

# **Cultural History of Indian subcontinent; with special reference to Arts and Music**

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## **Introduction**

Before partition in 1947, the Indian subcontinent includes Pakistan, India and Bangladesh; today, the three independent countries and nations. This Indian Subcontinent has a history of some five millennium years and was spread over the area of one and a half millions of square miles (Swarup, 1968). The region is rich in natural as well as physical beauty. It has mountains, plains, forests, deserts, lakes, hills, and rivers with different climate and seasons throughout the year. This natural beauty has deep influence on the culture and life style of the people of the region.

This land has been an object of invasion either from the route of mountains or the sea, bringing with it the new masses and ideas and assimilating and changing the culture of the people. The invaders were the Aryans, the Dravidians, the Parthians, the Greeks, the Sakas, the Kushans, the Huns, the Turks, the Afghans, and the Mongols (Singh, 2008) who all brought their unique cultures with them and the amalgamation gave rise to a new Indian Civilization.

## **Indus Valley Civilization or Pre-Vedic Period**

The history of Indian subcontinent starts with the Indus Valley Civilization and the coming of Aryans both are known as Pre-Vedic and Vedic periods.

The Indus River Civilization dates back to 2300 – 1750 BC and had two main cities; Harappa in western Punjab and Mohenjo-Daro on the lower Indus in Sindh – now the two important provinces of Pakistan. Both cities were urban grain growing civilizations and were believed to have run by Aryans who came from Iran (Mcintosh, 2008).

**Sculpture:** The statues found at the sites include both human and animal forms with intricacies and finest details. Some seals were found engraved with figures and motifs also. All these things were made with limestone, bronze, stone and terracotta (Pal, 1988). **Architecture:** The Harappa and Mohanjo Daro sites show the great architecture patterns of the time. The Houses were made of baked bricks, the drains and bathrooms were also laid down by bricks. There was a proper drainage system from the houses to the central drain. The houses were double storey with the ground floor made of bricks and the upper storey of wood. There was a public bath site found that could have been used for religious motives. Thus the cities were scientifically laid down. The construction of the houses was luxurious with bathrooms, upper story, wells, assembly halls,

granaries, barracks and workshops. There were market places and beautiful personal ornaments found there. The gold, silver, lead, copper, tin alloys, precious stones, cotton and wool had been in use by the inhabitants and the domestic animals like buffalo, sheep, elephant, bull and camel were present in the households (Mcintosh, 2008). **Dance:** In Harappa, a torso of a dancing girl was found which shows that dance as an art was present there. The musical instruments of that time found in the history are flute and drum. (Mcintosh, 2008).

**Effects of culture on intercultural relations:** There is evidence of cultural relationships of Indus valley civilization with other communities like the similar items are found in Mesopotamia (Mcintosh, 2008).



### **Aryan Migration or Vedic Period (1750-1000 BC)**

The Aryans were nomads who worshipped gods (their gods were all representation of nature). Their literature known as Rig Veda has many hymns for the gods, they distinguished between small gods and the Supreme Creator. Their worship includes sacrifice followed by the prayers.

The Aryans expanded their empire first towards the valleys of Ganges and the Jamuna and later to include the whole of Northern India (Gupta, 1999).

The local inhabitants resisted hard but at last were conquered by Aryans. This merger brought into existence a new civilization where the Rig Veda, sacrifice and prayers were changed into ritualistic worship conducted by a priest class known as Brahmanas. The superstitious beliefs in nature and spirits and the division of society into caste system emerged and divided the people of the society into four classes; the fair complexed Brahmanas (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors),

Vaisyas (Yeomen) and dark-skinned Sudras (the indigenous serfs). With the passage of time the roles and duties of each class became rigid and hereditary (Gupta, 1999).

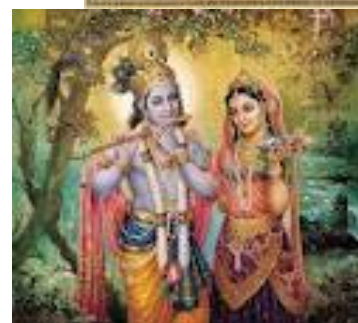
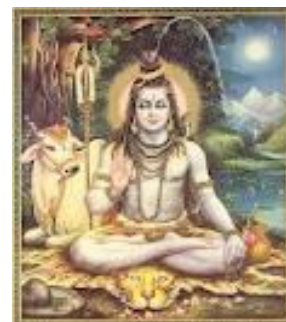
**Dance and Music:** In Rig Veda, there are references of dancing and other musical instruments as part of religious practice. The hymns of Rig Veda were chanted as a religious singing, it was more like a recitation than singing (Gupta, 1999).

**Note:** The Vedas are the most primitive fictitious literary record of Indo-Aryan civilization. It consists of mostly mantras or prayers and summons in praise of various Aryan gods. The word Veda means insight, facts or revelation, and it is valued and regarded as the language of the gods in human speech. The core message of the Vedas is to control the social, legal, domestic and religious traditions of the Hindus which are exactly followed to the present day. All the customs of Hindus conducted upon birth, marriage, death etc. are based upon Vedic principles and they are being followed from time immemorial (Khanna, 2007).

The Rig Veda is a collection of inspired songs or hymns and is a main source of information on the Rig Vedic civilization. It is the oldest book in any Indo-European language and contains the earliest form of all Sanskrit mantras that date back to 1500 B.C. - 1000 B.C. Some scholars date the Rig Veda as early as 12000 BC - 4000 B.C. (Khanna, 2007).

### **Brahmanism (900 BC)**

In the mean time a group of solitary persons or hermits and wanderers of the forest evolved the concept of Supreme Reality in terms of “Brahma, the infinite divine power which means that by stripping off everything external a man can find its true being, the self, the soul. This gave birth to the ideas of Hinduism, which later was the reason and inspiration of many religious movements in the area. This later period is depicted in the epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. However, the Brahmanas remain the untouched and rare blood sacrifices were still offered but the caste system became less rigid and the new gods along with the spirits of waters, herbs, trees etc. appeared in belief system of the people. The concepts of Karma, Maya, Mukti and Re-birth (Reincarnation) came into existence as well as the feelings of pity for all living beings (Bahadur, 1979).



**Dance and Music:** There are legends about the origin of dance in Hinduism, like the great Lord Siva gave the first glimpse of the dance who was a cosmic-dancer and among his many great names is Nataraja meaning the Lord of Dancers and Actors.

Another reference to the holy dance is that of Krishna and Radha, the Eternal Lovers. Krishna through his divine love, shown in the dance leads the couple to freedom. It is also believed that Brahma (the One Creator of All), gave the Natya Veda to great Bharata, the father of Indian Dance and Dramatics. The Brahmins and Buddhists literature has references of musical theory and practice too (Bahadur, 1979).

**Effects of culture on intercultural relations:** The class system divided the society and the people of lower castes were suppressed and brutally treated by the upper classes. There were no mixing of the lower and upper classes people, no social contacts, no marriages and lower classes were considered and treated like slaves and there was no peace between these four classes.

### **Jainism and Buddhism (500 B.C or 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C)**

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C two new religious movements, Jainism led by Mahavira and Buddhism led by Buddha emerged to catch the attention of people with their message of Truth, Non-violence and Renunciation/Denial. They advocated for religion as a personal matter of an individual and showed reflection on the daily conduct of life (Sen, 1988). Their message was for ethical values and they believed in love, freedom and equality for all human beings. Soon the masses who were the victim of class system and the tyranny of the priests, became prone to their teachings and a large number of people among the middle class and kings converted to Buddhism and Jainism was mostly followed by the richer merchant class (Sen, 1988).

**Sculpture:** The teachings of Buddha were against the development of art as it leads to desire and shun the man from reaching the ultimate goal, so the monks were forbidden to paint the pictures on the walls of the monasteries or to indulge in the art of sculpture. So we find no traces of sculpture art in this period (Swarup, 1968). **Architecture:** From Indus Valley Civilization till the period of Maurya, we found no traces of architectural remnant and have to depend upon the literature and assumption for it. Might be the houses were made of wood, mud or bamboos so we found no evidence of them. But the Vedic literature states about houses, halls and fire-altars. In Ramayana and Mahabharata also there is description of assembly halls, balconies, gateways and double storey buildings (Swarup, 1968).

### Alexander the Great (327 -26 B. C)

Alexander invaded the Punjab state of the region in 327 – 26 B.C and linked India with Iranian Civilization (Gordon & Walsh, 2009).

### Asoka Maurya (324 – 200 B.C or 273 – 236 B.C)

Asoka Maurya's period was dominated by Buddhism but he also showed tolerance to other religions (Sen, 1988).

**Sculpture:** He tried to give unity of culture by making stupas (Buddhist relic shrines) and pillars engraved with his addresses and lectures. The pillars of Asoka's era were regarded as great piece of work in the Indian art history as they represented bold designing, technical skills and expressive symbolism. The Buddhist regime of Maurya instigated many revolts from the followers of Hinduism and in 184 B.C, General Pushyamitra Sunga commenced with reverting, reasserting and rehabilitating Hinduism again with all its orthodox ceremonies, rituals, sacrifices and the supremacy of Brahamanas. During this period, the revival of Sanskrit language and the great epics took place. Under, Pushyamitra and his successors, the Buddhists were allowed to decorate their stupas and eventually the ritualistic worship was accepted in Buddhism also (Sen, 1988). This paved the way for art to flourish as the Buddhists thoughts and ideas, myths and legends were presented in visual forms. The pillars and stupas of that time depicted the reincarnation stories of Buddha and were illustrated as scenes on them. **Architecture:** The use of stone in architecture started in Maurya's regime (Schmidt, 1995). He established monuments, pillars and stupas engraved with the teachings of the Master (Buddha). **Dance:** In Asoka time, the dance continued as a sacrificial practice (Schmidt, 1995).



**Effects of culture on intercultural relations:** The society developed due to the liberal values of its emperor and the people enjoyed the riches and pleasures of life which is also evident in the art of that period.

## **North India/South India**

The Satavahana ruled over Northern Deccan and extended to South for the period of nearly 300 years and their empire flourish with trade in towns and ports. The Romans convoy came to its western coasts for spices, diamonds and pearls and from eastern ports the ships went to Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Java and Annam. They also had vast plains on the wide river valley in eastern coast. The Satavahanas were catholic and offered charities to Buddhism and gifted marvelously to shrines and monasteries where the monks could live and meditate (Thaper, 2002).

## **Invasion of North India (200 BC)**

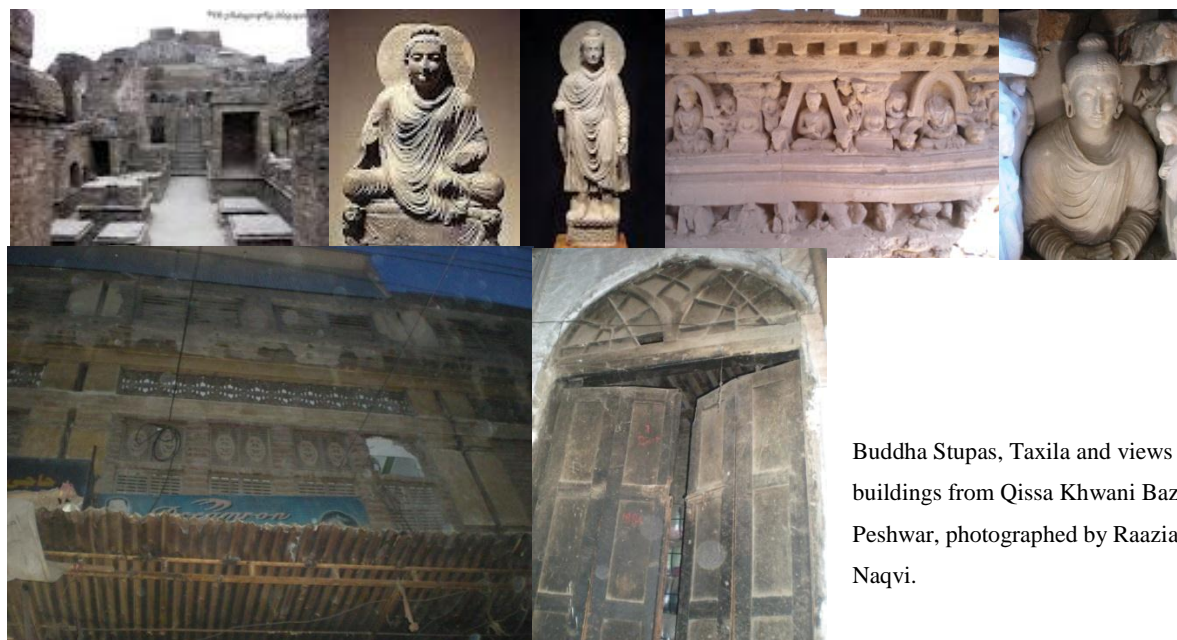
The north western borders of the country was swooped by first Greeks who came from Turkestan and Northern Afghanistan. They were followed by Sakas who came from Central Asia and ruled over lower Indus region and western India. Afterwards came Parthians or Pahlavas who were mostly Iranian wanderer/nomads and encouraged Hellenistic civilization and arts in their empire (Thaper, 2002).

Kanishka (A.D. 78 – 123) belonging to Kushans tribe extended the empire to include Kashmir, Upper Sindh, Bihar. Even beyond India towards Hindukush, Herat, Kabul, Ghazni and Kandahar provinces of Afghanistan and Seistan and Balochistan. Kanishka changed the face of the Buddhism by converting it to theistic. The Buddha became the object of worship and prayers, devotion, faith and charity became the guiding principles of life (Thaper, 2002).

**Sculpture:** As Buddha was the main Universal teacher and the Great Person of the time, the seated and standing posture of Buddha became the attention of the artists (Brancaccio & Behrendt, 2006). **Gandhara Art:** The Gandhara art as is revealed in the ancient ruins of Jalalabad, Bamiyan and Hadda of Afghanistan and the Peshawar (Takht Bhai) and Taxila in Pakistan, had influence from many foreign sources including the Persians, the Greeks, the Sakas, the Pahlavas and the Kushans. The stories were still represented on the stupas and the pillars along with the standing or seated image of Buddha and Budhisattvas (the stage of not still acquiring the full Buddha - hood). (Brancaccio & Behrendt, 2006). **Architecture:** The Gandhara monasteries in Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Baluchistan and Swat districts of Pakistan and Kabul of Afghanistan are a master piece of architecture of Kushan's era. They consist of courts with open roof tops with assembly halls or chapels surrounding these courts; can be marked as kitchens, baths or dining

halls (Brancaccio & Behrendt, 2006). **Story Telling:** Peshawar, capital of Khyber Pakhtoon Khawa Province of Pakistan, had always been famous for its folktales. This small city is about twenty miles from the Khyber Pass, the main pass linking Afghanistan with the Indian subcontinent. In the olden days it was an important stopping-place for traders, because here the caravan routes from China, India, Persia and Turkestan joined. It is said that the travelers used to meet in the renowned Qissa Khwani Bazaar (Storyteller's market), where they would exchange stories learnt on their travels. The storytellers now sit in Hujras and recite the stories. However, the trend is dying as now days as the people listens to radio rather than the story tellers (Ahmad & Boase, 2010).

**Effects of culture on intercultural relations:** The Buddhist teachings promoted peace as they advocated for religion as a personal entity and spread the message of love and harmony among the people of different communities. The story tellers used to narrate the stories of kings and common people of different cultures which brought them together without even visiting the other societies and bringing the culture familiarity as is still seen between the people living at the Afghanistan and Peshawar borders of Pakistan.



Buddha Stupas, Taxila and views of old buildings from Qissa Khwani Bazar, Peshwar, photographed by Raazia Hassan Naqvi.



## Traditional India

### Gupta Empire (320 – 500 CE)

The invaders brought with them their manners, religion and ethics and imposed them on the masses. The relief came in the form of Gupta Emperors in (A.D. 319 – 510) who were basically feudal (Prakash, 2005). The first king of the line Chandra Gupta married in the ruling elites of Nepal and Bihar. The Guptas ruled over Gujrat, Kathiawar, Deccan, Bengal, Assam and hilly districts of Garhwal and Kangra and some of the tribal states of Punjab. During Gupta's regime the society adhered to nationalism and provided ideas for the great cultural revival in the country. The literary figures of the time produced great literature and art on the encouragement of their emperors (Prakash, 2005).

**Sculpture:** The art of the time was considered as “classic” in Indian history as it touches the limits of elegance and sophistication. Different gods of Hindu were portrayed in sculpture with sensuous details. The animal figures were also made but vegetative patterns found no place in the art (Prakash, 2005). **Architecture:** The Gupta regime saw the evolution and rise of decisive period in the form of temple as a Hindu sense of “House of



god”. The Vishnu temple in Jabbalpur district, Siva temple at Bhumara in Negod, Parvati temple at Nachna in Ajaigah, temple of Siva at Deogarh in the Jahnsi district and nine rock-cut asylums in Gupta tradition at Udayagiri in Bhopal are the examples of fine architecture of the time



(Prakash, 2005). **Dance and Music:** In Gupta regime, dancing became necessary elements in upper class culture and dancing at courts was a common feature. The history revealed that some of the rulers of Gupta regime were musicians themselves (Prakash, 2005)

**Effects of culture on intercultural relations:** Dancing became the means of expressions of one's feelings and the means of making the gods or the ruling elite happy or pleased.

### **Invasion of Huns (455 – 528 CE)**

The Gupta Empire came to end with the invasion of Huns from Central Asia who brought mass destruction by looting, ruining and burning the entire national heritage (Prakash, 2005).

### **Rajput Era (North India) and Regional Empires (South India) (650 – 1335)**

Vakatakas ruled over Deccan until about 500 A.D. and later the Chalukyas from Badami take over the territory and the Pallavas were the successors in the line of Deccan throne who came from Dravidian region. The Chalukyas and Pallavas hold over the South India regime for three hundred years. This period was of Hinduism success and became the religion of people of both the north and south India. The worshipping of Hindu gods and the religious verses in the local language were provoked among the masses. Sanskrit established its influence and Kanchi became the seat of Sanskrit learning in the South and as sacred a place as Kashi of the North. This gave birth to new common civilization which was Indian with common language and script, common systems of worship and common social outlook. The construction of gorgeous temples, sculptures and paintings of the time revitalized the religious thoughts too (Sen, 1988).

After the death of Harsha, the North India broke down into different small empires and the political leadership was passed to the Rajputs who were an upper class of former princes, feudal or army officials of the foreign races like Sakas, the Pahlavas and the Huns. The Rajputs claimed that they were the descent of old Hindu gods Surya, Chandra and Agni etc. All this clan clashes and religious rivalry opened the path for Muslim invaders to enter the region (Sen, 1988).

**Sculpture:** This was the time when different gods of the Indian got faces and were portrayed with religious fervor and passion by acquiring new strength and attributes e.g. the four faces of Brahma and Veshnu, and five faces of Siva and three eyes of Mahadeva reflected their strength, power, knowledge and sovereignty thus ensuring their divinity and holiness. The human form and features were the main focus of the artists of the period and they imitated the human form with full natural beauty (Swarup, 1968). **Paintings in the Hindu and the Buddhist Era:** The origin of this form of art is



described in the historic literature of Hindus and Buddhists. The pictures were figurative of gods and goddess and their supernatural powers. The early history of Buddhist's literature revealed that no festival was considered complete without decorating the walls, doors, streets of the village or town with paintings of pictures (Swarup, 1968). **Dance:** The practice of dancing at temples as part of the daily worship developed in the early years of the history and the women who dedicated their lives to the Lords of the temples and dance as a a ritual of the temples, are called "Devadasis" (Swarup, 1968). **Music:** The Bhakti form of worship gave revival to Indian Music in which the worship by prayers and by songs was stressed which were the sign of real devotion to the gods (Swarup, 1968).

**Effects of culture on intercultural relations:** The emperors of these small dynasties were all the time fighting with each other and gave no importance to the mutual national outlook and this resulted into drastic changes in the social as well as religious sphere of the region. The Buddhism merged into Hinduism and Jainism withdrew into the background. The spirits of sectarianism rise among the different clans and the rulers to get support of the religious leaders and to win the hearts of the masses, spent lavishly on temples and religious rituals. The religious texts were written down and all people have to adhere to it in their daily life. The artists and artisans were also under the full control of the scholastic theoreticians who even prescribed the smallest details of their work (Sen, 1988).

### **Arabs take Sindh (711)**

First Arab Muslim to capture the lower Indus valley was Muhammad bin Qasim who opened the way for Umayyad Caliphs to penetrate in the region. But as their homeland was far off in Baghdad so it was not easy to get assistance or any type of support from there and the empire could not bring effective results (Annemarie, 2004).

After nearly three centuries, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century came Seljug Turks from Central Asia, they got hold of the region as the Indians were ill-organized and there was no political integrity (Annemarie, 2004).

### **Raid of Mahmud of Ghazni (997 - 1027) and Muslim India**

Mahmud raided the region in 1000 A.D. from Ghazni and destroyed the worship style and wealth of the area and as a result the Hindu domain vanished from most of the Punjab. A century passed and another Muslim warrior Sultan Muhammad came from Ghur a neighbouring area of Ghazni with his slave governor, Qutbuddin Aibak. The victory of Muslims over the region had resulted in building their empire in the Punjab, the Gangetic plains and the Bengal and subsequently down till Mysore and Delhi. The Hindus thought that this race will also be merged into their religion but the Muslims were proud of their religion and culture and soon Islam and Muslims were accepted in the social and religious life of the people (Annemarie, 2004).

### **Mughal Empire (1526 – 1858)**

Itutmish, Balban, Khiljis, Tughluqs and other Muslim Sultanates were ruled over by the Turkish Mughals who came to India in 1526 under Babur rule. The Muslims who advocated for one God and the equality of all men, their simplicity and condemnation of caste system, polytheism, idolatry and ritualism became popular in the masses and most of the Hindus embraced Islam for the true faith, sincerity and purity of life which symbolized from the life of the Muslims. But at the same time there were Muslim writers and poets (Muslim Sufi order) who along with their Islamic traditions brought assimilation with Hinduism and the rulers offered Hindus the jobs in bureaucracy and in Army too, without compromising in the supremacy of Islam. Hindu music, art and dance were given space at the courts and Hindu motifs got blended with Islamic art (Richard, 1995).

But this was only true for the North India, the South remains under the rule of Hindus and the Cholas Empire remains from 985 to the middle of the thirteen century and spread over the northern Ceylon, Bengal, Burma, Malay and Sumatra. This part extended the temples with courts and halls thus growing it into temple towns. The gods were kept in these temple towns as kings in the courts. These towns include the enclosure for musicians and dancers and dancing developed as a great part of the art. This regime was also run over by a Muslim Sultan Alauddin Khilji who came from the North in early 14<sup>th</sup> century (Richard, 1995).

Khilji's state could run for only twenty five years and the South was again taken over by Hindus, this is known as Vijayanagar Empire in the history and lasted for almost two hundred years. It

became the center of Hindu Cultures and many gorgeously decorated temples are still a proof of strong religious feelings of the Hindus of that area (Richard, 1995).

In Deccan state, a Muslim ruler Bahmani grew up against the Vijayanagar Empire. This empire gave permission to immigrants of Western Asia to port at Western India and take up jobs in the administration. This period was of Persian influence in the art and culture of the area (Richard, 1995).

The Mughals who came in 1526 in Delhi under Babur rule, were Turkish nationals but were very Iranian in Culture. After Babur came his son Humayun and then Sher Shah Suri, they all influenced the arts and culture along with the Mughal court by bringing in it Persian as well as Iranian touch (Richard, 1995). Akbar, Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb Alamgir (A.D. 1658-1707) were the successors of the Mughal emperor Humayon (Richard, 1995).

Aurengzeb's religious fervor roused resistance from the Marathas, Sikhs, and Rajputs and soon the empire collapsed. Nadir Shah from Persia took over Delhi and many viceroys from other provinces declared their independence. The Delhi ruler had thus to accept protection from the British in 1803, who were the holder of next rule over India. This decline also reflected in the art, literature, architecture and paintings of the time. The Nawabs of the provinces were only interested in the cheap and romantic sentiments. The nobles started making the cloth and handicraft goods and Kathak dance flourished in the courts. Only the Hindu states of Rajasthan and western Himalayas still radiated with influence from artistic Mughal style. This Hindu art had a native feeling of nature, spirituality and romanticism (Richard, 1995).

**Sculpture:** As in the views of Islamic elites of the time, the teachings of Islam and Quran forbade making of sculptures so human and animal statues and drawings are not found in this period (Sharma, 1999). **Architecture:** The Muslim architecture of the time instead of using sculpture was dominated by carving and paintings of text from the Holy Book "Quran" and Arabic and Persian floral and geometric motifs are found on the sites of Muslim architectures. The Mosque and the Grave were the key important buildings of the time. Qutbuddin Aibak made the first mosque called Quwwat ul Islam or Might of Islam at Delhi, India later to add the Qutab Minar with the mosque. The Rohtas fort made by Sher Shah Suri (1541-45) near Jehlum, Pakistan is also a masterpiece of Muslim architecture. The tomb of Humayun (1564) in Delhi,

Fortress Palace of Agra, another mosque built by Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri along with tomb of Salim Chisti a benefactor and sufi saint of Akbar, Palaces of Jodh Bai, Mariam Sultana and Birbal, Dewan e Khas (Hall of private audiences - 1575), Jahangir's tomb near Lahore, Agra Fort and Moti Masjid near Delhi, Taj Mahal at Agra by Shahjahan and Badshahi Mosque at Lahore built by Aurengzaib

(1674), are the fine examples of Muslim architecture (Sharma, 1999).

**Painting:** The emperors Khilji and Tughhluq gave jobs to indigenous painters in their courts. The paintings of their time included the calligraphy (transcribing the text from the Holy Quran) and also the garden scenes but no animated picture could be found in this time. The Mughal had splendid taste in art. The style of painting in their regime is known as “miniature” which was primarily done on the delicate palm tree leaves till the introduction of paper in the country in 1400, which then became the most popular material for paintings. The Mughals were the first who challenge the religious ban on animated pictures and gave protection to the art of painting. Akbar who himself was a painter since his childhood, had always encouraged the painters and he laid the foundation of first ever Mughal school of painting in India. During Akbar regime, the painters started illustrating the serials of the stories and works of the past renowned writers. The reign of Jehangir is also considered as the Golden age of Mughal painting, the portraits of emperors, members of royal families, holy men, saints, soldiers and dancing girls were depicted by the artists in the paintings (Sharma, 1999). **Dance:** Muslim era saw the decline of dancing art particularly in the North, only Kathak dance was the only survival in North with all its emotions and with the passage of time and the influence of the ruling elites became more and more secular (Sharma, 1999). **Music:** The Sultan Alauddin Khilji had in his court a famous Persian poet named Hazrat Amir Khusrau who was a poet, a musician and a soldier. In Akbar's court, there were total thirty eight masters of music as stated in *Ain i Akbari* and Dhrupad was the most favoured melody sung mostly by Swami Hari Dass at Akbar's court and his disciple Mian Tansen known as jewel of Akbar's court gave Dhrupad a new look by mixing in it the music from other origins. The later emperors, Jahangir and Shahjahan showed the same passion for music. Tansen used to play *Rabab* a musical instrument of that time and Amir Khusrau invented *Sitar*. *Tabla* and *Shehnai* were other popular



instruments in later years of Mughal rule (Sharma, 1999). **Sufism:** *Sufism* is a discipline that leads its believers to moral perfection by civilizing their spiritual and internal aspects and directing them towards accomplishing the Real by transforming them to an ideal and perfect moral personality and behavior, guiding them thereby to the knowledge of God.(Topbas, 2011). *Sufism* is a spiritual system that has had a tremendous impact on world literature and has affected many cultures. The impact of Sufism on Islamic culture can also be seen in the design of many buildings and the architecture in general, the patterns of poetry and music, and the visual effect of colors and calligraphy (Bayat & Jamnia, 1994). The induction of Sufism in Islam brought about a change in the spirit of Muslim Society. In comparison with the orthodox faith, Sufism was more humane, more liberal in forgiving human weaknesses, and more broad-minded on differences of beliefs. By its very nature, Sufism had a deep empathy for poetry as well as for mystical music. Sufism had great emphasis on ethics and most Sufis declared religion only the morals or ethics (Islam, 2002). The most prominent sufi (spiritual leader) of the Mughal's era was Nizam Salim Chisti.

**Effects of culture on intercultural relations:** As Akbar was pro Hindu and married a Hindu woman. He brought the idea of fusion of Hindu and Muslim culture. The art of his time had blend of both cultures, thus idealistic in nature. Jahangir and Shahjahan his successors maintained the same outlook of the society but Aurangzeb Alamgir (A.D. 1658-1707) break that spells again into conventional Muslim policy (Richard, 1995).

Art in the Muslim era flourished due to their good taste and generosity in aesthetic sense. The artists, writers, poets, thinkers, scholars from all over Asia came to their courts. It was a period of Indo-Islamic culmination of expression and glory in arts (music, painting, crafts and architecture) and culture (Richard, 1995).

All the Mughal emperors encouraged the artists and musicians and thus the people of different religions come together and also the sufis saints of the time paved a way in bringing people together.



(Rohtas Fort - photographed by Raazia Hassan Naqvi).

### **European Traders in India (1700 - 1900)**

The European came to India from the route of the sea. First to come were the Portuguese traders, then subsequently came the British, the French and the Dutch. The British were the most successful in extending superiority in colonial contest and till 1803 became the real supreme power of the whole of India. These European nations brought with them the elements of western cultures into the art and ways of living of the people of the country. The Portuguese introduced the regeneration of glitzy art and the French introduced their tastes in the decorations of palaces and houses. The British brought with them the Britain style of architecture and also influenced their modes in paintings and sculptures to such an extent that the Indian mind became alien to their own legacy and heritage.

The British after suppressing the independence war of India in 1858, took the complete administrative hold of the country. Some artists tried to enrich their own historic art but became only the imitators of the past. The new generation also tends to incline towards the western culture and the outbreak came with the independence of the region from the British in 1947 and the emergence of two independent states; India and Pakistan.

### **Conclusion:**

The art of Indian subcontinent is idealistic in nature with strong traces of different cultures and civilizations in it. It is evident from the history that the cultural diplomats in the region were the



invaders, warriors that brought the cultural diffusion through hard power but along with them there were a great number of soft power promoters as artists, suifs, poets, musicians, and story tellers. The role of these cultural diplomats was significant in contributing to the better socio-cultural understanding and building relationship between people of different faiths, sects and regions.

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