruled from Purushpur, the present Peshawar. Some famous personalities such as Kanishka converted to the Buddhist faith and rendered their services to the cause of Buddhism and ancient Indian culture and civilization. It is also known that from the 5th century AD onwards, Armenian merchants had been active in trade between India and Russia and towards the Central Asian region too.

Central Asian Trade Relations with India during Tsarist period:

Prior to the advent of the British rule in the later period of the Mughal rule, Central Asia acquired a new importance in the context of the growing desire of the Russian Tsars to establish trade and diplomatic contacts with India. In all, the Russian sent five missions to the Mughal court in India, but only Semyon Malenky in A.D. 1701 could succeed in getting an audience from Emperor
Aurangzeb. On the Indian side Babar, who knew about the decline of the power of the Golden Horde and the rise of the Moscow state had sent Khoja Hussein to Moscow, who reached there in A.D. 1532, two years after Babar's death. The Russian conquest of Astrakhan Khanates contributed greatly to the development of trade between Central Asia and India. As the Russian trade with India was channeled mainly through Iran, Astrakhan on the Caspian sea became the Russian gateway to Asia including India.

In the early 17th century the Indian colony at Astrakhan was firmly established. It had a strength of about 100 merchants and money lenders. The Indian businessmen had already acquired a firm foothold in such important economic centers as Kabul, Isfahan, Bander Abbas, Shiraz Hemedan, Shemakha etc, and penetrated as far as Astrakhan on the Caspian.

Astrakhan which came into prominence as Russia's entreport for its Asia trade through Iran became more dependent on the overland caravan trade from north-west India through Bukhara in Central Asia when outlet by sea was cut off as a result of the domination of the Persian Gulf by

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the Portuguese.\textsuperscript{32} Indian trade with Russia in the 18th century was thus conducted through the Central Asian city of Bukhara which was linked with both Astrakhan and Orenburg. Through the caravan routes Indian merchants reached the Caspian sea by camel transport and during the 19th century, these overland Central Asian caravan routes which were probably the oldest, dating back from the times of the Great Silk Route, remained in operation for reasons of Anglo-Russian political and trade rivalry.

The Indian colony in Astrakhan retained its importance till the later half of the 18th century when the Orenburg - Central Asian route began to replace it. Despite the setback on account of the appearance of Orenburg as an entrepôt of Russo-Indian trade, some sixty Indian merchants and money lenders were still living in Astrakhan as the main centre for contracts with the East during the next ten years or so. Several expeditions were dispatched against Khiva and Bukhara with the object of opening up regular caravan trade with India. In 1762, a private company was formed by Russians for trade with Khiva and Bukhara.\textsuperscript{33} Plans were prepared at the end of the 18th century for the establishment of a Russian chartered company to revive the


\textsuperscript{33} G.J. Alder, \textit{British India's Northern Frontier, 1865-95}, op. cit., p. 98-99.
silk trade which lay hampered by high Persian duties. The proposed company was to extend its operations to Kashmir, Tibet and India by caravan route and procure cochineal, lacquer, precious stones and indigo.

A memorandum dated A.D. 1800, preserved in the Department of foreign Trade records speaks of the proposed establishment of a Russian company to extend Caspian trade through Astrakhan to India and to Central Asia on the bases of a special agreement with the Persian Government and an understanding with the ruler of Afghanistan and other rulers of northern India to ensure safe transit.34 A northern caravan trade from India appears to have grown about the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th century. Some of the trade through Central Asia which had earlier converged on Astrakhan now made for Orenburg. In the late 18th and early 19th century Russian traders were visiting Kashmir from Ladakh side almost regularly. Russian goods bought from Yarkand were exchanged at Leh.

In the 19th century during the sixties, Indian merchants played an important role in supplying the Central Asia, tea, indigo, muslin, spices and a wide variety of Asian population with Indian goods. They brought to Central Indian and British manufactured goods. Indian merchants

34. P.M. Kemp, Bharat-Rus, An Introduction to Indo-Russian Contacts and Travels from medieval times to the October Revolution, Delhi 1958, p.77.
sold their goods not only in Bukhara but also in Samarkand and Tashkent. In the beginning of the eighteen nineties, they began to favour Bombay-Batum sea route counting upon the Trans-Caspian railway, opened recently. From Batum, Indian goods were brought to the Caspian by the Caucasian railway and then across the Caspian to Karakoram. As the transport of goods from India by this route was profitable to the Tsarist treasury, transit was allowed along this route in 1895. The opening of this cheap trade route to Central Asia had a favourable effect on trade. Even the extension of Russian tariff regulations to Bukhara in 1894 did not restrict the volume of India's trade.35

In the early 19th century British mercantile capital was already thinking about not only closing the Indian market to Russian goods but also capturing the Central Asian market.36 Sir Alexander Burnes discovered a growing competition between the Russian and British trade in Central Asia and northern India.37 Russian caravans leaving Orenburg for Bukhara in January each year carried cheap Russian imitation brocade that under cut the high quality brocades from Banaras and also broad cloth manufactured in

Britain. He, thus, found two streams of commerce meeting in Central Asia from the opposite quarters. Three-fourths of the articles exported to Central Asia from both countries, i.e. Russia and India, were of British manufacture. From the Russian side P.V. Golubkov who led a group of Moscow traders and industrialists formulated his own plan to meet the challenge posed by trade competition with Britain.

His plan envisaged the founding of a Russo-Asiatic trading house with monopoly rights, for trade with not only Central Asia but also with "Yarkand, Kashgar, Lahore, Herat, Kabul and the whole of India." To realise this plan, Golubkov suggested to establish a special city called Indianopol on the Caspian coast.

Thus both India and Central Asia began to feel the impact of the growing colonial rivalry between Tsarist Russia and Britain at the threshold of the modern period of history. This rivalry was to become more acute when the two great European powers entered the phase of imperialism in the second half of the 19th century. It had an inhibiting effect on the growth of historical and cultural ties uniting


them but could not completely curb them in spite of the
efforts of their colonial oppressors.

Indian Exports to Central Asia Via Kashmir:

Central Asia's imports from Indian comprised of tea, indigo, muslin, brocades, spices, indigenous medicines, Kashmir shawls, corals etc., goods for which there existed a good demand among the peoples of Central Asia. According to an estimate, Indian goods worth 54,75,000 rubles were exported to Bukhara annually. Bukhara had developed into a transit emporium from where Indian goods found their way to markets in Russian Turkestan and other parts of Russia. Kashmir's involvement in the Indo-Central Asian trade was limited to being a transit station for the transmission of Indian goods such as tea, indigo and coral to Central Asia through the Leh-Yarkand route. Hand-made books mainly religious and historical in character which were produced by Kashmiri calligraphists were also exported to Central Asia.

The people of Central Asia harboured a special liking for Indian tea, which explained the increasing export of this commodity from India to Central Asia via Punjab-Kabul-Bukhara and Kashmir - Kashgar - Kokand overland trade routes. A considerable portion of this trade was

later diverted to the Bombay - Batum sea route after the extension of railway communication in Russian Turkestan.\textsuperscript{41}

During the year 1889-90, Indian tea worth 37,500 rupees was imported into Chinese Turkestan from Leh which was exclusively meant for Russian Central Asia.\textsuperscript{42} This trade soon assumed considerable proportions. In the 1890, the Russian customs authorities at Osh collected duties worth 30,000 roubles on Indian tea imported via Kashmir route. Since this commodity could be exported to Russian Central Asia, from India via Afghanistan and Persian routes at cheaper rates than was possible through Leh - Yarkand route, the export of Indian tea via the latter route dropped to insignificance towards the end of the nineteenth century. Apart from its export to Central Asia Via Kabul - Bukhara route, indigo found its way to Chinese Turkestan from India Via Kashmir. A fraction of this dye was later re-exported to Russian Turkestan from Kashgar. Russian merchants reported in early 1895 that a large quantity of indigo was arriving at Yarkand during the year 1974s. As per the data collected by the Russian consulate at Kashgar, 1500 roubles worth of indigo and 1000 roubles worth of aniline dye were exported


\textsuperscript{42.} Ladakh Trade Report, 1889-89, op.cit.
to Russian Turkestan from Kashgar during the year 1916 and they also imported indigo into Russian Central Asia from India via Kashmir-Kasgar route. 43

The shawls belonging to Chitral, Hunza, Gilgit, Yashin and other adjoining frontier territories of Kashmir also formed an item of trade between Chitral, Badakhshan and numerous Central Asian Khanates. Shawls signify an intricately woven and embroidered dress material made of fine wool and continue even today to be one of the specialities of Kashmir. Since there existed great demand for shawls in Europe, the British and Russian governments made serious efforts to acquire pashmina yielding goats for breeding in England and Siberia respectively. Used as a body-covering, scarf or a turban, the shawl formed the attire of the kings, queens and the nobility.

As in the western countries, shawls were popular among the affluent sections of society in Central Asia which maintained close commercial ties with Russia and acted as a transit station in the forward transmission of Kashmir shawls to markets in Russia. Where as Kashmiris went as far as Orenburg to trade their goods, Central Asians used to

43. Kadajg Trade Report, 1874, Cited by Ishwari Prasad, call these "explorors" The pioneers of imperialism", History of Modern India, Delhi, 1951, p.167.
come personally to Kashmir for making on the spot purchases of the shawls.\textsuperscript{44}

When Moorcroft visited Kashmir in 1820 he took extraordinary interest in the study of shawls industry in Kashmir. According to him the demand for shawls in Russia was great at that time and a big trading house in Yarkand sent its representatives to Kashmir for the sole purpose of purchasing shawls suited to the Russian market. By then the Russian ruling circles had started evincing interest in the development of Russian commerce with Kashmir and it was the shawls which had stimulated this interest.\textsuperscript{45} The great demand for Kashmir shawls in Central Asia resulted in about 2000 Kashmir shawls being exported to Russia each year. Available evidences suggest that Kashmir shawls used to be exported to Central Asia and from there to Russia mainly during the first half of the nineteenth century. Bukhara was main transit centre for shawls market in Russia.

According to Burnes an approximate number of 120-130 pairs of Kashmir shawls made of finest texture were annually exported to Russia through Central Asia. He estimated that two lakh rupees worth of shawls had passed to Russia during

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Kadajg Trade Report, op.cit.}
\textsuperscript{45} Moorcraft to G.Swinton 12 Nov. 1822, \textit{Foreign Politics, 10 Oct 1823}, p.29.
1832. The Kashmir embroiders used to travel long distances to Russia for assessing the actual requirements and designs for their shawls in accordance with the tastes of the buyers indicates the flourishing state of shawls trade between Kashmir and Russia through Central Asia in the early nineteenth century.

The circumstance of lucrative shawls trade with Russia must have also been a factor with Maharaja Ranbir Singh's desire to establish friendly relations with Russians in Central Asia. When his emissaries arrived at Tashkent in 1865, they stressed the importance of better trade relations between Kashmir and this region. On their part the Russian authorities also encouraged and recognised the advantage of "offering the Kashmir merchants rights of trade with Russia which in general the Central Asian people enjoyed" on reciprocal basis. A part of such shawls goods also reached Russian Central Asia from Kashgar.

A steady and sizable demand for coral ornaments among the Central Asians was responsible for increased export of the coral beads to Russian Turkestan. Its export to Sinkiang registered a sharp increase only after the bilateral

Russia-Sinkiang trade was put on regular and formal footing as a result of the signing of St. Petersburg Treaty in 1881. This facilitated the export of coral to Chinese Turkestan from India for consumption in Russian Central Asia. Since the Russian authorities had imposed duties of 4 to 5 roubles per pound of coral imported into Russian Turkestan as part of their policy to restrict Indian exports to these areas, smuggling of coral into Ferghana through the mountain passes of Turkistan and Osh flourished. About half of the total quantity of coral imported into Russian Turkestan was estimated to have been smuggled.\(^48\) It also needs to be recorded here that all such coral trade was entirely in the hands of British Indian traders who found it both profitable and easy to transport. This coral was imported from Italy to India where it was re-exported to Central Asia. Indian exported coral must have been selling at cheaper rates in Russian Turkestan than what was imported via more direct route of Batum, due to a higher duty chargeable on the latter route. It is significant that despite such heavy odds as the restrictive duties imposed by the Tsarist government and the circuitous and hazardous nature of the Leh-Yarkand-Kashgar-Ferghana route, coral exports from India

to Russian Central Asia flourished for more than a quarter of a century.

**Indian Imports from Central Asia Via Kashmir:**

Indian traders who conducted their business with Central Asia, found it lucrative to send their sale proceeds back to India in the form of gold coins and roubles. There was no other alternative product in Russian Central Asia that could have been imported by these traders for resale in India. However, Russian made cotton goods maintained a small but steady demand in the frontier territories of Kashmir. Russian made cotton goods like drill-cloth, broadcloth and Chintzes used to be imported into Kashmir and its frontier areas almost steadily during the 19th century, though in small quantities. The remark made by Captain H. Ramsay, the British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh in his annual trade report for the year 1884, that a small trade between India and Leh in Russian piece goods sprung up only in 1883, is not borne out by facts.49

The British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh during 1872, has recorded that Russian broadcloth, linen and longcloth,

which were locally known as Banat, Laka and Laatha respectively, used to be imported from Tashkent into Ladakh where from these were also exported to Kashmir and Kullu.\textsuperscript{50} All the available evidence indicates that Russian-made chintzes and cloaks sold readily in the frontier areas of Kashmir like Gilgit, Hunza and Chitral. According to Macartney at least four thousand rupees worth Russian cotton prints were exported to Hunza from Tashkent via Srikot during the year 1910-11.\textsuperscript{51}

Despite the entry of this new competitor, the Leh market received a small quantity of shaitan-tari (Russian drill cloth) during 1917. Such imports, however, decreased considerably due to the rise in prices of shaitan-tari in the Central Asian markets caused by internal disturbances during and after the Bolshevik revolution.

An analysis of the pattern of the import of Russian manufactured cotton goods into Kashmir shows that these textile goods being coarse, cheap and durable maintained almost steady demand in Ladakh, Gilgit, Hunza and Chitral, territories which were directly coterminous with the Chinese Turkestan or the Pamirs. Though the import of Russian-made

\textsuperscript{50} Ladak Trade Report for 1886-1887, op.cit., pp. 37-47.
\textsuperscript{51} Ladak Trade Report for 1910-11, op.cit., pp. 41-47.
cloth into Kashmir territory was insignificant quantitatively, yet its successful penetration into the British Indian frontier regions via a circuitous and hazardous route speaks of the traditional links between the two regions. The Russian cloth suited the requirements and tastes of the poor Kashmiri and Ladakh masses. The German or English trade agents lost no time in exploiting the demand in Kashmir for such a cloth. A small quantity of fine silk cloth made in Bukhara and Kokand and Andijan reached Ladakh through Chinese Turkestan. According to an official estimate, silk from Bukhara and China worth about four to five hundred rupees a year used to be imported into British Indian via Yarkand-Ladakh-Kullu route during and before the year 1850. This was due to the fact that Kokandi and Andijani traders who came personally to Ladakh to buy Indian tea for consumption within Russian Central Asia, brought along with them large quantities of silk cloth for selling purpose. The quantity of imports of Central Asian Silk cloth into Kashmir, however, stood nowhere as against the large export of Indian silk goods like brocades, velvets, satin etc., to Chinese Turkestan and also to Russian Central Asia. Such import was only due to the Kokandi and Andijani traders.

traders and pilgrims who brought this commodity for sale in Ladakh during their personal visits to that region. Besides, there was little demand in Kashmir for such costly fabric considering the poverty conditions in the valley. The Indian silk brocades and velvets which were more readily available catered to the small local demand. Mulberry plantation has existed in Kashmir since ancient times. The silk industry was modernised in Maharaja Ranbir Singh's time.

Russian leather goods like shoes, boots, furcoats and skins, which were locally known as bulgar in the Leh and Kashmir markets, were imported into Ladakh via the Kokand-Kashgar-Yarkand route but in very small quantities. The fine Russian leather reached as far as Tibet through the hands of Kashmir and Ladakh traders, which is evidenced from Moorcroft's finding during his mission to Tibet in 1812.53 This commodity filtered into Ladakh more or less steadily during the first half of the nineteenth century. Its imports dwindled to nil particularly after the extension of Russian control into Central Asia during the 1860's.

Precious metals like silver ingots and gold coins and dust were traditional items of import into Kashmir from

Chinese Turkistan. Several factors were responsible for such import. The Central Asian had much less to offer in exchange for the goods exported there by the Indian traders who found it convenient to import bullion as one of the means of transferring their sale proceedings back to India. The traders found it easy to carry billion which was light and easily transportable.

The Central Asian Haj pilgrims who annually travelled through India enroute to Mecca brought sufficient quantities of bullion for meeting their travel and other expenses. However, the quantum of gold imports into India via Ladakh and Kashmir varied in accordance with the nature of political and economic conditions prevailing in Central Asia from time to time.

During the first half of the nineteenth century gold tillas (coins) of Bukhara and Kokand flew into Ladakh and Kashmir almost regularly. But with the extension of Russian control over the Central Asian Khanates this trade was seriously disturbed. As a result the quantity and value of silver, gold dust and coins imported into India from Chinese Turkistan via Ladakh increased.

According to British officer, Strachey, these coins were sold at the rates of six and a half to seven Indian
rupees, which was overvalued.\textsuperscript{54} From 1883 onwards the imports of gold coins and dust registered a sharp increase which was due to the arrival of Shikarpuri merchants from Bukhara and other towns in Russian Central Asia via Kashgar - Yarkand - Leh caravan route. These traders, whose money-lending activities had been strictly restricted by the Russian authorities in Central Asia, were forced by the changed conditions to return to India. They brought their accumulated capital and profits earned during their long stay in Central Asia in the form of gold coins and dust. This phenomenon continued till 1900 from which year onwards the Russian gold and paper rubles substituted the earlier from of bullion imports.\textsuperscript{55}

The year 1897 appears to have been a cut-off point when the Russian currency began to be imported into India as a trade commodity. During that year rubles worth about 85000 rupees were remitted to Bombay from Kashgar. But for temporary periods of depression such import went on rising in value till it scaled a new height of about six million


\textsuperscript{55} Aitchison, J.E.T. \textit{Handbooks of the Trade Products of Leh with the Statistics of the Trade from 1867 to 1872 inclusive,} Calcutta, 1874, pp. 133, 214.
rubles in the year 1919-20. Then came a sudden halt to this trading in Russian gold and paper currency as a result of the British prohibition imposed on any ruble imports into India as part of their anti-Bolshevik campaign. During the period from 1901-1916 gold coins were imported in considerable quantities. Later Russian government encouraged dealing in paper rubles to check the outflow of gold. At least four lakh of rupees worth rubles were delivered by the Russian post office at Kashgar during the year 1901-11. It is certain that the import of Russian currency into India exceeded the estimates as shown in the annual Ladakh Reports. An idea of this trade can be made by the fact that about three million rubles were deposited in the government treasuries at Srinagar and Leh in a short period of first three months of the year 1920. Besides, more than 26 lakh rubles were re-exported to Chinese Turkestan from Ladakh during the period April 1920 to March 1921.

Between Central Asia and Kashmir commerce was transacted through Punjab, Afghanistan, Srinagar- Punjab-Afghanistan- Bukhara and Leh-Yarkand-Kashgar-Kokand routes.


Due to such geographical factors this trade was subjected to numerous inhibiting influences like the state of unstable political conditions in the Central Asian Khantes and the hazardous nature of the mountainous trade routes. This trade was just an extension of the traditional and well established Kashmir-Kashgar trade.

Central Asia-India trade became the casualty of the Anglo-Russian rivalry over Central Asia. British success in adopting various measures in Kashmir for promoting Indian trade with Chinese Central Asia was complimented by the steps taken by Tsarist government in Asian markets. Under such circumstances there existed no substantial trade dealings directly between Kashmir and Russian Central Asia except for small indigenous products of India like spices, Indigo, books, tea, shawls and brocades which maintained steady demand among the Central Asians and the occasional import of Russian gold and paper currency. But it was due to this small trade link that numerous Indians including Kashmiris had been visiting Central Asian trading markets and that several Central Asian traders were attracted to the markets in Leh and Srinagar.

This mutual intercourse played a key role in the strengthening of social ties between the people of the two regions. Numerous Indians, some of them from Srinagar,
Chitral and Hunza had taken up their residence in Central Asia. In the post-Bolshevik period the British restrictions on Indian exports to that quarter affected the flow of goods between the two regions adversely. With the state take over of trade in the Soviet union there was little scope for the continuation of the over land trade between India and Central Asia, which earlier was conducted solely through the medium of private traders.

Central Asian Indian Relations During The Soviet Revolution:

Establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia its dynamic impact on relations with India was first echoed in Soviet appeals to the people of the East, calling upon them to rise against alien imperialist rules. This came at a time when the British policy towards Turkey and their harsh measures to suppress the Indian National Movement had alienated a large section of the Indian population against them. The British now began to see the Bolshevik hand behind every movement in India, which was already simmering with discontent. British anxiety, which made them desire the insulation of India from any Bolshevik influence, became more intense due to the Soviet propaganda crusade against British Imperialism in the East and also due to their open support of Indian revolutionaries who operated from Soviet territory.
The British reaction to the Soviet moves was strong and spontaneous. Their immediate fear was that the success of the Bolshevik revolution in Central Asia would stir up "political disorder and ideological conflagration", in Persia, Afghanistan and over their Asian colonies. Introducing political influence in Central Asia emerged as an important constituent in the formulation of the British policy towards Soviet Russia.

The British attached such a great importance to checking the progress of socialist revolution in Central Asia that they dispatched yet another mission under the leadership of Lt. col. E.M Bailey from India to organize and operate the anti-Bolshevik forces there. The Red Guards had not yet extended their control over the frontier posts on the Russo-Chinese Border or even in the Kashgar consulate. Bailey's task was facilitated by the willing cooperation provided by the Russian officials manning these posts who were the adherents of the old regime. Yet, both Malleson and Bailey failed in destabilizing the Soviet power in Turkestan, Trans-Caspi, Bukhara and Khiva.

Interestingly, the period between 1917 and 1923 not only saw efforts by the Bolshevik revolutionaries to restore their authority in various parts of the former Tsarist
Empire but also witnessed an effort by Lenin to fuel revolution in British India through Indian Marxist and revolutionaries like M.N.Roy. Lenin aimed to exploit both the anti-colonial and Socialist sentiments in British India so as to expand Soviet influence over India's Liberation Movement.

On the Central Asian front the British Consul-General at Meshed, Maj. Gen. W.Malleson had in 1918 opened a front in Trans-Caspia fighting desperately along side the anti-revolutionary forces to stop Bolsheviks from taking control over the whole of Central Asia. The British consolidated their hold on the north-west province and the area in and around Kashmir with a view to strengthening their military establishment in this whole frontier belt.58 In the process the normal intercourse between Central Asia and India via Kashmir was greatly disrupted. The British authorities in India sought to justify these measures as steps to prevent the spread of Bolshevism.

Central Asian Culture and Civilization

The nationalities of Central Asia represent a complex mixture of various ethnic groups since antiquity. The

people of Central Asia are all interrelated through old ethnic ties and joint family system which account for a number of common features in their life style, professions, community living, political setup, culture, tradition etc. Central Asia is one of the oldest centres of civilisation. Here Soviet archaeologists have unearthed a large number of relics belonging to the early palaeolithic age. Finds of the monsterian and even earlier periods have been discovered from the Talas and Zambul areas of Kazakhstan and from Tashik Tash in southern Uzbekistan. Many Central Asian tribes, for example those of the Jaithun in Southern Turkmenia, were already cultivators and herdsmen in the Neolithic period. Cultivation of land was known to the Anan culture in Southern Turkmenia in the 4th millennium B.C.

Early Iron Age culture of the 1st millennium B.C. existed in ancient Khorezm. It was mainly farming and cattle breeding culture. In Khorezm an elaborate system of canal irrigation also existed. Other contemporary cultures which had reached a high level of farming and urban life were those of Bactria and Sogdiana.

The original population of ancient Central Asia and of the steppe region was of the Iranian stock. The Sogdians of the Zeravshan valley and the Khorezmians inhabiting the lower banks of the Amu-Darya belonged to the first world monarchy known to history as the Achaemenid state. They are
mentioned by king Darius (522-486 B.C) as his subjects in his inscriptions. On the land adjacent to Tajik territory, there arose the Uzbek Narodnost (people). The historical ancestors of the Uzbeks were the local Central Asian people such as the Khorezmians, sogdians, Massagets and Sakas. 59

The break down of the Golden Horde, which began at the end of the 14th century, influenced the ethnic development of the people of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. At end of the 15th Century, these steppe tribes, with Sheibanikhan at the head, conquered the deteriorating Timurid state. 60 The Uzbek tribes followed Sheibanikhan to Central Asia and gradually merged with the Turk and Tajik population. The ethnic evolution of the Uzbek people were complete. The Uzbek Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand were heterogeneous in their ethnic composition. In khiva, there were Uzbeks, Turkmens, Kara-Kalpaks and Kazakhs. Uzbeks were further divided into sarts. The name "Sarts" which was in use before the 1917 October Revolution, was not related to the Uzbeks and denoted social status rather than ethnic origin, meaning "settler" "citizen" and in some cases


"merchant" or "trades man", who were descendants of the old local population, Chek and Deshti-kypchak Uzbeks who still preserved their tribal culture and clan distinctions.\textsuperscript{61} In the middle of the 15th century as a result of feudal disintegration, small principalities sprouted in the basin of the Chu river, gradually developing into the Kazakh Khanates in the 16th century which concluded the formation process of the Kazakh nationality group.

Thus from the 15th to 16th centuries, under conditions of developed feudalism and as a result of long historical evolutions, the principal national groups of Central Asia and Kazakhstan had been formed.\textsuperscript{62} They lived under the rules of the khans of Uzbeks dynasties for three centuries (16th to mid 19th centuries) until they were incorporated into the Tsarist Russian Empire.\textsuperscript{63}

The people of Central Asia developed a splendid culture of their own and achieved remarkable success in the fields of agriculture, irrigation, arts and crafts, exact sciences and literature as well as in the art of warfare comparing

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} N.Khanykov, \textit{Opisaniye Bukharskogom}, St, Petersburg, 1843, p.53, 75.
\item \textsuperscript{62} \textit{Narody Srednei, Azii, Kazakhstana}, Moscow, 1962, p.103.
\item \textsuperscript{63} \textit{Travels in Central Asia}, Punjab state Archives, patiala, M\textbackslash3557\4386, p, 23.
\end{itemize}
favourably with the achievements of other ancient and mediaeval cultures. The Central Asian people borrowed much from the cultures of Indian subcontinent and China, and enriched it further with their creative genius. The trade relation with India, especially the Kashmir, will be looked into in detail sometime later in the chapter.

Their common historical development and joint struggle against foreign invaders strengthened these bonds of unity. However, the fact that each group had a distinct process of formation should not be ignored. Central Asia, divided into feudal khanates, lagged far behind in socio-economic, political, educational and cultural development in the modern period. Its economy was undermined by incessant internecine wars between the khanates, the low level of development of productive forces and stagnation in agriculture and craft also adversely affected the formation of national groups. 64

Despite the unfavourable conditions of those times, the people of Central Asia had each developed a common language, way of life and a distinct culture. But their ethnic development to a higher stage was retarded by their economic, political, educational backwardness. It was only

after the merger of Central Asia and Kazakhstan into the Tsarist Russian Empire that rudimentary capitalist elements began to appear.

The end of intervening wars and penetration of capitalist relations helped remove feudal stagnation. The construction of railway lines, expansion of commerce and introduction of marketable agricultural products such as cotton brought this remote territory of the Russian Empire into the vortex of the world market. On the basis of the new capitalist development these national groups of Central Asia began to consolidate into bourgeois nations. The Soviet historians regard the drawing together of the oppressed working people of Central Asia with the then existing revolutionary forces of the Russian Empire, which was vital for the future overthrow of the rule of the Tsar, and the landlords and the capitalist, and for the victory of the socialist revolution throughout the country as the main progressive aspects of this annexation.

But this process of consolidation could not be completed and was retarded by the Tsarist regime's policy of


military-feudal imperialism and colonial oppression. It was completed not on a capitalist but on a socialist basis after the victory of the October Socialist Revolution in 1917. The October Socialist Revolution opened up for the people of Central Asia and Kazakhstan the path of independent national development. The Soviet government's accomplishment in fixing the national-state boundaries in 1924 helped the people of Central Asia in their national consolidation efforts. The formation of the national republics led to their speedy cultural and economic advancement.