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**INDUS WATERWAY AS AN
INTERNATIONAL OUTLET TO
SEA FOR LAND LOCKED
CENTRAL ASIA**

BY

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1- INTRODUCTION

Indus area has a rich and glorious cultural heritage of its own. From the age of Aryans, Indus has been relatively close to central Asia. The following quotation for the book 'Indus Sager and the making of Pakistan' by Aitzaz Ahsan is relevant: -

The Mouth of the Lion

The Indus is one of the mightiest rivers on this planet. It rises as a small spring, appropriately called the 'Mouth of the Lion', in the distant and inaccessible Forbidden Land of Tibet. Near its source the young but ferocious Indus then cuts a narrow, deep gorge through two of the most imposing mountain ranges of the world; the Himalaya and the Karakoram. Upon entering the plains, it slows down and meanders to the sea through the plains of the North-West Frontier Province, the Punjab, Balochistan, and Sindh. En route, it imbibes its five major Punjabi tributaries, the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej.

This book is essentially about the people inhabiting the Indus and its tributaries. It is a land that is referred to here either as 'Indus' or the 'Indus region', depending upon the context. These terms are meant to identify the geographical extent of the land and to distinguish it, at the same time, from 'India', the remainder of the subcontinent. Indus is presently the area that substantially comprises the state of Pakistan. When referring, however, to the river Indus, the definite article 'the' precedes Indus; also, when 'Indus' is used as an adjective as in the Indus person, the Indus region, the Indus culture. This is not the case when the reference is to the entire area comprising Pakistan.

Indus (Pakistan) has a rich and glorious cultural heritage of its own. This is a distinct heritage, of a distinct and separate nation. There is, thus, no fear of any other country devouring or destroying the state. During the last six thousand years Indus has, indeed, remained independent of and separate from India for almost five and a half thousand years. Only the three 'Universal States', those of the Mauryans, the Mughals, and the British welded these two regions together in single empires. And the aggregate period of these 'Universal States' was not more than five hundred years.

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For the remainder, from prehistory to the nineteenth century, Indus has been Pakistan. 1947 was only a reassertion of that reality. It was the reuniting of the various units, the Frontier, the Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Kashmir once again in a primordial federation. The mohajirs, who reverted to the Indus in 1947 and thereafter, were the sons and daughters returning to the mother. As such, 'Pakistan' preceded even the advent of Islam in the subcontinent. It was not merely 'a chasm that one people created for themselves in the ten short years from 1937 to 1947', as some Indians may like to believe.

The subcontinent has itself always been at least two distinct worlds. The truly 'Indic region', comprising the Genetic plains and peninsular India, on the one hand, and the 'Indus region', consisting of the basin of the Indus and its tributaries (i.e. Pakistan) on the other. In fact, the twain have seldom, if ever, truly met, 'Indus' (that encompasses the entire Indus valley, including the areas served by the tributaries Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab, and Jhelum), has been one large, independent, politico-economic zone for the past countless centuries. From the age of the Aryans, Indus has been relatively closer to the areas of the Onus (Amu Darya) and the Jaxartes (Syr Darya), than to any other plains, river system, peninsula, or desert region Indian or Arab.

The Historical Watershed

The Panipat has so often been the field upon which the fate of the Indian empire has been sealed does not imply that Indus was a mere passive conduit for central Asian invasions. The fact is that Indus had always been considered as the outpost of the central Asian states. It always resisted. It was only when the invader had crossed the Indus region that he could, in the battles at Panipat (or Kurukshetra, or Tarain), have all of India. Contrary to much-popularized myths, the Indus region always provided the great defence of the subcontinent. It provided the first and the strongest resistance.

Yet the central Asian, on their part, considered the Indus region as a part of central Asia. The 'international boundary' was always deemed to be the Sutlej. Thus, too, the significance of Panipat. Even if Peshawar or Lahore resisted, the central Asian invaders considered the taking of these cities as the reconquests of their own outposts. India was to be won with the conquest of Delhi, the city commanding the Genetic region. The plains of Panipat were at Delhi's doorstep. They were the great historical watershed.

That brings us to the Battle of Panipat in 1526.

2- PROPOSALS FOR INLAND WATER TRANSPORT

Pakistan has overlooked the cheapest mode of inland water transport though it has large rivers and largest irrigation system in the World. Navigation is practised on rivers in Europe, which are as large as our canals. This neglect seems to be due to the lack of understanding of its benefits. The British Government neglected water transport after the introduction of railways to benefit the railways though Indus and some of the canals had considerable water transport on Indus. Though the central Engineering authority of the

Federal Government was responsible for inland water transport for East and West Pakistan, nothing was done in West Pakistan. President of Pakistan issued a directive in 1959 to study inland navigation. The first Feasibility study for water transport was prepared by Tipton Kaimbach in 1962 for Rasul Qadirabad and Qadirabad. Balloki Link Canals but was not considered due to extra financing requirement beyond the scope of the Indus Basin fund. A paper was presented by the undersigned for inland navigation from Kalabagh to Sea in 1963 Engineering Congress Session. A large number of studies and papers were prepared by various authors and Consultants but nothing materialised.

The Pakistan Government got feasibility study in 1992-93 through Luis Berger International Inc. which clearly indicated that Indus from Kalabagh to Port Qasim could be made navigable. This was a first concrete step towards inland water transport but the Consultants suggested that as there is not enough load the project should be taken up after AD 2000. The undersigned suggested that the Central Asian loads would justify taking up this project immediately. When these proposals were still under consideration the Government was dismissed. The undersigned wrote in 1993 to the Minister of Communications in the Caretaker Government to at least make a start by construction of a navigation lock at Sukkur so that through navigation on the Indus river would be possible at least in high flow periods. It was also suggested that Chashma Lake should be developed as an inland port for China and Central Asian Countries as it would save 900 miles of haulage by road and rail to the Arabian Sea. Pakistan signed a transport agreement with China, Kazakstan and Kirgizia to transport goods through Karakoram Highway to Pakistan. This further enhanced the possibility of using Chashma as inland port and Indus waterway for outlet to the area. In September 1997 the undersigned sent a note to the Prime Minister of Pakistan stating that the road from China border to Chashma should be considered as a transport corridor and Chashma port and Indus waterway should be developed as a joint project on the same lines as the transport corridor from Kunming in Western China to Dhamo on the Irrawaddy in Burma. A copy of his reply is enclosed as Appendix-I.

The economy by use of water ways in terms of haulage per gallon of oil can be well appreciated from the following Table:-

Mode	Ton K.m.s. /Litre
Pipe Line	108
Waterways	90
Railways	72
Road (Trucks)	21
Aircraft	1.3

Freight transportation costs per ton-Km handled by trucks in Pakistan range between 0.40 to 0.60 Rupees in area where there are no back hauls. Rates can be as low as 0.20 Rupees per ton with a back haul load is more readily available. Average rail costs are estimated at 0.29 Rupees per ton-Km. However, rail rates vary more significantly by length of haul with rates as low as 0.15 Rupees per ton-Km for unit trains handling long distance high volume commodities. Water can move bulk cargoes at costs that are only a fraction of high way or rail costs. It has been estimated that water transportation services could operate in Pakistan at about 0.04 Rupees per ton km (about 1/10 of highway cost and 1/4 of the lowest rail rates). In the light of the above we should develop not only the Indus but also other rivers and major canals for water transport.

3- **NEW PROPOSAL FOR USING INTER-RIVER LINK CANAL AND POSITION OF OTHER RIVERS FOR WATER TRANSPORT**

As indicated in Para 1, the Rasul-Qadirabad and Qadirabad-Balloki Link could be justified now due to the ever rising cost of oil particularly as a connection to Indus at Chashma is possible through the Chashma Jhelum Link Canal and the part of river Jhelum from tail Chashma Jhelum Link to Rasul. This reach of Jhelum has supplies in most months of the year say 8 months as this is the period that Indus navigation is to be considered. There are proposals for construction of dams on the tributaries of Jhelum such as Bunha and Rohtas which will improve the supply position. These dams have to be taken up soon as Mangla Dam is losing capacity by silting and raising the dams is not only expensive but there is not enough water in all the years in Jhelum to store upstream of Mangla.

These proposals would bring Lahore and Central Punjab within the reach of Arabian Sea.

Another possibility is the future Sehwan Barrage and Sehwan Kotri-Nara Link Canal. One of the largest coal fields in the world in Thar is located close to the tail of Nara Canal. Water transport of the coal and coal briquets to replace fuel-wood would be possible from this coal field industries and steel mills could also be fed by coal transported by water cheaply. The import bill of Pakistan for forest products and fuel-wood is U.S. \$100 million per year. It is well known that industries mostly develop along water-ways all over the world.

Indus water-way should be considered as an international waterway like the Suez canal and the Panama canal and thus be safe from any enemy action. Another redeeming feature of the Indus water-way is that it helps national integration of all the Provinces of Pakistan.

4- **CONCLUSION**

As member of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Pakistan should strengthen its relations with Central Asia countries. The first train service from Almetey Tajkistan to Turkey is to start from 1st January AD 2000. The railway will from Iran to Pakistan is to be completed in the year 2001 when conditions improve in Afghanistan the

railway but from Chaman to Turkistan shall also be taken up along with Gas and oil pipe lines. The Indus waterway would strengthen the transport agreement with China Kazakhstan and Kirgizia.

Pakistan's experience on SAARC as proved disappointing due to Indian legarmonic outlook a outlook. The recent cancellation of SAARC meeting is an example India has floated on resolutions on Kashmir, grabbed Sikkim in spite of China's protests and waged 3 wars with Pakistan since 1947 and broke away East Pakistan. Unlike USSR and India China has been a great friend of Pakistan. ECO should have closed support though it is not a member. To quote Heavy Kissinger who used Pakistan as a lineage to improve relations between USA and China states in a recent article would have many political cards "Beking" to play. The Soviet Union in the end stood substantially isolated facing a coalition of all the industrial demo crisis plus China but China has traversed its 5000 years of recorded history by careful calculations and its necessities and great patience. Unlike China India has dreams of an empire like the Mourilyan Empire. Mr. Nehru and Prof. Parukkar have mentioned about these future dreams in their books. India is bulging a large blue water way, missiles and nuclear armounents. They consider the Indian ocean as an Indian lake. To put an end to these ambitions a strong Central Asia and China should act. There is no justification to leave the Indian Ocean to India it should in fact be called Asian Ocean.

In conclusion it may be stated that a new doctrine for development of Asia has to be evolved. We may call it the doctrine of Allama Iqbal, the great poet philosopher of the East. He did not believe in nationalism and condemned the distinction of colour and race. The following quotation from his poetry would amply make this point clear:

*The History of the Islamic People proves the hidden truth .
Thou art the guardian of the nations of Asia so vast,
Learn again the lesson of Truth, Justice and Chivalry!
Though wilt be required perforce to guide the world.*



بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Prime Minister's Secretariat (Public) Islamabad.

نمبر ایف۔ ا۔ (۲) ۱/۹/۹۱۔ سی۔ او (پی ایم) / ۹۷
مورخہ ۲۹ ستمبر ۱۹۹۹ء

محترم جناب محی الدین خان صاحب

السلام علیکم !

عزت مآب جناب وزیر اعظم صاحب کے نام آپ کا خط موصول ہوا۔ انہوں نے مجھے ہدایت کی ہے کہ اس کے لئے میں آپ کا تہہ دل کروں۔

دعا کریں کہ اللہ تعالیٰ ہمیں عوام کی توقعات پر پورا اترنے کی توفیق عطاء فرمائے۔

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آپ کا مخلص
(خیام قیصر)
پرنسٹن اسٹاف برائے وزیر اعظم

جناب محی الدین خان
۱۶۔ اے۔ ای۔ آئی
گلبرگ۔ ۳ لاہور۔

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