



PAKISTAN DAY



Pakistani people and their cultural traditions

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HISTORY/Background: For millennia, the mountain regions, valleys and plains of Pakistan have been a melting pot of different races, cultures and belief systems and have been among the oldest inhabited places on earth.

Settlers in this land included Aryans, Greeks, White Huns, Persians, Arabs, Turks and Mongols who mixed with the original inhabitants, the Dravidians, and established the Indus valley civilization.

Its famed cities of Harappa and Moenjodaro flourished for a thousand years from 2500 to 1500 B.C. Among the earliest settlements, which date back to 7000 B.C., the ancient village of Mehrgarh in the fertile Indus river valley was one of the world's first farming communities that had learnt to grow wheat and barley and raise cattle.

Pakistan has been a birth place of ideas and rich spiritual traditions. The first book of hymns of Hinduism was compiled along the banks of the Indus as the Aryans started migrating and settling in the South Asian subcontinent nearly four thousand years ago. The rise of the Gandhara civilization is associated with Taxila becoming the seat of Buddhist learning and

spread of Buddhism into China and beyond. In the subcontinent, Pakistan received the full impact of Islam, hence its unique identity.

Pakistan is rich in Sufi traditions. Sufi saints of Punjab and Sindh and their shrines in Lahore, Multan, Sehwan and several other spiritual centres are deeply revered and shape religious orientation of large sections of the population. A linked tradition is of mystical poetry that remains popular to this day and has a unique genre of singing. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, a renowned Sindh Sufi poet-saint, founded a new musical tradition called Shah-jo-Rago. Shah Hussain, Sultan Bahu, Bullhe Shah, Madho Lal Hussain and Khwaja Ghulam Farid are the most celebrated among the many mystic Sufi poets of Punjab which is also famous for romantic folk poetry. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khushhal Khan Khattak is the most renowned poet and savant, who lived in the seventeenth century.

Languages

Pakistan is inhabited by a mix of migrating populations creating a mosaic of different races and distinct linguistic groups. There are scores of languages and dialects spoken all over Pakistan with seven major languages namely Pushto, Hindko, Punjabi, Siraiki, Brahavi, Sindhi and Balochi. According to some scholars, Brahavi has a Dravidian origin.

All languages are rich in folklore and poetry. The national language Urdu is not linked to any particular region but has developed over one millennium as a blend of Persian, Turkish, Arabic and local languages and as part of the Muslim heritage in the subcontinent. Lahore has remained one of the principal literary centres of Urdu in the region.

Literature

Urdu is recognized among the major languages of the world and in the richness of literary traditions, it rivals other significant languages of the orient. The tradition owes to the poetic genius of great luminaries such as Amir Khusro (1253-1325), Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib (1797-1869) and the more contemporary Allama Iqbal (1877-1938) and Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984).

Mushaira or poetry recitals are common and are organized at national and international levels. Urdu has a developed tradition in prose. Short stories by Saadat Hassan Manto have been internationally recognised.

In Pakistan, the great Urdu literary tradition has been kept alive by a new generation of poets and writers as Ahmed Faraz, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, Sufi Tabassum, Mustapha Zaidi, Munir Niazi, Parveen Shakir, Abdullah Hussain, Intizar Hussain, Ashfaq Ahmed, Naseem Hijazi, Shaukat Siddiqui and Mumtaz Mufti. For challenges of translation their works have still remained under recognized. In recent years, however, new Pakistani authors writing in English have established themselves internationally as exponents of contemporary Pakistani fiction.

Pakistan with a population of 180 million people is a vibrant multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society, which is remarkable for its diversity and dynamism that combines tradition with modernity. City dwellers in Pakistan make up more than 40% of its population. A large segment of the population is young and is an important asset for the future. Breaking the traditional mould, women in Pakistan are making impressive strides. They are active in politics, businesses and all professions. In many academic disciplines of higher

education, in particular medicine, they often outnumber male students.

Arts

The rich tradition of painting that Pakistan inherited was characterized by naturalism and vibrant colour. At the time of independence, the two most eminent artists in the country were Abdur Rehman Chughtai and Ustad Allah Bux. While the formative influence on both was miniature painting, their themes and styles were dramatically different. Chughtai, the more celebrated of the two, was known for his pastel hued and innovative interpretations of the Mughal female archetype. Bux depicted folk myths and rural life.

The story of Pakistani art is also one of embracing new forms. Within an incredibly short period there was a diversity of master abstract painters, many of whom enjoyed international renown. Most notable amongst these are Shakir Ali and Sadequain who were radically different stylistically and highly influential. The works of an enigmatic female painter, Zubaida Agha, were among the first abstractions to be exhibited in the country. Gulgee, Jamil Naqsh, Ahmed Parvez, Bashir Mirza, Zahoor ul Akhlaque, Shemza, Iqbal Hussain and more recently Qudus Mirza and Tasadaq Sohail as well as Shahid Sajjad in sculpture are other important modernists.

Pakistani CALLIGRAPHERS practice a range of forms in calligraphy; important exponents include Abdul Majid Parveen Raqam, Rashid Butt and Khurshed Alam Gohar Raqam for classical and Gulgee and Ahmed Khan for abstract styles.

Between the traditionalism of miniature and the advent of modernity and abstraction, the contemporary Pakistani artists have an immense variety of influences behind them. Pakistan is perhaps unique amongst nations formed in the 20th century in having arrived at an artistic style that is at once incredibly diverse, instantly recognizable, and globally relevant.

Women have contributed and played a critical role in the development of Pakistani art; many of them have exhibited their works abroad winning accolades from art critics.

Festivals

The cultural vista of Pakistan is colourful and there is a range of religious and spiritual festivals, celebrations of spring and urban and rural fairs called Melas as well as local exhibitions of livestock with dancing horses, tent pegging and other local sports. The Eid festivals are celebrated with great fervour and enthusiasm throughout the country. Weddings are special family occasions for reunions, feasts and rejoicing.

Among spiritual festivals are the annual Urs linked to shrines of important saints. The Urs at Sehwan in Sindh and at shrines in Multan, Lahore and Rawalpindi attract devotees from all over the country and abroad.

Basant, a spring festival, is one of the most colourful. The focus of the celebration is Lahore, especially the inner walled city that adorns a festive look in mid-February with skies filled with kites. On two days of Basant, people organize parties and feasts on rooftops, enjoying kite-flying and kite fighting competitions with musical revelry. All wear saffron clothes to match the colours of mustard fields that flower during that period, turning the landscape into vibrant hues of yellow.

Pakistani cities are alive with cultural



Muhammad Nawaz Sharif
Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
Message

THREE quarters of a century have elapsed since the Muslims of the subcontinent irreversibly resolved to seek their own independent Muslim state.

Their revered Quaid declared that Muslims of South Asia were an independent nation by any definition. He led them to wage a struggle for a state based on principles of social justice, self-determination and equality. The independence struggle witnessed countless vicissitudes but the Quaid never flinched from his avowed objective. The firm commitment of the Quaid wholeheartedly backed by the Muslim nation ultimately succeeded in carving out an independent homeland. The Quaid bequeathed to his people the Promised Land with the exhortation to preserve and protect it for future generations.

Three quarters of a century later, the Quad's Pakistan is groping to overcome unprecedented threats and challenges. The peace loving people of Pakistan are unwittingly exposed to threats posed by extremism and terrorism. Pakistan has been subjected to an existential threat that it has no option but to confront. The anti-state elements threatening Pakistan are out to threaten not only the lives but also the very fabric of the Pakistani nation. But the Pakistanis have irrevocably stood up to the challenge and have resolved never to give in. Pakistan is resolved to redeem its pledge given to its founding fathers that it will protect the homeland. We are also committed to preserve and ensure freedom, equality and social justice as core values of our polity as desired by our enlightened forbears.

I am a steadfast believer in permanence of morality based representative plurality envisaged by the Quaid. I greatly value the equality principle and consider it vital for national preservation. I am a formidable opponent of anachronistic notions of obscurantism and consider it harmful to our national existence. I am confident that with the valued assistance of our valiant armed forces, unconditionally supported by the entire array of political opinion, we will surely overpower threatening forces.

I am confident that Pakistan has turned a new leaf in its existence and will soon be able to overcome all odds. My government has embarked upon a vast portfolio of institutional and development ventures that will bear fruit in the near future.

I wish to reiterate my resolve to the nation that under my watch no effort will be spared to bring tolerance and harmony in Pakistan. I am committed to ensure that all Pakistanis are provided with every opportunity to live freely, seek education, gain employment and practice their faith without hindrance, fear and favour.

PAKISTAN PAINDABAD

activity and take pride in renowned institutions of long standing devoted to arts, including performing arts. Colleges in Lahore and Karachi have produced numerous talented artists, architects and designers. National and private galleries as well as academies for music and performing arts contribute to the richness of cultural life in the country. Al-Hamra in Lahore is a centre for performing arts and organizes international musical events, plays and theatre performances. The newly established National Gallery of Arts in Islamabad is emerging as another centre of cultural activity in the capital.

Mamnoon Hussain

President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Message

THE 23rd of March marks the momentous occasion when Muslims of the Indian subcontinent resolved to struggle for an independent state based on principles of equality and justice. It was on this day, 75 years ago, that great thinkers and political leaders came together to embark upon the journey for independence. Quaid-e-Azam realized that it was the right of every Muslim of South Asia to enjoy freedom, equality and social justice. Millions of people sacrificed their lives to realize the dream of Pakistan. To mark this historic occasion I would like to urge all citizens of Pakistan to renew their resolve to bring their country to the forefront of the comity of nations. We are confronted with formidable threats and challenges. Women and children, civilians and soldiers alike, have been targeted by terrorists and extremists. Our schools and our places of worship have been attacked. This day brings us together to remind us of the great struggle and commitment that accomplished the state of Pakistan. Today Pakistan needs the same efforts and commitment from its citizens to unite against evil forces. We must forget our differences and reclaim our country. A country where there is harmony and tolerance, education and prosperity, and people can live in peace and continue to strive towards success.

May Allah Almighty bless us in our efforts to preserve and protect our citizens and our homeland.

PAKISTAN ZINDABAD



National Bank of Pakistan

Would like to felicitate on the occasion of NATIONAL DAY OF PAKISTAN (23rd March) of its glorious ascension. We take this opportunity to join the nation in offering our humble prayers for continued peace and prosperity in the country. On this auspicious moment we pledge to serve and proud to join the economic activities in the Brother Country Bangladesh.



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