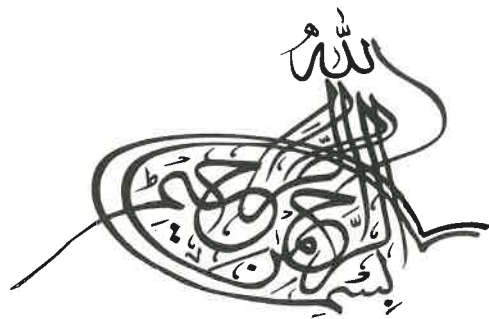


PAKISTAN

THE LAND AND ITS CULTURE



Huma Jalil Abbas



For my family

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Fouzia Aziz Minallah

PAKISTAN
THE LAND AND ITS
CULTURE



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Published by
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Chief Executive / Director General
Pakistan National Council of the Arts

Layout
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Production
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Publisher
Pakistan National Council of the Arts
PNCA Centre, National Art Gallery
F-5/1, Islamabad

e-mail: pncoaisb@gmail.com

ISBN: 969-450-052-4

Printed in Pakistan by WordMate, Islamabad

Price : Pak. Rs. 1195

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The story of Pakistan, the story of its land, its culture, runs with the flowing waters of the Indus. This great river is the lifeline that nourished and fed the ancient civilizations that chartered their course against its banks and left their legacy, whose deeper layers are still visible today.

Pakistan's cultural consciousness starts from Balochistan seven thousand years ago, to spread slowly to rest in the Indus river valley. As epochs passed and the waters of the great river lapped new waves, the land it nourished felt the impact of different civilizations, each unique, each different, spread from the shadow of the greatest mountain range of the world to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea. The beautiful land of snow peaks, green fields and vast deserts, peopled by different races of diverse cultures and languages slowly welded into a fascinating and taut mosaic of one country, in search of a common cultural identity and the need to understand the cultural diversity which is the base of a country where people still live by ancient wisdoms, revere their faith, hold close their beliefs and dream by the music of old songs and stories woven with the waters of rivers, the rootedness of the land and the remote mystery of its mountains.

The history, the cultural expressions, the ancient legends and the cities are all a reflection of the people where the past constantly inheres in the present like the eternal flow of the Indus.

From its mystical beginning through the many twilight tellings, the weave of history continues and in the music, songs and stories of Pakistan who can truly say where dreaming ends and truth is born.

Huma Jalil Abbas



Allah Bux (Ustad)

HISTORICAL SITES/EVENTS

- MOENJODARO
- THATTA
- TAXILA
- TAKHT BAH
- ROHTAS FORT
- SHALIMAR GARDENS
- LAHORE FORT
- ANARKALI'S MAUSOLEUM
- BASANT
- HORSE AND CATTLE SHOW
- SHANDUR POLO FESTIVAL



A. R. Chughtai

MOENJODARO

The culture of a country is born of a vast historical legacy of customs, traditions, myths and legends which evolve into an intangible but comprehensive mode of social living. While the cultural process constantly absorbs and owns new perceptions and influences and keeps adapting to changing social patterns, it becomes imperative to identify and preserve the historic and cultural roots for an understanding of the psyche and mystique of a people.

The first evidence of our cultural roots is Mehrgarh, located in the North Kachchi Plains in the Balochistan province, where the earliest permanent settlement was established in 7000 B.C. This process of the beginning of civilization culminated in the highly developed Indus Valley Civilization of which the most recognized excavations are Harappa on the river Ravi and the ancient city of Moenjodaro that almost five thousand years ago was nourished by the great river Indus in the desert of Sindh. The remains of this spectacular metropolis stand in Larkana district on the western bank of the river.

The excavations reveal that Moenjodaro is a complete city, carefully planned in two distinct parts. The upper part is on a mound, like a high citadel massively fortified. Within the walls are a cluster of imposing baked brick structures with cloistered courtyards and pillared halls surrounding a massive great bath like a sacred tank for ritualistic purposes. At the lower level, the housing and living areas are laid out in a perfect geometric pattern with roads, lanes, courtyards and civic amenities like a covered drainage system and granaries all meticulously planned to serve the needs of a large population. The two levels of habitation point to



Ali Raza

THATTA

The ancient city of Thatta is located hundred kilometres east of Karachi on the west of the Indus and the Arabian Sea coast. It was once Sindh's capital city and a centre for Islamic art. It symbolized the glory of Sindh from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries when four Muslim dynasties ruled Thatta, the Samma dynasty, the Arghuns and Isa Khan Tarkhan, the last of the great rulers till it was annexed to the Mughal Empire by Emperor Akbar.

The history of Thatta goes back two thousand years. In its surrounding barren and rocky Kohistan area excavations reveal occupations dating from the first century B.C. Its origins remain a mystery and its archaeological wonders make it one of the oldest historic sites of the world. The Greeks, Arabs and Persian invaders all left their mark on it and it is believed that Alexander of Greece rested his legions in Thatta after his long march from Asia Minor. Amir Khusrao, the renowned Persian poet of Delhi eulogized the beauty of this city in his verse. Not only was Thatta one of the major seats of learning, fine arts and handicrafts, it was a renowned and flourishing port of continental trade. Travellers, traders and scholars from different countries of Asia and Europe thronged to Thatta for its intellectual, cultural and commercial activities; its wealth and artistic splendour and the prosperity of its thousands of inhabitants dazzled all who came here as it was famously called a utopia of wealth and culture.

A mile west of Thatta is Makli Hill, the world's largest necropolis. It is the resting place of saints, kings, queens, philosophers and soldiers of a bygone era, an era which not only celebrated life in all its cultural and

a dual hierarchical social order, the priestly class or the priest kings, ruling the working class inhabitants who lived below the citadel.

Moenjodaro points to a highly developed urban civilization with its elaborate architectural lay out, where several million people lived a well organized social life. Excavated seals with figures of animals and discovery of precious stones and metal objects indicate that the people had advanced beyond the pure agrarian way of life and may have had trade links with other groups beyond the region. They used a script several examples of which exist on the terracotta pots and seals, but the script has not been deciphered so the language and the mode of communication remains a mystery.

Mystery also surrounds the physical characteristics of these artistic people. Anthropologists claim that the people of Moenjodaro were of non Aryan racial stock and of medium stature and olive complexion, the women fond of gold and bead ornaments and elaborate attire.

Their worship must have been cult worship of either natural phenomena or the mother goddess as a symbol of sustenance and fertility. The figurines of the priest king in an embroidered robe, the mother goddess elaborately jeweled and the young dancer in bronze found at the site all with a strange serenity of expression denote a people at peace with themselves with a deep understanding of their natural environment, of seasonal rhythms and balances of life and existence.

Then abruptly, this highly developed civilization vanished. Maybe it was the consequence of the natural historical cycle of migration and movement, maybe it was tragically destroyed by invading Aryan tribes or by climate change or the drying up of a sustaining river.

History is mute as there is no record of human experience, but the abandoned city of Moenjodaro is a silent reminder of the skill and artistry of a people whose legacy has become an indelible part of the culture of Pakistan. Moenjodaro and Harappa are the two main discovered sites on which the whole edifice of the Indus Valley Civilization rests, and in its discovery, comprehension and understanding is the unravelling of one of the oldest civilizations known to man.

TAXILA

Taxila located about thirty kilometres north west of Islamabad, ranks among the great archaeological finds of the world. Three thousand years ago this region felt the impact of a civilization that was to leave its great cultural legacy on it forever. It became the hallowed centre of Buddhism and the Indo-Greek legacy shaped the cultural idiom which was visible in the sculpture and art forms of the great Gandhara civilization.

Once a province of the powerful Achaemenian Empire, Taxila was conquered by Alexander in 327 B.C. It later came under the Mauryan dynasty and reached a remarkable level of development under the great Asoka. The most creative period of the kingdom called Gandhara was under the Kushan dynasty and under the patronage of the Kushan king Kanishka, Taxila became a great Buddhist centre of learning, philosophy and art. Pilgrims and travellers in search of knowledge and truth came from as far away as China and Greece. At this stage the city of Taxila was very wealthy, populous and well governed. The city layout was fortified and built like the cities of Greece.

The end of this civilization of high learning and balanced humanism came in the fifth century A.D. when the white Huns destroyed the last of the successive civilizations that had held unbroken sway in this region for several centuries. The serene culture of Gandhara withdrew into the monasteries and retreats of Buddhist beliefs.

The archaeological remains of three cities have been excavated and more than a dozen stupas and monasteries have been found in the area nearby. The earliest city Bhir Mound dates back to the sixth century B.C. It seems

aesthetic fullness but also carried this love of aesthete into the final resting place.

The mausoleums of Makli are made of marble and granite and have exquisite and intricate carvings on them. Against the brick and stone used in the monuments are glazed tiles of peacock colours from the exotic purple to light green and brilliant blue, forming a beautiful mosaic and inlay of colour of the Persian style of architecture. The largest and most impressive mausoleum is that of Isa Khan Tarkhan who died in 1644, the other preserved monuments are the mausoleums of Mirza Jani Baig, Mirza Tughral Baig and Diwan Shurfa Khan. A few kilometres away is the Shah Jehan Mosque, a masterpiece of Moghul architecture built by the same craftsman who built the Taj Mahal in 1647 A.D.

Today these palaces, monuments and mosques of unsurpassed beauty are protected as the architectural and cultural wonders of world heritage. The town of Thatta with its ancient twisting lanes and imposing structures and the great necropolis of Makli bear testimony not only to its past glory but to the highly aesthetic cultural and artistic development of a people whose wisdom and superior living was already ancient when the rest of the world was still barbaric and uncivilized, reminders of a glorious civilization whose beginning is hidden in a timeless past.



Taxila Museum

to have irregular narrow streets and small houses of primitive structure, followed by Sirkap, a well planned city having been built in the second century B.C. with its wide streets, the royal palace, and temples and shrines. The third city Sirsukh was apparently built by the Kushan kings of the first century A.D. and seems the most developed but has not been fully excavated yet.

The remains of Buddhist stupas and monasteries in the Taxila valley are located in quiet spots, on the slopes of hills and near secluded springs and rivulets. The excavated monasteries of Dharmarajika, Mohra Moradu and Jaulian have yielded a wealth of gold and silver coins, jewellery and relics. There are endless sublime images of Buddha in stone and stucco and numerous panels depicting all the stages of the great sage's life.

The archaeological treasures are all housed in the Taxila Site Museum. It has a dazzling collection of coins, jewellery, relics and gold and silver caskets. It holds rows of cases filled with the most exquisite Gandhara sculpture crafted at a time when the world was young. These perfectly sculpted friezes and statues of all sizes evoke the mystical life and sublimity of Buddha, the Enlightened One.

Taxila has become the main focus of tourist activity and the area is now considered a protected zone. The hills and valleys of Taxila are an entire civilization and its historical impact on the region makes it a most sought after and intriguing archaeological site the world has ever known.

TAKHT BAHİ

The famous ruins of Takht Bahi the great Buddhist monastery, are situated on the crest and northern slope of a rocky spur of Takht Bahi hill about fifteen kilometres north east of the city of Mardan in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. It is the centre of the ancient territory of Gandhara. The history of the Buddhist monastery of Takht Bahi is shrouded in mystery. It is a wonder that Takht Bahi is not mentioned in any of the Buddhist or historical chronicles.

It is the legacy of a belief of a man who was more than a man, who walked the length of the land to find the truth and under the Bodh tree he meditated and found the answer and from Gautama he became Buddha, Sakyamuni the Enlightened One. Maybe Takht Bahi became the retreat of Buddha's followers after the white Huns devastated the area which was known as Gandhara and to preserve their religious texts and art, the monks retreated into the hills and hidden from the world kept their knowledge and faith alive.

General Court, the French officer of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was the first to mention this site in 1836. Sir Alexander Cunningham, the first Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India visited the site several times and yet could not fathom its origins, though new documentation shows that the monastery could be eighteen hundred years old.

Today the remains of this site are spread on a hill with a magnificent view of the fertile plains and the encircling mountain range.

The remains of the monastery rest on the middle ridge of the Takht Bahi



Taxila Museum

ROHTAS FORT

The magnificent Rohtas Fort is situated on the east bank of the tiny river Kahan about sixteen kilometres north west of Jhelum in the Punjab. From Dina, a narrow road on the west of the highway leads to village Bhaganwalla from where it is clearly visible.

It is one of the most imposing historical monuments, an architectural wonder, remarkable for its sheer size and massiveness. It stands sprawling across a low rocky hill, its great ramparts growing from the cliff, looking north to the low hills of the Salt range and beyond them to the snows of the Pir Panjal.

The Fort was built by the legendary Pathan king Sher Shah Suri who ruled over India from 1540 to 1545 A.D. after expelling the Mughal Emperor Humayun. It was mainly to keep the emperor and his sympathizers the Ghakkar tribes at bay that he had this huge fort constructed on the gorge of the Kahan, for that was the main route from the mountainous country north of the Salt range to the southern plains of the subcontinent. The Ghakkar tribes who lived around the Jhelum hills tried to stop the construction of the fort, but Sher Shah with single minded determination paid a rupee for each stone carried, and in spite of the efforts of the Ghakkars the fort was completed in 1543.

The plan of the fort is adapted to suit the terrain and is defended by a number of deep ravines as well as the river Kahan which breaks through the low eastern spur of the Tilla range. The Fort is about six kilometres in perimeter and surrounded with a massive wall and twelve gates. Its most striking feature is its wall strengthened with sixty-eight bastions. The bastions not only fortify the wall but add majesty and grandeur to the

hill. The religious structures comprise several units like the court of many stupas, the main monastery, assembly hall, courtyard and living areas. It is like a complete city fortified, secluded and self sufficient. All the structures are built in grey coloured limestone and mud mortar. In places massive walls still rise to an approximate height of fifteen metres. Sandstone has also been used for certain parts of the structures.

The explorations and excavations at Takht Bahi have yielded a large number of fine sculptures built in stone, stucco and other artifacts. The sculptures are primarily Buddhist, religious and devotional and depict the life and teachings of Buddha. Most of the excavated treasures of Takht Bahi are preserved in the Peshawar Museum as well as some in the Lahore Museum.

Every year Buddhist devotees from a number of countries like Japan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Thailand throng to this mountain retreat to pay homage and renew their faith in one of the greatest religions and philosophies of the civilized world. As Takht Bahi and its monastic remains continue to enchant visitors and tourists with its antiquity and mystery, it is undoubtedly the most fascinating and complete Buddhist monastery to this side of the Indus in the hills.

SHALIMAR GARDENS

The famous Shalimar Gardens are located five kilometres north east of Lahore city. Laid out as a royal sanctuary at the command of Emperor Shah Jehan, they are an exquisite expression of the Mughal concept of a perfect garden and landscape architecture.

The Mughal emperors made the subcontinent their empire and home, but their inspiration and ideal expression of architecture, city planning and gardens stayed essentially Persian. Maybe it was a nostalgia for their cool mountainous origins or a desire to create that flower and fruit green ambience in the arid heat of the subcontinent that the Mughal emperors especially Jehangir and Shah Jehan had beautiful gardens laid out in their cities and the flower and fruit trees, fountains and water cascades of these exquisite gardens became their haven and sanctuaries between their journeys from one area to another.

In 1639 Ali Mardan Khan, a Persian noble and governor of Lahore, sought permission of Emperor Shah Jehan to build a canal from the river Ravi at Rajpur where its waters descended from the hills into Lahore and within two years the shah naher or royal canal was completed. In 1641 Shah Jehan directed Khaleel Ullah Khan, a noble in his court, to select a site on the canal for laying out a garden, and a site on the old bed of the Ravi was chosen to lay out one of the most beautiful gardens in the world.

The Shalimar Gardens laid out in three terraces, covering an area of sixteen hectares are surrounded by a high wall with serrated battlements. The inner face of the wall has cusped arched panels of varying sizes and a band of colourful frescoes seem to have embellished the exterior of the

huge fort. The wall composed of two or three terraces varies in thickness, the maximum being eleven metres near the main gate. The terraces are inter linked with each other by a stair line. The height of the fortification wall built in coarse rubble stone masonry ranges from ten to twelve metres and holds a large number of galleries to shelter the reserve soldiers and protect storage. The melon shaped and decorated battlements are provided with openings for use of musketry or pouring molten lead on enemies during an attack or siege. Although built for purely military purposes some of its twelve gates are an exceptional example of the architecture of that period. One of these gates called the Sohal Gate guarding the south west wall is being used as a rest house, it is more than twenty five metres in height and provides a grand entrance to the magnificent fort complex.

The Rohtas Fort is being protected as a gigantic world heritage, its monumental structure is a timeless legacy of our cultural and historical past, a legend in stone, symbol of a great king's vigorous and dynamic rule.

LAHORE FORT

The magnificent Lahore Fort, a living testimony of history, has a history as ancient as the existence of the city of Lahore itself. Tradition holds that the Fort was built with the founding of the city sometime in the beginning of the second century. Historically this grand monument saw countless conquests, was almost destroyed by the Mongols and achieved its true glory under the Mughal rule when Emperor Akbar demolished the ancient mud construction and built it in burnt brick in 1566 A.D. Today the Lahore Fort is the only monument in Pakistan which represents a complete history of Mughal architecture. The Lahore Fort was essentially a fortress palace, but it also served as an abode for royal treasury and a stronghold in the event of war.

The Fort is about four hundred and twenty seven metres east to west and some thirty five metres north to south. It is protected by a strong fortification wall built in small brick. At intervals the wall is strengthened with semi-circular bastions and provided with loopholes for musketry. The main gates are located in the middle of the east and west walls. A gateway providing access to the private apartment of the royalty exists in the north west corner.

The Fort has some twenty one different buildings in it, including such magnificent edifices as the Shish Mahal, Naulakha Pavilion, Diwan-e-Khas, Diwan-e-Am, Jahangir's quadrangle, Moti Masjid, the pictured wall and the massively constructed Masti and Alamgiri Gate. The entrance to the Fort is through the Masti Gate built during the period of Emperor Akbar. The Alamgiri Gate was built by Emperor Aurangzeb and the Shah Burj Gate was built by Emperor Shah Jehan. There are a number of

wall. The corners at the end of the terraces are occupied by a burj or towers, each surmounted by a red sandstone pavilion. Within the upper and lower terraces, symmetrical garden plots are divided by intersecting canals which are paved and plastered and contain rows of fountains in red sandstone and marble. Tanks containing fountains are placed at the intersections of the canals. The middle terrace contains the great tank over sixty metres across and has more than hundred fountains, four pavilions and the great cascade. This is the most spectacular feature of the garden and the tinkling music of the fountains, their sparkling falling sprays and the rippling cascades and fragrance of flowers creates an ambience which is pure magic.

In the upper terraces only flowers and sweet scented shrubs were planted for the exclusive use of the princesses of the harem. The lower terraces were planted with fruit trees. Cypresses, poplars and chenar trees lined the sides of the khyaban transforming them into beautiful shady avenues. It was recorded that the fruit trees of every season and climate such as mango, cherry, apricot, peach, pear, apple, almond, mulberry and many varieties of orange had been planted in the garden and flowers of every hue and variety like roses, tulips, iris, lilies, jasmine, narcissus, lilac and lotus all bloomed exquisitely. The vast gardens also contain many buildings, they include baradarries or summer pavilions, diwan-e-khas-o-aam, khwab-gahs or sleeping chambers, hamams, elegant gateways and towers. The royal marble throne of the emperor is placed between the great cascade below the tank of fountains. All the walls of the buildings are beautifully decorated with frescoes and most halls have fountains in the centre like foaming springs.

The gardens with their summer pavilions became the favourite haunts of the Mughal princesses. It was here that Zebunissa, daughter of Emperor Aurangzeb, mesmerized by the rhythmic sound of the cascades and the enchanting atmosphere of the gardens composed her finest verse. The real glory of the gardens belongs to the Mughal era but the Shalimar Gardens are still here to enchant all. Heads of states who visit Lahore are entertained by the citizens at the Shalimar Gardens and much is being done to restore and preserve them.

Yet in the moonlight when only nature is awake, the Gardens belong to the emperors who knew how to create a part of paradise in the midst of the turmoil of the world.

From the eighteenth century onwards the Fort suffered much damage and vandalism. Today with international co-operation efforts are being made to save the Fort from decay and deterioration. Its preservation is legacy. Its deterioration will deprive the future generations of a great part of their history, for history without tangible testimony is relegated to the forgotten part of memory.

quadrangles inside the fort, each suited to the needs of the emperors who built them. Jehangir's quadrangle enclosed by a row of dalans is in red sandstone with richly carved columns and sculptured stone work. There is a large garden inside the quadrangle with a spacious tank of fountains in the centre. The other spectacular quadrangles are in the Diwan-e-Khas and Diwan-e-Am built by Shah Jehan. These are beautiful delicate buildings in pure white marble with graceful arched pavilions, slender pillars and carved marble screens. The floors are laid in multi patterned marble of different colours with round cisterns inlaid with pietra dura work occupying the centre. Then there are khwab-gahs, fine spacious chambers in the quadrangle, the hammam-e-shahi and a lovely garden for the princesses of the harem where flower plants of all seasons were planted with water basins and fountains and red sandstone railings all around. The Moti Masjid in white marble and the incomparable Shish Mahal are the most beautiful and unique buildings in the fort. While the Moti Masjid is all in pristine white and exquisitely structured, the Shish Mahal is one of the most lavishly decorated and splendid palaces of the Mughal period. Built by Asif Khan for Shah Jehan, it consists of a grand and spacious hall in front and several rooms behind. The main decorative features of the palace are the convex glass mosaic work covering the ceiling, the gilt and pietra dura work and the exquisite marble screens of extraordinary beauty and perfection skilfully carved in geometrical and tendril designs. The floor of the spacious courtyard in front of the hall is paved with stone slabs in a variety of different coloured marble and a marble platform occupies its centre.

The exterior of the Fort wall presents a series of tile mosaic panels which are amongst the most exquisite in the world. There is a remarkable unity of composition, combined with a marvelous variety of designs, which is one of the chief features of this unique wall decoration. The wall which is nearly four hundred and fifty metres in length and seventeen metres in height has been adorned with panels of tile mosaics and fresco paintings. These tiles depict men, fairies, elephants, lions, dragons, scenes of animal fights, men playing polo and other games all in deep blue and white gold of the Persian motif surrounded with delicate floral borders. Two small museums have been established in the Fort premises, the Mughal Museum in Jehangir's quadrangle and the Armoury Museum in the Moti Masjid court. The Mughal Museum houses historic manuscripts, miniature paintings, coins and Islamic calligraphy. The Armoury Museum houses the arms and armour captured by the British during the Sikh wars.

ANARKALI'S MAUSOLEUM

One of the most tragic and romantic legends of the Mughal era is the legend of Anarkali. It is the story of the doomed love of the beautiful young dancing girl Nadira and the heir to the imperial Mughal throne prince Salim, the son of none other than Jalaluddin Akbar, the most powerful and formidable emperor of Mughal history. History records that as the Mughal Empire grew, so did its fame and the emperor desperate for a son and heir, walked the burning sands to pray at the retreat of the great Sufi Saint Sheikh Salim Chisti, outside Agra. His prayers were answered and a son was born to Akbar, the heir to the vast Mughal Empire, and to commemorate the saint a new fort was built near Agra called Fatepur Sikri.

Many years later, it was in Lahore that prince Salim as a young man saw Nadira, a dancing girl affectionately called Anarkali by Akbar for her delicate beauty, and fell in love with her. From a mere dancing girl, Anarkali became the greatest threat to the might of the empire. For the continuity of the royal house, it was unthinkable that a dancing girl, notwithstanding her great beauty could sit on the fabled throne of Taimur as the queen of Hindustan. Legend has it that the enamoured Salim took up arms against the emperor, was defeated and imprisoned in a palace and the lovely and hapless Anarkali cruelly entombed on the orders of the despotic emperor outside the fort. The emperor's imperious will won. The Mughal throne was spared the taint of a lowly born empress and a young life had to pay the price of imperial tradition and despotism.

Whether this story is historically true or not, a modest mausoleum stands in Lahore believed to have been built by the grieving prince Salim in 1615



A.R. CHUGHTAI

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Muhammad Sharif (Haji)

A.D. This small mausoleum of Nadira Begum known as Anarkali is situated in a corner of the Civil Secretariat of the Punjab Government in Lahore. The mausoleum is circular in shape with a vast and lofty dome supported from inside by eight massive arches. It is a masterpiece of solid masonry work of the early Mughal period and is beautifully and carefully structured and has withstood the onslaught of time. Close by to the mausoleum, taking a sharp turn from the main road is a famous bazaar of narrow streets full of the most incredible merchandise for women. It is called the Anarkali Bazaar. The shops hold everything from the most opulent and expensive to the everyday necessities of life. From glamorous clothes to shoes, to household linen, to glass bangles, gold jewellery, cooking utensils and much more, all that a woman needs is available in the versatile and diverse shops of the bazaar. Next to it is the equally famous Bano Bazaar where bridal dresses of all colours and textures with elaborate gold and silver and sequined embroidery are available to dazzle the eyes and the imagination. A girl just has to look at them and feel transformed into someone as breathtakingly lovely as the girl whose beauty like the pomegranate blossom, Anarkali, has become synonymous with romance.

Akbar, a cruel emperor snuffed out a young life like a small flame in the wind, but her legend has inspired countless movies, plays and works of fiction. She will always live in the minds and imagination of women who adorn themselves. Anarkali the name, will always conjure up an enigma, an enigma which exists in some secret recess of every woman's heart.

BASANT

Jashne-baharan more popularly called Basant is the festival of spring, an ancient tradition incorporated into the culture of the countries of this subcontinent. Celebration is an essential part of human nature. Collective emotions of joy, rejoicing and sorrow find expression in collective group activity where togetherness and support become natural co-relatives of community living. Over a period of time these expedient group activities get assimilated into the everyday life practices of a community and eventually become the main cultural events of a people.

The spring festival is essentially celebrating the end of winter and the advent of spring. In any country the end of the long dark wintry days is heralded by the first appearance of the spring flower, the narcissus and the blue hyacinth in the hilly valleys and the golden mustard flower in the plains. It is an awakening, a rebirth of the cycle of seasons after the dormancy of winter. The green shoots and grass break through like an exultant shout. There is an echo of renewal in the human heart and it responds with joy to this new burst of life.

Maybe someone, a long time ago, looked at the blue expanse of the sky and saw birds skimming and dipping in the light wind; his heart soared and wanting to fly, he fashioned a kite and as it skimmed and dipped and soared like a giant bird, the ecstasy of not being earth bound made kite-flying one of the best loved pastimes and so Basant was born.

Today Basant is celebrated all over the country with the fervour of the main festival of the year. More than any province it is the Punjab that throbs to the hypnotic beat of the dhol, and a mild frenzy seems to



Iqbal Ahmad

poets and tourists come from neighbouring countries and as far away as Europe, Japan, China and other countries to participate in this bonanza of fun-filled music food extravaganza.

The festival has its own unique ambiance. It creates a spirit of brotherhood and conviviality, a few enchanted moments when people of differing cultures, backgrounds and beliefs become members of one big family, out to have the best time of their lives and so Basant celebrates not just the coming of spring but also the joy of being alive.

Basant as a cultural festival has the unique distinction of being celebrated as a grand and international event only in Pakistan.

overtake the people. The festivities start around the second week of February when the fields start to green and are carpeted with the golden mustard blooms.

In the villages the festivities have the abandon and joy of rural melas and fairs; people wear the traditional yellow of the festival, sweets are cooked and distributed, horses and cattle are decorated and displayed, kites are flown and there is entertainment, buying and selling all in a festive holiday spirit. In the cities especially Lahore, Basant becomes a huge cultural gala. Tourists both from within the country and outside flock to the city.

Everyone dresses in yellow coloured attire, emblematic of the mustard flower. Gorgeous kites are flown by groups of celebrating friends and family from the rooftops of the old havelis of the inner city, accompanied by the frenetic beat of the dhols. An extravaganza of special local delicacies are prepared by professional cooks on the premises to cater to the constant flow of people going from one rooftop to another. In the evenings there are musical galas, concerts, plays and puppet shows at art centres, open air theatres and private homes.

The city is aglow with lights especially the trees lining the whole length of the canal, casting a magic firefly glow on the waters. While some take the day's festivities into elegant evening parties, the more adventurous take the fun of kite flying well into the night. It is a strangely beautiful sight to see the indigo night sky dotted with pale fluttering kites like huge white moths suddenly illumined by the burst of multi coloured fireworks. It is magical, the spectacle of kites in the sky, the throbbing music and the carefree happiness where for a while everyone becomes a child again. Sometimes the fun becomes too competitive when competitors go to all lengths to break the twine of the other and the victor is applauded with shouts of joy and frenzied clapping, and so the fun goes on.

Basant is the great catharsis. For a few days there is unrestrained joy and letting down of one's defences and a great outpouring of collective emotion, exhilarating, exhausting and intensely alive.

Basant is not just a local ethnic event anymore but has gained world wide popularity as a grand national cultural festival of Pakistan and over the years has become a great tourist attraction. Musicians, artists, singers,

HORSE AND CATTLE SHOW

The Horse and Cattle Show is one of the most famous annual festivals of the country. It is usually held in spring, the most important and auspicious season for any rural and agricultural community. Spring fairs are celebrated everywhere in the world with great cultural and historical backgrounds, sometimes to commemorate a special event or usually to celebrate a seasonal change. The Horse and Cattle Show is essentially rooted in the traditions and culture of agrarian communities, where the economic strength of a farming people is assessed by the wealth of their livestock, the heads of cattle, their breed, and the class and quality of horses. Horses being essential to the way of life as the only mode of transport of nomadic tribes and farmers who had to travel from one place to another.

While the Horse and Cattle Show is celebrated in many cities of Pakistan, historically this particular fair was held in the small historic town of Sibi at the mouth of the famous Bolan Pass in Balochistan since the fifteenth century. The Sibi mela was the meeting place of all the tribal chiefs of the area, it was the barter culture of the nomadic Baloch tribes where travelling tribesmen would buy merchandise in return for livestock and this interaction of people gave them the time to share common interests and indulge in recreational activities and rural sports. From one community event it became the major event of the area.

Assimilated into the cultural ethos of the country, the main national Horse and Cattle Show is held in the Fortress Stadium in the city of Lahore every spring. The huge stadium is grandly decorated for the occasion, stalls are put up all around with a dazzling display of clothes, jewellery, gift and household items. During the week long activities, about two thousand of



Askari Mian Irani

SHANDUR POLO FESTIVAL

“Let other people play at other things, the king of games is still the game of kings.” So reads a panel at the entrance of the Agha Khan Shahi Polo Ground in Gilgit, south of the famous Silk Route from China to the west, in the northern areas of Pakistan.

The game of polo played on top of the Shandur Pass situated between the Karakoram and the Hindu Kush range almost four thousand metres above sea level, is the world's highest polo playground surrounded by some of the most spectacular mountains of the world. It is a major sporting event of the country and takes place in the first week of July.

Polo, the game of kings and queens, goes back to an undocumented past embedded in Central Asia dating back to the sixth century B.C. At first it was a training game for cavalry units for the king's guards or other elite troops. Later in time it became the national game of Persia in the sixth century A.D. From Persia, the game spread to Arabia then to Tibet, China and Japan and was introduced in South Asia by the Muslim conquerors in the thirteenth century. It became the favourite game of the Mughal emperors and not only the kings and princes played the game, it also became a favourite sport of Mughal queens and princesses and Empress Noor Jehan was supposed to have excelled at the sport and regularly patronized tournaments for the princesses of the royal house.

Polo as a sport became part of the culture of the subcontinent and all the ruling houses played the game to show their superior riding skills, their mastery of the horse, and held regular competitive tournaments to lift the trophy for the best team.

the country's finest livestock, the most valued breed of horses, mules, cattle, buffaloes, camels, sheep and goats are brought by the owners who have reared them for the event and come from all parts of the country to participate in the Show. The opening of the Show is spectacular. There is a huge crowd of spectators who form the audience, the Show is usually inaugurated by the Chief Minister of the province. Dignitaries, foreign visitors and tourists mingle with the people of the country for this mega event.

The Show starts with the smartly turned out bands playing traditional tunes, then the livestock gaily decked, are proudly paraded by their owners accompanied by groups of dancers and musicians in their beautiful regional costumes. Prize dancing horses and camels complete with silver bells and colourful trappings come next and regale the spectators with their delicate high stepping dancing to the music of the drums. Each animal a prized breed and the finest in the country. After the parade of animals is the tattoo show, usually a display of riding and acrobatic prowess on horses, camels and motorcycles by the specialists of the army. Various bands accompany each performance with their stirring tunes.

In the evening there are multicoloured fireworks lighting up the sky and the highlight of the Show, the incredible tent pegging competition starts with the enthralled audience hushed in anticipation. The finest riders of the country come to compete and it is one of the most exciting spectacles to witness the perfect coordination of rider and horse moving like a tangible blur of speed to bend and raise the lance along with the colour of the victor. As the victorious riders ride around the stadium they are accompanied by the greatest applause ever by the thrilled audience.

The finale is equally spectacular, with all the teams, animals, dancers and singers coming together for a final presentation with the bands playing traditional tunes and thousands of balloons are released to float in the evening sky. The first Horse and Cattle Show was held in Lahore in 1954 and since then it is held every year in early March. This fair is a tremendous expression of the true cultural spirit of the country, epitomizing the glory and chivalry of the past. It is an expression of the rootedness of a culture which is enduring in its traditions and at the same time looking forward to a bright modern future. It is enduring because it is based on the most enduring aspect of a country, its land and its rural strength.



Sardar Muhammad

In Pakistan, Gilgit, Chitral and Skardu have always played the game of polo closest to its original form. In the past, local Rajas, Mirs and Mehtars were the patrons of the sport and more than fifty percent of the annual budget of their principalities would be spent on supporting the game. The first polo tournament took place at the Shandur Pass in 1936. A British political agent Major Cobb who was fond of playing polo under a full moon had the polo ground near Shandur named Moony Polo Ground.

Until 1989 eight polo tournaments have taken place at the Shandur Pass and since 1989 the tournament has become an annual national event. The event marks the annual rivalry between the polo teams of Gilgit and Chitral. The finest horsemen of the area form the team and the game with a team of six players in a side lasts one hour. It is absolutely thrilling to watch this sport which is not just a game between two teams but exhibits the ultimate skill, horsemanship and elegance in this sport of kings. The final champion match between Gilgit and Chitral is an incredible spectacle, supporters and tourists travel from all over the world to watch the thrilling finale. A camping village is set up and the end of the festival includes folk music and dancing. The event also offers a fascinating insight into the culture and indigenous customs of the people of the region.

To play the game under the clear blue skies of the greatest snow range of the world and to feel the cold bracing wind in one's face is to feel the pulse of life and the excitement of being alive. It makes the game more than just about winning and losing, it becomes an affirmation of the perfect combination of man, animal and nature linked in the great metaphysical chain of being. The game of polo played on the highest terrain of the world is indeed a game played by the kings of the game.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

- FOLK DANCES
- WOVEN HERITAGE
- HANDICRAFT HERITAGE
- MUSICAL HERITAGE (FOLK MUSIC)



Allah Bux (Ustad)

FOLK DANCES

Dance has always been the natural physical expression of powerful emotions of joy, celebration and victory. Folk dancing is an integral part of a country's traditional culture, it is an enduring tradition which is unconsciously carried on by the people and handed down from one generation to another.

In Pakistan folk dances are mostly associated with rural festivals, with the seasons of harvesting and the coming of spring. The history of this art form is as ancient as the civilizing process itself. Primitive cultures have been known to propitiate the forces of nature through song and dance and a bountiful harvest and benign climatic season necessitated a ritualistic propitiation and that was through communal dancing accompanied by joyful songs. Folk dancing is the root of all primitive rural cultures and is the first rudimentary form of an anthropological cult and its worship.

In Pakistan every region has its own expression of dance and this folk art assumes a distinct and unique differentiation with different regional languages and social patterns. In most rural communities dancing is male-oriented because of the congregational and public aspect of folk festivals. In the Punjab province rural festivities begin with the season of harvesting and the coming of spring and Bhangra is the popular dance which is performed at rural melas with much zeal to commemorate the beginning of the year. Men attired in yellow and green, the predominant colours of spring, follow the drummer who plays a staccato beat on the dhols; the dancers form a circle around the drummer and dance this exuberant and energetic dance with great abandon accompanied by the clapping of the audience which is always a part of the dance. The Bhangra is also danced



Sardar Muhammad

commemorations. The dancers attain a state of trance and move hypnotically to the music of the dhols and shehnai. It is a dance of religious ecstasy where the dancer loses his consciousness in the contemplation of the Divine and the unbroken movement denotes complete harmony and oneness with the universe.

Whether it is the vigorous beat of the Bhangra or the mystical rotation of the Dhamal, folk dancing in Pakistan is the kaleidoscopic expression of the folk culture of the country over the centuries. Folk dancing reflects not only the cultural norms of a people but is an essential part of the human instinct, to move to a beat in the blood, to reflect in rhythm the movements of nature, to express the joy of being alive and above all to be in harmony with one's self and the natural phenomena around.

at weddings preceding the groom's party on their way to the bride's house.

The other dances of the Punjab are the Luddi, Gidda and the Jhumar danced by the women at weddings and festive occasions. The Luddi and Gidda are danced by young girls at weddings in a circle with much clapping of hands and rhythmic body movements to the music of catchy tunes and traditional romantic songs. The Jhumar is a favourite of the women of Multan, Muzaffargarh and Bahawalpur. It is a dance of sheer romance and grace beginning with a circle breaking and forming into patterns as it progresses, it is usually danced to highly emotional and romantic singing.

Up country in the Frontier province the martial Pushtuns have their own dance forms, the Khattak and the Lakhtai, dances which are exclusively male and are for the commemoration of a celebration or a victory. Its origins could have been a preparation for combat or celebration of a victory. The Khattak and the Lakhtai are performed by Pushtun youths in white peshwaas and embroidered waistcoats brandishing swords around a big fire. The young dancers swirl around with great verve and tempo to the frenetic beat of drums and the strains of the shehnai.

Even further north up in the Chitral valley the Kafir-Kalash people who still follow an ancient pagan creed, most probably Greek in origin, celebrate spring in their cult festivals like Joshi Chilim Jusht, Phool and Chowmas with dancing and singing; both men and women dressed in black attire with colourful headgear of beads, shells and feathers, chant and dance together, the women forming an inner circle while the men clap and sing to their rhythmic movements.

Down the coast of Makran, the Baloch tribes celebrate their festive occasions by dancing the Leva. Performed by men, this dance form reflects the graceful movements of the camel. The dance is high-stepping and has free body movement and is performed with great artistry and precision. Another interesting variation of the Leva is the Chaap, danced by certain Baloch tribes, it is again danced by men in a circle while the musician the lohri, stands in the middle with a saruz, a bow instrument, with the dancers clapping in unison as they move to the music.

The most inspirational of the natural movement of expression is the Dhamal or devotional dance performed at shrines during religious

WOVEN HERITAGE

The woven heritage of Pakistan goes back to a history which is five thousand years old, to the folk art of the Indus Valley Civilization which together with the Egyptian and the Mesopotamian are the three most ancient civilizations known to man. It is recorded that the people of Moenjodaro, the identified and preserved city of the era, were great traders and some of the things that found their way to ancient Egypt and the valley of the Euphrates were the handicrafts and woven material which are still an enduring legacy of Pakistan.

Every region of the country has its own traditional weave. Different textures of silk, cotton and wool are carefully designed and woven on traditional looms, a whole spectrum of colours and beautiful patterns are used in hand printing and dyeing all over the country, carpet weaving, with lighter textured Darees, Namdas and Farshis are all part of this rich and incredibly beautiful handloom industry of Pakistan.

From the cold regions of the north, Swat, Chitral, Gilgit, Hunza and Kafiristan, woollen cloth is hand-woven into the versatile Pattu, invariably in one colour block, it is extremely warm and is used as shawls for both men and women and also for long loose shirts for men to wear in the winter. Sindh and Multan are known for their bright coloured Khais used as wraps or bed covers, the soft pliant Lungi used for turbans or sarongs, and Daryai or Susi which is striped hand loom in cotton and silk in deep jewel colours; it is also woven with elaborate gold and silver thread to be used for formal wear.

Lahore, Khairpur and Karachi produce the most exquisite silks and



Ahmed Pervaiz

commemorations. The dancers attain a state of trance and move hypnotically to the music of the dhols and shehnai. It is a dance of religious ecstasy where the dancer loses his consciousness in the contemplation of the Divine and the unbroken movement denotes complete harmony and oneness with the universe.

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HANDICRAFT HERITAGE

Handcrafted folk art has an enduring and timeless appeal. The skill and artistry that goes into a handmade creation is a legacy which is handed down generations and becomes living history because these art forms ensure the continuity of the cultural legacy of a people.

In Pakistan the traditional skills of woodwork, metal stone pottery, jewellery and lacquer are still recreated on the old designs and patterns because artisans have kept their traditional knowledge and skill alive and all handcrafted items are now systematically identified as the folk art of the country.

The history of Pakistan's folk art goes back five thousand years and the country is noted for some of the most varied and beautiful handicrafts of the world. One of the most ancient forms of craftsmanship is jewellery-making. The old designs in heavy silver worn in the interior of Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab are still made in the traditional style; the anklets, heavy necklaces and nose ornaments are crafted with the same intricate detail as those found in the excavations of old sites. The Mughal Persian jewellery in gold inlaid with precious stones known as Kundan and Jardhao is the traditional jewellery for brides, and the Jhumar, Tika, Guluband and Jhumka is as dazzling in its workmanship as it was when it adorned the peerless beauty of Noor Jehan and Mumtaz Mehal.

Another craft which has been preserved and constantly recreated is the craft of hand beaten and embossed silver brass and copper articles. Beautiful articles for daily use and for decorative purposes are made in Multan, Peshawar, Karachi, Hyderabad and Lahore. Intricate enamel inlay

brocades on their looms including the famous Kimkhab created by inter weaving gold and silver thread with silk in a rich variety of colours and traditional motifs of flower and paisley. This beautiful fabric is used for making bridal attire for brides and grooms.

Sindh is known for its Bandhanu, the tie and dye process which creates patterns in geometric dots, squares and circles in vivid green, yellow, red, black and blue and the traditional Ajrak with its multi purpose print, the predominant colours being dark blue and maroon on a background of white. The ancient method of Khari is used to print patterns with a wooden block using gum or lac dusted with gold and silver powder, the result is a unique and exotic woven piece of folk art, timeless and beautiful.

Traditional embroidery of Balochistan and Sindh show the influence of Arab, Persian and Turkish craft. The silk thread is woven through myriads of tiny mirrors which are stitched on garments and are worn by the women of Balochistan and Makran. The Phulkari of Multan and Bahawalpur is a pattern of brightly coloured silk thread embroidered in motifs of flowers, birds and animals on a background of black cotton. Phulkari shawls and shirts have been worn down the ages and the appeal is enduringly fascinating. Another unique expression of the woven art is the Rilli, the patch work quilts of Cholistan and Tharparkar. The Rilli is made from old cotton cloth pieces of different colours and prints, the completed quilt has the effect of a multi coloured check, tukri. Rilli-making itself is an act of synthesis as whole families and members of tribes sit together to create it; it is not only a domestic industry but an integrated expression of the communal culture of Sindh.

The wool produced in the country is considered the finest for carpet weaving. Numerous carpet handlooms have been set up around Karachi, Multan, Quetta, Lahore and Peshawar which turn out carpets of incomparable beauty and quality which are exported the world over and are famous for their traditional patterns and colours.

The ancient system of weaving, the delicate craft of gold, silver, and silk embroidery is not a mechanical craft, it is the expression of tradition which is inherited from centuries and kept alive because the old secrets of weaving, printing and dyeing are remembered, cherished and handed down as part of the cultural heritage of a people.

artistry and genius of the people. Their antiquity goes back to the ancient civilizations of the Indus, Moenjodaro, Harappa and Gandhara and are deeply rooted into the culture and artistic traditions of the country.

From the dawn of civilization, men and women have been moulding clay into perfect creations of symmetry, fashioning gems into precious metal to create lasting pieces of timeless beauty; labouring aesthetically to carve wood and break stones into objects of pure art, all a tribute to the essential need to leave a legacy of man's finest instinct for the generations to come, the contribution of every age in the story of human civilization.

in metal is a replication of the old Arabesque style, floral rosettes giving the effect of Arabic tughras is used for metal glasses, bowls and cups. Copper ware ornament pieces in glazed hollow metal ware are made in Gujrat and Hyderabad and the shapes are often reproductions of famous Persian originals.

Koftgari is the art of encrusting one metal into another, when silver is used the craft is known as bidiry. Gujrat and Sialkot are famous centres for this work, producing domestic articles like betel boxes, hookah bases, bowls and vases. Kashmir wood carving is world famous, extremely fine floral designs in engraved raised work are wrought on cabinets, folding screens, tabletops, boxes and trays. Many Kashmiri craftsmen work in Swat, Peshawar, Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi.

Wooden furniture with brass inlay is made in Chiniot and Dera Ismail Khan, the designs of Chiniot have metal cut to required shapes and the veneer and marquetry using buffalo horn and ivory are famous and have an incomparable freedom of execution.

Hala and Kashmore in Sindh are famous for the use of lacquer work for wood ornamentation used to decorate bed stands, chairs and low wooden stools called piris. Jhang and Sargodha are known for their mirror inlaid furniture items in red and black giving it a special exotic appeal. Pakistan's indigenous pottery is perfect in line and form. Bahawalpur is famous for its kaghazi paper-thin pottery and the re-creation of ornament pieces with calligraphy miniature paintings on clay tiles as wall pieces. Sindh is famous for its painted pottery in maroon and black and Multan's glazed blue pottery with traces of Persian influence is the exclusive Muslim contribution to the architecture of the subcontinent .

Onyx tabletops, bowls and pill boxes are made in Balochistan and Peshawar, they come in the delicate pistachio green and in white with amber streaks and have a market world wide.

One of the prettiest folk creations are the baskets and fans made from date palm, wild rushes and wheat stalks; they are woven by men and women in Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab and are one of the oldest and most enduring expressions of folk art.

The handicrafts of Pakistan are a continuing expression of the communal

MUSICAL HERITAGE (FOLK MUSIC)

Music expresses man's deepest sentiments. It is a release of feelings of elation, happiness and melancholy, it is the need to share these feelings with others and this need and its expression in song, becomes the strongest cultural bond of a people.

In the subcontinent the early forms of music were devotional in content and their base was the folk music of the people who expressed their cultural and linguistic affinities in song. And slowly the music of different areas sung in different dialects became part of the culture and custom of communities and congregational singing became a spontaneous aspect of festivals, marriages, religious commemorations and village fairs.

After the advent of Islam in the subcontinent, music became the great medium of Sufi philosophy and mysticism. The Sufi belief of spiritual ascension towards the Divine was expressed through poetry and poetry was given the musical form of song. These songs were learnt by people who came to the great teachers to hear their message and the devotional songs that were sung there were assimilated into the cultural patterns of the areas. The most famous of these mystics was Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai of Sindh. Not only did he express his mysticism through music but also transmuted the existing folk legends of the Mehran into his spiritual expositions. Bulleh Shah the renowned poet of the Punjab also expressed his poetry through musical renderings, the "Sih Harfi and Kafian". Khwaja Ghulam Farid of southern Punjab wrote in Saraiki, Sindhi and Marvari and his songs became the folk tradition of Punjab, Bahawalpur, Dera Ismail Khan and Sindh. The compositions of Sachal Sarmest were sung in Sindhi, Saraiki, Persian and Urdu.



S. Ali Imam

FOLK LEGENDS OF PAKISTAN

- SOHNI MAHIWAL
- MIRZA SAHIBAN
- HEER RANJHA
- ADAM KHAN DUR KHANAI
- SASSI PUNHO
- NOORIE JAM TAMACHI
- MARVI

These mystic songs were the Kafis, the Vai's, the Baits, Dohra, Lori, Sehra and Jugni of the Punjab and Char Baita sung in the northern areas of the country. The beautiful music with its deep spiritual impact was sung by folk singers in the twilight at great shrines where multitudes would listen spellbound and the message and the song would become one.

From the deep mysticism of folk music evolved the romantic songs of love and celebration; the Mahiya and the Jhoomar became the ballads of Multan and Bahawalpur, the Rasurto and Moro, the plaintive melodies of Tharparkar and Kohistan. In lower Sindh the love songs of the rural culture are the Jhoongar, the Lari, Dholan and Dhatearo and are sung by people as they work on the land and in the fields. In parts of Punjab, the Dohra, Challa, Bolian and Hookah are sung with great fervour at weddings and seasonal festivals.

One of the strongest cultural traditions is the ceremony of marriage, the various rituals involved are not only a binding factor in community living but the songs sung at weddings are deep cultural expressions of this traditional heritage of customs and rituals. Among the marriage songs the most popular is the Sehra Bandi in the Punjab which has its equivalent in the Morr Bandhan songs of Sindh. There are Mehndi songs when henna is applied to the bride before the wedding ceremony. Geech is the marriage song sung by the bridegroom's family in Sindh as are the Sithni songs sung in the Punjab extolling the superior graces of the bride. Phul Chundan is prettily sung by girls while picking flowers for the ceremony, and the Rukhsati and Doli songs, sung by the family and friends of the bride as she leaves for her new home, contain the essence of the tradition of marriage.

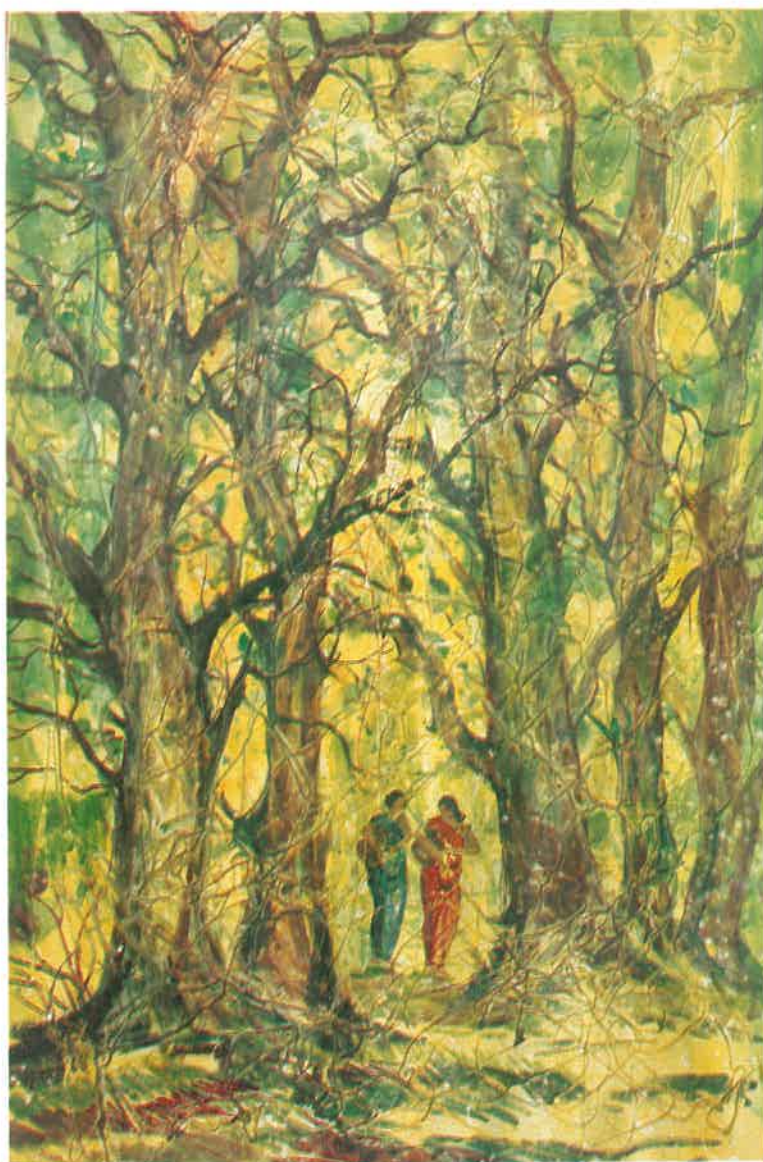
The various forms of music not only express the collective emotion of people but are the strongest binding force in a country's cultural heritage.

SOHNI MAHIWAL

The folk heritage of a country is embedded deep in the cultural psyche of a people. It is part of the rhythms of seasons, of the joy of harvest, of the waiting between harvests when the dreams come and old memories and long forgotten stories heard in the twilight are revived through songs which are learnt and sung at local festivals and so become part of the myth and lore of a culture. These are ancient stories of romance and mysticism which get blurred in one search for the truth of life and whatever the physical and earthly symbols, it becomes a search for something which is nobler and more compelling than life itself.

One such folk legend is the story of Sohni Mahiwal, the origins lost in the mists of time but kept alive and handed down from generation to generation through song and the telling. It is a story whose heritage belongs to the waters of the Chenab in Gujrat. It is a story of love and sacrifice and a mysticism which comes when any emotion goes beyond mortal confines to become part of the soul.

Sohni as the legend goes, was the daughter of a potter named Tula who lived on the banks of the Chenab. She was born on the night of the full moon and was eulogized for her great beauty and so was called Sohni. She made earthen ware pottery in her hut on the bank of the river and would gaze into the dark waters illumined by the glow of myriads of fireflies in the warm scented nights, her luminous face casting its elusive shadow on the waters as she dreamed her dreams. As destiny willed, a young merchant prince from Bukhara called Izzat Beg passed through Gujrat. He rested his caravan on the banks of the Chenab and saw the beautiful Sohni with her dreaming eyes. He fell in love with her and



Sumbul Nazir

desperation jumped into the river and not being able to swim reached her nevertheless, to hold her and to drown with her.

The young lovers died, but their story has not only immortalized the waters of the Chenab forever, but has become part of the song and music beloved of the vast rural terrain of the Punjab.

The legend is more than just a story of a doomed love, it is a quest for the eternal truth where the surrender of the self leads to the mystery of the infinite and love becomes the fathomless dream towards its final destination, the eternal Divine.

abandoning his companions and home in a distant land, he lost all his wealth and in bondage stayed on and lived in a hut in a bela on the Chenab and became Mahiwal the grazier of cattle.

Sohni, spirited and brave, knew of Mahiwal's great love for her, and since her own love for him had gone beyond mere youthful emotion and had become more a reason for existence, she would leave the sleeping village at night and wait on the bank of the Chenab and Mahiwal would swim the waters to be with her. In the wordless silence they would dream of a future when free of his bond Mahiwal would take her away to his home. Their love was as fathomless as the night and daybreak would see her back in the village.

Before long Tula found out about her meeting Mahiwal and forcibly married her off to a kinsman. Sohni rejected all earthly ties and spurning her bond of marriage would leave the village to be with Mahiwal waiting for her on the bank of the river; the present and the future caught in a timeless moment where the need to be together was the quest.

Once while swimming across to Sohni, Mahiwal struck his leg against a broken branch in the water and wounded himself. Sohni helped him across, tended his wound and Mahiwal returned to the bela at daybreak. Unable to swim to her he was desolate, but Sohni desperate to be with him herself, swam across the river to him on an earthen pitcher, and every night from then on she would swim to the injured Mahiwal waiting in the bela.

One night on her way to meet him, Sohni was spied upon by a kinswoman who had followed her on her nocturnal pilgrimage of love, and jealousy and hatred being inseparable components of an emotion which becomes incomprehensible in its total absorption, she removed the hard baked pitcher which Sohni used and replaced it with an unbaked one.

On the fateful night when Sohni was to meet Mahiwal, a storm came up. She, undaunted, left the village and braving the turbulent waters of the Chenab tried to reach Mahiwal. The unbaked pitcher dissolved. Sohni knew she had been betrayed, she struggled to fight the rising waters and crying out Mahiwal's name in despair she felt her strength ebbing; her pliant form tossed on the wild waters like a broken bough. Mahiwal waiting in the bela heard her faint cry on the storm wind and in

MIRZA SAHIBAN

Mirza Sahiban, one of the most loved folk legends of the Punjab, has been immortalized by the poet Peeloo. This legend, which goes back many centuries reflects the cultural ethos of the tribes of the Mahinis or Siyals and the Kharals who inhabited the terrain of the Chenab valley. It is not just a folktale but a cultural and historical process involving the evolution of tribes and the long blood feuds that lasted for centuries and changed the face of the land and the characteristics of the tribes who fought for honour and territorial supremacy. These wonderful folk legends sung by generations of itinerant bards at local melas and village fairs got assimilated into the literary traditions when a poet picked on a theme and with his poetic fancy reenacted the ancient tale in a literary idiom which eventually became the folk heritage of the people of the area.

Mirza Khan and Sahiban, the young protagonists of this high drama of romance and tragedy were related by family ties, their tribes inhabiting the valley of the Chenab. Mirza was the son of the Kharal chief Mehr Vangal and was the archetypal hero of ballads, young, handsome, valiant and daring.

Skilled in arms and a formidable marksman, he rode the country on his fleet footed horse Bakki, the pride of the Kharals and was lauded in song and verse for his heroic qualities. The Kharals inhabited the south of the Chenab valley and Mehr Vangal sent his son to his maternal uncle Khewa Khan, the chief of the Mahini clan who inhabited the northern part of the valley. Mirza was sent to the maktab in the mosque and he met Sahiban, the beautiful daughter of his uncle Khewa Khan.



Muhammad Sharif (Haji)

he took an arrow from his quiver and true and clear of aim the arrow found its mark and Shamir fell. The mournful Sahiban knowing that Mirza would kill her other brother Mir as well, hid his quiver with his arrows hoping that her tribe would forgive them, but her vengeful people surrounded them and attacked Mirza.

The young warrior hero desperately looked for his quiver but it was out of his reach and lamenting Sahiban's folly in protecting her brother against him, he died pierced by arrows still standing against a jhand tree.

The sorrowing Sahiban did not ask for forgiveness or mercy and was cruelly hanged by her kinsmen next to her fallen beloved. The triumphant Siyals returned home, their honour restored, but their victory was short lived. Bakki the faithful horse of Mirza, wounded and limping, returned riderless to the stronghold of the Kharals and then the final saga of the blood feud erupted with the whole strength of the Kharal clan in mourning for their young cheiftain, sweeping like a horde of destruction on the Mahini village and sparing the women killed every Siyal male, young and old.

The Siyals as a force ceased to exist for generations after this. The ill fated lovers were brought back, Mirza with his red turban now fallen and Sahiban still in her vermilion bridal attire. The mourning for their lost youth, beauty and love lasted as long as the Kharals lived and remembered on the waters of the Chenab and with the rhythms of song and the sweetness of its pathos their love was sung and listened to and cried upon by the people in the twilight of the great valley of the Chenab. And so they became part of the deep rooted cultural traditions of the Punjab.

From here on the legend becomes a tale of epic tragedy. They fell in love and were thwarted by Sahiban's mother, an embittered woman who held a grudge against the Kharals for being rejected in her youth by Mirza's uncle. Mirza and Sahiban were however aided and comforted by Khewa Khan's younger sister Bibo who loved them both and welcomed the romantic involvement as a bond that would strengthen the ties between the Kharals and the Siyals.

At this stage Mirza was summoned by his father to his village and he and Sahiban parted with a vow to reunite when the time came. But fate was not kind and Sahiban was betrothed to one Tahir Khan of the Jadhar clan. A desperate Sahiban sent a message to Mirza in his village of Dhanabad to come and save her. On receiving it, Mirza like a true ballad hero disdaining all advice and caution by his family and friends and in all the impetuosity of his youthful ardour, armed with a hundred arrows in his quiver and riding his loyal horse Bakki, covered a distance of a hundred miles in two sleepless days and nights. He reached the Mahini village just as the bridegroom accompanied by the musicians was approaching Sahiban's house. Mirza's aunt Bibo hid him and carried his message to the hapless Sahiban who though dressed as a bride, displayed the most extraordinary courage and daring and in the dark, helped by Mirza, climbed the gate of her father's haveli to ride away with him in the night before her wedding.

From here on, it is a narrative of escape and destiny. It becomes not just a tale of thwarted love but a savage saga of the land, the culture of tribal vendettas and primeval hatred fanned by the ambivalent bonds of blood ties. Honour of the tribe gets precedence over every other emotion and ties of blood and kinship are swept aside mercilessly in the brutal pursuit of restitution of name and reputation.

The Mahini tribe gathered its forces and came in wrathful pursuit of the fleeing lovers. Mirza just short of the safety of his own belt of land, succumbed to the exhaustion of having ridden three days without rest and food, stopped in a dense wood of jhand trees and fell into a deep sleep. Sahiban who kept a fearful watch tried to wake him several times but Mirza sure of his prowess and skill to match the whole tribe of his foes demurred to rest a little more.

In the meanwhile the furious Mahinis came upon them. Mirza finally woke to the cries of Sahiban and seeing her brother Shamir coming at him,

HEER RANJHA

One of the greatest love legends of the Punjab is Heer Ranjha. The legend, supposed to have originated in the sixteenth century, was given its classical mystical expression by Waris Shah in the eighteenth century. The immortal love story of Heer and Ranjha is a spiritual odyssey of the soul. The story woven around the valley of the Chenab and the various stages of human emotion and its ultimate transcendence, flows with the waters of the great river.

Heer, the beautiful daughter of Mehr Chuchak of the Siyal clan, lived on its banks. She spent all her time in the green belas of the Chenab with her village friends. She was loved by her people and her life was idyllic. In the upper reaches of the same valley in a place called Takht Hazara was the village of Ranjha, son of Chaudary Manjo. Unlike his eight older brothers, Ranjha was unworldly and idealistic and the magical music of his flute playing had the mystical power of a woodland deity and enthralled man and beast into a strange stillness and peace. Ranjha's father died and denied of his patrimony he left his village.

During his wanderings, he heard of the famed beauty of Heer and almost in a trance he moved towards the ideal who had captured his mind and heart. Almost as he was led, Ranjha found himself close to the Siyal village and seeking shade from the sun he sat under an old pipal tree and leaning against it he started playing on his flute. The music seemed to envelop the world around him and in a vision he saw the Five Saints who blessed him and knew the secret of his quest and promised him fulfilment, as the union with his beloved had been ordained before time.

Ranjha came to Heer's village and rested on the bank of the Chenab just as



Allah Bux (Ustad)

Here the legend takes two turns. In Waris Shah's spiritual tragedy Ranjha brought Heer to Mehr Chuchak and he was promised Heer in marriage if he would return with his people. Ranjha left to return with his brothers and in his absence Heer was betrayed by her tribe and was poisoned to protect the family honour. Ranjha returned only to be told that his beloved Heer was dead. He went to her grave, fell on it in despair and died. And so the legend of Heer and Ranjha as sung by Waris Shah ends, the lovers united for ever by a love that was beyond the realm of the mortal.

The other version is that Ranjha never brought Heer back to her village. He rode away with her into the mysterious recesses of the great valley of the Chenab and that it was whispered among the people of the river that the magical music of a flute was heard softly from the foothills of the valley and sometimes was carried on the wind that came from the river. It became the common belief of the people that the Five Saints found a refuge for the lovers, for they were the blessed ones and had found the truth of life, that it is only in the wondrous submission of love that you find God, and the mysteries of the beyond are revealed for those who negate themselves for the beloved.

The legend of Heer Ranjha is Waris Shah's quest and his submission is his search for the eternal truth.

Heer with the village girls was in the bela of the river.

Heer's beauty as described by Waris Shah is of the essence of the legend, she epitomizes the colours of nature, the movement of the elements.

The perfection of her cypress slender form, the long dark hair like a summer cloud concealing the brightness of her face, her red mantle paling against the ruby of her mouth, her lustrous eyes like a startled deer looking at the long limbed youth with his flowing hair on the river bank, at the magic and mystery of his eyes, at his hands holding the flute. The music stilled in wonder as he saw her; the seeker and the ideal, symbolized in his love and her beauty. The mystical dispensation needed the earthly ties of union; Heer and Ranjha had to belong to one another and Heer as much in knowledge of the mystical nature of their love as Ranjha, persuaded her father Mehr Chuchak to let Ranjha become a herdsman for his buffaloes and live in the bela.

Ranjha the divine flute player would tend the buffaloes on the river. Heer would come to him and in a trance listen to his music; both waiting for the promised time when they would be united in the bond of marriage. Heer was spied upon by the people of her tribe, she was kept away from Ranjha and to reach the transcendence of spiritual purity Heer and Ranjha went through the penance and trials of separation. Heer was forcibly married off to Saidu the son of the chief of the Khera clan and in spite of her impassioned denial of the marriage vows and the ceremony itself, she was sent off to the Khera village, but she met Ranjha before she left and both knew that their bond was eternal and inevitable and that they would eventually be united.

Ranjha wandered into the wilderness, saw the Five Saints in a vision again and to complete his penance went to a saint and became a jogi. The two stages ran parallel, Ranjha who again took up the search for Heer, the temporal quest, and the transcendence of his soul for the search for the eternal truth. He found Heer, helped by her kinswoman who felt the mystical power of Ranjha and as Heer was about to leave with him they were caught and brought before Adli Raja, the ruler of Multan. Heer was given back to her husband and Ranjha was thrown into prison. Miraculously the town went up in flames, and Adli Raja realizing Ranjha's ascendant spirituality gave Heer to him and they both left.

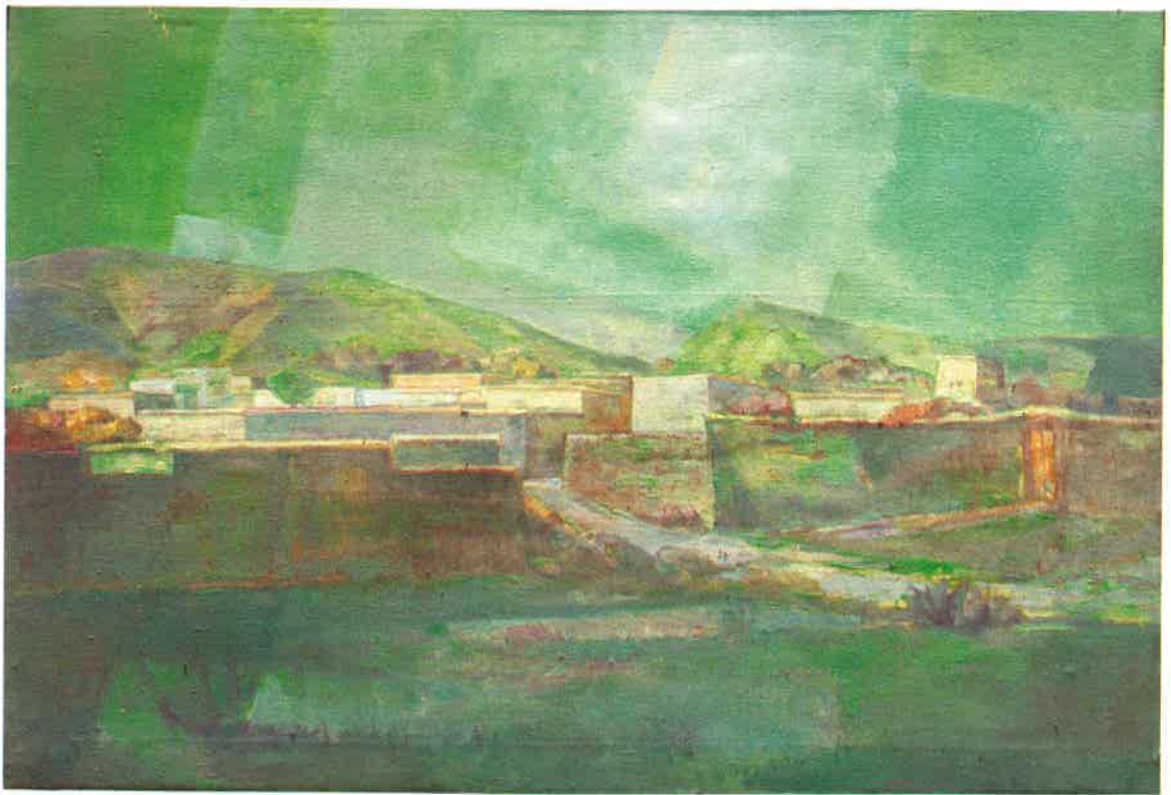
ADAM KHAN DUR KHANAI

The Pathans, one of the most enigmatic people to occupy the hinterland in the remote northern belt of Pakistan, live under the greatest mountain range of the world, on the wildest and harshest terrain; a people whose physical beauty, personal bravery and deep sense of honour have become part of the lore and legend of this country's history.

It is the land of Kamal Khan, the legendary freedom fighter and border chieftain, immortalized forever in ballad and song and countless chieftains like him who single handedly fought the British, raised forts in that wild country, knew every crag and hill, remained elusive and undefeated in their valour and pride and earned the grudging admiration and respect of their foreign foe.

The Pathan mystique has always been an enigma; there is tribal lore, myth and legend and the tremendous scenic sweep of sombre beauty of indescribable clarity and contrast against which the Pathan men and women play out their lives, an unending drama of life, death and honour with honour becoming the ultimate ideal to die for.

Adam Khan Dur Khanai is one such legend that tells the story of love between a young man and a beautiful girl, with a simplicity of emotion and the direct swiftness of a mountain romance. Adam Khan Dur Khanai is a seventeenth century composition in the written and oral tradition and was given its literary poetic form by the nineteenth century poet Sayyid Abu Ali Shah. The legend belongs to a hill village in Swat, the hilly habitation known as Upper Bazdara and the low lying area known as Lower Bazdara. Hasan Khan the chief of Lower Bazdara had a son named



Imtiaz Hussain

flowed from him to her in a bond that was meant to be.

The marriage party dispersed, Dur Khanai went home knowing that now she could only belong to Adam Khan. He, with a passionate resolve, went to his father Hasan Khan and told him he would win Dur Khanai even if it meant laying down his life. A distraught Hasan Khan turned to his kinsmen for help knowing that this was the beginning of a long feud that would end in the destruction of the two tribes.

Adam Khan desperate in his love, accompanied by the faithful Miru, went to seek out Dur Khanai under cover of night. They reached her house and Adam Khan scaling the fortress found Dur Khanai asleep in her room. He woke her gently. She rose as from a dream, saw him and the dream and the reality became one. Many promises were made, many tears shed in the whispering dark and at dawn with a sorrowing heart, Adam Khan reluctantly left Dur Khanai with the vow to take her away soon from the prison of her father's house.

The young lovers waited anxiously for a chance to meet again and once when the unsuspecting Ta`us Khan was away, Adam Khan once more sought out Dur Khanai; the joy of reunion and the fear of separation trembling on the uncertain threshold of life. He knew it was the last time they would meet in her father's fortress.

Soon after, Ta`us Khan, apprehensive for his honour, assembled the jirga and arranged the wedding of Dur Khanai with Payu Khan. A lamenting Dur Khanai was forced to go away with him, but with unparalleled courage, she spurned Payu Khan and told him that she could never accept him in the marriage bond and that in body and soul she belonged only to Adam Khan. Payu Khan furious and angry over his tarnished honour could not kill her because of her great beauty, but stayed away and planned Adam Khan's murder hoping that he would be able to win her back once Adam Khan was killed. Adam Khan heard of Dur Khanai's marriage, he lost his reason and will to live and wandered into the hills. He was found and brought back by his father who promised to find a way to release Dur Khanai from her bond.

Hasan Khan gathered a jirga and sought out a powerful warlord of the region called Mirma`i. He pleaded for his son and asked for his help. The jirga allowed Adam Khan to rescue Dur Khanai from Payu Khan's house

Adam Khan, lithe of limb, straight as a lance, fearless and bold, he roamed the wild hills and valleys like a young eagle with his two comrades Miru and Balu. Like all young chieftains, he rode, he hunted, he played the rabab and sang songs and was the pride of the hills.

The chieftain of Upper Bazdara Ta`us Khan had a beautiful daughter called Dur Khanai. With her dark hair and long black eyes, her glowing face was lovelier than any mountain flower, its purity enhanced by a strange black spot in the middle of her smooth forehead. She was kept secluded from the gaze of the world and growing up in solitude she had her own dreams and like a caged bird was waiting to be free. Her only companion was her old maid servant Gulunai who loved her and had earned her trust.

Ta`us Khan would watch his daughter broodingly in her full young bloom and in the tradition of his people, feared for any blemish on his honour and wanted her wed to a person of his choice. He chose a young man called Payu Khan who had heard of Dur Khanai's great beauty. A tribal jirga was assembled and Dur Khanai was betrothed to Payu Khan. But fate willed otherwise. Dur Khanai had an aunt in Upper Bazdara, she had a daughter Baskai who was Dur Khanai's age and was about to be married. In the close knit tribal custom it was obligatory for Dur Khanai to leave her house to attend her cousin's wedding.

Close to Upper Bazdara lived a saint called Pir Salih. The great faqir had already seen images of a future in his vision, and to his sorrow he knew that the young and brave Adam Khan had to unwittingly fulfil the final stages of a prophecy long known. He sent his nephew Ikram Khan to seek out Adam Khan to bring him to the wedding. Adam Khan received him honourably and accompanied him back to receive the blessings of the Pir. Pir Salih prayed for courage for the young chieftain and told him to go and fulfil his dream.

Adam Khan came to Baskai's wedding, sat with the guests and sang at the feast with his fine young voice, and all were charmed with his music. Behind a wall Dur Khanai listened to his song. Defying convention she stepped out to see the singer. Every gaze was on her as she stood there. Dur Khanai saw the handsome youth with his laughing eyes as Adam Khan saw the lovely Dur Khanai glowing like a flame, his eyes riveted on the beauty mark on her forehead. The music stopped in his throat, it

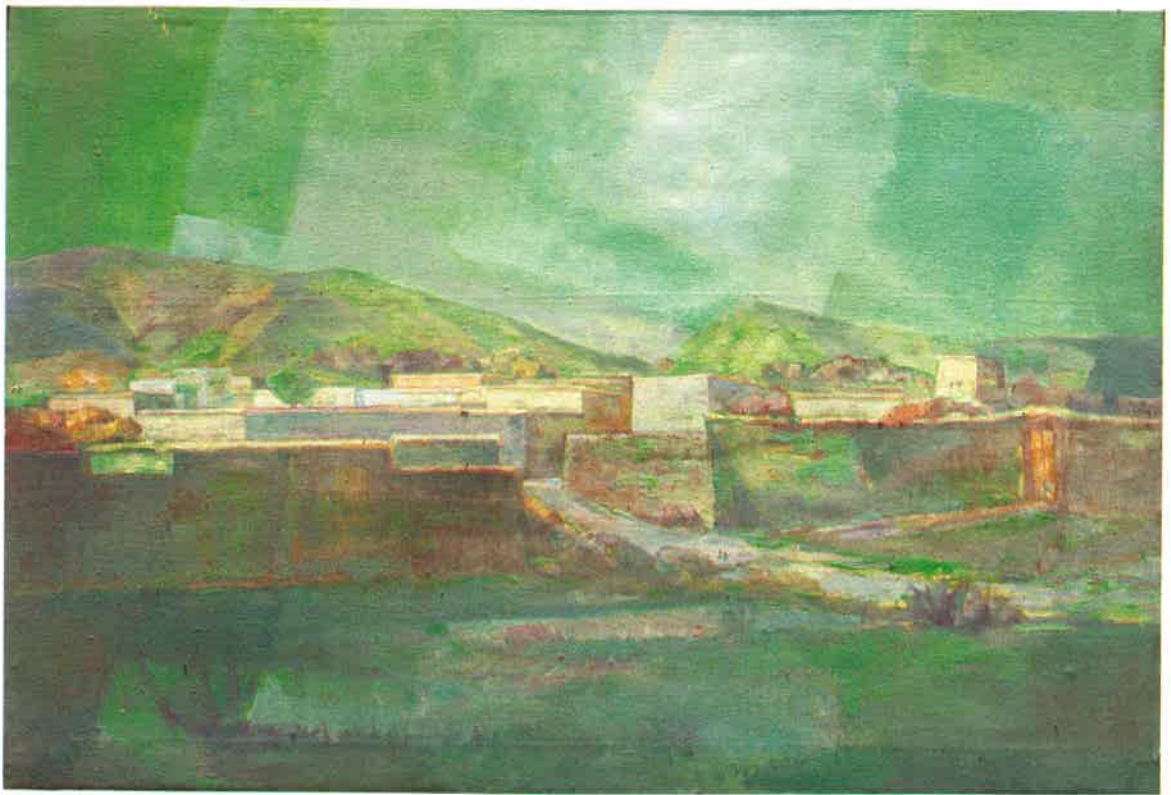
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SASSI PUNHO

The folk legends of Sindh, sung on the ghats of the Indus and told and retold on the haunting expanse of the Tharparkar desert, are in essence the legends of the great river and the desert itself.

One such legend is the legend of Sassi and Punho. This ancient story originated in the seventeenth century and was given life and form in the verse of Hashim Shah.

In the legend, Jam Adam the ruler of Bhambore, fabulously wealthy and sovereign over all the lands of the Indus, was childless and desperate for an heir to continue the royal line. A wandering faqir prayed for him and his queen was blessed with a lovely daughter. According to the custom of the times, royal astrologers were consulted about the destiny and fortune of the child, but unfortunately it was predicted that though she would grow up beautiful and accomplished, she would bring shame to the royal name. Jam Adam in a conflict, chose his honour over his child and the new born princess was put in a wooden casket with ample jewels for the finder for her upkeep and a locket with written proof of her royal parentage around her neck; the casket was put in the waters of the Indus to take her to her destiny. The great river, mystical, sustainer and protector, brought the casket safely to the ghats of the washermen. Here one Atta found the casket and as destiny willed, the child was adopted by him and his childless wife. She was named Sassi, the beautiful one, the gift of the Indus.

Time passed and Sassi grew up. The fame of her peerless beauty and grace reached the royal palace. On Jam Adam's request to see her, Sassi

and give her refuge in Mirma`i's house till she would be freed from the marriage bond. Adam Khan stormed into Payu Khan's house and rode away with Dur Khanai. Following the tribal decree he left her in safety in Mirma`i's house. Wild with rage Payu Khan went to Mirma`i and offered him great wealth if he would break the jirga code and return Dur Khanai to him. The unscrupulous Mirma`i succumbed and gave the despairing Dur Khanai back to Payu Khan.

Adam Khan with his two friends and his tribe went after Payu Khan and after a terrible fight in which his friend Balu and many young tribesmen were killed, Adam Khan lost to Payu Khan. Mourning for his lost love and the loss of his faithful friends, Adam Khan gave up all hope. He rejected a beautiful girl Gulnaz whom his father hoped would make him forget Dur Khanai and after wandering in the wild hills and valleys till he lost his strength, Adam Khan came home to his village to die. In a delirium he called for Dur Khanai for one last sight of her and still crying out her name he died, plunging the people of the hills and valleys into anger and grief over his broken youth and wasted life. Gulunai carried the news to Dur Khanai, alone in her dark corner. Adam Khan's love, his fidelity and the dream they had shared was all she lived for; clutching her heart and taking his name one last time, she fell and already wasted in body and spirit, she died, finally released from the prison of her tragic young life.

In the legend related by Sayyid Abu Ali Shah, Adam Khan and Dur Khanai were buried together and the people of the high hills and valleys believed that the grass always grew green over that mound and that Spring was a constant presence, for the two young lovers had found true love like the pure sweet spring that bursts from the barren face of a rock, and flows eternally to renew the promise of life in that unyielding and indomitable terrain.

So one evening when they were celebrating their happiness, the brothers drugged Sassi and Punho, then leaving the sleeping Sassi, tied up Punho and took him away at night on to Kech Makran.

At daybreak Sassi awoke to find Punho missing and as the treachery of his brothers dawned on her she desperate for time, rode off into the desert all alone after them. It is her courage and determination that is the essence of the legend as she faced the expanse of the desert to find her lost love. The wind rose as she struggled on. The desert storm darkened the sun. She was lost but she still struggled on till the storm of sand covered her fair form and Sassi fell from her horse. The sand buried her and Sassi died.

Further on to the border of Kech Makran, Punho awoke from his stupor and breaking his bonds struck his brothers as he realized their duplicity and treachery. Fearing for Sassi he ran back desperate to find her and covering the burning stretches of sand found two mounds. With a breaking heart he dug in the sand with his bare hands and first uncovered Sassi's mare and then the lovely still form of his beloved Sassi. He saw nothing and heard nothing and held her there in the desert. And then the waiting storm rose again, enveloped them both and Punho died holding Sassi to him forever. They were discovered and brought back to Bhambore and mourned over but the desert had claimed them. Their love became the songs and music of Sindh, to be sung and retold on the ghats of the Indus and by people who walk the desert and who know why the rising wind mourns over the sands like a lament.

who knew the secret of her birth, sent him the locket which was put around her neck by her mother. The sorrowing ruler and his queen found their lost daughter but Sassi with her innate strength and pride did not betray the poor washer folk who had sustained and loved her, and refused to go back to her royal parents. The repentant Jam Adam however made her the gift of a beautiful garden pavilion with vast lands all around, called Lakhi Bag which overlooked the Indus. With it came the ownership of the ferry and Sassi as the keeper of the ferry, ruled the waters of the Indus from her royal pavilion.

Across the desert to the west of the great river was Kech Makran in Kohistan, the home of the Baloch warrior-chieftain Haut Ali and his tribe. He had four stalwart sons and prince Punho the second of his sons was the bravest and handsomest of the desert princes. Caravans from Bhambore would cross into Kech Makran and travellers would recount the fabled wealth and splendour of the kingdom of Jam Adam and sing the praises of the glorious princess Sassi, the keeper of the ferry; and these reached the young prince. He fretted and planned to meet her. In Bhambore, Sassi who had inherited a portrait gallery of all the rulers of the area as part of her pavilion, came upon the portrait of prince Punho. She knew she had found her prince, and as she dreamed and planned to meet him, prince Punho himself impatient to meet his destiny, contrived to get his father's consent to visit Bhambore.

Sassi heard about Punho's arrival and the young prince was brought in her presence. Punho the gallant young chieftain burnished with the sun, swift and poised like a hawk in flight, and the slender silken princess of dazzling beauty confronting one another in the age-old puzzle of life. Time stood still and moved when they realized that they had been waiting for each other all this while and nothing mattered but the need to be together till eternity. Punho forgot about his home and tribe and spent all his time with Sassi. His older brother unable to make him see reason, left and went back to Kech Makran. With the approval of Jam Adam and her people, the blissful Sassi was married to Punho and the world was theirs.

In Kech Makran, Haut Ali enraged like a desert lion, sent Punho's three brothers back to Bhambore to forcibly bring him back. Punho's brothers arrived in Bhambore to be greeted to a royal welcome by the ecstatic Punho who then took them to meet the radiant Sassi. Charmed as they were by her loveliness and sweetness, they still had to obey their father.

NOORIE JAM TAMACHI

The legend of Noorie and Jam Tamachi is the ancient legend of the Mehran, the lower Indus valley where the kings of the Samma dynasty ruled the coast line of Sindh.

Their stories were carried down the centuries to become the folk songs of the region and were sung by the fisher folk and the settlers of the coast till they became absorbed into the customs, beliefs and culture of Sindh.

In the seventeenth century Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai the great Sufi mystic and poet, used the ancient legends and transmuted them into his poetry to express the greatest truth of existence, the search for the Divine through the principle of love, the abnegation of the self, and the longing for the moral perfection that is the spiritual ascension of the soul towards its final reunion.

In the legend, Jam Tamachi the ruler of the Mehran valley, had built a palace on the banks of the Keenjhar Lake, the emerald lake as big as the sea which was home to the fisherfolk who lived around it and by its bounty, and were content with the ancient wisdom of those who live by the waters long enough and know that like its flow everything is transient and so must pass. Jam Tamachi would leave his palace and sit by the Keenjhar and watch the fisherfolk by the lake.

One such fisherman had a daughter called Noorie. Honey-hued and dark-eyed with a beauty that had no parallel, she would swim the waters of the Keenjhar to catch fish and lived on its banks in peace with herself. Once when she was coming out of the lake, the green droplets clinging to her



Kaleem Khan



Ghazanfar Ali

lovely form, Jam Tamachi saw her and dazzled by her beauty, fell in love with her.

The legend as sung in the poetry of Shah Bhitai becomes a song of the soul, as Jam Tamachi sat in his palace with a strange emptiness in his heart and saw around him the futility and mockery of his fabled wealth against the ache of life and the longing for fulfilment. Noorie became the answer to his search, the love that would negate his loneliness and become the balm for his pain. Jam Tamachi sought out Noorie in her hut of reeds, expressed his need of her and asked her to become his consort and go with him to his palace. In her answer, the song becomes the moral fable from which spiritual lessons are drawn. Noorie refused to leave her home, telling him that as a king he would eventually abandon her, a poor fisher girl, but he could only love her if he came to her not as a ruler but as a man, her equal, as ordained by The Almighty without the man made differences of rank and wealth. She turned away from the king, and he left, alone, his world of wealth and rank meaningless and forgotten.

In the romantic tradition of Shah Bhitai's poetic imagery, Noorie waited alone in the dark in her hut of reeds, the flickering light of the earthen lamp shadowing her great dark eyes as she looked beyond the limpid waters of the Keenjhar to an unequal world, when a shadow fell across the door and as she looked up, she saw the young king step inside her hut. He had come to her not as a ruler but as a supplicant for her love. In Shah Bhitai's song the veil lifted and the seeker and the truth became one in the eternal love of a man and a woman, surpassing life, beyond eternity.

Noorie and Jam Tamachi found love and solace in each other and the silence of peace, having learnt the lesson that pure love is worship and in the negation of the self is the ultimate ascension of the soul into the Divine. Shah Bhitai the mystic of the Mehran, symbolized this union as the longing of the soul for God.

Noorie and Jam Tamachi moved into legend immortalized forever in the song of Shah Bhitai. Those who believe the truth still come to a mausoleum on an island in the Keenjhar, the resting place of Noorie and Jam Tamachi, and believing, go away, carrying in their hearts that same stillness and peace, that fulfilment of the self that Noorie and Jam Tamachi found against the waters of the Keenjhar.

MARVI

The legend of Marvi is one of the most beautiful legends of Sindh. It embodies all the romance, pathos and beauty of a land whose mystery and historical depth has shaped the literature, music and culture of Sindh.

The legend of Marvi is the story of the desert, its vastness, its inscrutability and its rootedness. It is the desert Thar which gives the people who live on it their sense of kinship, their strength and their freedom. They are the ones who roam its limitless spaces and know the limitlessness of eternity and so praise the Eternal in songs of love and submission as the wondrous source of all beauty and perfection.

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, the great Sufi poet and saint of Sindh, gave expression to this divine love in his version of the legend of Marvi. In the legend, Marvi lived on the edge of the Thar in a village called Bhalwa. For her the Thar was her life, she lived by its changing hues, its endlessness, its freedom. She sang and danced with her playmates in the cool dark nights beneath the star studded sky. Her little village, her family and the village youth Khet who loved her was all that she wanted and Marvi's life was complete.

There was an old well of sweet water in the middle of the village and here Marvi used to go to draw water in the dusk, and as she dropped her pitcher in it she would sing. And it was one such evening when she was singing at the well, her attire of sun colours giving a luminosity to her glowing beauty, a rider passed by and it was no other than the young Arab chieftain Umer who had a fortress far on the horizon where the desert seemed to end. Mesmerised by the sweetness of her song, he



Askari Mian Irani

FAMOUS CITIES OF PAKISTAN

- KARACHI
- HYDERABAD
- BAHAWALPUR
- MULTAN
- LAHORE
- QUETTA
- ZIARAT
- PESHAWAR
- MURREE
- SIALKOT
- FAISALABAD
- GUJRANWALA
- RAWALPINDI
- ISLAMABAD

stopped at the well and as she looked up he saw her standing with the setting sun behind her, her long dark hair mantling her lovely face, and lost in the vision of such beauty he carried her off to his palace. Marvi was confined in the fortress. The infatuated prince laid before her all the treasure and wealth he possessed; he asked her to become his consort and be loved as no woman had been loved before, but his love for her became her greatest sorrow. A captive bird in a gilded cage, Marvi spurned him and like a desolate spirit would wander the palace at night, alone and comfortless, beating her hands against the unyielding stone walls that had become her prison. Lost in the palace, Marvi's pining for her lost home, her terrain and her people, gave birth to the most poignant mystical Sufi philosophy. Marvi's yearning is Shah Bhitai's yearning, her thirst is his eternal thirst.

Finally as Umer saw her mourning day and night, he knew that her restless spirit would break the bond of life and like a beautiful but flickering flame she would die. Conquering his will to hold her, he opened the gates and Marvi was free.

In the legend, as she stepped out and once more lifted her young face to the sun, saw it turn her beloved Thar gold, heard the faint mournful notes of the nadd from her village, sensed the presence of the grieving Khet against her well, Marvi ran, her feet skimmed the sands of the Thar leading her home. Alone in his fortress Umer watched her slender form recede till it became a fast moving flame on the horizon and then disappeared like a mirage and an illusion that ended like a dream that never was. As he brooded on his loss and the futility of human passion, he wondered if that was what Marvi had been, just a mirage and an illusion.

Marvi's flight and eventual freedom is Shah Bhitai's yearning for the union with the Eternal, the longing to find the way home from the confines of the mortal prison as Marvi found hers from captivity to become once again the free spirit of the Thar.

KARACHI

Karachi, the city of lights, lapped by the warm waters of the Arabian Sea, is the largest and most populous city of Pakistan. Karachi's recorded history goes back to the eighteenth century when it was a small coastal fishing village known as Kalachi-jo-Goth. With the development and expansion of its harbour it gradually grew into a bustling port metropolis, the centre of trade and industry and the economic lifeline of the country. Down the coastline is the site of the ancient port city of Debul which was the historic landing place of the young Arab conqueror Mohammad Bin Qasim in 712 A.D. who after defeating the indigenous ruler established Muslim supremacy over the region. Centuries later, this very city which had seen the imprints of a new and enduring dispensation became the first capital of the new state of Pakistan in 1947.

Karachi is a proud city. Proud, because it houses the birthplace of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Wazir Mansion is located in one of the oldest residential areas of the city and is a protected national monument today. It is also the city of Quaid's mausoleum, this white marble structure with its curved Moorish arches and cool green interior is a landmark of the city where visiting dignitaries come to lay floral wreaths to honour the memory of the founder of the nation. It draws people from all walks of life who come with reverence to pay homage and also to see the impressive change of guards ceremony that takes place everyday.

Karachi is the main financial and trading centre of the country and has the largest sector of industry and banking; the State Bank of Pakistan and the Steel Mills and other industrial units form the nucleus of the economic base of the country. The stock exchange, trading, banking and the turn



Ghulam Mustafa

sheltered harbour or ride the waves on a yacht on a bright day, it is always the sea and the sand that are an endless source of joy for the people of this city. The camel rides, the silken sand, the incredible beauty of the setting sun against the coppered waters, the sheer immensity of the sea, all this wondrous panorama of nature is what makes a day at the beach a wonderful and exhilarating experience.

It is a city that never sleeps, teeming lively and loquacious during the day, the roar of its traffic dulls to a growl in the small hours of the night, but all over the city the streets are awake; there is traffic on the roads, people on the pavements, in the lanes.

It is the city of high fashion, designers and boutiques. It is trendy, heady, exciting and at the same time traditional and a wonderful amalgam of cultures, languages and varying social groups all come together in a society that is constantly re-inventing itself and moving forward.

Karachi, the city of lights and the city on the sea will always remain the city of the Quaid, for it holds the promise that he made to the nation, to move forward and strive for the highest standards of human excellence.

over of the industrial sector make Karachi one of the busiest cities. It has the largest airport in the country and the only city with a vast coastal line, the Port Trust and huge harbour for the naval and maritime fleet of ships.

Karachi is a city of contrasts. It has magnificent historic buildings like the Liaquat Hall in the Gothic style which is a library and art gallery surrounded by the verdant lawns of the Bagh-e-Jinnah, the Sindh High Court, a magnificent sandstone building in the Renaissance style, the grand National Museum, the classic Mohatta Palace and the Maritime Naval Museum to name a few, juxtaposed against the narrow twisting lanes and alleys of the old city. It has wide metal roads, endless shopping complexes and exotic bazaars; the Sarafa Bazaar, Zainab Market and Bohri Bazaar, the shoppers' veritable delight where everything from the most exotic ethnic to the latest chic is available. There is a treasure of gold and silver jewellery, handicrafts of onyx, wood and brass, rare and fine rugs and carpets and beautiful furniture. Bargaining here is a way of life and an endless pastime for those who have the patience and the time for it. For the selective shopper there is the elegance of the shopping centres at Clifton, Zaibunissa Street and Abdullah Haroon Road. Karachi has the most varied and interesting restaurants and eating places any city can offer. There is the delicious local cuisine, the delectable sea food and the fast food restaurants for the young and trendy. Like all big cities with international tourists and visitors arriving on a regular basis for recreation and business, Karachi has a galaxy of hotels offering every luxury and the comfort of international standard requirement.

The old world charm and the aristocratic legacy of great families is felt and seen in the elegant ambience of the Sindh Club, the Yacht Club and the Karachi Gymkhana where exclusivity is the name of the game. For the art lovers it has splendid galleries which not only have a priceless collection of classical and modern art but also hold exhibitions to display the work of new artists.

From the fascinating mosaic of its high rise buildings, leafy residential areas, the exotic inner city and the modern city centre, it is the endless golden beaches and the azure waters of the Arabian Sea that give Karachi its unique style and character. The freedom of spirit and joy of living is nowhere more evident than on the beaches of Sandspit, Hawk's Bay and Paradise Point where sailing, scuba diving, snorkelling and crabbing are almost a national sport. Whether it is to sail on a moonlit night up the

HYDERABAD

The city of Hyderabad in the desert of Sindh, once its fabled capital and now the third largest city of Pakistan, is one of the oldest cities of South Asia. Hyderabad is located one hundred and fifty kilometres from Karachi and is connected with the main cities of the country by road, rail and air.

Its fascinating history dates back to pre-Islamic times when Ganjo Talkan or the barren hill, a nearby hill tract, was used as a place of worship by the then Hindu ruler of the area, Raja Nehrun from whom the city derived its previous name Nehrun Kot and was called the heart of Mehran. Where this ruling ancestry came from is lost in the mists of time and antiquity, but the desert and the Indus was to change its destiny and as the great river changed its course from Khudabad, the then capital of Sindh, Ghulam Shah Kalhoro of the Kalhoro dynasty founded the city of Hyderabad in 1768.

It started as a small settlement on the left bank of the Indus but Ghulam Shah Kalhoro loved the city of hillocks so much that he ordered a great fort to be built on one of the three hills to house and defend his people. The fort was called Pucca Qilla and dominated the skyline of the old city. After the death of the legendary Kalhoro, the ruling house was taken over by Mir Fateh Ali Khan Talpur who made Hyderabad his capital in 1798 and moved his residence and court to the Pucca Qilla. Under the fifty year rule of the Talpur Mirs, Hyderabad known as the perfumed city attained unparalleled splendour.

In 1843 the destiny of this city once again changed its course and the



Ali Raza

BAHAWALPUR

The city of Bahawalpur is located in the Punjab just south of the Sutlej river. Its proximity to Sindh makes it a crossroads city and an important marketing centre for the surrounding areas. Bahawalpur is connected to Karachi and Islamabad by air and by rail and bus services to the other cities of the country.

The city was founded in 1748 by Nawab Mohammad Bahawal Khan Abbasi. The Abbasi family ruled over the state for more than two hundred years. During the rule of the last Nawab Sir Sadiq Mohammad Khan Abbasi Bahawalpur state was merged with Pakistan in 1954. Since it was originally a princely state, Bahawalpur's cultural and historical base has been the ruling family. The most impressive and beautiful structures are the palaces of the nawabs in Dera Nawab and the central library with its fine architecture, vast collection of books and rare manuscripts. It has one of the finest libraries in Pakistan and is visited by students and scholars from within the country and abroad. The Bahawalpur Museum has a rare collection of coins, medals, wood carvings and paintings of Islamic and pre Islamic period. The other areas of interest are the zoological gardens with an exotic collection of animals and tropical birds and grand sport stadiums.

On the south side of the city is the famous desert of Cholistan which extends up to the Thar desert. It is this ambiance of desert and sand that gives Bahawalpur its unique aura. While its agricultural area is richly fertile, its wide deserts are full of the finest game in the country, the hog deer, the black buck, blue bull, foxes, porcupines and hares abound and wild boars are found in large numbers in the forest areas. The desert is also famous for its bird life especially the bustards and hawks that attract

British colonial forces came face to face with the Talpurs at the battle of Miani. History bears witness that the brave and courageous Mirs fell, holding their faith and swords high. The Mirs of Talpur lost their city to the British forces and Hyderabad the perfumed city lost its glory. Sadly, it became the regimental and ammunition base of the English during the first war of Indian Independence.

The legendary past belongs to history, but the desert claims its own. Today Hyderabad, a modern city has the distinction of having made the most outstanding contribution to education in Pakistan. It is home to most of the universities and colleges of the country. Although most are in Jamshoro at the outskirts of Hyderabad, they are considered a part of the city. The University of Sindh, Mehran University, Liaquat University of Medical Health and Sciences and Isra University have all contributed in providing excellent education to the students who study there.

The remnants of great monuments of Kalhoro and Talpur rulers still stand and captivate the imagination; the remains of Pucca Qilla still inspire awe, a tribute to the vision of the Kalhoro ruler. Stretching from Hyderabad Fort to the market tower is Shahi Bazaar where shops full of colourful merchandise are housed on both sides of a winding street and tiny lanes, offering handloom cloth, the famous sussi and the colourful ajrak, silver bracelets, shimmering bangles, block printed chadors, handmade shoes, glazed tiles and beautiful wood furniture. The people are hardy and hospitable and courteous to visitors.

Hyderabad with its glorious historical past, captures the ethos of Sindh; all the chivalry, romance and courage of a people who live close to the desert, who know its challenges and have learnt the secret of survival.

MULTAN

The city of monuments Multan has been around for centuries. The turbulent history of Multan dates back to ancient times when it was the path of innumerable invasions and cultures from western and central Asia. The Greeks, the Mauryans, the Kushans, the white Huns and finally the Arabs invaded, ruled and held sway for centuries. From the beginning of the thirteenth century, for the next three centuries it became the outpost of Islam and was incorporated into the Mughal Empire by Emperor Babar until it came under the rule of the British colonialists in 1848.

Located in south Punjab it is now a major city of Pakistan connected to all other cities by air and rail and is on the main railway track from Karachi, Lahore to Quetta and Peshawar. It is the seat of the most powerful feudal families, the Gaddi Nashiins, who inherit not only a mystical dispensation from the founding Pirs but command the allegiance of thousands of followers. It is a city of writers, poets, mystics and leaders, all bound by deep alliances to various traditional creeds.

Today the city of Multan is divided into the ancient and the new urban spread. The ancient historical monuments have a unique architectural style, the most famous is the beautiful shrine of Saint Shah Rukne Alam and has the second largest dome in the world, it has rich and colourful mosaic glazed tile work and calligraphy and is visited by devotees all the year round. The other famous shrines are those of Bahawal Haq Zikrya, Shah Yusuf Gardezi and Hazrat Shams Sabzwari to name a few. The city of Multan is bound on the north side by the Multan Fort and on the other sides by a brick wall with six famous gates to enter the city. The Multan Fort was built on a mound separating it from the city by the old bed of the

hunters from outside the country who come for the prize.

The people of Bahawalpur are deeply traditional and wear colourful and exotic clothes, the long embroidered shirts and baggy shalwars for men and beautiful ghagras or long skirts and chunari dopattas for the women. The people have a deep sense of faith, they venerate saints and shrines and music and devotional singing is part of their expression of belief. The famous shrine of Mulak Shah is located in the city and thronged by devotees on religious commemorations.

A little further on the confluence of the Chenab and Ravi rivers is the ancient town of Uch. It is believed to have been in existence since 500 B.C. and is a centre of famous shrines, the shrines of Hazrat Bahawal Haleem, Hazrat Jalaluddin Surkh Bokhari and Bibi Jawindi to name a few.

The city of Bahawalpur stands at the edge of the desert with its gleaming white buildings, colourful and vibrant people, its traditional folklore and deep religious faith, making it one of the most intriguing and interesting cities of Pakistan.



Mehboob Ali

Ravi river. It must have been a splendid structure once; today its only remains are parts of the old rampart and bastions. The famous Qasim Bagh and a stadium are located within the walls of the fort.

Multan has some beautiful modern buildings such as Nishtar Medical College, University Campus, Arts Council building, the famous clock tower and the State Bank of Pakistan. The old city has narrow colourful bazaars full of local handicrafts and winding lanes and open air stalls creating an old world ambiance of the marketplaces of a bygone era. Multan is famous for its indigenous local handmade crafts like the Multani khussa, gold thread embroidery on kurtas, the famous painted and glazed blue pottery, camel skin products, carpets and intricate brass and copper handicrafts. Multan and its surrounding areas grow the most aromatic and delectable mangoes, eagerly relished within the country and without; the quality, variety and flavour of this fruit makes it one of the best in the world. The people are traditional and deeply religious and their strongest cultural strength is visible at religious festivals where devotion and recreation merge into a way of life.

Multan with its sun-baked buildings, its ancient inner city and artistic and devout people is a mystical city. Whether it is the sweetness of Saraiki or the magical quality of its dust, this city in the sun is the city where the deeper layers of its historical past are still visible today.

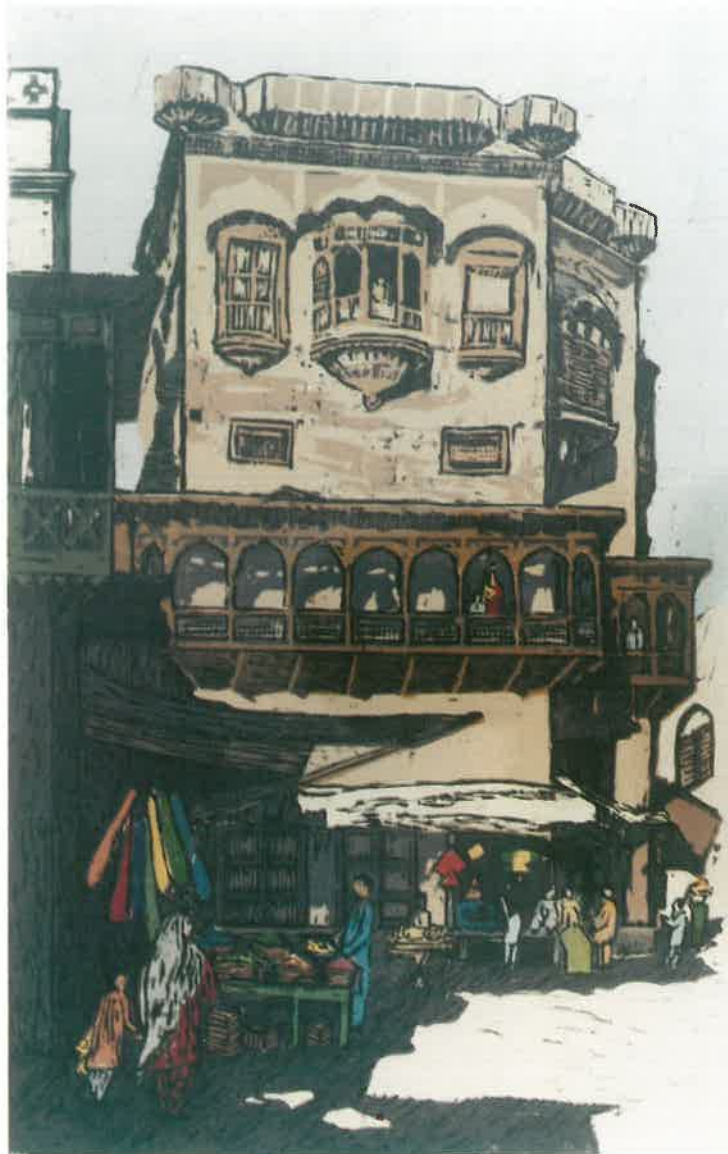
LAHORE

Lahore, the capital city of the Punjab, is the second largest city of Pakistan. On the river Ravi, Lahore is the cultural and academic centre of the country. It is a city, ageless, timeless whose early history and origins go back four thousand years to an ancient epic past. Its recorded history is two thousand years old. Lying on the main trade and invasion routes to South Asia, Lahore has been ruled by a number of dynasties. It touched the zenith of its glory during the rule of the Mughals from 1524 to 1752 A.D.

The Mughal emperors who were great builders gave Lahore some of its finest architectural monuments. The Royal Fort, the Badshahi Mosque, the mausoleums of Emperor Jahangir, Noor Jehan, Anarkali, Asif Jah and the beautiful Shalimar Gardens are an evidence of the splendour of what the city must have been during that time. Lahore not only reflects a rich historical past, its history lives in the present.

It is home to the great shrine of Data Ganj Baksh, a centre of faith and the mausoleum of the poet philosopher Allama Iqbal in red sandstone is an enduring landmark. The historic Minar-e-Pakistan stands in Iqbal Park commemorating the date when the resolution for the creation of the country was passed in 1940.

Lahore is divided into the old walled city with its thirteen gates that once protected the ancient city from marauders and today its historic havelis and maze-like streets are a cultural experience where the finest food in the country is cooked and where traditional masterpieces in copper, brass and silver are still crafted by hand; and the modern city built on the leafy



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Lahore has always been a city of writers, artists, poets and thinkers; it is not just a city, it is a way of life that goes beyond boundaries and territories and is remembered with a nostalgia and a yearning to return. It is a city of memories and a continuation of memories from one generation to another. Lahore of the crisp winter mornings, the balmy evening air, the scorching summer heat, the fragrance of the flowers that bloom at night and above all, the people warm, hospitable and giving, who make Lahore the city that it is.

Shahrah-e-Quaid-e-Azam or the historic Mall Road which was built by the British colonialists after they defeated the Sikh rulers in 1859 and established their rule over the city. The Mall Road starts from the Cantonment and runs right through with the most splendid colonial buildings built by the British on one side and the vast Laurence Gardens on the other. The grand Assembly building in sandstone, the gleaming white Governor House, the Civil Service Academy, the Staff College, the Quaid-e-Azam Library, the shopping arcade of the Mall, the rose brick Aitchison College complex, all resplendent against the tree lined boulevard makes it one of the most picturesque drives, down to the old Punjab University Campus, the Lahore Museum and the National College of Arts all in red brick, past Kim's Gun immortalized by Rudyard Kipling to the quaint latticed Tollington Market and the famous Government College with its high Gothic spires and beautiful oval grounds. From Tollington Market a narrow road branches into the exotic Anarkali Bazaar where shopping is an experience of incredible indulgence and complete variety, with the famous Pak Tea House now reminiscent of Lahore's splendid literary past near the entrance. The city layout is an architectural delight of various grand styles, textures and colours.

Lahore is a fascinating amalgam of the old and the new, while the traditional and the cultural is rooted in the consciousness of the people, the modern urban expanding with new housing colonies and shopping centres and arcades, the most popular being the Liberty Market, the Gulberg Main Market, the Hall Road and Cavalry Ground and Defence markets to name a few. Lahore is the gateway to the vast terrain of the Punjab, feudal, rural, studded with myth, lore and legend, it is the largest market of agricultural produce of the entire country. The city is linked with the rest of the country by air, rail and road and has the Allama Iqbal International Airport to cater to the constant flow of travellers from within the country and abroad.

(The people of Lahore are vibrant, colourful and love life with a joy and zest that has become a cultural idiom. Every occasion becomes a celebration. The advent of spring brings the gaiety of Basant and the excitement of the Horse and Cattle Show. The Alhamra, the centre of performing arts, has a year round programme of theatre, drama and music and art exhibitions are held on a regular basis in the numerous art galleries all over the city.)

QUETTA

Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan, lies at the mouth of the Bolan Pass. The city has three large craggy mountains, Chiltan, Zarghun and Koh-e-Murdar forming a ring around it. Their copper red and russet rocks and crests that are powdered with snow in winters against the unflawed blue of the sky in the clear atmosphere, cast a beautiful glow over the city.

The province of Balochistan traces its history from times immemorial when it was inhabited by Stone Age hunters. The province is the seat of one of the oldest civilizations known to man, home to the most hardy and brave people of the country. The inhabitants are mainly Pathan, Baloch and Brahui and the present day Baloch people owe their unity to the great Baloch Sardar Mir Chakkar Rind who united the main Balochi tribes and also ruled over southern Afghanistan and parts of Punjab and Sindh in the fifteenth century.

In 1935 the scenic city of Quetta was devastated by a terrible earthquake in which more than 35,000 people lost their lives. With great courage and fortitude the people of Balochistan overcame this calamity and today Quetta is a modern flourishing city and is connected to the rest of the country by road, rail and air. The highway connects it to Karachi and the road to Sibi connects it with Punjab and upper Sindh and it is also linked by air with Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad.

The main thoroughfare and commercial centre of the city is Jinnah Road where banks, restaurants, shops, the Tourist Information Centre of Pakistan and the Tourism Development Corporation are located. Shahrah-e-Zarghun runs parallel to Jinnah Road; it is a long boulevard lined with



Kaleem Khan

ZIARAT

Ziarat, the beautiful valley in Balochistan province, is situated one hundred and thirty three kilometres from Quetta at an altitude of two thousand four hundred and forty nine metres above sea level. The resort is in one of the largest and oldest juniper forests in the world and the trees are said to be five thousand years old. Ziarat is surrounded by more than half a dozen gorges formed by innumerable natural springs known as karez and mountain streams of pure clear water flow around the valley.

The name Ziarat means shrine and a mystic saint called Baba Khar Wari is believed to have rested in the valley and blessed it. After he died he was buried here and his shrine is eight kilometres from Ziarat town.

Because of its cool weather and the natural moisture from its nearby streams and waterfalls, Ziarat is literally like a huge fruit and flower garden. Over four thousand acres in and around Ziarat are used as orchards for the famous and delicious dark red kulu apple and a great amount of black cherries are also grown in abundance. Ziarat is famous for its honey which is light and aromatic and the flowers are of every colour and variety and attain a very large size. One of the loveliest variety is the lavender like wild bush called shinshoab which looks luminous in the twilight and fills the air with a heady fragrance.

Ziarat is also the last home of the Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. He spent the last days of his life in the Residency. This historic building, elegant and finely structured has verdant green lawns, great chenar trees and beautiful flower gardens and commands a striking view of the valley. The Residency was built in 1882 by the British and used by the Agent to

trees and shady and cool in the summer; the Governor House and the Post and Telecommunication offices are located on it. The prominent bazaars of Quetta are located on Shahrah-e-Iqbal and Shahrah-e-Liaquat. Here one can find colourful handicrafts particularly Balochi mirror work embroidery, hand made carpets, the famous green marble products and other handicrafts of traditional Balochi skills. Quetta has an archaeological museum with a rare collection of antique guns, swords and manuscripts. It has a display of Stone Age tools, prehistoric pottery and articles found from Mehrgarh. The Geological Museum with a collection of rare rocks and ancient fossils is near the Balochistan University on Sariab Road. The famous Command and Staff College Museum, a treasure house of British military history, is housed in the former bungalow of Field Marshal Montgomery.

Twenty kilometres southwest of Quetta is the Chiltan National Park. It is the protected sanctuary of the Chiltan markhor, other animals that inhabit the sanctuary are the wild sheep, hares and porcupines and snow leopards, wolves, wild cats and striped hyenas occasionally migrate from the mountains. The park is also home to many birds like partridge, warblers, blue rock pigeons, golden eagles, hawks and sparrows and a variety of reptiles and snakes are sometimes seen there. Quetta is called the fruit basket of the country; plums, peaches, apples, apricots, melons and a great variety of grapes, cherries, pistachios and almonds are all grown in abundance. The city is famous for its local delicacies; the most famous is the roasted leg of lamb called saji and some of the finest mutton is raised around Quetta.

Because of the historical significance of the Bolan Pass, the Lak Pass and Khojak Pass as the main entrance points for migration from Central Asia to discover new homelands in South Asia, the people around the city are still nomadic and tribal and the rugged terrain and the great expanse of the province have given the people their unique character. Quetta is the capital of the largest province of Pakistan and forms an excellent base for an exploration of this fascinating land with its beautiful valleys, mountains and resorts.



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the Governor General as his summer headquarters. Today it houses the personal items and mementoes of the founder of the country and is visited by tourists who come to see the last abode of the leader and to pay homage to his memory.

Between the undulating hills and deep ravines there is a mile long stretch of flat land called the Chashma Walk which leads to the spring that provides water to the town. Another scenic interest is the view of Prospect Point. It lies at a height of about two thousand metres above sea level and is six kilometres from Ziarat. The Prospect Point affords a breathtaking view of the entire valley stretching out in gentle slopes in front. From a nearby cliff one can clearly see the highest peak of these hills known as Kalifet which rises to a height of three thousand metres. The valley has natural waterfalls formed by mountain springs and the waterfalls of Fern Tangi, Sandiman Tangi and Chutair valley are not only picturesque with the pure cold water cascading down the rocks but are also ideal picnic spots for tourists.

The cool clear mountain air, the lush greenery all around and the pure water of springs and streams make Ziarat one of the prettiest and most salubrious resorts in the country. In the evenings when the wind blows through the juniper forests, one can almost picture the Quaid taking his lonely walks through the lengthening shadows, maybe reflecting on the destiny of the nation he created.

Ziarat is just that. A shrine to an ideal, and a vision of the great leader of this country.

PESHAWAR

Peshawar, the great frontier city of Pakistan at the point of the Pak Afghan border, is a city which is unique in its history and character as the entire area has seen more movement than any city of the country. From times immemorial the legendary Khyber Pass and Peshawar valley have resounded to the tramp of marching feet as successive armies hurtled down the crossroads of history, a pathway of commerce, migration and invasion by the Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Bactrians, Kushans, Huns, Turks, Mongols and Mughals. This constant flow and interaction of different races and cultures have given the people of the area, the Pathans, their indomitable and independent character and their legendary sense of honour and freedom of spirit. It is a rugged mountainous area and the harsh and uncharted terrain has created one of the finest and fiercest races in the world.

The city of Peshawar is divided into the old city and the new modern city with its cantonment and surrounding townships and markets. Until the mid fifties Peshawar was enclosed within a city wall and its sixteen gates, the most famous the Kabuli Gate leading out to the Khyber and on to Kabul. The houses of the area are quaint and high, built mostly of unbaked brick set in wooden frames to guard against earthquakes. Many have beautifully carved balconies. The bazaars of the old city are numerous, colourful and have an old world ambiance, the most famous is the Qissa Khawani Bazaar redolent with the fragrance of tea in gleaming samovars mixing with the enticing aroma of Peshawar's unrivalled kebabs and naan of its many eating houses. The bazaar has fruit shops displaying the fruit of Peshawar's orchards apart from leather shops selling the famous Peshawari chappal and other leather items. The other famous



Ghazanfar Ali

by Babar in 1526 A.D. and beyond the city spreads the vast tribal area to the great and historical passes of the Khyber, the Tochi and the Gomal.

Every race has an icon which moulds their racial characteristic and the brave and fearless character of the Pathans has been moulded by their heroes Khushal Khan Khattak, the warrior poet, and Rehman Baba, poet and leader who made nationalism and love of their country bigger than life itself. Peshawar and the Pathans reflect that idealism.

bazaars are the Meena Bazaar for women and the Andar Shehar Bazaar for gold jewellery and rare gemstones.

Across the railway line lies the cantonment and the vast extension of the city west and east. To the west stretches a long line of educational and research institutions such as the Academy of Rural Development, Khyber Medical University and the Teacher's Training College. Peshawar's main markets, furniture shops, carpet and clothing shops and departmental stores are located on the University Road. Further up is the Peshawar University established in 1950 by Khan Abdul Qayyum, the then Chief Minister of the province. The university has many colleges, faculties and institutes for medicine, engineering, law, computer sciences and agriculture. Islamia College is another landmark and it was founded in 1930. The foundation stone was laid by Sir George Roosekuppe. The building in rose red brick stands by the side of Jamrud Road and has a magnificent front with its domes and high pinnacles. It is surrounded by gardens patterned in the old Mughal style and the long avenues are lined with lime and sisu trees. Another imposing building is the Peshawar Museum housed in the Victoria Memorial Hall built in 1905. It has the finest specimens of Gandhara sculptures, tribal life and the Muslim period. Peshawar has two ancient Mughal mosques, the Mahabat Khan Mosque built in 1670 A.D. by Mahabat Ali Khan and the Qasim Ali Mosque built by Qasim Ali. Both are lavishly decorated with floral work and Persian calligraphy.

Located in the heart of the old city is Chowk Yadgar. It is an open square with a memorial in the centre to commemorate war heroes. It is also the speaker's corner of Peshawar where political meetings are held. A road leads to the Kot Wali Darwaza and the clock tower constructed by Sir George Cunningham in 1900. The new residential area of Peshawar is the Saddar, a township with avenues of tall trees, wide roads and large houses. In the heart of Saddar is the Khalid Bin Walid Bagh which is an old Mughal garden. It has huge ancient trees and gorgeous roses. The two other gardens are the Shahi Bagh and the Wazir Bagh with an incredible variety of flowers and shrubs. In Saddar there are the splendid modern State Bank building, Governor House, Edwards College and High School, the Peshawar Club, a fine shopping area and the Tourist Information Centre.

The approach to the city is dominated by the massive Bala Hisar Fort built

MURREE

The lovely hill resort of Murree, known as the queen of the hills, is a ninety minutes drive north east of Islamabad. The Murree mountains at seven thousand five hundred feet above sea level are a part of the outer Himalayan range, extending south along the banks of the Jhelum river and out west in the Margalla spur and stop a few miles short of the Kala Chitta hills. The range consists of five main spurs known as the Murree spur. These hills and the valleys between them are deeply wooded and very green, the higher spurs are covered with magnificent pine forests, the silver fir species, the hill oak, chestnut, wild cherry and the fragrant green pine uniting to form the great forest belt of the spur.

Founded as a hill station by the British in 1851, Murree was the summer headquarters of the government of the Punjab until 1876. It was built like a small elite watering hole, a cool sophisticated retreat from the scorching heat of the plains. It had the famous Mall for promenading, parks, churches, schools, clubs and cafes. Since independence and the close proximity of Islamabad as the capital of the country, Murree has expanded rapidly. There are small inexpensive hotels dotting the hillside, the market area is crowded with people from all walks of life who come to beat the summer heat from various parts of the country; the more affluent have cottages in the more exclusive Galis or the string of hill resorts along the ridge between Murree and Abbottabad on the Karakoram Highway. Beyond Murree, the resorts of Ayubia, Khairagali, Bhurban, Doongagali and Nathiagali are more secluded and have lovely hill trails. Small hamlets and little patches of cultivation are found high up on hill sides and on mountain tops.



Ghulam Mustafa

SIALKOT

The border city of Sialkot lies north of the Aik Nala and south of the Jammu hills and is connected by road with Lahore and Gujranwala. Its historical past goes back in time to a mythical era and is believed to have been founded by one Raja Sul, five thousand years ago and is said to be the site of the ancient town of Sakala. Sialkot is bounded on the north by the Chenab and on the south by the Ravi and is sub-montane in character with a clear view of the Pir Panjal range lying on the north east part of the district. Since the district is watered on two sides by two of the great rivers of the Punjab, the Ravi and Chenab, the soil is rich and fertile and about nine tenths of the cultivable area is under crops. The chief crops are wheat, barley, rice, corn, millet and sugar cane.

Today Sialkot is a thriving industrial city of Pakistan and several townships have grown up around the original city which was incorporated as a municipality in 1867. With a population of three hundred thousand Sialkot has a strong and industrious business community with a deep sense of civic commitment. It has several hospitals, three libraries and colleges affiliated with the University of the Punjab. Its modern industries include flour and cotton mills and it is the largest producer and exporter of the finest surgical instruments, leather goods, ready made garments, musical instruments and the best sporting goods in the country. The high quality of its manufacturing products and the vast market of its exports make Sialkot one of the biggest income generating cities of the country.

The people of Sialkot have a special mystique, the racial flux of border towns and cities give the people a unique character and there is something special about the land that has produced heroes, martyrs, soldiers, poets

The dark green woodland of the valleys contrasts startlingly against the background of the high snow clad peaks. A tributary of the river Soan runs down the valley and forms deep limpid pools between the hills.

Murree spreads along the top of the ridge for about five kilometres, at the north east end is the Kashmir Point with a view across the valley of the river Jhelum into Azad Kashmir. At the south west end is Pindi Point looking back towards Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Between the two runs the Mall at the centre of which is the main shopping area, a wide street with shops on both sides along with small cafes and eating houses; this is a centre point where most people congregate. Many roads leave the Mall and either follow the contours of the ridge or descend to the principal road.

It is an incredible sight for anyone coming from one of the outlying roads to the main centre, suddenly coming upon a sea of humanity packed on the street of the Mall. Men, women, children, dressed in their best, jostling, pushing and just walking back and forth; promenading and shopping are the main amusements as are riding in the new chair lifts from the gullies to the ridge points. Shopping in Murree is quaint and interesting. One can pick up beautiful Kashmiri shawls, carved walking sticks, the famous red and golden Murree apples and the most delicious dry fruit.

Murree is lovely all year round. In the summers it is cool and even chilly, in the evenings rain falls intermittently throughout the months and in the winters Murree is snow bound and offers exciting fun for those who enjoy the snow, the cold crisp winter air and trekking up in the hills.

A hill resort always has a special allure. It offers a break from routine, a change of climate and scene and above all relaxation, whether of the energetic kind or just sitting in a cottage looking at the vast and lonely expanse of hills and valleys, the allure is in the wonderful silence broken only by the noise of the cicadas in the pine trees or the faint rhythm of a mountain stream moving over rocks and stones. The allure is in getting away from it all. Murree of the fragrant pines, the lively Mall, the secluded hill tracts and the long shadows of its forests, offers just that - the allure of getting away from it all.

FAISALABAD

The city of Faisalabad in the Punjab province lies one hundred and twenty kilometres west of Lahore. Going back to its interesting history and origins, it was part of the old Chenab colony, a great bare uncultivated area known as the Sandal Bar in the Rechna Doab between the Ravi and Chenab rivers. The whole tract was an alluvial plain sloping gently from the northeast to the southwest dropping gradually towards the two great rivers on either side. The Bar has been spoken of as a vast tract of a peculiar fascination to which the wilderness and vastness of the scene added a brooding desolation. The area was pastoral in character and home to the warring nomad grazier tribes and river settlers who fought for and parcelled out its pastures.

At the beginning of the last century the territories of the Bar were portioned out between the traditional warring foes, the tribes of the Bhattis, the Viraks, the Kharals, the Vattus and the Sials. Under the British government the Bar was divided into blocks or chaks and grazing fees were levied on all the graziers and the river tribes who moved from the pastoral to agricultural settlements and obtained proprietary rights over the chaks under their control. The principal town of the Chenab colony came to be called Lyallpur as the present city was founded by the then Lieutenant Governor of the province, Sir James Lyall in 1895. With the building of canals by the British government Lyallpur became the first planned city of the province. The city was built with a clock tower as the centre point with seven bazaars leading out of it in a circular pattern. It had a fine residential area, an officers club called the Chenab Club, a big central park and several schools.

and writers. It is the birth place of the poet philosopher the visionary Allama Iqbal and the great poets Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Asghar Sodai. Its beautiful hilly terrain, secluded streams and sacred shrines, the myth and legends associated with them seem to have shaped the visions and poetic fancy of these great minds. Maybe Allama Iqbal's concept of the intellectual flight of man's enquiring mind, the shaheen, was shaped in the hills and river plains of the district and Faiz who immortalized love as the ultimate power of the universe in his prismatic poetry imbibed his inspiration from the same source.

The people of Sialkot are fiercely patriotic and enterprising and have always been in the forefront in the defence and protection of Pakistan. Not only are they instrumental in augmenting the economic strength of the country, but are doing a lot to make Sialkot a modern city. To this end the business community of Sialkot have themselves raised funds to build an airport in the city which will not only facilitate trade and exports but will give a new shape and direction to the people of Sialkot.

Sialkot, the city that will always be loved as the birth place of the visionary whose concept of freedom of the spirit went beyond the stars and will always be inspired by the same principle of freedom, freedom of the spirit and freedom of a strong country, a principle that they cherish, which forms the basis of their patriotism and deep loyalty to Pakistan.



Ghulam Rasool

Today Lyallpur, renamed Faisalabad, is a thriving city and is surrounded by a fertile area where major crops of cotton, wheat, vegetables and fruit are produced. It is an important transportation and commercial centre, its industrial products include textiles, pharmaceuticals, chemical fertilizers, bicycles, textile machinery, flour, sugar, vegetable oil, soap and agricultural equipment. Faisalabad has a population of about two million people who are industrious and hard working and by sheer perseverance and dedication have made Faisalabad one of the busiest cities of Pakistan. The quick turnover of its large business community has contributed greatly to the economic strength of the country. Faisalabad is the home of the University of Agriculture founded in 1909 as the Punjab Agricultural College.

The city has several schools, colleges and hospitals, the Iqbal Cricket Stadium which hosts international and domestic cricket, first class hotels to cater to the international entrepreneurs who come for the export quality of its textiles. Faisalabad has an airport and is connected to the rest of the country by a network of rail and bus service.

Today Faisalabad is not only the economic and trade base of the province, but is also a high earner for the country. Its exports are of international quality and globally acclaimed.

The evolution and development of any country is one of the marvels of the historical process. To see a city grow from the wilderness and vastness of the Bar and become a main industrial city is nothing short of a marvel that progress and development are an intrinsic part of the human instinct for betterment and growth.

GUJRANWALA

Gujranwala city on the Grand Trunk Road from Rawalpindi to Lahore, is the third largest city of the Punjab and is about sixty kilometres to the north of Lahore. The district occupies the portion of the Rechna Doab between the fertile district of Sialkot and the desert plains of Jhang, part of the upland tract brought under cultivation by the Chenab canal. The city of Gujranwala itself appears to be five hundred years old. It is recorded that the first name of the settlement was Khanpur Shansi after a chieftain of the Jat caste called Khan Shansi who founded eleven villages in the nearby area. The district was divided into two distinct portions, the cultivated portion or Des and the other the grazing tract or Bar. In the Des, the inhabitants were agriculturists of settled habits with right and property in the soil and deriving their chief support from their cultivation; while the people of the Bar were nomadic graziers, possessing little or no landed property and subsisting more on the profits derived from their cattle than their land.

Historically speaking the large majority of the settlers belonged to the great Jat family and the various sub-tribes spread all over the district. After the emergence of the new state, Muslim migrants came in large numbers, settled in the fertile district and with their expertise and new identity turned Gujranwala into the production marketing centre of the Punjab.

Today Gujranwala is a thriving city with a large population of over eight million people. Its marketing items are grains, melons, sugar cane, manufacturing ceramics, iron safes, copper, brass and steel utensils and cutlery, garments, sanitary fittings, surgical instruments, leather products,



Zulfiqar Ali Zulfi

RAWALPINDI

The Rawalpindi district is to the extreme north of the six districts which form the Rawalpindi division. It is bounded on the north by the Hazara district, on the east by the river Jhelum which divides it from Chibbal and Poonch in the Kashmir territory, on the south by the Jhelum district and on the west by the river Indus which separates it from Peshawar and Kohat. It forms a part of the table lands lying between the rivers Jhelum and Indus and the outer Himalaya and the Salt range. Located between the undulating plains beginning from the foot of the Murree hills, Rawalpindi city colloquially called Pindi has a history that goes back to the Buddhist era, to the invasions of the Greeks and then to the Muslim conquest of the subcontinent. From an obscure camping ground called Ghaznipur after the invasions of Mahmud Ghaznavi, the city eventually came to be known as Rawalpindi after the Ghakkar ruler of the area. In 1851 the city became the permanent cantonment of the British army and after the laying out of the railway line and the establishment of the railway station, Rawalpindi became the largest cantonment in South Asia.

Today Rawalpindi is a vast spread out city still retaining its unique landmarks while growing rapidly into a modern urban to accommodate the growing population and new living trends. Rawalpindi's famous Thandi Sarak, better known as the Mall, runs through the city to the intersection of the Murree Road and crosses it in the vicinity of the elegant Flashman's Hotel.

The unique architectural style of the old buildings with carved wooden balconies, is still visible in the old quarters of the city and the cantonment where the Pakistan Day parade used to be held before Islamabad came

transformers and electric fans to name a few. The establishment of an industrial park, textile, silk and cotton industrial units and tannery productions increased its importance. Cultivation in the surrounding areas is dependent upon canal irrigation; wheat, cotton, rice, barley and millet are grown and cultivated and the world's best quality rice, the fragrant Basmati grows here.

In 1951 the city was converted into a capital district which gave rise to the new industries in the city, like the rice and sugar mills that are the main suppliers to the country. Gujranwala has an international level cricket stadium and the Jinnah Stadium also known as the Municipal Stadium. The Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry came into existence in November 1978 and the first elected executive committee, the Majlis-e-Aamla took charge of the Chamber. The credit of the building's construction undoubtedly goes to the founders and the G.C.C.I. has the rare distinction of being the only chamber in the country to own its own building. Apart from the chamber office, the zonal offices of Habib Bank, United Bank Limited, Allied Bank Limited and the State Bank of Pakistan are functioning in the building. The city has many well equipped hospitals, good schools and several colleges affiliated with the University of the Punjab. The new railway station was opened in 1996 by the Commissioner of the Division and is one of the busiest railway stations on the Grand Trunk Road.

Gujranwala is famous for its incredible local cuisine, the tikka and kebab shops and restaurants are famous and extremely popular with people who love good food. Another interesting feature of the city is its love of local sports and it is known as the city of wrestlers. It is home to the famous wrestlers of the subcontinent who have on numerous occasions proved their skill and prowess and have not only won fame and recognition but have also won several international titles and trophies to make the city proud.

Gujranwala is an extremely important industrial region and potential agricultural trade base of Pakistan and plays a major role to augment the economy of the country. The fertile region, the strong and rooted indigenous population and the motivated migrant community have all created a city with a tremendous sense of direction and the need to prosper as one of the major cities of Pakistan.



Hajra Mansoor

into existence. It has the famous Polo Ground where local and international matches are held. The historic Lal Haveli, another architectural landmark, is located in the neighbourhood of the Purana Qilla, the Sarafa Bazaar, Bohar Bazaar and Moti Bazaar.

While a lot of urban development has taken place in the city and new housing, schools, colleges and hospitals have been built, the historic part of the city has retained its cultural and traditional ambience. In the Purana Qilla the streets are narrow and winding, the quaint high houses have intricate woodwork on jharokas, bay windows and doors, the masonry solid and old. The old barrack city of Rawalpindi is rapidly undergoing a change as well. At Chaklala, Westridge and other areas of the cantonment new modern buildings and infrastructure is changing the face of the city. The modern Rawalpindi has an impressive set of schools and colleges, the Agricultural University, the Army Medical College and the Army Public College of Management and Sciences to name a few. It has well equipped hospitals to meet the demands of its large population and the Rawalpindi General Hospital, Hearts International and DHQ are the main ones.

Rawalpindi specializes in handicrafts; the exquisite inlaid sheesham and walnut furniture is made here and old shops in the Sadar Bazaar, Moti Bazaar, Sarafa Bazaar and Raja Bazaar are famous for beaten gold and silver jewellery, traditional brass and copper ware, garments and electrical goods. Many new shopping plazas and high rise complexes have come up all over the city which are full of the latest in local and imported merchandise. The city has the famous Ayub National Park, the Golf Course and the Racecourse Park. Rawalpindi also has a newly built cricket stadium of international standard where local and international cricket is played. For music and theatre fans, it has the grand Liaquat Hall where musical concerts and stage plays are organized all year round.

Rawalpindi is the amalgam of the cultural traditions of two provinces, Punjab and North West Frontier Province and the inhabitants of the city are a heterogeneous mix of both the provinces. Rawalpindi has retained its old world mystique and at the same time it is busy and on the move, a special blend of the old and the new which aptly reflects its ethos as one of the principal cities of the country.

ISLAMABAD

Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan is at the northern edge of the Potohar Plateau. Surrounded by the gradient range of the Margalla hills, the Murree and Kahuta hills form the backdrop and the city spreads below in undulating hillocks and wooded grassland making it scenically one of the prettiest capital cities. The plan for the city was laid out by a Greek firm of architects and Islamabad came into existence on the twenty sixth of October in 1966.

The city is beautifully planned with wide tree-lined avenues and streets, neat residential areas, imposing public buildings and well organized market centres. Seasonal flowers are resplendent against every hillock and green belt all year round, side walks are shaded behind rows of stately chenar trees, flame trees, jacaranda and hibiscus; roses, jasmine and bougainvillea are in profusion in the many parks and the wooded view points offer a sweeping panorama of the city in its cool and green ambience.

The main nucleus is around the wide double avenue called the Constitution Avenue with the elegant white marble Presidency at the one end, it is flanked by the Government Secretariat buildings, the imposing structures of the Supreme Court, the Prime Minister's Secretariat, the National Library, till the Convention Centre. The Margalla Road with its rows of elegant houses, the Embassy Road and the secluded and wooded Diplomatic Enclave all lead to it and from it to other parts of the fast expanding city. Many new housing sectors have come up which have spread Islamabad right up to the Motorway and to the foothills of the Murree hills.



Anna Molka Ahmed

NORTHERN AREAS

- KAGHAN VALLEY
- SWAT
- CHITRAL
- GILGIT
- HUNZA
- BALTISTAN

Islamabad has unique architectural landmarks like the grand and imposing Shah Faisal Mosque designed by the renowned Turkish architect Vedat Dalokay, the ethnic Lok Virsa which is the folk heritage museum, the huge Islamabad Sports Complex for national and international sporting events, several art galleries, museums and some of the finest universities, the Quaid-e-Azam University, the National University of Modern Languages, the Allama Iqbal Open University, the National University of Science and Technology and the International Islamic University. The city is surrounded by parks, gardens and low lying hills like the Rose Garden, the Shakaparian hills, the panoramic Daman-e-Koh and the Raval Lake. The densely wooded Margalla range itself has a spectacular network of trails for the adventurous trekkers and hikers.

From the Constitution Avenue an offshoot road leads to a small village called Nurpur at the foot of the Margalla hills. In the centre of the little hamlet, is the mirror studded shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam; devotees come from all parts of the country in a steady stream to pay homage to the great saint who lived in these hills and upheld the faith.

The city has a variety of shopping centres, the Jinnah Super Market, Blue Area, Aabpara, the Covered Market, new shopping plazas and high rise complexes, all stocked with the finest merchandise, food items, fresh fruit and vegetables. Islamabad has well equipped hospitals like the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, Polyclinic and the National Institute of Health; all the infrastructure needed for the requirement of its inhabitants. The historic Mughal gardens of Wah are twelve miles away from the city and the picturesque drive to Murree is an hour's distance from the capital.

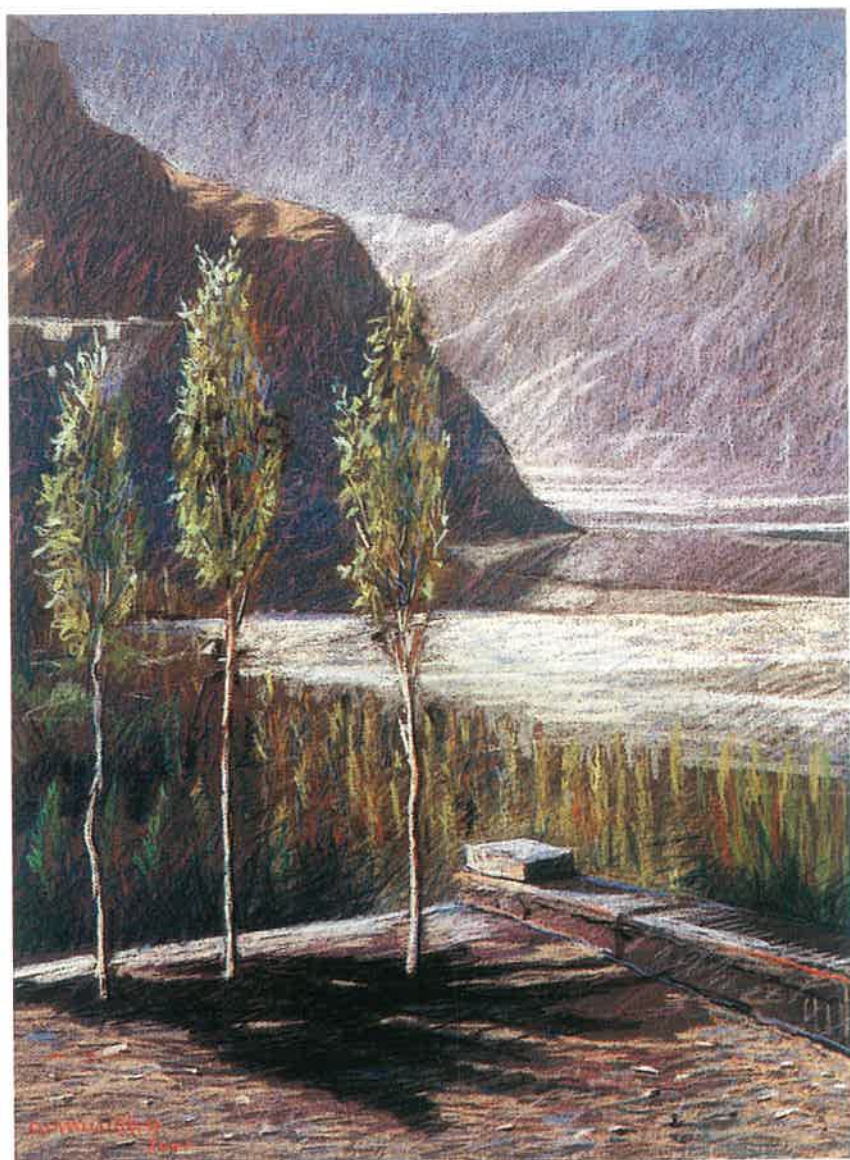
The capital city of a country reflects the national character and Islamabad reflects the sense of peace and identity which is the birthright of every citizen of the country.

KAGHAN VALLEY

The Kaghan valley lies to the north east of the Hazara district of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province. The valley extends for one hundred and fifty kilometres and is enclosed by the mighty range of the Hindu Kush and the outer Himalayan chain which crosses the river Indus above the Kaghan valley. The valley itself rises from an elevation of two thousand metres to its highest point, the Babusar Pass at four thousand metres, making it an unbelievable land mass of mountains, terraced hillsides, isolated glens, lakes, water falls, streams and glaciers.

This lovely valley is a dream holiday spot during the summer months and is accessible by road from Rawalpindi, Islamabad and Peshawar. To get to the valley the route is through Abbottabad and then through the winding road of a low lying range to the next stop Balakot which is the gateway to the valley. This little hamlet is famous for the shrines of Syed Ahmed Shaheed and Ismail Shaheed Brelvi, the great freedom fighters and nationalists who dedicated their lives to the cause of a free nation.

Sixty one kilometres from Balakot is the little village of Kaghan which gives the valley its name and from here another picturesque drive against the flowing Kunhar river below the road leads to Naran, twenty three kilometres away. Naran is the base for the whole valley and from here a breathtaking vista of lakes, valleys and snow capped mountains spreads all around. The outer frontier of this valley are the two ranges of the Hindu Kush and the outer Himalayas which join at the point of the Babusar Pass which commands the whole Kaghan panorama and on a clear day, the great snow mountain Nanga Parbat glistening and sharply etched against the skyline in the distant Chilas valley can be seen from this point.



Ghulam Mustafa

SWAT

The lush green valley of Swat lies at an elevation of nine hundred metres under the chain of the Hindu Raj mountains, a range of the lower Himalayan belt which forms one of the sharpest cultural boundaries in the world, the cultural lines between central and northern Asia. Still further north is the great range of the Karakoram and the Hindu Kush which forms the outer boundary of the northern areas of Pakistan. This beautiful valley spreads over an area of 10,000 square kilometres and is fed by the rivers Kunhar and the Swat. The undulating valley is like a huge fruit laden orchard. It has flower decked slopes, snow torrents, icy streams and secluded lakes. Scenically it is one of the loveliest valleys of the northern areas and one of the best holiday resorts of the country.

Swat has a rich cultural history, it is the Udayana or garden of the ancient Vedic epics called the land of enthralling beauty. In this valley many ancient legends were born and became part of the cultural and religious lore of the epic age. And it is in Swat that Alexander of Greece crossed over from the Pamir and fought and won some of his major battles before moving into the plains of the subcontinent. Swat is the valley of the hanging chains described by the famous Chinese pilgrim travellers Huain Tseng and Fa Hian in the fifth and sixth centuries.

The green valley of Swat with its secluded retreats in the low lying ranges was once the home of Buddhism and over one thousand monasteries were built on its slopes and hills. Some of the finest sculptures of the Gandhara period have been excavated from the valley, sites where ancient Buddhist stupas and monasteries were built have also been found and identified.

Saidu Sharif which is the main town of the valley has the famous Swat Museum which contains the finest collection of Gandhara art in the world. Mingora, three kilometres from Saidu Sharif is a treasure of excavated Buddhist relics and ancient stupas. Apart from its historical and cultural significance, Swat is a hiker's paradise. The aroma of its orchards mixes with the fragrant mountain air, the scenic splendour of its snow range, ice lakes and streams makes a stay there a heady and exhilarating experience. One can well imagine why some of the most romantic and beautiful legends of an ancient epic past originated in this valley of fruits and flowers. Thirteen kilometres away is Marghzar, a lovely hilly area famous for its Safeyd Mahal, the white marble palace of the former Wali of Swat.

For the modern day tourist, Swat has a panoramic golf course in Kabal and Malam Jabba at over two thousand metres and thirty nine kilometres north east of Saidu Sharif has been developed as a ski-cum summer resort. Swat is linked by road and air to Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Peshawar.

The Swat valley is not just an enchanting holiday resort, its cultural and historical richness makes it one of the most fascinating areas of Pakistan.



Afshar Malik

scenic splendour is unparalleled, a three hundred and twenty two kilometres long valley under the shadow of the most spectacular snow peaks of the world.

Apart from Tirich Mir at over seven thousand metres other high peaks are Istornal, Bunizem, Saraghrar, Noushaq, Ghocharsor, Phal, Daser and Don, offering a challenging adventure to those who play the world's most exciting and dangerous sport, mountain climbing. The snow rivers of Chitral especially the Lutkuh and Shishi Kuh Nallah are famous for the speckled brown trout and the angling season starts from April through September.

Chitral is accessible from Peshawar by air, by road through Malakand, Dir and the Lowari Pass, and from Gilgit through the Shandur Pass.

Polo is another sport which is extremely popular and matches are held on festive occasions. A regular polo tournament is held every year in July at the Shandur Pass and has an enthusiastic audience from within the country and abroad.

A holiday in Chitral is a cultural experience going back to a fascinating historical past, an exhilarating challenge to scale the great peaks in an ambience of unspoiled nature, a combination which makes a visit to the Chitral valley a lifetime experience.

GILGIT

Far to the north west of the most mountainous region of the Himalayas lies the Gilgit valley. At an elevation of almost sixteen hundred metres, the valley is forty kilometres from the Indus and its fertile irrigated tract is drained by the river Gilgit. The quaint little town of Gilgit is shadowed by a wall of giant mountains. Eleven snow bound peaks ranging from six thousand to eight thousand metres run east from the passes of the Hindu Kush leading to the Karakoram range to the mighty maze of the outer Himalayas making it scenically one of the most magnificent valleys of the world.

Being an ancient route from Central Asia the valley saw the influx of different civilizations and remains of ancient stone buildings and rock engravings of Buddha of the eighth century show that Gilgit was once the seat of Buddhism and its ancient name was Sargin. More than four hundred years ago Ghazi Mukhpun a Persian adventurer, founded a new dynasty and gave the continuity of Muslim rule and changed the name to Gilgit.

Today Gilgit is one of the most exciting mountain resorts for hiking and trekking. The local inhabitants are hardworking and industrious cultivators, their crops are wheat, barley, maize, cotton, millet and pulses and fruit is plentiful. From Gilgit mountain roads lead into the surrounding valleys and the fast flowing Gilgit river which runs through has the largest suspension bridge in Asia. Trekking and hiking routes are from the Naltar valley with its verdant mountain forests of juniper, fir and silver birch, small blue-green lakes and glaciers. Gahkuch the headquarters of Ghizer district is the gateway to the Iskoman valley and



Annie Khadija Beghin

HUNZA

The serenely beautiful Hunza valley lies to the extreme north west of the northern boundary of Pakistan on the banks of the Hunza river. To the north it extends into the mountainous region of the Karakoram range which adjoins the belt of the Hindu Kush and the Muztagh. In the south it borders on Gilgit, on its western side Hunza is separated from Ashkuman and Yasin by the range of the lower Karakorams, in the east the Muztagh range divides Hunza and Nagar from Baltistan.

At an elevation of two thousand five hundred metres, the Hunza valley has fertile green wheat fields, fruit laden orchards of apricots, apples, plums, peaches, cherries and grapes, a range of splendid trees and vegetation all under the canopy of high snow capped mountains and vast glaciers. The dominant giant mountain of the Karakoram range Rakaposhi with its glittering snow peaks at seven thousand eight hundred metres rises to its awesome grandeur in the valley and is clearly visible from Karimabad, the capital of Hunza.

Hunza valley's ancient history goes back nine hundred and sixty years. The ruling Hunzakuts known as the Mirs of Hunza are thought to be the descendents of five wandering soldiers of the legions of Alexander of Greece. Throughout its turbulent history, the rulers of Hunza resisted external control of their state, they successfully fought off the territorial imperialism of the Kashmir rulers, the Russians and the British colonialists. In 1897 Hunza became a princely state protected by British India. The state became a part of Pakistan after independence in 1947.

Today Hunza with its incredible scenic location and its ancient historic

the site of the ancient archaeological excavations, Singal and Sher Qilla from where trekking routes link with Chilas and Kohistan. All routes lead to the towering range of peaks with their sweep after sweep of glacier and eternal snow.

The mountain streams and lakes of Gilgit are full of the rainbow trout, the finest catch is at Kargah Nallah, Sher Qillah, Singal and Gahkuch. The favourite sport in Gilgit is polo and local tradition claims that the game originated from the valley. It is a rugged and free style version compared to the elegant style played in the plains. The polo tournament is held from the first of November for one week. It is a festive occasion and draws a large number of visitors and tourists. Gilgit is connected to the rest of the country by air and road; there are two flights a day between Islamabad and Gilgit and by road it is accessible from Islamabad and Rawalpindi by the Karakoram Highway.

The Gilgit valley, picturesque, quaint, at the base of the highest mountain range of the world, retains its rugged mountain culture. To visit the valley which is a part of the belt of the highest plateau of the world is an experience of a lifetime, to see nature in its most sublime magnificence.

BALTISTAN

Baltistan the last frontier of the great northern belt of Pakistan lies two thousand five hundred metres, shadowed by the greatest mountain range of the world, the Himalayas, the Karakorams and the Hindu Kush that unite to form the Pamir Plateau, the Bam-e-Duniya, the roof the world.

The historic Karakoram Pass, an ancient trading route between Kashmir and Xinjiang gives its name to the range, west of which forms the watershed between the Indus and the Central Asian deserts. The eastern boundary of the Karakoram is the upper Shyok river from where it extends west to the Karambar river and the Hindu Kush range. To the north it is bounded by the Shaksgam tributary of the Yarkand river and south by the Indus. Here, the Nanga Parbat rising eight thousand one hundred and twenty six metres, is the western anchor of the Himalayan range which stretches in a massive arc thirty thousand kilometres to form a boundary and a barrier which for centuries has determined the destiny of the subcontinent.

Some of the largest glaciers of the world flow in the Karakorams, the Batura, the Siachin, the Hispar and the Baltoro. This is the fabled Silk Route through the Khunjerab Pass and the Mintaka Pass along the great glaciers that connected Europe to Asia, the route on which history's most famous travellers walked, the Chinese monk Fa Hien in the fourth century, the Arab historian Al-Baruni in the eleventh century and Marco Polo of Venice in the thirteenth century.

Apart from its incomparable mountain peaks and glaciers, Baltistan's five valleys, Shigar, Skardu, Khaplu, Rondou and Kharmang are a haven of

landmarks, draws a large number of visitors and tourists. Most of the inhabitants are Ismaili Muslims, have a remarkable life span and attribute their longevity and health to their diet, the naturally grown fruit, vegetables and the miraculous Hunza water which is supposed to carry traces of gold apart from its high iron content.

Two landmarks which have intrigued people for centuries are the two ancient forts, the Baltit Fort and the Altit Fort. Baltit Fort is about one and a half kilometres from Karimabad and is supposed to have been built six hundred years ago. Based on massive wooden stilts, its bay windows look out over the entire valley; it was once the mountain residence of the Mirs of Hunza. The Altit Fort is in the village of Altit three kilometres from Karimabad. It has been built on a sheer rock cliff that falls three hundred metres into the Hunza river. The Altit Fort is older than the Baltit Fort, it speaks of a mystery that was part of the customs and beliefs of the ancient mountain people centuries ago. Old rock carvings and inscriptions around a village called Ganesh near the Altit Fort give evidence of the epic and later the Buddhist civilizations that held sway over the entire area before the Greek invasion. The inscriptions are in four different scripts, Kharoshti, Gupta, Sogdian and Tibetan, and are carved with human and animal figures. The most famous of these is the Hunza Rock.

The valley has great mountain trails for hiking, trekking and camping. The massive glaciers of the range, the Batura, the Hopar and Hispar are twenty five to forty eight kilometres from Karimabad. The Batura glacier, fed by ice streams, is the seventh largest glacier of the world.

The famous ruby mines of Hunza are a popular tourist attraction and the deep blood red precious stones can be bought from the gem centres at Aliabad. The local dialect spoken by the inhabitants is Brushaski, it seems unrelated to any other language and its source remains a mystery.

Hunza is accessible by road from Gilgit which is connected by air and the Karakoram Highway with Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Touching the northern boundary of the country, legendary Hunza manifests one of the world's great mountain communities. In its age old contact with Central Asia, it was the gateway to the fabled caravan routes and it has retained its very ancient culture, very original beliefs, customs and art forms. Its mountain fastness ensures its enduring mystery.

brehtaking lakes and fruit orchards. The two lakes of sparkling azure waters are the Kachura Lake and Satpara Lake near Skardu. As is the historic fort known as Kharfocho Fort, the king of forts, it was constructed by Ali Sher Khan Anchan who ruled from Ladakh to Chitral till the end of the sixteenth century.

The Shigar valley, thirty two kilometres from Skardu is the gateway to the spectacular mountain peaks of the Karakoram, the K-2, the Gasherbrum, the Muztagh, the Chogolisa and the beautiful peak of perfection, the Paiyu. It is here that the greatest challenge to man's courage, endurance and passion is renewed time and time again. All those who have seen the awesome majesty of the great mountain K-2 rising over the range, its eternal ice peaks glittering with an unearthly beauty in the moonlight, have seen nature at its perfection. Since 1954, this range has become the main trekking and hiking area of the world, countless climbers come every year for this most dangerous sport and countless have climbed and taken back memories. But the mountain stays forever inviolate and forever its own.

Skardu is linked to the national capital Islamabad by air, the air journey itself is a thrilling experience flying over the gorge of the Indus with enormous rock cliffs on two sides. The adventurous can travel by road on the Karakoram Highway along the Batura glacier and see the mountain grandeur and the breathtaking panorama of this spectacular landscape which in itself is an unforgettable experience.

From the towering snow peaks of the Karakorams, to the incredibly serene haunts of the mountain valleys and the amazingly well preserved remains of ancient civilizations, the relics of Buddhism, the route of Alexander, the monuments of the Mughals, tell the most fantastic tale of human endeavour. While man's footprints traverse the valleys and the mountains, this last frontier of this unique and remote corner of earth stands unconquerable, defying time and history in its eternal inscrutability.

Acknowledgement

All illustrations courtesy of National Gallery,
Pakistan National Council of the Arts, except those at
p.p. 38, 88, 109 and 114 which are courtesy of
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