

At the outset I must thank Professor Hossein-Ali Ghobadi, President of Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies, Professor Shookoh Hosseini, Director of International Scientific cooperation Office, IHCS, Mr Mohsen Radfar and my dear friend and colleague Prof. Abhay Kumar Singh, Director Swami Vivekanand Cultural Centre, Embassy of India, Iran, Tehran for inviting me to speak at this seminar on **Art for Brotherhood, Culture and Peace**.

Iran and India are two great civilizations of the world. Since ancient time we are connected with each other through language, literature, culture, trade and diplomacy. This journey which started through Silk Road has grown and strengthened over the years. Our diplomatic relations are not just 70 years old. Since many centuries, there used to be exchange of Ambassadors between rulers of India and Iran. I am not a scholar of Indology nor student of history, so may not able to provide a detailed account of various cultural linkages between India and Iran but relationships in Avesta and Sanskrit languages, art and architecture, literature, culture and traditions. But try to present my understanding how art and culture is important for brotherhood.

Contribution of Art and Culture for Peace

The western world defined Art as the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form, such as painting or sculpture, and producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power. It encompasses a diverse range of human activities, creation and ways of expression.

In Indian context, the Arts are not studied in isolation but all-inclusive way (*samagrta*); and studied in relation with nature, social structure and cosmology.

The Art and Culture of this sub-continent with the foundation of Indic philosophy and tradition, cuts across the dogmatic notions and leads one to think for the global welfare i.e. *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*- the world is one family.

The best example of this Sanskrit phrase from Upanishad is the ‘Bhartavarsha’: the country of diversity; but is beaded in one string (*sutra*) of compassion, peace and non-violence.

Peaceful times are for prosperity

Going through the annals of Indian history, we go through different periods and come across the culture which flourishes in peaceful times, and also gives impetus and encourages different arts to flourish---- be it, for utilitarian, decorative and ritualistic purposes.

In Indian history, different historical phases have given emergence to different schools owing to patronizations and also due to organized institutes of learning.

We come across the institutions of excellence in ancient India at Nalanda, Sharda, Vikramshila, Taxila, Somapura. Different subjects and different forms of art were the focuses of study, which attracted students and scholars from all over the world.

Kamasutra talks about 64 Arts and every men and women were supposed to be acumen and trained in all these art forms ranging from singing, dancing to theatricals; different techniques of plastic art, be it stone, ivory, wood, metal; warfare and weapons, agriculture to livestock study; medical remedy and healing practices, to name a few.

In such atmosphere arts got due impetus in study, learning and also its practicality.

Art is not to be studied in isolation

Art is to study vis-à-vis with the environment it defines. To make it more practical and competitive it has to be studied taking into cognizance the related fields. It is this multi-disciplinary approach which is rooted in our traditions and getting worldwide recognition for study and research.

Shared heritage of India and Iran

India and Iran share a common heritage in terms of first creative expressions of man in pre-historic terms. The petro-glyphs (rock art), has a lot of similarities; rather there is a continuum of flow and point towards the early nomadic cultures which surpassed even the geographical boundaries. The man made boundaries in recent times have distanced apart culture and frequent cultural exchanges are needed.

Coming to the earliest times we see commonalities between the two great civilizations i.e. the Persian and Indic. The religious texts of Zoroastrian and Vedic Aryans point towards the interactions at physical and metaphysical levels.

The interactions between the two countries have been profuse and it is difficult to pin-point the influences reflected in their heritage, both tangible and intangible.

The miniature paintings of early Jain school travelled from the western coastal belt of India and influenced the miniature art of Persia, which later on attained its own idiom and characteristics. This is further established by the mural paintings at Ajanta where we see depiction of art and artistic motifs of the neighboring countries. Through the cultural heritage, both these great nations have assimilated beyond recognition. There are standing edifices of Mauryan period which have strong affiliation with the Iranian counterpart.

Ancient India and Ancient Persia enjoyed a shared heritage and with the advent of Islam a renewed emergence of Iranian art, architecture, language and literature began to receive royal patronage from the Indian rulers.

Tombs, mosques and palatial building which came up during the Sultanate period. the Tughlak and Khalji architecture reflect the Iranian art in terms of planning and execution. We find a lot of Iranian craftsman employed in designing ambitious masonry projects like Taj, Sikandara and other Mogul monuments. Refined art of glazed tile decorations were directed imported from Iran. Late 16th century. we see the glazed tiles being manufactured in Hyderabad, Sind.

During the medieval days, Persian scholars came to India as they were drawn by reading the Persian translated works of Indian texts. Indian classical and historic epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata received great attention and generated a lot of Interest towards India.

Role of IGNCA

IGNCA has been set up in 1987 as a Centre to study and experience of all the arts.

To Extempo for 10 minutes about IGNCA