



AZEEM MONTHLY ENGLISH MAGAZINE

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SOCIETY?



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EDITOR'S NOTE

In this September-October issue, Azeem English Magazine explores a range of topics that reflect our changing world, from culture and identity to science, self-growth, and society. Each article offers a unique look at modern challenges, touching on subjects like the digital impact on mental health, finding joy in simple things, and balancing traditional values with new ideas. We also delve into timeless themes, honoring the legacy of Syedna Umar Farooq e Azam (R.A) and discussing how Islamic values can guide us through contemporary challenges. The recent Enlighten Islamic Values 2024 Conference brings thoughtful perspectives on integrating faith with the demands of the modern age.

We hope these pieces encourage you to think deeply, question the everyday, and appreciate the little things in life. Join us as we journey through these diverse themes, inspiring conversations about who we are and where we're headed in today's fast-paced world.

Happy Reading!

Thanks!

Muhammad Ali Farooqi
Editor-in-Chief

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HARNESSING THE POWER OF YOUTH: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NEXT GENERATION



Haveerus Mughal
Columnist, Engineer, Theatre Artist

04 MINUTES READ

Pakistan is at a pivotal moment with a median age of around 22 years, positioning it as one of the youngest countries globally. This youth bulge offers a remarkable opportunity alongside significant challenges. With more than 64% of the population under 30, the nation has the potential to leverage this demographic dividend to drive economic growth, social development, and innovation. However, if these opportunities are not effectively addressed, the same youth population could contribute to rising unemployment, social unrest, and economic stagnation. To avoid this bleak scenario, it is imperative that Pakistan creates and sustains opportunities for its youth, fostering an environment where young people can thrive and contribute meaningfully to society.

Currently, the youth in Pakistan face multifaceted challenges. Unemployment and underemployment are rampant. According to the Labour Force Survey, 4.51 million are jobless with an unemployment rate of 6.3 percent. This figure is even higher among young women, reflecting deep-seated gender disparities.

Additionally, the quality of education remains a significant concern. While Pakistan boasts a literacy rate of about 62.8%, the reality is that many young people, even those with degrees, lack the skills required by the modern job market. This skills mismatch is a critical barrier to employment and economic mobility. The digital divide further compounds these issues. In an era where digital literacy and access to technology are crucial, a large proportion of Pakistani youth remain disconnected. Only about 25% of the population has access to the internet, which severely limits opportunities for education, entrepreneurship, and employment. Bridging this digital gap is essential for ensuring that young Pakistanis can compete in a globalized world.

Despite these challenges, the resilience and potential of Pakistan's youth are undeniable. Young Pakistanis have demonstrated remarkable ingenuity and creativity in various fields, from technology and entrepreneurship to arts and social activism. For instance, Pakistani startups have begun to make their mark on the global stage, with companies like Airlift and Bykea showcasing the innovative spirit of the nation's youth. Moreover, social movements led by young people, such as climate change, advocacy, and

IMAGE SOURCE: ITCLIO

women's rights campaigns, have gained international recognition, highlighting the leadership capabilities within this demographic.

To harness this potential, Pakistan must adopt a multifaceted approach that addresses education, employment, and empowerment. Firstly, the education system requires a comprehensive overhaul. It is not enough to increase enrollment rates; the focus must shift to improving the quality of education. This includes updating curricula to meet the demands of the 21st century, investing in teacher training, and integrating technology into the classroom. Vocational training and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education should be prioritized to equip young people with relevant skills.

Furthermore, creating economic opportunities for the youth is crucial. This can be achieved through fostering entrepreneurship and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are the backbone of any economy. The government, along with private sector partners, should establish incubators and accelerators that provide young entrepreneurs with access to capital, mentorship, and markets. Additionally, public-private partnerships can play a significant role in creating job opportunities and apprenticeships, ensuring that young people gain practical experiences and are better prepared for the workforce.

Digital inclusion is another critical area that requires urgent attention. Expanding internet access and improving digital literacy should be national priorities. Initiatives such as subsidizing internet costs for low-income families, establishing community internet centers, and incorporat-

ing digital skills training into the education system can help bridge the digital divide. By doing so, Pakistan can unlock new opportunities for education, employment, and innovation for its youth.

Empowerment of young people also necessitates creating an enabling environment where their voices are heard, and their contributions are valued. This involves promoting youth participation in decision-making processes at all levels, from local to national government. Establishing youth councils and forums can provide platforms for young people to express their views and influence policies that affect their lives. Additionally, efforts to promote gender equality and inclusivity are essential to ensure that all young people, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to succeed.

The role of the international community should not be overlooked. Development partners and international organizations can support Pakistan's efforts by providing technical assistance, funding, and best practice models. Collaborative initiatives that facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity building can enhance the effectiveness of youth-focused programs and policies.

Pakistan's youth can transform the nation's socio-economic landscape through education, economic opportunities, and digital inclusion. A united effort from the government, private sector, and civil society is essential. Immediate action is vital for the success and well-being of future generations.

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The Great Talat Hussain



Uzma Sabeen
Writer, Artist and Director

04 MINUTES READ

Talat Hussain, a legendary actor and an unparalleled talent, is no more. His passing marks the end of an era in the world of television, film and theater. My first introduction to Talat Sahib was as a devoted fan of his TV dramas during the golden era of Pakistan Television (PTV). His name in the cast was a guarantee that the serial would be a hit. Talat Hussain was synonymous with quality, and his performances in dramas such as *Hawain*, *Kashkol*, and *Teesra Kinara* and many more left an indelible mark on the audience.

One of my most vivid memories of watching his work was tuning into the night transmission of PTV at 3 a.m. to catch a rerun of *Teesra Kinara*. My brother and I would clandestinely watch TV with the volume turned low, making sure not to wake our parents. The experience was thrilling, not just because of the secrecy, but because performances by Talat Hussain, Rahat Kazmi, Sahira Kazmi, and Usman Peerzada were mesmerizing, making the late-night vigil worthwhile.

My admiration for Talat Hussain deepened during my university years. Mr. Iftikhar Shafi, one of our teachers in the English Department, introduced us to a different facet of Talat

Hussain's talent. He played a recording of Hasan Kozagar, a poem by Noon Meem Rashid, recited by Talat Hussain. The clarity and emotion in his voice were spellbinding. Each word was delivered with precision, bringing the poem to life in a way that made its meanings crystal clear. It was a moment of awe and admiration, as we realized the breadth of his artistic capabilities.

My third and most profound interaction with Talat Sahib was during my audition at the National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA). He was on the panel, along with Mr. Zia Mohyeddin and Mr. Mohsin Shirazi. Seeing him for the first time in person was an unforgettable experience. There was an aura around him, a presence was so powerful that it felt almost otherworldly. Perhaps it was my nervousness, or maybe it was the sheer magnitude of his personality, but I felt goose bumps as I stood before him.

Talat Hussain later became my teacher at NAPA, and I found him to be incredibly kind and approachable. He taught us the fundamentals of acting, such as the basic footwork required to stand on stage. His guidance was invaluable, and I learned so much from him, not just about acting but about carrying oneself with grace and confidence.

As our diploma program neared its end, our teachers decided to stage a theater play for us. They chose Habib

IMAGE SOURCE: AALITY

Mamoon, an adaptation of Anton Chekhov's Uncle Vanya, directed by Mr. Zia Mohyeddin. I was involved in the lighting design for the play, and had the privilege of witnessing the rehearsals. Talat Sahib played the protagonist, and watching him bring the character to life was a master class in acting. His performance was a treat to behold, filled with nuance and depth that only a seasoned actor like him could deliver.

Another memorable production was Sufaid Khoon, written by Agha Hashr and directed by Zia Mohyeddin as the inaugural production of the Repertory Theatre. Talat Sahib played the role of the King, and he was simply magnificent. During rehearsals, there were many interesting incidents, particularly involving the play's prompter, Mr. Taj Niazi. Talat Sahib was known for his dramatic pauses, which often left Taj Niazi uncertain whether to prompt him with the next line. This uncertainty led to amusing moments where if Niazi Sahib prompted him, Talat Sahib would say, "No, please! I was taking my time," and if he didn't, Talat Hussain would ask for the cue. Despite these moments, his pauses were never empty; they were filled with meaning and emotion, a testament to his mastery of the craft.

Talat Hussain's versatility extended beyond acting. He starred in productions like Vakil Sahib, The Seagull, and Jo Chaley tu Jaan se Guzar Gaye. He also directed plays for both the Academy and the Repertory Theatre, such as A Doll's House and Ewam Inderjeet. As a director, he was generous with his talent, often demonstrating how to perform various roles, bringing his immense experience to the benefit of his students. He also taught us the history of theatre which was

one of his favourite topics. He was a voracious reader and he had a huge collection of books on theatre, acting and literature. His ability to embody different characters and his passion for teaching made him an exceptional mentor. He had a keen insight into current affairs and religious matters. Moreover, Talat Hussain was also a writer and an adaptor of plays. He wrote some short stories and dramatized tales by classic authors. One such project was the play Kafan, a dramatization of a short story by Munshi Premchand. His adaptation brought new life to the story, showcasing his ability to bridge the gap between literature and theater seamlessly.

I once had the privilege of riding in Talat Sahib's car, sitting next to him as he drove. During our journey, a man on a scooter recognized him. The man slowed down his scooter, approached Talat Sahib's window, and greeted him with a heartfelt "Salam." It was a simple yet profound moment that underscored his status as a true superstar. Talat Hussain's ability to connect with people, even in fleeting encounters, showcased the genuine warmth and respect he commanded from his fans.

Talat Hussain's legacy is immense. He was not just an actor but a storyteller, mentor, and artist who profoundly impacted many lives. His passing is a great loss to the performing arts, yet his contributions will continue to inspire future generations. The lessons he shared, the performances he delivered, and the stories he told are now part of our cultural heritage. We celebrate a life dedicated to storytelling, bringing depth and joy to countless audiences. His legacy will forever live in our hearts.

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CAGE OF THE PAST :

How to Deal With it?



Nikita Kumawat
Yoga Trainer & Amateur Writer

04 MINUTES READ

Good memories cause suffering more than bad ones. Well people say we are in pain because of bad experiences or failures in different phases of life in different sectors like friendship, love, family, career, success etc. Every human being has their own stories or past. There is no human being at all who doesn't have any past. Now what is the past? Lived part of life, gone by in time or no longer existing.



What ingredients or content this past made up of? What we lived or went through years ago, past few months or at a very recent timeline of life our brain keeps all the files as memories as good and bad experiences according to one's perspective. These are those memories our eyes perceived, ears heard, our flesh felt by touch or our heartfelt emotions or our brain mentally experienced. What fills one's mind, heart and soul with happiness in terms of eternal bliss, joy, peaceful mind, satisfaction or fulfillment of any human desire in terms of luxuries, success, achievements create good memories in life results cause of sufferings whether life graph goes downward after a certain graph, or we desire for more than that parameter. If we lack those blissful joyful moments that we lived in the past, but if it is the need or desire of the present, then a human being travels through the tunnel of regrets as past cherishing memories start causing pain as we are in search of that again in present.

Desiring for more than what we had in the past also causes sufferings in the present timeline of life as what we are getting in present is the outcome of our current efforts, hard work and destiny according to current external circumstances, comparing it to the past achievements and feeling dissatisfaction while urging for more also causes sufferings.

On the other hand, if we throw a light on the phases where we face failures are the durations where we were broken. Sometimes we get good

people around us who channelize our life back to the normal. Sometimes human beings have a self-driven force of self-realization which keeps channelizing an energy where one learns a lifetime lesson with a failure and within painful focus, he himself breaks the parameter of past where regain of confidence takes place and failure converts into success or happiness. In those cases when we trip on that past incident, we feel thankful and grateful to the divine force that it happened in the past else we have not been at a good place in the present.

Now let's talk about the literal meaning of the word past- it means things which no longer exist anymore. Then how it is possible that things which no longer exist affect our mind, body, and soul at such a level that it hampers our present and disturbs our present decision-making power daily which distracts the future also. REASON - our brain or mind has a natural tendency to compile each fine detailed experience we

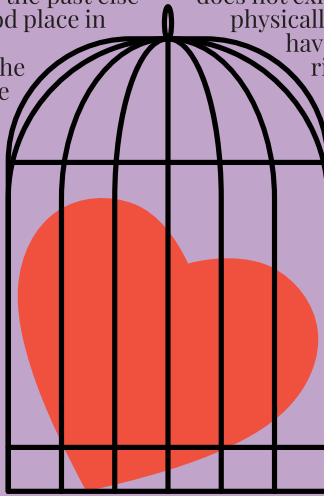
perceive through our senses, body and brain whether it is good or bad as memories. Few of them fade away within time as if we resolved it on time with the help of family, friends, or positive people around us or by self-realization we moved on to our own track closing a part of life, sometimes deeper bad experiences or failures replace those lighter painful memories.

In the case of good memories, when we go through dark phases of

life-happy memories become painful, we regret and doubt our own decisions of life in the present.

Therefore, attachment, good memories never give growth, but painful failures and bad experiences push broken pieces of human beings to recollect them and sculpt yourself into a new version required to your present timeline which we called "maturity within age".

Past has no meaning. Once things have gone or an incident happened or does not exist anymore it has no value physically, but as human beings



have a collection of memories since birth to death in mind within time when it gets retrieved, we live those memories again and again mentally which is of no use in present or even for future. Physical memories don't have life, it's already a dead thing but we human beings keep them alive in our conscious and subconscious mind by living them again and again whenever memories files get retrieved into our brain as per external circumstances or state of mind. It's an automated nervous system which sensors, perceives and records everything in our brain as memories.

How to get rid of switching into the past?

Time is wound, and time is medicine, keep yourself busy.

2. Make a distance cut-off to the person, place or things.

3. Spend my time with yourself and your hobbies.

4. Travel to the places you have never

visited (travel does not mean to travel expensive trips only as everyone cannot afford those trips, travel means to explore new- it can be a nearby park you never visited or nearby cafe, etc.)

5. Practice yogic asanas and meditation, make it a part of daily routine so that one can feel lighter by heart and more active by brain in present.

6. Make any sports or physical activity as a part of your daily schedule.

7. Spend more time with loving and positive people around.

8. Keep yourself involved in spiritual things, do prayers daily, do charity or help needy people-feeling of gratitude and joy of giving heals us emotionally keeps us happy.

9. Keep writing 10 positive things of the day daily to motivate and 10 bad things one feels happened to them and think from a different perspective to deal with them in a better way to keep moving forward.

10. Whenever the mind trips into past happy memories, cherish them without comparing or demanding it to the present. If it is a deep rooted failure, whenever the mind goes into those sections, if you feel like crying it's ok to shed tears as it's a cleansing and detox process of the body mentally - physically. It gives you a feeling of calmness and peace at heart and mind at a time. Instruct your brain that whatever happened it has already gone and have no existence physically- mentally at all in my brain. Once you habitually practice this after a certain time even though a person, place or anything from past come into present existence cannot trigger you anymore.

So, the PAST is all in our heads, FUTURE is in our hands while living our PRESENT to the best.

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Tips for Maintaining Mental and Physical Health While

Balancing a Career

Balancing a career while maintaining mental and physical health can be challenging, but it's essential for long-term well-being and productivity. Here are some practical tips to help manage both:

Prioritize Physical Activity: Incorporate exercise into your daily routine, even if it's just a 15-minute walk. Physical activity not only improves fitness but also reduces stress and boosts mental clarity.

Set Boundaries: Establish clear work-life boundaries to avoid burn-out. Turn off work notifications after hours, and dedicate time for relaxation and personal activities.

Healthy Eating Habits: Opt for a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Avoid processed foods and sugary snacks, which can lead to energy crashes and mood swings.

Practice Mindfulness: Mindfulness techniques, such as deep breathing and meditation, can help reduce anxiety and keep you focused. Taking short breaks to clear your mind improves productivity and mental health.

Sleep: Prioritize quality sleep by sticking to a consistent sleep schedule. A well-rested mind is more productive and better equipped to handle daily stress.

Seek Support: Don't hesitate to seek professional help or talk to a trusted friend if you're feeling overwhelmed. Maintaining mental health is as important as physical health.

Balancing work and health requires consistent effort but leads to a more fulfilling and successful career.



IMAGE SOURCE: FREEPK

The Science of Eye Color



Muhammad Shoaib Khan
Life Sciences Researcher, Writer

04 MINUTES READ

The eye is an incredible mechanical marvel and an impressive piece of engineering by nature. It has enabled humans to see and explore the vastness of this universe and all the things in it visible to us. The first thing people usually notice when looking into somebody's eyes is not its engineering but its color. Eye color is an amazing feature of the human body that contributes to the aesthetics and uniqueness of a person. It adds to a person's beauty and we often compliment people as we like the color of their eyes. In this article, we will explore the science behind this eye color.

Firstly, one wonders where this color in the eyes comes from. Well, it arises from the pigmentation in the Iris. Iris is a structure of the eye that surrounds the pupil (a black hole in the center of the eye) and it controls the amount of light that enters the eye. The color of the person's iris ranges from very light blue to dark brown as the most frequently categorized eye colors are blue, green, hazel, grey, and brown. Most individuals in the world have brown eyes color i-e color of their iris is brown. The pigment that colors our eyes is melanin. Remember! The same pigment also colors our skin and hair. So likewise, skin and hair color, the eye color are also directly affected by the amount of melanin present in the front layer (stroma) of iris. Brown eye color is determined by the large amount of this pigment in the Iris, Green/Hazel/Grey due to the moderate amount of pigment, and Blue

color arises when the amount of this pigment is much less. Therefore, the blue colors arise not because of the blue pigment but as the light gets scattered through the iris in a similar way to light scattered through the Earth's atmosphere and gives a blue sky.

Secondly, the genetic background of eye color is important to discuss as most of it is determined by the variation in a person's genes. As many as 150 genes have been discovered that influence the eye color. Most of the genes involved in determining a person's eye color are involved in the production, storage, and transport of melanin pigment. Two genes present very close to each other on chromosome 15 play a major role in eye color. These include OCA2 and HERC2. Several other genes that are involved in determining skin and hair coloring are also reported to play minor roles in determining a person's eye color. These include ASIP, IRF4, SLC24A4, SLC24A5, SLC45A2, TPCN2, TYR and TYRP1. The effects of these genes are likely to combine with the effect of OCA2 and HERC2 to produce a range of eye colors in different people.

The OCA2 gene produces P protein, which is involved in the maturation of melanosomes. Melanosomes are intracellular organelles in melanocytes (melanin-producing cells) of the skin and eye, where these cells make and store melanin. In this way, P protein plays a major role in the amount and quality of melanin present in the Iris. Variations in the OCA2 gene reduce the production of P protein. The lower amount of P protein produced will mean that less melanin will be present in the first layer of Iris. It shows that people with the normal OCA2 gene will have brown eyes but people with several

common variations (polymorphism) in the OCA2 gene will have a bluish color of their eyes. In a nearby region on chromosome 15, the HERC2 gene has a segment known as Intron 86 that controls the expression of the OCA2 gene, turning it on or off as needed. At least one variation in this area of the HERC2 gene is reported to decrease the expression of the OCA2 gene and in turn, a less amount of P protein will lead to less amount of melanin and lighter color of a person's eyes.

Thirdly, it is interesting to know the inheritance pattern of eye color. Can a child's eye color be predicted by the eye color of his/her parents? The answer is that the inheritance of eye color is much more complex than it was originally thought as multiple genes are involved. Initially, researchers believed for around 100 years that a single gene determined eye color and its inheritance pattern would be simple in which brown eye color was dominant to the blue color and that the parents with bluish eyes would not have a baby with brown eye color. Later researchers disproved of the model, as it was too simplistic. It is not very common that parents with blue eyes can have a child with brown eye color but this cannot be ruled out as we now know that multiple genes are involved in determining the eye color which makes the inheritance pattern of eye color a complex one. Therefore, yes, the child's eye color can be predicted by the color of the eyes of its parents and near relatives but unexpected results are seen sometimes such as parents with brown eyes can have a baby having blueish eye color and vice versa as polymorphism may arise. Researchers are still studying how different factors cause such variations.

Fourthly, some disorders also affect eye color. For example, Heterochromia is a condition in which an individual has eyes of different colors. It can be caused by genetic variations, anomalies during the development of the eye, as well as because of another disease or an injury to the eye. Ocular Albinism is a condition of the eyes in which the pigmentation of the eyes is severely reduced causing very light-colored eyes and problems with vision. Another condition is Oculocutaneous Albinism in which the pigmentation of skin and hair is also reduced in addition to eyes and in turn, the affected individuals will have very fair skin, light-colored eyes, and white or lighter-colored hair. Ocular Albinism and Oculocutaneous Albinism result from the mutation of genes involved in the production and storage of melanin.

In conclusion, the color of our eyes is a beautiful blend of nature and genetics. It all comes down to the amount of pigment in our irises and the interplay of multiple genes, especially OCA2 and HERC2. While brown is the most common eye color, blue, green, and gray hues arise from fascinating genetic variations. Eye color inheritance can be unpredictable, making every gaze uniquely mesmerizing. In addition, let us not forget that some conditions like heterochromia add even more intrigue to the story of our eyes. Isn't it amazing how much science is behind that twinkle in our eyes?

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The Universe's average colour is called 'Cosmic latte'. In a 2002 study, astronomers found that the light coming from galaxies averaged into a beige colour that's close to white.



Scientific Thinking and Traditional Devotion



Sara Noor
Lecturer, PhD Scholar

04 MINUTES READ

(The writer is a Lecturer and PhD scholar with interest in literature, religion and social issues. She can be reached at @noortheidealist & saranoor2100@gmail.com)

Recently, a message circulating on WhatsApp caught my eye. The contents of the message informed readers of a scientific research carried out by a Professor Lawrence Joseph at some university in Jakarta. Research findings indicated that the earth would stop rotating on its axis if circumambulation (Tawaf) of the Ka'aba stopped. When I surfed the internet, I also found two websites carrying the same (fake) information. The reasons I, at once, disregarded this post as inauthentic and untrue are twofold. The first reason is that the Ka'aba was first constructed approximately 5000 years ago during the time of Prophet

Abraham (A.S.), whereas the earth is calculated to be about 4.5 billion years old and has always rotated on its axis without the Tawaf around the Ka'aba. Secondly, Tawaf has been suspended temporarily during some historical periods such as the siege of Mecca in 683 and 692 A.D. to name a few incidents. Thus, fake messages like this play with people's religious sentiments and traditional devotion.

The question that begs attention here is: What do such fake messages imply? Such kind of posts reveal several things about the underlying mindset of the propagandist writers and naïve readers. One, the traditional devotion of masses towards religious figures, objects, rituals etc. can be in excess to the point of elimination of rationality, objectivity and scientific thinking. Two, naïve, uneducated and less knowledgeable people can be easily manipulated to believe in the superiority of their creed. Three, the impersonal and objective nature of scientific research is compromised in favour of partiality and parochialism. Four, a specific

country is glorified for its strong faith and faith-backed scientific culture. Five, the post also symbolizes a synergy between reason and faith which is an admirable aspiration if it can be undertaken. Six, the mentality of Muslim countries (pardon the generalization) is revealed to be non-scientific. This last implication is the root of the current low status of the Muslim world in science and technology.

The religion of Islam prescribes rules for both spiritual and practical matters which is why faith and science are considered the two sides of the same coin. The early Muslims from the 7th to 15th century were world leaders in scientific exploration with an objective and rational attitude towards the world. Notable intellectuals like Al-Haytham, Al-Beiruni, Al-Khwarizmi, Jabir bin Hayyan, and others were known worldwide for their scientific contributions. In fact, the Muslim societies of that era had a scientific and objective approach, and conducive environments for inquiry, doubt and rationality. The political downfall of the Muslims also resulted in decline in their academic and scientific rigour and overall empirical attitudes.

When empirical thought is diminished, a mindset of flawed reasoning and exaggerated devotion to rituals takes its place. The elements of faith and religion such as the spirit of inquiry, free will for submission to the divine, moral behavior, religious and worldly knowledge, balancing contemporary needs with demands of one's faith, are compromised due to illogical thinking, narrow-mindedness and emotional reasoning. This is evident in the 57 countries of the Muslim world today which comprise approximately 26 million square

kilometers, out of which only 96 universities were included in the top 1102 world universities according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2018 (for 2016-2017).

Worldwide changes in technology and economy have prompted the Muslim countries to establish more universities now. According to Young Universities Rankings, 2024 that include 673 universities less than 50 years of age, 272 universities belong to 19 Islamic countries. There is an effort to build knowledge streams at par with the more advanced universities in the world. This is a heartening trend as it reflects growing awareness in Muslim countries, however the internal political problems, economic distresses and worsened law and order impede rapid growth of the higher education sector, research culture and an overall tolerant and objective attitude in society.

Quality research and teaching in universities can provide a platform to groom youngsters to face the challenges of practical life ahead. Practical, market-oriented, industry-related and science subjects as well as courses in the humanities should be taught. Most importantly, the principles of critical thinking, empirical attitudes and logical reasoning must be taught. In fact, this should start from school education so that students learn to accept different approaches with an open mind. This can pave the way to a peaceful society where the evils of extremism, radicalism and bitter polarization along political, sectarian and religious grounds do not exist. In the long run, the Muslim world can learn to balance both faith and reason through this approach.

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WHAT MAKES US HUMAN?



Laiba Khalid

Writer, Poetess and Columnist

03 MINUTES READ

Humanity is what makes humans different from other creatures, and it is a core trait whereby everyone becomes the same transcending religious, cultural, and gender differences. It is the fundamental quality that makes us human—sentient, emotional, and logical beings with the capacity for moral reasoning, deep thought, compassion, and empathy. At the heart of humanity lies our shared capacity for self-awareness, our ability to think critically about the world, and our innate need to find meaning and happiness in life. The thread that unites us together is humanity, which serves as a constant reminder that, above all else, we are just humans. Regardless of our upbringing or circumstances, it is the basis on which we all stand and from

which our societies, communities, and interpersonal relationships are constructed. We can get over the obstacles that keep us apart so frequently when we accept our common humanity.

Religion, culture, age, gender, and even interpersonal relationships lose significance in light of the essential reality that all people are entitled to respect, decency, and the chance to flourish.

Although religion offers a sense of belonging and spiritual guidance, mankind is more than these things. It demands that everyone be treated with kindness and tolerance, regardless of their religious views. Before we are Hindu or Muslim, Eastern or Western, man or woman, young or old, we are human. Humanitarian deeds have a broad appeal and application and are not limited to any one doctrine. Religious leaders spread messages of love, compassion, and tolerance that transcend theological

IMAGE SOURCE: THOUGHTCO

divisions. People from various religious backgrounds come together to help one another in times of distress.

Cultures shape our values, customs, identities, and ways of life, and influence our worldviews, but humanity transcends cultural differences. Our ability to experience love, grief, happiness, and sorrow unites us despite our differences in culture. Humanity is beyond bias and cultural norms. It inspires us to value diversity in languages, cultures, and practices while acknowledging our shared heritage. Festivals and celebrations that bring diverse cultural communities together to celebrate our common joys and traditions. Intercultural friendships and partnerships promote mutual understanding and admiration.

Gender is a social construct that establishes identities and roles and frequently results in injustice and imbalance. Equality should never be impeded by a person's gender. Humanity upholds the belief that every individual, regardless of gender, is entitled to equality, respect, and decency. Irrespective of our gender identity, we are all human. It argues for the elimination of stereotypes and prejudices, creating a world in which everyone can prosper. Women in leadership roles challenge gender stereotypes, while men actively participate in family tasks, defying established gender conventions. Transgenders assert their right to be treated with dignity as the gender they identify with.

Age is just a number; it's a chronological marker in our lives, but it doesn't determine our worth or potential. From the innocence of infants to the wisdom of old age, humanity values the distinctive contributions that

people of all ages make to society. Instead of focusing primarily on differences in life stages, we should observe and engage with one another through the prism of our humanity. A little child's innocence and an elderly person's wisdom can provide useful insights that cross age barriers. Intergenerational friendships and mentorships that cross age barriers reveal our shared humanity.

Our relationships, whether with family, friends, or lovers, have an immense effect on our lives. But humanity goes beyond these boundaries. It includes strangers, neighbors, and those we may never meet. Humanity encourages us to treat strangers with the same respect and care as we would our loved ones. Prioritizing our shared humanity allows us to form deeper, more meaningful relationships that go beyond familial, romantic, and societal ties. Strangers helping each other in times of crisis, showcasing our innate capacity for empathy and kindness.

To claim that "man is first and foremost a human, and then anything else" is to emphasize our common humanity over all other labels and classifications. Humanity is the foundation on which we develop our society, institutions, and systems. It is the overarching idea that should guide our decisions, policies, and interactions with one another. By putting our shared humanity first, we can build a more just, fair, and sensitive world. No matter what the religion, the culture, the gender, the caste, the creed, the age, the color, the territory, the relationship of an individual— Man is a man First of all, beyond everything else!

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NATYASHASTRA: A BLUEPRINT FOR PERFORMING ARTS



Aqdas Ali Hashmi
Lecturer, PhD Scholar,
Ghazal and Sufi Vocalist, Researcher

03 MINUTES READ

The Natyashastra, an ancient Indian treatise, stands as a cornerstone of the performing arts, offering an encyclopedic exploration of dance, music, and drama. This seminal work, attributed to Bharata Muni, delves deep into the aesthetics, techniques, and philosophy underlying these art forms. At its core, the Natyashastra posits that dance and music are inseparable, two wings of the same bird, and essential to the creation of a compelling theatrical experience.

Dance, as delineated in the Natyashastra, is categorized into two primary forms: Nrta and Nritya. Nrta refers to pure dance, devoid of narrative, focusing on rhythmic patterns and bodily movements. It is the foundation upon which the more expressive Nritya is built. Nritya, on

the other hand, is imbued with meaning, conveying emotions, stories, and characters through gestures, expressions, and footwork. The Natyashastra meticulously outlines the various aspects of Nritya, including the importance of mudras, or hand gestures, which serve as a visual language. The text also emphasizes the significance of abhinaya, or acting through dance, where the dancer becomes a conduit for expressing a wide range of emotions.

Music, an equally vital component of the Natyashastra, is intricately intertwined with dance. The text explores the theory of raga, the melodic framework that forms the basis of Indian classical music. It delves into the intricacies of tala, the rhythmic structure that provides the pulse for both music and dance. The Natyashastra also discusses the various musical instruments, their role in creating different moods, and their harmonious interplay with the

IMAGE SOURCE: KOLAHAL.ORG



human voice. Importantly, the text emphasizes the importance of music in enhancing the dramatic impact of a performance.

The Natyashastra goes beyond mere technicalities, delving into the philosophical underpinnings of dance and music. It explores the concept of *rasa*, or aesthetic emotion, which is central to Indian classical arts. The text posits that the ultimate goal of a performance is to evoke a particular *rasa* in the audience. Whether it is love, joy, sorrow, anger, or wonder, the dancer and musician must collaborate to create an immersive experience that transports the spectator to a different realm.

Moreover, the Natyashastra emphasizes the spiritual dimensions of dance and music. It suggests that these art forms can be a path to self-realization and liberation. The text explores the connection between the human body and the cosmos, suggesting that dance is a microcosm of the cosmic dance of creation and destruction. Music, too, is seen as a divine language, capable of transcending the mundane and connecting the individual with the divine.

The Natyashastra also elicits the view of the performer, extending beyond mere technical proficiency. It recognizes that a truly exceptional performance requires a harmonious integration of physical, mental, and spiritual qualities. The text emphasizes the holistic development of the performer, encompassing their character, intellect, and emotional depth. A performer, according to the Natyashastra, must possess a strong moral character. Ethical conduct, discipline, and humility are considered essential for cultivating the right mindset for artistic expression. It also

emphasizes the importance of intellectual development. A deep understanding of the script, the characters, and the underlying philosophy is crucial for effective portrayal.

Beyond these qualities, the Natyashastra places great importance on the emotional dimension of performance. The ability to empathize with characters, to experience a wide range of emotions, and to convey them authentically is seen as paramount. The performer is encouraged to delve deep into their own psyche to unlock the emotional reservoir necessary for compelling performances.

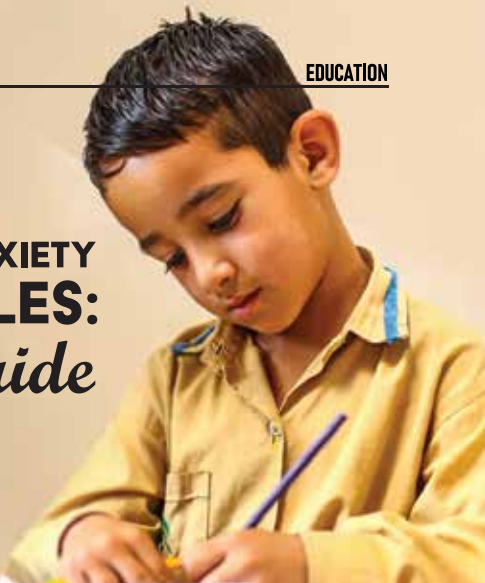
In essence, the Natyashastra envisions the performer as a well-rounded individual, capable of embodying a character completely. This holistic approach to training and performance has had a profound influence on the development of Indian classical arts, shaping the ideal of the complete artist.

The Natyashastra offers a diverse understanding of dance and music. It is a testament to the rich artistic heritage of the Indian subcontinent, providing invaluable insights into the philosophy, aesthetics, and techniques that have shaped the evolution of these art forms. While the text is ancient, its principles continue to inspire and inform contemporary practitioners, ensuring the enduring legacy of Indian classical dance and music.

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Water might not be wet. This is because most scientists define wetness as a liquid's ability to maintain contact with a solid surface, meaning that water itself is not wet, but can make other objects wet.

REDRESSING WRITING ANXIETY OF PAKISTANI MLES: *A Pragmatic Guide*



Imran Hussain
Writer & Translator

04 MINUTES READ

Writing is an indispensable dexterity transcending disciplines barriers and endorses a fundamental facade for academic and professional attainment. English Language Teaching (ELT) in Pakistan is bustling with an array of languages, cultures and learning experiences. For that reason, writing English among Multilingual Learners of English (MLEs) is a fraught enterprise escorted by anxiety.

This blog is anticipated as to alleviate writing anxiety of Pakistani MLEs through empirical steps, equipping them with essential expressive techniques to be self-assured and communicative writers. Other regional, national, mother, and religious lingua franca dominance i.e., Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Saraiki and Arabic etc. is a foremost

barricade in English written glibness and sentence configuration of Pakistani MLEs. Rote and grammar drill consequences in limited exposure to inspire and genuine expression is another influential contributor of anxiety among Pakistani MLEs.

Socio-economic disparities, i.e., lopsided access to technology and quality instruction also foster writing anxiety among Pakistani MLEs. Cultural, gender and societal dynamics also lead to stifling creative and critical voices of MLEs in Pakistan. It is intended that by nurturing trans-language navigation among MLEs will augment their linguistic competence concerning writing English. Fostering creative writing prompts among MLEs in Pakistan, shifting from grammar drills and rote learning, will be an effective mode to assimilate writing skill. Peer-prop up, shared brainstorming, enabling free space for floating ideas, cocktailing digital support and making sure the accessibility of authentic assorted

IMAGE SOURCE: TCF.ORG

English materials, can decrease pressure and anxiety from Pakistani MLEs. And can amalgamate creative, critical, and expressive expertise among them. Cultivating conducive context through writing prompts practice, daily journaling, vocabulary wall, blog, short essay, story writing, creative undertaking and peer-support in ELT are some of the projected classroom practices or activities that can redress writing anxiety among MLEs in Pakistan.

Additionally, spotlighting on practice and enrichment by discarding perfection, self assessment, peer cum instructors' feedback, showcasing MLEs writing prompts and commemorating their writing enactment can alleviate their writing anxiety and advance their writing persona to new-fangled heights. Equipping MLEs with assorted resources harmonizing their written adeptness, endowing in providing English contents and reading material, multi-cultural collaboration, utilizing guideline for teaching English writing, drill and workbooks, digital libraries and tools, integrating a self-directed writing framework, hand on training and writing competition among MLEs are some of the recommended resources and tools that can minimize the writing anxiety among Pakistani MLEs. And can capitalize their written expression into creative, critical and impressive English writers.

Likewise, assessment and feedback strategies necessitate reconsidering to lessen writing anxiety among MLEs in Pakistan. Perfection is an illusion that can demoralize writers, especially learners, so practical and attainable goals must be situated on the part of instructors to trim down anxiety from MLEs. A formative assessment strata

gem must be espoused so that learners are entitled to acquire feedback and corrective measures as and when requisite during the writing process. Grading criteria must be lucid and flexible which ensures creativity and critical skills rather than replication, repetition, and imitation.

Motivation and constructive feedback rather than ultimate undefined grade must be avoided as an assessment tool to activate writing and reduce writing anxiety among MLEs. Lastly, self assessment, self-correction and peer-review must be an integral module of assessment to nurture critical evaluation among MLEs. Spotlighting on individual specific concerns and catering pace with the updated trends can be handy in redressing writing anxiety and nurturing expressive expertise among MLEs in Pakistan. Reducing the gap amid mother, national and English language in ELT classrooms can be an influencing agent in this regard. Patronizing and corrective feedback towards errors can maximize enrichment and escalation among MLEs.

Considering the socio-economic context and access to English resources, MLEs can significantly reduce writing anxiety. Embracing technology-assisted tools and AI resources encourages MLEs to navigate cultural and linguistic diversity, allowing them to showcase their unique perspectives globally. This approach fosters mental growth aligned with the evolving landscape of the English language and effectively alleviates their writing anxiety.

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BREAKING THE SILENCE: THE FIGHT FOR LIFE AND LIBERTY IN PAKISTAN



Habib Hanzalah
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04 MINUTES READ

According to Robert C. Maynard, "Human rights rest on human dignity. The dignity of man is an ideal worth fighting for and worth dying for." Knowing your rights is crucial for every citizen to ensure a fair and just society. The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan guarantees fundamental rights to all its citizens, aimed at promoting equality, freedom, and justice. Understanding these rights not only empowers individuals but also fosters a culture of respect and accountability. This article will delve into the right to life and liberty (Article 9) under the 1973 Constitution, highlighting the challenges in its implementation and suggesting a way forward.

Article 9 of the 1973 Constitution ensures that no person shall be deprived of life or liberty except in

accordance with the law. This fundamental right is the cornerstone of all other rights, ensuring the protection and dignity of every citizen.

Despite the constitutional guarantee, the right to life and liberty faces significant challenges in Pakistan. Arbitrary detentions and extrajudicial killings remain pressing concerns. For instance, the case of Nageebullah Mehsud, a young man killed in a staged police encounter in 2018, drew national and international condemnation. Such incidents highlight the gap between constitutional provisions and their enforcement.

Freedom from arbitrary detention is another critical aspect of this right. However, reports from organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International indicate that enforced disappearances are a persistent issue in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Families of the disappeared face immense hardship, often without any recourse to justice.

IMAGE SOURCE: DAWN

One poignant example is the case of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM), which has brought attention to the extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of Pashtun people. The movement has faced severe repression, with its leaders being arbitrarily detained and protests being violently dispersed. This situation underscores the urgent need for reform and accountability within the law enforcement agencies.

Furthermore, the plight of missing persons in Pakistan, such as the case of Idris Khattak, a human rights defender who was forcibly disappeared and later charged under the Official Secrets Act, reflects the misuse of legal provisions to curb dissent and intimidate activists.

To improve the human rights situation, especially concerning the right to life and liberty, several bold steps need to be taken by the government and individuals. Strengthening institutions by enhancing the capacity, transparency, and accountability of judicial and law enforcement bodies is mandatory. Media, including social media, can play a vital role by spreading public awareness campaigns about constitutional rights, empowering citizens to demand their rights and hold authorities accountable.

Educational systems should include comprehensive human rights education, making the constitution a compulsory part of the curriculum. Effective mechanisms must be established to ensure that constitutional rights are actively protected and enforced, including setting up independent human rights commissions and watchdog organizations.

Special measures should be taken to protect vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and religious

minorities, through legislation addressing gender-based violence and discrimination and ensuring equal access to justice for all citizens. Technology can play a crucial role in monitoring human rights abuses and promoting transparency, with e-governance platforms making it easier for citizens to report violations and access information.

Knowing your rights as a citizen of Pakistan is the first step towards ensuring justice and equality in society. The 1973 Constitution provides a robust framework for protecting these rights, but effective implementation remains a challenge. By strengthening institutions, promoting awareness, ensuring enforcement, and protecting vulnerable groups, Pakistan can make significant strides in improving its human rights record and enhance the confidence of the people in their institutions, such as parliament and judiciary.

Remember, technology cannot replace a teacher, but a teacher with technology can replace a teacher without technology. Similarly, laws alone cannot protect rights, but an informed and proactive citizenry can ensure that these rights are upheld and respected.

As John F. Kennedy aptly stated, "The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened."

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DID YOU KNOW?

The Universe's average colour is called 'Cosmic latte'. In a 2002 study, astronomers found that the light coming from galaxies averaged into a beige colour that's close to white.

FEMINISTS AGAINST FEMINISM

A FEMINIST AGAINST FEMINISM



Sobia Naeem
Writer

03 MINUTES READ

To be called a Feminist has become an abuse in modern society. People are unable to swallow this word considering it an undigestible and unhygienic chip to engulf. Society has transmuted the actual meaning of feminism. It is a school of thought not to consider women superior and men inferior but to give both of them equal rights. The stereotypical conceptions of gender dynamics are chained with adamant locks by the power of time and rooted in the minds to such an extent that not only men but also women don't covet to break the boundaries. Women think all these are imprinted in their fate and they just have to face them and bear them patiently. They can't surpass the ambitions enclosed around them

because it is a part of their ancestry. Men in our society are trained to be a controller or a part of a superior race from early childhood and women are nourished by being inferior, shy, delicate, and unable to take decisions on their own. These thoughts are so deeply rooted that even a sixteen year old boy, who himself is under the control of a woman, takes himself as a disastrous Martian tycoon being 'MAN'. He considers women an emotional, weak, and poor creature. Why? and how those who even don't know themselves properly, who even don't know how to pick a pencil properly have the ability to speak against women because they are nourished with such thoughts not by men but by women bitterly but truly. The first obligation imposed on the woman, who opts to cross the four walls around her, is also of a woman due to her mind that is coded invol

IMAGE SOURCE : EPS8JORG

untary by biased features of a man can, but woman can't sit properly, don't go alone outside, don't argue, accept everything blindly and patiently, she is our noble daughter; how can she go against our decision about her life. All these famous words that almost every woman's faces are also of a woman to a woman. So there is a dire need not only to mend men's thoughts but also of women.

A man takes to his ego to encounter a voiced woman, who can stand for herself, and start brutality or oppression on her to make his control over her. Every man should stand in the place of a woman once to realise the truth of the words of a woman. Why can only a man express his anger by breaking the glass and beating other people? Why does a woman have to stay silent and bear the oppression patiently? Does she not have nerves of anger?

I am afraid of getting older. I am afraid of getting married. Spare me from cooking three meals a day, from the relentless cage of routine and rote. I want to be free. I want to be omniscient. (Sylvia Plath, Letters home).

In every step and in every aspect a woman should stand equally to a man. Women don't want to be part of the so-called slogan 'ladies first' but to be part of equality. Women don't want any sympathy or first rank opportunity but equality. Women are not in support of being treated like queens, but still there should be equality. Is it wrong to say that both have 206 bones, one brain, one heart, two kidney, and two eyes? Then why women are emotional, delicate, shy, indecisive, and talkative?

A man can be robbed, abused and ill treated but can't be harassed. He does not have to face a mark on his respect

that a woman dues. Woman's access to safe space is restricted and conserved; she cannot move freely, and she requires support to make herself safe in this modern society. She even cannot make her way to success alone but within the shade of a man. But all that can be mended if every individual works on himself or herself to make a safe space for women.

To provide equal rights to men as to women is not a hard nut to crack but this is indigestible for the society as it is rooted deeply. It will take years after years to unlock these locks to make women breathe freely, move freely, and decide freely. One day the dirt in the brains about male chauvinism will fade, and a woman will stand side by side with a man. Man has to bear that man and woman are equal and there are no dynamics, no monarchy, and a woman has the power to create the time when a man himself will favour feminism.

How long will you continue to depend on others for your existence? Create your own inherent strength. You have yet to accomplish great many things so that your freedom may reach the pinnacle of its glory.

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DID YOU KNOW?

The largest piece of fossilised dinosaur poo discovered is over 30cm long and over two litres in volume. Believed to be a Tyrannosaurus rex turd, the fossilised dung (also named a 'coprolite') is helping scientists better understand what the dinosaur ate.



TRUE JOY IS FINDING HAPPINESS IN LITTLE THINGS



Sadia Zia
Writer

03 MINUTES READ

No matter how hard your life is, you should always seek happiness in your life and surroundings. You should focus on the blessings of your life. In our fast-paced and often stressful world, it's easy to get caught up in the challenges and forget to appreciate the small joys that surround us every day. Happiness is not all about big achievements or events; it may be found in the smallest of moments. Happiness can be as fleeting as a stranger's smile, the comfort of a warm blanket on a chilly day, laughter with friends, morning walk, or the flavor of your favorite dish. Even while these tiny happy moments might appear minor, they have the capacity to uplift our moods and make our days happier.

Experts in the field of positive psychology, such as Seligman and Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky, emphasize the importance of finding happiness in little things. According to Lyubomirsky, author of "The How of Happiness," approximately 40% of our happiness is within our control, and cultivating gratitude for life's small pleasures is a key component of that. I still remember the day of my exam results vividly. My teacher announced to the class that we had all passed. While some of my classmates were anxious about their marks, I felt a wave of relief and gratitude wash over me. I was simply happy to have passed, and grateful for the opportunity to continue learning and growing. That moment taught me the importance of appreciating even the smallest victories and finding joy in the present.

Another example of finding happi

IMAGE SOURCE: DIGITAL HOPE

ness in little things is the joy of a child playing with a simple toy. Children often find immense delight in the most ordinary objects, turning a cardboard box into a spaceship or a pile of leaves into a kingdom. Their ability to find wonder and joy in the world around them serves as a powerful reminder that happiness can be found in the simplest of pleasures.

Another source of joy can be found in connecting with animals. Whether you have a pet of your own or spend time with animals at a local shelter, the unconditional love and companionship they offer can bring immense happiness. The playful antics of a puppy, the soothing purr of a cat, or the gentle nuzzle of a horse can lift your spirits and provide a sense of peace and contentment.

Life is full of challenges, both big and small. While it's important to have long-term goals and aspirations, it's equally important to celebrate the small victories along the way. Whether it's finally finishing that book you've been reading, reaching a personal milestone in your fitness journey, or overcoming a fear or an obstacle, each small victory deserves to be acknowledged and celebrated. By recognizing and appreciating these achievements, you can build confidence, resilience, and a greater sense of happiness in your life. Even something as simple as getting out of bed on a difficult day or making someone smile can be a victory worth celebrating.

As we've explored in this article, happiness is not just about big achievements or grand events; it's about finding joy in the present moment, connecting with the world around us, and cherishing the blessings in our lives. Whether it's watch-

ing a sunset, spending time with loved ones, or celebrating our small victories, each moment offers an opportunity for happiness and fulfillment.

So, let's pause, take a deep breath, and remind ourselves to appreciate the beauty and wonder of everyday life. Let's find happiness in the little things and carry that joy with us wherever we go. After all, as the saying goes, "Happiness is not a destination, it's a journey."

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Facts You Need to Know

- The largest piece of fossilised dinosaur poo discovered is over 30cm long and over two litres in volume. Believed to be a Tyrannosaurus rex turd, the fossilised dung (also named a 'coprolite') is helping scientists better understand what the dinosaur ate.
- The Universe's average colour is called 'Cosmic latte'. In a 2002 study, astronomers found that the light coming from galaxies averaged into a beige colour that's close to white.
- Animals can experience time differently from humans. To smaller animals, the world around them moves more slowly compared to humans. Salamanders and lizards, for example, experience time more slowly than cats and dogs. This is because the perception of time depends on how quickly the brain can process incoming information.
- Water might not be wet. This is because most scientists define wetness as a liquid's ability to maintain contact with a solid surface, meaning that water itself is not wet, but can make other objects wet.



THE ETHICS OF COSMETIC SURGERY: EMPOWERMENT OR REINFORCEMENT OF BEAUTY STANDARDS



Javeria Malik
Psychology Student, Writer

03 MINUTES READ

What is plastic surgery? It encompasses the reconstruction of facial features and other body parts to improve one's appearance. Plastic surgery can be broadly categorized into two types: Reconstructive surgery and Cosmetic surgery. Reconstructive surgery seeks to restore the body after an injury, illness, or congenital defects, such as vitiligo. It treats burns and blisters. It not only improves physical appearance but also restores a person's comfort and confidence, thus empowering individuals. This does seem like empowerment; However, the narrative shifts when discussing cosmetic surgery which is pursued by individuals without medical necessity. It has become synonymous with the search for an idealized beauty, manifesting the notion that natural

beauty is inadequate. Thus, this does reinforce beauty standards.

When individuals who are otherwise healthy and normal, express a desire to have cosmetic surgery, it reflects their underlying insecurities. Pakistani celebrities like Mahnoor Baloch, who always looks like she is a day older than twenty, is in fact in her forties, and this is because of her having undergone multiple such surgeries. Ghana Ali, and Hadiqa Kiani openly admitted having plastic surgery, while rumors surround others like Ayesha Khan and Mehwish Hayat etc. In addition, it is quite common in Hollywood, and many celebrities have openly admitted to undergoing various procedures to enhance their appearance such as Kim Kardashian, Cardi B, Courtney Cox and the age-old icon Michael Jackson etc. This trend shows the pressure to maintain perpetual youthfulness and conform to society's ideals of beauty. However, there is a

IMAGE SOURCE: EXP-ANIANI

distinct charm in embracing one's authentic self, and that is real empowerment.

The allure of being the epitome of beauty leads to dependence on cosmetic intervention. Why does a woman want to be the most beautiful among her relatives, friends, peers and neighbours? In fact, why does she strive for titles like "Miss World"? Why does she want so much attention and validation from everyone, when it is constrictive. Having cosmetic surgery is like always needing to upload a perfect selfie to get 200 likes straight, and nothing short of it. It is too much pressure to have. Eventually who is benefiting from this? People do not realize that they are being exploited for their insecurities, which are lucrative for businesses across the globe. I get it that women need to have their moments of beauty. They need makeup to enhance their beauty. However, the cosmetic industry being a multi-billion-dollar business and especially cosmetic surgeries being one, is way too much to swallow. How would you feel if you went to a cosmetic surgeon and he said, "Oh I think you need a lot of work. We need to fix this here, and that there"? Not only will you feel really hurt, but you will realize that they are only trying to make money out of you.

If only every woman could wake up in the morning and say to herself, "I am beautiful just the way I am," feeling complete within herself. This reminds me of a beautiful Quranic verse; "Indeed, We created humans in the best form." (Surah At-Tin, verse 4). It emphasizes that human beings have been given the finest bodies, which no other living being has. There is inherent perfection in human creation, and if we can internalize this ayah, then it will foster inner

contentment in us by working as an antidote to our insecurities. It will liberate us from the shackles of society's beauty standards.

Furthermore, we must recognize that we are not just bodies, we are souls. We are our personalities. We are our good traits like our kindness, our affection and/or our easy going nature etc. Having soft and sweet words for everyone we come across and emanating good vibes to them. Also ponder upon this: would we prefer companionship with people of integrity, loyalty, and warmth, or with those with mere physical beauty - who lack these essential qualities? It is not everything!

Moreover, the relentless pursuit of unattainable beauty standards has dire consequences like fueling eating disorders (anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa etc.) and body dysmorphia. The preoccupation with perceived flaws brings constant dissatisfaction with one's appearance and the self-loathing can lead to disturbing mental disorders. And what if a person is still unaccepting of her/his body, even after the surgery. Amongst a sample of 200 patients with BDD who received cosmetic surgery, the most common outcome was no change in the severity of BDD symptoms (Phillips et al., 2001). This shows that cosmetic surgeries do not boost confidence for everyone. The insecurities remain!

Cosmetic surgery may fix perceived flaws, but true empowerment comes from self-acceptance and inner beauty, freeing individuals from society's restrictive beauty standards.

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Think it - Think differently



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04 MINUTES READ

In my last post, I mentioned a phrase: “When everybody thinks alike, nobody thinks any more.” What does that mean? It may be a coincidence that few more people come to the same conclusion as you. Or it may be that nobody cares to think through and copy the ideas of other people with some variation and come to the same favourable or adverse position as everyone else and then blame the environment, outside forces for their misfortune or boost of their intellect for their success if any. But copycat people seldom achieve above normal success.

The big question is how to think differently. There are hurdles to this. For example in a group brainstorming session one might be intimidated by some outspoken members or in a situation of extrovert vs. introvert or in some cases because of peer pressure - do as the Romans do. Going different from the herd needs some conviction and courage. When someone is convinced of his/her thoughts/solutions in absolute terms then he/she may find courage to tell a

different story. That needs a holistic thinking mindset of the situation/problem. Henry Ford once said, “Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it into smaller parts.”

In this way one can analyse each part independently as well as connected to other parts and can model the behaviour of the problem to see it's working by changing the interconnected parts one at a time and can be confident of his/her solution. This is known as “What-if” analysis. By asking “What if?” questions, different perspectives can be explored. It helps break out of conventional thinking and consider new possibilities. For example, “What if we approached this problem from a completely different angle?” or “What if we combined these two unrelated ideas?”

So it is not that difficult to have a different point of view. All it needs is a little extra work. You need to reflect on what you have seen or read or listened to. Reflective thinking gives you perspective and confidence in your decision-making skills. If you're not reflecting, it's holding you back more than you think. As Socrates said, “An unexamined life is not worth living.” Reflecting is critical thinking.

Critical thinking is the ability to analyse information objectively, and make a reasoned judgement. It involves evaluating sources, such as data, facts, observable phenomena, and research findings, to form a well-supported conclusion. For example asking such questions: is it true? Is there something else to it? What have others said about it? Who is right and why? What is the source? etc.

Some people are shy of speaking in a group discussion not because they are introvert, but because of their natural tendency. It is a big misconception that introverted people are shy. They just prefer smaller, more intimate settings. Shyness of speaking in a group can be overcome by little things to do in advance viz. (1) Familiarise yourself with the discussion topic beforehand. This will help you feel more confident about contributing. (2) Rehearse what you want to say. You can even write down key points

or questions you want to ask. (3) Practise speaking in smaller, less intimidating groups before moving on to larger ones. (4) Pay attention to what others are saying. This will help you feel more connected and make it easier to contribute. (5) If you're unsure about speaking up, start by asking questions. This can help you ease into the conversation. (6) Understand that it's okay to feel nervous and that improvement takes time. (7) Acknowledge your progress, no matter how small.

A very interesting read about thinking differently is "Six Thinking Hats by Edward D Bono". "Six Thinking Hats" is a way of investigating an issue from a variety of perspectives, but in a clear, conflict-free way. It can be used by individuals or groups to move outside habitual ways of thinking, try out different approaches, and then think constructively about how to move forward. Following is a summary of Six Thinking Hats.

Hat	Overview	Technique
BLUE	"The Big Picture" & Managing	CAF (Consider All Factors); FIP (First Important Priorities)
WHITE	"Facts & Information"	Information
RED	"Feelings & Emotions"	Emotions and Ego
BLACK	"Negative"	PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting); Evaluation
YELLOW	"Positive"	PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting); Evaluation
GREEN	"New Ideas"	Concept Challenge; Yes, No

Po is Lateral Thinking - It is an extraction from words such as hypothesis, suppose, possible and poetry, all of which indicate forward movement and contain the syllable "po." Po can be taken to refer to any of

the following: provoking operation, provocative operation, or provocation operation.

Practice, Practice, Practice

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Fright Night:

All You Will Need for a Horror-filled October



Ayesha Mustafa Malik
Writer, Researcher

03 MINUTES READ

October is often heralded with the arrival of fall. The world around us embraces more vibrant shades of red, orange, and yellow and the summertime air develops a more raw and invigorating appeal. Many people associate October with the embrace of cozy sweaters, frequent chai intervals, and foggy cold mornings, as the natural world starts to de-accelerate, preparing for the long-awaited slumber of winter. However, beneath the gorgeous veneer of autumn's splendour; there lies something darker, something uncanny that penetrates the mood.

What had once been a holiday in the Global West, centered on spooky costumes, sweets and pumpkin carvings is now a multimillion-dollar industry that takes pride in petrifying the old and young around the world. The versatility of this genre is unmistakable, as the demand for thrilling and blood curdling content hits the roof the weeks leading up to October 31st. I will be divulging into some of these sources of horror that will make you scared witless.

Screams on Screens

I am sure you have spent many tantalizing hours watching the *Conjuring* or *The Final Destination* franchise, so

I will present something new and unique to fuel your nightmares.

Hollywood has provided many delectable works of fiction, such as *The Haunting of Hill House*, *Locke and Key*, *Midnight Mass* being worthy series to binge on late at night. If you are more of a movie enthusiast, then some of these psychotically exhilarating movies might be your best bet. *A Quiet Place*, *Bird Box* and *The Pope's Exorcist* have recently graced the



cinemas with reverting reviews from its wide audience. Even the foreign box-office has not failed to provide a terror filled atmosphere for cozy fall nights. Korean industry have always guaranteed a satisfying dose of dystopian sci-fi in its movie; for instances, *#Alive* and *Train to Busan* with its zombie-esque obsession. However, if you seek some comfort in jinns and ghouls; you might relish the bone chilling cinematic of *Bulbul* and *Kaali Khuhi* from across the border.

Tales from the Shadow

A good book can make the world around you fade away. What if it makes you feel a haunting presence within the dark crevices of your mind?

From ancient folklores, to the gothic genre of the modern age, the horror genre reveals the darker facets of the human psyche. Some classic works

such as Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" and Bram Stoker's "Dracula" have not only terrified but also captivated its readers for centuries. In our contemporary times, the gruelling works of Stephan King have tempted many sinners to dedicate themselves to the craft. Some of his most prominent works include, IT, The Shinning, Salem's Lot and The Dark Tower Multiverse. Confronting the darkest aspects of humanity, novels such as The Silent Patient by Alex Michaelides and The Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins are a testament of the monster within.

Paranormal Picks

For the individuals who want to peek behind the curtains and explore the origins of the paranormal and the unnerving; your best bet is to indulge in the realm of paranormal investigation and true crime documentaries. You can have your pick of some of the most nerve-racking footage of paranormal activity on YouTube channels, such as Sam and Colby and BuzzFeed Unsolved.

True Crime Podcasts have had sensational success around the world, as they reveal the intricacies of criminal minds and humanize those affected by tragedies. I would personally recommend True Crime Daily and MissMangoButt for a healthy dose of mental satisfaction of seeing criminals behind bars.

The horror genre is here to stay and eager to engulf us in realms of dread, thrill, and dark wonder. The never-ending display of macabre in every medium of entertainment has entranced the world into the fascination with the unknown. Terror no longer occupies the shadows, but the eerie glow of our screens and the crevices of our favourite books.

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The Rise of Remote Work Now a Days:

Remote work has seen a significant rise, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, transforming the traditional office-based work model into one of flexibility and autonomy. This shift offers professionals the ability to work from any location, providing benefits such as better work-life balance and the elimination of long commutes. However, to thrive in a remote work environment, certain strategies are essential.

1- First, time management is critical. Establishing a structured routine and setting clear work hours help maintaining productivity. Tools like task managers, digital calendars, and time trackers can keep work on schedule and prevent burnout.

2- Second, creating a dedicated workspace is important. A well-organized, quiet space with minimal distractions can significantly enhance focus and efficiency. This also signals to others in your household when you're in "work mode."

3- Third, communication is a key. Remote workers must be proactive in staying connected with their teams through regular updates, virtual meetings, and messaging apps. Clear, concise communication prevents misunderstandings and ensures alignment with team goals.

4- Lastly, continuous learning and upskilling are crucial for career growth in remote settings. Professionals should stay updated on industry trends and seek online certifications or training to remain competitive.

Building a successful career remotely requires discipline, effective communication, and a commitment to professional development.



THE COLDEST PLACE ON EARTH

Hashem Al-Ghaili

05 MINUTES READ

The coldest place on Earth is the East Antarctica Plateau, according to NASA. This region experiences bone chilling temperatures that can drop as low as -144°F or -98°C . Before the East Antarctica Plateau took the crown, the Vostok Research station in Antarctica held the record for the coldest temperature ever recorded. Temperature here can drop as low as -128.6°F or -89.2°C . So what contributes to such extreme cold in these areas? It all boils down to an extraordinary combination of clear conditions and incredibly dry air. These conditions can persist for several days, creating a cycle of continuous freezing temperatures. With no incoming warmth from the sun and a lack of significant weather systems to provide any respite, the East Antarctica Plateau remains locked in a deep freeze. It's an actual test of endurance for any living being. But let's not forget about the brave souls who call Earth's coldest places home.

In the small village of Oymyakon in

Russia, people live in the face of unimaginable cold. Can you believe that average temperature in Oymyakon reach a bone chilling -58°F or -50°C ? It takes a special kind of resilience to thrive in those conditions. Residents of Oyakodon adapt to extreme cold by using well insulated homes and continuous heating using coal or wood burning stoves. They also use specialized clothing made from animal fur and consume high calorie, high fat foods like reindeer and horse meat. On top of that, their vehicles are designed for severe temperatures. The world's biggest iceberg is finally on the move after being stuck for over 30 years. The iceberg, named A23A, is around three times the size of New York City and is considered to be one of the oldest icebergs, breaking off from the Filchner Ron Ice Shelf in West Antarctica in 1986. The iceberg has remained stuck on the seabed of the Weddel sea. However, recent satellite images show it has started moving again, propelled by strong winds and currents. The movement of such a

IMAGE SOURCE: DAILYHIVE

large iceberg is quite rare, and scientists are closely monitoring its path. It is estimated to weigh almost a trillion metric tonnes. As it continues its journey, it is expected to be carried into the Antarctic Circumpolar Current, towards the Southern Ocean along a route known as iceberg alley, where other icebergs of similar size can be found. The reason behind its sudden movement remains unclear. Glaciologists suggest that the iceberg may have thinned slightly over time, gaining enough buoyancy to lift off the ocean floor and be propelled by ocean currents. If the iceberg continues its journey, it can potentially disrupt shipping routes as it moves north towards South Africa.

Despite being in warmer water, an iceberg of this size can survive for an extended period in the southern ocean. Icebergs are impacted by climate change as rising global temperature causes warmer ocean currents and air, leading to accelerate melting and fragmentation, which in turn contributes to rising sea levels and loss of crucial habitats for marine wildlife. Greenland has lost one trillion tons more ice than previously thought, and it's currently losing ice at a rate of 30 million tons per hour, according to a new study. Greenland's ice sheets have lost 20% more ice than previously estimated, shedding light on the alarming impacts of climate change. Researchers analyzed approximately 240,000 satellite images from 1985 to 2022, to track the retreat of glacier terminus positions, where glaciers meet the ocean. The study led by NASA, found that Greenland lost about trillion tons of ice at its edges over the last four decades, a loss not accounted for in prior studies. The melting of these glaciers indicates potential for further ice

melt, enabling glaciers more readily flow towards the sea. If Greenland's ice glaciers were to melt entirely, it would lead to a significant, and catastrophic rise in global sea levels, estimated to be about 7.2 meters (24 feet).

This would dramatically reshape the coastline around the world. Inundating low lying areas, and resulting in the displacement of millions of people. Coastal cities and islands would be particularly vulnerable. Additionally, the influx of freshwater into the ocean could disrupt ocean currents, affecting global climate patterns. This melt water would also impact the arctic ecosystem, potentially leading to loss of habitats for native species. The global environmental, economic, and social implications of such an event would be profound and far-reaching.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The largest piece of fossilised dinosaur poo discovered is over 30cm long and over two litres in volume. Believed to be a Tyrannosaurus rex turd, the fossilised dung (also named a 'coprolite') is helping scientists better understand what the dinosaur ate.
- Animals can experience time differently from humans. To smaller animals, the world around them moves more slowly compared to humans. Salamanders and lizards, for example, experience time more slowly than cats and dogs. This is because the perception of time depends on how quickly the brain can process incoming information.



THE SILENT SYMPHONY: UNVEILING THE SECRETS OF TREE TALK



Saad Rashid
Writer, Programmer

05 MINUTES READ

A silent breeze makes its way through the thick forest as the sunshine and leaves play their favorite game, hide and seek. But beneath this mind-blowing forest lies a universe of its own, something which we can't even expect in our wildest imaginations. We thought that we knew all about trees, but the reality is that we don't know anything about them (except that they do photosynthesis). This universe represents a world of communication that is more complex than we are aware of. Trees are regarded as an object that lacks emotion, are motionless, and are incapable of communicating. However, recent studies have demonstrated that trees possess the ability to communicate, and in fact, they do so. It has been proved that they are interconnected to a delicate balance of the ecosystem which allows them to stir up conversations known as the "Tree

Talk". A term which opens the doors of our knowledge of forests and brings us a step closer to determining the whole system behind the perfect ecosystems of a forest.

Traditionally, trees have been viewed as solitary organisms, involved in an individual struggle for survival. But recent studies say otherwise because trees do communicate, just not like humans who like to inform the whole city what they wanna say, instead trees serve as the secret spies of Mother Nature as they communicate silently and without anyone witnessing them. Their way of doing it is pretty unique as well because they talk through a complex web of fungal connections known as the "Mycorrhizal Networks". This fungal network extends from a tree's roots to the whole neighborhood. These fungal highways serve as the information highways, facilitating chemical signals, nutrients and water between trees.

The language of tree talk is unpre

dictable yet complex. Trees, according to recent studies, have been termed as extroverts because they release chemical messages enough for a cocktail into the soil through their roots. These warnings can be threats and warnings like insect infestations or fungal diseases. These chemical messages can be picked up by neighboring trees and activate their defense mechanisms, such as producing toxins to deter insects or strengthening their cell walls to resist fungal invasion. Trees always make other trees aware of a threat not like humans who become a threat to their own family and friends.

Tree talks however isn't just about defense; it's also about fostering cooperation. Trees also share resources which include nutrients, minerals, water and even glucose. Older and well established trees help little saplings, and provide vital support for them to grow and promote forest regeneration. This also explains why trees grow better in a forest than in a land with no trees even when the weather, soil and other conditions are similar. Older trees are required to ensure the survival of these struggling seedlings. It turns out that trees are not as selfish as humans as they are always ready to share their resources with their neighbors. This selfless behavior of trees allows a happy and better ecosystem.

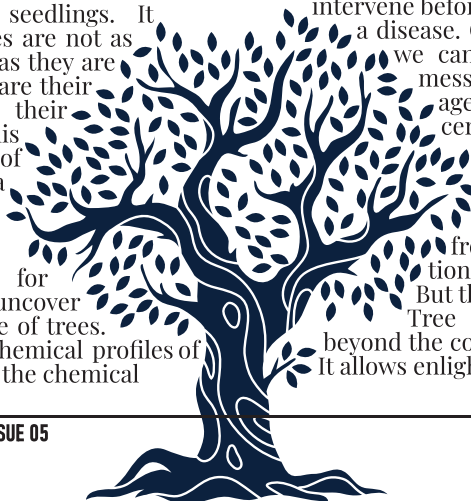
The next step for scientists is to uncover this silent language of trees. By analyzing the chemical profiles of trees and studying the chemical

signals that travel through mycorrhizal networks, we can decipher the messages of these secret spies of mother nature. These chemical profiles serve as Instagram profiles from where we can understand the message trees are trying to convey. It's a human desire to eavesdrop and now after humans, we move to trees to eavesdrop on them. But by understanding how trees communicate, we can develop strategies to promote forest health, improve tree growth, and enhance the resilience of forests. This will also allow us to predict weather and soil depletion which can shape the modern world.

Imagine a future where foresters can identify stressed trees through their chemical signals and intervene before they succumb to disease. Or a scenario where we can encourage the growth of specific tree species by manipulating the messages they send through the mycorrhizal network. These are just a few of the possibilities that Tree Talk research opens up.

But just imagine a future where farmers can identify stressed trees through their chemical signals and intervene before they fall prey to a disease. Or a scene where we can manipulate the messages and encourage the growth of certain trees. But both of these scenarios will soon be transferring to reality from our imagination.

But the implications of Tree Talk extend beyond the concept of forestry. It allows enlightening people as



to the relationships people have with every other living thing and the ecosystem in which they are in pointing that a person is not the owner of nature but rather a member of the ecosystem. It is beneficial to rethink the role of trees as just natural spectators of the world: actually, trees are its active participants and active speakers. All in all, this new knowledge results in a higher respect of the environment and the level of thinking included in the processes occurring in nature.

Moreover, the ethical considerations of meddling with the tree's communicative processes has to be made. Are we to control the system Tree Talk in order to suit a particular purpose that we have in mind or are we just supposed to give credit to the old organisms that have been trying to communicate with one another all this time. These are matters that both scientists, the government and everyone else needs to contemplate as we get deeper into Tree Talk. And in my opinion, they should be given their own rights and a chance to vote maybe?

Nevertheless, the possible advantages of comprehending Tree Talk are enormous facts that show that Bengal has one of the easiest Languages To Master, but the silent language of Tree Talk rather complicates the issue, Courtesy to the many aspects the language incorporates. We can also learn from the silent partners that make up the forests which will enable us to formulate ways of maintaining the forests for generations to come. Let us approach Tree Talk with appreciation, honoring the silent symphony of the forest.

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Do You Know About Naadam Festival in Mongolia?

Every July, Mongolia comes alive with the vibrant and thrilling Naadam Festival, a celebration of the country's rich nomadic culture and warrior heritage. Known as the "Three Manly Games," Naadam showcases three traditional sports—wrestling, archery, and horse racing—which once tested the strength and skills of Mongolian warriors.

In wrestling, athletes dressed in traditional garb compete in a show of raw strength, attempting to throw their opponents to the ground. Archery highlights precision and tradition, with men and women shooting arrows at distant targets, showcasing skills passed down for generations. Meanwhile, horse racing is the heart of the festival, where child jockeys, some as young as five, race across the open steppes on semi-wild horses for distances up to 30 kilometers.

Naadam, however, is more than just sports. It's a grand cultural celebration with colorful parades, traditional music, and ceremonial dances. Recognized by UNESCO as part of Mongolia's Intangible Cultural Heritage, it's a time for the nation to come together, reconnect with their history, and celebrate their identity.

For visitors, Naadam offers a rare and captivating glimpse into Mongolia's soul—where ancient traditions and fierce competition meet in one unforgettable festival.



WHY BLAME SOCIETY? WE ARE THE SOCIETY



Arooj Tariq
Freelance Content Writer

03 MINUTES READ

Blaming society for everything? Is it fair to blame society for everything while simultaneously being a part of it? Society has always been a concept of collective experiences of living in a group, and indeed, it is the most desirable way to live. It provides structure, a sense of security, and the opportunity to share experiences with each other. Envision a life without any companionship, without anyone to share your stories with. (so hard and boring) In recent times, society has been seen as a source of blame; for the people it has become very convenient to play the blame game without taking any responsibility for their own actions and beliefs. However, if we deeply look into this matter, we too are a society, and we can't simply point the finger at it without first examining our role in it. There are certain norms, values, and beliefs that are shared by a group of people, binding them together as a

society. Society is both a reflection of who we are and a product of our collective actions. Therefore, we cannot simply blame society for every minor inconvenience we face without acknowledging our own role in creating it. We are not just passive recipients of societal influences, but active contributors to its creation. Engaging in activities that compromise ethical boundaries often carries a transient allure, people easily get seduced by the thrill of the forbidden or the allure of shortcuts but what they don't realize is that this kind of satisfaction is just temporary, and may mask the impending repercussions that gradually unfold over time. Therefore, these actions can erode one's self esteem, and at this point people often find it super convenient to blame society for personal failures, as it shifts responsibility away from oneself, reducing feelings of guilt and shame. The question that arises here is: are we simply just looking for a scapegoat? It's easier to blame society for everything than to face reality, our own flaws and shortcomings. Therefore, when we

IMAGE SOURCE: LANTIN X

blame society, we are basically blaming ourselves. Our generation needs to realize that we are the ones who make the society, and we have the power to change it.

Maclom X states: "If you don't stand for something you'll fall for anything."

A renowned Turkish-British author/activist Elif Shafak writes about the importance of the interconnectivity of humans and how we all are a part of the same common story. In one of her most popular novels, "Forty Rules of Love," she writes, "To perceive the world differently, we must be willing to change our belief system, let the past slip away, expand our sense of now, and dissolve the fear in our minds." This well written quote highlights the importance of individual responsibility in shaping a society. If we wish to bring desirable changes in a society we must first focus on our flaws, it is so important to change yourself first because change starts with us, and only then can we inspire positive changes in others.

Paolo Coelho states, "The world is changed by your example not by your opinion."

Furthermore, Elif Shafak speaks about the importance of storytelling, and how it can connect people with different backgrounds and cultures. She believes that sharing different life experiences with each other can bring people together, as individuals can foster a sense of unity and facilitate a deeper understanding of one another. In her TED talk, "The Revolutionary Power of Diverse Thought," she states, "We need to speak up and

we need to speak out but we also need to listen and we need to listen with compassion." The quote attempts to highlight the importance of reciprocity and emphasizes the concept that the actions we extend towards others tend to be mirrored back onto us. If we expect our stories to be heard with consideration, then we also need to respect the perspectives of other people. Considerate listening and mutual understanding can help pave the way for a more compassionate world. If we start treating others with respect and consideration we can create an environment where such behavior becomes the norm rather than the exception. By treating everyone with the same respect and honor we expect for ourselves, we can build a more inclusive society. This domino effect contributes to better communication, fewer conflicts, and enhanced cooperation with various spheres of life and everyone values the richness of human experiences.

At points societal issues can be complex and individual actions alone may not be enough to solve them, however, by working together with consistency, because change doesn't happen overnight, it's very important to be consistent, and patient when solving problems. This way we can create a ripple effect that contributes to a positive change. A renowned psychologist/ author Jordan Peterson sheds light on the danger of collective blame, as the act of collective blame diminishes personal agency, and hinders progress. He further emphasizes that blame games absolves individuals of their responsibility and eventually perpetuate a cycle of victimhood.

Furthermore, our consumption

habits also leave a huge impact on our society, therefore, by making conscious choices about what we buy and consume we can make a positive difference. Every time we purchase something we are supporting the companies that produce it, and contributing to the economy. Hence, we should only support the companies that align with our values so we can have a sustainable future, these small steps/actions can make a huge impact. Similarly, our greeting manners on different occasions, the way we behave towards others also impacts society. Our interactions with family, friends, neighbors, and strangers can spread positivity or negativity throughout our communities. Therefore, by being empathetic, kind and compassionate to those around us, we can create a more supportive and interconnected society. In corporate sectors, when people habitually point fingers at each other, the cohesion and trust within the groups erode over time. Therefore, eventually, people hesitate to share ideas or admit mistakes, fearing repercussions. Hence the productivity and overall performance of the team suffer, hindering the company's progress. Furthermore, the acts of finger pointing often create an atmosphere of defensiveness and hostility. When individuals feel attacked they are less likely to cooperate. Therefore, it becomes challenging to find common ground when no one is willing to step back. Such attitudes not only hamper collaboration but also lead to a perpetual cycle of blame.

In conclusion, we need to realize that change starts within us. We cannot expect change to happen if we do not take responsibility for our own

actions and beliefs.

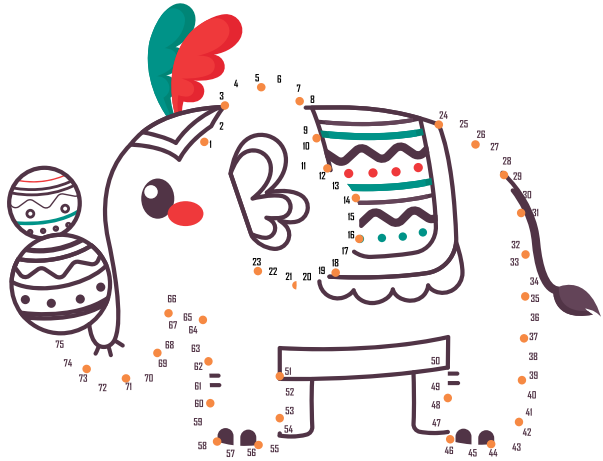
Robert Ingersoll states, "We rise by lifting others."

The powerful quote emphasizes the value of collective progress. Moreover, we all need to realize that pointing fingers and laying blame rarely leads to positive change. No one has ever benefited by pointing fingers at others. Both personal and professional spheres can evolve positively by breaking the cycle of blame, ultimately leading to more fulfilling and productive lives. Let's strive for a better future and build a harmonious society where each individual learns to accept their mistakes and takes pride in learning lessons from them. A society grounded in responsibility and respect would promote development and personal growth. Let's focus on what unites us rather than divides us and create a society that thrives in collaboration, empathy and growth. Embracing personal responsibilities and mutual understanding can facilitate the establishment of a more cohesive community. Such foundations act as guiding lights that lead us forward.

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DID YOU KNOW?

Mount Everest isn't the tallest mountain on Earth. Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa in Hawaii, the twin volcanoes, are taller than Mount Everest due to 4.2km of their heights being submerged underwater. The twin volcanoes measure a staggering 10.2km in total, compared to Everest's paltry 4.6km.













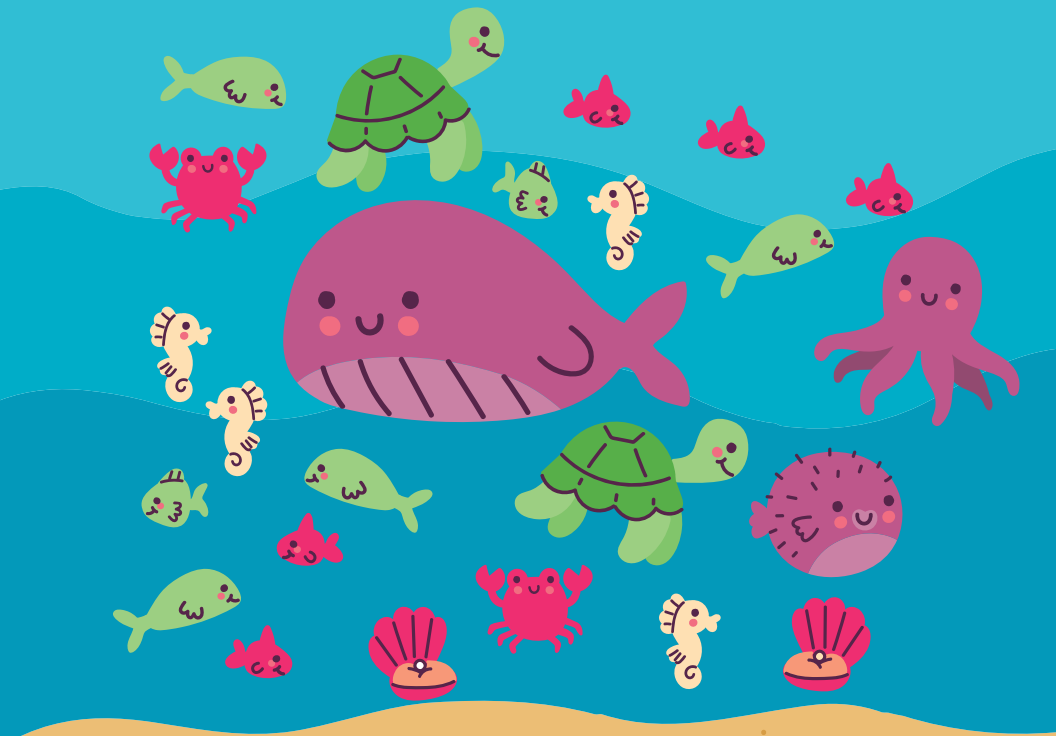
CONNECT THE DOTS



HOW MANY?

Count the similar
and write the number

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DIY: HANDMADE PAPER KITES

AEM

02 MINUTES READ

Materials You'll Need:

- Colored paper or newspaper
- Thin sticks (bamboo skewers or similar)
- Glue or tape
- Scissors
- String
- Markers, crayons, or stickers (for decoration)

Instructions:

Step 1: Prepare the Paper

Begin by selecting your paper—colored or newspaper. If it's rectangular, fold one corner over to meet the opposite side, creating a triangle. Trim off the excess paper below the triangle and unfold it to reveal a square.

Step 2: Create the Kite Shape

Lay the square paper flat. Fold it diagonally to form a triangle and make a gentle crease. Unfold the paper to reveal a diagonal crease across the center. This crease will guide the placement of the sticks and string.

Step 3: Attach the Sticks

Place one stick vertically from the top corner to the bottom corner along the crease. This will be the main support for your kite. Next, place another stick horizontally across the vertical stick,

forming a cross. Secure both sticks to the paper with glue or tape, ensuring they are firmly attached.

Step 4: Secure the String

Cut a length of string, approximately 2-3 meters, or longer if desired for higher flight. Tie one end of the string around the point where the two sticks intersect in the center of the kite. Make sure the knot is tight to keep the string secure while flying.

Step 5: Add a Tail

To improve stability, attach a tail to your kite. Cut a strip of paper about 30-50 cm long and glue or tape it to the bottom of the kite where the vertical stick ends. Decorate the tail with additional paper strips, stickers, or small bows to enhance its appearance and function.

Step 6: Decorate Your Kite

Get creative with decoration! Use markers, crayons, or stickers to design your kite. Draw patterns, add stars, or create your own unique designs to make your kite stand out.

Step 7: Test and Adjust

Take your kite outside on a breezy day. Hold the string tightly and run a little to launch the kite into the air. Let out more string to let it climb higher. If it doesn't fly well, adjust the tail or check that the string is securely tied. Enjoy the fun and satisfaction of flying your homemade kite!

DIY: Shalwar Kameez Paper Dolls

AEM

02 MINUTES READ

Materials You'll Need:

- Thick paper or cardstock
- Colored markers or crayons
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- Decorative materials (stickers, sequins, fabric scraps)
- Pencil

Instructions:

Step 1: Draw the Doll Outline

Start with a piece of thick paper or cardstock. Using a pencil, draw the outline of a simple doll shape. This should include a head, body, arms, and legs. Keep it simple so it's easier to cut out and decorate.

Step 2: Cut Out the Doll

Carefully cut out the doll shape from the paper. Make sure the edges are neat. You can use scissors or ask an adult for help if needed.

Step 3: Design the Shalwar Kameez

Next, draw the shalwar kameez on another piece of paper. For the kameez, draw a long shirt with sleeves. For the shalwar, draw loose pants that tuck into the kameez. Make sure the outfit is a little bigger than the doll so it looks like it can be worn.

Step 4: Color and Decorate

Color in the shalwar kameez with

markers or crayons. Use bright colors and patterns to make it look vibrant and fun. You can add extra details like buttons, embroidery, or traditional patterns to make it more interesting.

Step 5: Cut Out the Outfit

Once you're done coloring, carefully cut out the shalwar kameez. You should now have separate pieces for the kameez and shalwar.

Step 6: Attach the Outfit to the Doll

Use glue or tape to attach the shalwar kameez to your paper doll. You can place the outfit directly on the doll or create separate paper clothes that you can change. If you want to create separate clothes, just make sure the doll has a base layer that can hold the clothes.

Step 7: Add Accessories

To make your doll even more stylish, you can add accessories like hats, shoes, or jewelry. Use small stickers, sequins, or scraps of fabric to decorate. Glue them onto the doll or the clothes.

Step 8: Play and Enjoy

Now your shalwar kameez paper dolls are ready! You can create more outfits, mix and match different styles, and have fun dressing



up your dolls.

This craft is a great way to learn about traditional clothing while using your creativity.

Enjoy designing and playing with your new paper dolls!



MEMES, ANXIETY, AND THE CURSE OF BEING TOO ONLINE: CONFESSIONS OF A GEN Z-ER



Nisa Asim
Student

03 MINUTES READ

As a proud member of Generation Z, I've come to accept that my entire existence is a walking contradiction. We're the social media-savvy, climate change-fighting, gender-bending rebels of the 21st century...but we're also the most stressed-out, sleep-deprived young people in modern history. We're confident, go-getters who will literally dance challenges our way to success - but we're also hopeless over thinkers to a fault. And let's not forget our unparalleled skills in the lost art of irony and meme-making. The millennial parents might not understand us but believe me, it's all very confusing, even for those of us actually living it.

You see, being a Gen Z-er is a uniquely challenging experience. We're the first generation to grow up entirely in the digital age, with no concept of a world without constant connectivity and the opportunity to publicly docu-

ment our every waking moment. And while this exciting new world of technology has undoubtedly offered us incredible advantages, it's also opened up a Pandora's box of mental health struggles, societal pressures, and just a general sense of existential dread. Take social media, for example. On one hand, platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter (formerly known as X) have given us an unprecedented level of creative freedom and the ability to tap into a global community of like-minded people. But on the other hand, this constant exposure to the carefully curated "perfect" lives of our peers has warped our sense of self-worth and left us in a near-constant state of FOMO. How can we possibly keep up with all the cat meme videos, flex posts, and viral challenges? The struggle is real, my friends.

And let's not forget the added stress of trying to save the entire damn planet. As if navigating the emotional minefield of online life and the standard

IMAGE SOURCE: BLOGSECURITY

turbulence of adolescence wasn't enough, us Gen Z-ers also have the added responsibility of fighting against the very real threat of climate change. It's a lot of pressure to put on a generation that's still trying to figure out how to be a proper adult. I mean, how are we supposed to focus on our skincare routines and drop shipping side hustles when the whole world is quite literally on fire?


But perhaps the most uniquely Gen Z-esque struggle is the challenge of trying to find our place in a rapidly changing social/political landscape. We're a generation that's deeply passionate about progressive causes like racial justice, gender rights, and income inequality - often to a more vocal and radical degree than previous generations. And while that unwavering commitment to creating positive change is admirable, it also puts us in a difficult position of often feeling at odds with our own families and broader cultural norms. Can someone please explain to my older boomer relatives that asking for female gender rights is not a sign of disrespect to our culture?

For young Pakistani Gen Z, there are even more unique challenges to navigate. Growing up, we often feel pulled in two different directions - trying to honor our Pakistani heritage while also living in the modern, Western world. Our families and communities put a lot of pressure on us to follow certain paths, like excelling in school, getting a respectable job, and following traditional gender roles. Things like choosing a nontraditional career or delaying marriage and kids can bring harsh criticism and judgment from our elders. It can feel really suffocating to constantly have to balance these cultural expectations

with our own desires and identities. We see rapid social progress happening in Pakistan, which only highlights the disconnect between the "old country" and our current reality here. Reconciling these two very different worlds requires an incredible amount of resilience and nuance. We have to be willing to politely challenge tradition and "talk back" to our families at times. But in doing so, Pakistani Gen Z-ers are forging a bold, unapologetic identity that celebrates the full complexity of our multicultural experiences. It's not easy, but we're determined to carve out a path that honors both sides of our heritage.

Of course, it's not all doom and gloom for us Gen Z-ers. After all, we're also the generation that's reinventing the wheel when it comes to self-expression. We're ripping up the outdated playbook and building our own paths to success, whether that means starting our own small businesses, going viral with our creative talents, or simply taking a stand and using our voices to affect real change. And let's not forget our unparalleled skills in the lost art of irony and meme-making - truly a superpower that will serve us well in the decades to come.

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ECO-ANXIETY:

THE EMOTIONAL COST OF ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS



Zainab Malik

Anthropology Student

[03 MINUTES READ](#)

The feeling of concern, apprehension or anxiety as an outcome of environmental degradation and the associated problems is termed as eco-anxiety. It's the nagging feeling of distress and preoccupation with environmental issues like global warming, pollution, deforestation, and habitat destruction. People grappling with eco-anxiety often feel helpless and uncertain about the future of the environment and the impact it may have on their lives.

This overall perception of sheer helplessness can be distressing, or perhaps it is the anxiety that comes with thinking that there is only so

much one can do to solve environmental problems. Such feelings can be channeled leading worsening a generalized sense of anxiety linked to eco-anxiety, hence an overall stressful condition.

This helplessness can also make people feel ashamed since they participate in the creation of such a problem, but cannot solve it.

Addition to these feelings, the causes for which eco-anxiety has become rife in the contemporary world are complex. One of them is growing concern and, as a result, coverage in the media regarding the environment including global warming, loss of forests, and natural habitats. Thanks to the social networks and information overload one is a witness of the global environmental challenges more often than ever before. The inflow of such knowledge causes the

IMAGE SOURCE : MEDIUM

creation of the feeling of the constant threat and concern about the state of the environment, which can be called eco-anxiety.

Therefore, eco-anxiety can affect an individual's well-being. It leads to stress, depression, anxiety and is prevalent in both adults and youth.

Coping with environmental problems and constantly worrying that they might worsen can harm mental health, making people feel helpless and hopeless.

This emotional stress is drastically felt by those people who are great advocates of environmental conservation and have concerns over the future of the earth. These individuals may feel a strong sense of responsibility and empathy for the planet, leading to feelings of guilt, despair, and helplessness over the current environmental crises. They may also be more aware of their own personal contributions to environmental issues, which can add an extra layer of emotional burden to their eco-anxiety.

Given these profound feelings, eco-anxiety can have many impacts on an individual's daily life. It can lead to a lack of focus and concentration, negatively affecting productivity at work or school. People experiencing eco-anxiety may also find it difficult to enjoy activities they once loved, leading to reduced motivation and engagement in hobbies. In some cases, eco-anxiety can also lead to avoidance behaviors, where individuals may try to avoid media or discussions related to environmental issues to avoid feelings of anxiety and distress.

Understanding these impacts is important in order to devise adequate

strategies for coping with the problem. To address these challenges, coping with eco-anxiety involves taking a deliberate step back from the relentless cycle of environmental news and information. Limiting your exposure to distressing reports can help ease the burden of worry and stress that comes with constantly being aware of the world's environmental challenge. Thus, taking breaks and separating oneself from the information to which one can become addicted, it is possible to escape and find a temporary isolation from the information that causes anxiety about the health of our planet.

On one hand, it is useful to bear in mind that eco-anxiety can be a constructive kind of people's actions. Thus, although eco-anxiety is generally a negative phenomenon, it can have a positive side as a starting signal for action. When we have such strong emotions as worry and concern toward the state of our planet and the world around us, we tend to want to make a change. If one turns this energy and passion that comes with eco-anxiety into productive effort, then it is possible to be able to make numerous decisions that will help in curtailing one's negative impact to the environment, embrace sustainable activities and policies as well as encourage the policy makers to do the same.

Thus, eco-anxiety contributes to activism and strengthens the affective bond with the environment. At the same time, it may be suggestive of our deep passion and respect for nature and help people remember that they have to do everything possible in order to protect the earth and keep it beautiful and diverse for future generations.

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Healing

the Invisible Wounds: Overcoming Childhood Emotional Neglect



Sheheryar Shahid
Integrative Psychotherapist
Psychologist, Artist

03 MINUTES READ

Emotional childhood neglect can have long-lasting impacts, manifesting in various aspects of an individual's life well into adulthood. This form of neglect occurs when caregivers fail to adequately respond to a child's emotional needs, leading to profound consequences.

If you grew up in an environment where your emotional needs were not met, it could significantly affect your relationships with others. You may find yourself becoming hyper-independent, having had to take care of your emotional needs or mature faster than your peers. This hyper-independence, while a survival mechanism, can lead to mental health challenges such as anxiety or depression.

Understanding Childhood Emotional Neglect:

Childhood emotional neglect occurs when caregivers are emotionally absent from a child's life, failing to meet their basic emotional needs. This form of neglect can sometimes be classified as child abuse, although

it is not always intentional. The effects of such neglect can be long-lasting and pervasive.

Signs of Emotional Neglect in Children

Depression:

Children experiencing emotional neglect often show signs of depression, especially if they lack positive peer support during adolescence. Depression is characterized by persistent low mood and a variety of symptoms affecting thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. In severe cases, children may exhibit suicidal thoughts.

Difficulties with Emotional Regulation:

Emotional neglect can hinder a child's ability to regulate their emotions. Without recognition and validation of their feelings from caregivers, children may struggle to find healthy outlets for their emotions. Research indicates a link between childhood emotional neglect and difficulties in emotional regulation, suggesting that neglect can alter brain activity related to managing emotions.

Fear And Avoidance of Social Situations:

Children who experience emotional neglect may develop a fear of others and avoid social interac

tions. They may struggle with trusting others to provide emotional safety, leading to insecure attachments and difficulties in social settings.

Low Self-esteem: Emotional neglect can impair a child's ability to perceive their worth accurately. Studies have found a connection between child maltreatment, neglect, and low self-esteem, which can contribute to depressive symptoms.

Signs of Emotional Neglect in Adults
The impact of childhood emotional neglect can extend into adulthood, affecting mental health and interpersonal relationships. Here are some signs that may indicate unresolved childhood emotional neglect in adults:

Feeling Empty or Numb: Adults who experienced emotional neglect as children might feel hollow, empty, or numb. This can be associated with depressive symptoms or stem from an inability to understand or express emotions.

Mental Health Challenges: The mental health issues that begin in childhood, such as depression and anxiety, can persist into adulthood. Research highlights that adults who faced childhood emotional neglect may also deal with eating disorders, suicidal thoughts, personality disorders, psychosis, and substance use problems.

Difficulty Relying on Others: If caregivers failed to provide a safe emotional space, individuals might struggle with trusting and relying on others. This can lead to hyper-independence, where handling everything alone becomes overwhelming and isolating.

Problems in Relationships: Childhood emotional neglect often leads to difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships. Research indicates

that those who faced emotional abuse or neglect as children tend to have dysfunctional romantic relationships, feeling less safe, having trouble trusting partners, and being reluctant to enter into romantic relationships.

Coping with Childhood Emotional Neglect

Coping with the effects of childhood emotional neglect is essential for improving mental health and fostering healthy relationships. Here are some strategies to consider:

Seek Professional Support: A licensed mental health professional can provide guidance and therapy to help you cope with the emotional neglect experienced in childhood.

Recognise & Feel your Emotions: Learning to acknowledge and express your emotions is crucial. Mindfulness techniques can help you become more aware of your feelings.

Practice Mindfulness: Engaging in mindfulness practices can aid in managing stress and improving emotional regulation.

Listen to your Needs: Understand and articulate your needs to others. Setting healthy boundaries is a vital step in self-care.

Conclusion

Childhood emotional neglect is associated with various mental health issues and relational difficulties. Recognizing its impact and seeking coping strategies can help individuals overcome these challenges. If you're affected by childhood emotional neglect, consider using the FindCare tool to connect with a local mental health professional who can assist you in developing better coping strategies and improving your overall well-being.

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CHILAM JOSHI FESTIVAL:

CELEBRATING THE VIBRANT CULTURE OF KALASH VALLEY, PAKISTAN



Saif Uddin
Writer, Musician

04 MINUTES READ

Nestled amidst the picturesque mountains of Chitral District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, lies the enchanting Kalash Valley - home to one of the most unique and colorful festivals in the country, the Chilim Joshi festival. This annual celebration, deeply rooted in the rich cultural heritage of the Kalash community, showcases a vibrant display of traditional music, dance, rituals, and festivities that attract visitors from far and wide.

The Chilim Joshi festival, also known as the "Spring Festival," is celebrated by the Kalash people to welcome the arrival of spring and to mark the blooming of fruit trees in the valley. The festival typically takes place in May and lasts for several days, during

which the entire community comes together to partake in age-old customs and rituals that have been passed down through generations. Central to the Chilim Joshi festival are the traditional dance performances, where men and women adorned in colorful attire move to the rhythm of drumbeats and melodic tunes. The intricate footwork and graceful movements of the dancers captivate onlookers, transporting them to a world of folklore and tradition. The music, often accompanied by the sound of handmade instruments, adds an authentic touch to the festivities, creating an ambiance of joy and merriment.

One of the highlights of the Chilim Joshi festival is the exchange of homemade wine and dairy products among community members, symbolizing camaraderie and goodwill. Feasts of local delicacies are prepared, and traditional dishes such

as biryosh (meat stew) and pakhal (fermented corn) are shared with guests, fostering a sense of unity and togetherness.

Another notable aspect of the Chilim Joshi festival is the performance of ancient rituals and ceremonies that hold spiritual significance for the Kalash people. These rituals, conducted by the community's religious leaders known as Jeshtri, seek blessings from the gods for a prosperous harvest and the well-being of the village.

The Chilim Joshi festival serves as a platform for the Kalash community to preserve and promote their unique cultural identity amidst modern-day influences. It is a time when elders pass on traditional knowledge to the younger generation, ensuring that age-old customs and practices continue to thrive in the face of societal changes.

For tourists and visitors, the Chilim Joshi festival offers a rare opportunity to immerse themselves in the cultural tapestry of the Kalash Valley, experiencing firsthand the warmth and hospitality of its people. The festival has become a significant cultural event, attracting travelers, researchers, and cultural enthusiasts who seek to witness the beauty and diversity of Pakistan's indigenous communities.

In a nutshell, the Chilim Joshi festival of the Kalash Valley stands as a testament to the resilience and vibrancy of the Kalash culture. It is a celebration of life, nature, and community spirit, encapsulating the essence of tradition and heritage in a rapidly changing world. As we marvel at the kaleidoscope of colors and sounds during the festival, we are reminded of the importance of preserving and cherishing our cultural roots for

generations to come.

There are a few individuals who are working tirelessly to preserve and promote the unique heritage of the Kalash Valley. One such individual is Mr. Muhammad Bugi Ansari, a talented Pakistani artist who has been actively involved in supporting the Kalash community through his art and advocacy efforts. His work aims to raise awareness about the cultural significance of the Kalash people and their way of life.

Additionally, we cannot overlook the contributions of Athanasius Leronus, a Greek philanthropist who played a crucial role in the establishment of the Kalasha Dur museum and school in the Kalash Valley. Through his vision and generosity, the museum serves as a platform for preserving Kalash artifacts and showcasing the cultural treasures of the community, while the school provides education and opportunities for the youth of the valley.

As we marvel at the beauty and vibrancy of the Chilim Joshi festival, let us also recognize and appreciate the invaluable contributions of those who are working behind the scenes to ensure the preservation and prosperity of the Kalash Valley and its people. Through their collective efforts, the Kalash community stands strong, proud, and united in celebrating their heritage with the world.

Bakhtawar Khan, principal of Kalasha School, urgently needs 72 computers and an art teacher to improve declining performance due to financial issues. Support from global organizations is crucial to preserve the unique Kalash culture, which is at risk of disappearing.

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PREVALENCE OF NARCISSISM IN PAKISTAN: UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURAL FACTORS BEHIND NARCISSISTIC SOCIETY



Saira Batool

Nature Photographer, Blogger,
Media Student

04 MINUTES READ

Narcissism, characterized by grandiosity, self-centeredness, and a lack of empathy, is a personality trait that has been found to be prevalent in various cultures around the world. In Pakistan, the issue of narcissism is particularly pronounced, with cultural factors such as male dominance, gender discrimination, and racism playing a significant role in its prevalence. Understanding the roots of narcissism in Pakistani culture is crucial in addressing and combating this harmful personality trait. This blog explores the cultural factors behind narcissism in Pakistan and the implications it has on individuals and society as a whole.

Before delving deeper into the cultural factors contributing to narcissism in Pakistan, it is essential to have a clear understanding of what narcissism entails. Narcissism is a personality disorder characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance, a

constant need for admiration, and a lack of empathy towards others. Individuals with narcissistic traits often exhibit behaviours that prioritize their own desires and needs above all else, disregarding the feelings and rights of those around them. By defining narcissism, we can better grasp how it manifests within the Pakistani cultural context and identify ways to address and mitigate its effects on individuals and society. Understanding the cultural factors that contribute to the prevalence of narcissism in Pakistan is crucial for addressing this issue effectively. In a society where hierarchical structures and notions of prestige influence social interactions, individuals may strive for grandiosity and admiration to secure their status. Moreover, societal expectations emphasizing success, material possessions, and external validation can fuel narcissistic tendencies in individuals. The interplay of collectivist values with individualistic pursuits also plays a significant role in shaping narcissistic behaviors within the cultural context

IMAGE SOURCE: MERI SEHAT

of Pakistan. Exploring these factors will provide insight into the root causes of narcissism in Pakistan and guide interventions to foster healthier interpersonal dynamics.

The role of social media cannot be overlooked when discussing the prevalence of narcissism in Pakistan. With the growing use of platforms like Instagram and Facebook, individuals are constantly exposed to create images of success, beauty, and perfection. This perpetuates a culture of comparison and the pursuit of external validation, which are key aspects of narcissistic behavior. Additionally, the ease of creating a persona online that portrays an idealized version of oneself can further inflate narcissistic tendencies in individuals seeking admiration and validation from their online presence. Understanding the impact of social media on narcissistic tendencies is vital in devising strategies to promote authenticity and self-worth in a digital age.

Exploring family dynamics in Pakistan can provide valuable insights into the development of narcissistic traits. Research suggests that parenting styles, such as overindulgence or neglect, can contribute to the manifestation of narcissistic behavior in individuals. In a culture where respect for elders and authority figures is paramount, children raised in environments that lack healthy boundaries and opportunities for self-expression may seek validation and attention through narcissistic tendencies. It is essential to examine the interplay between familial relationships and the reinforcement of narcissistic traits to effectively address this issue within the cultural context of Pakistan. Understanding these dynamics can lead to interven-

tions that promote healthier patterns of interaction and self-esteem development.

Recognizing narcissistic behaviors in oneself or others can be a crucial step towards initiating positive change. Symptoms such as a constant need for admiration, lack of empathy, and an inflated sense of self-importance are indicators of narcissism. In a Pakistani cultural setting, where these traits may be normalized or even reinforced, it is essential to foster awareness and open dialogue about the detrimental effects of such behavior. Through psychoeducation, therapy, and support systems, individuals exhibiting narcissistic tendencies can work towards developing healthier relationship dynamics and improving emotional intelligence. By addressing these behaviors proactively, we can promote a more empathetic and harmonious society in Pakistan.

Understanding the cultural factors contributing to narcissism in Pakistan is a critical step in fostering a more empathetic society. By acknowledging and addressing narcissistic behaviors, individuals can begin the journey towards personal growth and healthier relationships. It is imperative for communities to promote self-awareness, empathy, and emotional intelligence to combat the negative impacts of narcissism. Through continued education, therapy, and supportive environments, we can cultivate a culture that values humility, compassion, and genuine connection. Let us collectively strive towards creating a society where empathy and understanding prevail, paving the way for a harmonious and compassionate Pakistan.

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THE POSTMODERN SLAUGHTER OF REASON - PART 1: MEMETIC THEORY



Armughan Munir
Podcast Host, Writer

06 MINUTES READ

“The rise of the philosophers meant the fall of man, for once reason took over,

Men no longer possessed their former guides, their regulating, unconscious and infallible drives; they were reduced to thinking, inferring, reckoning, coordinating cause and effect, these unfortunate creatures; they were reduced to their ‘consciousness,’ their weakest and most fallible organ!” – Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals, II:16

The conscious will driving the mecha-gears of the new dawn is Information. We live and breathe in the information age. An ethereal sea of information surrounds us. Before this ether encompassed us, the skies of ignorance were clear. If a plague wiped out the entire civilization flourishing in the Asian subcontinent. Inhabitants of the European peninsula wouldn't know about it until it was much later. It's not the case anymore. The ethereal sea ensures lightning-fast transmission of facts (or fiction).



In the mid 20th century, when the informational ether was introduced for the first time. It provided knowledge, and a sense of power with it. But as we moved towards the 21st century, the ether got flooded with all types of toxins. Information is not the only thing that spreads online. Misinformation is equally prevalent, if not more.

We have been highly conditioned to accept anything the internet tells us. This misinformation on the internet has made it difficult to tell facts from fiction. We are drowning in the ether of information searching for wisdom, and experience to rescue us.

The mechanics of news propagates on the internet are entralling. Before the 21st century, only news channels shouldered this responsibility. Social media is all the hype now. It is the arsenal where multiple subtools are casually implemented to spread ideas. They are reels, images, podcasts, videos etc. You are bombarded by millions of them. There is an endless list of videos to watch, of reels to scroll, and of memes to laugh at. The subtool which has the fastest velocity is a meme. Memes spread like rapidfire. They

IMAGE SOURCE: MEDIUM

spread across the culture, infect different cultures, and become a global phenomena. They are quirky, smart, funny, and catchy. The opposing side of the coin, often ignored, is that there can be dangerous memes. I must clarify to the reader that I am not talking about the 'funny images' you see on the internet. There are memes which don't require the internet. They are carried from one individual to the other, through their minds. There is a high probability that memes might just be the building block of our brains. The history of memes extrapolates further back than previously thought of..

A Redefinition of Memes:

The word 'meme' was coined by Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book, "The Selfish Gene". The definition of a meme is not commonly known. The internet has actively hijacked the word 'meme', limiting its definition to "an image, video, piece of text, etc., typically humorous in nature, that is copied and spread rapidly by internet users, often with slight variations."

When Dawkins came up with the word. He meant something much deeper than 'funny images on the internet'. Although the internet's definition of the word fits the actual definition. According to Dawkins, a meme is a unit of cultural inheritance. In order to grasp the cusp of what he meant by that, we need to understand the core premises of The

Theory of Evolution and The Selfish Gene:

The grandeur of Charles Darwin's idea of evolution and its impact on our understanding of life is remarkable. It can't be overstated. Before

Darwin, philosophers since Aristotle, meddled with the idea of an essence. "What's the essence of X or Y?" was all the debate. Theory of evolution solved this problem by stating: life is a series of gradual improvement. It's gradualism all the way through. Gradualism, trial-and-error, natural selection, gene refining, and a high degree of luck. Life starts from a single common organism (a cell) and goes through a series of gradualization carrying useful information (the gene) in the DNA. It's important to note the distinction that genes are not DNA. Genes are the information carried by the DNA. Through natural selection, the genes which contribute to the organism's survival replicate themselves, while the genes which are counter-productive (or no longer contribute) to the organism's survival die off and eventually go extinct. A gene, therefore, is a unit of selection of life. A replicator that faithfully copies itself. This leads us to the following conclusion: a gene is truly immortal. It is immortal because it copies the information with significant fidelity. The genes present on the earth today are here only because they were remarkable at ensuring the survival of the individual body. The ones not so good were discarded in evolution's garbage can. A gene has to be exceptionally good at building bodies that are survival machines. If it isn't good, it wouldn't be here. This is what Dawkins told us in the Selfish Gene

Memes are to culture, what Genes are to life. Gene are replicators for biological evolution, while memes are replicators for cultural evolution. Any idea that is imitated faithfully, spreading across the cultural fabric, eventually rooting itself in the cultur

al soil is a meme. We stuff our mind with all sorts of memes. “tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or building arches” are memes. Words, and subsequently language, is a meme.

The reason memes are worth discussing is because they separate us from our cousin ancestors: the chimpanzees. A chimpanzee’s brain is like a computer without any software installed in it. On the contrary, humans fill their brain with all kinds of apps. This software/application is what memes are. We are awash in them. The host of a meme works actively to share it with the potential other hosts. This idea was developed into ‘The Memetic Theory’ by American Philosopher and Cognitive scientist, Daniel Dennet.

“It spreads like an epidemic. It acts like a Virus” - Richard Dawkins on Memes

Memes can be catastrophically dangerous. A meme doesn’t have to be correct. We are flooded by toxic memes. The ones which cause their host to think and act stupendously irrationally. Memes could potentially drive a host to extinction.

A Lancet Fluke’s effect on the Ant

Imagine as one day you are walking by your garden. You observe an ant engulfing in rather dangerous behavior. It climbs the top of a blade of grass, tries to balance itself, topples back down, starts all over again. Surely this behavior is irrational even from the rationale of an ant. What is it that drives the ant to do such a dull-witted act?

The answer is a Lancet Fluke, a parasitic flatworm. Once this parasite enters the ant’s system. It hijacks the ant’s brain. It controls the ant’s mind, placing the ant directly in harm’s way. The reason it commandeers the ant over the top of the grass blade is because this is a vulnerable position for the ant. A herbivore can easily spot and eat the ant. The flatworm leads the ant to its grave.

If an ant’s brain can be hijacked by a flatworm. What can human brains be hijacked by? There are no flatworms or parasites capable of hijacking a human mind that modern biology is aware of, except ideas.

It’s ideas, or specifically, memes that hijack the human brain. Toxic memes are viruses of the brain: an information packet with attitude and arrogance.

The Burden of Responsibility for Memes

The word “meme creator” popped up on the internet. Its someone who replicates, and edits an internet meme with the intention of it going viral. There are meme creators who don’t require the internet. They are the philosophers, scientists, physicists, doctors, spiritual gurus, and leaders of the world. They advent novel ideas implicitly hoping they will take off. Some ideas take off, most don’t. Novel theories, intricate equations, aesthetic artworks, and medicinal therapies are advents.

It’s imperative for them to take into account the beneficial effects, and the potential misuses of the ideas they create. The burden of responsibility lies heavy on their shoulders.

The magnitude of the burden of responsibility is distributed unevenly

among different fields. Doctors and engineers handle a greater magnitude of this responsibility. They are trained to always hold in the back of their mind, “what if I am wrong?”. The hippocratic oath is an example of a high standard of ethical commitment. It’s important that people in this field realize what is at stake. God forbid, if they turn out to be terribly wrong about a medicine or a design, millions of lives could be lost. To avoid dire consequences, there is a long standing tradition of caution.

There is no hippocratic oath for a philosopher. Neither is there for a scientist or mathematician. In the fields auxiliary to the ones described, no assertions are made generally which can bring direct harm. What can a literary critic do to harm you? Hit you in the head with a copy of Homer’s Iliad or Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Grey?. A mathematician might inadvertently trip a student in the corridor as a prank... but that’s about how far it goes.

What is at stake for a philosopher or a mathematician is much less serious. If my research is on whether the concept of justice in Plato’s republic is rightly justified? Or if the concept of time is valid according to the new observations in string theory? Or if I can challenge my intellect and come up with a proof of Fermat’s Theorem. Let’s assume I turn out to be wrong, dead wrong. The most I risk losing is my ‘scholarly’ reputation.

However, the magnitude of the burden of responsibility increases significantly when philosophers aspire to dent the ‘real’ world (as opposed to the “academic” world). Many philosophers share this aspiration today. This is where they need to adopt the tradition and habits of the

practical science department. They must be duly credited for the productive effects of their ideas, and ruthlessly criticized for its misuses.

Note: In the next edition to this series, we discuss the “postmodernist” philosophers and their treatment of science.

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DID YOU KNOW?

You could sweat when you're anxious to alert others. One theory suggests we've evolved to sweat whilst anxious to alert the brains of other people around us so they are primed for whatever it is that's making us anxious. Brain scans have revealed that when you sniff the sweat of a panic-induced person, regions of the brain that handle emotional and social signals light up. When you're anxious your sympathetic nervous system releases hormones including adrenaline, which activates your sweat glands.

The Reformative Voice of MIAN MUHAMMAD BUKHSH: Sufi Wisdom in Punjabi Verse



Imran Khan
PhD Scholar, Writer
Dramatist, Poet

10 MINUTES READ

Mian Muhammad Bukhsh (1830–1907) stands as an eminent figure in Punjabi Sufi poetry, celebrated for his masterful blend of poetic beauty, spiritual insight, and reformative wisdom. Born in the village of Khari Sharif, near Mirpur in present-day Pakistan-administered Kashmir, Mian Muhammad Bukhsh composed verses that carried a profound moral and ethical message, often mixed with themes of divine love and human connection. His poetry, particularly his magnum opus *Saif-ul-Muluk*, has echoed deeply across generations and cultural boundaries, offering guidance for individual and societal reform.

Saif-ul-Muluk: A Journey of Spiritual Awakening

Mian Muhammad Bukhsh's most celebrated work, *Saif-ul-Muluk*, is a long mystical poem that follows the journey of a prince named *Saif-ul-Muluk*, who embarks on a quest for his beloved fairy, *Badi-ul-Jamal*. While it appears to be

a simple love story on the surface, the poem is deeply allegorical, with each episode symbolizing stages of spiritual awakening. In Bukhsh's world, the fairy represents divine beauty and truth, while the protagonist's journey reflects the soul's quest for the ultimate truth, leading to union with the Divine.

Through *Saif-ul-Muluk*, Bukhsh subtly encourages readers to introspect, urging them to navigate the inner struggles of pride, jealousy, and worldly desires to find peace and unity with the Divine.

*Saif-Muluk ander Rab paya buhta
asar danai.*

*Tēz tabiat, hosh wādiat, fehṁ aqal,
chitṛai*

God bestowed wisdom upon Prince *Saif-ul-Muluk*. He was clever, nimble, and sharp-minded, always quick to act and think.

Emphasis on Reform and Moral Conduct

One of Mian Muhammad Bukhsh's distinctive contributions to Sufi literature is his emphasis on social reform through individual transformation. He believed that societal

progress could only occur when individuals embraced values like kindness, honesty, humility, and patience. His poetry is filled with themes that encourage readers to act as agents of change, not just for personal gain but for the benefit of the community.

*Je lakh zuhd, ebadat kariay, bin
ishqun kis kari
Jan, jan ishq na saray tainun, ta,ta
nibhay na yari*

Without divine love, your prayers are meaningless. If the passionate fire of love does not burn within your heart and soul, you will never be able to truly connect with the beloved reality.

The Role of Compassion and Empathy

Bukhsh's poetry often emphasizes compassion and empathy as cornerstones of a just society. In a world prevalent with divisions based on caste, creed, and wealth, Bukhsh's verses call for an egalitarian outlook, encouraging people to look beyond superficial distinctions and see the divine spark in every individual. His poetry champions the value of love and compassion in everyday interactions, advocating for a world where people lift each other up rather than compete against each other.

*Bal charagh ishq da, maira roshan kr
de seena
Dil de deevay di rushnai, javay vich
zameenan*

Kindle the flame of love and illuminate my heart. May the glow of this humble lamp enrich the world with its light.

Humility as the Path to Divine Grace

Mian Muhammad Bukhsh's poetry places a high value on humility, an essential trait for anyone seeking spiritual fulfillment. He saw humility

not only as a personal virtue but as a form of respect toward the Divine, recognizing that all human achievements are ultimately granted by a higher power. His poems encourage readers to adopt an attitude of gratitude and humility, avoiding pride and arrogance, which he warns can lead to spiritual downfall.

A recurring theme in his work is the notion that humility brings one closer to the Divine. He frequently contrasts humble, self-effacing individuals with the arrogant, illustrating that only through modesty can one gain inner peace. This message challenges the reader to reject societal norms that often equate success with self-importance and encourages a gentler, more introspective approach to life.

*Loran wala reeha na khali lor keeti jis
sachi
Lor karaind jo mur aya, lor ohdi gin
kachi*

If someone does not attain the ultimate truth, it is evident that either their effort lacks persistence or they lack divine guidance or spiritual insight.

The Enduring Relevance of Mian Muhammad Bukhsh's Message

In an era where personal success is often measured by material wealth and social standing, Mian Muhammad Bukhsh's poetry offers a refreshing reminder of the timeless values that lead to true fulfillment. His verses, brimming with wisdom and compassion, call on readers to embrace a life of simplicity, humility, and service to others. Bukhsh's poetry is not limited by religious or cultural boundaries; its messages of love, unity, and morality are universal, appealing to anyone in search of a more meaningful life.

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The Baloch and Balochistan



Zubair Bajoi
Student, Analyst

03 MINUTES READ

Today, Balochistan refers to Pakistan's largest province by area, but its modern geography is markedly different from that of its ancient namesake. The Balochistan region is partitioned among Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and administratively, it is comprised of three separate entities: Pakistan's Balochistan province, Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan province, and the Afghan provinces of Nimruz, Helmand, and Kandahar, which are located in the country's southern part. Moreover, it is important to note that the Baloch people do not have their origins in the region currently known as Balochistan.

Historical and Geographical Overview of Balochistan

Balochistan's history stretches back to 4000 BC, with a strong historical background revealing the presence of ancient civilizations, its geographical

position making it an important trade route linking the Near East and Persia to the Sindh region and the wider subcontinent. The region's prehistory extends to the Paleolithic era, with notable sites like the Kachi Plain, where stone tools and fossils have been discovered, and the Bolan Valley, featuring ancient rock art and artifacts. The rise and fall of empires have left an indelible mark, with echoes of forgotten dynasties lingering in every valley. In ancient times, Balochistan was divided into two administrative states: Qaigan, comprising northern districts with its capital in Damb Sadaat, near Quetta, and the southern regions of Jhalawan, Makran, and Lasbela, with its capital near Nal, called Sohr Damb, with the fertile Surab valley being a disputed territory. The region was inhabited by various nations, including the Indus Valley Civilization, which controlled the coastal trade routes from Koh e Milan to Jiwani, connecting them to the Near East and Iran. Eventually another nation invaded and gained dominance over northern Baloch

istan. They were idolaters, worshipping Mata Devi and practicing animism. Archaeologists have discovered continuous evidence of human presence from the Stone Age to the Iron Age, with thriving civilizations flourishing from 3500 BC to 2000 BC, but afterwards, a prolonged period of drought and famine gradually began, transforming the region's landscape and population dynamics, with present-day desert areas having had a network of settlements and abundant resources in prehistoric and historical times, as evidenced by the Gabar Band and other water structures.

In 1600 BC, the Arians launched an invasion of Balochistan. In an inscription by Darius I, the emperor of Iran, a branch of the Sakas (Sacas), known as the Makas, gained control over the southern region and named it Makran (Makuran). These Sakas, who were ethnically Aryan, also made the Iranian region of Sistan famous. Cyrus the Great, the founder of Iran's first organized empire, brought this vast region under his dominion. In 325 BC, Alexander the Great, the Greek conqueror, marched towards Sindh, passing through the regions of Makran and Bela in Balochistan

during his conquest of the ancient Iranian empire. He was wounded in Multan during his invasion of India and, on his return journey, took the route through Makran, where a portion of his army perished due to the harsh weather and scarcity of food.

The Buddhist Era in Balochistan

The Mauryan dynasty of northern India, with its capital in Magadha, defeated Seleucus, the Greek general of Alexander the Great, who had gained control over the eastern regions (including Balochistan) after Alexander's death. The Mauryans then seized control of the Iranian provinces of Arachosia and Gedrosia. The entire coastline of Balochistan came under their sway, and their government also extended to Afghanistan and Punjab. The Gupta dynasty, which ruled for centuries, saw a significant flourishing of Buddhism during the reign of Chandra Gupta. Traces of the Gupta era can be found at various locations in Balochistan, particularly in the valleys of Hingol or Hinglaj, where remnants of Buddhism are present; notable sites include Nani Mandir and Hinglaj Mata.

Three centuries later, the Sassanian



dynasty of Iran overthrew the Buddhist government and reasserted control over Balochistan, extending their reach to the Indus River. However, persistent drought and harsh weather conditions prevented them from consolidating their grip. Internally, the region remained autonomous, and in some areas, the influence of Indian power and Delhi's rule also persisted.

The Arrival of the Arabs

After the advent of Islam, the second caliph, Hazrat Umar, sent an Arab group to assess the situation in Makran. This was a time when the Sassanian government of Iran was weakened due to internal divisions, and Balochistan was virtually independent. The Arab group observed some areas of Makran and reported back to the caliph that the region's disadvantages outweighed its advantages. They described the mountains and plains as equally difficult to traverse. The group's leader warned that a small army would risk being overwhelmed, while a larger army would face logistical challenges due to the scarcity of food and water. Hazrat Umar subsequently postponed plans to conquer Makran. However, the Arabs attacked and occupied the coastal regions of Balochistan again in 664 AD. As the Sassanian government weakened further, the Arabs gradually gained control over Balochistan. Yet, they struggled to maintain a strong presence due to the lack of resources, and their rule became ineffective. Eventually, the Arab governor was forced to flee. Remnants of the Arab settlement "Albaizah" near Nal still exist today. This location held significant importance during the Arab rule. Qandabil (Gandhara), Qusdar (Khuzdar), and Mastunj (Mastung) were

major trade centers during this period and enjoyed considerable fame.

The Invasion of Muhammad Bin Qasim

In 707 AD, the Arab conqueror Muhammad bin Qasim captured Makran and subdued Sindh, establishing a Muslim center there. He brought some Baloch tribesmen from Shiraz, who were granted jagirs (land grants) in Makran. Until the 10th century AD, Balochistan remained under the control of this Arab conqueror and his successors, but even during this period, the Arabs' primary focus remained on the fertile plains, where resources were abundant. They did not establish a strong government in Balochistan. When the caliphate weakened, Iran regained independence and incorporated Balochistan into its empire. However, local rulers continued to govern internally, exercising their own authority. The Sewa dynasty of Hindus held sway over Kalat.

Origins, Language and Culture

The Baloch are descendants of Arabs. The valleys between Aleppo and the Tigris are their ancient homeland and dwelling. They were followers of the Abrahamic faith. They were divided into tribes and remained subordinate to their chiefs. Herding cattle and camels was their means of livelihood. They continually migrated in search of lush pastures. Nomadism and pastoralism are inherent in their nature. The Baloch share traits of bravery, warrior spirit, and a tough life similar to the Arabs.

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MUSLIMS: RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL?



Nahin Sani
Doctor, Writer

04 MINUTES READ

Religion and spirituality; seeming identical terms revolving around belief systems, but are they identical? Both are dedicated to a Supreme God and a higher purpose. Their every action revolves around worshipping Allah and being good to others. However, if you look closely, you can separate the sugar and salt from the water. Let us filter out these traits.

Religious:

What does it mean to be religious? Being a religious person gives up the clue that one is a follower of an organized religion, such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, etc. Each organized religion has a divine scripture that one reads as a guide from their Creator and incorporates its teachings into one's daily life. Furthermore, because religion is organized, it involves a huge number of followers carrying out similar practices, co-existing as a society and

preaching their beliefs inside and outside of their faiths.

A religious person follows the teachings of his Creator because he considers himself subservient to Him. Allah's laws are eternal, hence it is his duty to act upon these laws, irrespective of whether he agrees with them, is comfortable with them or feels like implementing them or not. He fears Allah, because he knows death is outside of his control and he has to answer to Allah on the Day of Judgment for his every deed, hence his focus is not incurring the displeasure or disappointment of Allah.

Spiritual:

On the other hand, there isn't an organized group of spiritual followers as compared to that of religion. This is because spirituality is a personal journey of curious pondering and self-development. A spiritual person doesn't solely depend upon any scripture to increase his faith, nor does he habitually follow practices specific to a faith. A spiritual person achieves peace and contentment from his personally designed routine which

IMAGE SOURCE - ARTICLES FACTORY

can include yoga, meditating, spending time alone contemplating why things are the way they are, etc.

A spiritual person believes in a Creator but not because he is ordered to, but because he wants to. By pondering over the many creations Allah has made, how meticulously with time his life grew complex with its ups and downs, how he grew into who he is now and how there is always a bigger picture, he discovers himself that this whole world was created by Allah. This doesn't always require scientific evidence; just a deep level of understanding. Furthermore, he doesn't obey Allah's commands out of fear of Him but in fact the exact opposite; because he loves Him. He is truly grateful to Allah from the depths of his heart for all he has. He respects Allah, because he is worthy of much more and he knows that Allah loves him so however his life may be, he knows it's all for a higher purpose.

Religion vs. Spirituality?

It is possible that one is religious and not spiritual when engrossed in obeying and worshipping Allah but remains constantly in a state of fear of Him, works for the community of his faith but doesn't focus on his intellectual growth. It is possible that one is spiritual and not religious when he achieves a tremendous level of contentment based on what he feels is right, yet doesn't show his obedience or gratitude that is expected of him. Although both these terms have similarities and differences, we as Muslims may not completely fit into either one category. Religion has spiritual aspects, and vice versa.

As Muslims, we must follow the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) as obedient slaves but we are all not the same. We do not all reach the high status of a slave so quickly and

comfortably. Each of us cannot fulfill our obligations completely unless we traverse an individual spiritual journey that helps expand our mind, cleanses our soul and understand why this path is Sirat-ul-Mustaqeem. You can reach your goals at the age of 40, 30 or even 15, but that doesn't matter, because Allah doesn't want blind supporters, He wants us to be at peace with the Deen we have chosen for ourselves. He wants us to fear and love Him at the same time, fear death and prepare for it at the same time. Hence, being a whole Muslim requires a blend of both; a two-way relationship of us giving our obedience and Allah granting us blessings.

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Did You Know?

Animals can experience time differently from humans. To smaller animals, the world around them moves more slowly compared to humans. Salamanders and lizards, for example, experience time more slowly than cats and dogs. This is because the perception of time depends on how quickly the brain can process incoming information.



"Enlighten Islamic Values": 44th Annual Conference by Azeem Educational Conference

AEM

06 MINUTES READ

The Enlighten Islamic Values Conference, organized by Azeem Educational Conference (Rgd.), Islamabad, took place on October 13, 2024, at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts Islamabad. The conference was held under the patronage of Dr. Muhammad Azeem Farooqi. This year's event continued the organization's 44-year tradition of honoring the life and contributions of the Second Caliph of Islam, Hazrat Umar ibn al-Khattab (R.A), also known as Farooq-e-Azam (R.A). The conference brought together Islamic scholars, educators, and participants from diverse backgrounds to reflect on Islamic teachings, particularly the enduring legacy of Hazrat Umar (R.A), and their signifi-

icance in addressing contemporary challenges. The conference also served as a memorial reference for Sahibzada Muhammad Ahmed Farooqi.

First Session:

The conference commenced with the **Recitation of the Holy Quran** and a **Naat**. The first session featured multiple esteemed speakers who delivered thought-provoking talks on various Islamic topics.

The first speaker, **Miss Fouzia Azeem Farooqi**, Principal of Al Fauzul Azeem International Quran Academy (AFAIQA) delivered a lecture on *Islaah-e-Ahwaal - Surah Asr ki Roshni Mein* (Reforming Actions in the Light of Surah Al-Asr). She emphasized the importance of self-improvement, patience, and mutual encouragement

towards truth and perseverance as essential elements for personal and communal growth.

Following her, **Muhammad Faisal Chauhan**-an internationally renowned IT expert- provided a critical analysis on Information Technology and Propagation of Islam. Muhammad Faisal Chauhan offered insightful perspectives on how information technology can be effectively utilized for the global dissemination of Islamic teachings. He drew attention to the role of digital platforms in making Islamic knowledge more accessible and engaging to audience worldwide.

Next, **Prof. Dr. Muhammad Azeem Farooqi** introduced the audience to the core themes and objectives of the conference, setting the tone for the day's discussions.

Second Session:

The second session began with a

scholarly talk by **Umer Nawaz Farooqi**, Chartered Accountant, who spoke on *Seerat e Farooq e Azam (R.A), Asr e Hazir kay Tanazur Mein* (The Life of Hazrat Umar Farooq (R.A) and the Modern World. He related the qualities of Hazrat Umar (R.A) to the contemporary world, drawing parallels between his leadership style and the needs of today's society.

Following this, **Prof. Muhammad Waseem Farooqi**, a religious scholar, discussed *Hazrat Umar (R.A) ka Faqr* (The Humility of Hazrat Umar), elaborating on the remarkable simplicity and asceticism that defined Hazrat Umar's (R.A) leadership, despite his immense responsibilities as a ruler.

A highlight of the session was a heartfelt performance by the children of **AFAIQ** (Al Fouzul Azeem International Quran Academy), where they recited **Hamd, Naat**, and selections from the works of **Allama Iqbal**, a



renowned philosopher-poet. Their captivating performance filled the room with spiritual energy and cultural pride. The performance was orchestrated by Mr. and Mrs. Abrar Ahmed Bazmi, under supervision of Prof. Fauzia Azeem Farooqi principal (AFAIQA). Following the performance, **Barrister Muhammad Asif Raza Farooqi** took the stage to speak on *Europe mein Tarveej e Islam kay Taqaze*

throughout 2023-2024. This was followed by a short film screening titled "*Sacha Hamdard*" (The True Sympathizer), written by Abrar Ahmed Bazmi, directed by Muhammad Ali Farooqi and produced by **The Curtain Raiser Productions** which was well received by the audience. In the final part of the session, **Dr. Muhammad Umer Farooqi**, joining online from the United States, shared



(The Challenges for Spreading Islam in Europe). He provided an insightful analysis of the challenges and opportunities faced by Muslims in Europe, offering practical suggestions for the effective propagation of Islamic teachings in non-Muslim societies. A documentary was then screened, showcasing the accomplishments of the Azeem Educational Conference and its affiliated organizations

his thoughts on the growth of Islam in the USA. His message resonated with the audience, highlighting the global efforts to promote Islamic values. Speeches by **Dr. Abdul Rehman Ranjha** and **Dr. Abu Bakr Siddique Farooqi Hazarvi** added further depth to the discussion, reflecting on various aspects of the life and legacy of Hazrat Umar (R.A). The conference concluded with the

traditional ceremony of *Dastar Bandi*. The final address was delivered by **Dr. Muhammad Azeem Farooqi**, the Pattern-In-Chief, who gave a detailed lecture on the life of Hazrat Umar (R.A). He shared several incidents from Hazrat Umar's life that offered profound lessons for self-improvement, leadership, and personal conduct. Dr. Muhammad Azeem Farooqi urged the attendees to apply

tance of Islamic values, especially in today's rapidly changing world, and the enduring relevance of Hazrat Umar's (R.A) exemplary life.

Prof. Imran Khan Farooqi hosted the event. The management team included Muhammad Ali Farooqi, Prof. Muhammad Waheed Rasheed Farooqi, Abrar Bazmi, Muhammad Naeem Anwar Farooqi, Dilshan Aslam Farooqi, Romail Iqbal Farooqi Ch. Fayyaz



these timeless lessons to their own lives to achieve success both in this world and the Hereafter.

The event ended with **Zikr** and **Dua**, a collective prayer, leaving the participants spiritually enriched and inspired to uphold the values of Islam in their daily lives.

This 44th Annual Conference by Azeem Educational Conference served as a reminder of the impor

Ahmed, Ch. Zulfqar, and many AEC volunteers.

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EMBRACING ISLAMIC VALUES IN MODERN TIMES: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE



Dr. Muhammad Azeem Farooqi
Religious Scholar, Academician,
Researcher

05 MINUTES READ

As rapid changes continue to drive cultural shifts and challenges, the urgency to reconnect with your core values that promote unity, resilience, and purpose has never been greater. Recognizing this, the Azeem Educational Conference Regd. organized its 44th annual event, the Enlighten Islamic Values Conference 2024. At this esteemed gathering, Dr. Muhammad Azeem Farooqi, Patron in Chief AEC, delivered an inspiring presidential address that underscored the enduring relevance of Islamic principles. His address, marked by sincerity and depth, emphasized the timeless relevance of Islamic principles, which have the potential to guide individuals, communities, and societies toward enlightenment, unity, and resilience in a rapidly changing world.

The address began with an invocation of blessings, setting a reverent tone for an exploration of Islamic ideals and virtues. Dr. Farooqi spoke

passionately about the dawn of a new era- an era of enlightenment and knowledge that he envisions spanning from the east to the west. According to Dr. Farooqi, this era of enlightenment is to be fueled by individuals deeply committed to Islamic principles, including distinguished scholars and experts from various fields who can act as beacons of faith, wisdom, and progress.

Upholding Islamic Values in Adversity

A core theme of Dr. Farooqi's address was the importance of adhering to Islamic values, especially in challenging times. He underscored the need to follow the Sunnah (practices of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the Shariah (Islamic law) as foundational to confronting adversity. In support of this, he drew upon quotes from revered Islamic figures that highlighted the essence of Islam, the Quran, and the role of faith in sustaining the human spirit.

He shared personal observations of extraordinary faith demonstrated by certain individuals, whose devotion was so intense that they experienced

miraculous events and signs of divine approval. These remarkable instances of faith, he noted, serve as powerful reminders of the potential within each individual to connect with the divine and lead lives guided by deep spiritual commitment. By recounting such experiences, Dr. Farooqi illustrated the unique and uplifting power of Islamic faith and values.

Purpose and Duty of Muslims

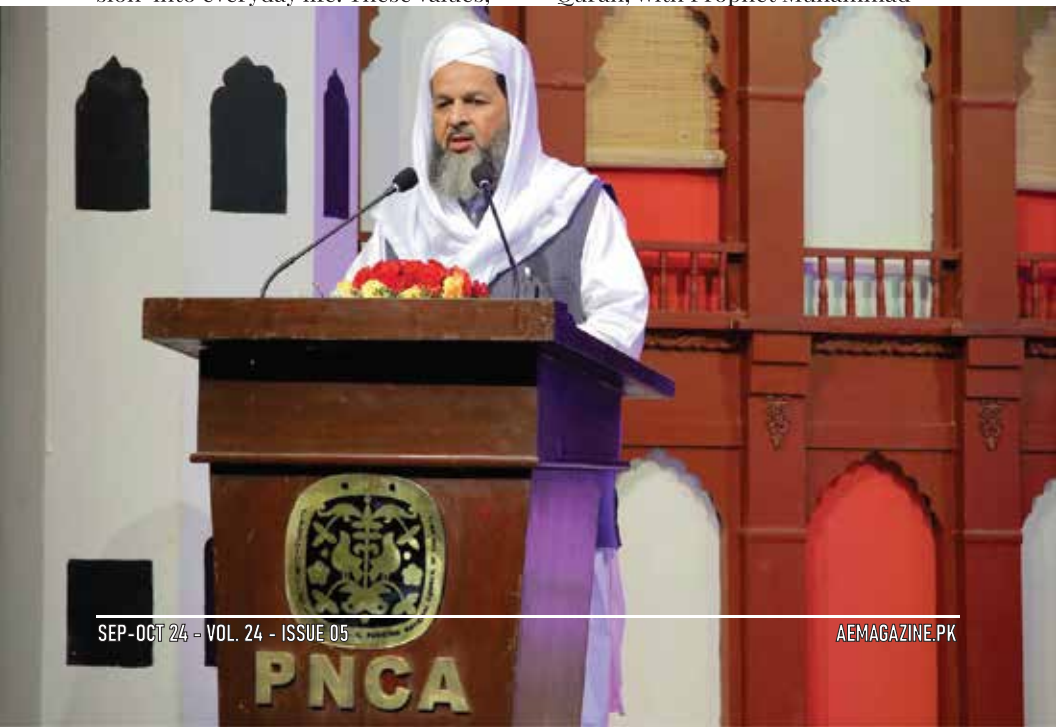
In his address, Dr. Farooqi further elaborated on the purpose of life as guided by Islamic teachings. He drew attention to the fact that Muslims have a duty to fulfill their responsibilities with sincerity and to seek guidance from Almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad (SAW). He reminded the audience that this commitment involves integrating Islamic values—such as honesty, integrity, responsibility, and compassion—into everyday life. These values,

he explained, are the cornerstones of personal and societal well-being.

According to Dr. Farooqi, Islamic values hold transformative power that goes beyond personal conduct to positively impact broader social structures. He stressed that embracing patience, humility, and gratitude fosters resilience and harmony in communities, particularly in difficult times. Such qualities, he argued, not only uphold individual character but also promote collective strength and solidarity.

The Superiority of Islam and the Quran

Dr. Farooqi spoke with great reverence about the status of Islam as a religion and the Quran as the ultimate guide for humanity. He put stress on that no other religion or book compares to the depth, wisdom, and guidance provided by Islam and the Quran, with Prophet Muhammad



(SAW) serving as the ideal model for all. His reflections on the beauty and completeness of Islamic teachings served to remind the audience of the profound blessings and responsibilities of being Muslim.

Moreover, Dr. Farooqi expressed his belief that Islam will one day prevail as the dominant religion globally. He predicted that, within the next century, Islam will remain the guiding light for humanity, driven by its inherent strength, purity, and relevance in addressing human needs and aspirations. This conviction, he explained, underscores the importance of preserving Islamic identity and passing down these values to future generations.

Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Legacy of Humility and Respect

Dr. Farooqi took time to reflect on the humility and respect that defined Prophet Muhammad's character. He shared the story of how, after the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) chose to sit with an oppressed individual in the Ka'aba rather than alongside his most prominent companions. This action exemplifies the Islamic values of humility and respect, qualities that are as relevant today as they were over a millennium ago. Dr. Farooqi

highlighted that the Prophet's compassion toward the marginalized and oppressed serves as a timeless lesson in upholding human dignity and justice.

Honoring Prominent Islamic Figures and Their Values

Dr. Farooqi also honored the contributions of various historical Islamic figures, such as Hazrat Usama bin Zaid (R.A) and Hazrat Imam Hasan Basri, who, despite humble origins, achieved high status through their devotion to Islam. These figures, he argued, exemplify the egalitarian nature of Islam, which grants honor and respect based on piety and character rather than lineage. He called attention to the lives of other renowned Islamic personalities, like Siddiq Akbar (R.A), Farooq Azam (R.A), and Hazrat Ali (R.A), whose commitment to justice and truth shaped the foundational principles of Islamic governance and society.

Lessons from Abu Bakr (R.A) and Umar e Farooq (R.A)

In addressing the current challenges faced by the Muslim world, Dr. Farooqi invoked the exemplary leadership of Abu Bakr (R.A) and Umar e Farooq (R.A). He urged the audience to follow these figures for guidance on moral and ethical principles that remain



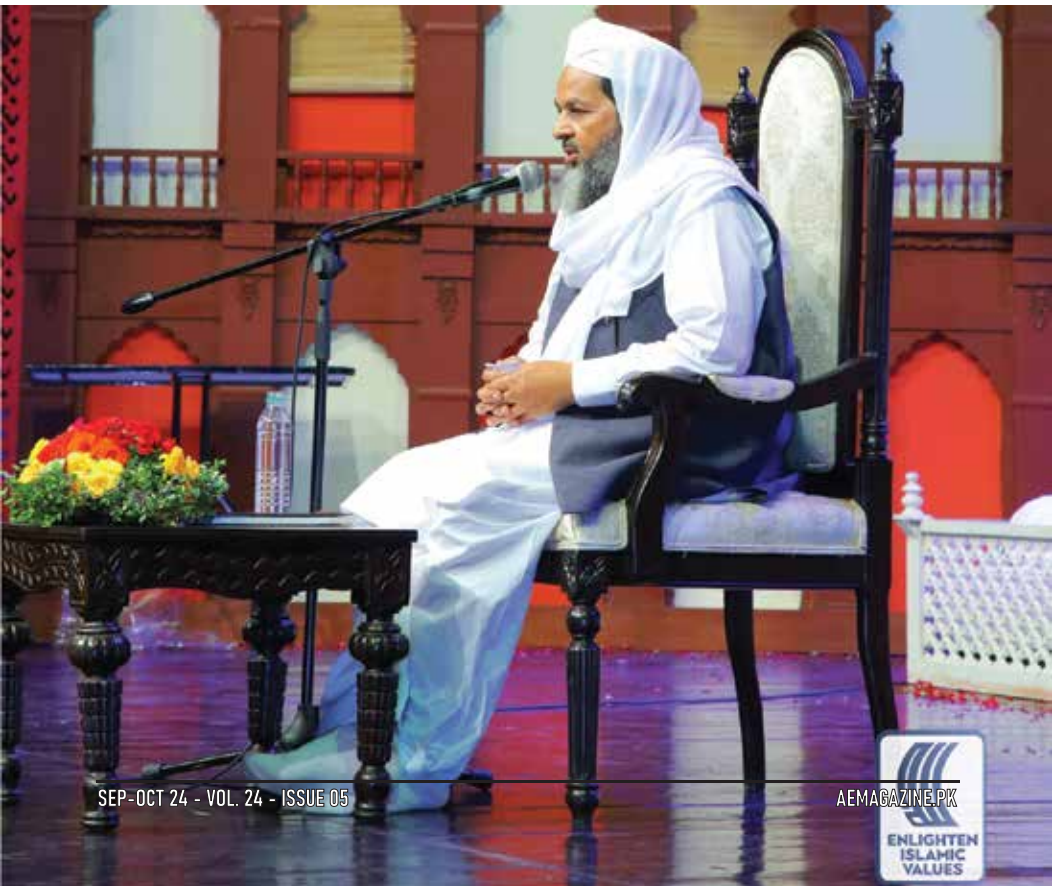
relevant today. By studying the lives of these early leaders, he argued, Muslims can find effective solutions to modern issues while staying true to the values that have sustained the Muslim community for centuries.

Conclusion: Embracing a Legacy of Islamic Values

Dr. Farooqi's address at the Enlighten Islamic Values Conference was a profound call to action for Muslims worldwide. He reminded listeners of the timeless relevance of Islamic values, such as integrity, compassion, and humility, in both personal and public life. Through these values, Muslims can contribute to a world

grounded in justice, unity, and respect for all.

His words served as an inspiration for those present, urging them to uphold the principles of Islam as a guiding force in times of adversity and change. Dr. Farooqi's address highlighted the need for continued faith, resilience, and unity in the pursuit of a harmonious society that reflects the best of Islamic teachings. As he concluded, he expressed hope that Muslims everywhere would rise to this challenge, becoming torchbearers of a brighter future for generations to come.





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