

Pakistan's Cultural Diplomacy with India.

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Introduction

South Asia's political history after World War II has been a chaotic one. The disintegration of Pakistan and successive formation of Bangladesh are the most obvious examples of this turmoil. The major problems of this region are authoritarianism, centralization of power, politics of status quo -ism, politics of secularism, religious extremism, forces of ethnic groups, and national integration, concentration of economic power into few hands and poverty of the masses (Kukreja & Singh, 2008).

Nevertheless, over the last fifty years, South Asia has made some stumbling treads towards constancy, harmony and peace. This is an important step forward for a region characterized by diversities of ethnicity, religions, castes, classes, and languages. India has had an un-broken democracy over the last fifty years and Pakistan has been ruled over by military for a period of 33 years out of its almost 65 years of existence (Kukreja & Singh, 2008). Both countries became nuclear states in 1998.

However, Pakistan and India share the same and common cultural history and are tied with the upheaval of the invaders and colonial powers of the past as well. As it was Muslims from whom the Britain took charge, most of the Pakistani thought that it was the Muslims who were the basic and true occupier or lords of the land, not knowing the pre-historic era where the Muslims were also the foreigners who came as traders, merchants and saints and took control of the region from the hands of the Hindus and Buddhists. This rivalry brought to the most effective during the British rule on Indian subcontinent and after partition in 1947. Both countries blame each other for all the massacre and destruction caused at the time of partition and do not realize that the same incidents were found on both sides.

After the Independence, both India and Pakistan had fought three wars (1965, 1971 and 1999) along with the time to time border tensions and clashes, military confrontations and blaming each other for assistance to non-state violent actors. The tensions before and at the time of partition and the problems of disputed and occupied territories had been the bone of contention between the two countries ever since their inception.

Despite all the political differences, the citizens of both countries remain strongly interrelated and interconnected with each other through the (somewhat) same culture, same language, same

dress, same weathers, same festivities and same traditions which are bonding them together despite the diplomatic differences promoted by the states.

Social indicators for India and Pakistan according to UNDP's Human Development Report, 2011:

Country's Name	India	Pakistan
Human Development Index ranking out of total 187 countries of the world (from high to low).	134	145
HDI Value	0.547	0.504
Life expectancy at birth	65.4	65.4
Mean years of Schooling (years)	4.4	4.9
Expected years of schooling	10.3	6.9
Gross National Income	3468	2550
Gender Inequality Index		
Rank	129	115
Value	0.617	0.573
Maternal mortality ratio	230	260
Seats in National Parliament (% female)	10.7	21
Population with at least secondary education (% ages 25 and older)		
Female	26.6	23.5
Male	50.4	46.8
Adult Literacy rate (% ages 15 and older)	62.8	55.5
Mortality		
under 5 per 1000 live births	28	87
adult per 1000 people	111	189
Health adjusted life expectancy	61	55
Total expenditure on Health (% of GDP)	4.2	2.6

Cultural relationships of Pakistan and India - (Analysis of Soft Powers)

Although India is socially, politically and economically better than Pakistan and had made remarkable progress in all spheres as compared to Pakistan, but there remains a stigma and chances of reconciliation in all regards with its neighbouring country; Pakistan.

Following is the analysis of India and Pakistan's relationship in terms of media, literature, cricket, pilgrimage and education along with some suggestions for improvement of ties for the future.

Literature, History and Text Books

It is also due to the wrong and biased depiction of the past in the history books written by writers of both countries only to defame each other and bring glory to its heroes. Most of the text books taught in the educational institutions of both countries also present false and subjective picture so the nation grew up thinking each others as rivals and enemies. In order to invoke nationalism and making people proud of their past, the syllabus taught in the schools was rewritten with vigilant removals, erasures and accumulations to present facts and truths as a glory of one nation (Saigol, 2006). For example in the text book of India it is written that,

“The Babri Mosque was built after demolishing a temple, which is exactly the same place where the Indian god ‘Rama’ was born.”
(Saigol, 2006)

And in the Civics textbook of Class VI, Pakistan it is written that,

“The Hindus attacked Pakistan in 1965 at the hours of night so they are timid and cowardice and always had sneaky ways to fight with the courageous Army of Pakistan.” (Saigol, 2006).

The history is distorted making one's own personalities as heroes and blaming others for all the bad things and happenings in the past. This kind of knowledge was designed to create hatred and violence against religious and national fragments gave birth to many episodes of tensions among the people of the country in India and Pakistan like the incidents of demolishing of Babri Masjid

and Gujrat massacre in 2002 in India and this leads to destruction of many temples in Pakistan subsequently (Saigol, 2006).

Media

The media is no exception which promotes hostile feelings in the masses at the both sides. Most of the Indian and Pakistani films and dramas were based on provoking hatred with each other. Media of both countries can also promote peace and solidarity among the masses. But the true picture is that the print and electronic media enhance the tensions and play negative role in building relationships between two countries. It can be referred as “A tyranny or cruelty of victimology” as said by David Binder of New York Times (Alam, 2006). This is truly said that now a day war is fought on the media front and it is true for both Indian and Pakistani media.

Electronic Media

Indian cinema and Music had made a tremendous progress in the last century as compared to Pakistani cinema which has deteriorated to the state of non existence in the present day world. The artists and singers of Pakistan in order to get work and recognition started working in the Indian films and dramas and the Indian films also found a way in the cinemas of Pakistan. Although the films of India has ever been popular in Pakistan and the heroes of Indian film industry were praised and loved by Pakistanis long before the state give permission for the broadcasting of Indian channels officially. The songs of Indian films can be heard in almost every household of Pakistanis and even the shopping malls, in common day transportation vehicles and also in rural areas of Pakistan.

Shah Rukh Khan a middle class Muslim boy from Delhi-India is considered a living legend of Indian film industry. He is popular as King Khan and is termed as a modern-day god as his posters are sold among religious deities in the streets of India (Anupama, 2007). Shah Rukh Khan is married to an Indian Hindu girl and he termed his marriage as a true face of secularism and thus the face of modern India. Shah Rukh Khan says that,

“The language, the name of god, should not become an issue between couples, between neighbours, society and the whole of the

country. I stand for the young, educated Indian and when I say Indian it could be Muslim, Hindu or Sikh”, (Rao, 2010).

All the top three Indian film actors naming, Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan and Amir Khan are the Muslim Indians and considered a must for hit of any Indian film or a TV program. Pakistanis watch the films of India with full zeal and the heroes of Indian movies are liked by them. The posters of Indian Actors and actresses can be seen in markets and at homes of people of Pakistan.

Pakistani drama has ever been popular in Pakistan and also in India. The reason being its story is realistic in nature and portrays the simple life of a common man of the region. At the same time, the dramas of Indian channels though also popular in Pakistan, lack the ability to effectively making prominence in the hearts of the learned people, as it is based on family politics, betrayals by family members and loud music. Most of the learned and educated people of India themselves do not appreciate the dramas of their country being promoting family conspiracies as they say this is not a true picture of our society as all Indian common man are not always involved in conspiracies with all its related men.

India wins Oscar in 2009 for its film *Slumdog Millionaire* and its musician A R Rehman also got awards for the making of its music and song *Jai Ho* at the 81st Academy Awards. Another Oscar came to the region in 2010, this time to Pakistan by Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy who won Academy Award for her documentary short film with name as “Saving Face” which was about acid attack victim women in Pakistan.

Cricket Diplomacy

The only form of diplomacy seen between the two countries in the past decade was of ‘cricket diplomacy’. The first test series was played in 1951-52 when Pakistani team went to India and in 1954-55 Indian team came to Pakistan to play cricket. But from 1962-77, no match was played on the home grounds of both India and Pakistan due to the 1965 and 1971 wars between the two countries. (Holm, 2008).

The higher political leadership also goes to stadiums if both countries are playing with each other and buck up their respective teams. There are special messages on TV News if one country beat the other by the political leadership. The former President of Pakistan Mr. Zia ul Haq went to

India in 1987 to watch a match between two countries on invitation of Indian Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi (Holm, 2008).

Today cricket is considered as a part of riot, uprising and rivalry between the masses of the both countries, as the players of both countries were taken as fighting for the win of their country and defeating the rivals. People celebrate the victory on roads and streets if they win the other in cricket (Holm, 2008).

Pakistan and India are going to play together on 25 December onwards in India and it has been after some years that any country is hosting the other on its soil. The reason are the softness shown by the both governments and especially Pakistan considering terming India the Most Favourite Nation (MFN) in the coming new year. This play is taken as a means to promote bilateral ties between the two countries and bringing the people closer. It is expected that India shall allow common people from Pakistan to visit India to watch the match in its stadiums or play grounds and would grant visas to about thousand Pakistani. This is a positive sign to bring peace and harmony between the two nations.

Sikh Pilgrimage Visits to Pakistan

Every year thousands of Sikh *Yatrees* (Pilgrims) came to Pakistan from India to pray at their Holy Places in Punjab Province of Pakistan by a special train service named Samjhota Express that's runs between India and Pakistan. Pakistani government welcomes them and shows hospitality and they went back with enchanting memories, as reported by Pakistan Today, April 11, 2012.

Civil Society and Peace Activists

A number of civil society organizations and NGOs are working to promote peace and harmony between two nations. They include among others South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA), Pakistan, Green circle Organization (GCO), Pakistan, Institute for Secular Studies and Peace (ISSP), Pakistan and *Aman Ki Asha* (Hope for Peace) a joint venture of two daily newspapers of India and Pakistan.

GCO has launched a project where they take citizens of one country to their homes in another country which they left behind after partition in 1947. The people went back to meet their

neighbours, their families and to see their homes where they had spent life in the early days of their lives. ISSP has launched a signature campaign in Pakistan to have soft visa procedures for the people of both countries. Their campaign named “Signatories for Peace” was successful to gather twenty two thousand (22,000) signatures which they collected from ordinary people of the Pakistan at different schools and colleges and from the public bus stations.

Aman Ki Asha (Hope for Peace) is a joint venture of Daily Jang Group, Pakistan and The Times of India which was launched in 2010. The initiative was the outcome of the struggles made by an International NGO named “Friends within Borders” with which these dailies were partners. The programme launched many small projects to promote peace between two nations along with an anthem which says,

“You live within Sight but remain Unseen” and

“These tunes bring us Together, even when we are Apart.”

There are peace activists, human rights organizations and activists, individuals, journalists, scholars, historians, academicians who are all advocating for better ties between India and Pakistan.

Educational Cooperation

India and Pakistan can do much in the educational sector also. Most of the students of South Asian countries go to West for higher foreign education. This involves lots of money and immigration problems along with the chances of militancy and terrorism in the host countries, and because of this factor the visa process is quite complicated and strict for Asian students. According to the UNDP’s Human Development Report 2011, India’s adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and older) is 62.8 and Pakistan’s 55.5 (as shown in the above table). Though the difference is not quite much but India’s educational institutions are producing better stuff than the Pakistanis. So both countries can have bilateral process for educational cooperation and should learn the positive things from each other. This would reduce the economic pressure on the students seeking admission in West and they would be better adjusted due to the somewhat similarity of cultures and languages (Gupta, 2006).

Relations in 21st century/ Latest Interventions

Present day saw the decrease in tensions because of the role the civil society, human rights activists, scholars, artists (actors and singers) has brought in towards each other and is paving the way for a peaceful and democratic relationship between the two countries. The both countries are relaxing the visas for its citizens making it convenient for the masses to meet each other often and releasing the prisoners from jails of the opponent countries.

President of Pakistan Mr. Asif Ali Zardari visited India on a private visit to Azmir Sharif on April 08, 2012. He was accompanied by his children and had a lunch with the Prime Minister of India Mr. Manmohan Singh enroute to the Holy shrine of Salim Chistie a sufi poet and religious scholar of Mughal era. The President of Pakistan invited Indian Prime Minister to visit Pakistan which he accepted and said that he would soon visit Pakistan. They discussed the opportunities for mutual respect, harmony and peace for the betterment of the region and its citizens.

After the announcement of most favoured nation by Pakistan to India and softening of trade ties and relaxing the visa process for ordinary men, the Indian cinema made a film *EK THA TIGER* (once there was a Tiger), 2012 in which the Indian boy from Raw falls in love with a Pakistani girl of ISI and they both eloped betraying the government rivalry of each other but outliving their love for each other as seen between the common people of both countries. The common man of the countries has blood relations, friends and colleagues from both sides and do not have only hostility between them, but they await each other on occasions of marriages, festivals and rituals.

Most of the TV music shows now have both country representatives as the judges and the competitors are also from both countries, even in one music TV show there is a Bangladeshi singer as judge also along with the judges from Pakistan and India.

Till this day, we found many Pakistani artists working for Indian films and music industry. To name a few, *Rahat Fateh Ali Khan*-a Pakistani singer is considered as a success symbol for films in India these days. Some female Pakistani artists are also working in Indian films but due to the difference in cultural norms only woman bold enough would agree to be part of Indian cinema as they have to face the fundamentalists Muslims back in their home country.

On the occasion of last Eid after the Holy month of Ramazan, the Muslims of a small town of Joshimath in the state of Uttarakhand, India offered prayers in a Gurdwara by getting permission from the manager of the Gurdwara, as it was torrential rain on the day of Eid and Muslims can't offer the prayers in the open ground so they asked the manager of nearby Gurdwara who whole heartedly allowed them to offer their prayers there, as reported by the News International August, 22, 2012 and The Indian times, August 23, 2012, thus setting an example of cultural harmony and peace.

Suggestions to promote Peace and Harmony between two countries

- The media can bring the people close and create harmony between two nations. The media of both countries can play an effective role by objectively presenting the news and not playing with and lighting the people's emotions.
- Pakistan and India should start educational ties and offer scholarships for the students of each country and should invite the scholars to come and visit each other and do researches on common interests.
- The literature and syllabus books should not contain hatred to each other and both governments should revise and rewrite the history without depicting hostility to each other.
- There should be cultural exchange programs between India and Pakistan. The artists should be allowed to freely work in each other's TV programs and films and there should be no ban on telecasting each other's programs in both countries.
- The Indian Cultural Center should be established within Pakistan and Pakistan's Cultural Center in India to bring the people together by understanding each other's customs, traditions and values.
- Pakistan should invite and take help from the film makers and singers of India to boost its film industry.
- There should be inter-cultural dialogue between the activists, students, writers, scholars, historians to promote peace and harmony between two nations.
- Trade shall certainly bring the two countries together but visa for common man to visit one's families and meet common man in the two countries should also be relaxed. It is

noteworthy that both countries are also relaxing visas for group tourists to each other country, that is also a good step towards better mutual relationships.

- Cricket should be used to create congenial atmosphere between people of two nations and the leadership should show respect and tolerance towards the defeated side of the country to promote peace in the region.

Conclusion

India and Pakistan share borders, share history, share the heritage, share the sky to say it poetically, so there should be congenial relationship between two countries and it is not always wise to hurl abuse at the neighbour, it should be met with revulsion by all intellectual and learned citizens of these countries who can motivate the state actors to open hands for a peaceful and democratic relationship between the two nations.

We wish for more positive and friendly relationship between India and Pakistan in the coming years.

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