KASHMIR’S CONTACT WITH CENTRAL ASIA DURING MUGHAL PERIOD (1586-1753.A.D)

INTRODUCTION:
Kashmir's contact with Central Asia dates back to remote past and cover several aspect of human relationship; social, economic, historical, cultural, and intellectual. These contacts developed over the years due to the frequent movement of people, material and thought between the two regions. Notwithstanding geographical hazards, dynastic upheavals, political convulsions, vagaries of nature, limited means of communication and transport etc., such contacts thrived uninterrupted to the great benefit of the humans across the borders. Being multifaceted, these contacts were varied in nature, time and space.1

The Mughal occupation of Kashmir on 1586, opened new ways of developments. Immediately after its annexation it was merged with Subah Kabul of Mughals. A new type of administration was introduced comprised of subedars, diwans, qazis etc. With the end of political isolation the valley was thrown open to rest of the world, which in turn developed the economy of people. Road communications resulted in multiple of changes. Complete freedom and liberal patronage was provided by rulers to skilled workers for the development of industries. The two progressive industries of the time were Shawl and Silk weaving. Newer designs in art and architecture were introduced for the first time in valley. Plantation of Chinars was boosted by them. Gardens with attractive terraces were built at different places. The period of Mughals was far from contacts. Contacts with other areas resulted in cultural changes. Forced labour was abolished and people began to work with interest. All people were satisfied with the new governing class. Different castes of Central Asian origin got settled in valley.

A variety of transmission channels sustained such contacts and in that the role of a network of branches of the Grand silk route, few crisis -crossing the valley, can not be underestimated. Incidentally, Kashmir was the junction, where all the ancient trade routes converged; one of them was Barmulla/Gandhara route which was traversed by many missionaries and travelers like Hieun-Tsang and Faibien. Similarly the route via Baltistan, Gilgit and Chitrals was no less important. The route across Zojila to Leh and then onwards to Lhasa and Yarkand was functional till recent past.2

The historical travel accounts of Hieun-Tsang, Kalhana, Marocopolo, Sayyid Ali, Mirza Hayder Dughlat, Haider Malik Chodaro, Narian Koul Aajiz, Muhammad Azam, Saadullah Shahabadi, Nath Pandit, Diwan Kripa Ram, Gh. Nabi Khanyari, Hassan Shah Khohami and foreign travelers like, Father Xavier,George Forester, H.G.Bellbow, Moorcroft, E.F.Knight and Yonghusband etc. provide a good deal of information on the topography and usefulness of these routes from early times. It was along these routes that Kashmir came in the network of great Mughals and became part of Kabul Subha.

With the Mughal occupation of Kashmir in October 14th 1586 the traditional links connecting Kashmir with Central Asia across the Karakoram in the east and the Pamirs in the west were kept intact. Together with these new routes along the Pir Panjul range were established to directly link Kashmir with the Punjab, Lahore, Kabul and Central Asia. With this, local ruling aristocracy was eliminated and their place was taken over by the Irani, Turans, Kwarizmians who significantly contributed to Mughal nobility and army in Kashmir. During this period, the ruling elite comprising the subedars, nabh-subedars, diwans, qazis etc. was mainly formed of the people of Central Asian descent. Though they constituted a reference group, they certainly left considerable bearing on Kashmir society; its polity, art, architecture, language, dress, diet, customs, traditions, etc. It is true that the said rule registered a little bit of wastage and drain of resources from Kashmir. But at the same time, it made significant contribution to Kashmir economy especially its textiles; Shawl and Silk weaving for the promotion of which, keeping other considerations apart, roads and rest houses were constructed on the way to India, Lahore and Central Asia. The raw material for these textiles continued to be obtained from Central Asian neighborhood. Wool -wool, an item of considerable economic and commercial advantages to Kashmir, was imported from Ladakh and western Tibet. However due to epidemics among goats in these areas, supply was derived from herds kept by nomadic Kirghiz tribes and imported through Yarkand and Khotan. During the time of Mughals several types of finished Shaws were manufactured, “Jamawar” was the best and finest in quality and make. Emperor Akbar called it by the name of “Pamr-Narm”. Like Shawl cloth, the silken textiles occupied a coveted place in the nobility in and outside Mughal India. Akbar, 1555-1605 AD was very fond of Shaws and took pains in improving this industry and during his reign Shaws became very popular. The Ain-i-Akbari records how Akbar improved the department of shaws and almost two thousand Shawl industries were functional in valley of Kashmir during the time of Akbar. The price of Shawl ranged between rupees two hundred to twelve hundred each in those days. Several types of Shaws of finished nature were then manufactured by Kashmiri Shawl workers. There seems to have been more excellency in the art with his positive support to artisans. He has realized the importance of Shawl work and its benefits to the local artisans as well as to government. The Shawl work can develop further contacts of valley to other parts of world.

From the very beginning of Akbars time Kashmiri Shawl became the coveted article of Mughal luxury and accordingly became the valuable item of royal harem. The Shawl industries progressed too much during his time, because of the liberal patronage that was received by the workers. Later Mughal rulers like, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb were all extremely fond of Shawls and patented the Shawl industry. They provided some sort of subsidy on Shawl weaving. As quoted by Bernier the Shawl industry will very soon change the economic status of people in valley of Kashmir. During Mughal period Shawl became the fashion of the day. In the days of Mughal emperors the art of Shawl weaving attained to such excellence that a Shawl of one and a half square yards could be twisted and passed through an ordinary finger ring. It is available today and is known as the “Ring Shawl of Kashmir” 3. Thus during the Mughal rule not only contacts of Kashmir with Central Asia sustained uninterrupted but many industries especially Shawl and Silk weaving developed considerably.

The increasing demand also resulted in more production this shows the sign of mastery over the art. Because of more earnings the art became too much popular in valley. People from rural areas began to migrate to urban areas especially in the city of Srinagar. With the passage of time the art flourished towards the other areas of valley. People willingly opted the new profession from there inner recesses of their heart. Side by side with the development of Shawl industry the Silk industry also progressed too much under the proper care of Mughal rulers. The industry was usually one of the principle source of revenue to the Mughals and obviously got developed to a greater extent. Silk industry was boosted in Kashmir because of abundance of mulberry trees, suitable elevation and favourable climate. According to standard sources of Mughal period like, Ain-i-Akbari of Aurangzeb, Fuzul-i-Jahangiri of Jahangir the Silk work increased the new avenues of income to Mughals. The work that was initiated by Mughals ultimately bore its results under Dogras. In the beginning of twentieth century it began to replace the Shawl industry. Today it is the most reputed gov-
The mosque of Mulla Shah was built in Srinagar in 1634. The Mughal emperor Jahangir extended the plantation of gardens at different places of valley. The festivities of the reign of Shahjahan, 1627-1658, A.D., built a pavilion in Chashma Shahi garden. This garden was laid out by Ali Mardan Khan in, 1632. A.D, emerging from the slopes of the Zabarwan hill. The waters of spring are known for their cool and rejuvenating qualities. The garden is arranged on three ascending terraces. The total area of the rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high
times of emperor Babur. The Mughal emperors wore on their turbans a jeweled ornament known as Jigha. Many Andijani weavers were brought into India and Kashmir by the Mughal emperors, because they were the trained masters of the Jigha design. The Jigha design is still prevalent both in Kashmir and Persia. This design was introduced during the time of Mughals both in Kashmir as well as in India.

10. Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, P.376.


12. Baradari having twelve doors is ordinarily a square or rectangular pavilion with three doorways on each of its four sides. It is generally a summer house in garden.

13. Achabal is almost 10 Kms. from Anantnag town.


18. Deambi Kaul, B.K., Kashmir and Central Asia, Srinagar, 1989, P.113