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Society Newsletter

Spring 2022



The Pakistan Society UK members touring Lords Cricket Ground in November 2021

Message from Sir William Blackburne, Chairman

It is with great pleasure that I welcome the revival of the Society newsletter after a gap of nearly ten years since the last edition appeared. The newsletter, with its articles and photographs on recent events in Pakistan and on past Society events, used to be a regular feature, appearing two or three times a year. For those

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executive committee. It takes account of the easier digital accessibility of readers to major news stories and will therefore concentrate more on the Society's activities and events affecting Pakistan and the UK which might not get quite the coverage in the regular news media which they deserve. There will also be occasional articles written specially for the newsletter. We welcome comments from readers and suggestions on how it might be improved. I wish it well and hope that it engages the interest of you, our members, and wish Eid Mubarak to those celebrating.



RECENT EVENTS

Iftikhar's Story: Reviving the Art and Heritage of Gara Embroidery

Noor Sattar, moderated by Amina Ali

On the 25th January, the Society was treated to an excellent online talk by Noor Sattar as she traced the history of Gara embroidery and its particular significance within her family. This fascinating talk revealed the origins of Gara and the popularity of this intricate craft in both Eastern and Western societies. Noor expertly explained the multiple motifs and

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Gara Embroidery

What is Gara?

Gara also known as 'Garro' is an intricately embellished satin stitch, primarily embroidered on a saree. It entails picturesque designs of flora and fauna, married together with birds and landscapes, in beautiful colouring to create cultural stories and references.

History of Gara

The embroidery designs originate in the late 19th century, with the start of the tea and opium trade, between India and China spearheaded by the Indian Parsi community.



The Silk Road and Beyond: Narratives of a Muslim Historian

Professor Iftikhar H. Malik

Professor Malik provided a stimulating talk on the 10th of February on the Silk Road and its history, covering topics from the Mongols to the first travel writer. Through his talk, Professor Malik weaved anecdotes from his own travels, meeting fellow historians, schoolchildren and more.

Story of the Silk

- ★ Baron von Richthofen--History of Sericulture.
- ★ Story about the Chinese Queen sipping on green tea under a mulberry tree in 4,500 BCE.
- ★ 138 BCE: General Chang Chien's visit to Bactria and Khorezm. Khivans interested in his silk outfits.
- ★ Chang discovers "Heavenly Horses" in Ferghana.
- ★ Buddhism goes into Tibet and China via Karakoram passes.
- ★ Nestorian priests and the introduction of silk.
- ★ Muslim victory over the Chinese in the Battle of Talas in 751
- ★ 200-day journey with silk and the rest to Italy by numerous intermediaries and caravanserais on the Silk Road.



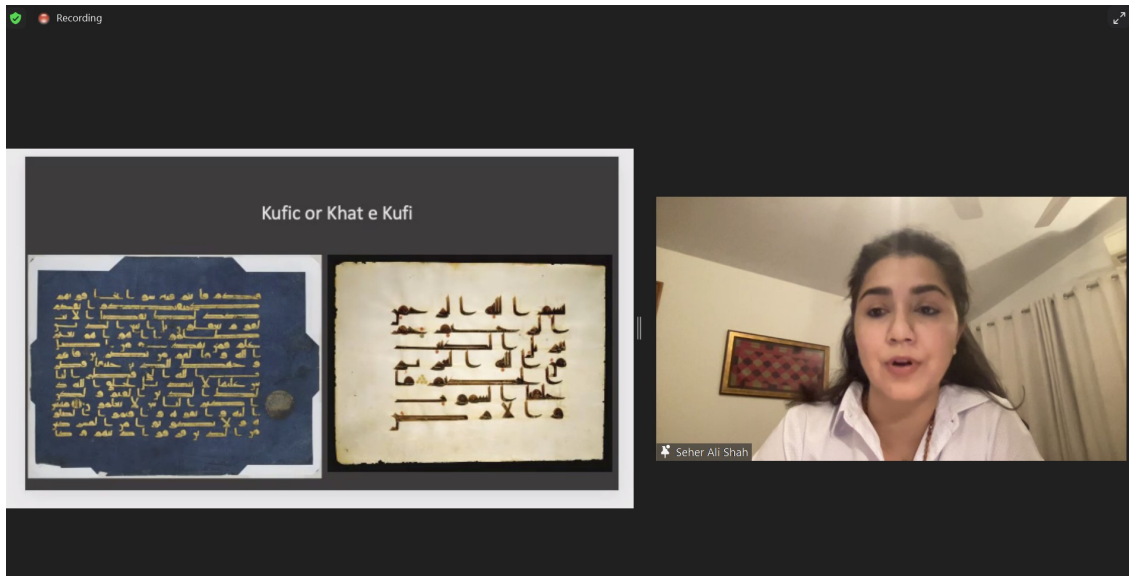
'Nastaliq', Origins and Evolution of Islamic Calligraphy and its Prevalence in Pakistan

Seher Ali Shah

On the 24th of February Seher Ali Shah, an apprentice of a Master Calligrapher in the Ottoman school of calligraphy, provided an in-depth look at Nastaliq, 'an esoteric

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explores the defining features and nuances of Kufic, the most light and nimble of styles, imparting not only its historical significance but also its current day usage.



If you missed one of the talks you can still view the recording on our website:
<https://www.thepakistansociety.org.uk/events/event-video/>



Wednesday 11th May: An online talk on 'The Many Strands of Pakistani Art 1947 to the Present' will be held featuring Professor Emeritus Salima Hashmi in conversation with Dr Samina Iqbal.

Tuesday 24th May: The 67th Annual Dinner of The Pakistan Society will be held in The Great Hall of The Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, London WC2A 3TL. The Chairman and Executive Committee of the Society very much hope you will join us on this special evening which this year will be celebrating the 75th anniversary of Pakistan's independence.

You can keep up to date with upcoming events on our website:
<https://www.thepakistansociety.org.uk/events/forthcoming-events/>

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SERIES RECOMMENDATION

Khuda Aur Mohabbat reviewed by Peter Gourd, Committee Treasurer

Written by Hashim Nadeem Khan and directed by Syed Wajahat Hussain this drama of 39 episodes has proven to be the biggest blockbuster of Pakistani Dramas. A Geo programme produced by Abdullah Kadwani and Asad Qureshi under 7th Sky Entertainment, it features Feroze Khan and Iqra Aziz in lead roles. The third season premiered on 12 February 2021. It is available on YouTube with the option of English subtitles.

The story initially is set in Lahore and follows the restless hero Farhad (played by Feroze Khan), a disappointment to his father because of his failure to complete his BA exams. Finally his father finds him employment at the home of a wealthy family who need help managing the wedding of their daughter. Farhad proves to be accomplished in his role, but develops a romantic interest in a close friend of the bride, Mahi Kazim Shah (played by Iqra Aziz) who is visiting from Bahawalpur. Mahi's family are wealthy landowners and Farhad's interest is not returned. When Mahi returns to her home Farhad decides to follow her and to try and win her over. Mahi has also attracted the attention of a more suitable suitor, Taimoor Shah (played by Mirza Zain Baig) from a wealthy land owning family in Multan.

The programme examines the gulf which exists between the land owning class and ordinary citizens. Can this divide ever be crossed?

It also looks explores the theme of the women in the family being responsibly for safekeeping a family's honour.

Supported by a haunting title song performed by Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and Nish Asher, many of the scenes take place at a popular shrine in Multan, helping to set the mystical atmosphere of the series.

For me the essence of that atmosphere was successfully captured by the performance of Noor Ul Hasan who plays Darvesh.

This drama is a little different from the many of the available shows and I would recommend it.

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NEWS

The Express Tribune: Pakistani microfinance pioneer nominated for Nobel Peace Prize 2022

Dr Amjad Saqib, a Pakistani philanthropist and founder of the country's largest interest-free microfinance programme Akhuwat, has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his humanitarian work in poverty alleviation. As many as 343 candidates from around the world have been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for 2022 – 251 individuals and 92 organisations.

"My services are beyond such awards and they are purely for the sake of Allah," Akhuwat Foundation Chairman Dr Amjad told The Express Tribune. Dr Amjad said no person can nominate himself for the Nobel Prize and there is no lobbying involved in the entire process.

"An official of a foreign country might have recommended my name for the award as people across the world are familiar with my services for humanity... but I am not aware of any such development," he said while responding to a question that a minister of Malta recommended his name for the prestigious award.

Dr Amjad, was one of five recipients of the Ramon Magsaysay Award — named after a Filipino president killed in a plane crash — for his "first-of-its-kind" interest- and collateral-free microfinance programme that has helped millions of poor families.

Nearly two decades after its launch, Akhuwat has grown into the nation's largest microfinance institution, distributing the equivalent of \$900 million and boasting an almost 100 per cent loan repayment rate.

Dr Amjad, who uses places of worship to hand out money, was cited for "his inspiring belief that human goodness and solidarity will find ways to eradicate poverty."

Having graduated from King Edward Medical University, Dr Amjad started his career by joining the esteemed civil service of Pakistan in 1985.

He served at various high-level government positions including Punjab Rural Support Programme (PRSP), a rural development and microfinance initiative by government of Punjab for seven years. The programme aimed at social mobilisation, community organisation and provision of financial access to the poor.

Concluding that an alternative method is needed to cater to the needs of the poor, he decided to resign from the civil service and dedicate his life to the mission of creating a poverty-free society by founding Akhuwat.

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operations, Akhuwat now presents a viable model of Shariah-compliant microfinance, which is both sustainable and replicable. Besides Akhuwat, the philanthropist is voluntarily serving many civil society organisations in the realm of education, health, disability, banking and finance.

The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded on the day of Alfred Nobel's death, the 10th of December, a time-honoured tradition since 1901.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2353779/pakistani-microfinance-pioneer-nominated-for-nobel-peace-prize-2022?amp=1>

Pakistan Independence Day Event to be held at Wembley Arena

Pakistan's Independence Day this year will be celebrated at Wembley Arena on 14th August. The announcement was made by Safiq Shahzad, Pakistan's Trade and Investment Minister Pakistan High Commission London, who stated that "Pakistan's Platinum Jubilee will be celebrated in style and Wembley Arena is the best place. Thousands of British Pakistanis and from Europe will grace the occasion." It is estimated that 10,000 people, including Pakistani artists, will attend.

More information on tickets can be found here: <https://www.ents24.com/london-events/ovo-arena-wembley/75th-pakistan-independence-day-jashan-e-adazi-mubarak/6462408>

Dawn Newspaper: Mother of orphans, Bilquis Edhi is no more

Known for her compassion and selfless work, mother to thousands of orphans across Pakistan, recipient of the Mother Teresa Memorial Award for Social Justice and Hilal-i-Imtiaz, caretaker of hundreds of cradles for babies abandoned mainly due to poverty, the right-hand woman and other half of the late Abdul Sattar Edhi, Bilquis Bano Edhi, breathed her last at Karachi's Aga Khan Hospital on Friday evening.

An avalanche of condolence messages from politicians, activists, civil society started pouring in as soon as news broke of Bilquis Edhi's passing. In his message, the President Dr Arif Alvi said he was deeply saddened to hear of her demise. He prayed that she be rewarded by God with the greatest of place in Jannah for her fine work and for forwarding the mission of her late husband Edhi Sahib. "Bilquis Edhi's selfless work for humanity will always be remembered," he said.

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huge loss for the nation. "An incredible woman in her own right, she stood by Edhi Sahib like a rock and together they set up an example of human compassion and ran one of the largest philanthropic organisations of the world. May her soul rest in peace."

According to son Faisal Edhi, her funeral prayers would be said at the New Memon Masjid after Zuhr followed by burial at the Mewashah Graveyard. "My mother wished to be buried alongside her own mother and my grandmother at the Mewashah Qabristan," he shared with Dawn.

April 16 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1685238>

Service of Remembrance for the Duke of Edinburgh Attended by The Pakistan Society

A Service of Remembrance for the Duke of Edinburgh held at Westminster Abbey on 29th March, was attended by Sir William Blackburne and his wife Vivien on behalf of the Pakistan Society. They were seated in the Abbey by the Great West Door through which all the guests entered, including all the UK and overseas royalty and other VIPs. Sir William reports that most charming of all was to see the robed and mitred Archbishop of Canterbury crouch down to shake hands with a slightly bemused Prince George and then with his sister, Princess Charlotte. Sir William reflects that the Pakistan Society enjoys a rare and precious link with the UK establishment.

The Daily Mail provides further details of the event: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10665435/ROBERT-HARDMAN-observes-poignant-day-loved-ones-pay-tribute-Prince-Philip.html>

Arooj Aftab the first Pakistani Woman to Win a GRAMMY

Arooj Aftab won the GRAMMY for Best Global Music Performance for "Mohabbat" at the 2022 GRAMMYS; she is the first artist to win in the new category. This is the composer's first GRAMMY win of the 2022 GRAMMYS, and of their career.

"I feel like this category in of itself has been insane... it should this be called yacht party category," Aftab said onstage at the 64th GRAMMY Awards. "I made [this record] about everything that broke me and put me back together. Thank you for listening to it and making it yours."

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Westminster Abbey marks Pakistan Day with Special Service

Dr Faisal Aziz Ahmed, Charge d'Affaires, together with the officers of the High Commission, represented Pakistan at the Special Service. He was received by The Very Reverend Dr. John Hawkey, Canon Theologian and Almoner at Westminster Abbey. The Evensong was sung by the world-renowned Choir of Westminster Abbey.

Special prayers were offered for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan and its people, as well as for the continued friendship between the two countries. A large number of British citizens and churchgoers attended the event, besides the High Commission's officials.

The highlight of the occasion was that Pakistan's Flag kept flying for the whole day on the north tower of Westminster Abbey. It remained the focus of attention of the tourists who gather around this iconic church every day from across the world.

Each year, Westminster Abbey invites the High Commission to a Special Evensong on Pakistan Day to pray for the nation, its leaders, and people.

March 22, 2022

<https://www.phclondon.org/infodiv/pressreleases>

[/20220322_westminster_abbey_marks_pakistan_day_with_special_service.aspx](https://www.phclondon.org/infodiv/pressreleases/20220322_westminster_abbey_marks_pakistan_day_with_special_service.aspx)

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A four-year-old Pakistani girl Mahnoor has etched her name in history books as she bagged a silver medal in skating at the national ice sports competition.

Reports in local media said the little girl, who hailed from Hooper Valley in Nagar district, stunned the world by clinching a silver medal. Residents of the northernmost region cheered the young achiever for her outstanding performance.

The young skater waved the Pakistani flag with athletes twice her height. Mahnoor's father commenting on the feat said his daughter is obsessed with sports.

A total of 20 teams of men and women from all regions participated in the ice skating, ice hockey, ice football, and ice polo contests.

29th March 2022, <https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/29-Jan-2022/four-year-old-gb-girl-bags-silver-medal-at-national-skating-competition>

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