

PAKISTANI CULTURE —FACTS AND MYTHS *

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Pakistan came on the world map in 1947 but its land and people had lived for centuries by norms, traditions and rituals of the society--- which in technical term and called culture and which are enshrined in the history of the sub-continent.

Culture is a product of history. It carries in it dictating imperatives of both time and space in cognitive sense. Cultural blossoming cannot be discerned without taking into account racial heterogeneity in the distant past nor can it be separated from the geographical impact on a given society. The Dravidians, the Aryans, the Mohanas have left impeccable marks on the customology of the living people of this sub-continent. The Indus, the Ganges, the Brahamputra, Sundarbans, Rajisthan, the Himalayas, the food baskets of river fed deltas of Doab, Punjab, Bengal and Narbada Valley--- all contributed to the making of the sub-continental man Religions play significant role in human thought and action. Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam all made continental life rich in urbanity. Equally important in the making of sub-continental culture are the neighbouring societies of both Iran and Turan, wherefrom human migration has been trekking down over the ages for food and shelter to the plain lands of South Asia. While defining culture, we must, therefore, take the roots and seeds of the society.

The Mohanas and Brahuis of Pakistan give to us rich and laudable traditions of the Dravidians' attainment. We take pride in associating with them in the marriage ceremonies denominated under Artti (marriage house hold goods, including flour, ghee, rice, sheep etc), Bajjar (an amount which the relatives and tribesmen give to the groom as an aid), charrya charri (giving his own sister or daughter's hand to another person in return), Waj (the house hold goods which the parents buy for groom's marriage)and other social institution like Ashar, (collective performance). Tabar (family). These traditions form part of all ethnic groups in Pakistan under same or different name.Both Mohanas and Brahuis, reportedly of Dravidian origin carry, much of the central Asian Turkish stock. Their presence on the sub-continent dates back to third/ fourth millennium B.C. The new entrants, the Aryans, also from northern Asia supplanted them in the subcontinent. The Aryans came with a rich culture of the Pamir region and further enriched it in the serene climate of the sub-continent. The number of gods and goddesses with them reflected the state and power of nature. The society divided into castes and the Brahmin held on to the loftiest position. Male dominance, as in many other earlier societies, held upper hand in the Aryan order. The male superiority bestowed godliness in this patriarchal system and the Brahmin male cult attained extra ordinariness. Women had to make themselves worthy of the partnership in marriage and hence the dowry system which permeates in our present society also. Both dhoti and sari which depict body exhibition whether on account of weather compulsion or sex demonstration still rule the day. Saris coverage of body enlarged later under Muslim canons of law in both the communities – Hindus and Muslims in the medieval period.

Music and dances forming part of the religion enriched the human entertainment chapter. Religion negated meat dishes and replenished the cuisine with the use of ghee, vegetable and pulses. Bhangra, Khattak, Atan, Lakhtai, Luddi, Jhoomar, Bamaqa, come from the Aryan dancing which assumed mostly male specialty under the new ideology.

* Reprint from *PAKISTAN*, Journal of the Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar, Dec. 1997, pp. 14-20.

Both the Achaemenians and the Greeks much talked about under foreign impact in our literature make exaggerated reading. Many traits attributed to them in our culture are indigenous dating back to our earlier ancestors.

The role of Buddhism in our cultural refinement cannot be simplified. It gave dignity to the suppressed humanity. The “Sanghas” became the centre of human equality and Prakrit, the common man’s language became lingua franca.

The combined Hindu- Buddhist attainment blossomed in the Kushan era when art and architecture adorned the sub-continental society. Numismatic variations under the impact of foreign trade contact made impressive debut in this period. Poshapur (Peshawar) came into prominence with its traditional art and culture---the symbol which remains reflecting even today. Stupas, monasteries and statue formation forms part of the profession – Peshawar attracted scholars and artists from all parts of civilized world including china and Greece.

The rise of Islam in the sub-continent is a turning point in the socio-political system of the region. Along with bringing fresh wave of Turco-Mongolian ethnic stock, it brought a new political philosophy which challenged the existing (Hindu) social norms and customs. Large number of the lower strata of Hindus deprived of socio-economic privileges, welcomed the new system. The Islamic order, therefore, had to accommodate then with many of its time-honoured institutions. Islam then gradually passed on its colour to the conquered society.

With political rivalry on the top, competition in all human sectors ensued. Religions, the chief exponents of the cultures in both the systems, clashed with each other. The political clash of the Padshah and Maharaja descended to *Mullah and Pandit*. The Mandar received severest challenge from the Masjid.

The Muslims and their Islam had come to stay in India. A process of Co-existence as of necessity emerged amongst the adherents of the two faiths. This blending process bought interaction to knowledge. Language played prominent role in it. Persian was owned by Hindu Scholars and Sanskrit by those of Islam. The early Muslim scientists, Alberuni in particular learnt a lot from Hindu science and discoveries. Advancement of Muslim Mathematics, Astronomy and Medicine owes a lot to India.

Interestingly the type of Islam that came to the sub-continent was either Iranian or Turanian and the latter in greater proportion. Islam had come to central Asia around three centuries earlier and had assumed a shape of its own. The early Muslim invaders of India were either Turks or Pukhtoos. The Ghaznavids were pure Turks, followed by a line of more of the same ilk. The ghorids, the Kailjis, the Tughluqs and the Mughuls were Central Asian Turks. The Lodhis and Suris were Pukhtoos. With them came the Central Asian norm and form to the sub-continent. In their wake also came the great Sufi orders of Chishtiya, Suharwardia, Qadria and Naqshbandia which changed the spiritual life of the society. While other orders mostly remained socio ethical, Naqshbandia also developed political inclination. Mujaddid Afl-i-Sani, Shah Wali Ullah, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Syed Ahmad Shaheed Brelvi, Shah Ismail Shaheed, Sulaiman Nadvi, Mahmood-ul-hassn, Ubaid ullah Sindhi and Shabbir Ahmad Usmani emanate from this political link.

Both Mullah and Sufi gave a shape of his own to Islam. The role of Saints, shrines and Madaris cannot be overlooked in the socio-political formation of the society in Pakistan. Many of the political personalities of Pakistan derive their support and succour from the shrines and *Madaris* of Pakistan.

The sub-continent also came under great thrust of the Persian literature as compared to Arabic under Central Asian influence. Bu Ali Sina, Jalal-ul-din rumi, Abdul Rahman Jami, Rodaki, Hakeem Sanai, Watwar, Farabi, Ansari, Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi, Khiyam, Firdosi, Hafiz Shirazi, Shaikh Sa'sdi and many more like them made their impact on the life and thought of the sub-continental man. Farsi Provided mother care to Urdu.

Architecturally; the sub-continent noticed new forms of buildings. The mosque being the most prominent Muslim structure was patterned after the Central Asian design. Painting, calligraphy, music, Qawali all added new charm to the society here.

Great changes were brought into the dress and eating habits of the sub-continent under Islamic order. Qaba, Kulah, Shalwar, pagri, peshwaz and dopatta replace local dhoti and sari, meat dishes replace pulses and vegetable dishes in the sub-continent. Kabab, kofta, pulao, biryani, zardah and halwa replenished the local diet. The word Khan adorns majority of Muslim names in the sub-continent. The addition of Beg, Chughtai, Bukhari, Badakhshani, Lodhi, Ghorri, Afghani, Kilji, Qureshi, Ansari, Madani, Alvi, Razvi and Siddiqui with our names is a distinct testimony to our link with the Islamic world.

The advent of the Europeans into the sub-continent bought another landmark in social-political life of the land and people of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. It brought both concepts of secularism and Christianity to the sub-continent. Secularism flourished amongst the newly educated Europeanised people while Christianity appealed to the down trodden Shuder section of the Hindu society. The Englishman gave to India the concept of marketing and urbanity. New cities and settlements emerged in all corner of the sub continent after the name of their area administrators. The new schools and colleges brought forth a new set-up of Intelligentsia, the babu class and the white collar workers. It also created a new landed gentry which exercised a great impact on the socio-economic life of the land. The west ministerial system of government and administration bought a new breed of Politicians, administrators and civil servants. The introduction of electricity, transport and communications facilities, radio and bioscope (cinema), followed by newsprint media and pet culture changed the human concept about life in the sub-continent.

During their rule of about a century, the British bought a great cultural change in the sub-continental society. With their long stay here, they replaced "Diwan" with chair and table. The upper class began to use knife and fork while eating because the British used to do so. Coat and Pantaloon were introduced by the British. Besides health facilities including hospitals, medicines, surgery, pipes potable water through overhead tanks, modern sewerage system, the British also introduced a lot of English dishes in the sub-continent including cake, pastry, bread (double roti), biscuits and egg-butter breakfast.

Plantation of tea, potato, tomato, tobacco and citrus fruits were introduced in the sub-continent by the British. Tea drinking displaced every other local entertainment item.

Western sports and games rooted in the Geek Olympic traditions were introduced in the east. Beside usual local field sport events, court games like tennis, billiard, cricket, hockey, football, volleyball, squash, basketball etc were introduced in the sub-continent.

Western dress, cuisine, language and formats became symbols of advancement. The introduction of banking system gave impetus to concept of market economy, followed by industrial growth in major cities of the sub-continent. India, though to a large extent remained a granary and market to Britain, yet it exhibited its industrial potential in cotton and jute products.

The indo-Pak soldier, for the first time, participated in world wars under the British command and learnt of the world value system in politics. Communism made strides towards India under Soviet orientation to counter British hegemony in the area. It all had a great impact on the making of the man that started life in the new states of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

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