

Undivided Hearts Pak-India Relationship in the Perspective of Citizens of Both Sides

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Abstract

Cultural diplomacy has become a crucial principle in the bilateral relations between Pakistan and India, despite their complex political history. Cultural interactions have fostered a strong people-to-people relationship, based on shared appreciation of history and culture. Cross-border festivals, collaborative artistic endeavors, and personal exchanges have promoted empathy and dispelled stereotypes, fostering a perspective of mutual humanity. Cricket diplomacy, in particular, symbolizes hope for peace through shared sportsmanship. Despite political instability, conflicts, and contested borders, cultural and social affinities persist, providing a foundation for inter-societal relations. Shared passions for arts, literature, and everyday interactions, along with historical ties, have shaped the connections between the two nations. Initiatives like the Amanki Asha peace process, literary exchanges, and educational collaborations have contributed to mutual understanding and peace. Media platforms, reality shows featuring cross-border artists, religious pilgrimages, civil society initiatives, and youth exchange programs have further strengthened people-to-people diplomacy, challenging perceptions and building bridges across divides.

Keywords: Pak-India Relationship, Cultural Diplomacy, Cultural Interactions, *Aman Ki Asha*, Peace Process Initiatives, Cross Border Festivals, Literature

Introduction

Just as it is mentioned earlier, the citizens of the two parties in conflict have the responsibility of shaping peace between the two nations. While it is common to focus on the roles of politicians and militias, everyone's participation and backing are critical to any peace process. People are losing their lives during the conflicts and even after the war, the outcomes of the conflict will remain a part of their everyday lives, their support is crucial for the sustainability of a peace process. Citizens contribute to peace processes

in several key ways: by participating in public consultations and dialogues, they help ensure that the peace process addresses the concerns and aspirations of the broader population; by advocating for peace through grassroots movements, civil society organizations, and public campaigns, they can mobilize support and incentivize political leaders to make necessary concessions; by monitoring the implementation of peace agreements, they report on progress, identify challenges, and hold parties accountable; and by promoting reconciliation through inter-communal dialogues, cultural exchanges, and joint development projects, they help rebuild trust and social cohesion in the aftermath of conflict. The role of citizens will vary depending on the context, but their engagement is essential for ensuring that peace processes are inclusive, responsive to public concerns, and ultimately sustainable. Supporting citizen participation should be a priority for those seeking to promote peace between countries (Haass, Hartzell, & Ottmann, 2022).

The relationship between Pakistan and India is deeply influenced by history, politics, and cultural exchange. Since the partition of British India in 1947, these neighboring nations have faced a tumultuous journey. The creation of India and Pakistan during the partition resulted in massive human migration, violence, and massacres (Hashim, 2019, March 1), profoundly shaping the narratives and perceptions of citizens on both sides. From the perspective of Pakistani citizens, the relationship with India intertwines with issues of national identity, security concerns, and the lasting legacy of partition. Historical grievances and ongoing territorial disputes, particularly over Kashmir, continue to foster mistrust and animosity among segments of the population. Media portrayal and political rhetoric often amplify nationalist sentiments, further influencing public opinion.

Pakistan and India, both situated in South Asia, share profound geographical, cultural, and sociological ties. These connections contribute to a complex and dynamic relationship characterized by enduring ups and downs. Politically, similarities between the two countries are evident, further influencing their interconnectedness. The deep-rooted people-to-people relations add another layer of complexity to the bilateral dynamics between Pakistan and India. Despite their historical, cultural, and geographical similarities rooted in ancient civilizations like the Indus Valley, religious and geographical differences strain relations between Pakistan and India. In North India and Punjab, people have many things in common but different beliefs in terms of religion. Territorial, religious and political issues have pulled the two nations apart but various actions, popular diplomacy, student and artist exchange programs like *Amanki Asha* seek to bridge the divide. The process of reconciliation has been active since the 1990s with both nations participating in sports exchange and having common ties via voluntary diasporas in the UK. Diplomacy and conflict resolution remain paramount to civic societies and peace-builders on both sides, this is

evidenced by agreements like the *Non Discriminatory Market Access on Reciprocal Basis* (NDMARB) that was signed in 2015 to address bilateral relations. *The Commercial Peace Theory* posits that wars become unrealistic when commerce and business investments are at risk. To this end, both countries should consider the conversion of their strategic departments into economic departments in the cause of deepening the trade relations. On this regard, Azim et al. (2016) noted that Pakistan can do more in this regard by providing *Most Favored Nation* (MFN) status to Indian to improve the bilateral trade. As in most countries, public opinions are influenced by historical tensions and hostilities, as well as by occasional terrorist acts affecting relations. However, cultural relations and the effort of civil society organizations are very important since people continue to migrate across the globe. Common historical and religious roots, kinship, and business connections offer the prospects for political and economic negotiations; people's aspiration for peace and well-being. The push toward reconciliation between Pakistan and India has entailed serious diplomatic interaction in the recent years including the 2015 talks between the prime ministers of the two countries; Narendra Modi and Nawaz Sharif, respectively. All these actions stress the role of soft power and cultural engagement for managing the relations between the two countries and overcoming the conflicts.

Significance of Research

This research is significant because it analyses Pak-India relationship in the perspective of citizens of both sides. Therefore, this research is a timely attempt to illuminate Pak-India relations and open new avenues for scholars, policymakers, diplomats and decision-makers. Both the countries have built friendly relations with each other in terms of culture (literature, media, sports). Both are same culturally. This research aims to assess the role of cultural diplomacy and diplomatic strategies in India and Pakistan, as well as their implications and place in foreign policy formation in light of political turmoil and diplomatic tension. The role played by cultural diplomacy has shown that it is an essential way of ensuring that diplomacy is done under a secure, healthy context despite leaking stress factors.

Research Questions

1. How does this research assess Pak-India relationship in the perspective of citizens of both sides?
2. What are the key factors contributing to Pak-India relationship in the perspective of citizens of both sides?

Research Objectives

1. To analyze Pak-India relationship in the perspective of citizens of both sides.
2. To identify key factors contributing to Pak-India relationship in the perspective of citizens of both sides.

Literature Review

The relationship between India and Pakistan stands as one of the tensest bilateral rivalries in today's global landscape. Since their independence in 1947, both nations have been involved in several military conflicts and have continuously attempted to outmaneuver each other diplomatically on the international stage. Both countries possess nuclear capabilities and have developed advanced delivery systems since the late 1990s. This has escalated their conflict behaviors across various levels, spanning from nuclear threats to conventional warfare and tactics like terrorism at sub-conventional levels.

There are various aspects that play a significant role in developing the right perception among the people belonging from Pakistan and India, and given the importance of goodwill prevailing between both countries. Thus, culture in terms of history, language, art, food, and customs fosters the perception of belonging to a common national team and ensures trust. Family, social and business interrelations strengthen people's goodwill through understanding each other. People meet to watch games and share cultural activities this removes political barriers and brings people together. Other positives are gained regarding the public sentiments through the diaspora communities advocating for peace and understanding. Civil society, Non-governmental organizations and diplomacy entails intellectuals and policymakers to discuss and come up with simple ways of mitigating conflicts and promoting peace. Economic interdependence and trade relations rely on the aspect of non-usage of forces since self-interest are worked on. Subtle representations of power dynamics and positive attributes, as well as cultural outreach that emphasizes similarities in people's values and goals play the role of forming a favorable image. Other aspects increase countenance and tolerance through educational partnership, students' exchange and research projects among one's peers. These conditions collectively help to provide a positive and healthy atmosphere for both the countries of Pakistan and India to sustain their political conflicts peacefully and spread the love and cooperation among its people.

Azim et al., (2016) claim that promoting trade relations between Pakistan and India is crucial for enhancing their economic strength and fostering interdependence. This approach is believed to mitigate the likelihood of conflict, aligning with the principles of the Commercial Peace Theory. By integrating their economies and investing in trade, both countries can create mutual economic interests, making the prospect of war prohibitively costly. Azim et al. further suggest transforming strategic departments into economic entities to prioritize and facilitate trade promotion.

Tere (2014) goes further to say that mainstream media has a critical role in fostering actors' diplomacy between India and Pakistan. He focuses on capturing the severity of the military context and the situations that South

Asian countries face, explaining that the success of the region depends on the understanding of the necessity of peace. Tere (2014) submitting that citizen diplomacy especially through media networks has immense possibility but remains untapped. He notes that the wars between India and Pakistan are based on perception and each country is always trying to outdo the other country. In this regard, Tere (2014) holds the view that media can act as an effective confidence-building measure and a search for a peace-building consensus in conflict by constructing positive communication platforms.

Cultural diplomacy: particularly music can create a positive attitude towards conflict transformation for the promotion of a harmonious relationship among nations according to Einbinder (2013). He defines Music as a mediator and stimulate the intercultural communication and cooperation in various sectors of global society. Einbinder (2013) explores the social function of music through an interdisciplinary lens and positing that although music is not cultured, it can convey deep feelings and build bridges irrespective of the cultural or religious differences people may have. He applies that cultural diplomacy provides a liberating way to change enmity for amity instead of hatred for hatred and prejudice for curiosity.

Iftikhar (2013) arguing the fact that Hindus and Muslims lived together as brothers for many years before arrival of partition and they had great deal of similarities in food, art, fashion, music, painting, poetry, language, architecture and norms. Post-partition, a new system emerged, but Iftikhar (2013) argues that leveraging cultural values through cultural diplomacy can effectively address differences between India and Pakistan using soft power. He suggests that cultural diplomacy offers more benefits compared to hard power approaches, emphasizing its potential to reduce political tensions and anxieties between the two countries.

Mukherjee (2014) discusses the significance of soft power in shaping global politics and influencing the agendas of nations. He argues that soft power can sway the preferences of other countries even before negotiations begin. Despite an increase in scholarly and policy discussions since the 2000s praising India's soft power, Mukherjee contends that Indian soft power has not met the lofty expectations set by its rich cultural history.

Ashraf (2020) argues that functionalism supports initiatives such as cross-border people-to-people interactions, cultural exchanges, social activities, and most notably, increasing bilateral trade between Pakistan and India. These practical engagements aim to build confidence among populations on both sides of the border and reshape public perceptions of conflicting parties. Cooperation in specific sectors like infrastructure, power generation, or information technology can pave the way for collaboration in other industries such as automotive, engineering, and telecommunications. Over time, this economic cooperation has the potential to yield mutual benefits and create win-win situations for both nations.

According to Haass et al., (2022, p. 8), citizens have an important function in processes of peace building whereby citizens consult on peace processes, lobby for peace through civil society organizations, oversee the compliance to peace agreements and the waging of reconciliation mechanisms such as communal dialogue and cultural shared practices. They help to make the peace processes more comprehensive and public-oriented while also focusing on sustainability.

Kothari and Mian (2012) claimed that cultural and public diplomacy have the potential to build peace where people are keen on influencing the changes. They point out that through arts, drama, institutional relations and the exchange of culture, people-to-people contact can be instrumental in taking initial steps towards the process of peace making. These forms of soft power are considered to be more efficient than the hard power strategies. To resolve partition related conflicts and to make people of both the countries closer to each other, the authors suggest the introduction of cultural, social and educational exchange programs.

In fact, much has been written on the political, historical, and diplomatic aspects of India and Pakistan but little is known on the perceptions of the people of these two nations.

Data Analysis

Cultural diplomacy is best illustrated by the relations between Pakistan and India. Both nations are part of the same cultural history and people are politically divided but still retaining familial relationship. Activities in cultural relations including music, movies, books, and games contribute to the modeling of relations and understanding between the two parties. Projects such as cross cultural festivals, art exchanges and people to people contacts serve as tools to change hearts and minds. Cricket for example has over the years been used to promote culture and oneness through different sporting events. Pakistan – India cricket series go beyond cricket because the games are seen as a bridge where the two nations can exist as peaceful neighbors and respect each other.

Cultural diplomacy deals with the people not with the governments and so they define relations as a soft power. Thus, as new patterns of power distribution at the global level and new system of relationships are established while the Western world ceases to dominate, the superpowers, such as the United Kingdom, have to redefine their role and relationships with other countries. Culture emerges as a critical asset in this process, implying a systematic and planned effort to integrate cultural diplomacy pursuits into organizational routines.

Thus, despite political instability, conflict, and border disputes in the last decades, the population of Pakistan and India has much in common, such as attachments, cultural relations, and roots. Some of the challenges that the region faces include: central authoritarianism, counter-terrorism, secularism

politics, religious extremism, status-quo politics, integration, ethnic diversity, poverty, economic inequality, and religious interest groups. Since the period of 65 years, there was no time when there was no tense environment between both countries. However, the two countries have many similarities in their backgrounds, as therefore they have many issues in common despite animosity.

Both of them were colonies of different invaders in the past and mostly cooperated with one another because their cultures are somewhat similar. Up till now, Pakistan and India have witnessed 3 wars, terror activities, and operating border conflict, however, citizens of both countries share same culture, language, climatic conditions, dress code, festivals, and genres.

The people of the two countries are proud of cooperating or having much in common. They love cricket and have a profound cultural relation with art and paintings particularly the van art truck painted in both the countries. Both countries have active markets with a vibrant color and culture, and both enjoy a popular drink, hot tea. Music, the joy for autochthonous snacks and fast foods, and the occurrence of donation boxes in mosques and shrines illustrate the cultural similarities. Further, sweet items that include *Amritsarimithai*, *Jalandhar mithai*, *Faislabadimithai*, and *Lahorimithai* are relished by people of both the countries proving cultural bonds between two nations. Despite apparent political enmity, the common ethnic background and colloidal resemblances following the divided nation construct the consciousness of unity between Pakistan and India.

Literature:

Basically literature and the way it is written and portrayed in textbooks in India and Pakistan play a major role in shaping the attitudes of the populace and the possibilities of a peaceful resolution. An emphasis on presenting fair, compassionate, and communication-focused stories and depictions in textbooks and nonfiction literature, as well as in exchange programs, may be conducive to India and Pakistan's peace process. Due to the hostility factor between the two countries, there are a lot of negative impressions that have been imprinted into the minds of the respective countries' citizens and are still visible even in education materials. However, there are new positive approaches like the *Amanki Asha* that has initiated the process of peace where literature, media, and cross-central interaction can be potentials to bridge the two nations (Sarwar, 2007). This way, the media has a great potential to become an indirect mediator and a tool for conflict solving and peace-making, as the example of the Indian- Pakistani bilingual newspaper named *Amanki Asha*, launched in 2010 by the *Indian Times Group* and *Pakistani Jang Group*, demonstrates. This initiative addresses a wide array of issues pertinent to both nations, encompassing trade, business, culture, language, education, visa policies, cricket diplomacy, lifestyle, music,

drama, films, as well as more contentious topics like the Siachen conflict, Kashmir dispute, water issues, and the plight of prisoners.

Amanki Asha has significantly influenced the perceptions of ordinary citizens in Pakistan and India by highlighting their shared roots, culture, cuisine, and language. It is recognized as a genuine and earnest effort to promote peace between the two nations. The initiative underscores the importance of following the legacy of great poets, Sufi saints, and Bhakts who advocated for peace, harmony, love, and kindness. One notable project under *Amanki Asha* is *Heart to Heart*, which has facilitated heart surgeries for over 60 children from both countries. Among the most celebrated programs under *Amanki Asha* are:

- *Sur Kshetra*
- *Chhote Ustaad*
- *Foodistan*
- *Pakistan-India Takra*

Key aspects of *Amanki Asha* include:

1. Establishing people-to-people contacts and building understanding through workshops, dialogues, and cultural events involving writers, academics, and activists from both countries (Rid, 2019)
2. Using media platforms to shift narratives and mindsets away from hostility and towards peace and cooperation by highlighting shared heritage, values, and aspirations of the people of India and Pakistan (Wikipedia Contributors, 2024, May 12).

Media:

The conflict between India and Pakistan in the media space has critical implications because it contributes to the development of the countries' relations as well as instigating anger and hostility. Competitiveness and focus on past animosities tend to be especially stressed in films, dramas, and news programs, stimulating nationalism in both countries. But at the same time, one should also note the fact that despite the existing division, there is remarkable unity between the citizens of the two nations. The political differences notwithstanding the believers of media culture have nurtured a keen interest in the other's entertainment industry. Inspiring stories accompanied by beautiful actors and spectacular music from Indian films are especially appealing to Pakistani viewers and successfully revive the use of the cinema. Similarly, Pakistani dramas which are famed as realistic shows with raw depiction of day to day and social issues also have a large audience in India (Syed, 2016, June 28).

The examples of the celebrities' personal and public images also exhibit the attitude of secularism and unity, such as Shah Rukh Khan who is married to an Indian Hindu woman and who constantly speaks of unity disregarding

religious background. This is why they are liked as their themes are familiar and are a call for tolerance and recognition of each other's existence. In addition, other cultural achievements include Oscar wins for *Slumdog Millionaire* from India and *Saving Face* from Pakistan proving the worldwide influence of each respective country's film industries despite political relations. In recent years, social networks have become one of the key tools for communication, for overcoming and existence of the gap, and interaction between young people of the two countries. With sites such as twitter or face book one can directly interact and share ideas hence fostering the feelings of togetherness and harmony. This is the reason, print media also have important advocacy for managing perceptions and for the cultural diplomacy. Newspapers and magazines are, thus playing a crucial role in presenting the positive features of the perceived in-group and the other out-group society's by attentively focusing on aspects that embrace common cultural background and good interaction. To all intents and purposes, it could be stated that political connections between India and Pakistan ebb and flow, although the cultures and the mutual esteem do not. There is no denying the fact that media acts as a powerful instrument in nurturing of peace culture, inter sect and inter cultural harmony in the region (Hafeez, 2015).

Pakistani Artists in India:

The Pakistani entertainment industry is facing significant challenges due to a lack of investment, leading many talented artists, including singers and actors, to seek opportunities in India. This cross-border migration has been driven by the immense popularity of Pakistani artists among Indian audiences, and vice versa. In fact, several notable Pakistani artists have successfully performed in India, including legendary musicians like Ustad Ghulam Ali and Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, as well as actors like Ali Zafar, Fawad Khan, and Humaima Malik (Zaki, 2023, May 19). These performances have not only catapulted the artists to international stardom but have also played a crucial role in fostering greater understanding and cooperation between the two nations. The artistic communities of Pakistan and India have emerged as key players in citizen-led peace diplomacy, working tirelessly to resolve conflicts and promote the well-being of the people.

Reality Shows:

In the past, Pakistan and India had a lot of conflicts. But now, they are competing in friendly way. They are having TV shows where chefs and musicians from both countries compete against each other. The people who make these shows think that this will help bring the two countries closer together. Pakistan and India share a lot of cultural similarities, like food, language, and music. Many popular TV music shows now have judges and contestants from both countries. These competitions bring people from different backgrounds together and help them understand each other better (Bhushan, 2012, March 22).

Sports:

The intersection of politics and sports has long been a fascinating phenomenon. When governments leverage sports to foster diplomacy, it's a well-known strategy (Jackson & Haigh, 2008, p. 349-358). Sports personalities and events offer a unique platform for public diplomacy, helping to ease tensions during difficult times. The convergence of sports, politics, and diplomacy has a rich history, with sports providing a valuable function in politics.

Cricket diplomacy between Pakistan and India is a compelling example of how two nations, despite their differences, can find common ground in their shared passion for sports. This phenomenon was first coined by General Zia-ul-Haq, the President of Pakistan, in 1987, after he witnessed a test match between the two countries in Jaipur during a period of high tension. Cricket has played a significant role in bridging the gap between Pakistan and India, with both countries using it as a tool for interaction in the past. The first test series was played in 1951-52, with the Pakistani team visiting India, and the Indian team reciprocating in 1954-55 (Holm, 2008, p. 77-78). Although a gap occurred from 1962-77 due to the Indo-Pak wars, cricket diplomacy continued to play a vital role in reducing bilateral tensions.

In 2004, a series of cricket matches was facilitated by both governments to explore ways for normalizing relations. The visit of the Indian cricket team was met with extraordinary hospitality and friendship from ordinary Pakistanis, setting a positive tone for future interactions. This was followed by high-level visits, including General Pervaiz Musharraf's trip to New Delhi in 2005, where he engaged in informal talks with Indian leaders. Even in the aftermath of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, cricket was used as a diplomatic tool to create a conducive atmosphere between the two nations. In 2011, Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani accepted an invitation from his Indian counterpart, Manmohan Singh, to attend the World Cup semi-final match in Mohali, marking a significant attempt to use cricket diplomacy to ease tensions.

Religious Pilgrimage Visits:

Religious pilgrimage visits have become an important feature in the process of cultural diplomacy and bilateral relations between Pakistan and India for creating people to people contacts. Both the governments have sufficiently shown their respect for the faith of these pilgrims providing for religious tolerance and freedom.

From India several thousands of Sikhs visit this venerated site for pilgrimage are Yatras every year while on the other side several Muslims from Pakistan pay their respects and perform the ziyarat at the Khawaja Moeenud Din Chishti Dargah in Ajmer Sharif, Dargah of Haji Ali and other holy sites in the country (Shabina, 2015). These pilgrims lay the basis for understanding and can act as an important function in the correct representation of information about their religion in other nations and vice versa.

The political leadership, more specifically the Musharraf regime in Pakistan, has actively contributed for the restoration of Hindu temples at Katas, which portrays a rather positive signal about interreligious harmony in the country. The goal of this project was to bring more people in the form of pilgrims and to demonstrate that Pakistan is a country that tolerates and recognizes the Hindu faith. Likewise, numerous Muslims from Pakistan take the pilgrimage to the distinguished Dargah and other holy places in the country. Eventually, in the year 2012, the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari made a private visit to the Sufi shrine of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer Sharif where he was invited for lunch by the Prime Minister of India at New Delhi. It brought out the importance of religious diplomacy especially in enhancing bilateral relations and bringing about unity and therefore; stability in the region.

Civil Society Members and Peace Workers:

Many people and organizations in Pakistan and India have been trying for several years to influence changes with a positive effect on bilateral relations. The civil society, NGOs and other such social organizations have played a major role in the creation of the necessary harmonious environment, peace and goodwill appealing through literary festivals, trade fairs business delegations, youth exchange and educational visits, confidence building measures, civil society interactions etc. Several notable initiatives have been taken by both countries to foster better relations, including the *South Asia Free Media Association* (SAFMA), *Green Circle Organization* (GCO), *IJSP*, *Institute for Secular Studies and Peace Pakistan*, and *AmankiAasha*. These initiatives have facilitated cultural exchange programs, civil society exchanges, journalist exchanges, actor exchanges, singer exchanges, poet exchanges, and student exchanges, all of which have contributed to promoting mutual ties. Moreover, civil society, media persons, peace activists, human rights organizations, individuals, scholars, and academics from both countries have been advocating for better relations, recognizing that the prosperity of the region and its people depends on it (Mohmand & Naqvi, 2012).

Friends without Borders:

Friends Without Borders initiative was launched to foster cross-border friendships by establishing direct connections between individuals. In collaboration with *Roots 2 Routes*, this campaign has become the largest and most historic peace effort in the joint history of Pakistan and India. Initially conceived by the governments of India and Pakistan, with the support of two British tourists, the program has undertaken various initiatives. One of its primary focuses was a massive letter-writing campaign between children from both countries. This simple yet powerful act has left a lasting impact, promoting love, kindness, and trust. As these seeds take root, they promise to cultivate a safer and more friendly environment. This innovative approach aims to build bridges between nations in conflict zones. Thousands of

children from across India and Pakistan have participated in this letter-writing exchange, paving the way for a more harmonious future. The world's largest love letter from the children of India to the children of Pakistan with this message.

"Dear Children of Pakistan!

Let's joint hearts in friendship.

Together we can make a better world.

The children of India".

Green Circle Organization:

The Green Circle Organization's primary objectives are to eliminate myths and misconception coupled with unnecessary irritation that affects civil societies in Pakistan and India. As a result, the organization encourages the practice of peace and economic integration in order to bring forth a region that is prosperous and at peace.

Along this line, as one of the biggest NGOs in Pakistan, GCO has been on the frontline helping the country's civil society in realizing its role in the promotion of peace. As a result, with the support from the British Government, the organization can readily make an effective change.

One can quickly ascertain that at the center of GCO's operating model is the principle that engendering more interactions between people through exchange, conversation, and exchange can inspire peaceful coexistence. Through promoting ease of people to population mobility, the organization intends to influence the improvement of confidence, decrease of tension, and progression in relations between Pakistan and India. People in both the countries will have ability to form new bonds, explore the prospective ventures along with providing stability and prosperity to the region.

Seeds of Peace (SOP):

Seeds of Peace an American based organization focuses on reconciliation training of young people of the conflict stricken countries and the United States by offering them summer camp interaction. Every year during the first three weeks of August, a carefully chosen group of Pakistani and Indian talented youth, and teachers come together in Maine, for building trust and respect among the youth of two rival countries. The course is created having an understanding that the barriers separating people have to be eliminated and people have to be interlinked. As a result of interchangeability of participants between the two countries the main idea that is believed on the end of the trips is that the societies of their countries can work for peace.

Aghaz-e-Dosti Project:

In the year 2012, *Mission Bhartiyam India* and *The Catalyst-TC Pakistan* based organizations have come together to start a historic partnership *Aghaz-e-Dosti*. As non-profit organizations committed to interfering the cultures of peace and tolerance, both the organizations have been striving hard to reduce the distance between India and Pakistan. Thus, the main purpose of *Aghaz-e-Dosti* is to establish and diversify interpersonal communication, develop

the culture of peace and mutual understanding of citizens of Iran and Afghanistan. This way the project has been continuously compelling the authorities on both sides to underline further Strategic Dialogue for Indo-Pak Relations.

For the project, components in schools and colleges within both countries remain among the most significant accomplishments of the project. *Aghaz-e-Dosti* has introduced a range of innovative initiatives, including:

- *Aman Capsules* which comprise of point –to-point topical discussions, seminars as well as integrated and lasting workshops in promotion of peace.
- The vibrantly decorated Indo-Pak Peace Calendar and the paintings made by the school students from both the Pak-Indiaterritories
- *Friends Beyond Borders* is an online conflict transformation program in education for youth empowered minds.

Thus, *Aghaz-e-Dosti* is paving the way to cultivate change through young leaders who want to pave a way for a peaceful India and Pakistan.

Recent Cultural Activities between the Countries:

However, when Pakistan and India started packing the seeds of an amicable settlement, the channel opened for the cultural diplomacy between the two countries. When people busy themselves with works, artists, actors, civil society members, and cultural organizations took the chance to balance it through a set of interesting events.

Another success factor was the visits of the student delegation where students and faculty members from different countries interacted and learned from each other. The *Shan-e-Pakistan*, a cultural extravaganza was another highlight as both nations brought out their cultural strength in the event. The Indian theater group enthralled the people with their show, whereas the film planning session directed by Mahesh Bhatt in Pakistan can be considered a notable step taken in the movie relations between the two countries.

Such collaborations were founded on the fact that Humayun Saeed was cast in the Indian film *Dushman*. Another example of such symbiosis was the theater performance *Milne Do* in India. An idea of an exhibition that could feature the best of the two cultures was represented by the showcase while *Ajoka Theatre* organization embarked on a project that sought to restore world peace through theatre. The link includes that artists from Pakistan performed well in India, and reality shows served as a channel of bridge between the people of the two countries. These cultural exchange program not only helped in building awareness between the two hostile nations but also facilitated for a better future of Pakistan India relation.

Students Delegation Visits:

Two non-governmental organizations, the *Citizen Archive of Pakistan* and *Routes 2 Roots*, are struggling for Pakistan and India to have friendly relations. Their major success is the student exchange program called Exchange for Change which stimulated the exchange of more than 11 000

students in the age ranging from 10 to 15 years. In this program, students write letters, exchange photographs, and record each other's stories; only a few chosen students visit the other country. In September 2013, on 2nd Indian 33 students crossed border to Pakistan and on 10th September Pakistani 36 students visited India. These exchanges have proved to be very beneficial in renewing a *Susan Sontag* like photography of each country to the other, eliminating stereotype misrepresentation of each other's generations. It is critical for every learner to have a sense of their culture and the best opportunity to learn more occurs in this project since learners for both countries get to study their respective cultures and their values. Thus, the functioning of the Exchange for Change is a vivid example of the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy as a way to solve conflicts between countries. As the young people's minds are amalgamated by this initiative, positive prospects towards a better and more stable future of Pakistan-India relations have been created (Qazi, 2014).

Conclusion

People-to-people bonds between the citizens of Pakistan and India is getting stronger and stronger beside the political confrontation of states. Even though the both nations have been at logger heads cultural diplomacy activities have remained essential determinants of understanding and relations between the two nations. In a peaceful way, with culture having a major emphasis in both Pakistan and India's music, literature, sports and other forms of media, rivalries have been set aside and diplomacy has been highlighted. This cultural bond has the prospect to become the basis for creating new, better relations between the given countries. For now, long-term investment in dialogue, in education and exchanges, in peace organizations and civil society point towards how a less hostile relationship can be constructed. Therefore, cultural diplomacy through consideration of other people's cultures and promotion of empathy, reduction of stereotype and emphasis on similarities can greatly help in the promotion for the peace and stability in the region from both parties. While the new dynamics of the world are on the change, ensuring these cultural ties are maintained is crucial towards the disciplined construction of the Pak-India relationship lacking hate and barely tolerance. By investing in cultural diplomacy, both nations can work towards creating a more stable and peaceful region, where the shared cultural heritage of the people serves as a catalyst for cooperation and mutual understanding.

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