

**TRADE PATTERN AND ROLE OF MERCHANTS IN INDIA  
AND CENTRAL ASIA DURING 16TH-17TH CENTURIES**

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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**Trade pattern and Role of Merchants in India and Central Asia during 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries**" submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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*Dedication*

TO

MY REVERED MUMMY AND PAPA

WHO HAS MADE ME WHAT I AM

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# 1 CHAPTER: INTRODUCTION

India's linkages and interactions with other Asian countries goes back to several thousand years. However, India and Central Asia is the land where world civilisations have existed since ancient times. India and Central Asia, with common and immediate neighbours, climatic continuity, similar geographical and geo-cultural affinity, have long traditions of socio- economic and cultural interactions since ancient past. Their relations have been multi-dimensional, deep, profound, old, reflective and continuous. Central Asia shared many cultural similarities, characterised by a degree of uniformity in the biological, psychological, linguistic, and socio-religious spheres.<sup>1</sup> Central Asia was the crossroad for invaders from the Sythians in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C to the Mongols and Uzbeks in the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century. More than a thousand years before the Common Era, Hindu-European tribes traversed these lands. Both India and Central Asia faced the Achaemanian invasion led by the Alexander the Great. These regions were also populated by the Arabs, Mongols etc. For most of its history, Central Asia was a bridge between the Muslim and non-Muslim parts of Asia<sup>2</sup>. This land was populated by people of different religion like Buddhists, Muslims and others. However, Buddhism spread from India and it had deep impact on Central Asian society and culture. Muslims especially Mughal came from Central Asia to India which transformed the polity, economy and culture of the region. Over the millennia, trade and cultural links have made significant impact in India and Central Asia relation.

## 1.1 GEOGRAPHICAL AND STRETEGIC LOCATION

Geographically, India, the land of great civilisation, is a part of Asian continent. It is located between latitude 8° N and 37° N and longitude 61° E and 97 ° 30' E, contains two broad physical divisions, the Indo-Gangetic plains and the Peninsula<sup>3</sup>. In Asia, India is located in the South Asia, bordering China and Hindu Kush Mountain in the North, Arabian Sea in the South- West, Indian Ocean in the South, and Bay of Bengal in the South- East. Similarly, Central Asia is also a part of the

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<sup>1</sup> Mansura Haider, Indo-Central Asia relations, From early times to medieval period, p.79

<sup>2</sup> Peter L. Roudik History of Central Asian Republics Greenwood Press p.1

<sup>3</sup>Tapan, Raychaudhuri, and Irfan Habib;- “ *The Cambridge economic history of India*”: 1200-1750, Vol-I, Cambridge University Press, Delhi, 1982, p-1



Asian continent and stretches from the Caspian Sea in the west, China in the east and from Afghanistan and Iran in the south to Russia in the north. In Asia, it is located in central part of the region which known as Central Asia. The definition of Central Asia, given by Alexander Humboldt, is inner part of the Asian continent. For this, Central Asia is located in the middle of the Eurasian continent<sup>4</sup>. Presently, Central Asia has five independent republics such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and each have relation with India.

**Map 1: Geographical Location of India and Central Asia**



Source: <http://www.mapsofworld.com/asia/>

Mansura Haider discusses about the India-Central Asia relations. According to her, due to geographical proximity and a close cultural affinity and similarity, there is an exchange of people, art and ideas between India and Central Asia at high level through the ages. Being India's immediate neighbours, Central Asian states have had an age-old association and multidimensional contacts with India<sup>5</sup>. During the Vedic age the relation between the two regions was more extensive.

<sup>4</sup> Peter L. Roudik History of Central Asian Republics Greenwood Press p.3

<sup>5</sup> M. Haider, Indo-Central Asia relations, From early times to medieval period, 2004 p.8

It was Buddhism which encouraged relation for the same. In the early medieval India, the influx of medieval conquerors and fortune seekers were from the north-west with the dawn of Sufism in its wake. By and large, the people of India have remained unaware of their contribution to the glory of their neighbouring countries.

## 1.2 DEVELOPMENT IN PRE-HISTORY

Development of relation between any regions can be explored on the basis of archaeological evidences. Similarly when we approach to know about the India and Central Asia relation, firstly we only depend on the archaeological evidences for the same. However most of the people know about the relation between India and Central Asia during the Buddhist time. But many archaeological evidences confirmed that these contacts were in the early period of human activities such as Stone Age. However, Old Stone Age culture in India, Pakistan and Central Asia is a recent development where exploration takes place in the Himalayas and the Pamirs. In the Himalayan foothills, the Siwalik formations, traversed by the Indus system, from the Peshawar valley in Pakistan to the Kangra valley in India, formed the original habitat of the Old Stone Age men of India. In the low ranges of the Pamir, the Gissar, Babatag, Zarafshan, etc., traversed by the Amu and Syr and their tributaries, from Southern Kazakhstan to Tajikistan, formed the original habitat of Old Stone Age of Central Asia.<sup>6</sup> Geographically, these two areas are contiguous, a factor that must have facilitated physical and cultural contacts of the peoples of these regions.

In the Indian context the earliest stage of the Old Stone Age Culture in the Himalayas is known as the Soan, after its first identification on the banks of the river of that name. In Central Asia, the Old Stone Age Culture is known as Borykozghan, type- side in Southern Kazakhstan. The tool- repertoire of both the cultures is astonishingly similar. However, Borykazghan reflect as the 'Soan culture of Central Asia'<sup>7</sup>. It seems probable that the Soan Culture originated in the Himalayas and reached the Pamirs at a very early stage.

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<sup>6</sup> Gupta, S.P. (1970), *India and Central Asia in the Old Stone Age*, in Amlendu Guha (ed.), "Central Asia: Movement of peoples and ideas from times Prehistoric to Modern", New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc, p.15

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, pp.16-17

H.D.Sankalia gives a detailed survey of the tools and it shows that Middle Palaeolithic culture have a very wide extant, covering the whole of India. The occurrence of this culture in the Sanghau cave near Peshwar not only extends its limits, but brings it to the very fringe of the Levalloiso- Mousterian Cultures recently discovered in Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran. This widening frontier or horizon has necessitated a re-consideration of the Cultural affinities of this Culture in India with similar Cultures in Africa, Western Europe, Western and Central Asia<sup>8</sup>.

In human cultural development, the Neolithic period brought about a momentous social change, making the appearances of the effective village farming communities. The problem of the early development of agriculture is rooted in the environmental and cultural conditions. It has been suggested that the beginning of food production started in various nuclear areas from where it spread outwards.

Coming to the Chalcolithic Period, we find that the knowledge of metallurgy led to new demands and this, together with agriculture created new opportunities for trade, notably in raw materials, finished products and surplus food, and for specialized craft skills<sup>9</sup>. The self-sufficiency and isolation of Neolithic villages was broken and conditions were ripe where the movement of both ideas and people could take place.

Finally, the similarity between the assemblages of northern Neolithic Culture of India and the Neolithic Cultures of Central Asia would have resulted from the movement of people and culture into the sub-continent from the north through the passes connecting these areas. During the Chalcolithic stage of economy, trade and exchange led to the movement of ideas, as demonstrated by the occurrence, in south Turkmenia, of objects of Harappan affinities without seriously affecting the pattern of culture obtaining in that region.

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<sup>8</sup> H.D Sankalia, *The Middle Paleolithic Cultures of India, Central and Western Asia and Europe* in Amlendu Guha (ed.), "Central Asia: Movement of peoples and ideas from times Prehistoric to Modern", New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc1970, pp.25-27

<sup>9</sup> B.K ,Thaper,*Central Asia and India during the Neolithic and the Chalcolithic Periods* in Amlendu Guha (ed.), "Central Asia: Movement of peoples and ideas from times Prehistoric to Modern", New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc1970, p.77

### **1.3 INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION/ HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION**

Central Asia, being a neighbour, there has been a regular flow of men and merchandise between the two regions since antiquity. In fact, cultural and economic intercourse between India and Central Asia can be traced as far back as the end of the third and beginning of the second millennium B.C. The relics of the Altn-Tepe culture testify to the existence of close ties Indus Valley in Sind region such as Harappa and Mohenjodaro. The similar types of sites excavated in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and north region of India like Jammu. New researches have brought to light the existence of ties between the towns of the Indus Valley and settlements of South Turkmenia where metal and ivory articles, pottery, etc, found in the period of the mature Harappan culture. Apart from objects imported from India such as ivory articles, beads there are traces of Indian influence and above all headed monster. There are also the South Turmenian teracottas which resemble those produced by the Indus people. These contacts materialised and whether they were direct or indirect, but the existence of links between Central Asia and India at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B. C. is also developed. Establishing the specific features and the trend of the cultural influence exerted by Central Asia on the Indus civilisation was a reciprocal process. Therefore, the India and Central Asian interactions are much older than the migration of the Turkic tribes to Central Asia and the advent of Islam in that region.

#### **1.3.1 POST- HARRAPPAN PERIOD**

On the basis of the Harappan civilisation, the contacts between two regions were also in progress. Some archaeologists also traces of affinity between the post-Harappa Jhangar Culture, discovered in Chanhu- Daro and in several Sind sites, and similarly the cultures of Central Asia of the period of so-called barbarous occupation.

### **1.4 VEDIC AGE**

The question of Aryan migration in India is still a debatable issue. Scholar's opinions vary as to the ancient homeland of the Indo- Iranians and the routes along which the Indo- Aryans came to India. Some think that Central Asia as the starting-point of the Indo- Aryan migration and other think that the Indo-Aryans reached India from the west and they passed through the Caucasus. Another scholar like Bal

Gangadhar Tilak who established the fact that the Indo- Iranian settlement was in Valley of river Oxus and Jaxartes before they migrated south to India and Iran while he also certified the original home of the Aryans was in the Arctic region<sup>10</sup>. But many of them have agreed that the Aryan came to India through Central Asia. After all, it is possible that the existence of ties between Central Asia and North India in the post-Harappa epoch through Aryan migration.

## 1.5 BUDDHISM: 6<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY B.C

Buddhism, a religion of humanity, fraternity, and equality, was one of the world's greatest unifying forces which transcended the barriers of regional diversity. The expansion of Buddhism beyond the Hindukush and its survival in alien territories is a wonderful story. However, Buddhism approached the common people through their own speech and taught the equality of sexes and of human beings and it also stressed wildlife protection along with emphasis on the open door policy of the *Sangh* for monks from all quarters. The concept of universal brotherhood was the key principle which sustained humanity through the ages. Buddhism directly appealed to the sentiments of the people and established direct relation between the devotee and the almighty<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, Buddhism played a very important role in spreading Indian languages, scripts, philosophy, religions and ideas to the farthest corners of Asia and opened and exposed India to foreigners.

Buddhism spread in the various parts of Central Asia at the time of the Sakas and the Kushanas. However, Indian merchants and individual also had carried elements of Indian culture and such as Buddhism to the different states of eastern Turkestan at least a century before the beginning of the Christian era. During Kushan period, Central Asia and north western India were integrated into single kingdom and many cities like Khotan, Kashgar, Balkh and Bamiyan had developed into important centres of Buddhism<sup>12</sup>. The first missionary who took Buddhism to Central Asia was Vairochana, a Kashmiri scholar, who built the first monastery at Khotan. When

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<sup>10</sup> Amit Kumar Singh, India and Central Asia: An Interpretation of Mutually Indelible Historical Relationship and its Multi Faceted Impact in International Journal of Inter-disciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS), 2015, Vol 2, No.7, 61- 72.

<sup>11</sup> M. Haider “India and Central Asia linkage and Interaction”. 2003 pp. 38-40

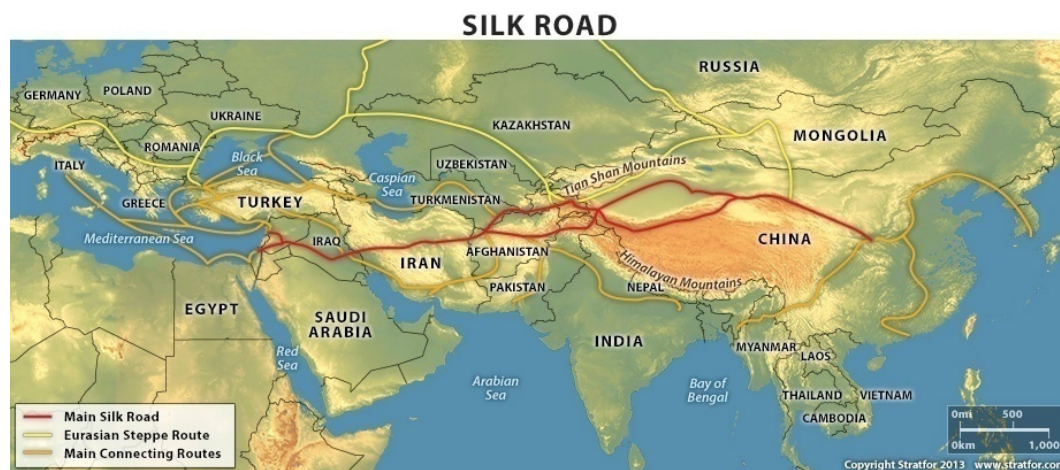
<sup>12</sup> K.A. Nizami, India's cultural relations with Central Asia during the medieval period in Amlendu Guha (ed.), “Central Asia: Movement of peoples and ideas from times Prehistoric to Modern”, New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc p.158.

Buddhism spread in Central Asia, it came to the notice of Xiongnu, an ancient Mongolian tribe, which had direct relations with Central Asia<sup>13</sup>.

## 1.6 THE GREAT SILK ROUTE

Historically, the Silk Route, which connected China, Europe and India, passed through Central Asia, beginning during the Han dynasty of China in 207 BCE – 220 CE. As a result, it has acted as a crossroads for the movement of people, goods, and ideas between Europe and China through Central Asia. It owed its name to the fact that the main commodity carried was Chinese Silk. A lot of cities were established along the Silk Route. In those cities Indians settled and lived their own life; they had their own social and political organizations, language, scripts, literature, art, architecture and religion.

**Map 2: The Great Silk Road Connecting East and West**



**Source:** [http://www.stratfor.com/sites/default/files/main/images/silk\\_road\\_v2.jpg](http://www.stratfor.com/sites/default/files/main/images/silk_road_v2.jpg)

In the Kushan period, the Great Silk Route stretching from the Caspian Sea in the west to China in the east, Central Asia has been of vital importance in the history, economy and politics of Eurasia. Silk Route provided a stable and strong trans-continental bridge facilitating multilateral exchanges between India, Central Asia, China, Middle East and Eurasia. The main trans-Caravan route was linked to China, India and Central Asia with the country of Mediterranean. Caravans made their way unhindered to Bactria, India and Sogdiana, reached Parthia and penetrated even further west.

<sup>13</sup> M. Haider "India and Central Asia linkage and Interaction". 2003 p.40

Silk was main important item among all the goods and it was exported to the West through the Silk Roads. Chinese silk was exported through two routes in Central Asia-the northern one passing through Turfan, Karashahr and Kucha, and the southern one through Miran, Niya, Khotan and Yarkand. The terminal points of the two routes at the eastern were Tunhuang and at the western one Kashgar. This trade provided incentive to the merchants of different communities for involvement in it and settling down at different points on these trade routes. Moreover, the eastbound caravans brought gold, precious metals, textiles, ivory and coral, while westbound caravans transported ceramics, cinnamon bark and rhubarb as well as bronze weapons. The silk route was important aspects for the development of Central Asian cities. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the main trading centre of Central Asia was Bukhara. Bukharan merchants played active role in this trade. Moreover, Bukharan merchants played a critical role in the trade routes through Moscow, Siberia, and China and it also laid the foundation of trade route between India and Central Asia<sup>14</sup>.

## **1.7 ACHAEMENID EMPIRE AND ALEXANDER THE GREAT**

At the time of Achaemenian state and of Alexander the Great, the relation was also developed between Central Asia and India. Some regions of Central Asia such as Bactria, Soghd, Parthia, Khorezm and territories of North West India like the Gandhara region and the Indus region became parts of the common empire. The campaign led by the Achaemenian army where Central Asian people served as army. Mutual relations were greatly motivated at the time of the campaigns of Alexander the Great, when Central Asian region and large areas of North- west India became a part of his empire<sup>15</sup>.

After the campaign by the Alexander the Great, the relation between the two regions also developed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B. C. In this time, the Saka tribes migrated from Bactria to North India via the Pamirs and they carried the traditions of Central Asian culture<sup>16</sup>. During the Chandragupta's reign, the Mauryan Empire conquered the trans-Indus region, which was under Macedonian rule. Chandragupta then defeated

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<sup>14</sup> M. Haider "*India and Central Asia linkage and Interaction*". 2003 p. 259

<sup>15</sup> G.M. Bongard, "*India and Central Asia, Historical Cultural Contacts*" in Ancient Times in Amalendu Guha (ed.) "*Central Asia: Movement of peoples and ideas from times prehistoric to modern*", New Work: Barnes and Noble, Inc 1970. pp.98-99

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.99

the invasion led by Seleucus I, a Greek general from Alexander's army. Under Chandragupta and his successors, both internal and external trade, and agriculture and economic activities expanded across India. After the Kalinga War, the Empire experienced half a century of peace and security under Ashoka. At this time India was a prosperous and stable empire of great economic and military power whose political influence and trade extended across Western and Central Asia and Europe.

## 1.8 KUSHAN PERIOD

The relation between the two regions also effected politically. Rulers of India and Central Asia provided common cultural interaction. For example, Central Asian dynasties like Huna, Kushanas and Saka ruled India while Indian dynasties had ruled Khotan and elsewhere in the Central Asia<sup>17</sup>. Before the rise of Kushana Dynasty, politically, Central Asia and North India were divided in smaller territories under many chieftains. Kushanas not only unified them into one kingdom but also provided a common culture, administration and a monetary system. This empire incorporated many territories of Central Asia and a part of North India. The Kushan period was a time of great enrichment of cultures of India and Central Asia through their synthesis and amalgamation. The Kushan coins bear witness to the co-existence Zoroastrianism with the Indian religions of Buddhism and *Saivism*<sup>18</sup>. Some inscription of that period, Central Asian people embraced Buddhism who came to live in India. A Kushan inscription from Taxila mentions the building of the Buddhist *Chaitya* by a Bactrian. Similarly, inscription from Sarnath mention that two Buddhist donors were Vanaspara and Kharpalanas. A Kushan sculptures from Mathura, it shows the influence of Central Asian culture and traditions in India<sup>19</sup>. The concept of divinity in Indian religion and philosophy was unknown earlier and it was introduced by Central Asian rulers. Like '*Devaputra*' title comes with Yueh-Chis. Saka introduced the concept of semi-divine in the Indian monarchy system. However, Central Asian dynasty's Divine Right became an integral part of the Hinduism<sup>20</sup>. During Kushan period, agriculture and irrigation system, handicrafts, pattern of trade and commerce, architecture went

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<sup>17</sup> Kumar, B B. India and Central Asia : Links and Interactions India and Central Asia. In: Roy , J N . Kumar, BB. (eds.) Classical to contemporary periods, Delhi: Astha Bharti Pub. 2007. p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> (surendra p. Preface p. V)

<sup>19</sup> G.M. Bongard-Levin in Amlendu Guha Book p.99

<sup>20</sup> Amit Kumar Singh India and Central Asia: An Interpretation of Mutually Indelible Historical Relationship and its Multi Faceted Impact in International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS), 2015, Vol 2, No.7, 68



through a revolutionary change. The extent of spread of the Kushana's influence is still to be found in Central Asia and India. Evidence of common relation, for example, one of the greatest ruler Kanishka's coins from Bihar to the Aral Sea is found in abundance<sup>21</sup>. Under the Kushana's the money economy acquired prevalence with the circulation of gold coins on a large scale. The numismatic evidence clearly reveals the development of inland and foreign trade<sup>22</sup>. During this period the regions flourished materially due to the operation of the Great Silk Route connecting China and the Far East with Europe and India through Central Asia. In case of long distance trade, since it had obviously started from 2nd-3rd centuries A.D., the prosperity of the overseas trade and Silk Road across Central Asia were seen through both archaeological and literary evidences.

Cultural exchange between India and Central Asia continued to develop in the post-Kushan period. Excavation at Pianjikent representing a blue dancer which is traceable to the iconography of Shiva, the Hindu god who is often depicted *nataraja*, connected with the legend of how Shiva became *nilkantha* (blue-necked)<sup>23</sup>. Apart from this, the Indian schools of sculpture had also influence the Central Asian sculpture. For example, wooden sculpture of India has been found at Pianjikent<sup>24</sup>. However, Indian repercussions in Central Asian sculpture and painting are attributable both to common traditions and to direct contacts.

During the Gupta period, the relation between the two regions was affected. It was during Skanda Gupta's reign that the Huns (*Hunas*) from Central Asia invaded India from the northwest region. Though Skanda Gupta managed to prevent his Kingdom from the invasion, but it was not able to resist the long term attacks. After the reign of Skanda Gupta, the Gupta Kingdom was getting weakened by political and economic problems that finally led to the downfall of the great Kingdom under military troop of Hun at around the middle of 6th century A.D.

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<sup>21</sup> Rahul, Sankrityayan, *Madhy Asia ka itihas*, part 1. Patna: Motilal Banarasi Das; 2013.p. 205.

<sup>22</sup> G. R. Sharma *India and Central Asia from 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C to 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D* in Amlendu Guha book p.111

<sup>23</sup> A.M. Belenitsky *The History of Cultural Relations between Central Asia and India in the Early Medieval Period "Ancient India"* Moscow, 1964p.192

<sup>24</sup> G.M. Bongard-Levin in Amlendu Guha Book p.103

## 1.9 EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The reconstruction of medieval Indian economic history before the Ghorian conquests of the late twelfth century, R.S Sharma, in his work *Indian Feudalism*, says that early middle age was a period of general economic decline in north of the Indian sub-continent. There are striking parallels in the changes which took place in India social and economic condition and in the Western Europe in the same centuries. In this period, global historical factors which appear to have contributed to the decline in prosperity of both areas include invasion by fresh waves of barbarian Central Asian tribes, the closure of the silk- route through the Tarim basin and north- west India to the Arabian Sea, and the rise of Islam<sup>25</sup>.

The pattern and nature of trade in early medieval centuries were in the expansion of maritime activity in the eastern waters of the Indian Ocean and the China Sea. The old silk- route from China through the Tarim basin and the passes of Afghanistan to the ports of western India, which had been a major trade route for commerce with the Roman world, had been cut off, and from the seventh century onwards maritime connections developed between China and the Persian Gulf. This trade was originally in the ships of Persian numbers and traders, but Arabs also began to appear in increasing numbers at the great Chinese port of canton from the eighth century onward<sup>26</sup>.

In early medieval times, the spread of Buddhist teaching and worship also influenced the India's relations with Central Asia. This initiated the one of the greatest cultural movements in history. Some scholar says that with the introduction of Islam Buddhism as religion disappeared from Central Asia. But other scholars says that the legacy Buddhism left on Central Asian people thinking and local philosophical and moral thinking is included into Islamic thought in Central Asia. According to them, with removal of Buddhism from the scene its ideas and thinking could not disappear from the minds of the people.

## 1.10 SULTNATE PERIOD

From the close of the twelfth century to the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the major portions of Northern India came under the domination of the Turkish rule of the

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<sup>25</sup> Tapan, Raychaudhuri, and Irfan Habib;- “ *The Cambridge economic history of India*”: 1200-1750, Vol-I, Cambridge University Press, Delhi, 1982, p.p-45-46

<sup>26</sup> Ibid pp.126-127

Delhi Sultanate. The Ghorian conquest of northern India which led to the establishment of the Sultanate marks the true beginning of the medieval period in India. The economic basis of the Sultanate was unstable with the passages of time and the growing authority of the Sultans, attempts were made to increase revenue by collecting taxes. During the Delhi Sultanate, India and Central Asia relation was also established. At that times Persian language and literature were introduced to India. Central Asia was not conquered by Islam by military means but they were Islamic missionaries mostly from Persia who introduced Islam in Central Asia. It is at that time when many Sufi scholars, poets and saints came from Central Asia and settled in Delhi, Kashmir and elsewhere in India. In many cases this was return of many Buddhist thoughts and ideas back to India.

During the Delhi Sultanate period, the trade of slave were also important commercial and military aspects for the Delhi Sultan. Many of these Indian slaves were used by Muslim nobility, but others were exported to the demand in international markets. According to Scott Levi, the forcible enslavement of non-Muslims during Delhi Sultanate was motivated by the desire for war booty and military expansion. A major proportion of slaves owned by the Sultans were military slaves and not labourers or domestics. However mixed army comprising both Indian soldiers and Turkic slave-soldiers like *mamluks* from Central Asia and it were disrupted by the rise of the Mongol Empire reducing the inflow of *mamluks*. This intensified demands by the Delhi Sultans on local Indian populations to satisfy their need for both military and domestic slaves. The Khaljis sold thousands of captured Mongol soldiers within India. China, Turkistan, Persia, and Khurasan were sources of male and female slaves sold to Tughluq dynasty of India.

### **1.11 SUFISM**

Sufism or Tasawwuf is the inner mystical order of Islam. It represents the inward or esoteric side of Islam. Sufism, however, described as the mystical dimension of Islam<sup>27</sup>. Sufism is a common term given to Islamic mysticism. Mystical order is not necessarily a religious phenomenon and it may give mystic feelings of peace, job and ecstasy as an independent of a religious framework. The Sufis in India adopted the concept of relationship between god and the soul as one between the beloved. Pacifism and non-violence were imbibed by the Indian Sufi saints.

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<sup>27</sup> S.A.A Rizvi (1978), "History of Sufism in India", vol.1&2, New Delhi, p.18

Sufism, the mystic tradition of Islam, gained significant ground spreading from Baghdad into Persia. The emergence of Sufism in Central Asia had great impact on Indian society and culture. With the emergence of Islam in India (during the early 8th century), Sufi mystic traditions became more visible during the 10th - 11th centuries. During the early 11th century, the Ghaznavids brought many scholars and people into India, establishing the first Persian influence Muslim culture. Mu'izz al-Din Ghuri initiated a major invasion of India and extended the previous Ghazni territories into Delhi and Ajmer. He followed the mixed culture with Persian-Turkic traditions and influenced Sufi intellectualism in India

Sufism gained popularity in India after the establishing the Khanqah. A khanqah is defined as a hospice, lodge, community centre ran and maintained by Sufis. However, Khanqah was most popular among the common people of India. In India, there were many *silsila* of mystical order which followed the different style of Sufi order. Among them, the Chishti *silsila* of Sufis, in India, crystallized *khanqahs* with the highest form of modest hospitality and generosity.

During Mughal period, many Muslim Sufi Saints also came to India from the Central Asian cities like Bukhara and Sumarkand. According to Akbar's historian Abdul Fazl, who was from Central Asia. Abul Fazal mentioned the cultural importance of India and Central Asia. Central Asian people from Bukhara and Merv stayed at the imperial court of Mughal. From other source it is said that a number of high-ranking nobles (mansabdars) were of Central Asian origin<sup>28</sup>.

To sum up, the Sufism had great impact on the Indian political system, society and culture. It created egalitarian society and Sufis spread their teachings of love, spirituality, and harmony. It was the example of Sufi brotherhood and equity that drew people to the religion of Islam.

## **1.12 MUGHAL PERIOD**

The Mughal dynasty was established after the victory of Babar at Panipat in 1526. During Medieval period, India and Central Asia had strong political, economy and socio-cultural relation each other. The Central Asian influence in India is very much traceable especially in the ruling dynasty. The Mughal Empire in India was founded by Central Asian native Babur who was belonged to Farghana valley of

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<sup>28</sup> Surendra Gopal, India and Central Asia ( cultural, economic and political links) Shipra Publication, 2001 Preface p. v

Uzbek region. It was the first Islamic state outside the authority of the Caliphate. Mughal established strong administrative system. Nobility of Babur mainly comprises Turanian and Central Asian ethnicity. When Humayun was in exile, 57 nobles accompanied him to India of which 27 were Turanis while 21 were Iranis and 9 were unidentified<sup>29</sup>. The Mughal Court in its prime period was always amassed by Central Asian nobles.

During the Mughal period, India witnessed durable political stability, territorial integration and an expansion of economic activities. Agra became an active economic zone of the century. Trade and commercial links with Central Asian traders brought manifold advantages to the Mughal Empire. Akbar's thought for his heritage that it was somewhat different from that of Babur time and Humayun. He was brought up in India and 'thought of subcontinent as his home'. Babur was unable to adopt the new and unusual environment of India, but Akbar felt at his best in Indian surrounding. Akbar was highly admired the Indian world. Akbar's deputy Abul Fazl reflected Akbar's deep felt appreciation for India. The inhabitants of this land are religious, affectionate, hospitable, genial and frank. They are fond of scientific pursuits, inclined to austerity of life, seekers after justice, contented, industrious, and capable in affairs, loyal, truthful and constant. The soil of India is for the most part arable and such productive power that the same land is sown each year and in many places three harvests and more are taken in a single twelve month and the vine bears fruit in its first year.

### **1.12.1 TRADE AND COMMERCE**

In the area of economy and commercial activities, trade and commerce was simplest medium of interactions of both the region because it belonged to the common people during mughal period. Trade and commerce had started from the ancient period but at the time of Mughal emperor Akbar, trade and commerce were developed in India and it linked to the Central Asia. At this time, many Indian traders and merchants like skillful jewelers, book binders, weavers, farmers etc. were engaged in Central Asian markets. Some of them acquired monopoly over some trading items like tea trade of Bukhara and opened tea packing enterprises in Samarkand. Traders of indigo, muslin, silk, copper, cotton, dyes, iron-steel pots etc.

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<sup>29</sup> Kumar, B B. India and Central Asia : Links and Interactions India and Central Asia. In: Roy , JN . Kumar, BB. (eds.) Classical to contemporary periods ,Delhi: Astha Bharti Pub. 2007. p.17.

were mainly Indians.<sup>30</sup> The Indian traders and merchants were also the medium of amalgamation of Indian and Central Asian cultures. They kept cordial relations with locals and relation alive between Russia and Central Asia when the state was under Russian rulers<sup>31</sup>.

India has been trading since ancient times. The Indian Ocean can be regarded as the oldest sea in history in terms of it being used for travelling and transportation. This, however, shouldn't lead us to believe that there didn't exist an overland trade equally vibrant. The Indian subcontinent was a socially and culturally diverse zone where sea-borne trade supplemented by overland caravan routes gave the Indian economy a strong sense of unity.

Transcontinental oceanic and caravan trade was the economic mechanism through which the economies of the Indian Ocean and the major landmass were linked to the rest of the world. What accounted for much of the Indian trade was the ability of certain societies to produce a surplus over and above its own requirements, linked to the demands of the deficit areas<sup>32</sup>.

Before the Industrial Revolution the composition of long-distance trade was determined by eating and drinking habits clothing, and housing. But the later period needed a compelled continuity of uninterrupted flow of fuel, raw material and food stuff. Also, the nature of organization of trade played an important role. The mixture of goods traded in the pre-modern period was very random as opposed to the later times<sup>33</sup>.

Medieval trade in Asia started with exchange and acceptance of four major commodities -- silk, porcelain, sandalwood and black pepper in return for thoroughbred Arabian horse, incense, ivory and metal goods.<sup>34</sup> Arabs in the 8<sup>th</sup> century made it possible to unite the two main trade routes -- the sea route through the Red Sea and the joint sea, river and overland journey across the Persian Gulf, Iraq and the Syrian Desert. Some early centers of trans-continental trade were Jeddah (Hijaz), Basra and Siraf (Iraq), Isfahan and Shiraz (Persia) and Bukhara.

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<sup>30</sup> A. Lubarasky, *Indian Settlers in Central Asia*. Vivekananda Kendra Patrika. 1973.p 108

<sup>31</sup> Mansura Haider ., "India and Central Asia linkage and Interaction". 2003.p. 267-68.

<sup>32</sup> K.N.Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).p.532

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*.p.13

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*.p.23

After the Uzbek takeover of the Mughal ancestral homeland of Central Asia, and of prominent cities like Samarqand, the Mughals expanded into North India and ruled most of the Indian subcontinent from 1526 up to roughly the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Not much however, is written concerning their Central Asian roots, and Mughals in the historiography of today are treated as an Indian Muslim dynasty. In historical documents, such as their autobiographies, accounts of travellers, holy men, artists, traders and merchants, their sentimentality and nostalgia for Central Asia is very evident. India, for example, according to Babur was “unpleasant and inharmonious”; he further added that “there is no beauty in its people, no graceful social intercourse, no poetic talent or understanding, no etiquette, nobility or manners”, its only chief attraction being that “it is a country with lots of gold and money”<sup>35</sup>.

In the wake of the Mughal conquest of India, a large number of immigrants came to India from Central Asia and Persia and settled down in Delhi and other cities. These Persian and Central Asian families, including merchants contributed in the state administration and the economic setup of the Mughals<sup>36</sup>. During the medieval period almost the whole of Northern and Western India had commercial contacts and trading relations with Central and West Asia and extending through it to the Arab and Mediterranean world, as also to South-East Asia and China both maritime and overland routes.<sup>37</sup>

By placing Central Asia as a cultural contact zone between different peoples and polities such as between India and Russia and India and Iran, and a transit zone for material commodities such as silk, cotton, horses and dry fruits, this paper aims to connect the regions of India and Central Asia to the larger field of commercial history and trading relations<sup>38</sup>. The persistence of the Indo-Central Asian trade in the seventeenth century in the face of growing Indo-European trade, especially when the Europeans were given a more privileged position as compared to the Central Asians speaks much about the necessity and importance of this trade to the merchants of these areas and how firmly entrenched it was in the economic sphere of India. Limited possibility for trade diversion in certain key goods, such as textile and horse trade and

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35 Babar, Baburnama, Eng. Translated, A.S.Beveridge (London, 1921),p.518

36ShireenMoosvi, Production, Consumption and Population in Akbar’s Time (New Delhi, 1993), p.99.

37 Ibid.100

38 Nile Green, ed. Writing Travel in Central Asian History (USA, 2014).p.1

comparative advantage possessed by each region are factors which explain this persistence.

It is necessary to define the geographic limits of India, Iran and Central Asia. Mughal India formed the sub-continental mass south of the Hindu Kush and Himalayas, whereas the latter was known as the territory under the Uzbek Khanates including the important trading cities of Bukhara, Samarkand, and Qandahar etc. Economic policies formulated by the rulers of these Islamic countries gave a stimulus to internal and external trade. The barrier formed by the Himalayas at the north-west corner was pierced by a number of passes through which commercial contact was made possible with Central Asia<sup>39</sup>

A number of cities were frequented by the merchants and traders who were engaged in the overland trade between these regions. These cities were well connected with each other through various routes. Central Asian towns and cities such as Balkh, Tirmiz, Kish, Samarkand and Bukhara were very connected by way of Kabul which had been serving as a link between India and these regions from the earliest times.

During the Mughal Period, India had neither metalled roads nor advanced means of transport. India's varied physical features, clubbed with the dangers of travelling alone in these vast plains or rocky mountainous regions led travellers to form and travel in groups of various types, of which the caravans were the most popular, while pilgrims formed smaller groups. The caravan was the most popular and oldest method of travelling in large groups, providing the required safety and security, and also contributing to social and commercial life.

Babur was well aware of the importance of foreign trade which would benefit the areas under his control and the communication system which he would require to enforce this trade. An efficient communication system was created by erecting square towers after every 18 miles and *chaukis* after every 36 miles, all of which helped in the development of trade.<sup>40</sup> Between Babur's death and Humayun's re-entry into India, the Sher Shah (1540-1545 A.D.), a remarkably farsighted ruler, reorganized the

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39 Abul Khair Mohammad Farooque, *Roads and Communications in Mughal India*, (Delhi: 1977), p.11

40 Babar, *Baburnama*, Eng. Translated, A.S.Beveridge (London, 1921).pp.629-30.



country's administrative system<sup>41</sup> to a great extent. He constructed the Grand Trunk Road from Attock to Delhi.<sup>42</sup> Thus, travel for men and transport of goods and merchandize became easier and safer during Akbar's reign. The construction of new roads, bridges and military posts, along with giving the Army greater mobility also stimulated the flow of trade with surrounding and far off areas<sup>43</sup>. Jahangir had trees planted on the routes between Agra and Attock.<sup>44</sup> William Finch (1608-11) found many guards and police posts whose purpose was to prevent robbery and attend to the welfare of travellers<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, the overland route to Persia and Central Asia via Kabul and Multan was an extremely busy route and due to its importance, the Mughals initiated effective measure to improve and protect it. This route grew in importance after the growing trade of the Europeans in the Indian Ocean and the ability of the Muslim powers to challenge it successfully<sup>46</sup>.

All the transactions were generally done on exchange basis. The foreigners were paid the prices in the form of precious metals. Only some travellers like Tavernier and Fryer have paid sufficient attention in their accounts to the weights and measures prevalent during this period. The use of money and the coinage system of this period indicate a considerable use of metals of different kinds. According to Bernier, supplying itself with articles of foreign growth does not prevent Hindustan from absorbing a large portion of gold and silver of the world. It is admitted through a variety of channels, while there is scarcely any opening for its return.<sup>47</sup> Gold, silver and precious metals played an important role in various areas of lives of the people. The main reason for the significance of the metals was their economic worth and there are references to gold, silver and precious metals import from Persia to India in the works of Abul Fazl<sup>48</sup>.

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41 Abul Khair Mohammad Farooque, *Roads and Communications in Mughal India*, (Delhi: 1977), p.10.

42 Ibid.p11

43 Ibid.p.13

44 Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Eng. trans., H. Beveridge, (London: 1909), Vol.I, p.100.

45 Abul Khair Mohammad Farooque, *Roads and Communications in Mughal India*, (Delhi: 1977), p.57

46 Abul Khair Mohammad Farooque, *Roads and Communications in Mughal India*, (Delhi: 1977), p.18

47Francios Bernier, *Travels in Mughal Empire* (Delhi: 1972), p.204.

48 Abul Fazl, *Ai'n-i-Akbari*, Eng. trans., H. Blochmann, (Calcutta: 1868), Vol.I, p.138

The North-West India was considered largely self-sufficient in almost every respect. It always having enough to meet its internal demand and also export to surrounding regions. However, since every country cannot fulfil its needs on its own, I had to rely on other areas for a number of things it didn't produce. Goods and commodities which were imported from Iran and Central Asia via the Multan and Kabul route were carpets, silk, woollen items, dry and fresh fruits, precious metals, olive oil, rose water, glass etc. Persia produced large quantities of gums and drugs, particularly asafoetida, which was of great demand in India<sup>49</sup>.

Although India was mainly an agricultural country rich in agricultural products, it didn't export only raw materials. A long list of items of import and export can be found in various contemporary accounts of the period. These items can be classified into luxury and non-luxury items. India exported a variety of goods and luxury items, such as cloth, embroidery, pearls, ivory, elephants<sup>50</sup>, rhinoceros's horns, peacocks; and non-luxury items, such as ghee, spices, aromatic-roots, pepper, turbans, girdles, corals<sup>51</sup>, whereas the non-luxury items included cotton, indigo-cakes, iron-swords, musk, and different types of wood, sugar-candy, and food grains.<sup>52</sup> Trade with Iran generated surplus silver coinage whereas trade with Turan was compensated by import of Central Asian horses.<sup>53</sup> It is not possible to have an idea whether India had a favourable balance of trade in this period, nor on the basis of the available literature one can interpret that the balance of trade was in favour of the foreign merchants.

The portrayal of long-distance trade as being limited to, and primarily driven by, trade in luxuries does not provide an accurate picture, rather this evidence trade was driven by comparative advantage for goods that were demanded for several practical (*i.e.* military and socio-economic, cultural and entertainment) purposes, such as horses, precious metals and stones, silk robes etc. Consequently, demand-persistence for goods such as horses - due to their continued socio-economic and

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<sup>49</sup> Edward Scott Waring, *A Tour To Sheeraz By The Route Of Kazroon And Feerozabad* (London, 1807),p.76

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Coryat's testimony in: *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*, (ed.) W. Foster, (Oxford, 1921), p.243

<sup>51</sup> William Foster ed. *The English Factories, 1630-38* (Oxford,1910),p143

<sup>52</sup> Edward Terry in: *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*, (ed.) W. Foster, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), p.301.

<sup>53</sup> Stephen F. Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian trade, 1600-1750* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 6

cultural roles - entailed the sustenance of the trade till the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.

Throughout the Mughal period though, the volume of this trans-regional trade through the north-western land routes fluctuated depending upon the atmosphere prevailing between India and Persia -- of amity or hostility -- on the issue of possession of Qandahar and sometimes between the Mughal government and the Portuguese.

### **1.13 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Medieval India's long time foreign trade links was characterized by an over emphasis on the maritime trade especially with European trading companies and scholars neglected the overland trade with Central Asia and India. The reason is the availability of rich source material on the former and the relative lack of information on the latter. The research has improved in recent years due to the work of several scholars who have carefully used both Asian and European sources to focus the significance of the overland trade between both the regions.

Here the sources are available which highlight the overland trade between India and Central Asia Indian, European and Soviet scholars.

The work is done by **Scott Levi (2002)**, who emphasized the development of trade route and its importance for economic and commercial development. Indian merchants communities such as Multani, Sind, Lahore, Shikarpuri were directly engaged in this trade mainly for money lending. Similarly, Central Asian merchants who were also engaged in this trade especially for the selling or exchanging their wares. Apart from this, the commodities of trade such as textile, tea, indigo, silk, spices, horse were in large scale for exchange between both the regions. Scott Levi also discusses various aspects of the social life of the Indian Diaspora communities.

**Abul Khair Mohammad Farooque (1977)**, defines the geographic limits of India, Iran and Central Asia on the basis of geographical location and pattern to each other. He also focuses on trade route and it connected various regions of both India and Central Asia. The construction of new roads, bridges and military posts and mobility also stimulated the flow of trade with surrounding and far off areas and it ensure and encourage an uninterrupted flow of goods and traffic and it gave a stimulus to internal and external trade.

**Shireen Moosvi (1993)** focuses on people movement between both the regions. During Mughal period, a large number of immigrants came to India from Central Asia and vice-versa. The Central Asian families, including merchants contributed in the state administration and the economic setup of the Mughals in India. During the medieval period almost the whole of Northern and Western India had commercial contacts and trading relations with Central and West Asia and extending through it to the Arab and Mediterranean world, as also to South-East Asia and China both maritime and overland routes.

**Stephen Frederic Dale (1994)** explores the development of trade and commerce between both the regions. He focuses on commodities exchange and the trade with Turan (Central Asia) was compensated by import of Central Asian horses. He talks about Indian merchants (Punjabi Khattris, Pashtuns or Afghans and Marwaris) who lived and worked in Turan. Power and economic stability of the merchant's Diasporas personified the economic prosperity and status of the ruler. Stephen Dale says that the Indian merchants in Iran exerted a large economic influence in the country, by dominating foreign trade between India and Iran and operating as influential merchants within the Iranian community by supplying capital.

**Niels Steensgaard (1974)** focuses that the India's caravan trade with Persia, Turkey and India was brisk in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Cotton textiles were the main commodity sent from India while bullion was imported into it. The main route was Kandhar route and this route continued to be in use but there was a gradual decline in the trade, especially in the second half of the century. The likely reason for this was declining demand for Indian textiles in Persia and Turkey.

**K.A. Nizami (1970)** also explores the historical and cultural interaction between the Central Asia through the different ages of history from ancient to medieval period. He says that Central Asia and India's contacts with dates back to remote past and cover many aspects of human relationship such as social, political, and economic. Caravans of men and streams of though constantly moved between two regions and despite limited means of communication intimate cultural contacts developed between two regions.

**Mansura Haider (2004)** has tried to explore the active relation between the two regions. She shows that while lively trade relations existed between Central Asia and its neighbours like Russia, China and India, 'lawlessness and civil wars' were responsible for frequent interruptions in the commerce. By and large, the people of

India have unaware of their contribution to the glory of their neighbouring countries. From the early period, especially from 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, she believes that there are indeed many possibilities and enormous potential for establishing wide-ranging cooperation in various spheres between Central Asia and India.

### **1.14 SOURCES**

Primary sources available and used for this study can be categorized in the following heads:

- English translation of Persian chronicles
- Travel accounts, and
- English Factory Records

English translation of the chronicles such as *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, *Badshahnarnah*, *Alamgir namah*, *Riazul Salatin* and *Baharistan-i-Ghayabi* are relevant to the study of seventeenth century.

### **1.15 CHAPTERSATION**

In the light of this above survey of 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century, in the history of India and Central Asia during medieval period, the study of trade pattern and role of merchants in these regions during these centuries is examined in the following five chapters:

1. Introduction
2. Trade route, Transportation and communication.
3. Merchant and Trading Communities
4. Export and Import Commodities.
5. Conclusion

First chapter will discuss the historical and geographical importance of Central Asia and India. Apart from this, it will also focus on the historical development of trade and commerce through the different period between the two regions. Apart from this, the survey of literature will cover the whole chapters and related issue.

The second chapter focuses on the trade route, transportation and communication in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries which tries to look at the process and development of caravan trade. In this regions, the various routes connecting India and Central Asia with emphasis on theft and security, distance and geographical and climatic aspects. However, the development of trade were mainly depended on

trading centres such as Agra, Delhi, Multan, Lahore, Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Balkh, Bukhara, and Samarkand between both the region.

The third chapter deals with composition of merchant and trading communities during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This period takes up the theme of large groups of Indian merchants' presence and their role in Central Asia for the economic and commercial development.

The fourth chapter deals with the increased commercial activities between India and Central Asia during the 16th and 17th centuries. In this chapter, we will try to look at the process of trade and commerce in that period. India's foreign trade with Central Asia were mainly concentrated on exchange and acceptance of four major commodities -- silk, porcelain, sandalwood and black pepper in return for thoroughbred Arabian horse, incense, ivory and metal goods.

Chapter five will examine the various aspects of the above discussion.

## **2 CHAPTER: TRADE ROUTES, TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION**

Humans have been social animals who have travelled from place to place in search of food and pastures. And these tracks of migrations have developed into permanent trade routes. Along these routes rulers and their armies travelled for campaigns while merchants and traders travelled to earn profits<sup>54</sup>. India and Central Asia also connected through the various trade routes which were developed by these migrants, rulers, armies, merchants, traders, etc.

### **2.1 GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING**

Geography gives us an understanding of the evolution of people, their ideas, places and environments. Thus, the role of geography is important for the understanding of polity, society and the economy which are interdependent and interrelated. We will focus on the geographical importance between the India and Central Asia and how it did play shaping the economy especially trade route and communication.

Geographically, Indian subcontinent falls into three macro-regions: the mountains of the north, the Indo-Gangetic Plain and the peninsular plateau in the south. The northern mountain stretch some 2,400 kilometres east-west. Its north-south width varies from about 200 to 400 kilometres. The Himalayan ranges, in the east, form of densely forested mountain separated by deep valleys is almost impassable while in the north-west Himalayan ranges is griddle narrows and numerous passes yield land passages into the subcontinent. These passes acted as the corridors of communication with the rest of Asia and the beyond. Most famous passes here are Khyber Pass, the Gomal Pass and the Bolan Pass. During the Mughal period, the Khyber Pass – a thirty kilometres long meandering valley- became more popular. This Pass have been the more important route in the as it led to the Seistan area and the Helmand valley in Afghanistan, which in turn gave access to north-eastern Iran and Central Asia<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> Subhash Parihar, “*Land Transportation in Mughal India*”, Aryan books international, New Delhi, 2008, p-3.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p.3

Besides geographical features, political and historical changes also affected the route. Migrants or invaders who crossed the north-western passes into the Indian subcontinent. The first migrant group of farmers and pastoralists from Iranian plateau and Central Asia spread into the Indian subcontinent about 7000 BCE. At the early period, Indus valley people are known to have trading contacts with Mesopotamia and traders followed the overland as well as sea-routes.

By the sixth century BCE, the area shifted from the northwest and Punjab of the Ganges Plain. Both the regions remained linked to the Himalayan foothills and the rivers of the Gangetic system<sup>56</sup>. On the plains, as the settlements have always been denser along watercourses, the routes usually followed rivers. However, numerous towns became the centres of production of crafted items that were traded both overland and across the seas.

Macedonian Alexander's raid in northwest India in 326BCE opened "routes of communication and points of exchange, even if inadvertently"<sup>57</sup>. Alexander's raid resulted in a closer link between India, Greece, and Persia<sup>58</sup>. Routes of communication also developed in Kushan period. Kushanas under Kanishka, the sectors of Silk Road – the crucible of profitable trade between the India, Persian, Chinese, Turkistan, and Roman Empires- were under their control. Thus they brought Central Asia into the scope of the Indian traders. Takshshila and Purushapura on either side of the Sindhu river were connected with Indian trade routes on India side and Central Asian trade on the other. Strategically located, Takshshila, the capital city of Gandhar, was the terminus of several major inland routes and the starting point of the great trade routes connecting India and Central Asia. A route towards the north passing through Kashmir valley to Gilgit, Yarkand and Kashgarh connected it to eastern and western Turkistan. The western route passed through Pushkalavati, Purushapura (Peshawar) and Kapisha (modern Begran) to Bactria. One traveller from China like Hiuen Tsang reached Bactria from Samarkand and followed this route to reach Bamiyan, Kapisha and Purushpur through Khyber Pass. It was the oldest and most frequented route.

With the coming of Arabs, in the early eighth century, it made incursions into Sind region. Arab intension in India seems have preferred capturing trade routes

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<sup>56</sup> Y.M. Goblet, "*Political Geography and the world Map*" (London, 1919), p.45

<sup>57</sup> Romila Thaper, "*Early India from the Origins to AD 1300*" London, 2002 p.40

<sup>58</sup> A.L. Basham, "*The Wonder that was India Calcutta*" 1967, pp.232-233



rather than territory<sup>59</sup>. In 1192, Muhammad Ghauri established Turkish rule in India crossed the Gomal Pass. Ghauri's slave governor Qutabuddin Aibak declared himself Sultan of Delhi. Now the hub of power shifted to the great node of Delhi, situated at the gateway between the Aravallis and the Thar Desert on one side and the Himalaya on the other. Henceforth the city became the key to the power in Hindustan.

Transport and communication occupies an important place in the economic and social development of a country. From the earliest times, trade routes have determined the course of progress and prosperity and have broken the isolation of regional economies. Since ancient times, as we have mentioned above, India have had trade linkages with other parts of the world like Mesopotamia, Egypt, Central and Western Asia, China and Europe. And these trade routes have played a vital role in strengthening its economy.

The Mughal period saw important social, economic and commercial developments between India and Central Asia. The surplus production of the commodity created the need for the trading items to the different parts of the country and the beyond. India's strategic locations which facilitated easy transport of goods as connected to the important producing centres in though land routes. Indian cities and towns were linked to the major city of Central Asia through land routes which gave the prosperity of both the regions empire during medieval period. Tavernier admits that the conveyances and the manner of travelling in the Mughal India were "not less convenient than all the arrangements of marching in comfort either in France or in Italy<sup>60</sup>. During this period, many travellers and traders came to India and Central Asia gives their accounts contain vivid information about the trade routes between India and Central Asia. Even the indigenous sources like the *Ain-I-Akbari*, *Tujuk-I-Jahangiri*, *Chahar Gulshan*, etc provide a great deal of information on transport and communication during this period.

During the Medieval Period, India had neither metalled roads nor advanced means of transport. India's varied physical features, clubbed with the dangers of travelling alone in these vast plains or rocky mountainous regions led travellers to form and travel in groups of various types, of which the caravans were the most popular, while pilgrims formed smaller groups. The caravan was the most popular and

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<sup>59</sup> Romila Thaper, *Early India from the Origins to AD 1300* London, 2002 p.407

<sup>60</sup> Tavernier, *Travels in India* Delhi 1977 p.32

oldest method of travelling in large groups, providing the required safety and security, and also contributing to social and commercial life.

State investment in the maintenance of trade routes, commonplace throughout the Mughal period, was a regular practice long before the consolidation of Mughal control in the subcontinent. The Delhi Sultans were also very interested in maintaining a positive climate for trans-regional traders. Iltutmish (r. 1211–36) and Balban (r. 1266–87) both made special efforts to suppress predatory tribal groups that had been hindering commercial traffic along the caravan routes. State investment in trade routes in this period also involved clearing paths through forests, planting trees alongside roads to provide shade for travelers as they passed through the hot plains, constructing caravanserais (dormitory-style quarters established in urban centers and along trade routes for travellers) and forts of various sizes, digging wells, and protecting travelers from highway robbers<sup>61</sup>.

Since the time of the Lodi Sultans, construction of roads and maintenance of *serais*, digging wells and planting of shady trees became one of the main concerns of the rulers. Improved means of communications would be followed by economic prosperity resulting from an increased volume of output and a more intense exchange of goods between the town and countryside and between major urban centres<sup>62</sup>.

Sher Shah is also reported to have constructed thousands of miles of roads traversing north India, both sides of which were adorned with shady fruit trees, ‘so that travellers might travel under the shade while hot winds blew.’<sup>63</sup> He further helped fostered trade and commerce along his caravan routes by financing the construction of some 1,700 caravanserais across north India, each located just six to seven kilometres from each other and equipped with services for both Muslim and Hindu travellers. Sher Shah also implemented a policy by which his *muqaddams* (village revenue officers) were made responsible for any unrecovered merchandise stolen by highway robbers. Babur was well aware of the importance of foreign trade which would benefit the areas under his control and the communication system which he would require to enforce this trade. An efficient communication system was created by erecting square

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<sup>61</sup>S. Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade, 1550-1900* (Leiden: BRILL, 2002), pp.38-39

<sup>62</sup>Hameeda Khatoon Naqvi, *Urbanisation and Urban Centres Under The Great Mughals: 1556-1707*, (Delhi,1971).p.59

<sup>63</sup> Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh-I Firuz Shahi*, 2 vols, edited by S. M. Imamuddin, (Dacca: University of Dacca Press, 1964), I, pp.170-172

towers after every 18 miles and *chaukis* after every 36 miles, all of which helped in the development of trade<sup>64</sup>. Merchants coming from Iran and Central Asia on large caravans or on other pack animals, in groups or independently, passing through these routes greatly benefitted by this.

Travel for men and transport of goods and merchandize became easier and safer during Akbar's reign. The construction of new roads, bridges and military posts, along with giving the Army greater mobility also stimulated the flow of trade with surrounding and far off areas<sup>65</sup>. Jahangir had trees planted on the routes between Agra and Attock<sup>66</sup>. Tavernier recorded that:

*"...nearly all the way from Lahore to Delhi, and from Delhi to Agra, is like a, continuous avenue planted throughout with beautiful trees on both sides, which is very pleasant to the view; but in some places they have been allowed to perish and the people have not taken care to plant others"*<sup>67</sup>.

## 2.2 TRADE ROUTE

Before the European trading companies in Indian subcontinent, the trade and commerce were dominated by the Arabian traders in Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. However, the history of direct trading intercourse by sea between Europe and the East began with the Portuguese conquests replacing Arabs in Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea at the end of the 15th century. At this time, the foreign trade of India was chiefly in the hands of the Moors. At the time of the coming of the Portuguese a regular trade was carried on between India and the principal markets of the West by means of three main trade routes. The first was by sea to the Arabian coast at Aden and thence to Cairo and Alexandria. The second was by sea to the Persian Gulf and thence by land to Aleppo and on to the Levantine ports. The third lay overland by Kandahar to the cities of Persia and Turkey<sup>68</sup>.

Well-maintained land and riverine routes were linked between India and Central Asian region with one another, which facilitated domestic trade and foreign trade across the region.

<sup>64</sup> Babar, *Baburnama*, Eng. Translated, A.S. Beveridge (London, 1921), pp.629-30.

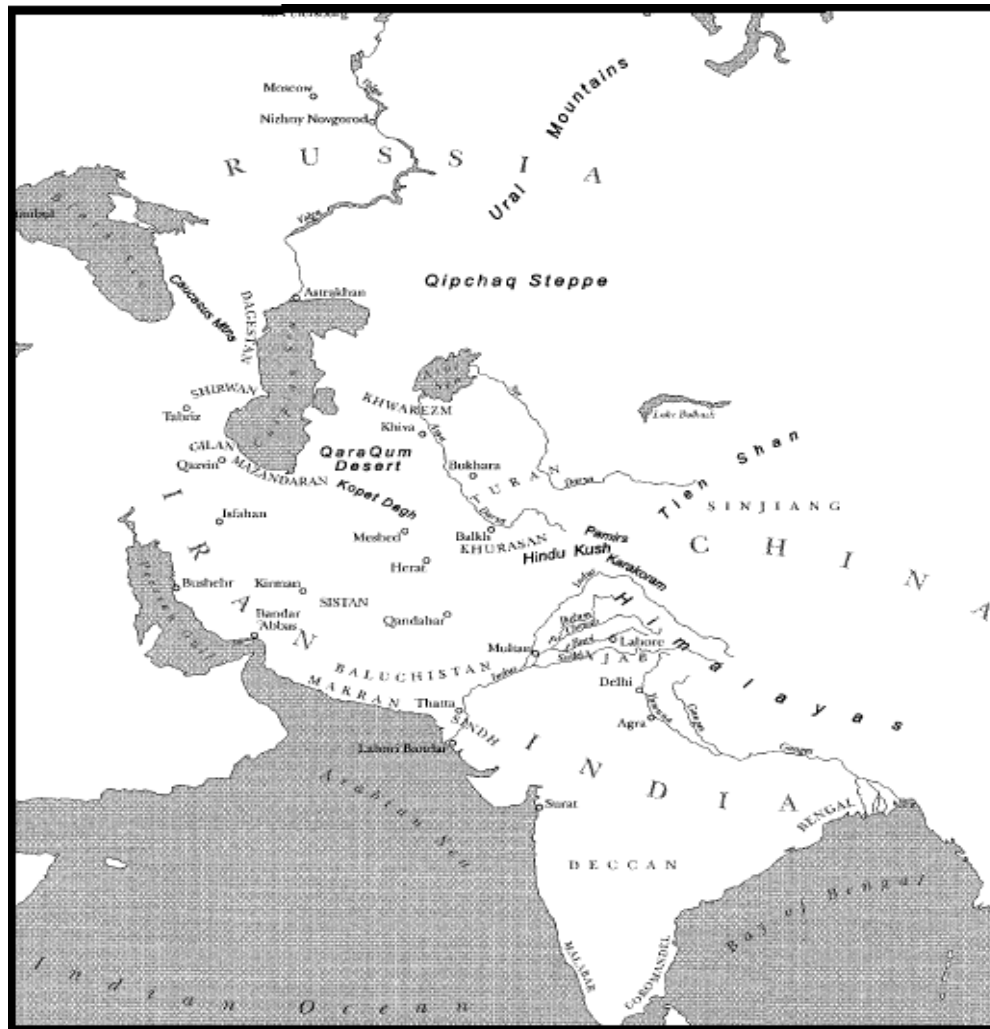
<sup>65</sup> Abul Khair Mohammad Farooque, *Roads and Communications in Mughal India*, (Delhi: 1977), p.13

<sup>66</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Eng. trans., H. Beveridge, (London: 1909), Vol.I, p.100. Terry, Foster.p.293

<sup>67</sup> Tavernier, Vol. I, p.89

<sup>68</sup> C.J., Hamilton; - *"The trade relation between England and India"* (1600-1896), Thacker, Spink and Company, Calcutta, 1919, p.4

Map 3: Trade route



### 2.2.1 RIVERINE ROUTES

The capital of Mughal empire was Agra. Thus Agra became important trading centre of this period. The route from Agra was linked to the entire region. The route from Agra to Kabul was the most important of this region. The commercial importance this route where Mughals ensured that travellers and merchants was without fearless. The trade centre between Agra and Delhi were Fatehpur Sikri, Hodal, Palwal and Faridabad. Between Delhi and Lahore, the main halts were Gannaur, Panipat, Kamal, Arnkala, Sirhind and Phillaur<sup>69</sup>. The Sutlej and the Beas the two main rivers were

<sup>69</sup> Tavernier, *Travels in India*, translated by V. Ball, edited by William Crooke. New Delhi Oriental Books

crossed by the means of ferries. The Portuguese traveller Fray Sebastian Manrique mentioned that several villages and cities lay on the road to Lahore and all of them had abundant supplies of food<sup>70</sup>. Continuing from Lahore the route crossed the Ravi near Shahdara and it reached the towns of Aminabad and other place. The Chenab was crossed near the town of Gujarat and the road became difficult from here. The Jhelum was crossed near the famous Rohtas fort. The route from the Jhelum to the town of Rawalpindi lay through a sandy plain intersected by ravines. Crossing the Indus River was sometimes dangerous due to the strong flow of the water. The town of Peshawar was the next important station on the route. There existed several other routes from the Indus River to Kabul apart from the Khyber route.

The Khyber road was the most preferred one as it had been made suitable for wheeled transport. Other routes went by the way of Bangash, Fannul, Karapah, and Naghr<sup>71</sup>. Gomal river was another important river route as Babar had mentioned that the route required crossing the river several times which could be dangerous when the water level was high<sup>72</sup>. The flow of Beas and Sutlej was crossed near Bahawalpur. From Bahawalpur to Multan was a journey of seventy miles. After crossing Multan and the Indus, one came across fertile territory from the banks of the river to the town of Dera Ismael Khan. The route reached the mountains at Karabagh. Several ridges and valleys had to be traversed before one reached the plain of Peshawar<sup>73</sup>.

### 2.2.2 THE LAND ROUTES

The surplus production of the commodity created the need for the trading items to the different parts of the country and with Central Asia. India's strategic locations which facilitated easy and, somehow barrier due to mountainous crisscross, transport of goods as connected to the important producing centres in though land routes. India was linked to the major towns and *sarai* in medieval period which gave the prosperity of both the region during 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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Reprint Corporation 1977, Vol 1,76-77.

<sup>70</sup> Fray Sebastian Manrique, *Trareis of Fray Sebastian Manrique*. 1629-1643, Oxford Hakluyt Society 1947, Voll, p 190.

<sup>71</sup> Abul FazL *Ain-i- Akbari*, translated by H. Blochman, edited by D.C.Philiotl, Delhi Crown Publications 1987, Vol 2, p 405.

<sup>72</sup> Abul FazL *Ain-i- Akbari*, translated by H. Blochman, edited by D.C.Philiotl, Delhi Crown Publications 1987, Vol 2, p 405.

<sup>73</sup> Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An account of the kingdom of Caboul and its dependencies in Persia. Tartary and India*, London J Strahan 1819, Vol I, p 1-88.

With the advent of Muslim power on the forefront, roads were laid all across northern India, which connected the principal cities with one another for military as well as economic purposes. It was this land transport that transported the principal articles of merchandise to different parts of the country, and enabled them to attain prosperity during the 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century, which has been attested by the numerous foreign travellers who visited north India. The imperial highways were constructed and many other tertiary roads radiated out from these highways in all directions, connecting the principal cities with one another.

The last section of the book, *Chahar Gulshan* consists of a road book, which describes all the major routes radiating from Delhi and Agra, which were the capital cities of the Mughals as well as large commercial centres. It was a short history of Mughal India written by Rai Chatarman Kayath in 1759. According to M.P. Singh “the *Chahar Gulshan* records 24 roads leading to different directions and they were: (1) Agra to Delhi, (2) Delhi to Lahore, (3) Lahore to Gujarat-Attak, (4) Attak to Kabul, (5) Kabul to Ghazni-Qandhar, (6) Gujarat to Srinagar, (7) Lahore to Multan, (8) Delhi to Ajmer, (9) Delhi to Bareilly-Banaras-Patna, (10) Delhi to Kol (Aligarh), (11) Agra to Allahabad, (12) Sironj to Narwar, (13) Aurangabad to Ujjain, (14) Bijapur to Ujjain, (15) Golkunda to Asir-Hindia, (16) Hindia to Sironj, (17) Narwar to Gwalior-Dholpur, (18) Dholpur to Agra, (19) Multan to Bhakkar, (20) Srinagar to Attak, (21) Ajmer to Ahemdabad, (22) Surkhab to Kabul, (23) Qandhar to Multan and (24) Qandhar to Attak”<sup>74</sup>.

On moving from Delhi to Agra (80 kos) stages are given by different sources: The stages mentioned by Jadunath Sarkar in *India of Aurangzeb* are: Delhi – Barapula – Madanpur – Badarpur – Faridabad – Ballabgarh - Sikri – Pirthala – Baghaura - Palwal - Khera Serai - Mitnaul - Hodal - Kosi Serai - Banchari - Khataila - Deotana - Chata – Akbarpur – Mathura – Naurangabad - Koila Serai of Jhandipur - Ganu-Ghat - Jhandipur - Farah-Serai - Sikandra – Agra<sup>75</sup>. Palwal was the frontier town between the provinces of Delhi and Agra.

The following are the stages given by Tavernier from Kandahar to Agra (645coss): Kandahar, Charisafar, Zelate, Betazy, Mezour, Carabat, Chakenicouze. Caboul (Kabul), Bariabe, Nimela Alyboua, Taka to Kiemry, Chaour Novechaar, Atek,

<sup>74</sup> M.P. Singh, “*Towns, Market, Mint and Port in the Mughal Empire: 1556-1707*”, Adam Publication, New Delhi.

<sup>75</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, “*Khulasat and Chahar Gulshan: India Of Aurangzeb*”, 1901, pp- xcvi - xcvi

Calapane, Roupate, Toulapeca, Keraly, Zerabad, Imiabad, Lahor Menat-Kan, Fatyabad, Seradaken, Sera- balour, Seradourai, Serinde, Sera Mogoul, Sera Chabas, Dirauril, Sera- Crindal, Guienaour, Delhi- Badarpur – Palwal- Koti Serai- Mathura (Shaiki Serai) – Goodki Serai –Agra. Tavernier calls Badarpur as Badelpoura, which was 8 kos from Delhi. He wrongly mentions Mathura, as the Shah Ki Sarai, and gives the name Mathura to a temple<sup>76</sup>.

According to John Marshall on his caravan from Delhi to Agra (80 kos), he saw the avenue of trees planted and construction of a road connecting Delhi to Agra by Jahangir's orders. Dilly (Delhi), Fryabad (Faridabad), Sheinschecalls Surray, Bramsurray (Bursana), Hullull (Hodal), Coleway Surray, Jetsurray, Farra, Agra<sup>77</sup>.

The Indian cities were also links to the various region of country and Agra, the capital city of the Mughals, was the commercial nucleus which served as a link between various parts of the empire. Major roads fanned out from Agra in all directions, to Sirhind, Lahore and Delhi in the North West, Etah, Allahabad, Banaras, Patna and Bengal in the east, to Ajmer, Ahmadabad and Surat in the south west. According to Pelsaert “the city was at the junction of all the roads from distant countries like Gujarat, Thatta (or Sind), Kabul, Kandahar, Multan, Lahore, Deccan or Burhanpur, and Bengal”<sup>78</sup>.

Major trade routes intersected and criss-crossed the entire region. The route from Amritsar to Khiva through Atak, Kabul, Balkh, Qarshi and Bukhara was a much frequented one. From Qarshi this route branched off to Turkestan through Tashkent and Samarqand. A road from Tashkent ran parel to the Syr Darya to Kashgar and Yarkand which were then connected to Leh. Multan was connected to Lahore, Shikarpur, Qandahar, Farrah, Herat, Mashed and Kirman. Some important trade depots and centrepots in this region were Kabul, Ghazni, Lahore, and Multan towards the Indian subcontinent, Bukhara, Samarqand and Balkh towards Central Asia, and Herat, Meshed and Kirman towards Persia.

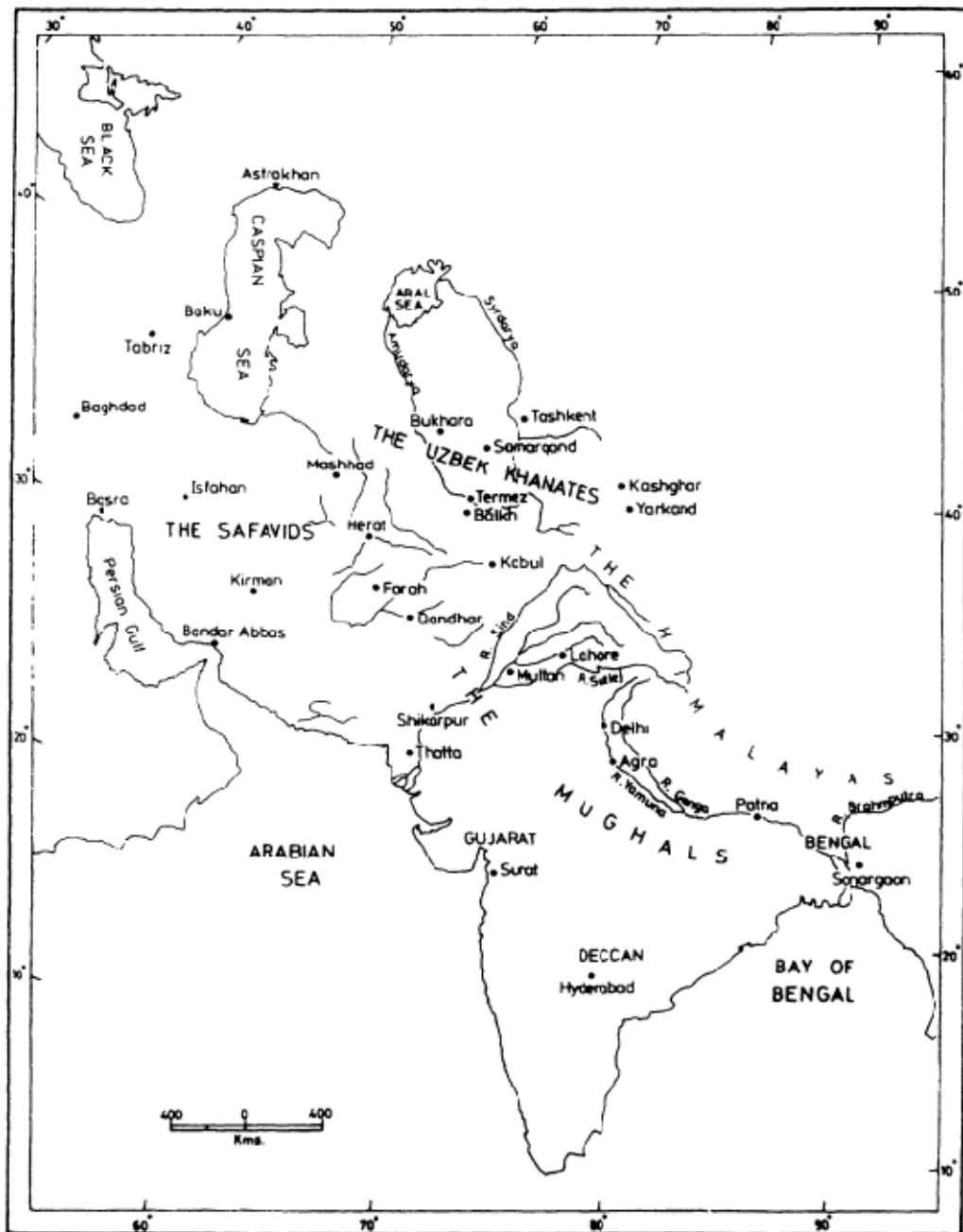
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<sup>76</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, “*Travels In India by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier*”, Vol.-1, (Trans V. Ball, Ed. William Crooke), pp.n. 87-93

<sup>77</sup> John Marshall, p.n. 159

<sup>78</sup> Francisco Pelsaert, “*Jahangir's India: The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*”, (Trans.W. H. Moreland), W. Heffer & Sons Ltd, Cambridge, 1925, pp-1-7.

**Map 4:** This map shows the trade route between India and Central Asia.



Merchants who travelled between Mughal India and Turan could choose among sea, riverine or overland routes. Most Europeans knew only the sea route from Surat- most widely known as Mughal- Safavid trade route. But two alternatives were also regularly and widely used. Those who came from the Punjab or Sind could sail down Indus in flat-bottomed boats to Lahori Bandar, known as Lahor's port. Merchants could travel overland from the Punjab or wind through one of the major



mountain passes directly into Kabul and then across Hindu Kush passes to Balkh, Bukhara or Samarkand<sup>79</sup>. These routes were complementary. Not only individuals used both land and sea route but merchants were capable of quickly shifting their trade from one to another when warfare or political instability threatened the safety of their ships or caravans<sup>80</sup>. Both sea and riverine route were safer, usually cheaper and sometimes faster. These routes were also links to the Central Asia through manufacturing centre such as Ifshan and Kirman. After dropping the goods in the Gulf, it could be transhipped by caravan to in Ifshan or to Kirman.

However, Kirman was not only a manufacturing centre, but also served as an enter pot on the caravan route from the Gulf to Mashad and onwards to Turan. Return voyages to Surat, some merchants choose to sail to Iran and return to India in the spring<sup>81</sup>.

Merchants and individuals have travelled from India to Central Asia and the beyond. During the Mughul period, many Luhanis traded beyond Kabul to Bukhara or Samarqand. But most of the individual merchants who had to travel between India and Turan chose to use the Khyber Pass during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Despite its later fame the Khyber had not always been the preferred route between north-western India and Turan<sup>82</sup>. While relatively short, well-watered and gradual in ascent it was also marpich, or serpentine, and the more infamous passages through its narrow defiles were less than 100 feet wide. Afghan uprisings often blocked the pass even at the height of Mughul power<sup>83</sup>. By widening the road, building caravanserais, Afghan chiefs to act as Mughal officials and guard the pass for travellers, Akbar and his successors made the Khyber the safest and preferred route between Hindustan, Kabul and Turan<sup>84</sup>. Shah Jahan, the great Mughul builder of the mid-seventeenth century, supplemented Akbar's road improvements and security system by having bridges built at either end of the pass, work that may have been supervised by his well-known engineer, Ali Mardan Khan<sup>85</sup>.

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<sup>79</sup> Stephen Dale p.46

<sup>80</sup> Stephen Dale p.46

<sup>81</sup> Stephen Dale Stephen Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade: 1600-1750*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994). p. 46

<sup>82</sup> Ibid p. 53

<sup>83</sup> Ibid p. 53

<sup>84</sup> Ibid p. 53

<sup>85</sup> Ibid p. 53

<sup>85</sup> Lahori, *Badshalmama*. cited in H.C. Verma, *Medieval Routes to India*, Calcutta Naya Prakash

The routes from Kabul to Central Asia crossed the terrifying Hindu Kush Mountains. The best time to cross them was during autumn when snow and water was low. As Lahori mentions that there were five routes between Kabul and Balkh by way of the pass of Tul, Khwaja Zaid, Abdarrah, Khinjan, and Maidan. The Hindu Kush was crossed through the Khawak Pass. The journey from Khulum to Balkh was tough as the land was barren. Many men and animals died due to heavy snowfall while crossing the Hindu Kush Mountains. In spite of these difficulties, the route was regularly used by caravans.<sup>86</sup> The journey from Kabul to Balkh took around three weeks.<sup>87</sup>

The Central Asian cities were connected to each other. Balkh and Bukhara was also linked to each other. The travel from Balkh to Bokhara it took eight to ten days. The arid region between Balkh and Bokhara posed many difficulties for travellers and merchants. They did not travel in day time but had to travel at night to avoid the oppressive day time heat. Horses had to be substituted by camels due to the latter's superior ability in coping with the arid climate. This had the effect of making travel slower.<sup>88</sup>

There was another route to Bokhara from India via Kandahar, Herat and the Persian city of Mashhad. This route was also the advantage for trade but the main obstacle on this route was the presence of few streams that could be difficult to cross in spring when the snow started to melt. There was a route between Kabul and Herat that went through the region of the Hazaras. Most of the traders and merchants were journeying between Herat and Kabul via Kandahar even though this took more time.<sup>89</sup>

Kashgar was accessible from both Kabul and Kashmir. The travellers who travelled by a route from Kabul to Kashgar that it had crossed the Hindu Kush by the difficult Parwan Pass. From here travellers reached Badakshan by a difficult road. From here the route wound its way up the Pamir plateau. Severe cold caused the death

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1978, p 86.

<sup>86</sup> Audrey Burton, 'Itineraries' in *Inde-Asie Centrale, Routes du Commerce et des idées*. Edited by Pierre Chuvin, Tashkent 1996, IFEAC, P 17-18.

<sup>87</sup> Surendra Gopal, *Indians in Russia*, p 78.

<sup>88</sup> Burnes, *Travels*, Vol L p 250; William Moorcroft, *Travels in India, Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab in Ladakh and Kashmir, in Peshawar, Kunduz and Balkh from 1819 to 1825*, New Delhi Asian Educational Services 1989 Reprint, vol I, p264-65

<sup>89</sup> George W Forrest, edited, *Selections from the Travels and journey preserved in the Bombay Secretariat*. Bombay Government Central Press 1906, p 9-10

of several men and animal especially horses. This was harsh journey and it finally reached Yarkand. There was another route to Yarkand via Chitral and Badakshan.

William Finch mentioned that the route from Kashmir to Kashgar, it was regularly used in spite of being very difficult.<sup>90</sup> The route connected from Srinagar to Ladakh. From here it passed through the valley of the Shayuk river and it crossed the Karakoram Range. There was another route from Kashmir to Kashgar via Skardu and over the Mustak range. Here the several routes were connected from the north India from mountainous region of Kashmir and Kabul to the Central Asian region. These routes were developed as caravan trading communities played important role. But most of the routes were closed during the winter season.

Merchants and other travellers who travelled from Kabul to northern Afghanistan and Turan had to make their trips between mid –April and mid-November because in winter snow blocked the lofty heights of the Hindu Kush passes, three of which exceeded 10,000feet.<sup>91</sup> In consequence round-trip journeys had to be carefully planned. Babur reported that seven possible roads connected Kabul with Balkh and Qunduz in Badakshan, a distance of 300 miles that represented the first segment of the two- stage trip to Bukhara and Sumarqand .The most direct route ran almost due north from Kabul through Charikar and Parwan to Khinjan, just north of the Hindu Kush and then on to Balkh.<sup>92</sup> During seventeenth century merchants reported that Camels took slightly more than three weeks to make this part of the trip, although at least another two weeks would be added if they went “around the hill”. On the second stage of the journey, from Balkh to Bukhara, the caravan path was a relatively easy. Attacks by Turkmen tribes represented the greatest dangers that merchants faced as they crossed the desert, although extreme heat was also a problem, forcing them to travel at night in order to maintain the 25 to 30 mile per day pace that healthy animals could usually mange in this terrain. If caravans were lucky they could cover the distance from Balkh to Bukhara in an additional two weeks. Thus if a merchant left Lahore in later Febuary he could hope to reach Bukhara or nearby Samarqand in early June.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>William Foster, *Early Travels in India*, p 169-70;

<sup>91</sup> Stephan Dale Stephen Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade: 1600-1750*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994). P. 54

<sup>92</sup> Ibid P. 54

<sup>93</sup> Ibid P.54

The city like Bukhara was the destination of most caravans from Mughal territories, but not all merchant chose to travel or to dispatch their good via the northern Afghan route. Others travelled to Turan from Mashad in Iranian Khurasan, which they might have reached either via Bander ‘Abbas and Kirman or from one of northwest Indian passes and Qandahar. As Steel and Crowther discovered, the 360-mile road from Qandahar to Mashad by way of Harat was reasonably safe. As in the case of the northern Afghan route, caravans faced the greatest dangers from Turkmen attacks in the desert and steppe country between Mashad and Bukhara. A tragic case in point was the report which Anthony Jenkinson heard in Bukhara in 1558 that a caravan, “which had come out of India and Persia,” had been “destroyed” while still ten day journey from Bukhara.<sup>94</sup>

### 2.3 UNIT OF DISTANCE MEASUREMENT

In medieval India the unit that was used to measure distance from one place to another was termed as kos, which according to Subhash Parihar was a distorted form of the Sanskrit word “krosa”. While the Persian term used for kos was “kuroh”<sup>95</sup>. We find a lot of variation in the length of kos from time to time and place to place. The coss (kos) in Northern India measured in Bernier’s time was 2 miles, 4 furlongs, 158 yards. While father Monserrat has calculated that the Indian Kos was equal to two miles, and was the usual measure of distance.<sup>96</sup> On the other hand Tavernier found out that Indians measured the distances of places by gos or gan and by coss. According to him gos was about four common leagues, and a coss was equal to one league. Gos that was used for measurement was a vague method of measuring distances as in northern India it was the distance travelled by a person as far as the lowing of cow could be heard or as far as a man could cover a distance by walking in an hour. Tavernier gives “the coss an equal value with the league, Thevenot says that the coss was only half a league and Akbar’s coss = 2 miles 1,038 yards. Tavernier remarks that in some parts of India kos even exceeded beyond 3 miles”.<sup>97</sup>

Father Monserrate gives a brief account of the method used for measuring the distance. According to him there was a special officer who was in charge of

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid P.55

<sup>95</sup> Parihar, Subhash *Land Transportation in Mughal India*, Aryan books international, New Delhi, 2008, p-13.

<sup>96</sup> The Commentary Of Father Monserrate Pg 78

<sup>97</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, “*Travels In India by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier*”, Vol.-1, (Trans V. Ball, Ed. William Crooke), p-69.

measuring the distance. He used a ten foot long rod to measure it. The distance of each day's march was measured, he was instructed to follow the King closely and to measure the distance from the moment he leaves his pavilion. And these measurements were later on used in computing the area of provinces and the distance between places.

## 2.4 CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF ROADS

The testimonies of various European travellers and contemporary literature provide a great deal of information on the various aspects of travelling in the Mughal Empire, especially between India and Central Asia, during the 16<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> century

Most of the roads in this region were unpaved tracks or kacca roads, which served as major link between towns and villages. And travellers faced a lot of difficulty in crossing them during monsoon season. A similar instance has been described by Peter Mundy, when he came to Jagdis Sarai.<sup>98</sup> Other than kacca roads there were paved roads also like between Delhi to Agra the imperial highway was paved.<sup>99</sup> The imperial highways connecting capital cities and important provincial capitals were kept in good condition and were repaired from time to time. Bridges were constructed over rivers for easy transportation. Mundy saw a five arched bridge at Chaparghata over the river Yamuna.<sup>100</sup>

Avenue of trees were planted on both sides of the roads to relieve the travellers from extreme heat and provide them shelter. On leaving Agra, Mundy was struck by the avenue of trees planted by Jahangir's orders on the main road from Agra to Lahore "to ease the Travellers". And many other travellers like Manrique also records that while travelling from Sasaram to Banaras, the roads were lined by villages and most of them lay in groves of green trees, which eased the weary travellers.<sup>101</sup> Wells and tanks or baolis were constructed to provide drinking water to the travellers.

It also deals with modes of transportation on this route, theft and security, and a brief description of kos minars, caravan sarai, and rest houses.

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<sup>98</sup> Peter Mundy, *"The Travels of Peter Mundy, in Europe and Asia, 1608- 1667"*, Vol. 2, (Ed. R.C. Temple), Hakluyt Society, London, p-114

<sup>99</sup> Jean Deloche, *"Transport and communications in India prior to steam locomotion"*, vol.-2, (ed. James Walker), Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, p- 104

<sup>100</sup> Peter Mundy, *"The Travels of Peter Mundy, in Europe and Asia, 1608- 1667"*, Vol. 2, (Ed. R.C. Temple), Hakluyt Society, London, p-89

<sup>101</sup> Sebastian Manrique, *"The Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique"*, Vol. II. (Ed. C. E. Luard), Hakluyt Society, p- 149

## 2.5 MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

Since times immemorial means of transportation have played a very significant role in transportation and communication. It has changed from time to time and region to region. The land transportation was famous for trade and commerce between India and Central Asia. For land transportation carts and pack of animals like horses, mules, oxen, camels, elephants were used. And even muscular power of man in form of human portage was used.

### 2.5.1 ANIMAL PORTAGE

Man has domesticated animals from the very beginning for riding as well as transportation purposes. Men were travelled with large group basically known as caravan. The animals used as beast of burden during this period in the region between India and Central Asia. The main animal was horses for the transportation purposes. In India, the mode of transportation varied from person to person, like the common man often travelled on foot or mules or oxen, elephants were generally reserved for the emperor and those whom he granted permission,<sup>102</sup> while camels were mainly used by nobles as informed to us by Peter Mundy.

Horses, mules and donkeys also served as means of transport but lesser people used them for carrying goods or travelling from one place to another. Tavernier informs us that “in India they do not employ asses, mules, or horses in caravans or journeys and everything is being carried here on oxen or by wagons, and this is a completely different custom from Persia.”<sup>103</sup> Mules and asses were less expensive than horses and hence were more suited conveyance for uneven paths and for lower section of the society.

Elephants, camels, bullocks, horses, mules, litters were usually the mode of transportation during this period. Camels were often preferred since they were suitable for both personal conveyance and as a beast of burden; the she-camel or the Famaza was very swift and could carry on an average ten maunds of weight.<sup>104</sup> In Sind, Multan and in Gujarat, camels were preferred as they were suitable for the terrain. Mules and asses and other pack animals were more suited for carrying goods though unmetalled and uneven paths and were usually used by the lower class of the

<sup>102</sup> H.k. Naqvi, “*Urbanization And Urban Centres Under The Great Mughals: 1556-1707*,” vol-1, Indian institute of advanced study, 1971, P-71

<sup>103</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, “*Travels In India by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier*”, Vol.-1, (Trans V. Ball, Ed. William Crooke), ch-3

<sup>104</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ai-n-I Akbari*, Vol I.pp.151-152

society since they were cheaper to acquire. Caravans were the most preferred mode of transportation and the also one of the oldest. The large size of these caravans made it a safe option for individual or small groups of people and even pilgrims. Caravans were sometimes composed of over thousands of bullocks and camels and looked daunting for the highway robbers and thieves. Caravans were usually used by the Banjara trading community, which was itinerant nomadic group which travelled the subcontinent with large quantities of corn, grains and other bulk goods on the backs of the bullocks which travelled in groups of thousands. Not only did they supply raw materials but they also transported finished goods from place to place.

## **KOS MINARS**

"Kos" was a medieval term that denoted distance and "Minar" was a Persian word for tower or pillar. Hence kos minars in the Mughal era, were milestones on the Mughal Highways or trade routes which indicated the distance between two places and guided the travelers, so that they could easily commute on their way. According to Catherine Asher these kos minars were covered with information giving distances. Abul Fazl has recorded in Akbarnama that Akbar issued an order that at every Kos on the way a pillar or a minar should be erected for the comfort of the travellers.

The size and form of the kos minars varied considerably from region to region. Generally they were solid round pillar that stood on a platform built with bricks and were plastered over. Jean Deloche has mentioned about the structure of the kos minar on the way to Ellahabad (Allahabad). He says that "the minars were simple truncated cones, pierced at the top to allow the passage of fire provided by a lightening device installed in the interior, thus to guide night travellers, functioning both as milestones and lanterns"<sup>105</sup>.

### **2.5.2 CARAVANS/ KAFILA**

In ancient period, it was quite dangerous to travel alone. The solution lay in combining together in the form of group and travel together. The very number of people in a group assured the travellers of security. During medieval period such convey of travellers formed for undertaking long distance of journey was called a *caravan* or *kafila*. The word is Persian and Arabic origin respectively.

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<sup>105</sup> Jean Deloche, "*Transport and communications in India prior to steam locomotion*", vol.-2, (ed. James Walker), Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, p-157

The English traveller Thomas Coryat (1612-17) defines the meaning of the word *caravan*. He tells that:

*“A caravan is a word much used in all Asia; by which is understood a great multitude of people travelling together upon the way, with camels, horses, mules, asses, etc. on which they carry merchandizes from one county to another, and tents and pavilions, under which instead of houses they shelter in open fields, being furnished also with all necessary provision and convenient implements to dresses the same...”*<sup>106</sup>

The main body of a caravan was comprises traders with their merchandise as large suppliers of goods. Individual travellers joined caravans to avail of its protection and companionship. Thomas Coryat travels place to place but feels safe in the company of caravan. Sometimes he had to wait until a caravan arrived. An individual also sometimes had to join some other type of group. In case of Manrique for the journey to Qandhar missed the caravan and next he had to wait for sixth month. Peter Mundy records that caravan consisted a multiple carts and people.

Coming to the caravan centre between India and Central during medieval period, Manrique points out, that Multan and Kabul were the main meeting places of the caravans from West and Central Asia<sup>107</sup>. Manrique stated that those from Persia, Khurasan and other countries returned in the company of Mughal caravans<sup>108</sup>. From dispersal points onwards the journey inside the country was also undertaken with group of travellers and caravans.

### **2.5.2.1 THE LEADER OF THE CARAVAN**

The leader of the caravan acted important role in promoting and strengthen the trade and communication between India and Central Asia during medieval times. The large group of men of caravan in which complete leader were also important. In medieval period he was called *Mir, Salar or Bakshi*<sup>109</sup>. He was important person and acted like the caption of a ship. He had control of everything while the caravan was on the road. He was responsible for selecting halts and announcing the departure of caravan. He was well known how to deal with customs- officers for formalities of customs. He was employed by the merchants forming the caravan. The leader of the caravan takes decision after the full consultation with them. Multan and Kabul was

<sup>106</sup> William Foster (ed) *Early Travels in India 1583-1619*, Delhi 1968 p.259

<sup>107</sup> Manrique II pp. 221-22

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, p.221

<sup>109</sup> Manrique Manrique, Sebastian, *“The Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique”*, Vol. II. (Ed. C. E. Luard) Hakluyt Society, 1927. pp.341-351, 364, 73



the main caravan route from where leader of the caravan leads to Central Asia. Returning from Central Asia via Multan and Kabul to different parts of India leader made safer journey.

### 2.5.2.2 REST HOUSES AND CARAVAN SARAI

Caravan *sarais* were halting places or rest houses, where travellers and their animals could rest and recover from the tiring day's journey. And these rest houses or inns provided shelter at night, food and water for the travellers and their animals. Travellers and merchants from all over the country and other parts of the world travelled on the trade route between Indian and Central Asia. As a result, the *sarais* on this route became major centers of flow of trade and commerce, information and people. Many *sarais* developed into busy market towns where the peasants could locally sell his agricultural produce and in return get commodities or some money for his use. The rest houses or the *sarais* were constructed by the orders of the emperor. They were even constructed by nobles and rich merchants.

The caravan *sarais* were not built according to a uniform plan or style and their construction varied from place to place. Usually they were built in square or rectangular shape with high walls surrounding it. These *sarais* were often built of bricks and stones and at times marble was also used. They had an open courtyard, arched doorways and a series of rooms to provide lodging to the travellers.

**Map 5 :** Caravansarai and Akbar's fort at Attock (Atak-Banares)



**Source:** Stephan Dale 'Indian merchants and Eurasian trade, 1600-1750, p.40

Despite all this, the road from Lahore to Kabul never had enough sarais at the desirable places and travelling on the road wasn't a very comfortable prospect. It was Aurangzeb who realized this and set about the task of setting permanent (*pukhta*) sarais at government expense; each serai comprised a mosque, a bazaar, a baoli and a *hamam*. Older sarais were renovated and restored. Keeping in mind the heat, several wells were dug at regular intervals as it shown by contemporary travellers. For example, on the Agra-Ajmer route, wells were dug at every kos.<sup>110</sup> Occasionally, when roads were cut by river channels, bridges were built to facilitate movement. Moreover, to ensure and encourage an uninterrupted flow of goods and traffic, Akbar and Jahangir remitted all imposts on goods in transit in the trans-regional trade in centres such as Lahore, Multan and Kabul, where merchants from Persia and Central Asia gathered. The duties on the Kabul-Qandahar route were completely abolished by Jahangir. Aurangzeb even employed officers to check that forbidden taxes were collected or not.<sup>111</sup>

### 2.5.3 THEFT AND SECURITY

Robbers and highwaymen have always been a matter of concern for the travellers, merchant and traders. And since the very beginning the Mughal emperors have taken great pains to maintain peace and security. According to William foster various check posts and chaukis were set up to safe guard the roads and prevent robbery.<sup>112</sup>

Severe punishments were inflicted on the robber and thieves. Like for instance Peter Mundy records that outside many towns, minars and little turrets with heads of certain men around it, in form of a pigeon house were erected. They did not exceeded 3 or 4 yards in height. And these heads were of the thieves arrested by the faujdar. Some bodies were hung up by the heels in a grove of mango trees while some were roasted alive<sup>113</sup>. Despite all these measures that were taken for safeguarding the roads there were still chances of robbery and theft while travelling.

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<sup>110</sup> Abul Fazl, *The Ain-I Akbari*, 3 vols. Translated by H. Blochmann. 2d edition. Reprint. Delhi, 1997 p.156

<sup>111</sup> I.H. Qureshi, *The Administration of the Mughal Empire*, (Karachi, 1966), p.151

<sup>112</sup> William Foster, *Early Travels In India: 1583-1619*, Oxford University Press, London, 1921, p-144.

<sup>113</sup> Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy, in Europe and Asia, 1608- 1667*, Vol. 2, (Ed. R.C. Temple), Hakluyt Society, London, pp-72 -73

William Finch (1608-11) found many guards and police posts whose purpose was to prevent robbery and attend to the welfare of travellers.<sup>114</sup> Milestones, reservoirs and milestones were provided along the roads and efforts were made to keep the *serais* clean and livable. These facilities greatly reduced the discomfort of journeys, most of which lasted for months. Moreover, the overland routes to Persia and Central Asia via Kabul and Multan were extremely busy routes and due to their importance, the Mughals initiated effective measure to improve and protect it. These routes grew in importance after the growing trade of the Europeans in the Indian Ocean and the ability of the Muslim powers to challenge it successfully.<sup>115</sup>

All these activities of the Delhi Sultans, Sher Shah and later the Mughals, however, went a long way in ensuring safety of passage for people coming in and going out of the Indian subcontinent -- whether they were traders, curious travellers, merchants or missionaries. Safety of accommodation and well-planned and managed resources in the *serais* greatly reduced the discomfort of the travellers and made the road a less hostile place and a not so daring task anymore. Commodities and goods could be transferred in large quantities by way of bullocks and huge caravans which was the oldest and most preferred mode of transport, apart from few occasional solitary travellers or small groups. In Shahjahan's time the overland routes from Multan and Kashmir had lost their importance on account of disturbances on the frontier. The Indo-Persian wars for the occupation and retention of Qandahar had caused great disturbance to all those trade routes which were linked to them.<sup>116</sup>

The commercial climate of Turan, both domestic and international, was similarly greatly improved under the policies of 'Abd Allah Khan II. In addition to granting tax-free status to a number of influential merchants, 'Abd Allah is himself known to have been actively engaged in trade, to have implemented a number of monetary reforms, and to have financed the construction of a number of commercial institutions in the Bukharan Khanate, including caravanserais and a moneychangers' bazaar (*taq-I sarrafan*).<sup>117</sup> In the 1570s, as Akbar's armies occupied Badakhshan and the Uzbeks did the same in neighboring Balkh, there was considerable construction of

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<sup>114</sup> William Finch's testimony in: *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*, (ed.) W. Foster, (Oxford, 1921), p.139

<sup>115</sup> Abul Khair Mohammad Farooque, *Roads and Communications in Mughal India*, (Delhi: 1977), p.18

<sup>116</sup> T.C. Bigham, *Transportation, Principles and Problems* (Calcutta: 1968), p.11.

<sup>117</sup> Burton, 'Bukharan Trade, 1558-1718,' p. 3.

new caravanserais and covered bazaars along the road between Samarqand and Bukhara.<sup>118</sup>

Although the monetary policies of the seventeenth-century rulers of Bukhara were less successful than those of ‘Abd Allah, Burton has observed that such notable Ashtarkhanid *khans* as Imam Quli (r. 1611–41), ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (r. 1645–81) and SubhanQuli (1681–1702) also acknowledged the need to maintain open routes for traders.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, the seventeenth-century correspondence of Mughal and Uzbek rulers demonstrates that it was common to appeal openly for mutual investment in trade routes and request that efforts be made to ensure that the roads were kept safe for merchants.<sup>120</sup>

#### **2.5.4 STATE AND MERCHANTS**

The relationship between the state and the merchants was a symbiotic one. The state needed merchants to foster a healthy economy and the merchants benefited from the efforts of the state to maintain a suitable and conducive commercial climate. When state support of trans-regional traders dwindled during periods of economic and political crisis, there was still a conscious effort on the part of the ruling administrators to maintain control of the trade routes and foster trade to the greatest extent possible.<sup>121</sup>

Finally, the movement of people between the two regions were the main basis of the development of route or road. State was willing to develop and construct the road and made viable communication. On the matter of theft, by robber, and security was most challenge for the welfare of common people, merchants and as well for State of both regions. These problems were strategically solve by the State and promoted and strengthened the commercial and cultural relation between India and Central Asia.

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<sup>118</sup> Levi, p. 43

<sup>119</sup> Burton, ‘Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,’ p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> Levi, p.44

<sup>121</sup> Levi, p.41

### 3 CHAPTER: MERCHANTS AND TRADING COMMUNITIES

Merchants and trading communities participated in the development of trade and commerce. These merchants and communities had played successive role in India-Central Asia relation. Trade involves transfer of goods from one part of the world to another. It ensures interaction between two peoples which have great impact on socio-economic relation to each other. During medieval period, the flow of goods and men in various regions of the India and Central Asia which had well participated in this exchange. The activity of the Indians who reached Central Asian lands after crossing snowy mountains and steppes as a group or caravan and vice-versa. Their operation, apart from Central Asia, includes Iranian cities, Russia and other part of the world.

Geographically, middle Central Asia also known as *Mawarannahar* or Transoxiana, situated on east of the Caspian Sea, north of the Amu or Oxus river, west of Badakhsan and south of the Syr Darya or the Jaxartes river<sup>122</sup>. India's relation with Central Asia or Transoxiana goes back to ancient period and have exchange of people between both the region whether traders, merchants, job-seekers, scholars, etc despite of political and geographical barrier. The travel and transport was facilitated by the entry points from Kashmir in the north to Sind in the south on north-west frontier<sup>123</sup>. Great Mughal scholar Abul Fazal describe, in his account, *Ain-e- Akbari*, the seven routes between Afghanistan and Transoxiana<sup>124</sup> where Akbar led the journey to Kabul. And thus Kabul was an important departure point for Indian to enter to Central Asia. It was very easier to making the road across the Khyber Pass were healthy for traffic<sup>125</sup>.

The political stability provided by Akbar and maintained by Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb enabled the economy to flourish between the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. There was a substantial increase in trade and commerce which resulted in emergence of new commercial centres and markets in the entire empire. India was

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<sup>122</sup> Surendra Gopal (ed.) India and Central Asia ( cultural, economic and political links) Shipra Publication, p.2

<sup>123</sup> Ibid,p.2

<sup>124</sup> Abul Fazal, *Ain-e-Akbari* Delhi 1989, vol.II p.405

<sup>125</sup> Ibid p.406

one the greatest cotton-textile producer of the world, and the finer qualities of cotton cloth sustained brisk long-distance commerce. The country exported calicoes, indigo, pepper, silk, species ivory sandal wood and numerous other commodities over sea and over land. Similarly there was a tremendous growth in trade in the region between India to Central Asia during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

During 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century, Indian was growing in the sphere of trade and commerce where several trading centres became as a focal and important point for India and Central Asia. These centres were in India such as Delhi, Agra, Multan, Lahore, Shikarpur, etc while in Central Asia the major trading centres were like Kashghar, Farghana, Turkestan, Bukhara, Samarqand, Balkh, Herat and Badakhshan, Bulkh etc. All these centres were link through different trade route and it became prosperous by the active role of different groups of merchant from both the region.

Merchants and trading communities made great contribution in the development of trade and commerce. Number of Indians, Central Asians, Iranians, Afghan, Russian merchants and trading groups became prominent in this sphere. Before going into detail, here the traveller who had explored the world is need to discuss. Traveller like Vasco da Gama who reached the East Africa in 1498 and he found Indians there. In the red sea and in the Arabian Peninsula also the Indian presence was significant. In Persia, Olearius estimated the number of Indians to be 12,000. Among them were several non-Muslims. In the south- East Asia, the Europeans found resident Indians. So here we will take consideration on the above activities of India in discussing of Indians during the Mughal period in relation with Central Asia.

The movement of people have been regular since ancient time. Indians were also in contact with Central Asia. During medieval time, it also became regular. After Timur conquest of Delhi, he handed over a large number of skilled craftsmen to princes, nobles and other members of his associates. Some of these Indians were taken to Samarkand. Timur ordered that stone-masons should be reserved and he wanted to construct a mosque in Samarkand. Indians formed a segment of the population of the city. Timur and his successors had transformed Samarkand into the important trading mart of Central Asia. It established close contacts with European nations, China and India. According to a Spanish visitor, in 1403-1406, Samarkand was full of goods from different country and India provided finest of spices, such as 'the best variety of nutmegs, cloves, mace, ginger, etc.

By the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a very friendly condition prevailed for the overall growth of trade in the whole region. In this condition, India took great advantage of new economic scenario. On the one hand, after the arrival of Portuguese in the Indian ports in 1498 that disrupted Indian sea trade with Persia and caravan trade was in declining mode. On the other hand, Babur in 1505 said that every year ten, fifteen to twenty thousand merchants arrived in Kabul with slaves, white cloth, sugar and medicinal herbs. From here (Kabul), according to Babur, some of them move to Transoxiana. He also pointed out that caravan came to Kabul from Farghana, Turkestan, Samarkand, Bukhara, Balkh, Hisar and Badakhshan.

Babur settled down in Kabul and in 1526 establishing his dynasty in India, a large number of soldiers, craftsman, and skilled men settled in India. In 1528-29, the people could cross the frontiers in large numbers as five hundred Mughal soldiers from across the Oxus river seeking employment with Humayun. During mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, Mughal emperor made great contribution of the development of the empire. For this purpose, he had taken help from the Central Asian people who worked as skilled craftsmen, skilled labour, revenue collector, etc. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the large number of Indians arriving in Central Asia is increased. Mughal had control over Kabul and Kandhar and made cordial relation with Iranian and Central Asian rulers. Mughal ruler Jahangir also boosted the relation between the two regions. Another factor was the emergence of Astrakhan, situated on the bank of the Volga river, as trading centre that attracted the Indian merchant and traders in Central Asia and Russia. The India traders in Bukhara found the trade with Astrakhan. From Astrakhan the Indian traders moved into the land of Russia. They were in good company and were engaged in money lending.

Under Shahjahan, there was the Mughal interference with the Central Asian rulers that led to the wars between them. Continual wars certainly disturbed the flow of men and goods both ways. But once the wars had ceased, the visits of merchants and traders between the two areas continued. Under Aurangzeb, the exchange of visitors and exchange of people was resumed.

### **3.1 MULTAN: TRADING AND MERCHANTS COMMUNITIES**

Political factors, safety and seasonal fluctuations determined the choice of a trade route - sea route, riverine or overland routes. The most important overland trade

routes in this trade passed through the Bolan, Gumal and Sanghar passes. Multan and Lahore were two main cities in this trade nexus -- redistributing goods throughout upper India and to Central Asia. Most direct routes between Central Asia and northern India by-passed Upper Sind, as the neighbouring Multan played the role of an emporium and a major financial centre for the caravan trade.<sup>126</sup>

During the medieval and early modern period, Multan was a flourishing and prosperous province situated to the north of Punjab and south of Sind. As early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, it was an important commercial centre in the north-western region of India. In the medieval period, Multan became the chief outpost of the caravan traders who travelled to and from India from Afghanistan through the Khyber Pass, Gomal Pass and either the Bolan or the Sanghar Passes, both of which connected Multan to Qandahar, the most important trading centre in southern Afghanistan. Despite the difficulty of passage and sometimes dangerous conditions, these routes facilitated overland movement of goods and commodities from India to Persia, Turan and from there to Russia. Multan's strategic location near these passes and on the confluence of the Ravi and the Chenab rivers, which made possible the movement of goods from the Indus to the Arabian Sea port of Lahori Bandar and Thatta, made it an important trading outpost.<sup>127</sup>

Multan played a major role in India's overland trade with Central Asia and Iran linking other important commercial centres like Qandahar, Ghazni, Kabul and Thatta. Located at the crossroads that connected North-West India with Afghanistan, Multan was the principal entrepot of this area. It was an urban commercial centre exerting regional economic influence and had been a major political and commercial centre throughout Indo-Muslim history.

Under the Turkish Sultans of the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughals, the significance of Multan grew dramatically. The province of Multan was often granted to the heirs apparent of these dynasties, a position indicating its strategic and economic significance. During the Mughal era, however, the security and position of Multan was threatened many times and its importance diminished a little when the Mughals occupied Qandahar, the most important trading centre on the Indo-Iranian trade route. However, despite the occupation of Qandahar (1595-1622 and 1638-49),

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<sup>126</sup> Claude Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947, Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*, (Cambridge University Press, 2004).p.37

<sup>127</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002).p.97



merchants chose to keep their offices in Multan, due to the politically instable position of Qandahar. Shifting of the course of the Indus River also proved to be disadvantageous for Multan as it made impossible and difficult the movement of goods from the Arabian Sea ports of Thatta and Lahori Bandar.

However, in spite of all this, Multan continued as the most important commercial center of India's north-west, remaining largely undisturbed even by the invasions of Nadir Shah in 1739. The fact that in 1615 Steel and Crowther and other merchants from Lahore travelled to Multan via Qandahar, speaks of its importance and continued significance in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was the chief dispersal point for merchants and from the entire Punjab area who wished to travel to Iran or Turan.<sup>128</sup>

During the Mughal period, Multan was one of the largest mint towns and an important agricultural centre. Renowned for its cotton production and textile industry, the outlying towns and villages supplied the cotton industry of Multan with finished materials to be exported to any number of foreign markets. Multan also produced corn, oranges, palms, sugar and indigo. Bukhara supplied it with silk of three varieties (Labeabi, Charkhi and Hoshkari).<sup>129</sup>

### **3.1.1 MULTAN: DIASPORA COMMUNITIES**

Merchant communities associated with Multan started directing their commercial enterprise to regions outside, especially to the north-western regions. Later, they greatly came to be known for their activities outside Multan and the term 'Multani' implied a general name for any Hindu or Muslim merchant in Central Asia and Persia, regardless of their religious or caste identities. This was a name which indicated that these men were either natives or residents of Multan but sometimes it appears to have been used in a broader sense referring to all the traders of Punjab, Sind and Multan provinces. The Indian diaspora communities that spread northwards from Iran into Central Asia and the neighbouring sea port of Astrakhan in Russia from 1600-1750 were multi-ethnic in character; but the most dominant position was held by these 'Multanis'. The identification of this majority of the Indian merchant diaspora reflects their connection with the flourishing trading centre of Multan. Indian merchants from Multan travelled frequently to parts of Central Asia in the 13<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Stephen Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade: 1600-1750*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.56.

<sup>129</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels into the Panjab, Afghanistan and Turkistan*, (London, 1846), p.393

century, but there is no evidence as to suggest that they formed diaspora communities around this time. Mention of them settling down and owning property in Bukhara first finds mention in documents dating to 1559 and 1561. In 1589-90, Multanis are mentioned in the reports of a Qazi in Samarqand in reference to their commercial activities in the city. He refers to the people of Hindus and Afghans. Most of the non-Muslim foreigners were moneylenders because of the law of Shariat prohibited money lending by the Muslims. In Turan, their presence was felt as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Mention is made of a group of an organization of textile merchants in the city of Samarqand under the leadership of one Janab Darya Khan Multani.<sup>130</sup> The importance of the Multanis continued to grow and seventeenth century sources mention a large number of Multanis living in communities in Persia, Turan and Astrakhan.<sup>131</sup> According to Stephen Dale, nearly all merchants of Astrakhan from India came from the city of Multan or from regions in its vicinity.<sup>132</sup>

Arthur Conolly, travelling from Herat to Qandahar via Kabul talks about a large number of Indian merchants in the city:

*“About a thousand of these idolaters, it is calculated, reside in the city: they have private houses, and some of them dwell in a large brick caravanserai which they possess in the main street. A few keep shops in the bazaar, the others are engaged in agency and general traffic, the extent of which is known only to themselves but the greater number of them are reputed rich, and they should be so, for nothing, one would imagine, but the certainty of considerable gain, could induce men of so wary yet indolent a race, to give up their friends and country, and to come through so much danger and hardship to such a land...”*<sup>133</sup>

Stephen F Dale talks about tens of thousands of Indian merchants (Punjabi Khattris, Pashtuns or Afghans and Marwaris) who lived and worked in Isfahan, a leading trading city, as moneylenders, moneychangers, wholesale merchants, commodity brokers and financiers. Power and economic stability of the merchants/diasporas personified the economic prosperity and status of the ruler. Dale

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<sup>130</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002).p.102

<sup>131</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002).p.99

<sup>132</sup> Stephen Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade: 1600-1750*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994).pp.87-88

<sup>133</sup> Arthur Conolly, *Journey to the North of India, Overland from England, Through Russia, Persia, And Affghaunistaun*, Vol. II (London, 1838).pp.45-46

places a lot of emphasis on the presence of Multan in the Indian diaspora. The role of Multan as an important centre of textile manufacture situated in a cotton growing area has been overshadowed by the importance given to Surat, says Stephen Dale. Talking about the importance of Indian merchants, Stephen Dale says that the Indian merchants in Iran exerted a large economic influence in the country, by dominating foreign trade between India and Iran and operating as influential merchants within the Iranian community by supplying capital. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the Indian diaspora in Iran extended its mercantile activities to Astrakhan, a Russian port on the Caspian; here too, the main population was from Multan.<sup>134</sup>

Tavernier describes Multan as a town where lots of calicoes are made. Moreover, he also says:

*“Multān is the place from whence all the Banians, migrate who come to trade in Persia, where they follow the same occupation as the Jews, as i have elsewhere said, and they surpass them in their usury.”*<sup>135</sup>

A large number of Muslim Multanis were most likely Indo-Afghan Lohani Powindahs, an Afghan nomadic community involved in overland transit trade. These were large nomadic tribes which migrated every year between north India and Turan and during their annual migrations, they participated in trans-regional trade by providing transportation for bulk commodities passing through their routes, most of which were difficult to pass. They crossed the Khyber Pass every year with over fifteen thousand camels; they played an important role in mediatory trade and provided pack animals, directions and expert knowledge of the routes to the sedentary merchants (Khatris, Marwaris and other Afghan merchant). They had been involved in the mediatory trade between India and Kabul since the time of the Ghaznavids who had granted them the region of Derabad in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. They were “natural” merchants and their migratory nature precluded them from any kind of production activities except weaving some flat-weave products and carpets. They sometimes extended their migratory cycle northward to Kabul, Balkh, Bukhara and Samarqand and south-eastwards as far as Bengal. During the time of Babar, their activities intensified and the Lohani caravans were now engaged in transportation of bulk

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<sup>134</sup>Stephen Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade: 1600-1750*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.45-50

<sup>135</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India*, Vol I, ed. William Crooke. (1676).p.87

commodities between Bukhara and Qandahar, Kabul, Hyderabad (Sind), Delhi, Benares, Calcutta and Jaipur.<sup>136</sup>

Mohan Lal Munshi, during a visit to Multan in the 1830s reported that Lohani and Shikarpuri merchants dominated the mediatory trade between Multan and Bukhara; but he says: “*were it not for Central Asian silk, Multan would not become the rival of the markets of Hindustan, the Panjab and Khorasan*”.<sup>137</sup>

Sedentary traders whether Khattris, Baniyas, Marwaris or other Afghans, had to use the Powindahs to move their goods across the mountainous regions into Turan and Iran. Alexander Burnes in his accounts also talks about the importance of the Lohanis who according to him dominated the movements of goods in and out of India in the north-western region:

*“the merchants, who carry on the trade from India to Cabool are principally Lohanee Afghans, whose country lies westward of the river, between Dera Ismael Khan and Cabool; and they now make an annual journey to and from these places, bringing with them the productions of Afghanistan, and taking back those of India and Europe. Being a pastoral race, they are their own carriers; and being brave, they require no protection but their own arms...Lohanees pass into India, and even to Calcutta and Bombay”*

However, these Lohanis didn't make up a significant group in the diaspora, the vast majority of which comprised of Hindu merchants belonging to different castes and involved in diverse activities such as trans-regional trade, money lending, brokering etc.; they are collectively referred to as the “Baniyas”. Although originally a caste affiliation, the term here refers to any individual or groups of individuals who engaged in trading and commercial activities. These Baniyas operated trading networks from many commercial centers such in regions throughout Punjab, Sind, Gujrat, Rajasthan and the Indus basin but Multan was the leading center and the main focal point in their trade with the north-west.

French traveller Thevenot in the 1660s observed that although the political elite and the majority of the population of Multan were Muslims, he says “*it contains a great many Baniyas also for Multan is their chief rendezvous for trading into Persia,*

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<sup>136</sup>Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002).p.104

<sup>137</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels into the Panjab, Afghanistan and Turkistan*, (London, 1846).p.396

*where they do what the Jews do in other places; but they are far more cunning, for nothing escapes them and they let slip no occasion for getting the penny, how small so ever it be*".<sup>138</sup>

Despite the widespread use of the term Bania by most travellers, Thevenot provides a rare exception to this rule with his careful observation that "*at Multan there is another set of gentiles whom they call Catry. That town is properly their country and from thence they spread all over the Indies*". Here, undoubtedly he is referring to the Hindu Khatri caste which was regarded as the most important merchant communities of early modern India. Because of their increasingly important role in the trans-regional trade, it is probable that most Multanis and Banias referred to in historical sources can be more specifically called Khattris. Moreover, a sub-caste of the Khattris called the Aroras was involved actively in controlling and handling the finances of India on a large scale with central Asia, Afghanistan and Tibet. These Arora-Khattris were centered in Multan and Derajat and were active throughout Turan and Afghanistan.<sup>139</sup> However, they weren't the only Hind community to establish themselves in Central Asia.

While both Banias and Khattris were identified as Multanis, because of their commercial roots in that city, another group of trading community called the Marwaris also existed in the Indian diaspora community. Their name indicated their connection to the urban centers of Marwar in Rajasthan and considering the presence of a large number of Jains in that region, many of these Marwari merchants are likely to have been Jains. Initially restricted only to domestic markets they began to expand and form diaspora communities only around late 17<sup>th</sup> century and appeared in Astrakhan only from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and in Turan too, around the same time. Their major thrust outside Rajasthan was into the Gangetic heartland; however, some of them could have made their way westwards along the well-known caravan routes where they could have joined caravans going through the Bolan or the Sanghar Passes.<sup>140</sup> The concept of the Indian family firm or the *Jagatseth* ('world-banker') house, originated in Marwar under the leader of the Jain Oswal caste. In Astrakhan,

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<sup>138</sup> Citing Thevenot from Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002).p.106

<sup>139</sup> L.C.Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India* (London, 1929), p32.

<sup>140</sup> Stephen Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade: 1600-1750*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.60

they are believed to have been engaged in diverse activities focusing mainly on money lending activities. Their partners or colleagues were located mainly in Iranian cities along the shore of the Caspian Sea, on the route connecting Astrakhan with Gombroon. In his account, George Forster states that in the Iranian town of Tarshis, he identified approximately hundred families of Indian merchants from Multan and Jaisalmer, the latter being an important Marwari Jain outpost.<sup>141</sup>

Another merchant caste associated with Sind in Astrakhan was the Bhatias, who were centered around Multan since the 7<sup>th</sup> century. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they were found in the town of Dera Ismail Khan and are known to have travelled to Kabul, Bukhara and even as far as Arabia. Sikhs also formed an important trading community in the Indo-Turanian trade and were located at Amritsar which was situated on the route through Khyber Pass to Turan. Also active in this trans-regional trade were the Muslim Khojas and the Bohra Muslims of Gujarat.

### **3.2 SHIKARPUR: MERCHANT AND TRADING COMMUNITIES**

But the slow process of decentralization of Mughal authority did have an impact on the commercial prosperity of the city and Multan suffered from a long period of crisis. Frequent invasions by the Marathas, Afghans, Sikhs and later the British greatly changed the position of the city from a leading commercial one to a regional trading town. As the political situations worsened, many Multani commercial houses, merchants and family firms shifted their base and relocated to Shikarpur, a smaller city to the south-west of Multan in the province of Sind.<sup>142</sup> After the Sikh conquest, the trade in Multan revived but never went back to the scale of earlier times.

While travelling to Shikarpur, Alexander Burnes noted: *“We continued at Shikarpoor for ten days, engaged in inquiries regarding its commerce, which, as is well known, extends over all Asia, China and Turkey excepted. Shikarpoor is a town of the first importance to the trade of the Indus. This does not result from any superiority in its home manufactures, but from its extensive money transactions which establish a commercial connection between it and many remote parts.”*<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> George Forster, *A Journey From Bengal to England*, 2 vols, 1808 (reprint, Delhi, 1970) II.p.186

<sup>142</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002).pp.113-114

<sup>143</sup> Alexander Burnes, *Cabool: A Personal Narrative of a Journey to and Residence In That City*, (Philadelphia,1843).pp.25-26

Alexander Burnes is impressed with the wide network of these Shikarpuri merchants and the towns in which they have agents. He gives a list of all the towns and cities in which they operate, from Astrakhan to Calcutta -- they were found in Muscat, Bandar Abbas, Yezd, Mashed, Bukhara, Samarqand, Kokan, Yarkund, Kunduz, Kulum, Ghazni, Kabul, Peshawar, Multan, Bhawalpur, Amritsar, Jaipur, Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Bombay, Hyderabad, Karachi, Mirzapur and Calcutta. According to him, these merchants of Shikarpur are a shrewd lot. "Their whole hearts are wrapped up in cotton and broadcloths: they suppose men created for nothing but to buy and to sell; and whoever makes not these occupations the sole business of his life seems to them to neglect the end of his existence; and I verily believe that they marry for no other purpose but to keep up the race of merchants and bankers."<sup>144</sup>

At Shikarpur, they benefitted from a more stable environment suitable for their trade and took advantage of the new opportunities provided by the Durrani rule. This shift from Multan to Shikarpur didn't affect the diaspora community at all; rather there was continuity in the Multani communities of Central Asia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.  
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Indian merchants in Turan originated from throughout north-western India and western India - from the cities of Multan, Lahore, Shikarpur, Peshawar, Haripur, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Jaisalmer as well as from more distant cities of Benares, Allahabad and Calcutta.<sup>146</sup>

### **3.3 LAHORE: MERCHANT AND TRADING COMMUNITIES**

Lahore, like Multan, was another major trading center in the north-western region of India. Apart from being furnished with provisions of all kinds, it had a commercial life which was rich and diverse. Its location on the main highway and command over a rich hinterland facilitated this promotion. It acted as a centre pot for all the Central Asian merchants who collected here for selling or exchanging their wares. Jahangir encouraged this trade by abolishing all the transit dues -- this was probably done for easy access to trading points in the north-west which were of enormous importance to the Mughals and benefitted the people of Iran and Turan as it

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<sup>144</sup> Alexander Burnes, *Cabool: A Personal Narrative of a Journey to and Residence In That City*, (Philadelphia,1843).p.27

<sup>145</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002).p.116

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.pp.109-111

was only these merchants, and merchants from India and Armenia that were directly engaged in this trade. This inevitably would lead to a boom in the Kabul and Lahore markets. Similar steps by Jahangir in Qandahar too, which was leading Central Asian market from Multan.<sup>147</sup>

This proved advantageous for the India traders too as they could transact business straight away on the spot without having to send their merchandise through a host of intermediaries. Central Asian caravans arriving at Lahore brought in a variety of goods. Good from all over India came to Lahore to be transported further - cotton fabrics from Golconda and Bengal, ivory from Multan, quicksilver, corals, turbans, girdles, vermilion, silken stuff from Ahmedabad and pepper and spices from other areas. The goods used to be loaded on thousands of camels at Agra bound for Lahore. Lahore was also the clearing house for the Biana indigo, as it was far more convenient for merchants to buy it here than go all the way to Agra. The price paid by them for this indigo seems to have been so good that it even induced individual merchants to transport it all the way to Lahore from Agra<sup>148</sup>.

According to Richard Steel,

*“Lahore is a goodly great Citie...and from this place came the Treasure of the Portugals trade when they had peace, as being the Centre of all Indian Traffique. And here they embarqued the same downe the River for Tatta, whence they were transported for Ormus and Persia. At this present the Merchants of India assemble at Lahore, and invest a great part of their monies in Commodities, and joyne themselves in Caravans to passe the Mountaines of Candahar into Persia, by which way is generally reported to passe twelve or fourteene thousand Camels lading, whereas heretofore scarsly passed three thousand, the rest going by the way of Ormus....Persia is that way furnished with Pepper and Spices from Masulipatan over land.”*<sup>149</sup>

Lahore was also linked to Kashmir through the passes in the Pir Panjal Mountains and rivers. Since this was the main route between Kashmir and the Mughal Empire, it made Lahore immensely important for the Kashmir trade. Lahore received Kashmiri shawls, silks, boats, woolen stuffs, sugar, saffron, raisins, walnuts etc, and

<sup>147</sup>Hameeda Khatoon Naqvi, *Urban Centers and Industries in Upper India, 1556-1803* (Bombay, 1968), pp.44-45

<sup>148</sup>William Finch in: *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*, (ed.) W. Foster, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), p.155.

<sup>149</sup>Steel and Crowther, in *Hakluytus Vol. IV*, p.269



distributed it to merchants who gathered there and taken to Multan, Agra or Central Asia.<sup>150</sup>

This vibrant commercial atmosphere of Lahore gave rise to a very flourishing merchant community which involved the Banias, Khattris and some members of the Muslim community who had come to acquire the name of Khwajas.

Lahore was also the point from where merchants from all over India embarked their goods on boats sailing down to Thatta into the Arabian Sea for Ormuz and Persia. Manucci observed the city as having being “*crammed with foreign merchants.*” Kashmiris were found in large numbers. The flourishing trade of Lahore could thrive only as long as there existed peace and security in the region, which was greatly disturbed by the coming of the Sikhs in the region who created anarchy in the whole province.

### **3.4 AFGHAN: MERCHANT AND TRADING COMMUNITIES**

One of the important participants in this trade was the Afghans merchants and trading communities. During the 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Afghans merchants used to breed horses in their country and sell them in India. They also bought horses from Central Asia. Among the Afghans, the pastoral nomadic group was powindas. Powindas actively engaged in this trade and commerce. Apart from this, Lohanis merchants were also emerged important trading communities during the time of Mahmud Ghazani. Lohani merchants were engaged in the trade between India and Kabul. Mughal emperor Baber, in his autobiography, mentions the name of Lohani merchants like Khwaz Khizr Lohani.<sup>151</sup> Abul Fazl mentions that, the Lohanis who frequently brought horses to India from Ghazni. Apart from horses the Lohanis merchants were also engaged in grain trade. In the early decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century the Lohanis travelled to the Indian sub-continent every winter and it brought horses, fruits and other commodities and it was sold in the markets of Upper India. Apart from these commodities the main articles sold which were textiles and indigo. The Lohanis caravan including Indian merchants who were engaged in India and Central Asia. The group of merchants engaged in Central Asia in Bokhara and Herat and sell the Indian

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<sup>150</sup> Hameeda Khatoon Naqvi, *Urban Centers and Industries in Upper India, 1556-1803*, (Bombay, 1968), pp.46-47

<sup>151</sup> Babur, *The Baburnama*, p 235.

goods there and to buy commodities for the Indian market. Finally the Afghan merchants and other tribes were also involved in the caravan trade market.

### **3.5 ARMENIAN: MERCHANTS AND TRADING COMMUNITIES**

The Armenians were also important community that engaged in India and Central Asia. Apart from both the region Armenians were engaged in Europe and all over Asia. During the 16th century the Armenians were well-known in the Persian port of Hormuz and they played important role in trade with India.<sup>152</sup> They were also engaged in the Indian ports of Goa, Diu and Cambey for trading activities. The Armenians were used the overland routes trade between India and Iran. The Armenian merchants were active in the indigo market of Bayana in India. Apart from India and Iran, they were also engaged in trade with Central Asia. Armenian was active as the manufactures in India to Central Asia. Armenians were participated in the bazaars of Delhi. Patna was also trading centres in Mughal India. At Patna there was residence of merchants from other countries like the Armenians, Mughals and Persians.<sup>153</sup>

There were many merchant and trading communities who were engaged in caravan trade. The merchant's communities who were engaged in trade belongs to the India, Iran and Turan, Afghans and the Armenians. The Afghan involvement was largely a influence for the development of trade and commerce between India and Central Asia. The Afghan traders came to India with Central Asian merchants. The Afghans mostly concentrated on the trade with Turan and the Armenians was the trade between Iran and India.

### **3.6 DIASPORA COMMUNITIES: LIFE AND STATUS IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SPHERE**

The focus of this chapter will be the social organization and the life in the diaspora of the Indian communities. In the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, many Indian merchants relocated to places in Turan. Naturally, a social distinction existed between Indian Hindu and Muslims merchants which could be seen in the way they lived. The Indian Muslim merchants of the diaspora generally lived among or alongside the local

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<sup>152</sup> Linschoten, *The Voyage of John Huyghen Van Linschoten to the east Indies*, edited by A.C. Burnell, London 1885, Vol L p 47.

<sup>153</sup> Mundy, *Travels in Asia*, Vol 2. p 159

citizens (who were mainly Muslims) in caravanserais, whereas Hindu merchants began to dominate and even purchased their own caravanserais, like in Astrakhan. The few Muslims in Astrakhan lived alongside the other Muslims generally in the Bukharan *dvor*, whereas the Indian *dvor* was occupied by the Hindus and the Jains.<sup>154</sup>

An exception to this difference was the institution of the *agrizhan*, an Indo-Tatar suburb of Astrakhan. This establishment came about due to the result of a growing number of Indians leaving the diaspora, marrying Tatar women, acquiring Russian citizenship and settling down permanently in Astrakhan. The majority of this population was a result of different circumstances though, which is described in the early nineteenth-century account of Nikolai Ozertskovsky who notes that:

*“when they (Tatars) are put in debt as a result of their dealings with them [Indian merchants] by the usurious rates of interest they charge, they become poor and are eternally in their (the Indians’) debt; they often pay their creditors by handing over their wives to the Astrakhan Indians so that the Indians—all of them do not have their own wives here—beget children with the Tatar women, the wives of their debtors.”*<sup>155</sup>

The Indian merchants that visited Turan were gumashtas of the great financial houses of Multan and lived in dormitory-style quarters in caravanserais. In the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, there is evidence of Multanis owning immovable property in Bukhara and there is mention of an Indian quarter there. Even in the account of Alexander Burnes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there is mention of an Indian quarter in Bukhara. Indians settled in Turan for long periods of time and owned commercial and residential property like the indigenous population.<sup>156</sup>

Majority of references to Indian merchants in Turan are to Hindu merchants who lived in Indian caravanserais, since they were more in number, and culturally distinct from the local populace; moreover, they were located in caravanserais which located near the markets of big urban centres.<sup>157</sup> They were generally free to practice their religious traditions but only in very few places where they allowed constructing temples. Special rooms were dedicated to rituals of religion and religious libraries in

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<sup>154</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston, 2002), pp.122-123

<sup>155</sup> Citing Nikolai Yakovlevich Ozertskovsky, *Opisanie koli i Astrakhani*, (St.Petersburg:1804). From Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 267–68.

<sup>156</sup> Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, I, pp. 285–86.

<sup>157</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston, 2002), p.126

the caravanserais.<sup>158</sup> Instances of conversions of Hindus' to Islam in Turan were very infrequent or hardly documented in the extant sources. Conversions to Christianity in Russia are more clearly stated in sources, although it is also mentioned that Indian merchants put enormous social pressure on their companions from renouncing their ancestral religion. Mohan Lal recorded that Hindus who wished to marry Bukharan women were required to inform the ruler and convert to Islam before they were granted permission.<sup>159</sup>

Islam provided a common source of identity among the Muslims of India and central Asia, transcending religious distinctions and facilitating the movement of people and ideas between India and Turan. However, despite having the bond of a common religion, Indians and central Asians saw each other as separate cultural entities. For example, in Mughal India, Uzbeks has a reputation of being militarily superior but also stereotyped as “untrustworthy, unclean, simple-minded pederasts.”<sup>160</sup> This image was partly a result of hostilities resulting from the expulsion of Babur from Samarqand by the Uzbeks. Even the culture of the numerous Uzbeks who visited Mughal India for diplomatic and commercial purposes is recorded as being very different from that of their Indian hosts. This is clearly stated in the accounts of both Bernier and Manucci. According to Manucci:

*“it was disgusting to see how these Uzbek nobles ate, smearing their hands, lips, and faces with grease while eating, they having neither forks nor spoons... Mahomedans are accustomed after eating to wash their hands with pea-flour to remove grease, and most carefully clean their moustaches. But the Uzbek nobles do not stand on such ceremony. When they have done eating, they lick their fingers, so as not to lose a grain of rice; they rub one hand against the other to warm the fat, and then pass both hands over face, moustaches, and beard... The conversation hardly gets beyond talk of fat, with complaints that in the Mogul territory they cannot get anything fat to eat, and that the pulaosare deficient in butter.”*<sup>161</sup> Manucci further added that, “he is most lovely who is most greasy.”<sup>162</sup>

<sup>158</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston, 2002), p.126

<sup>159</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, pp. 129–30

<sup>160</sup> Richard Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.31-45

<sup>161</sup> Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor or Mogul India 1653-1708*, Vol. II transl. by William Irvine, London, 1907, p.41

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.p.41

Bernier described the Uzbek nobles he met in Delhi as ‘narrow-minded,’ ‘sordid’ and ‘uncleanly’ and, talking about a dinner experience with them says, “my elegant hosts were fully employed in cramming their mouths with as much *pelauas* they could contain; for with the use of spoons these people are unacquainted.”<sup>163</sup>

Hindus too, who lived in Turan were viewed by their hosts as a different people. This can be seen in the account of one Sadr al-Din ‘Aini who talks about Hindus in Bukhara:

*“Hindu moneylenders are very filthy and bad smelling people. They wash every morning, but their smell was still such that it could not be endured (they say that every day after bathing they cover themselves with a special oil). There is a bad smell in front of the door of their residences whenever anyone crosses... Also, their profession is very filthy and they give money to the lowest and poorest of the people for great benefit... Every afternoon they would walk around the city collecting the money owed to them. After that they would go back home and drink Sabz-ob (Hindu alcohol)... After becoming drunk from the alcohol they make something similar to marijuana from grass and leaves. They wet the grass, filter and clean it, and beat it into balls like poppies. Then they mix it with clean water in a metal cup such as they use in India. From this they become greatly intoxicated. This drink is so strong that whoever drinks it loses their coordination and stumbles all over.”*<sup>164</sup>

These extracts are evidently mere exaggerations and are shown just to exhibit the prejudices and stereotypes which prevailed then too, for reasons mentioned above. However, despite the image Indians had in the minds of the central Asians, in terms of economic freedom, they greatly enjoyed the state’s protection.

### **3.7 INDIAN DIASPORA: THE EXTENT OF DISPERSION IN TURAN, AFGHANISTAN AND RUSSIA**

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Multan was the main area or the epicenter of the Indian diaspora, only to be later replaced by Shikarpur in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Multani family firms or their agents looked at attractive commercial prospects and urban centers which offered lucrative trading opportunities to them and which were also important centers of trans-regional trade during the 16<sup>th</sup> century and began to establish

<sup>163</sup> Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, p. 121

<sup>164</sup> Citing ‘Aini, *Yaddashtha*, III, pp.73 -75, from Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston, 2002),p.147

diaspora communities in these urban centers outside India. Some important cities were Kabul, Qandahar, Bukhara, Bandar-Abbas, Isfahan and Astrakhan, each of these cities having thousands of Indian merchants.

Many secondary or smaller trading communities developed in other regional capitals and important cities on the trade routes which connected India to central Asian and Russian markets. Throughout most regions of the diaspora, many tertiary diaspora communities developed too and comprised of just a few dozen Indian merchants.

### 3.7.1 TURAN

The evidence of presence of Indian diaspora communities in towns and cities of Central Asia has been unlimited. Although the most mentioned in sources, as the focal point of trade and Indian settlement was Bukhara, Indian communities appear to have been active in most towns and many agricultural areas, if not most. 16th century central Asia had Hindu presence in Bukhara, Samarqand, and Tashkent - the major cities of central Asia, and they were likely to have already been active in a lot of other cities too. Only in the 19th century however, are estimates of the number of Indian communities in Turan available. In the accounts of Mohan Lal, he says that Indians were widely dispersed in Bukhara as, “the caravansaraes, which have a grand appearance, exceed the number of those at Kabul, and most of them are inhabited by Hindu merchants.”<sup>165</sup> Other sources disclosed nine caravanserais inhabited by Hindu merchants in nineteenth-century Bukhara, including Alimjan, Abdullajan, Ibrahimjan, Serai-i Kalan, Serai-i Poi Astan, Amir, Tamaku, Karshi and Fil'khana. The presence of Hindu moneylenders in villages throughout the countryside has also been mentioned. In the early 19th century, Harlan stated that Hindus were active in virtually every bazaar in Turan, and Vambery noted that Hindu merchants has a strong commercial presence in urban and rural markets both.<sup>166</sup>

The urban centres of Bukhara, Kabul, Isfahan, and probably Bandar-Abbas, Qandahar, Herat, and Qalat had Indian merchants whose numbers exceeded five hundred. Smaller Indian communities are reported to have been extraordinarily wealthy due to their successful trading and moneylending activities in the villages and surrounding countryside.

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<sup>165</sup>Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, p.137

<sup>166</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston, 2002), p.154

Even the smaller communities of Indians, however, are reported to have been extraordinarily wealthy as a result of their successful trade and moneylending ventures in the villages and surrounding countryside. There were Indian communities in cities and villages dispersed throughout the Samarqand, Syr Darya and Farghana Oblast's. In the Samarqand Oblast', Indians are known to have lived in the cities of Samarqand, Kattakurgan, Jizak and Khojent as well as in such villages as Paishambe and Uzensakan.<sup>167</sup> The Russian sources mention that, in the Syr Darya Oblast', Indians lived in Tashkent, Auleata and Chimkent, and in the villages of Telau, Ablik, Toitepa, Zengiata, Chinaz, and Merk. During the period of this study, many diaspora communities emerged and disappeared/declined in a number of urban and rural settlements, the sources for which are non-existent.

### 3.7.2 AFGHANISTAN

Just like in Turan, Indian merchants in Afghanistan were present in towns and villages of all sizes -- Herat, Ghazni, Balkh, Kabul and many others. In the centuries under study, Kabul had the largest number of Indian merchant communities in the whole of Afghan territory. This was partly due to Kabul's status as a Mughal regional capital in the north-west of the subcontinent and also due to its strategic location on the trade routes connecting India with Central Asia and Russia. Thomas Herbert reporting on 17<sup>th</sup> century Kabul stated that the city's population was mostly baniya and that apart from the two main forts, the only other important structures in the city were caravanserais.<sup>168</sup> According to Thevenot, who travelled to Afghanistan in the 1660's:

*"Caboulistan is full of small Towns, Burroughs and Villages; most of the Inhabitants are heathen and therefore there are a great many Pagods there."* He also witnessed the Hindu celebration of Holi here and stated that digging wells and providing areas for rest along trade routes for the convenience of travelers was the main charity of the Hindus here.<sup>169</sup>

Mohan Lal in the 1840s passed through Kabul and recorded the total population of the city to be approximately 60,000, out of which 2,000 were Hindus. He distinguishes between the Shikarpuri merchants "never bring their families from their country" and the other Hindu merchants in Kabul. He states that Kabul had no

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.pp.155-156

<sup>168</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston, 2002),p.158

<sup>169</sup> Sen, ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 81.

less than 8 great family firms which were operated by some 300 families.<sup>170</sup> Whether or not these statistics are correct, what is clear is that Kabul was an important center of commercial activity and home to a large number of Indian communities who either lived with or without their families. Another territory in Afghanistan where a large number of Indians lived was Qalat in Baluchistan, an important city on the trade routes connecting Qandahar to Multan, Shikarpur and Thatta.

Mohan Lal also reported meeting Indian merchants in many urban centers and villages in Bukhara; he came across a Hindu banker in Khulum (east of Balkh), a number of Hindus in the village of Haibak (south-east of Khulum) and a Hindu community in the caravanserais of Balkh. Near the city of Kafir Qil'a, he stayed in a fort called Qil'a-I Hindu which was built and owned by a wealthy Hindu merchant to provide food and shelter for the travelers and fodder for their animals. His account also mentions meeting a Hindu in the small village Khail-i Akhund, and a Sikh in village of Qil'a-i Jumah.<sup>171</sup>

Herat in the western part of Afghanistan was another important center of Hindu commercial activity in the diaspora. George Forster reported that there were around one hundred Multani Hindus living in Herat in two caravanserais conducting good commerce and extending a long chain of credit. Forster also reported that under the reign of Timur Shah Durrani (1773–93), Indian merchants enjoyed the protection of the ruling elite and continued to play an active role in the financial administration of the state.<sup>172</sup>

### 3.7.3 RUSSIA

Long before Peter the Great (r. 1689–1725) actively encouraged Indians to trade with India, there existed an Indian merchant community from the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, it was only during his reign that the number of Indians settled in Astrakhan exceeded two hundred, not including two hundred other Indian merchants who annually visited Astrakhan from Iran and Bukhara without staying here. Although Indians extended their activity well beyond Astrakhan, their main area of interest was Astrakhan which remained active well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Terek was another entrepot and customs station for Indian merchants entering Russia from the northern Caucasus in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Indians

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<sup>170</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, p.64

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74

<sup>172</sup> Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, II, p. 151.



also travelled to the town of Krasnoiarsk and up the Volga to Tsaritsyn, Saratov, Kazan and Nizhny Novgorod (where they attended the annual fair), even going as far as Moscow and Yaroslavl, and later to Saint Petersburg.<sup>173</sup> In 1679 Indian, Iranian, Armenian, and Bukharan merchant groups were granted their own *dvor* in Moscow, and five years later there were twenty-one Indian residents in the city.<sup>174</sup> During much of the 1680s-90s however, the mobility of the Indian, Iranian and Bukharan merchant communities in Russia was restricted to Astrakhan, hampering their ability to freely move and pursue commercial prospects in other Russian towns and rural markets.

Armenians were seen and sought out as attractive trading partners and agents for a number of reasons - they were familiar with the mechanics of the *commenda* contracts of long-distance trade partnership and they also enjoyed many privileges of easy movement not shared by other foreign merchants, as well as freedom from certain taxes which lowered their transaction costs.<sup>175</sup> Despite the number of Indians in Russia not being so great in number as compared to Iran or central Asia and despite their restricted mobility, they were important import-export agents. And in spite of political problems in Iran resulting from the Afghan occupation, in 1724 the Indians exported to Astrakhan goods worth nearly 100,000 rubles, over twice the value of the goods imported to Astrakhan by Russian merchants.<sup>176</sup> The Astrakhan documents clearly show that, up to the second half of the 18th century, most of the Indian goods and people coming to Russia came via Iran. The overland trade passing through Afghanistan and Iran to Russia continued, throughout the politically turbulent 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Indians in Russia enjoyed a steady protection of the political elites in Russia. In some areas, during particular times, Hindus were allowed to construct temples and engage in religious traditions which were not preferred by their host societies, including the creation of their dead and even *sati*. This could be due to their importance in the trans-regional trade where they played a great role in providing investment capital and managing rural credit operations.

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<sup>173</sup> Surendra Gopal, *Indians in Russia in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, (Indian Council of Historical Research, 1988), pp.13-14

<sup>174</sup> Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 102

<sup>175</sup> Surendra Gopal, *Indians in Russia in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, (Indian Council of Historical Research, 1988), p.208

<sup>176</sup> Surendra Gopal, 'Trading Activities of Indians in Russia in the Eighteenth Century,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 5, 2 (1968), p. 142.

Indian diaspora communities flourished throughout Turan, Afghanistan, Iran, the Caucasus, and Russia, where their commercial activities reached even as far as Moscow and Saint Petersburg. In the 18th century, there were some distinct transformations in the diaspora such as the abandonment of some regions by the communities and their expansion and settlement into new areas.<sup>177</sup>

From the information presented above, the image we get is one of a vast network of Indian diaspora communities spread across much of urban and rural Iran, Central Asia, Russia and Afghanistan. Their association with their family firms was an element crucial for their commercial success. Their system of agents reduced and distributed risks over a larger group of people and withdrawing from hazardous regions and extending their credit and investment into more promising, emerging and under-exploited markets. For nearly 400 years, lines of credit stretched from the great financial houses of northwest India, through tens of thousands of *gumashtas*, to ruling elite, village industrialists, agriculturalists, trans-regional traders, retail merchants, and other groups who were in need of capital.

### **3.8 INDIAN DIASPORA: ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL FUNCTIONS**

The Quranic prohibition of engaging in profit-oriented money lending or usury discouraged many Muslims from practicing it. This, however, doesn't mean that individual Muslims or Islamic commercial organizations did not engage in it. There are ample references to Muslim moneylenders openly engaging in usurious activities throughout the medieval and early modern Indo-Islamic world. Zia al-Din Barani observed that while the majority of the moneylenders were Hindus, there were also a number of Muslims who lent money at interest, despite the restrictions in Islam.

Many diaspora around the continent, in Persia, Russia and Central Asia, Indians combined money lending activities with trading ones. In this period, Central Asia and Persia also had a large population of Jewish and Christian Armenian merchants. However, throughout the Armenian diaspora, commercial activities involved mainly long-distance trade and not money lending, while the Jews were engaged in retail trade of cloth and cloth dyes and not banking or money lending. What led Indians to also engage in money lending activities was the access to vast reserves of capital

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<sup>177</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston, 2002), p.177

wealth which gave them a commercial advantage in the markets abroad, which they fully made use of.

Family firms engaged in banking activities, according to Karen Leonard played a central role in the revenue collection system of the Mughal state.<sup>178</sup> The Delhi sultans too, relied heavily upon this growing intermediary class of financiers, whom Barani identifies as ‘Multanis and Sahs’. In the northern parts of India, these Multanis were active in this role already during the reign of Balban (r.1266-86). Barani writes: *The Multanis and Sahsof Delhi who have acquired abundant wealth have derived it from the resources (daulat) of the old nobles (maliks and amirs) of Delhi. The latter took loans from the Multanis and Sahsbeyond limit, and repaid the advances with largesses (by drafts) upon their iqṭa’s (revenue assignments). The moment a khan or malik held an assembly and invited notables as guests, his functionaries rushed to the Multan’s and Sahs, and giving them drafts (qabz’ha) upon themselves took loans at interest.*<sup>179</sup>

### **3.8.1 THE ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION OF INDIAN FAIMLY FIRMS IN INDIA AND ABROAD**

The categorization of medieval and early modern Indian family firms by the present day designations ‘merchants’ or ‘bankers’ doesn’t do justice to their diverse interests and participation in commercial ventures of various types and magnitudes.

The difference between a *sarraḥ*, literally a moneychanger and also sometimes moneylenders and a *tajir* (pl. *tujjar*), a large-scale merchant was often obscured and used interchangeably due to their participation in overlapping economic activities where each maintained diverse portfolios of money-lending and trade. However, while the *tujjar* were mainly interested in long-distance trade involving large scale exchange of commodities and sometimes also in providing credit and lending money for goods on profit; the *sarraḥs* on the other hand were more interested in the business of changing money and lending money for interest, although they too sometimes invested in long-distance trade.<sup>180</sup>

By this definition, the *tujjar* were the most important agents in the movement of commodities between regions, but it was the financial organizations orchestrated

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<sup>178</sup>Karen Leonard, ‘The “Great Firm” Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire,’

<sup>179</sup>*Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi*, from Cf. Raychaudhuri and Habib, ed, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, I, p.86

<sup>180</sup>Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002).p.201

by *sarrafs* (and similar groups) which succeeded in establishing and maintaining a cash nexus in the Indian economy. Referring to these Indian moneychangers, Tavernier noted, for example, that

*‘in India a village must be very small indeed if it has not a money-changer, called a Shroff, who acts as banker to make remittances of money and issue letters of exchange... All the Jews who occupy themselves with money and exchange in the empire of the Grand Seigneur [the Ottoman Sultan] pass for being very sharp; but in India they would scarcely be apprentices to these Changers’*<sup>181</sup>.

Closely linked and related to the *sarraf* was the *seth* (also, the *sah*, *sahu*, or *sahukar*) and like the *sarraf* was known to have been a well-capitalized, large moneylender, providing important and diverse banking services to a variety of clientele. Their commercial activities were so similar that contemporary European observers often categorized them both simply as ‘bankers.’<sup>182</sup>

*Hundis* were the most important means used by Indian family firms to transfer large amounts of capital from one individual, or firm, to another. Throughout the early modern period most transactions involving the transfer of large amounts of wealth from one location to another were conducted through *hundis* instead of cash. *Hundis* were usually bought by unaffiliated individuals who used them like money-orders or travelers’ checks are used today. The primary recipients of this service were merchants and other travelers willing to pay a small fee for the security of converting cash to *hundis* because of their relative safety, or those who wished to take out a line of credit with a family firm. Generally, *hundis* were written as a guarantee of payment by a firm either upon presentation at a predetermined destination (*darshani*, ‘sight’ or demand bills) or after a specified time (*muddati*, ‘deferred’ or usance bills).<sup>183</sup> Also, *hundis* were fully saleable, making them a negotiable medium between merchants that was much safer and more convenient than cash for the transmission of large amounts of capital across long distances.

In the early seventeenth century, *hundis* were commonly used for commercial payments and other transfers of capital throughout Mughal India and wherever the Indian family firms had established branch offices. For the Indian diaspora merchants

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<sup>181</sup> Tavernier, *Travels in India*, Vol I, p.24

<sup>182</sup> Levi, 202

<sup>183</sup> Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, p. 72

this mode of money transfer was a very important tool in the movement of capital between the central offices of the family firms in India and their agents in Central Asia and other regions of having Indian diaspora settlement.

The firms had other agents called *mahajans* which were present in numerous villages where they advanced various sorts of credit to agriculturists and village industrialists. In return for this credit, a share of the finished product or harvest (mostly grain) was given to the village merchant-moneylender (the *mahajan* here acting as a *baggal*). The moneylender would then arrange for this commodity to be transferred to another associate, most likely another creditor who functioned as a commodity broker (*dallal*), who distributed the agricultural production to wholesalers in urban centers.

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Considering the friendly relations Indian moneylenders generally shared with the government in India, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Safavid Iran, and Russia, it appears to be quite strange that, despite their numerous communities in the nearby Safavid-controlled Caucasus, Indian merchants did not establish diaspora communities in the flourishing commercial centers of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>185</sup> This probably was due to the presence in the Ottoman empire of efficient credit institutions operated by other foreign, i.e. Jews, as well as indigenous merchant groups.<sup>186</sup>

Above all the strong Indian mercantile presence is characterised both India and Central Asia during 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Indian Diaspora account the numbered in the thousands in Turan and Iran. During this period, an Indian colony was also established in Astrakhan. Comprising mainly of merchants was from Multan, Lahore in Central Asian market. Indian Diaspora who was involved in trade and commerce was based on the sale of large quantities of cotton textiles, horses, slave and other commodities like Indigo. They also engaged in money lending activities and fulfilled the credit requirements of the local population. The success of the Indian merchants was facilitated by the policies of the rulers of Iran and Turan. However, the Indian merchants of Iran suffered a setback as a result of unsettled political conditions during the first half of the eighteenth century. But they managed to re-establish their position subsequently.

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<sup>184</sup> Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, p. 50

<sup>185</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, I, pp. 168–69. He also mentioned that their position was quite unstable in Persia.

<sup>186</sup> Levi, p.209

## 4 CHAPTER: EXPORT AND IMPORT COMMODITIES

Close economic interactions between India and Central Asia has been existed all through the different ages. Primary and secondary sources have highlighted the economic relation between the two regions. For the development of trade and commerce, movement of commodity between the two regions is considerably most important aspects. Central Asia, due to its strategic geographical location had been progressed to such movements along the historical caravan trade routes up to the 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century. Traders and merchants from different region like Indian, Iranian, Afghan and Central Asian traders co-existed with each other in the great *towns* and *sarai* and they paved the way to the economic prosperity of both the region.

With establishing the Mughal empire, trade and commerce were developed between India and Central Asia. Agra, the capital of Mughal, controlled the internal and external trade and commerce. Abul Fazl describes about the prosperity of Agra under Akbar according to him, “his majesty (Akbar) had embellished Agra and thus it became a matchless city”<sup>187</sup>. And with the passage of time it became the most important centre of polity and economy during the medieval period. It continued as the seat of government until, the Mughal emperor shifted his capital to Delhi in 1638. But despite all this, Agra flourished as one of the most important urban and commercial centre in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This capital city of the Mughals was the commercial nucleus, which served as a link between various parts of the empire.

Major roads fanned out from Agra in all directions, to Sirhind, Lahore and Delhi in the North West, Etah, Allahabad, Banaras, Patna and Bengal in the east, to Ajmer, Ahmadabad and Surat in the south west. According to Pelsaert “the city was at the junction of all the roads from distant countries like Gujarat, Thatta (or Sind), Kabul, Kandahar, Multan, Lahore, Deccan or Burhanpur, and Bengal”<sup>188</sup>. While on the other hand, it was very well connected with the riverine route formed by the river Yamuna. Akbar made it his capital, partly to escape from the over-crowded and unhygienic old site of Delhi and its intolerable heat, but chiefly because Agra occupied a more central position in the Empire.

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<sup>187</sup> Abul Fazl, “The Ain I Akbari,” Vol.-2, (Trans.H. Blochmann), the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1873, p-180.

<sup>188</sup> Francisco Pelsaert, “Jahangir's India: The Remonstrantie Of Francisco Pelsaert”, Cambridge university press, 1925.

India and Central Asia traded in a wide variety of goods items, luxury as well as non-luxury items. Markets all over the world were stocked with India's textiles which included linen, muslin, silk, chintz and calicoes - all available in various colours and low prices.<sup>189</sup> In spite of Bukhara having a large silk industry itself, it nonetheless imported huge amounts of silk from India. And although India imported silk to Turan, there was a corresponding demand for Bukharan silk in the Indian markets and large quantities of silk were imported to Multan every year.

## 4.1 INDIAN EXPORTS TO CENTRAL ASIA

### 4.1.1 COTTON TEXTILES

Cotton textiles were undoubtedly the single largest commodity that dominated the trade between India and Central Asia. India's suitable climate and a wide network of rivers made it a commodity easily cultivable in India. Jean Chardin, a French traveller, wrote that even though the Iranians produced some cheap cotton, they were well aware of their inability to produce cotton as good in quality and at cheap prices than India.<sup>190</sup> It was great demand in Central Asia. Jenkinson explained that Indian merchants sold fine white cloth in Bukhara which was used for making turbans and other cotton cloth. The Bukharan rulers purchased large quantities of cotton cloth. Apart from Bukharan rulers, Balkh rulers were interested in purchasing turbans of India and it distributed to his subjects. Cotton for India's export came from four main regions within India -- Bengal, Punjab and Sind, Gujarat and the Coromandel Coast.<sup>191</sup> Textiles for exports to Central Asia and Iran were mainly produced in the Punjab and Sind region especially in towns like Lahore, Bajwara, Batala, Machhiwara, Samana, and Sialkot, which specialized in textile production. The production of cotton cloth was important factors responsible for the emergence of towns of Punjab as centres of textile production. Cotton crops of Punjab were augmented by raw materials from south India as well, imported by the Banjara trading community. These were nomadic groups which travelled the subcontinent with large quantities of corn, grains and other bulk goods on the backs of the bullocks which travelled in groups of thousands. Not only did they supply raw materials but they also transported finished

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<sup>189</sup>Audrey Burton, *Bukharan Trade: 1558-1718* (Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1993).p30

<sup>190</sup> John Chardin, *Sir John Chardin's Travels in Persia* (London,1927).pp.278-279

<sup>191</sup>Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002).p.75

goods from place to place.<sup>192</sup> Various types of cloth were also produced in Lahore.<sup>193</sup> Apart from Lahore, Multan was the centre of production such as white cotton goods and coarse chintz.<sup>194</sup> Sirhind was the centre of chintz and red muslin. Agra, the capital of Mughal empire, was the important market for silk and cotton textiles. Another trading centre of Mughal Suba was Patna. Patna was also visited by merchants for variety of textiles. Peter Mundy explores the commercial importance of Patna. He says that the Patna was famous for the production of raw silk and ambati, the coarse cloth during 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Even at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Edward Scott Waring noted that:

*“A very considerable sum of specie is annually exported from Bushire to Bombay, Masulipatam, and Bengal, whence they bring in exchange GiczeratKincobs, chintz, long cloths, muslins, &c.\* The King of Persia has lately endeavoured to put a stop to this large exportation of gold and silver, by offering a reward to whoever should weave cloth similar to the Madras long cloths; but the merchants cannot be supposed to interest themselves in an undertaking, which would convert a portion of their profits into another channel.”*<sup>195</sup>The last line confirms Jean Chardin’s account of the same.

A 1639 report states that each year, around 20,000-25,000 camels brought Indian goods, mainly cotton textiles from Qandahar to Isfahan in Iran and a similar account is given by the Dutch a few years later.<sup>196</sup> It should be kept in mind that Indian textiles were exported not just by caravan traders but were also carried by the India diaspora merchants who travelled to these places. The reliance of Turan on India for its cotton textiles can be seen in other sources too. In his Baburnama, Babur includes white cloth in the list of items regularly transported to Turan via Kabul.<sup>197</sup> Anthony Jenkinson in 1558 observed that Indian merchants in Bukhara were engaged in the sale of white cloth.<sup>198</sup> In a letter from one Bukharan khan Abd-al Aziz

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.pp.76-77

<sup>193</sup> Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor or Mogul India 1653-1708*, Vol. II transl. by William Irvine, London, 1907 Vol 2, p 399

<sup>194</sup> Francisco Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India: The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, Translated by W.H. Moreland and P. Geyl, p 31

<sup>195</sup> Edward Scott Waring, *A Tour to Sheeraz: By The Route of Kazroon and Feerozabad*, (London,1907).pp.7-8.

<sup>196</sup> Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution* (University of Chicago Press, 1974).p.410

<sup>197</sup> Babar, *Babur-nama*, transl. by AS Beveridge (Delhi,1921),p.202

<sup>198</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002).p.79



to Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, the khan appealed for stronger commercial linkages with Hindustan and explained that: “*at this time, textiles are difficult to find in the boundaries of Bukhara*”; he goes on to request that as soon as his merchant by the name of Mubarak had procured the required textiles, he be allowed to leave for Bukhara without delay.<sup>199</sup> In another letter to Shah Jahan by a merchant called Khawaja Awaz, the latter asked for permission to be able to send his agents between Balkh and Kabul and offered to supply Kabul with fruits, camels and horses in return for Indian cloth.<sup>200</sup>

Apart from raw cotton or cotton cloth, Indian textiles in Central Asia included other finished products such as handkerchiefs, robes, towels, turbans, napkins, huge amounts of linen, calico and chintz of various colours and patterns, Banarasi wraps, silk brocade and Kashmiri shawls - the last three being mainly luxury items.

An important feature to be noted is that while Indian textiles were imported in large quantities to the markets of Bukhara, Bukharan silk was also in great demand in Multan and Lahore from where it was carried onto other parts. The Bukharan merchants on the other hand, actively engaged in exporting the cotton from India to pastoralists and urban markets in Siberia and Muscovy.<sup>201</sup> Cotton cloth was the single most important commodity exported from Bukhara to Siberia. A great majority of this cotton cloth exported from Bukhara would have come from India, or equally likely, they may have been produced in Bukhara but with Indian cotton or threads.<sup>202</sup>

Thus, no commodity figures more predominantly in this trans-regional trade than cotton textile. Just as Turan was dependent on India for its cotton supply, India was dependent on Turan for horses.

#### **4.1.2 INDIGO**

Indigo was important Indian commodity that had a large demand in Turan. The best quality of the dye was produced in Bayana near Agra. The textile trade was complemented by a huge demand for indigo, a cash crop which enjoyed a large market in both Europe and Asia throughout the early modern period. The best variety was the ‘Bayana’ indigo produced in Punjab and Gujarat. Despite an indigenous

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid.p.80

<sup>200</sup> See manuscript no.102 in the *Archives of the Tajikistan Academy of Sciences*, cited in Nizamuddinov, from Scott Levi, *The Indian Diaspora In Central Asia*.p.80.

<sup>201</sup> Audrey Burton, *Bukharan Trade: 1558-1718* (Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1993).pp.10-13.

<sup>202</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002).p.82.

Lahori indigo, Lahore became an attractive market for the Bayana indigo which came from Agra, for the caravan traders from Iran and Turan; the demand being so great that Lahore is reported to have been termed an international 'clearing house' for Agra's indigo production. Not only Indian, European and Central Asian merchants traded in this commodity, but Armenian merchants too were extremely active in the overland transportation of indigo taking it from India to markets in the Levant, the Caucasus and finally on to Russia -- through their diaspora network which was centered in the New Julfa suburb of Isfahan.<sup>203</sup> Indigo was in abundance in caravanserais in Qandahar, Ghazni, Kabul, Kunduz, Balkh, Andkhui, Qarshi, Maimana, Shabarghan, Bukhara and Khiva where it was brought by the Lohani Afghans. Mohan Lal recorded that in just one year, Lohani and Shikarpuri merchants sent 1,500 loads of indigo to Khurasan.<sup>204</sup> Indigo was the main commodity exported to Bukhara during eighteenth century. Apart from Bayana, both Multan and Kabul were main points for the export of this dye to Central Asia. During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the value of annual export of indigo from Multan at 40 to 50 thousands poods (16kgs).

#### 4.1.3 KASHMIRI SHAWLS

Apart from cotton cloth, the Kashmiri shawl was very popular item and it was great demand in Central Asia. The Kashmiri shawls and other woollen garments were great demand in Central Asia. However, great pains have been taken to manufacture shawls in *Patna*, *Agra*, and *Lahor*; but notwithstanding every possible care, they never have the delicate texture and softness of the *Kachemire* shawls, whose unrivalled excellence may be owing to certain properties in the water of that country. The superior colours of the *Maslipatam chittes* or cloths, painted by the hand whose freshness seems to improve by washing, are also ascribed to the water peculiar to that town. The popularity of Kashmiri shawls had increased in the first half of the 18th century due to its new techniques was used in embroidery.<sup>205</sup> Many other product of India was exported to Bukhara, Balkh and other Central Asian region. The trade of Kashmiri between India and Central Asia, there was a route such as Leh-Yarkand-Kashgar-Kokand and Srinagar-Amritsar-Kabul route. Kashmir shawls were imported

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.p.49

<sup>204</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Punjab, Afghanistan and Turkestan to Balkh, Bokhara, and Herat*, London, 1846; repr., Patiala, 1971 p, 107

<sup>205</sup> A.M. Motto, "Shawl Industry in Kashmir in The Mughal period", proceedings. Indian History Congress (IHC), 36th session, Aligarh, 1975.

into Kokand and Bukhara. So there was frequent demand for Kashmiri shawls in Central Asia.

#### **4.1.4 SLAVE TRADE**

The slave trade was a special feature in Medieval Period but one of the most interesting and often the most neglected aspect, by historians, of Indo-Central Asian slave trade. Indian slaves were important aspects of trading activities in Medieval India and Central Asia. Numerous Indian slaves exported to Central Asia. These slaves were in large numbers who belong to Hindu, Muslim and other communities. They were skilled in working as craftsman. This slave pre-dates the 16<sup>th</sup> century emergence of Indian diaspora communities in Central Asia, when the Ghaznavid and Ghurid invasions into the Indian subcontinent led to considerable slave-raiding and exportation of tens of thousands of enslaved Indian captives. Along with the Indian captives in Turan, other slaves like Qalmaqs, Russians, non-Sunni Afghans, Shi'a Iranians were also in great demand in the slave markets of Central Asia. The presence of a large numbers of Hindus in the slave markets of Central Asia was largely due to the Islamic expansion in early modern India.

A 1489 document from the archive of the great Naqshbandi Sufi Sheikh Khwaja Ahrar (1404 - 90), a great spiritual leader of the Timurids, mentions a group of agricultural labourers and artisans on an estate near Bukhara, all of whom were Indian slaves. Not only were slaves used for artisanal work and as agricultural labour, but they were also used as soldiers, working in brick factories, maintaining irrigation canals, etc. they were also used to cultivate the land and watch over animals on the plantation style farms of wealthy Bukharan families.<sup>206</sup> In 1558, Anthony Jenkinson noted that the presence of Indian slaves in the Bukharan markets were very common phenomena as they were often purchased and exported by Indian and Iranian merchants who went to Bukhara.<sup>207</sup>

Following's sack of Delhi, thousands of skilled artisans were put into bondage and taken to Turan where Timur gave or presented rather, some of them to his nobles and reserved all others for the construction of the BibiKhanum mosque at his capital at Samarqand. The large number of Iranian slaves in early modern Turan was a result

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<sup>206</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002),pp.61-62

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.p.67

of numerous wars of the Uzbeks with the Safavid state and later, due to repeated Turkmen raids on the poorly-protected villages in north-eastern Iran.

Many slaves were exported by caravan merchants who either purchased them directly or received them in return for other commodities in India such as horses. In 1581, Jesuit missionary Father Monserrate travelled from Lahore to Kabul and reported that the 'Gaccars' (Ghakkars) frequently traded Indian slaves for Central Asian horses and they had even become associated with the proverb, 'slaves from India, horses from Parthia'.<sup>208</sup> Furthermore, Shah Jahan's aborted conquest of Balkh in 1646-47 led to the capture and enslavement of many Indians as his tired and retreating army made its way back into the subcontinent. These men were transported to Samarqand, Turkestan and Tashkent, leading to a large number of influxes of Indians into Central Asian society. Small numbers of slaves were also sent as gifts between the rulers of India and Central Asia. Shah Jahan is recorded to have sent 100 Indian slaves to the Ashtarkhanid rulers Imam Quli Khan and Nadir Muhammad.<sup>209</sup> And also, sometimes in addition to their regular employees, Indian diaspora merchants usually brought slaves with them, many of whom were sold in the slave markets.

However, Indian slaves exported to Turan were continued throughout the Mughal period. Akbar's attempt to prohibit the practice of enslaving conquered Hindus but were temporarily successful.<sup>210</sup> During the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, Abd Allah Khan Firuz Jang, governor of the regions of Kalpi and Kher region 'beheaded the leaders and enslaved their women, daughters and children, who were more than 2 lacks [200,000] in number while in the course of revolt against local rulers. Mughal expansion in India accounts for exportation of hundreds of thousands of individuals not only men but also vast numbers of women and children to Central Asia<sup>211</sup>.

What is interesting and noteworthy is that thousands of Indian slaves in the markets of Central Asia, especially Bukhara, must have affected the society in more ways than just commercial. Their roles as skilled artisans and craftsmen, architectural engineers and plantation workers must have had more impact on the society than what

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<sup>208</sup> *The Commentary of Father Monserrate, S.J., on his Journey to the Court of Akbar*; transl. by J. S. Hoyland, (London, 1922). p.11

<sup>209</sup> Audrey Burton, 'Bukharan Trade, 1558-1718.' Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies: Papers on Inner Asia, no. 23. Bloomington, 1993.p.31

<sup>210</sup> Abul Fazl, *The Akbar Nama*, II, pp. 246-47

<sup>211</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002).p.66

is essentially recorded. We must keep in mind the impact they had when they were manumitted and allowed to roam free in the streets of Bukhara and other cities of Central Asia and become part of the ethnic landscape of Turan. Alexander Burnes who travelled Central Asia through Bukhara in 1830, has given description that the sale of such slaves in Bukhara.<sup>212</sup> Alexander Burnes, wrote that “three-fourths of the people of the Bokhara are of slave extraction” implying that although most people were not slaves, but they had their roots going back to the slaves brought from the other regions.<sup>213</sup> But those who were Indian slaves was sold in the market of Balkh, Bukhara and Kabul. It was a usual practice of Khannate’s rulers that control on the sale of slaves in the market of Central Asia. The slave trade forms one of the important aspects of revenue for the Khannate’s rulers. But the establishment of Russian authority in Central Asia, the practice of slave trading was abolished.

#### **4.1.5 OTHER COMMODITIES**

There were also other commodities that were exported from India to Central Asia. In the early 17th century drugs and precious stones like diamonds and rubies were great demand in Central Asia and Iran. Agra was the important market for precious stones like diamonds, pearls and rubies. Apart from precious stones, Indian traders brought Saltpetre to Central Asia especially Bukhara. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the chief sources of saltpetre were mainly Coromandal and Gujarat. In the later period, Bengal definitely replaced Coromandal as the chief source of production. In Bengal saltpeter was produced mainly in the regions around where it was available in abundance. However, Saltpeter comes in abundance from Agra and from Patna. Saltpeter was also produced in Bhagalpur and Purnea districts of Bihar and some parts of North Bengal but these varieties were much inferior quality and produced in much smaller quantity.<sup>214</sup> In other area of trade, merchants from Central Asia, Iran, Afghan, Armenian who came to Patna and Dacca to buy coral, yellow amber, tortoise-shell, and sea-shell bracelets, and other toys. Those merchants who come, from Bhutan and Kabul go to Kandahar and on to Ispahaan, and they generally take back coral beads, yellow amber, and lapis wrought into beads when they can obtain them. The other merchants, returning from the regions about Multan, Lahore, and Agra, take calicoes, indigo, and an abundance of carnelian and crystal beads. Finally, those who return by

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<sup>212</sup> Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*. p 209

<sup>213</sup> Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*. p.276

<sup>214</sup> Sushil chaudhary p261

Gorakhpur, and have an understanding with the customs officer, take from Patna and Dacca coral, yellow amber, tortoise-shell bracelets, and others of sea shells,<sup>12</sup> with numerous round and square pieces of the size of our 15, so 1 coins, which are also of the same tortoise-shell and sea shells. When I was at Patna four Armenians, who had previously made a journey to the Kingdom of Bhutan, came from Dantzic, where they had had made numerous images of yellow amber.<sup>215</sup>

## 4.2 IMPORTS FROM CENTRAL ASIA

### 4.2.1 HORSE TRADE

The important aspects of India-Central Asia trade was Horses. Horses were the single most important produced by the pastoral nomads of Inner Asia - being the primary means of transportation, an important source of food and the whole pastoral economy revolved around the breeding of horses. The wealth of these Inner Asian tribes came to be measured in terms of the size of the herds and not by its reserves of precious metal or money. Horses were for these pastoralists the main currency in their commercial exchanges with the sedentary people, in return for which they usually got agricultural and industrial goods not available in the steppe.<sup>216</sup>

The horse was bred in various parts of the Indian sub-continent such Punjab, Gujarat, Mewat, Ajmer, Agra, Rajasthan and Sind. These horses had different type of bred. Apart from these, horses were bred in Himalayan region in the north and Deccan in the south. Although the best quality of horses was from Central Asia and it had great demand in India and world. There were also horses of Iran, Afghanistan and Arabia which was imported from India.

The overland trade and commerce in horses between Khorasan and India were developed during the 13th–17th centuries. The concentrations of nomadic peoples in Khorasan ensured an abundant supply of horses in India due to continual military conflicts that required a substantial demand. Yet invasions and plundering by nomadic tribes in Afghanistan and along the roads of northwest India were obstacles to the trade.

The horse trade in Eurasia has attracted for all its adjacent region through the Great Silk Route. However, the demand for warhorses was one of the main reasons

<sup>215</sup> Jean-Baptiste, Tavernier; - "*Travels in India by Jean-Baptiste, Tavernier*" vol-II ,Trans,V.Ball, Oxford University, London, 1925 p129

<sup>216</sup> Alexander. Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara: Being the Account of A Journey from India to Cabool, Tartary and Persia*, 3 vols, London. (1834).p.54.

for the opening of the so-called Silk Roads, and trade in horses continued down through the centuries. Consequence of his Route, it was also bound to the relationship between India and Central Asia through this route.

#### **4.2.1.1 KHORASAN AND ITS ROUTES TO INDIA**

After the Mongol conquests, Ilkhanid dynasty in Iran gave the rise of Bastam, Herat, Samarqand, Sultaniyah, and Tabriz. However, East-West exchange flourished as the unification of much of Asia under Mongol rule. Several important routes of trade and communication under the Mongols were developed. From Kashgar, one branch of the Silk Roads went west via Samarqand to Merv and Herat. From Herat the route continued west through Khorasan, traversing northern Iran through Sultaniyeh and Tabriz before passing through Asia Minor and ending in Constantinople.

A more important overland route, were also known as the “fur route”, went through Mongolia and northern Xinjiang, with a branch down to Khwarezm below the Aral Sea, and continued on north of the Caspian to the capital of the Mongol Golden Horde at Saray on the Volga, before ending on the Black Sea. This route was important in part for its connection to areas of the Qipchaq steppes which were major producers of horses. Another, less-known route the “Khorasan–India Road” linked the Silk and the Fur Roads to the maritime Spice Route. It traversed some 127 parasangs (= 729 km) from Marv to Balkh. From there its route took it through the Darhabun pastures and Badgheis. At Herat there were several options for continuing.

One was to go on through Kabul, Peshawar, and Sirhind to Delhi. Another was to head for Ghazna (modern Ghazni) or Kandahar, Multan, Sheshnogar and Sind to the Indus delta at Thatta and “Bahr al-Sind”. One could also reach the maritime route by going from Herat to Sistan, Mukran and the Persian Gulf. In the 13th–17th centuries, Hormuz Island, as the principal point on this route, was through the trade in horses from Oman, Yemen and areas of southern Iran on the Persian Gulf departed to the west coast of India.<sup>217</sup>

#### **4.2.1.2 HORSE BREEDS AND THEIR SPECIAL APPLICATION**

The most famous horse breeds in Persia in the 13th–14<sup>th</sup> centuries were Median (the modern Kurdish species), Nisaiyan (a Parthian/Khorasanian breed), Arabians from Arabia, Mesopotamia and Khuzestan, horses from Fars (a Turkish

<sup>217</sup> Ibn Battuta *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325–1354*. Translated by H. A. R. Gibb. 3 vols. 1953. Reprint. New Delhi: MunshiramManoharlal, 1998. pp 367–68

breed), and the breed of central Iran. In India, horses had been sorted out into four main categories on the basis of breed and use: warhorses (Turkish), horses for routine riding (from the Badgheis region), racehorses (Arabians), and ceremonial horses (a pure Arabian breed). Ibn Battuta gave Sultan Mohammad bin Tughlugh two equipped horses, one worth 800 and the other 1600 dinars. Pied-coloured horses had very important status among the imported horses, even in royal courts: many Indian miniatures show the Mughal emperor on pied horses. Although Safi, the veterinarian, had also opined that Indian emperor chose the horses of this colour. Besides, colour variety was more common among Khorasanian, Turkish, and Turkmen horses.

New horse breeds of Khorasan also sold in India. Until the nineteenth century, two breeds were raised in Bukhara and Kholam in Khorasan. One was *Qara-Ba'ar* (or Uzbek), "Qipchaqi" (from Sinjarak) and "Khanezad" (home-born) all sold in India for more than 50 rupees. The other was the Turkmen horse from Turkmenistan and Uzbek was regarded as a suitable horse for travel, not for war. The Kazakh horse was a semi-wild horse with a small body, long hair, large legs and heavy head. It could graze freely in all seasons and did not require provender. The preferred draught horse was a crossbreed, raised by the people of the Kokand region in Central Asia. Finally, Central Asian advantage lay in horse-breeding. The Turki (i.e. Central Asian) horses were preferred to Arabian (including, but not exclusively, Persian) horses, for their superior size and strength. Indian horses – which likely originated in Kashmir – were apparently *nature so small that when a man is upon them his feet nearly touch the ground*"<sup>218</sup> and hence were unsuitable for war or ceremonial purposes.

#### **4.2.1.3 RULERS OF MEDIEVAL INDIA AND HORSE TRADE WITH CENTRAL ASIA**

During the 13th – 14th centuries there were many horse imported in India from Central Asia for military and war purpose. Beginning with the Ghaznavid period, they were the first Muslim government to conquests on both Khorasan and north-western India and controlled the trade on the neighbouring roads by the horse power. The Ghurid dynasty also pursued similar policies. After these dynasties, the sultans of Delhi moved their capital from Ghur to Delhi, which then made expansion on Indian territories. This warfare continued under the Khalajid and Tughlughid

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<sup>218</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier *Travels in India*, Vol II, ed. William Crooke. (1676), p.256. This was due to their poor diet - due to the unavailability of suitable fodder and land for pastures in India, since most land was used for agriculture.



dynasties. Therefore from the early 12th century, the horse was the main merchandise to be exported to India. Beginning in the time of the Delhi Sultanate, political stability depended on the loyalty of Turkish slave cavalry and it required large numbers of horses.<sup>219</sup>

Because of their availability and reputation for strength, Central Asian horses and mares enjoyed great demand in the international market.<sup>220</sup> Ibn Batutta, in the middle of the 14th century, wrote that people of the steppe, in southern Russia, the territory of the Mongol Golden Hordes at that time made their living by raising large numbers of horses. He says it wasn't uncommon for people or even individuals to own several thousand horses. He further reported:

*“These horses are exported to India [in droves], each one numbering six thousand or more or less... When they reach the land of Sind with their horses, they feed them with forage, because the vegetation of the land of Sind does not take the place of barley, and the greater part of the horses die or are stolen. They are taxed on them in the land of Sind [at the rate of] seven silver dinars a horse, at a place called Shashnaqar, and pays a further tax at Multan, the capital of the land of Sind... In spite of this, there remains a handsome profit for the traders in these horses, for they sell the cheapest of them in the land of India for a hundred silver dinars (the exchange value of which in Moroccan gold is twenty-five dinars), and often sell them for twice or three times as much. The good horses are worth five hundred [silver] dinars or more”.*<sup>221</sup>

Baburnama mentions between 7,000-10,000 horses which were taken every year to Kabul for sale in Indian markets.<sup>222</sup> Bernier, writing in the mid-17th century calculated that over 25,000 horses were brought from Uzbek territory to India each year, and many more were brought from Iran through Qandahar and from Iran and Africa by sea, saying:

*“India...she is in need of a considerable number of foreign horses, receiving annually more than five-and-twenty thousand from Uzsbec, a great many from Persia by way of*

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<sup>219</sup> Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, AD 1656–1668*. Translated by Irving Brock and edited by Archibald Constable. Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1891 pp. 120–21

<sup>220</sup> Jos J. L. Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire: c. 1710-1780* (New York, 1995), pp. 16-17

<sup>221</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston, 2002), p. 56

<sup>222</sup> Babar, *Babur-nama*, transl. by AS Beveridge (Delhi, 1921), p. 202

*Kandahar, and several from Ethiopia, Arabia, and Persia, by sea, through the ports of Moka, Bassora, and Bander-Abassi.*"<sup>223</sup>

The Jahangirnama records the arrival of Muqarrab Khan in court to pay homage in 1610, and that among other things he "brought so many Abyssinian slaves, Arabian horses, and every other sort of thing...that his presents were offered for...inspection for a period of two and a half months."<sup>224</sup> Furthermore, Tavernier also notes that the King of Persia sent the King of Golconda a gift of fifty-five horses by sea.<sup>225</sup> Jenkinson confirms that it was common for Indian merchants to settle their accounts in Turan by transporting their wealth back into India in the form of horses instead of precious metals.

Mughal emperor Akbar ordered an adjustment in the prices and banned the export of horses from his country without a written permit from the royal court. During his battles on the road of Khorasan which linked the main pastures and cities such as Ghazni, Kahmard, Kabul, Badakhshan, Akbar met a great caravan of horses from Iraq and Khorasan. However, Akbar bought many of the horses at four or five times the going price in order to use them in his battles in the area. On another occasion Akbar was marching from Qandahar to Kabul, he bought many Iraqi horses from Turkmen merchants who were taking them India.

The Safavid rule of Iran was very concerned about the demand of the Mughals for horses and this had impact on prices. One report suggests that Indian traders purchased annually in Kabul as many as 100,000 horses from Central Asia during the 17th century<sup>226</sup>. In 1634, the Mughal ambassador Mir-Homai came to Isfahan to ask the Safavid ruler for horses to be exported to India. Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's envoy, they came to Isfahan and Shah Abbas II expressed to him his displeasure at the constant need of India for horses. The price of the horse was high because of the extensive exports to Mughal India and Ottoman Anatolia in the late Safavid Iran.

Until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were customs houses along the road from Khorasan to India which collected taxes for horses exported from Turkestan: the rate in Peshawar was three rupees per horse, in Jalal-abad two rupees, in Kabul four

<sup>223</sup> Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, pp.203-204

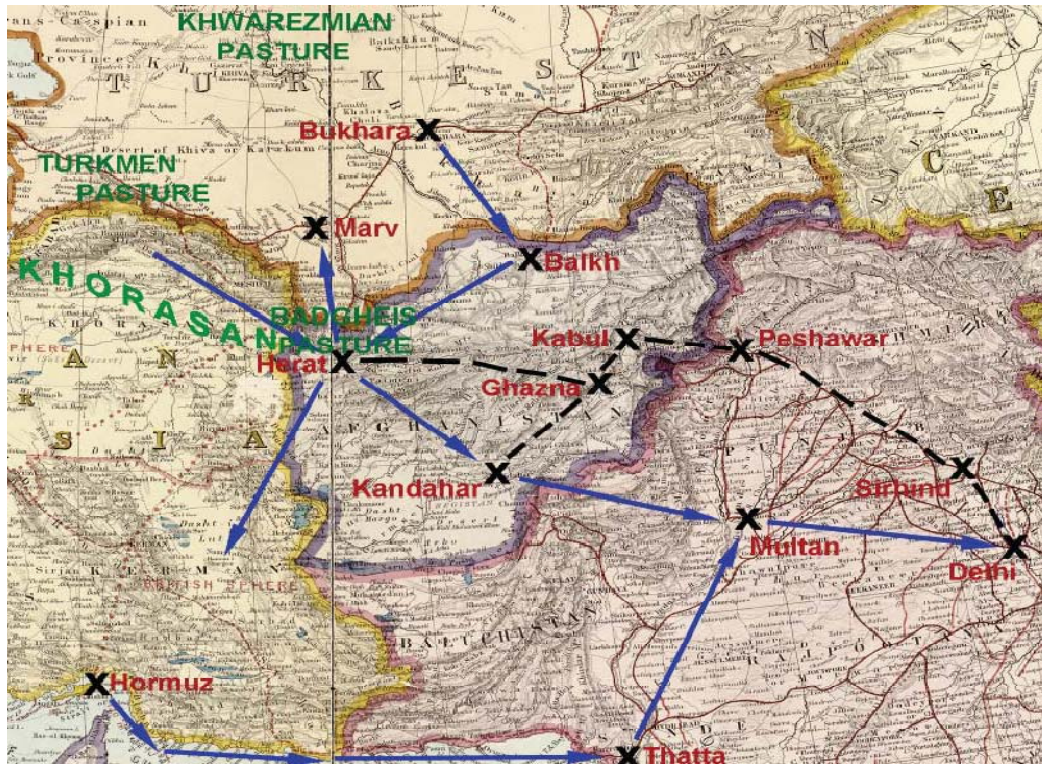
<sup>224</sup> Babar, *Babur-nama*, transl. by AS Beveridge (Delhi,1921).p.202

<sup>225</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier *Travels in India*, Vol II, ed. William Crooke. (1676).p.256

<sup>226</sup> Muzaffar, Alam 'Trade, State Policy and Regional Change: Aspects of Mughal-Uzbek Commercial Relations, c.1550-1750.' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 37, 3 (August 1994),p 209

rupees, in Bamian two rupees. From the some instances, the importance of the horse trade via Afghanistan to India from Central Asia and Iran is considerably significant.

**Map 6:** This map shows the horse trade route between India and Central Asia



Source:<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/gmd:@field%28NUMBER+@band%28g7420+ct001442%29%29>

Horses played a major role in Mughal warfare and formed a large part of the cavalry which was the most essential element in the Mughal army. Horses exported from Khorasan were the Turkish breeds and best suited for military activities. India's climate, although suitable for the cultivation of cash crops like cotton and indigo proved detrimental to the health of the horses - the horses suffered in the Indian heat. The crisis of the Mughal Empire, political instability and numerous rebellions intensified the demand for horses and provided an important income for the emerging Durrani, an Indo-Afghan confederacy.<sup>227</sup> However, it was only with the coming of the British and relative stability that the demand for the Central Asian horses decreased drastically.

<sup>227</sup>Jos J. L. Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire: c. 1710-1780* (New York, 1995), p. 89-95. At any time of the century, the total number of horses was around 400,000 - 800,000. Gommans calculates that the annual value of this overland horse trade was around twenty million rupees.

#### 4.2.1.4 OTHER COMMODITIES

Precious metals like gold and silver were in great demand in India, because for its size India had few deposits of gold and silver, giving foreign merchants with specie purchasing power in the Indian market. Thus in exchange for spices, textiles, industrial and agricultural goods, merchants from Asia and Europe brought in large amounts of precious metals in the form of dinars, tangas, ducats, guilders, reals, francs, rixdollars (reichsthalers) and many other varieties of coins, all of which were reminted into rupees. Manucci states:

*“It ought to be remembered that the whole of the merchandise which is exported from the Mogul kingdom comes from four kinds of plants---that is to say the shrub that produces the cotton from which a large quantity of cloth, coarse and fine is made. These cotton goods are exported to Europe, Persia and Arabia and other parts of the world. The second is the plant which produces indigo. The third is the one from which comes opium of which a large amount is used on the Java coast. The fourth is the mulberry-tree, on which their silk worms are fed, and as it may be said, that commodity (silk) is grown on those trees. For the export of all this merchandise, European and other traders bring much silver to India.”*<sup>228</sup> Large amounts of silver and gold came from Safavid Iran.

According to Bernier, *“it should not escape notice that gold and silver, after circulating in every other quarter of the globe, come at length to be swallowed up, lost in some measure, in Hindoustan.”*<sup>229</sup> He goes on to say that:

*“The importation of all these articles into Hindoustan does not, however, occasion the export of gold and silver; because the merchants who bring them find it advantageous to take back, in exchange, the productions of the country. Supplying itself with articles of foreign growth or manufacture, does not, therefore, prevent Hindoustan from absorbing a large portion of the gold and silver of the world, admitted through a variety of channels, while there is scarcely an opening for its return.”*<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> *Mogul India or Storia do Mogor*, by Niccolao Manucci (c.1652-1680), trans. and ed. by William Irvine, 1907-08. Vol II.p.418

<sup>229</sup> Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, p.202.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.* p.204.

Raphael du Mans compared Persia to large caravanserai with two doors, one through which Europeans traders brought silver from the west and the other from which silver was carried eastwards to India, “*where all the money in the Universe is unloaded as if into an abyss.*”<sup>231</sup> In exchange for all the indigo, sugar, textiles (calicoes, muslins, chintz, silks and Kashmiri shawls) which were imported to Bukhara by Indian and Afghan merchants, they returned to India loaded with gold and silver, especially Dutch ducats which had been taken to Bukhara from Russia.<sup>232</sup>

The metals were used as currency for trade and commerce. The silver currency used in Asia was based on the *tanga-i-Shahrukhi*, established by the Timurid Shah Rukh in the fifteenth century.<sup>233</sup> But in the later period, this metal currency was replaced in Central Asia by Khans, in India by rupees, and in Iran by tumans. But the Mughal rulers used all three currencies. During Akbar’s reign, the sums remitted to Akbar in taxes are said to represent amounts equal to the entire annual revenues of Iran and Turan.<sup>234</sup>

During the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, monetization process developed in the countryside. During the first three quarters of the sixteenth century, small-scale trade was carried on in copper coins. The opening of mints in big and small towns and villages for the exchange of coins which shows the expansion of money use.

During 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, most of the Mughal silver coinage was generated by direct European imports through major ports such as Surat and other ports. During the period mints from Kashmir, Kabul, Lahore, Multan and Thatta – together issued the largest number of coins of all Mughal mints.<sup>235</sup> However, some of coins from Central Asian region such as Khiva, Bukhara or Bulkh were recoined as rupees in these Indian mints.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, gold and silver were used in exchange of commodities between the India and Central Asia. At least silver was among the commodities that Bukhara wanted to obtain from Mughal India in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Khanate may

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<sup>231</sup> Citing du Mans from Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002),p.48

<sup>232</sup> Scott C Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade 1550-1900*, (Boston,2002),p. 48.

<sup>233</sup> Stephen Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade: 1600-1750*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994),p.29

<sup>234</sup> Richard, Foltz. ‘Central Asia as “Home” in the Minds of the Mughals: A Study of Unifying Elements in Asian Muslim Society in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Harvard University, 1998, p.7

<sup>235</sup> Chaudhuri, K. N. *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985 p.227

have procured items of significant are manufactured in one hundred and fifty workshops. Both Russian specie and Dutch coins were imported into Central Asia especially in Bukhara in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, that some of this money was re-exported to India.<sup>236</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Sugar

Sugar, in huge quantities was exported from the subcontinent even prior to the 16<sup>th</sup> century as Babar recorded both raw and refined sugar in his list of commodities commonly transported from India to Central Asia.<sup>237</sup> Sugar, seldom mentioned in sources was one of the principal cash crops of the Mughal Empire and was exported in large amounts. The two important centres for sugar were Lahore and Delhi, the latter being famous for its refined sugars. The magnitude of its production and its encouragement by the Mughal rulers and its constant exportation by foreign and Indian merchants suggests the continued demand of sugar in the early modern period.

#### 4.2.3 Spices

Spices also made up a large part of this trans-regional trade between India and Central Asia. Pepper, nutmeg, mace, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, medicinal herbs etc. were in great demand. Other items included jewellery, precious stones, weaponry and tents made from Indian cotton cloth. Indian ammonia, herbs, henna and other dyes, Hyderabad cornelian and Indian rice were also found in Bukharan markets. Paper was another item which was produced in Balkh and Bukhara and especially Samarqand and was in great demand worldwide. This paper was available in a variety of colours and patterns. The common ingredient in this paper was usually cotton recycled from old cloth.

#### 4.2.4 Tea

Tea was another item which was exported by India. According to Mohan Lal, tea was commonly transported from India to Bukhara via the overland routes along Khulum.<sup>238</sup> An English traveller reported that because of a strain in trade relations

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<sup>236</sup> Stephen Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade: 1600-1750*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.28

<sup>237</sup> Babar, *Babur-nama*, p.202

<sup>238</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, p.404.

with China, around 10,000 camel loads or nearly five million pounds worth of tea was annually transported from India to Bukhara.<sup>239</sup>

Numerous accounts, if not almost all, mention the vibrant trade in and fresh and dry fruits, which regularly arrived from India from Central Asia. Akbar made provisions for supply of melons, apples and pears from Samarqand in the summer months and melons from Badakshan in the winters. The Ain-I Akbari lists a variety of fruits and nuts imported from Turan which included two varieties of melons, apples from Samarqand, quinces, guavas, dates, and two varieties of raisins, plums, dried apricots, figs, jujubes, almonds, pistachios and hazelnuts.<sup>240</sup> Bernier recorded that:

*“It may also be observed that Hindoustan consumes an immense quantity of fresh fruit from Samarkand, Bali;’ Bocara, and Persia; such as melons, apples, pears and grapes, eaten at Dehli and purchased at a very high price nearly the whole winter; — and likewise dried fruit, such as almonds, pistachio and various other small nuts, plums, apricots, and raisins, which may be procured the whole year round.”*<sup>241</sup> He elsewhere observes that:

*“There is, indeed, a fruit-market that makes some show. It contains many shops which during the summer are well supplied with dry fruit from Persia, Balk, Bokhara, and Samarkand; such as almonds, pistachios, and walnuts, raisins, prunes, and apricots; and in winter with excellent fresh grapes, black and white, brought from the same countries, wrapped in cotton; pears and apples of three or four sorts, and those admirable melons which last the whole winter. These fruits are, however, very dear; a single melon selling for a crown and a half. But nothing is considered so great a treat: it forms the chief expense of the Omrahs, and I have frequently known my Agah spend twenty crowns on fruit for his breakfast.”*<sup>242</sup>

Cloth’s was also imported from Central Asia to India. There are the lists of cloths given in the Ain-i-Akbari which confirms that it was imported from Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia. Variety of Central Asian fabric was popular in India.

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<sup>239</sup> S. Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade, 1550-1900* (Leiden: BRILL, 2002)p.51

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Abul Fazl Allami, *The A-in-I Akbari*, Vol I, p.69, from Levi, *Indian Diaspora*

<sup>241</sup> Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*.pp.203-204

<sup>242</sup> Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*.p.249

Luxury items included fur, especially sable from Siberia and Muscovy. Camels, rubies and other precious stones, hunting birds mainly falcons, dogs and Chinese porcelain were also imported in lesser quantities.<sup>243</sup>

Thus, throughout early modern India, there was a steady movement of goods and commodities to and from the Indian subcontinent via overland routes connecting major trading centres in these regions. The trade was fostered by the investments of the ruling dynasties and elites of these regions -- mainly the Mughal, Safavids and Uzbek states. Measures were taken to make trade routes and passages more safe for merchants and travellers; roads, bridges, caravanserais were built to ensure this and provide convenient resting areas for merchants and traders. The balance of this trade however, largely remained tilted in India's favour.

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<sup>243</sup> S. Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade, 1550-1900* (Leiden: BRILL, 2002) p.53



## 5 CHAPTER: CONCLUSION

In this work, I have used information found in primary sources, and recent secondary literature in order to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the historic-cultural and commercial relations between medieval India and Central Asia.

India and Central Asia stood as commercial and trading regions during the 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century. This period has been seen as a significant change in the fortunes of both regions as of economic and commercial importance. It was due to its geographical location, situated on the mountainous passes, and overland routes which played important commercial and transportation communication to the development of both the region's economy. Apart from this, the period of 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century in India witnessed political stability and economic prosperity. The long reign of the four Mughal rulers viz; Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb provided peace and security, which led to the increase in trading activities and emergence of new trading markets and emporiums in India and as well as in Central Asia . But all this was possible only with the development of an efficient network of transport and communication between the two regions. Trade pattern and the role of merchant communities played a pivotal role in the growth of trade and commercial activities for the same.

As we have seen in the earlier chapters that the vast expanse of Central Asia was connected with India through both land and sea-routes. There were no metalled roads, though the main routes of land travel were clearly defined, by avenues of trees, and the milestones or Kos miners laid by the road side. The imperial highways and other roads were well maintained by the Mughals emperors and it also connected with Central Asia. Other than these highways, there were roads radiating out in all directions from the commercial towns and sarai. Travel for men and merchandize became easier and safer between the two regions. The construction of new roads, and military posts gave the traders merchants and travellers easy mobility which also stimulated the flow of trade with Central Asia. The principal overland routes went through the Khyber and Bolan passes. Lahore, Multan, Kabul and Qandahar were the major entrepot. Apart from that, there were the Kashmir routes which led through the Kara Koram to Yaraqand, where the routes from Ladakh, Tibet, China, and India were joined by the route which led to Kashgar. From Kashgar the caravans proceeded to

Samarqand and Bukhara. Samarqand, the first major city of Central Asia was the junction of the main routes from India (though Kabul and Kashmir), Persia (through Merv) and the Turkish territories. The city of Samarqand, together with Bukhara, was the centre of the Indian merchants for their trade in Central Asia.

The Indian diaspora communities that spread northwards from Iran into Central Asia and the neighbouring sea port of Astrakhan in Russia from 1600-1750 were multi-ethnic in character. Tajiks, Uzbeks, Khurasanis, Afghans, Hazaras, Barakis and Imaqis and Multanis were the principal people engaged in this trade. The Armenians also had a share in it and a good deal of this trade was transmitted through pastoral nomads who traversed the pastures between the Indus and Oxus rivers. But it seems that Indians themselves, throughout the period, aspired to be the chief carriers of even the Central-Asian articles in India. They seem to have had a keen appreciation for precious metals and a dislike for passing them on to the foreign merchants. The extraordinary strong Khatri participation in this trade, it should be noted, seems to have coincided with the rise and growth of Mughal power in India.

Until about the end of the sixteenth century, the participants in India's trade with Central Asia and Persia, both along the overland and maritime routes, came from almost the entire subcontinent. Some nodal transit points like Multan and Lahore had emerged in the north-western region, the merchants from this region profiting enormously from this trade. From the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, the traders from the north-western provinces of the Mughal Empire which resulted from the spurt of the caravan trade with the advent of European control over the sea-routes and the Indian Ocean. The caravan was the most popular and oldest method of travelling in large groups, providing the required safety and security, and also contributing to social and commercial life.

Sources also help us understand how Indian merchants lived side by side in different countries, along with people of different religion, culture and ethnic backgrounds. They adjusted to different social and political situations to maintain their credit-worthiness and to enhance their wealth and income. Although at one stage they were integrated in the local alien society, at another stage, they acted as allies of the Mughals at home.

Rivalry between the Mughals and the Safavids over Qandahar, and the outbreak of wars with the Uzbeks around Kabul, Balkh and Badakhshan in Shahjahan's time (1626-1656) did not permanently affect the commercial traffic. It

usually revived about bouts of decline. It is difficult to assess the volume of the India-Central Asia trade for any particular period. It is, however, noteworthy that in Mughal time's traders and the production centres of almost the entire sub-continent were involved in this trade.

But it is clear that this trade had a close bearing on the economy, on state power and on the politics of the regions in which it was carried out. It seems also clear that the political authorities of both regions appreciated the importance of the links between trade as such and the overall stability of political power. The Mughals, the Safavids and the Uzbeks were not oblivious of commercial affairs or economic the economic growth of their respective regions in general. Central Asia retained its economic vitality and continued to function as an important region for overland Eurasian trade throughout the early modern period, contrary to the widely prevalent notion that the arrival and increased presence of European traders in the Indian Ocean pushed Central Asia into economic isolation.

Commercial relations between India and Central Asia not only remained active throughout the early modern period but they continued at an increased level. This is partially due to the patronage of the great Islamic dynasties in India, Central Asia and Iran, but mostly to the activities of the many thousands of Indian Diaspora merchants who, from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century, occupied cities and villages across Central Asia. The merchants and state were mutually dependent. The state needed merchants to foster a healthy economy and the merchants benefited from the efforts of the state to maintain a suitable and conducive commercial climate. When the state withdrew their support from traders during periods of economic and political crisis, there was still a conscious effort on the part of those in power to maintain control of the trade routes and foster trade to the greatest extent possible.

The ability of Indian merchants to maintain flourishing Diaspora communities in foreign lands appears to be an unlikely historical phenomenon as the vast majority of the Diaspora population consisted of Hindu merchants in Muslim states, technically unprotected by Islamic law. However, with only a few notable exceptions, Indian merchants enjoyed the steady protection of the state. Although they were generally disliked by members of their host societies and their constant movement across political boundaries brought them under suspicion, Indian merchants were widely

respected as large-scale trans-regional traders. Their identification as ‘outsiders’ in their function of lending money for interest in Indian religious traditions are likely to have given the Indians an advantage over most other merchants. Ultimately, their success lay in the sheer magnitude of the Indian economy, which gave them access to greater capital resources than other merchants operating in the same markets.

Apart from economic and commercial interactions between India and Central Asia, it is clear that the geographical propinquity and mountain barriers did not prevent the continual flow of peoples, ideas and goods between the two regions. The developments of economic and commercial relation have always impact on cultural aspects on each other. The process and development of unending cultural relations, both regions have remained preoccupied with the migration of the Aryans and Sufism from these lands, the spread of Buddhism from India has impacts on each other. Moreover, Indian art, philosophy and cultural values made a deep impact in the medieval Central Asia. Central Asian culture has its own historical continuities from medieval period to the present days and has to be studied against these backgrounds. Even today the influence of the medieval institutions, ethos, and cultural trends is visible. Although, a appropriate understanding of the historico-cultural and economic relation between India and Central Asia is required to re-examine in a proper comprehensive manner.

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