



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Bull as Motif in Contemporary Pakistani Art: A Comprehensive Analysis**

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**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this research is to analyze the evolution of Bull imagery in contemporary Pakistani art over time and to understand the impact of this evolution on the overall aesthetic and thematic direction of Pakistani art. Pakistani art has rich visual vocabulary. These visual elements need to be discussed thoroughly. Unfortunately the books available on Pakistani art in our society there is less debate and lack of documentation of such faunal forms including the motif of Bull. Most of the literature available on contemporary Pakistani Art focuses more on artists' bibliography, technique and the painting style adopted by them. This research follows American Psychological Association (APA) style 6<sup>th</sup> edition and primarily employs a qualitative research approach, supplemented by a smaller quantitative component. The study will focus on an in-depth analysis of the artworks depicting Bull motif with a proposed examination. Artworks included in this research shows the aesthetic and conceptual approach of Pakistani artists regarding the imagery of Bull. These artworks also depict the social, economic and religious actualities related to the Bull motif in Pakistan. The selected artworks provide a visual documentation and highlight the significance of Bull imagery in the history of Pakistan.

**KEYWORDS** Contemporary Pakistani Art, Faunal imagery, Symbolism of Bull and Buffalo, Pakistani painters, Bull as motif, Bull in Paintings

**Introduction**

The imagery of bull can be traced knitted in the history of South Asian art for a very long period of time. The Indian subcontinent has a time-honored tradition of art-making, where faunal depictions, especially the imagery of bull has been abundantly used to convey a range of messages – religious, sociopolitical, and personal.

To gain insight into the evolution of such faunal themes of bull in Pakistani art up to the present day, it's important to analyze art from the pre- and post-partition periods, considering the various schools and practices that have contributed to contemporary Pakistani art.

Before the advent of camera the sole intention of the artist was to capture the meticulous details of the subject for the record purpose which restricted artists to unleash their creative spirit in such works. In subsequent periods of global history, the artist's individual creativity and imaginative capacity emerged as powerful modes of expression and became central to their recognition as a successful artist. Furthermore global interconnectedness of twenty-first century made today's artists to think out of the box in terms of expression while utilizing innovative techniques, mediums, surfaces and even spaces for the execution of their artworks. In current era artists have evolved new notions and visual vocabulary with faunal motifs by changing the context in which they have been used before.

## Literature Review

Artworks featuring the motif of bull have been integral to religious expression since antiquity, as seen in Buddhist, Hindu, and prehistoric cave art. Human beings unleashed their imagination by associating these ordinary creatures with extra ordinary meanings depending on their biological characteristics and physical appearances.

Animals including bull and lion along with other creatures have been portrayed as a mode of transportation for God and Goddess in Hindu mythology. Bull the 'Nandi' often painted with God Shiva riding on him and Goddess Durga on lion (Singh, 2018, p.2-3). One of the *Pahari* miniature painting (fig.1 ) depicts the Lord Shiva along with his companion Parvati and his vehicle *vahana* the bull *Nandi* who is about to touch Shiva's foot with his tongue as a gesture of devotion.(Losty& Mallinson,2018p.66).



Figure1.Kangra, 1820, Opaque pigments and gold on paper Kangra, 13.6 x 22 cm. (Source: [https://francescagalloway.com/usr/documents/exhibitions/list\\_of\\_works\\_url/37/pdf-indian-paintings-from-the-habighorst-collection.pdf#:~:text=Losty%202008,Losty%202010,66](https://francescagalloway.com/usr/documents/exhibitions/list_of_works_url/37/pdf-indian-paintings-from-the-habighorst-collection.pdf#:~:text=Losty%202008,Losty%202010,66)).

In Hindu mythology on the other hand imagery of water buffalo also used to symbolize a demon who use to deceive people by changing his physical appearance named *Mahishasura*, *Mahisha* mean Buffalo and *Asura* mean demon. A battle scene is depicted showing Goddess Durga seated on her vehicle tiger and slaying the buffalo demon with her arrow who finally attained his actual buffalo shape as evident in miniature *Durga fighting Mahishasura* (fig.2).( Baheti,2022,p.10).



Figure 2. *Durga fighting Mahishasura*, 19th Century, watercolor on paper, 60.9x83.8 cm, (Source: [https://chitrolekha.com/ns/v6n2/v6n2\\_06.pdf,10](https://chitrolekha.com/ns/v6n2/v6n2_06.pdf,10)).

With the advent of the Mughals – Persian Muslims – a compelling synthesis of Hindu and Muslim art philosophies emerged in the region's artistic and aesthetic history. Besides

documenting the history of their daily court proceedings, the Mughals fashioned a symbolic visual language. They utilized image-making and writing predominantly to impart the message of their legitimate rule over India. The selection and execution of such faunal motifs during Mughal dynasty was highly relied on the aesthetic taste of each emperor along with the context in which it was painted.

To watch animal fights from parapets among court attendants and visitors, was one of way how Mughal emperors use to amuse themselves. One such example is a miniature painting painted by Miskin, Akbar's court painter with the title *Buffaloes in Combat* (fig.3) painted during Akbar's reign. Buffalos painted here symbolizing struggle, to get victory over each with round muscular bodies empowering their strength among the figures of passionate court servants painted in the background. (*Buffaloes in Combat*, n.d.)



Figure 3 .Miskin, *Buffaloes in Combat*, late 16th century, Ink, watercolor, and gold on paper, 17.5 cmx24.1 cm, (Source: The Met, [https://www .metmu seum.org/art/collection /search/453210](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/453210)).

A visible alternation occurred which modified the lens of visual beauty for people of India during colonial era in the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century. East India Company for the purpose of ornamentation and for the maintenance of its historical records commissioned Indian and British artists as well to paint animals and plants by which they got fascinated with due to its exotic species.

British officials desire to bring back with them remembrances of foreign land in the absence of camera was one of the reasons behind the hyper realistic handling of painted images as evident in (fig.4) *A Cultivator*.(Chheda,2023,pp1-5).



Figure 4.*A Cultivator*, 1826, (Source: <https://www.dailyartmagazine.com/company-school-transition-to-indian-modern-art/>).

Scenes of vendors, artisans busy in their tasks were painted along with village sites portraying mode of transportation like bullock carts and horse carts were also painted. (Chaitanya, 1994, p.106).

## Materials and Methods

This research is based on qualitative approach regarding the symbolism of Bull motif in the artworks of Pakistani conventional artists namely Ustad Allah Bukhsh, Zainul Abedin, Shakir Ali, Laila Shahzada and modern artists including Saeed Akhtar, Jamil Naqsh, Imran Hunzai, Muhammad Zeeshan and Akif Suri. The writing format is based on American Psychological Association (APA). Primary and secondary sources have been used to gather data including interviews of artists, visits to galleries of Lahore, research articles, websites, and magazines.

## Results and Discussion

### Bull as Motif in the works of selected Pakistani Artists

The name of Ustad Allah Bakhsh is among the pioneer artists of Pakistan who not only worked in British India before partition on Hindu mythological themes but also after partition of subcontinent. After partition he shifted his interest towards Punjabi folklore and culture by choice being resident of Lahore city in Pakistan where there was no demand or admiration for Hindu mythological themes. Ustad Allah Bakhsh did not received any formal academic training but his working experience with a theatre company polished his skills. Once Chughtai gave statement about this self-taught artist that "Allah Bukhsh did not inspire Lahore intellectuals because of his social position as a sign painter and later a bazaar painter". (Arshad, 2016, p.61). After partition artists were inclined to create their unique alluring expression being an artist of newly established Pakistan due to which they avoided Hindu subjects in their paintings. This desire for nationhood resulted in the emergence of two art movements one of them was oriental art followed by Allah Bukhsh as well which comprised of conventional themes and representations with the inclusion of modern approach. (Ali, Rahat, Anwar & Akhtar, 2024, p.1469). This modern approach developed by his experience of copying paintings of western masters like Eugene Delacroix enabled Allah Bukhsh to capture the complex details of animals in his paintings in later years and introduced him with western painting style. (Jawad, Alam, 2021, p.44). He built his identity with painted agrarian scenes featuring bulls, buffaloes alongside fields. A strong sense of interdependence can be felt among his painted farm animals like bulls and buffaloes and agrarian local dwellers of Punjab as Samina Nasim comments while discussing his painting *Village Scene* (fig.5) that painting is not just a visual representation; it's a visual narrative of the people, their struggles, and their bonding to the land. (Nasim, 2024, p.285). So after above discussion it can be said that the imagery of bulls and buffaloes in Allah Bukhsh's village scenes did not remain confined to the representational art. It tells story of migration, new nation land, soil, economy, agriculture with a touch of modernism while painted in western style.



Figure 5 .Ustad Allah Bukhsh, *Village Scene*, 1960, oil on canvas. (Source: <https://doi.org/10.71016/hnjss/637hqg07>).

Contrary to Allah Bukhsh, Zainul Abedin is one of those pioneer artists who saw the political upheaval in subcontinent before partition and aftermaths of post Colonialism.

Abedin's relatively modern quick sketches in pen and ink on paper got appreciation by news reporters and reformers in Calcutta which got inspiration by Bengal famine in 1943.

These forceful drawings and sketches depict Abedin's empathy towards Bengal famine victims who faced struggle, dislocation and starvation. Along these famine sketches he also portrayed routine life of East Pakistan in works like *After Fishing*, *The Floating Market*, *Boat race* and motif of bull in *Retreat* which in later years became his hallmark.

This raging bull in *Retreat* (fig.6) covers the size of 20 inch by 24 inch was completed in just 15 minutes depicts Abedin's skills of handling dry brush strokes which were characteristic of his work. (Hoek, Sunderason, 2019, Zainul Abedin and the Journeys of Allegory, para.4-5).



Figure 6. Zainul Abedin, *Retreat*, 1951, sketch in Zainul Abedin, *Paintings and Brush Drawings*, (Source: <https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/en/publications/journeying-through-modernism-travels-and-transits-of-east-pakista/>).

The first Decades mentions that Badruddin Jahangir's (the great art historian) once referred Zainul Abedin work as "*Abedin's rural peasants and bulls emerge as laboring bodies, heroic figures frequently engaged in struggle. This primitivism, Jahangir has argued, seen in Abedin's realist works, is radical and critical rather than nostalgic and oriented toward the past*" (Dadi, 2009, p.43) as evident in (fig.7) *The Struggle*.

So it is not wrong to say that the imagery of bull in Zainul Abedin work often juxtaposed with other rural elements like carts and working peasants became emblem of social struggle.



Figure 7. Zainul Abedin, *The Struggle*, 1959. Oil and tempera on masonite board. 155 × 627 cm. (Source: Dadi, *Modernism and the art of Muslim South Asia*, 106-107).

Even in the early years of 1950's after his return from Europe, Zainul Abedin remained persistent in portraying his interest for the rural life, local people and folk as the subject matter for his oil paintings and watercolor sketches with a touch of Modernism. (Dadi, 2010, pp.106-107).

Another prominent painter who portrayed bulls as subject in his paintings was Shakir Ali. In the newly established Pakistan he managed to inspire the new generation of artists through his simplified objects and semi abstract art. He used symbols in his paintings to express his fundamental ideas. Influence of different civilizations is evident in his paintings. Primitive and modern approach runs simultaneously in his art. Shakir Ali did not describe his subject directly but used symbolic connotation to something other than the apparent subject. (Manzoor & Nadeem, 2020. p.229).

In the early fifties bull was painted as a primary motif in his paintings. In his painting *Figures with Cattle* (fig.8) painted bulls demonstrate the conceptual weightage (p.230). Marcella in her book while discussing Shakir Ali's Bulls imagery mentions that they derived from many sources-the powerful masculine bull of Picasso, the graceful, delicately rendered bull of prey of Altamira, the bull of labor ubiquitous in rural Pakistan and the bull of Greek mythology from the walls of the Cretan palace. (Sirhandi,1992,p.44)



Figure 8 .Shakir Ali, *Figures with Cattle*. (Source: Sirhandi,M.Neasom, Contemporary Painting in Pakistan,44).

Shakir Ali's mental and physical encounters of life resulted in the development of intimate allegories. In different phases of his career he treated the imagery of bull differently. He painted bulls with more twisted bodies having sharp pointed edges which were inspired by Picasso's style as compare to those which were painted as part of rural sites generate a sense of rustic simplicity and recalls those mural paintings which he painted in Bombay (44).He looked at bulls with personal interest rather than as an expert judge of livestock. It was associated with his romantic and intimate experiences with the women in his life history.

Akbar Naqvi mentions that there always raises a question in Ahmed Pervez's mind that how Shakir Ali's soft, delicate fingers could handle such powerful animals (Naqvi, 1998,p. 224).

The Bull in his painting titled *The Bull*(fig.9) is inspired by Cretan Bull a Greek mythological beast who became the lover of Pasiphae is painted in white color standing in front of red colored pillar with impressively painted detached horns recalls painted cave walls of primitive time (224-225).After analyzing the whole discussion one can say that the Bull motif in Shakir Ali's art is not an ordinary bull, he painted this bull anthropomorphically which retains those hidden unexpressed emotions of pain, pleasure and love which Shakir Ali experienced in his life and expressed them indirectly with a touch of abstraction.



Figure 9. Shaker Ali, *The Bull*, oil on canvas, 1962, 51 cm x 57 cm. (Source: Naqvi, *Image and Identity*, 225).

Bull motif was not only painted by male artists but there are some female painters as well from Pakistan who fused this motif in their paintings, Laila Shahzada is one of such artists. She was brought up in United Kingdom by her Indian father and English mother and soon developed likeness towards art. In 1960 she exhibited her work for the first time in Pakistan at Karachi art Council (Mooraj, 2015). She started painting driftwood series in search of experimentation and to evolve a style which is unique and modern at the same time.

On international level early civilizations became center of attention when a crew comprised of top classicist excavators was sent by UNESCO to measure the risk of destruction faced by artefacts due to the increasing level of underground water. This was the time when Laila Shahzada refreshed the remnants of the forgotten civilization by displaying a series of her paintings in 1976 at Karachi for the exhibition entitled "The Indus Valley Civilization". (Ali, 1995, p. 252). Paranormal phenomena and enigmatic feature associated with primitive cultures and beliefs also inspired her to examine Gandharan era and Indus Valley Civilization through her canvases. Laila Shahzada revived these themes which were inspired from clay deities and Harappan seals through her stylized treatment and imaginary backgrounds portraying bulls with their elongated elegant horns (Sirhandi, 1992, p. 67).

Motif of bull is boldly executed by her in the paintings as Ijaz ul Hassan mentions in his book *Painting in Pakistan* that Laila Shahzada through her striking and vivaciously painted forms added her own unique perspective and flavour to such historical themes (Hassan, 1991, p. 123). She has done amalgamation of different artefacts in one composition to develop a new visual language as evident in her painting *The Indus Bull with Dancer* (fig. 10). In this painting a slender female figure inspired from Mohenjodaro's famous sculpture Dancing girl is painted reclining playfully on the back of a raging bull whose inspiration taken from seals of Mohenjodaro. By painting sixty to seventy paintings on such themes she created a significant impact in this style of painting (Ali, 1995, p. 253).



Figure 10. Laila Shahzada, *The Indus Bull with Dancer*, oil on canvas. (Source: Hassan Ijaz ul, *Painting in Pakistan*, 124).

Saeed Akhtar made his name among the prominent art educationist and painters of Pakistan after completion of his graduation degree in 1964 he got opportunity to join National College of Arts as a teacher.

Lacking the ability to differentiate between specific colors in a way helped him to get a better understanding of tones than colors until he get revision procedure done few years back. Left over blank areas of his paintings were often filled up with light and shade of a single color and with paint trickling in the background of compositions.(Tarak,2017).

Although he already established his name for painting realistic images but at a point in his life he felt gravitated towards abstraction and modernism and adopted semiabstract genre in the late sixties. He admitted that he painted commissioned portraits of models, politicians and intellectuals despite knowing that such themes usually considered lesser only because it provides him bread and butter. Saeed Akhtar sensed that semi-abstract paintings provides him opportunity to fully express himself being an artist without any restrictions. He painted some landscapes and paintings depicting horses and bull in such semi abstract style *Horses and Blue Moon* is one such painting (Naqvi,1998,p.579).

Another such painting with the motif of bull was painted by Saeed Akhtar as a book cover for Mustansar Hussain Tarar book titled *Undlaas Main Ajnaabi* published in 1967.Inspiration of this book *Undlaas Main Ajnaabi* came from author's travel diary recording his experiences in Spain and highlighting traces of Muslim inheritance still existing over there.Saeed Akhtar's painted bull is an emblem of splendid power as evident through his physique as well standing as a sturdy giant instead of getting injured in a bull fight.Moorish landscape and painted calligraphy adorn the background of painting as evident in (fig.11) (Tarak,2017).

According to Saeed Akhtar although the animal bull looks magnificent but only God has given him the ability to destroy the opponent in one blink of eye or surrender in front of his beloved. The famous verse "Allah alone is Victorious over all" from Quran in the form of calligraphy painted in background of painting suggests that the ultimate victory is only in the hands of God instead of human beings. (S.Akhtar, personal communication, October 27, 2025). So the painted bull motif here by artist symbolize the authority of God over all creatures in indirect way. Luminous mountains in perspective suggests mountainous areas of Spain and the dripping red color indicates the blood shed happens during bull fight.



Figure11. Saeed Akhtar. (Source:TheFriday Times,<https://www. thefridaytimes.com/20-Oct-2017/ master-painter>).

Another famous painter from Pakistan who integrated the bull motif symbolically in his paintings is Jamil Naqsh. In his art inspiration for the symbolism and stylization of basic shapes came from Shakir Ali and Pablo Picasso. In 1954 he got admitted in National College

of Arts and developed interest towards modernism when came in contact with Shakir Ali's early paintings which were inspired from cubism. He went to Karachi and settled there after spending one year in Lahore with an incomplete degree. Job in an advertisement company provided him opportunity to understand various textures and designs which he utilized in his artworks in later period. In the last years of his life he painted a retrospective series of paintings inspired from old civilization of Mohenjodaro and called it as "My Mohenjodaro". Title of this last painted series by him was *Fisher Woman* in which he portrayed bulls and fish reminiscent of the seals from ancient river civilization.

Final exhibition of his paintings was done in 2019. In *The Bull* (fig.12) painted bull in earthy tones contrasts with the brilliant and fresh color palette used by artists in foreground highlights the idea of then and now. (Nasim, 2021, pp. 369-367). Ancient civilizations used to look at bull as a totem. This painting gives impression of a collage done in multilayers. Jamil Naqsh through his art of stylization and variation of color palette successfully added a flavour of Modernity in Pakistani Art.



Figure 12. Jamil Naqsh, *The Bull*. 2019, Oil on Canvas, 91.44x91.44cm. (Source: <https://jlcc.spcrd.org/index.php/jlcc/article/view/117>).

With the passage of time exposure to the social media and end results of globalization made contemporary artists to evolve their visual language more meaningfully in terms of methods and materials employed by them in their artworks. Progression in emblematic language is getting more weightage in the artworks of contemporary Pakistani artist. Noteworthy is the fact that in current times artists are experimenting with sizes, spaces and the idea of tangibility in execution of conventional symbols to reframe the perspectives associated with them.

Imran Hunzai is a contemporary artist from Hunza Gilgit Baltistan who got opportunity to teach at National College of Arts and NUST as well. He did national and international residencies and exhibiting his work since 2007. His art is provocative both visually and tangibly. He used to create portraits of faunal creatures with metal mesh which is rust free to ironically comment on human's possession in the form of industrial settlements over natural environment of animals. Metal and concrete replaced the forest areas with passage of time damaging the eco system and threaten the freedom of faunal creatures by putting them in cages as showcased items (Tauqueer, 2022).

One such artwork by Imran Hunzai which catches viewers eye is *untitled* portrait of Bull (fig.13) executed in metal mesh showcased in exhibition titled *Aboriginal Souls*. The medium of metal mesh metaphorically used to indicate the restricted areas along with the industrial zones created by human beings against natural environment. Artist meticulously created the facial details of bull in mesh to capture his inner aggression and agony at the same time and ironically comments on systemic instability.



Figure 13. Imran Hunzai, *Untitled*. 2002, Rust-free Metal Mesh, 134.6 x 99.06cm. (Source: <https://oartspace.com/product/imran-hunzai-untitled-14/>).

It is quite interesting to witness such artworks which despite of their conventional imagery retains the flavor of novelty in them.

Muhammad Zeeshan is such contemporary artist from Pakistan who persistently practice this thing in his artworks. He got trained in traditional miniature art at National College of Arts. His art is multifaceted as he explores various techniques and art forms for the execution of ideas. He explores the idea of social upheaval, brutality and Machiavellianism which have been remained echoing nonstop in past, in belief systems and in folklore as well (Rehman, 2019).

Faunal motifs in his paintings often use to have symbolic connotations as evident in his work *Fighting Bulls and a Donkey* (fig.14). Muhammad Zeeshan very thoughtfully juxtaposed such animals in this artwork which possess contradiction in their characteristic nature. Left half of the scene showcase the conventional imagery of two tangled fighting bulls symbolizing the wickedness and barbarity of society. Right half is occupied by a distantly standing donkey symbolizing wiser emotional detachment although people use to look upon donkey as a dumb and lazy animal but here it supports the irony of situation that sometimes dumbness saves your peace and love. Title of the show was *No fight, be a donkey!* in which his work *Fighting Bulls and a Donkey* was showcased.



Figure 14. Muhammad Zeeshan, *Fighting Bulls and a Donkey*. 2019, Graphite and UV print on sandpaper, 83.82x137.16 cm, (Source: Artist's courtesy).

Another painting by Muhammad Zeeshan is *He is my witch I* (fig.15) in which he utilized the motif of Bull to signify the hostile forces, unscrupulous behaviors and restlessness prevailing on global level. Whereas the couple seated above the fighting bulls

symbolize the family affairs, peace and love of a common man which get disturb the most during the turbulence of war affairs.



Figure 15. Muhammad Zeeshan, *He is my witch I*, 2025, Acrylic on canvas, 99.06 x91.44 cm, (Source: Artist's courtesy).

Muhammad Zeeshan often combines classic imagery from the conventional Mughals and Persian miniature paintings to address the issues of current era by adding his own flavor to it. (M. Zeeshan, personal communication, March 31, 2026).

Muhammad Zeeshan's bull fighting engages the viewer with deep re-contextualization of Indo-Persian miniature painting within a contemporary geopolitical and cultural framework. The use of flat application of colors, simplified and refined contours are the reminiscence of Mughal and Persian manuscript traditions but Zeeshan playfully inserts symbolic tension through the motif of the fighting bull beneath a couple. The scenes of animal combat had been presenting in classical miniature paintings as symbol of power, imperial control and dominance of the emperors (or conflict) but the artist combines it with intimacy of a Persian couple. This juxtaposition of love and fight opens a new debate on contemporary sociopolitical realities of Iran.

The title, *He is My Witch*, introduces a challenging inversion of gendered and cultural archetypes. The term "witch" traditionally carries connotations of marginality, power, fear, and resistance. By attributing this label within an intimate relational framework, Zeeshan is challenging normative constructions of masculinity, authority, and otherness. The phrase destabilizes identity categories, suggesting fluidity and ambiguity in both personal and political domains. This representation of bull can be placed within postcolonial and contemporary practices. This imagery operates as a palimpsest, layering contemporary anxieties with Persian and Mughal aesthetics.

It is very interesting to note that the Pakistani artist of contemporary era successfully managed to develop new perspectives by executing conventional faunal motifs, imagery and scenes in unconventional manner. In ( fig.3) by Miskin from Mughal era and in ( fig.15) by Muhammad Zeeshan the replicative imagery of fighting bulls is replicative but former painted the fighting animals for the record purpose whereas the later one painted the fighting bulls in allegorical way as an emblem of barbarity at global level in a different context.

Another contemporary artist from Pakistan is Akif Suri hails from Dera Ghazi Khan, lives and practice in Lahore. In spite being trained in miniature painting Akif likes to do experimentation both with the themes and scales of his paintings. One such painting done by him is *Sanam* (fig.16). This painting is an irony on the contradictory perceptions linked with the subject of domestic cow or cattle which highlights socioeconomic and cultural

differences of our societies. Sanam is an Arabic word which means idol whereas mostly used in Sufi poetry for the beloved (Binnale catalogue).



Figure 16 .Akif Suri, *Sanam*, graphite and powder pigment on archival paper, 2017, 116x198cm. (Source: <https://www.kbcuratorial.com/artists/aakif-suri>).

Akif Suri chose the motif of domestic cow as his subject in painting to raise voice against the contrasting dogmas linked with this animal existing worldwide. Hindus use to worship the idols of cow as their Goddess in temples and give donations for it while Muslims use to sacrifice cows, bulls and buffaloes to please their God and feel honor to pay extra for the purchase of expensive bigger animal for scarification. Akif Suri use to call this painting as *Sanam* 20% extra as he intentionally exaggerated the size of painted cow from 12 - 13 feet to 15 - 16 feet. According to artist people use to look at this animal as a product and as companies use to put different offers on their items on special occasions to attract the consumers same idea is portrayed through his painted cow. He painted the subject standing humbly against an ominous black cloudy land which symbolize the state of confusion among belief systems globally. (A.Suri, personal communication, December 09, 2025).

The work of Akif Suri critically questions the paradoxical cultural, religious, and economic meanings attached to the cows across diverse belief systems in India and Pakistan. By appropriating the motif of the domesticated animal, Suri foregrounds its simultaneous sanctification and commodification—revered as sacred within Hindu traditions while also functioning as a sacrificial entity within Muslim practices. Thus, Suri’s work transcends mere representation, positioning the cow as a contested signifier through which broader discourses of faith, consumption, and identity are critically examined.

## **Conclusion**

After examining the aforementioned artworks one can say that Bull as motif in Pakistani art still retains its conventional essence accompany the flavor of modernity. There have always remained a strong connection between the artist, art and the audience. In modern era mutations occurred not only in ideas, insights but in aesthetics as well. Every artist treated this motif of ‘bull’ according to their circumstances and knowledge. Contemporary artists took the motif of bull and its symbolism to new heights with valiant spirit of test and trials. Bull as motif runs as an uninterrupted thread throughout the history of Pakistani art to the current era weaving the social, political, religious aspect in new colors and patterns of modern era.

## **Recommendations**

Recommendations for the upcoming emerging artists of the digital era where sky is the limit. There is still margin to explore this Bull motif with new mediums and techniques to convert it from ordinary to extra ordinary. They can employ this motif further to promote the Contemporary Pakistani art.

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