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# **Muhammad Omar Iftikhar's Articles and Columns in Dawn**



**DAWN**



# DAWN

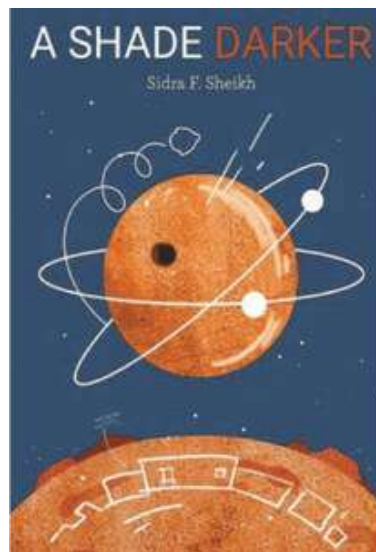
E-PAPER | JUNE 15, 2025

## FICTION: SATIRE AND COSMIC STAKES

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published April 27, 2025



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### A Shade Darker

By Sidra F. Sheikh

Windy Beach Books

ISBN: 9786279457806

270pp.

When Sidra F. Sheikh released her debut science fiction novel, *The Light Blue Jumper* in 2017, she gave Pakistani literature something remarkable — a genuinely original sci-fi story that balanced cosmic stakes with razor-sharp wit.

Seven years later, the sequel *A Shade Darker* proves this wasn't just beginner's luck but the emergence of a significant voice in speculative fiction.

Sidra's debut introduced us to Zaaro Nian, one of contemporary Pakistani sci-fi's memorable antiheroes — a pale blue, perpetually anxious being whose watery eyes and bald head concealed an extraordinary power. Like a cosmic reinterpretation of Harry Potter's Dobby, Zaaro's accidental ability to teleport across time and space made him the rebellion's unlikely linchpin against the tyrannical Inter-Planetary Forces (IPF).

The first novel was a blend of space opera grandeur with situational comedy, where bureaucratic absurdities often proved deadlier than laser battles. *A Shade Darker* picks up five years after the rebellion's explosive climax from *The Light Blue Jumper*, trading revolutionary magnetism for the more complex challenge of governance.

*The sequel to The Light Blue  
Jumper has deeper themes  
and more ambitious  
worldbuilding, while  
retaining the sci-fi novel's  
trademark wit and heart*

As Sheikh explains: "It shows readers what happens after the big win. When the rebellion is successful — what comes next?" This premise allows the sequel to explore thematic territory while retaining the franchise's signature humour and political satire. Zaaro and his misfit crew return, now wrestling with political infighting, resource shortages and the IPF's influence.



The sequel explores moral ambiguity, as the victory hasn't magically solved everything and our "heroes" must make increasingly questionable decisions. Sidra does balance these heavier themes with the debut novel's characteristic wit, ensuring the philosophical introspections never become awkward.

Where *A Shade Darker* shines is in its character development, Madam X, the Resistance's no-nonsense leader, evolves from straightforward revolutionary to a pragmatic stateswoman. Her relationship with the Good Doctor (heading the wonderfully absurd Ministry of Misinformation) provides both comic relief and moving commentary on post-revolution disillusionment.

Zaaro remains the heart of the story, his involuntary jumps through spacetime now carrying greater emotional weight. Once purely comic relief, his appearances take on sombre whispers as he struggles with his legend versus what the reality bears for all. Commander Lethalwulf (a double agent with his own agenda) enriches the narrative and the stakes while reprising his role in the sequel.

Sidra's universe expands organically in the sequel. The Ulronians — aliens whose marital customs include moustache-based in-law bonding and surprise weddings — exemplify her imaginative worldbuilding. These fun details don't feel forced; they celebrate diversity in a galaxy trying to unite. The question remains: will the galactic characters ever come on the same page or will they continue with their oppressive ways?

The IPF's Orwellian rebranding as "Inter-Planetary Friendship" provides biting satire of authoritarian propaganda, while Central Command — the coldly logical

AI enforcer — becomes a more formidable antagonist precisely because of its impersonal efficiency.

*Sidra draws clear parallels to real-world issues of imperialism and polarisation without ever becoming preachy. The Central Command's character design bears traces of Otto, the AI autopilot from WALL-E (2008), and HAL 9000 from 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968). Like Otto, it serves as an automated overseer, and like HAL it exhibits a chillingly calm presence.*

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The author Sidra F. Sheikh

Some figures in the story may initially feel derivative — shaped by iconic sci-fi themes — but Sidra introduces enough originality to distinguish them. The Central Command’s role diverges from its predecessors in key ways. Unlike HAL, it lacks outright malice and, unlike Otto, it isn’t purely comedic.

Instead, it personifies a bureaucratic, systemic antagonist, reflecting modern anxieties about AI governance and its far-reaching impact and influence. Sidra’s worldbuilding further sets it apart; the story’s unique setting and rules prevent the AI from feeling like a recycled archetype — which brings a fresh perspective in her writing.

While HAL and Otto represent distinct eras of AI in cinema — one a cautionary symbol of cold logic, the other a satirical take on automation — Sidra’s Central Command merges these ideas into something relatable. It’s a testament to her ability to draw from classics while developing a narrative that stands on its own. The result is a character that feels familiar yet innovative, paying homage to the past without being constrained by it.

Readers will identify nods to various sci-fi touchstones: the teleportation tech evokes Star Trek, certain political dynamics recall Battlestar Galactica, and the absurdist humour links to Douglas Adams' The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. Yet Sidra synthesises these influences into something she can call her own.

The sequel particularly excels in its character work — Salaar's transformation from "dashing good guy" to morally compromised leader is handled with impressive detailing. Furthermore, the novel's shifting perspectives — jumping from Resistance leaders to double agents to ordinary citizens — create a rich enigma of intergalactic politics.

Sidra smartly balances action sequences with character moments, knowing exactly when to undercut tension with humour. The climactic battle, featuring Zaaro's near-mythical confrontation with IPF forces, delivers a spectacle and an emotional payoff.

Beyond its entertainment value, *A Shade Darker* represents an important milestone for Pakistani literature. It proves local authors can create sci-fi having social allegories that entertains and sends readers into introspection. Especially the novel's exploration of post-revolution challenges does feel apt in our era of global political challenges.

*A Shade Darker* improves upon its predecessor in nearly every way — deeper themes, richer character development, more ambitious worldbuilding — while retaining the original novel's trademark humour, satire, wit and heart. It cements Sidra as one of Pakistani literature's most exciting voices and *The Light Blue Jumper* series as essential reading for sci-fi fans.

*The writer is a columnist and an author of two science fiction novels: **Divided Species** and **Player AI**.*

*Published in Dawn, Books & Authors, April 27th, 2025*

# DAWN

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## CULTURE: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published February 9, 2025

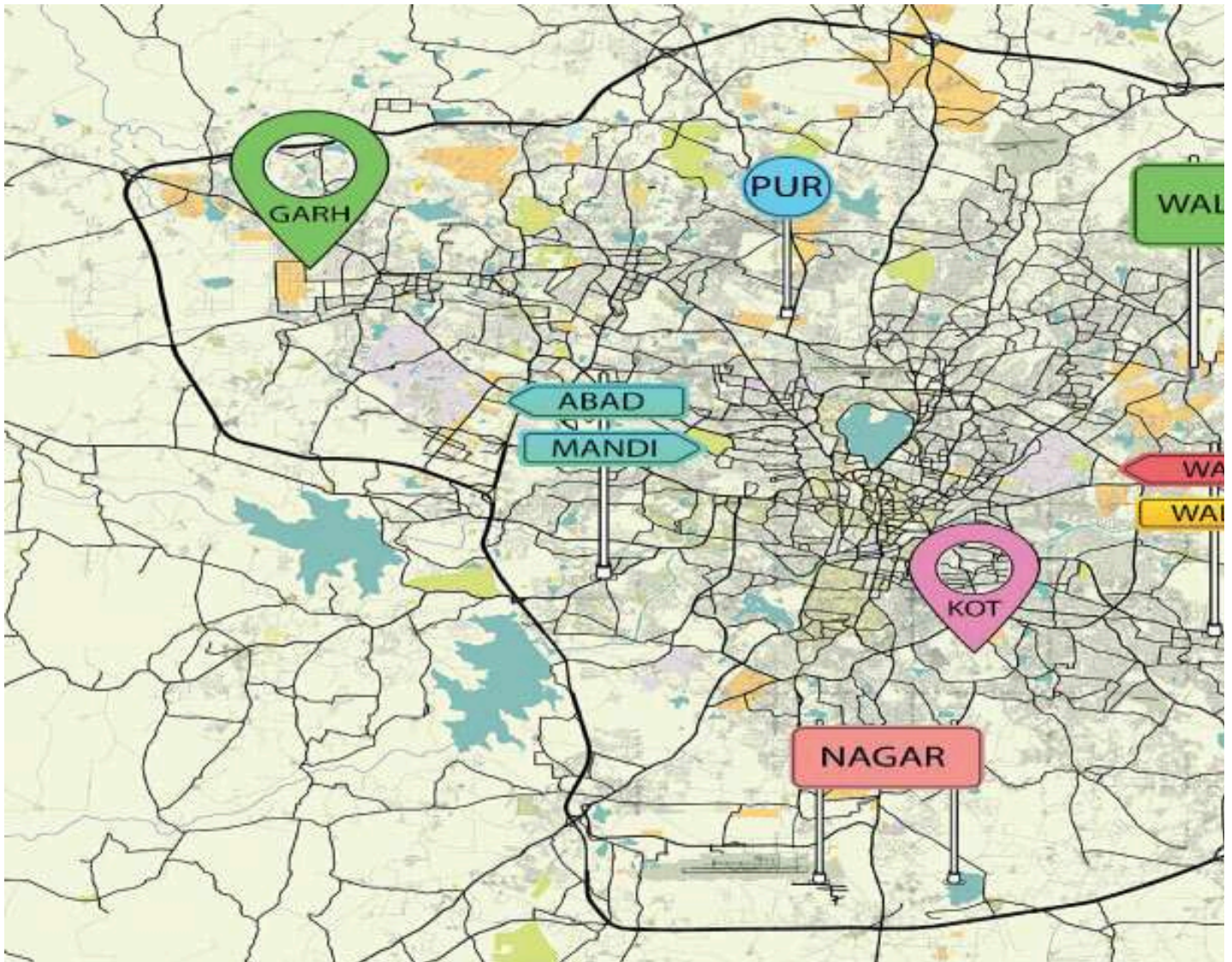


Illustration by Sarah Durrani



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**Cities are more than mere points on a map; they are living narratives, reflecting the history, culture, and evolving identity of a region. Pakistan, with its deep-rooted civilisations, dynasties and**

**diverse cultural influences, is home to cities whose names serve as echoes of their past. These names often reveal clues about the cities' geographical, historical or cultural significance. From the remnants of ancient empires to the markers of modern development, each city tells a unique story.**

In his book *Nagar Nagar Punjab*, renowned historian and award-winning researcher Asad Saleem Sheikh delves into the rich tapestry of Punjab's cities and towns, seamlessly blending the chronicles of ancient and modern settlements. Shaikh traces the evolution of human habitation from ancient times to the present, exploring cities established during pivotal eras, including the Delhi Sultanate, Mughal, Sikh, British and post-Independence periods of Pakistan. This article draws on some key insights from his work, alongside reflections from its author.

Many cities and towns in Pakistan feature distinctive suffixes or prefixes, such as 'Nagar', 'Abad', 'Pur' and 'Mandi'. These terms are more than mere linguistic markers; they reflect the heritage and evolution of these places, each with its unique etymology that reveals the stories of the people and events that have shaped these regions.

The suffix 'Nagar', meaning 'city' or 'town' in Sanskrit, is commonly found in the names of cities and towns across Pakistan, particularly in the Punjab region. Historically, it was used throughout South Asia to denote urban areas and became more widespread during significant periods, such as the Mughal and British empires, when settlements were either established or expanded into prominent urban centres.



*Behind every city and town  
name in Pakistan lies a tale —  
of empires, saints and  
historical evolution.  
Muhammad Omar Iftikhar  
explores the linguistic legacy  
and etymology of these names  
and what they reveal about  
our collective past...*

For example, Bahawalnagar was originally known as Rojhanwali, a small settlement consisting of only a few huts and shacks. In 1904, when Nawab Mohammad Bahawal Khan Abbasi, the ruler of Bahawalpur State, visited Rojhanwali, the local people requested his permission to rename the town in his honour.

Similarly, Phool Nagar, formerly known as Bhai Pheru, is located in the Kasur district of Punjab, Pakistan. This city is named after Rana Phool Muhammad Khan, a former minister of the area who contributed significantly to its development.

## **LINGUISTIC MARKERS**

The suffix 'Pur' has its linguistic roots in Sanskrit and Prakrit, where it translates to 'town' or 'city'. Historically, it was widely used in ancient and mediaeval South Asia, particularly in regions influenced by Hindu and, later, Muslim cultures. Derived from the Sanskrit word pura — meaning settlement, city or fortified town — the term holds



historical significance and reflects the region's long-standing urban traditions.

For example, the town of Bahawalpur was originally known as Bahamanabad. In 1729, Nawab Amir Bahawal Khan rose to power and transformed Bahamanabad into the capital of his state, renaming it Bahawalpur in his own honour.

Similarly, in 1783, Mir Sohrab Khan Talpur established his rule over Upper Sindh and chose Burahan as his capital. Three years later, in 1786, he renamed it Khairpur.

Another example is Haripur, which was established in 1822 by Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, a notable Sikh general. The city was named in his honour, further reflecting the tradition of naming places after influential leaders who shaped the region's history.

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Many cities in the region include the word 'Mandi' in their names, a term signifying a market or trade centre in local languages such as Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi. This reflects towns or settlements historically recognised as commercial hubs, often serving as key locations for the exchange of agricultural goods or livestock. Over time, these market centres expanded into larger settlements and urban areas, yet the Mandi suffix or prefix has remained intact.

A prime example is Mandi Bahauddin, a city whose name combines two elements: Mandi, denoting a market, and Bahauddin, derived from the nearby village of Pindi Bahauddin, now part of the town. The Mandi prefix underscores the area's historical significance as a bustling grain market, while Bahauddin links the town to its neighbouring village, emphasising its connection to the region's broader cultural and geographic landscape.

## **OF SAINTS AND SETTLEMENTS**

Similarly, the suffix 'Garh', meaning fort, stronghold, or fortified place, is often associated with areas historically linked to military settlements, forts or fortifications. These structures were primarily built for defence, protecting local populations and critical trade routes from potential threats. Over time, places with this suffix evolved into towns and cities, yet their fort-related origins remain embedded in their names.

One notable example is Garh Maharaja, located in the Jhang district of Punjab, Pakistan. Known as the 'City of

Saints', it is home to the revered Sufi shrine of Sultan Bahu. Another example is Muzaffargarh, a city in Pakistan named after Nawab Muzaffar Khan, who founded it in 1794. The name translates to 'Fort of Muzaffar', reflecting its origins as a fortified settlement.

The suffixes 'Wal', 'Wala' and 'Wali' are commonly found in the names of cities and towns, originating from Persian and Arabic influences. These suffixes generally signify a relationship, ownership or association. Specifically, Wala is derived from the Persian and Arabic word Wali, meaning "one who possesses" or "is associated with" something. In this context, the suffix typically refers to someone belonging to or residing in a particular place.

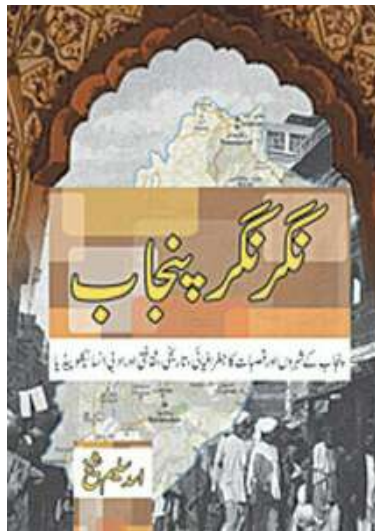
For example, the name Mianwali traces its origin to the Sufi saint Mian Ali, whose legacy is deeply connected to the region. This area has a rich history, dating back to the Indus Valley Civilisation, and has witnessed the rule of several prominent figures in South Asian history, including Alexander the Great, Qutb Shah, Mughal Emperor Babur, Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali. The combination of historical depth and spiritual significance underscores the importance of this suffix in regional nomenclature.

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Likewise, Gujranwala derives its name from the Gujjar tribe, which inhabits northern Punjab. The name translates to ‘Abode of the Gujjars’ in Punjabi. One local story suggests the town was named after a Gujjar named Choudhry Gujjar, who owned a Persian wheel that supplied water to the town.

In the case of Jaranwala, another town in the region, the name originates from a bohar or bargad [banyan] tree, famously known as the Jaranwala Bohar. The name itself combines two Punjabi words: ‘Jaran’, meaning roots, and ‘Wala’, meaning place. This connection to nature further emphasises the significance of the suffix in linking the identity of a place to its defining features.



## HONOURING A LEGACY

The origin of Burewala's name is less clear, with multiple theories surrounding its development. One suggests that it was named after a person named Burha, possibly a Sikh. The village was also referred to as 'Purana Boora' or 'Old Bura.' According to one account, the villagers constructed a well called Chah Boorhay Wala [Well of Burha]. This well became part of the Pakpattan Islam Link Canal, leading to the naming of the new city as Burewala, further strengthening its association.

Additionally, many cities feature the suffix 'Abad', derived from Persian, where Abad means inhabited, populated, prosperous or developed. This suffix signifies a place that is well-established or flourishing due to human settlement or communities. For example, Faisalabad is named after King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. The name reflects not only its connection to the monarch, but also its growth and prosperity in recent decades. Similarly, Islamabad, the planned capital of Pakistan, symbolises modernity and prosperity, echoing the nation's aspirations for development.

One notable city with the Abad suffix is Hyderabad, founded in 1768 by Ghulam Shah Kalhora of the Kalhora Dynasty, on the site of the ancient town of Neroon Kot. The city remained the chief town of Sindh until 1843, when it surrendered to the British after the Battle of Miani, and the capital was moved to Karachi. Named in honour of Hazrat Ali, the son-in-law of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Hyderabad's name translates literally as "Lion City", derived from haydar, meaning lion.

Another city with the suffix Abad is Sadiqabad, named after Sadeq Mohammad Khan V, the ruling nawab of the Bahawalpur state. The city, inaugurated in 1948, is a tehsil in the Rahim Yar Khan district of Punjab province.

Moreover, Abbottabad, founded in 1853, is named after Maj James Abbott, an English military officer in the Bengal Army and an administrator in British India. He is often regarded as the first British deputy commissioner of the region.

Jacobabad, a city in Sindh, Pakistan, was founded in 1847 by Brig-Gen John Jacob, an officer of the British East India Company. Jacob, known for establishing the town and founding the cavalry regiment 36th Jacob's Horse, spent much of his career in colonial India. The city's name honours his legacy in the region.

Another example is Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, which was founded in 1646 by Sultan Muzaffar Khan, the chief of the Bomba tribe. Khan also constructed the Red Fort that same year, to protect the area from incursions by the Mughal Empire.

Wazirabad, established in the 17th century by Wazir Khan, who served as the governor and later the grand vizier under Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, has a rich history. Over the centuries, the town came under various rulers, including Charat Singh in the mid-18th century, Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1809, and the Jarral Rajputs of Rajouri in 1855. The new town they built featured a wide, straight bazaar with side streets arranged at right angles, a design that still defines the town today.

Certain cities feature the suffix or prefix 'Kot', referring to a fort, stronghold or settlement, and originating from the Persian word Kot or Qut, meaning a fortified place. These towns were often strategically located near rivers, trade routes or borders, underscoring their military, trade or administrative importance. The usage of Kot also reflects the cultural influences of Persian, Sanskrit and Indo-Aryan civilisations, particularly during periods such as the Mughal Empire and the Delhi Sultanate.

For instance, Umerkot takes its name from Umer Soomro, a local ruler of Sindh from the Soomra dynasty. The city is famous for the folktale of Umar Marvi, a tragic romance also included in the renowned Shah Jo Risalo.

Similarly, Kot Addu is named after Addu Khan Mirani, a leader from the Mirani tribe. This ancient and historically significant town, founded in 1500 by the Mirani chief Addu Khan, is renowned for its beauty and tranquility.

Additionally, Shahdadkot, located in Pakistan, was named after its founder, Shahdad Khan Khuhawar. Initially part of the Larkana district, Shahdadkot became the focal point of a new district, Qambar Shahdadkot, created by the government in 2005. The district was originally named

Qambar, but the name Shahdadt was added following objections from the city's residents.

Sialkot, one of Pakistan's most important industrial cities, boasts a very ancient history. It was founded by Raja Sul and later reconstructed by Raja Salivahian, who also built a fort in the city. As a result, the city was named Sialkot, which translates to 'Fort of Sial', emphasising its historical and military significance.

It is essential for us, especially for future generations, to understand the history of the places within Pakistan. By connecting with our past, we can better appreciate our present and work towards building a brighter future.

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## DAWN

E-PAPER | JUNE 15, 2025

# Power of the written word

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published February 1, 2025

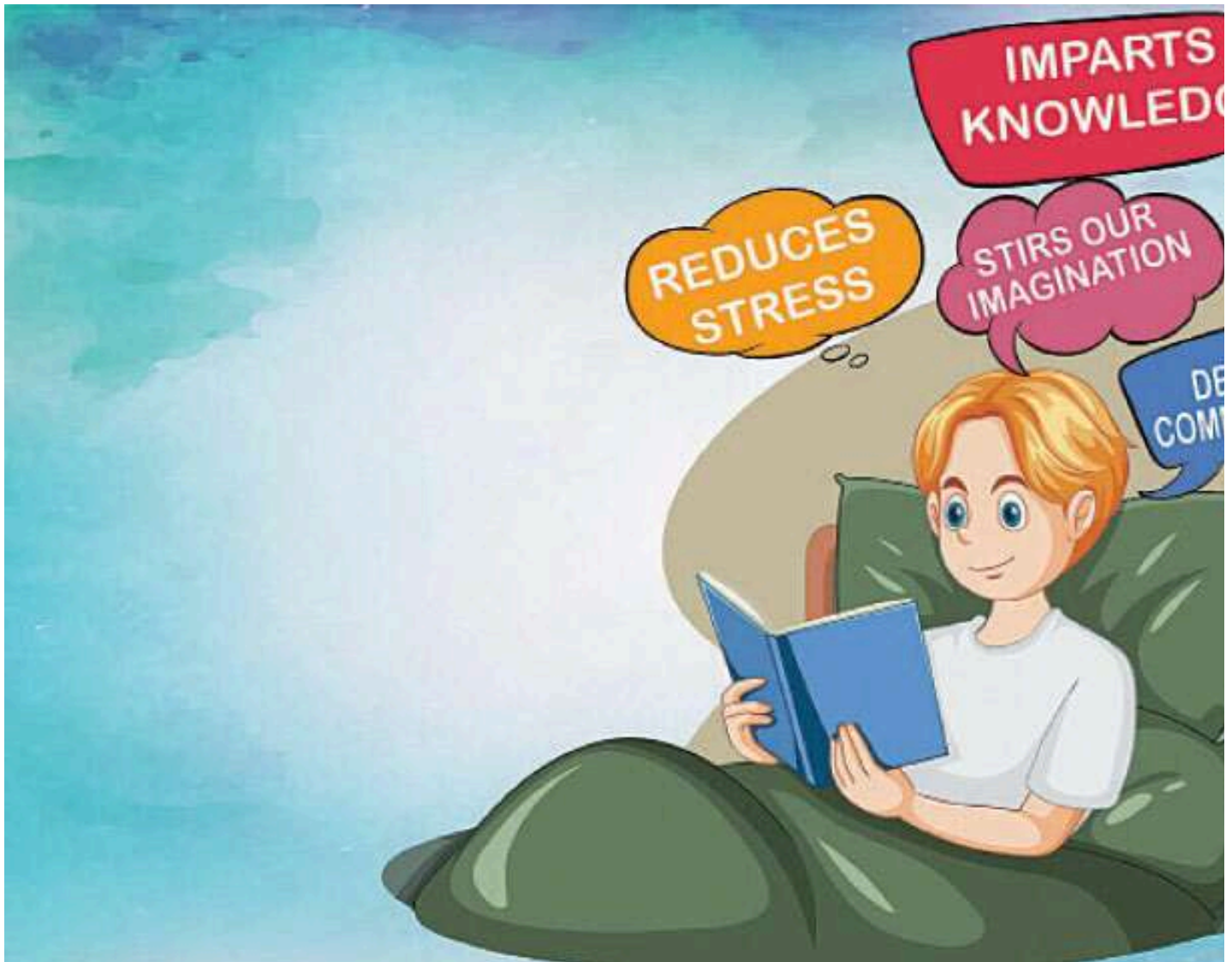


Illustration by Sumbul



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**Book reading is not just a habit. When pursued with dedication and interest, it becomes a lifestyle that integrates itself into our daily routine. The habit of book reading is essential for cognitive**

**development, learning new vocabulary and, in the long run, acquiring knowledge. Moreover, reading fiction stirs our imagination and explores emotions and situations we might never encounter in real life, while reading non-fiction allows us to experience diverse perspectives, gain knowledge and develop a deeper understanding of real-world issues and events.**

In this article, I will explain some of the key benefits of reading books to help you incorporate this valuable habit into your daily routine.

**Improves cognitive stimulation:** Reading is an exercise for the mind. When we read anything, it helps us develop our imagination, as well as creative thinking skills.

To get the most from reading, you must focus on each word at a time, so that it stays in your mind and you develop an understanding of its meaning. Our cognition develops when we observe, question and ponder the information we are reading.

**Develops emotional intelligence:** Reading helps us in developing our emotional intelligence. So when reading fiction, through the characters' journey, we gain a sense of empathy. Similarly, by reading historical accounts and biographies that come under the non-fiction genre, you learn about the struggles and sacrifices, the political and social situations and other information about all those who have shaped the history of this world.

**Reduces stress:** If you are under stress and want to divert your mind, then reading is one of the best activities. You can take a break from the monotonous routine of your

school life or official chores, while entering into a world of fiction or non-fiction that provides relief from the daily grind.

It is advised that you keep a journal or diary with you when reading and keep writing down key points from the book, the phrases or sentences you may find unique or the words that you may not be too familiar with. This exercise will relieve stress and give you an engaging activity to pursue.

Develops communication: If you are aspiring to be a writer, then the habit of book reading is the first step to help you become one. Reading develops our sense of writing sentences, gives us a direction of what narrative to write and provides us with a framework of what may work. Consider reading a work of fiction and understanding how the dialogues are written. It will help you create dialogues when you are writing your manuscript.



Illustration by Aamnah Arshad

Moreover, reading works of non-fiction helps you develop a keen understanding of how to present information to the relevant audience.

Here is a word of advice for aspiring writers: do read the opinion or op-ed articles in daily newspapers to comprehend how to present maximum information within a limited word count.

Stirs our imagination: Reading is akin to entering into a world where you can live your imagination. The characters of the Harry Potter series, Gnadalf from The Lord of the Rings; and Aslan from The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, among others, are some of the examples of characters who have become a part of our memories for their character arc and actions in the story. These characters and the settings, story and the climax, action and the suspense combine to form a magical combination that we experience through words.

Imparts knowledge: There is immense knowledge in books that we acquire when we read them. Through non-fiction narratives we get insights into business, management, finance, self-development, sports, communications, leadership, entertainment. Through these books we become aware of trends, analysis, insights and information to these subjects and topics.

This knowledge broadens our mental horizon and facilitates us in becoming confident when discussing such topics in social gatherings.

### **Make reading a habit**

Remember your goal must not be to become a reader, but to develop a habit of reading. This habit, when done with consistency, will become an integral part of our lives.

Reading demands not only our concentration but also our time and commitment.

**Explore new niches:** Don't limit yourself to one genre or niche. The more you explore, the more aware you become. For instance, if you are interested in reading mysteries, also read adventure stories, biographies and encyclopaedias.

**Read to learn:** Your reading activity provides you with learning opportunities for growth. Each book that you read gives you a sense of direction and insights into your emotions and develops an emotional attachment with the topic you are reading, so that you can understand the topic from its core.

**Discuss what you read:** If there is an exciting information or story you have read, share it with those around you. It will be not just a good topic of conversation, but will also make you remember it for a long time.

Discussing about the books you have read with others can also lead you to finding out about other great books and writers from fellow readers. You can then exchange books and have more books to read without spending money.

**Write what you've read:** When reading starts to improve our language skill and stirs our imagination, it is only natural that we may feel the urge to write ourselves. We may want to write something ourselves, which can be a creative piece inspired by a story we've read or just our observation and opinion on something. Don't hold this urge back, grab a pen and paper and write — or start punching on the keyboard and write on a computer.

You can even start by keeping a diary, notebook or journal for random scribbling, do have a place where you note down thoughts, ideas and sentences that come to mind.

So nurture the reader in you and let words stir your intellect and skills to develop new aspects of yourself that you didn't know existed.

*Published in Dawn, Young World, February 1st, 2025*

# Book Lovers Day: What it takes to write a book

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published August 5, 2023



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Illustration by Sumbul

Writing is not just a skill, it is an art form that enables writers to express their thoughts and creativity. Aspiring writers begin their literary voyage by crafting letters to the editors, articles and columns for both print and digital publications.

Writers keep enhancing their capabilities through continuous learning. With each word they conceive, writers dream of sharpening their craft to evolve into authors.

Do you dream of becoming an author? If so, then read on, for this article discusses some key points to remember when writing a book.

## Know your topic and theme

The topic has to be close to your heart. It should resonate with your thoughts to reflect the same energy in your words. The topic selection is an overlooked aspect, but it determines the course of your writing journey. It shapes your research and the depth of your work.

Suppose you want to write a book on movies. This will be your theme. Your topic could be “The history of animated movies”. It may include a detailed introduction about animated movies and their historical perspective. You may explore ideas such as the need to create animation, the cultural and traditional significance of animation across the world, popular characters and moral lessons explored through animation, among others.

### **Research provides the foundation**

Research is the backbone of any literature (fiction and non-fiction). It connects you with information that is helpful for the readers. It also broadens your understanding as a writer. You need to be a skilled researcher if you want to write a book. The relevant content, facts and details will add value to the narrative.

For an author, doing research is akin to collecting gold. Readers crave to read updated and relevant information. For a non-fiction book, the content you gather will enhance the final product.

There is so much research you can do when writing a book about cricket in Pakistan. You can delve into the life and career of the pioneers of cricket, memorable tournaments and matches, rivalries, and the national team’s performance in World Cups. You can delve into the



domestic cricketing domain and the process of selecting the national squad.

There can be a plethora of sub-topics that you can include in the book, for which research and facts will be the foundation.

### **Outline creates order**

After deciding upon the topic and gathering the content, you will prepare an outline. It will become the first step to help you materialise the content. An outline becomes a structural plan that lets you place the content in a specific order.

A chronological order may be suitable when writing a non-fiction book, especially when you discuss eras and periods of the past. For fiction, the outline will help you determine the plot structure and how the story progresses.

### **Begin writing!**

Start writing based on your outline. It will keep you aligned to narrate a story (for fiction) or discuss events, insights and periods (for non-fiction). You will have to write your heart out, one chapter at a time. Your writing process will be supported by the facts and details you gathered through research and the outline that you created.

When writing fiction, you pour your thoughts through detailed descriptions, character development, compelling dialogues and by using descriptive storytelling. You breathe life into your story with vivid scenes, settings and creative storytelling. When writing non-fiction, educate, discuss and elaborate on your topic, using your opinion merged with facts.

## **The title is king**

The book's title will eventually make or break the image of your book in the readers' minds. No matter how clear and crisp the content may be, the name is the first aspect of the book that the readers will read. The title should be short and catchy to elucidate the essence of the message.

## **Know your word count**

Consider the appropriate word count for your book. It should be determined before you begin writing.

Fiction novels typically range from 70,000 to 120,000 words, while non-fiction books can vary from 60,000 to 1,00,000 words. Depending on the breadth and depth of the topic, this word count may increase by another 1,00,000 words.

Epic fantasies are usually 90,000 to 120,000 words long. Young adult novels range from 45,000 to 75,000 words. Picture books for children range from 350 to 700 words.

## **What are short story, novella and novel?**

Writers may write a short story, novella, or a novel when pursuing fiction writing. Novels are the longest form of prose that comprise a detailed plot, character development and a narrative structure. They usually range from 55,000 to 120,000 words. Novellas are shorter than novels but follow the same literary devices. They range from 30,000 to 50,000 words. A short story is more concise, comprising 1,500 to 30,000 words.

All three forms can include a plot, characters, theme, conflict, point of view, tone and style, pacing, dialogue, symbolism, conflict and resolution.

## **Rules for non-fiction**

When writing non-fiction, focus on sharing important and informative content relating to the message. Ensure that facts and details, including names of people, places, events and dates are accurate. Cross-check all the facts and ensure their accuracy.

You should share your opinion blended with facts, including quotes from experts from the relevant industry that the book's subject pertains to.

## **Rules for fiction**

Immense yourself into the story when writing fiction. You have to create characters that are believable and relevant to the plot and setting of the story. You can combine narration, description, show, don't tell and dialogue to engage the readers.

## **General rules for all books**

Define the purpose for writing the book (fiction or non-fiction). This objective should be evident in every chapter. Once you begin writing, remain consistent to maintain the flow of creativity and relevancy.

Edit and revise your work to refine grammar, punctuation, sentence structure and tense usage. Write short sentences and use an active voice for clear and concise writing.

## **Edits and revisions are vital**

You should carefully edit the book before sending the manuscript to the publisher. It is advisable to edit it at least three times after completing the first draft. In the first edit, you focus on correcting the errors in spelling, grammar and

punctuation. In the second edit, you rewrite sentences that feel out of place, make edits for clarity and space, change passive voice sentences to active voice (where needed), use synonyms to replace repetitive words and refine the look and feel of the content.

You have to take a break for a week before reading the manuscript again with fresh eyes. It will help you find the mistakes that you could not catch. By stepping away from the content, you can identify problems and errors that might otherwise go unnoticed in your day-to-day review.

*The writer is a fiction writer and columnist. He is the author of “Divided Species”, a science fiction story set in Karachi, and “20 Steps to Writing Articles”, a concise guide on effective writing.*

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## DAWN

E-PAPER | JUNE 15, 2025

# NON-FICTION: CLIFFSNOTES FOR THE MODERN 'READER'

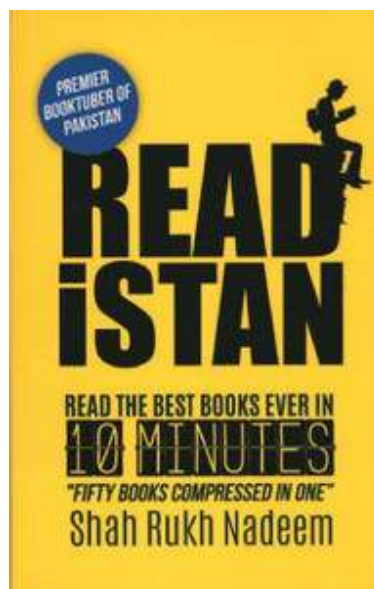
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Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published May 14, 2023

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Readistan

By Shah Rukh Nadeem

Liberty, Karachi

ISBN: 978-6277626037

334pp.

shah Rukh Nadeem is on a mission. The 'premier booktuber' of Pakistan, who runs the YouTube channel 'Book Buddy', wants to inculcate the habit of diligent reading among people. To do so, he has brought out Readistan, which aims to build the mental acumen, knowledge and insights of Pakistani readers.

Nadeem's objective seems to stem from the increasingly limited amount of time people can allocate to reading. Time is one of the modern world's most valuable commodities and it is unfortunate that reading for leisure has been among the earliest casualties of living the fast-paced life. There are innumerable works of fiction and non-fiction that merit our attention, but simply not having the time means we are the ones losing out on important knowledge.

This makes the blurb on the back of Readistan — “The book has been designed to ensure that readers enjoy the breathtaking wisdom that is embedded in its words” — all the more appropriate. As the front cover succinctly explains, here we have 50 of the “best books ever”, compressed to be read in 10 minutes each.

The author discusses a range of genres, from philosophy and business management to self-help, fiction, autobiography, motivation, sociology, psychology, politics, current affairs and history. He has picked from the most popular books in each genre and analysed them in a clear, complete and comprehensive manner.

*A Youtuber picks 50 books  
from a diverse range of genres  
and summarises their content  
in a conversational way for  
those who are struggling with  
time to read in their fast-  
paced lives*

Early in Readistan is the chapter 'The Story of My Life'. This is quite interesting in itself, as Nadeem tells of his personal history, especially his teenage years, when his parents inspired him to develop an interest in reading. Despite financial limitations — at one point, he and his four siblings had to sit out an entire year of school because there was no money to pay their fees — his parents ensured they had access to the weekend edition of Dawn newspaper, so that their learning “was not compromised.”



The analyses of the 50 books that make up Readistan begin with a review of Man's Search for Meaning, written in 1946 by Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist and founder of logotherapy Viktor E. Frankl. At the launch of his own book, Nadeem stated this was a deliberate choice, because of how Frankl explains the importance of finding one's purpose in life.

The analyses are penned in a simple, engaging and conversational style, and revolve around four basic elements. First, the chapter on each book is preceded by a single sentence that sums up the gist of the work with the intent to arouse curiosity. Then, Nadeem introduces the work and its author.

He presents the book's objective, sheds light on its major concepts and, for works of fiction, explains the story and the main characters. Then come his own insights, where he 'talks' about how he interprets the book's message. His own style of writing is worth mentioning here; he keeps his words simple and precise, directed to the reader in a conversation of sorts.

For instance, about American cartoonist Jessica Hagy's *How to be Interesting*, he writes: "It is the desire of almost every individual to possess a charismatic and attractive personality so that people would want to become associated with him. If you think you don't have a charming personality and your presence is not so magnetic, then don't worry, because in the next few paragraphs I will tell you principles which, if followed well, will enhance your aura by manifolds."

Anthologies often run the risk of becoming monotonous because of their similar content. Readistan, on the other hand, manages to keep readers' curiosity alive and kicking with the broad variety of books included. Many of the titles featured within are modern classics, such as George Orwell's novella *Animal Farm* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. There are well-known self-help publications and an interesting selection of local literature as well, including *My Feudal Lord* by Tehmina Durrani, *Taboo* by Fouzia Saeed and *Karachi: Ordered Disorder and the Struggle for the City* by French political scientist Laurent Gayer.

A corporate management consultant, entrepreneur and teacher, in recent years Nadeem has emerged as a thought leader in Pakistan when it comes to reviewing books, his vlogs showing his proficiency in elucidating upon their



substance and essence. The same approach is taken in Readistan.

One thing he avoids is being too assertive. Reading is very subjective and no two readers may have the same takeaway from the same book. Sometimes, a reviewer may inadvertently impose their opinion in a manner that overshadows the core message of the book. Nadeem, on the other hand, balances the author's ideas and theories with his own analysis that does not take away from the spirit of the book.

Compressing 50 books into a single collection will help readers absorb the gist of so many well-known works easily. It may well encourage them to pick up the actual book for further reading. Nadeem writes, "I have stood on the shoulders of giants to bring you a book which you will enjoy", and there is plenty of space on those shoulders for readers to climb up next to Nadeem.

*The reviewer is a columnist, formerly an assistant editor at a magazine and currently working at a business management institute in Karachi. He can be reached at [omariftikhar@hotmail.com](mailto:omariftikhar@hotmail.com)*

*Published in Dawn, Books & Authors, May 14th, 2023*

# DAWN

E-PAPER | JUNE 15, 2025

## Science fiction that made an impact

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published January 7, 2023



Illustration by Ziauddin



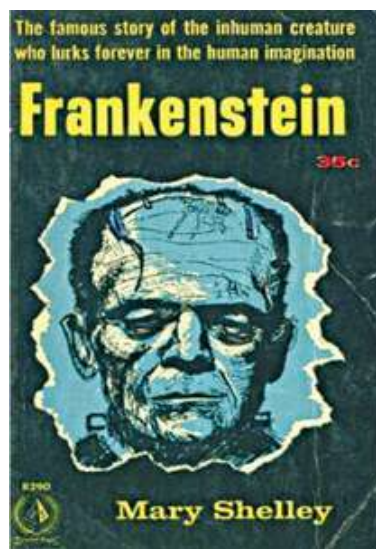
JOIN OUR WHATSAPP CHANNEL

**Science fiction narratives have been mesmerising readers for decades. The futuristic worlds, unique settings, colonisation of planets, space travel and alien encounters, among other themes, have kept**

**readers craving for more. Science fiction authors have delved into discussing concepts of science and technology to combine them with social issues and challenges. They are a compelling read for those who have a curious mind, are imaginative, and who dwell on thinking about the “what if” factor about the future.**

Here we will look at some of the books that fans of science fiction should read.

### **Frankenstein by Mary Shelley (1818)**



The story is about Victor Frankenstein, who creates a human-like figure by stitching human parts together. Shelley used the concept of science by using galvanisation as the process by which Frankenstein brings his creature to life, which is rejected by everyone for being repugnant.

### **Ice by Anna Kavan (1967)**



The story is set in apocalyptic times when the existence of humanity is jeopardised by the melting of the ice shelf as a result of a nuclear war. Kavan's three characters struggle to survive in extreme circumstances. Kavan has not given names to her characters, but differentiates them based on their personality. She includes the themes of loneliness, addiction and mental illness, while putting in social allegories.

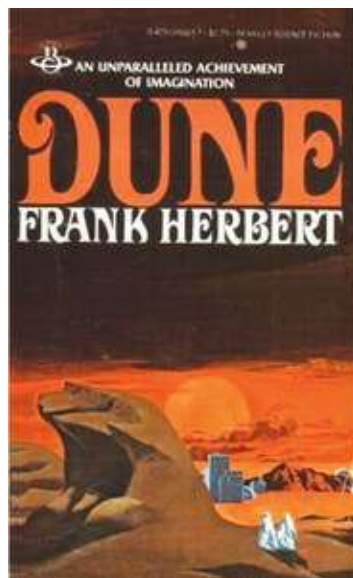
### **The Martian by Andy Weir (2015)**



This novel was indeed a work of art. It blended science with fiction to create a story that could just be true. Three astronauts visit Mars in 2035 for a month. After six solar days, an intense dust storm compels them to leave the

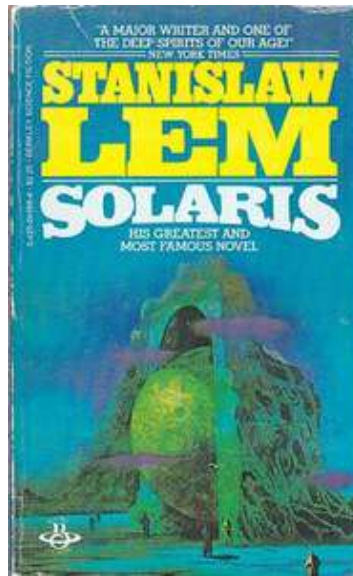
planet or their Mars Ascent Vehicle (MAV) will overturn. Astronaut Mark Watney is left behind when an antenna hits him. The crew must leave or they will remain stranded. Watney is an engineer and a botanist who experiments growing potatoes on Mars to survive. He does so by creating a humid environment in the Martian habitat by burning hydrazine to generate water. Watney knows that the next mission will land at Ares 4 in four years. This point is 3,235 kilometres away from his current location. The rover cannot travel that long so he has to modify it with solar panels and batteries.

### **Dune by Frank Herbert (1965)**



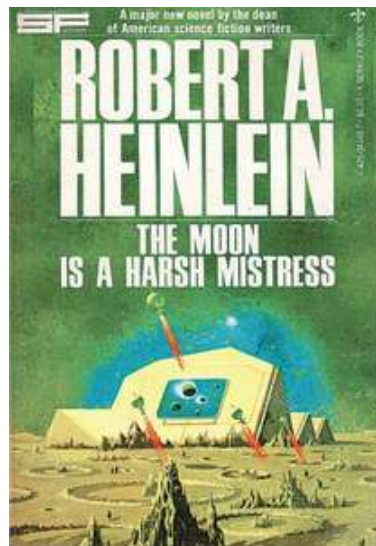
Dune has remained one of the best science fiction novels of all time. The story focuses on Paul Atreides and his family as they take command of the planet Arrakis. The planet is unfit for human life, but is the only source of a spice called melange. It facilitates interstellar travel and enhances cognitive capabilities. Dune explores the themes of tradition, customs, power, religion, politics and fear. Literary critics have advocated that Dune influenced the birth of Star Wars.

### **Solaris by Stanislaw Lem (1961)**



Lem's novel explores how the humans on a space station are trying to study the living ocean on the planet Solaris. What seems to be an ocean is a gel that is one single entity – a living creature of unknown origins.

### **The Moon is a Harsh Mistress by Robert Heinlein (1966)**



The story is set in 2075, when humans orchestrate a rebellion on the Moon. Mannie, the narrator, who is a computer technician, learns that the central computer of the Moon's colony has achieved self-awareness. Heinlein creates a story where the Earth-Moon battle is undertaken that impacts the political, social and military fabrics of the two planets.

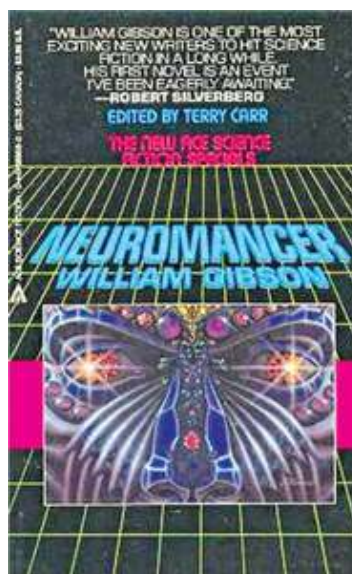


## Hyperion by Dan Simmons (1989)



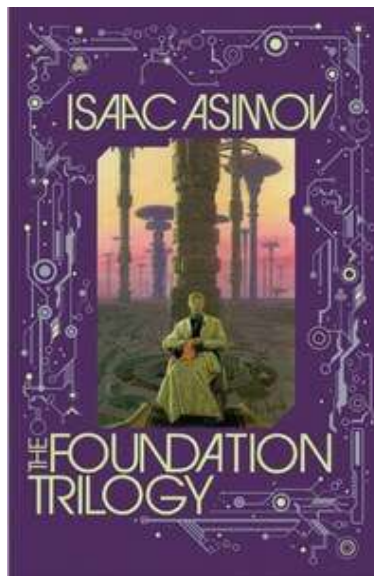
The story begins in the 29th century when the Hegemony of Man has spread across hundreds of planets in the universe. The Hegemony is working along with a civilisation of artificial intelligent beings called the TechnoCore. There are also modified humans, called Ousters, who live in space stations. They have a tussle with the Hegemony. Hyperion is one of the many planets. Time Tombs, structures that travel back in time, are present on the planet. They are guarded by Shrike, a creature no one wants to meet.

## Neuromancer by William Gibson (1984)



The novel is considered an early predecessor to the cyberpunk genre. The story is set in Chiba City, a dystopian Japan's underworld. Henry Dorsett Case, the protagonist, was caught stealing from the database of his employer. Case's nervous system was damaged as a punishment when poison was injected. This prevents him from entering the matrix. Case is offered a job by Armitage, who is a former US military officer. In return, Armitage will give Case his cure. If Case is unsuccessful, he will be punished.

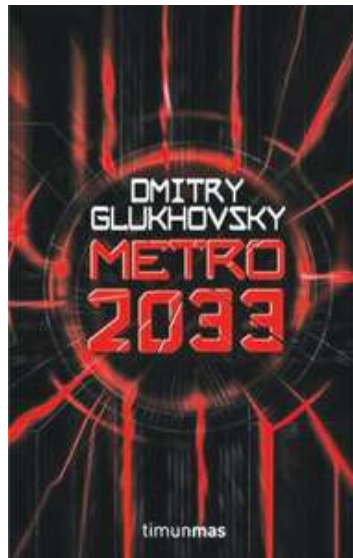
### **Foundation by Isaac Asimov (1951)**



The Foundation series by science fiction's most prolific author traces the life of Hari Seldon. He is an expert in psychohistory and tries to save his generation from extinction. The story takes place in 12,067 GE (Galactic era) when the Galactic empire is slowly coming to its end. The Commissions of Public Safety arrests Seldon for they highly oppose his views.

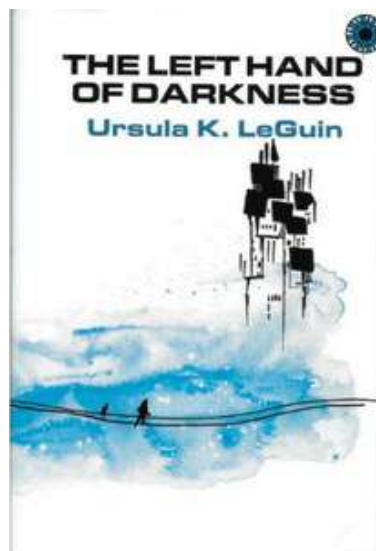
### **Metro 2033 by Dmitry Glukhovsky (2002)**





By 2033, the people in Moscow are forced to live in underground tunnels because of a nuclear apocalypse. The citizens have adapted to the new lifestyle and they are living in tribes. They are unaware of a mutant that survives on flesh that is lurking in the unknown areas of the tunnel.

### **The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula K. Le Guin (1969)**



Genly Ai, a male resident of Earth or Terra, visits Winter, a planet that is cold throughout the year. Ai tries to understand the culture, tradition and ideology of the planet Winter, where all citizens are of the same gender.

*The writer is a fiction writer, columnist, and author of a science fiction novel, [Divided Species](#). He Tweets [@omariftikhar](#).*

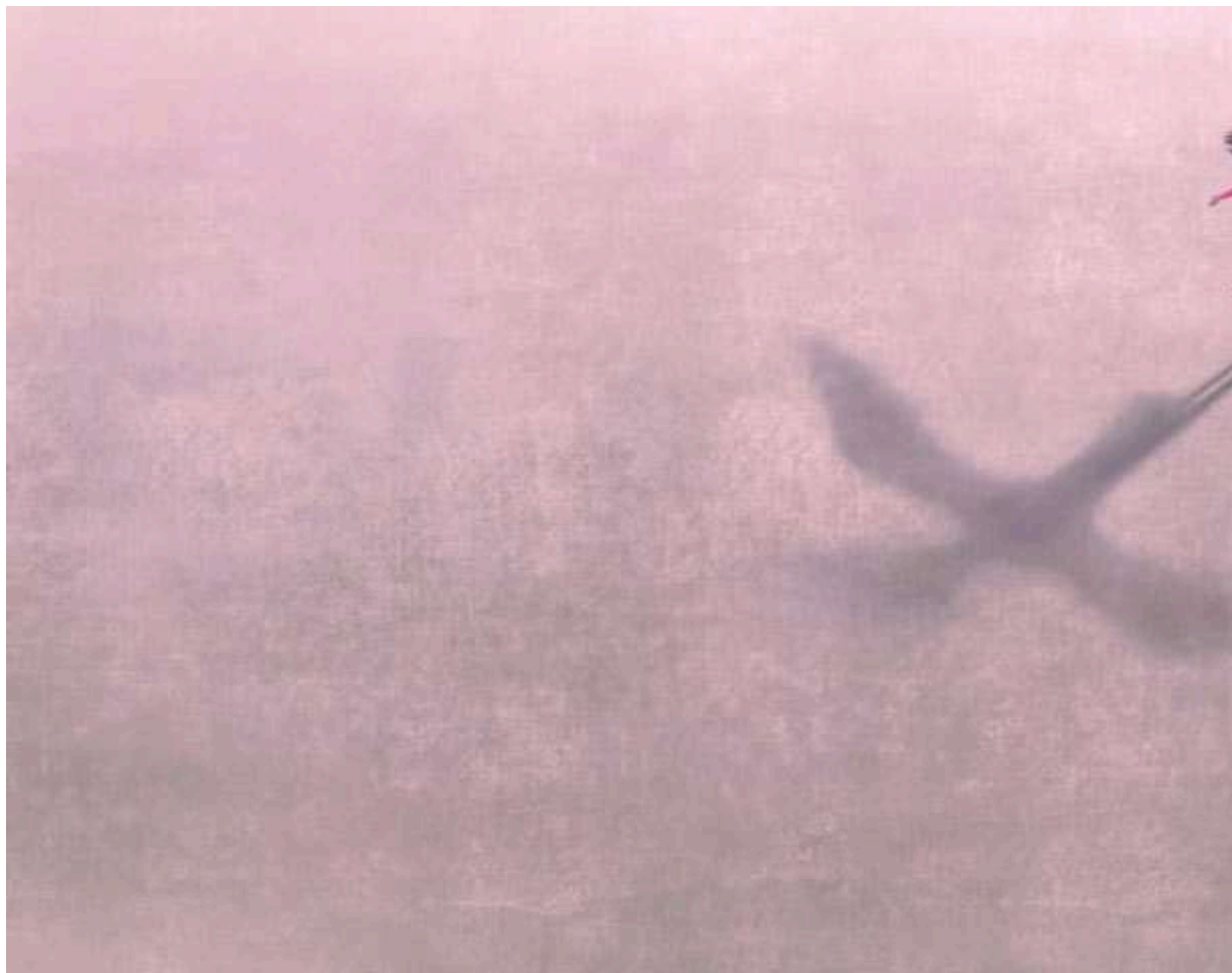
*Published in Dawn, Young World, January 7th, 2023*

# DAWN

E-PAPER | JUNE 15, 2025

## FICTION: LEARNING TO FLY

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published October 10, 2021



JOIN OUR WHATSAPP CHANNEL

**After her debut *The Quintessential Fat Girl*, Hina Shamsi's second novel, *Love Knot*, is a story about lost love, abandonment and grief and highlights issues commonly prevailing in relationships and, particularly, matrimony.**

In the book's opening pages, readers are introduced to middle-aged Pakistani architect Aaira and her Turkish friend, Mehmet Erdem. After an early morning walk and a cup of coffee sipped at a corner cafe, he asks her just one question: "Will I ever see you again?"

The author then takes us through a series of chapters that intersperse the present with flashbacks. In 1994, Aaira is 18 years old and a typical Karachi teenager who lives with her parents Raheela and Muzaffar, little brother Waleed, loves drinking tea and dreams of getting married to Prince Charming.

Enter Saafel, the proverbial prince. Sixteen years older than Aaira and a cardiologist living in England, he is the son of Raheela's much older, only sister, Bina. When the marriage proposal is made, Muzaffar states there is no hurry, and Aaira should complete her education first. Raheela, of course, is disappointed, but then Bina offers the exciting suggestion that Aaira can get her degree after marriage, and that too from a British university.

Swept away by her cousin's handsome bearing, maturity, self-possession and charm, and the appeal of the future he promises, a starry-eyed Aaira agrees. However, Saafel turns out to be not quite what dreams are made of, and the ugly side of his personality — that Bina hid from her sister — surfaces soon after the wedding, when he begins to verbally and physically abuse Aaira.

*A sophomore novel explores  
the relationships individuals  
have with others and the*

*mental disturbances and  
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marriages dissolve*

Bina is guilty not just of concealment, but also of perpetration. Every time Saafel launches into an episode of rage, which often includes humiliating and insulting his wife over petty issues, Bina paints Aaira as the culprit who instigated Saafel's anger. Raheela, beholden to the sister who effectively raised her when their parents died, turns out to be an ineffective ally to her own daughter.

Saafel goes back to England, leaving Aaira more or less a caretaker for his parents. Years pass and Aaira's son, Merab, is now 25. He wants to marry his classmate, Haniya, and Aaira is greatly perturbed at the thought of explaining to Haniya's parents the complicated situation with Saafel. What happened to Saafel that led him to be permanently removed from Aaira's life is for readers to find out; suffice it to say that it was a situation grave enough that Aaira could no longer live with her in-laws.

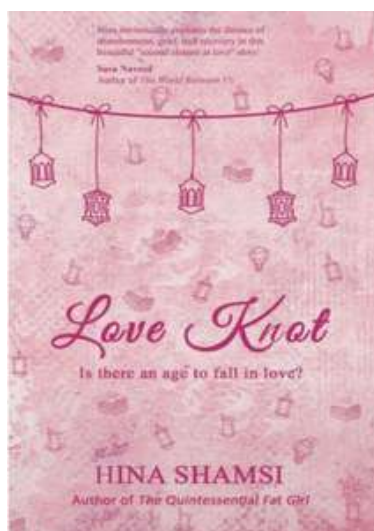
In the present times, as she struggles with figuring out how to handle the meeting with Merab's potential in-laws, Aaira is an architect working at an architecture and interior design firm. When a client requests for his offices to be upgraded in a very particular style, Aaira reluctantly takes a plane to Turkey, where she meets Mehmet at a cafe.

Mehmet is a photographer and the author uses his career — as well as Aaira's own quest to find authentic Ottoman furnishings for her client's office — as a useful opportunity

to describe the landscape of Turkey in great detail. She takes readers down lanes and alleys, from the Topkapi Palace to the Hagia Sophia, and from the Blue Mosque (which she mistakenly writes as Sultan Omar Mosque instead of the Sultan Ahmed Mosque) to the colourful markets of Istanbul and Izmir.

There is also plenty of mention of local delicacies, from the seafood and rice mash-up Midye Dolma, to baklava and, of course, the famous theatrics of Turkish ice cream sellers. There are people to meet, celebrations to attend, and experiencing — on her own — the life most women in Pakistan are allowed to experience only if there's a husband to lead.

In exploring the relationships individuals have with others — parents, spouses, siblings and friends — Shamsi explores the mental disturbances and emotional baggage women are forced to carry when their marriages dissolve. She highlights the struggle single women endure for the sake of their children and the social stigma of being divorced which, in our society, never stops haunting no matter how long ago the marriage broke down. Aaira is a strong-willed woman, but how can she hold up against a collective culture that is far stronger?



Love Knot depicts not only the kaleidoscope of emotions that surface in an abusive marriage — the tearing down of a spouse's self-esteem, gaslighting and manipulation — but also the difficulties of trying to 'move on'. Interestingly, the problem is that those who advise 'moving on' want it to be done on their terms, not on the affected individual's terms.

When Aaira ventures to talk about remarrying, those closest to her are scandalised the most, because isn't living with her parents, having a well-paying job and the near prospect of becoming a grandmother enough for a 40-something woman to feel happy and fulfilled? What does she need a partner for? More importantly, where will she find one at this 'elderly' age?

It leads one to wonder what the takeaway would be if the tables were turned, if Aaira were the one abusing Saafel and the latter demanding to end the marriage because he couldn't take the toxicity anymore. What would 'moving on' entail in that scenario?

Shamsi's storytelling skills should be commended for creating a tale that relates to the South Asian mind, but her choice to include a therapist — who Aaira sees at the behest of her male boss, no less, because "I'm glad I took her advice. She is fantastic." — is refreshing in a world where we are not supposed to talk about domestic trauma with anyone, let alone a stranger.

Admittedly, the presence of a plethora of characters may make it difficult for the readers to keep track of each. Apart from Aaira, Saafel, Merab, Haniya, Mehmet, Aaira's parents and her in-laws, there are Haniya's parents, Mehmet's step-sister and brother, Aaira's brother Waleed, her friend Maria Karim, Maria's friend Sameer and a few

others. The roles many characters play are small, but important, so perhaps their narratives could have been condensed into each other.

Nevertheless, Shamsi does a good job at crafting a decent novel. Aaira undergoes a profound change in her attempts to overcome her past life and takes realistic steps on the road to recovery. In one therapy session, her counsellor Zofeen says, “Many women stay in abusive relationships because of financial stability. Some stay for children, while some fear the judgement and the stigma of divorce in our culture. Others are so broken, they feel they deserve the abuse.”

But Aaira has been there and she has done it all. Now only one question remains: will Mehmet ever see her again?

*The reviewer is a columnist, currently working at a business management institute in Karachi and author of the novel Divided Species. He tweets [@omariftikhar](#)*

Love Knot

By Hina Shamsi

Liberty Publishing, Karachi

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222pp.

*Published in Dawn, Books & Authors, October 10th, 2021*



# The making of a scientist

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published November 7, 2020



JOIN OUR WHATSAPP CHANNEL

**Have you ever wondered who scientists are? You may have seen them in movies, wearing white lab coats and thick glasses. But kids, while scientists wear lab coats in reality too, however they do so only occasionally. Apart from all the ones you see**

**in ‘movies’, scientists are not some beings out of this world, they are humans like all of us. They have the passion to ask questions, search for answers and conduct extensive research in the fields of their study in the sciences.**

Science is a general term given to hundreds of fields lying inside it and the more you explore, the more it opens up. Let’s not get into the details of the sciences and focus on natural science for now.

Natural science includes life sciences and physical sciences. Life sciences deal with the study of living subjects, such as botany, zoology, biophysics, entomology and microbiology, among others. Physical sciences are the study of non-living subjects such as physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, etc.

Scientists methodically, logically and rationally collect and use research and evidence to conclude a study and eventually present their findings that help in the growth of an industry and the community.

### **How, what, where?**

Scientists are always pondering over the ‘how’, ‘what’ and ‘where’ of the subject matter. The ‘how’ pertains to how will they complete the research, will they use statistics or data? The ‘what’ is about the question they are trying to find, the mystery they are trying to solve.

This can be about the elements found on Earth or the ones present in the sky, across the universe. The ‘where’ is in which industry they will use the findings of their research. Will it add value to aviation, medicine, life sciences, astronomy, etc?

## How to be a scientist?

After completing your intermediate education (class 12) or your A level education in science, you enrol in a university degree programme. This is the moment where you will begin to study the courses that will lead you to become a master in a field you have chosen. After completing your bachelors and master's degree programmes, you have to do MPhil, followed by pursuing your PhD.

By then, you would also have amassed ample work experience and knowledge to work on your thesis and conduct research in your field of study.

## What makes a good scientist?

A good scientist is someone who has the following traits, among other things:

**Curious:** A scientist must have an inquisitive nature in order to ask questions and continue to explore life and seek a plausible, reasonable explanation for all actions.

**Calm, composed and courageous:** Scientists need to remain calm as they go through the trial and error of experimenting. To arrive at a conclusion, they need to conduct several tests and investigate the subject for days, they may face many failures, but they have to remain composed to reach a favourable conclusion.

Remember if a person is courageous, failures never let him/her fail. It may take months or even years, so if you want to be one, you must keep yourself poised.

**Detail-oriented:** Everything in the domain of science works on data, observations, facts and numbers. Presenting this data make all the difference.

Scientists should be detail-oriented when it comes to collecting, reading, analysing and presenting data. This habit will help them classify useful information under categories and add value to how they present it.

**Creative:** Don't worry if you are not creative, look inside your heart, you will find a lot of skills, and having skills means you are creative and an able person.

To become a scientist, you must find alternative ways to test your hypothesis and move on with research, remember creativity comes with trial and error.

**Perseverance:** It may take years or decades before a scientist's work is recognised at the national and international levels. They should exhibit values such as grit, persistence and resolution in the face of odds they experience during their research.

**Communicative:** The communication skills of scientists need to be immaculate. They have to share their hypothesis, ideas and research with fellow scientists and with key influencers of the industry.

Moreover, they need good communication skills to note down and share their research, elaborate on the various aspects of the survey they employed, explain their testing methods in detail, and express opinion over the technicalities of their research.

**Free from bias:** Scientists do not need to show any favouritism towards anything — be it a person, a fact or research. They must use their analytical skills and logic to ask questions, conduct research and arrive at solutions.



**Thinkers and problem solvers:** If you are aspiring to become a scientist, you need to be a thinker first. The world must be your canvas on which you paint your thoughts in the form of your research. You need to explore the very dynamics of your subject. You need to identify problems about society, community and those at the local, national, regional and international levels.

It is through such an in-depth analysis of challenges that you will question the anomalies and devise ways to resolve such challenges. Problem-solving then becomes an instinct of scientists and a way of life. They crave to use mathematical equations, conduct experiments, collect data and analyse research to present a result that helps society and the world at large.

**Note:** *The World Science Day for Peace and Development is celebrated on November 10*

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### **Key discoveries by Muslim scientists**

It is important to know our history, particularly related to scientists from the Muslim world. It will motivate all of you to give your best when pursuing a career leading you to become a scientist.

Here are five key discoveries by Muslim scientists.

## **Surgery**

It was during the year 1000 that Al Zahrawi, who was physician, published a 1500- page document. It described the process of surgery. He laid the foundations of modern surgery.

## **Camera**

Ibn al-Haytham (965 AD- 1040) was a mathematician and physicist. He researched how light works and studied its various dynamics. His significant contributions to the principles of optics led to the development of the camera.

## **Flying machine**

The first person who attempted to construct a flying machine was Abbas-ibn-Firnas. During the 9th century, he designed the concept of a winged device. It is believed that his initial designs inspired future generations to build a flying machine.

## **Algebra**

The Book of Calculation by Completion and Balancing in the Arabic language translates to Al-Kitab fi Hisab Al-Jabr Wa l-Muqabala. Al-Khwarizmi wrote this book and introduced the concept of algebra.

He developed a formula for systematically solving quadratic equations and several other concepts that are applied in algebra across the world today.

## **Maps**

Al-Idrisi (1100 – 1165) was a geographer and is considered to have made the first medieval world maps. They were later used by voyagers to navigate across the oceans of the world.

*Published in Dawn, Young World, November 7th, 2020*

# DAWN

E-PAPER | JUNE 15, 2025

## Let's build Pakistan

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published August 15, 2020



Illustration by Ahmed Amin



JOIN OUR WHATSAPP CHANNEL

**This year we are celebrating Pakistan's 73rd Independence Day. The Muslims of the subcontinent earned this free country after their**



## **great efforts and the resolve of our founding fathers.**

Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founder, played a central role in this regard. He had the support of Liaquat Ali Khan, Fatima Jinnah, Sir Muhammad Zafarullah Khan, Choudhry Rahmat Ali and Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, among others.

Today, Pakistan has provided us with a home, opportunities for education, healthcare and the necessities of life we need. Every country has shortcomings, however, and it is up to the people, especially the youth, to focus their efforts to envision and pursue trailblazing initiatives.

Here we will discuss some ideas that the readers of this magazine and the youth of Pakistan can follow to help Pakistan grow.

### **Conserve energy**

Our country is facing an energy crisis and we can help it conserve energy. We must switch off all electrical equipment, including fans and tube lights, when we leave our room. At night, we can turn on only those lights in our home that are needed, and put out those that are non-essential, especially the ones at the main entrance and the rear end of our home.

Similarly, we must use water as per our needs. For instance, when brushing our teeth, we must not keep the tap open, but use water only when we gargle. If you have an electricity pole in front of your home with a streetlight and a switch, do see to it that this light is switched off after sunrise. If this is not being done, bring it to the notice of the management committee of your locality.

You must never touch an electricity pole barefooted or if there is a puddle of water near it. You can conserve electricity by opening the windows and curtains to let in sunlight instead of turning on lights indoors during the day. These small steps will help you conserve energy. If we all follow them, it will create a lot of difference.

### **Be clean and green**

Always use a dustbin to throw away unwanted stuff or garbage, it can be a piece of paper, a used wrapper, a bottle, or a tin can.

When you are outside your home, throw away garbage at designated places. In case you cannot find one, keep it with you until you can throw it away properly in a garbage bin.

You must never throw litter outside of your home. The cleanliness you observe at your home must be reflected on the street and in the neighbourhood that you live in. Similarly, with cleanliness comes the idea of keeping your environment green. We must plant saplings in our home and at designated areas along with roads and in open grounds. The saplings we sow today will become trees in the years to come.

Trees and greenery will help in reducing temperatures during the summer season. They will become a home for animal and birds and will increase oxygen.

### **Educate others**

You must kindle in others the spark of knowledge and information. By educating others, you will ensure a better tomorrow for Pakistan. You can begin educating children of your maid, gardener and driver so they can have a

brighter future. However, you need to follow SOPs when doing so.

Moreover, you can give tuition to the children of your neighbourhood. Since these days social distancing is important due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it can be come online through Zoom. This will become a source of your pocket money. You will also help others complete their homework or learn about new stuff.

### **Be law-abiding**

A nation also grows when the citizens follow laws and principles. This pertains to whatever we do in our everyday, academic, personal, and professional life.

A simple example is that of following traffic rules. We see how disorderly our traffic is and how senselessly we park our vehicles. If we follow traffic laws and do not show haste when driving, then the traffic flow will be smooth without any bottlenecks. We have to follow laws at all times. Standing in line to wait for our turn is a rule we need to adopt. Following laws requires patience and self-control, which we must develop to become a success.

### **Be honest and loyal**

We must become honest and loyal citizens of Pakistan. Our uprightness must be replicated in our daily lives. Students must never use unfair means when attempting to solve questions during examinations. Professionals must follow rules and procedures when completing their personal and professional tasks. Literary scholars and researchers must produce original thesis and research work, and should avoid plagiarism at all costs.

Our loyalty to the state is our personal, secret tool that guides us to remain truthful to ourselves and faithful to our country.

### **Promote Pakistan**

It is true that in this age of globalisation, we can buy products made in another country. However, to make Pakistan strong, we must promote and appreciate the brands and products that are made in Pakistan. We should add value to the ecosystem of the Pakistani companies that are offering products instead of purchasing imported products.

Our appreciation and loyalty for Pakistani brands will help in the growth of such industries.

### **Reverse brain drain**

The trend of brain drain has hampered Pakistan's growth for many decades. After acquiring education, Pakistani youths settle abroad for either higher studies or to avail better job employment opportunities. The youth of Pakistan must appreciate the good things Pakistan has to offer.

This includes a diverse range of degree programmes they can pursue after completing Intermediate or A level. Moreover, the youth can also establish start-ups to uplift their community, society and the country.

### **Read and write**

A nation's fortitude is observed through the number of readers and writers it produces. The youth, as the future of Pakistan, needs to develop and maintain the habit of

reading and writing. Read novels, newspapers, magazines, eBooks, and any material in any format that interests you.

Moreover, cultivate the habit of writing. You can begin by writing blogs before moving on to writing for print and digital media. If you are an avid reader, you will absorb content that will help you write opinion-based write-ups. You can also share your thoughts, feelings and experiences through blogs and articles.

It is up to us, the Pakistanis and the youth, to think about the ways we can help Pakistan become better and stronger. The actions we take today will help our country and us tomorrow. With commitment, dedication, hard work and by following our principles, goals and vision for a better tomorrow, we can build Pakistan into a country we want to live in.

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## DAWN

E-PAPER | JUNE 15, 2025

# How countries got their names

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published October 5, 2019



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**Do you ever wonder why Norway is called Norway and France is called France? Do you know how our country got its name?**

It is interesting to know how countries got their names and how some of these names have evolved over the years.

While a lot of thought went into naming of some countries, sometimes many lands and countries were given random names after travellers, mostly by sea, discovered unknown pieces of land they arrived at. In some cases, the natives of a country named their land.

### **Let's find out how the following countries were named:**

#### **Pakistan**

Beginning with our own country, the name Pakistan is actually a combination of two Persian words: "Pak" which means pure and "istan", which means place. Choudhry Rahmat Ali is credited with coining this name in 1933.

#### **Australia**

This country was called Southern Land or Terra Australis Incognita (Latin) or 'unknown southern land'. The name was coined when the British explorer Matthew Flinders arrived there in 1814 and decided that it was a country in the Southern part of the world.

Interestingly, New Holland was the name initially given to Australia by Dutchman Abel Tasman, the discoverer of Tasmania. The name remained semi-official until the mid-1800s when the British rulers changed it to Australia.

#### **America**

According to historians, the word America is derived from the name of an Italian traveller, Amerigo Vespucci, who arrived in present-day US during 1499 and 1502.

During his expeditions, he explored the coasts of South America too.

## **Bolivia**

The land of Bolivar and later Bolivia was the name given to this country after Simon Bolivar, the military and political leader who changed the course of colonial South America.

## **Costa Rica**

Researchers and historians suggest that Christopher Columbus first arrived in this land in 1502 and named it as “rich coast” for the abundance of valuable metals and minerals, and over time it became known as Costa Rica.

## **Djibouti**

There are a number of versions of how Djibouti got its name. In the Afar language, spoken in Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia, this word was ‘yibuti’, while in Arabic it was ‘jibuti’, and in Somali it was pronounced ‘jabuuti’.

Another version is that the Afar word ‘gabouti’ or ‘plateau’ was the origin for the word Djibouti.

## **Egypt**

In Greek, this land was first known as Aigyplos and in Latin as the “Home of the Ka and Ptah” who were earlier Egyptian gods. Moreover, in some Greek scriptures, this land is also named as Aigaiou hyptios, translating to ‘Land below the Aegean Sea’.

## **France**

France got its name from Francia from Latin, translating to ‘Land of Franks’. Franks were a group of Germanic tribes living on the East bank of River Rhine.



Interestingly, the word ferocious or fierce, is derived from ferocia, the name given to the Frank warriors.

## **Greece**

The names Grecas and Crecas from Old English and Graecia from Latin combined to form Greece. Other observations are that geras (gift of honour) from the Indo-European language formed the name Greece.

## **Hungary**

In the Turkic language, on-ogur refers to the 'People of the ten arrows', which is derived from the Alliance of the Ten Tribes. Although Hungary had no association with Turkic language, the Byzantine chronicles show origins of this name based on the Turkic-nomadic customs of the time.

## **Indonesia**

This name also has Greek origins from the words indos and nesos, meaning islands. The word Indonesia was coined centuries before the formation of an independent Indonesia.

In 1850, an English ethnologist, George Windsor Earl proposed the name of 'Indu-nesian' for the people residing in the Indian Archipelago, that later became Indonesia.



## Japan

When the Italian explorer Marco Polo arrived where Japan is located today, he referred to these islands as Geppun, which loosely translates to Jitpun from the Shanghainese language meaning “Land of the rising sun”.

Previously, in the Sino-Japanese language, Japan was also referred to as Nihon or Nippon, meaning “Empire of the sun”.

## Kuwait

The name Kuwait is derived from the Arabic ‘akwaat’, the plural of ‘kut’, meaning a fortress built near water.

Interestingly, the Portuguese built a fortress in Kuwait in the 16th century.

## Lebanon

The name of Mount Lebanon originates from the Phoenician root ‘lbn’ meaning ‘white’, apparently from its snow-capped peaks.

## Maldives

Researchers believe that the Sanskrit word of ‘maladvipa, which means ‘Garland of islands’, is the origin for the name Maldives. Furthermore, ‘maalaa’ in Sanskrit means islands or small islands.

## **Nepal**

According to the ancient maps of South Asia, Nepal was referred to as Nepa, which meant ‘people who domesticate cattle’. The people of this area are called Nepa, Nepar or Newal, who still reside in and around Kathmandu.

Moreover, in Sanskrit, ‘Nipalaya’ means ‘abode at the foot of the mountains’ which refers to the natives of Nepal who live near the mountain regions of the Himalaya.

## **Oman**

It is believed that the name ‘Omana’ was given to this area by Pliny the Elder, a Roman author. Another version says that the Arabs called this area as ‘Aamen’ or ‘Amoun’, which means ‘natives or settlers of an area’.

## **Portugal**

Portugal comes from the Roman-Celtic ‘Portus Cale’ or the Port of Cale. The word ‘cale’ or cailleach refers to a Celtic deity. The early settlement that resided in Douro River, north of present-day Portugal, was also called ‘Cailleach’.

## **Qatar**

The country was apparently named after a renowned and powerful Khariji commander named Qatari ibn al-Fuja’a.

## **Russia**

The modern name of Russia, which came into use in the 15th century, is derived from an early Greek name for the people of Rus, which is an old Norse word for ‘people who row’.

### **Saudi Arabia**

The Al-Saud dynasty gave its family name to the Gulf Arab monarchy of Saudi Arabia, ruled by the sons of founder Abdul Aziz bin Saud.

### **Turkey**

The name of Turkey is the anglicised version of the Turkish name “Türkiye”, which represented the land of the Turks, back then ruled by the House of Osman, which gave the word Ottoman, which was how Turkish people were used to be called back then until the collapse of their empire and the foundation of the modern country of Turkey.

### **Ukraine**

There are several theories about the origin of the name Ukraine. According to one theory, the name originates from the general Slavic word for borderland, which primarily referred to Kievan Rus border territories. Later on ‘Ukraina’ referred to borderlands within the Polish kingdom.

### **Venezuela**

In 1499, an expedition arrived near the Venezuelan coast. When the expedition’s leader saw houses built near a lake, it reminded him of Venice and he named this area as Veneziola, a Spanish word translating to Little Venice. Veneziola later became Venezuela.

## **Wales**

The words Wales and Welsh originate from the Old English 'Wealh' and 'Wealas', who were described as descendants to Walhaz, of German origin. In some scriptures, the ancestors of the Welsh are said to have a Roman descent, called 'Volcae'.

## **Yemen**

In ancient times, Yemen was known as Arabia Felix, Latin for 'happy' or 'fortunate'. It acquired the name because its high mountains attracted rain, making it more fertile than most of the Arabian peninsula

## **Zimbabwe**

One historical record states that the name Zimbabwe was derived from the Shona language, where 'dzimba-dza-mabwe' translated to 'houses of stone' or 'house made of stone'.

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# DAWN

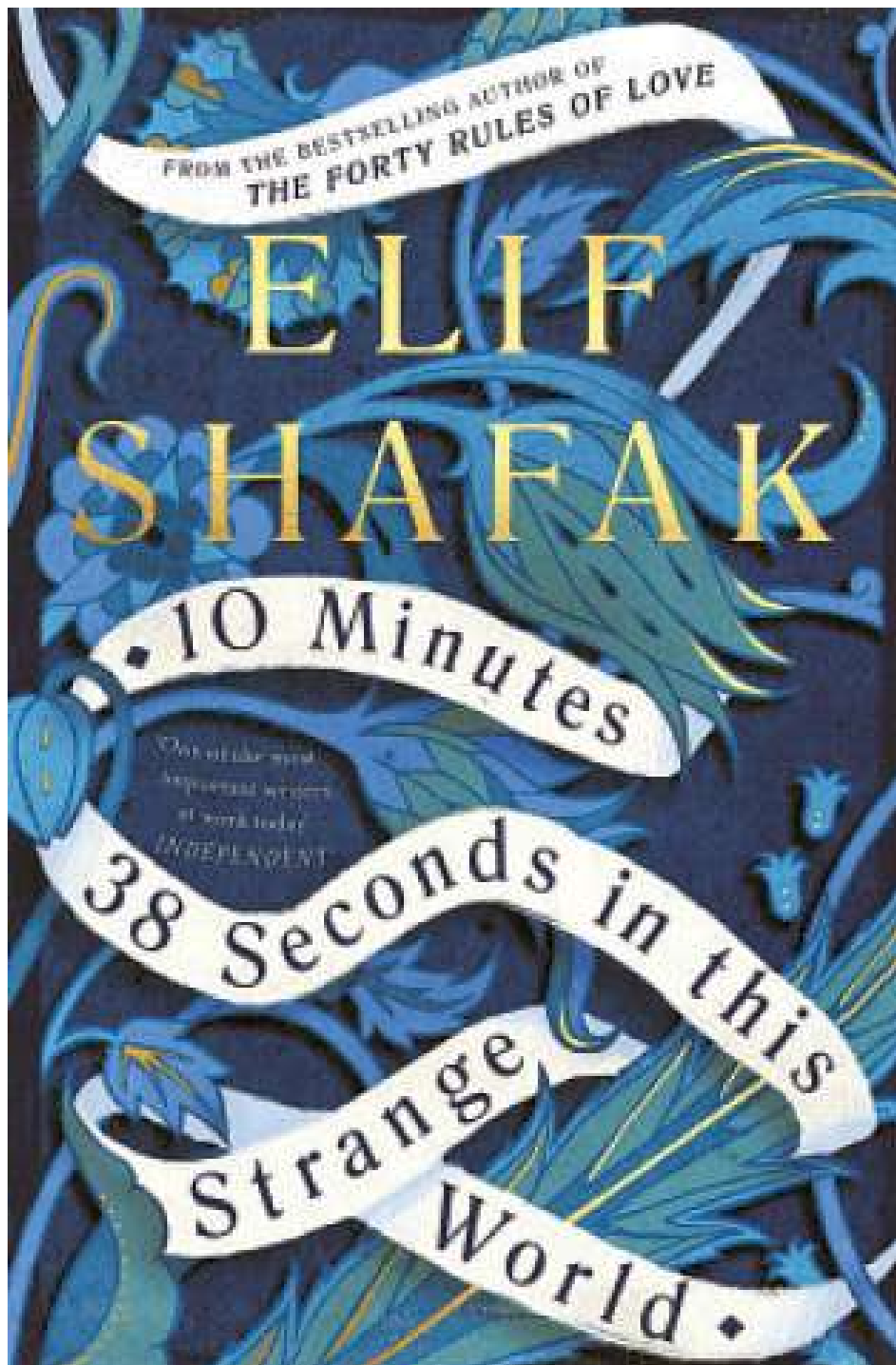
E-PAPER | JUNE 15, 2025

## FICTION: IN SEARCH OF DIGNITY IN DEATH

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published July 28, 2019



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Unlike the usual format of a three-step act with a beginning, middle and end, Turkish author Elif Shafak's latest novel opens with the climax. The preface is ironically titled 'The End' and, in it, Shafak reveals what happens to Tequila Leila and why her body is in a wheelie bin. Leila is the protagonist of 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World; she has led a socially unacceptable life in the brothels of Istanbul and her end has been painful.

Apparently, 10 minutes and 38 seconds is how long — according to a doctor in the novel — the mind remains conscious even when the body is clinically dead. The sudden realisation of being dead sends Leila into a heightened consciousness where her entire life flashes before her eyes. She recalls the first time her mother talked to her soon after her birth. She revisits forgotten moments. Sounds and flavours dance in her memory soon after she is murdered. Leila's body is unable to move, but Shafak creates a vivacious world with Leila's thoughts, through an exquisite narrative that aptly describes Leila's feelings to explain the complexities of her not-so-moral life as a sex worker in an illiberal country.

Describing the last moments of Leila's brain activity and then looking at her life while she was alive would have been a tedious task for any writer to complete. Perhaps this is why Shafak divides the book into three parts. Part one, 'The Mind', shows a delicate balance between the horror of losing a life and of life itself, while revealing Leila's perception of her own existence. Leila is, and always has been, focused on the present and averse to thinking about her past. Shafak writes, "Never in a thousand years would she agree to be spoken of in the past tense. The very thought of it would make her feel small and defeated, and

the last thing she wanted in this world was to feel that way. No, she would insist on the present tense — even though she now realised with a sinking feeling that her heart had just stopped beating, and her breathing had abruptly ceased, and whichever way she looked at her situation, there was no denying that she was dead.”

*Turkish author Elif Shafak's  
latest novel traces the life of  
an Istanbul prostitute after  
her death and of others  
marginalised by society*

Part two, ‘The Body’, discusses Leila’s five friends — Sabotage Sinan, Nostalgia Nalan, Jameelah, Zaynab<sup>122</sup> and Hollywood Humeyra — who, like Leila, do not fit into standard social ideology and thus, are non-existent for society. Themselves pushed beyond the edges of ordinary communal existence, they want to give Leila’s body a proper burial to prove that she was not alone in this world. Here, the narrative does not resort to one specific point of view, but is shared with a sagacious external voice. It also sparks a few moments of morbid amusement when the friends dig out Leila’s corpse from the Cemetery of the Companionless. Shafak gives each of the five friends a chapter of their own as well, to explain their connection to Leila and the trajectories of their individual lives.

However, while Shafak’s tone and expression are strong in the first two parts, she sort of loses her grip on style and brevity in the third, ‘The Spirit’. This is perhaps because, by



the time the third part begins, Leila's mind has ceased to work and she is gone for good. Furthermore, Shafak's narration during this part seems to be written in haste, maybe because she has already explicitly described Leila and her life in the first two parts and, it seems, just wants to end the novel now.

*Akin to other Muslim societies,  
Turkish society does not  
accept sex workers or any  
outcast as their own. This is  
why Tequila Leila's body is  
dumped at the Cemetery of the  
Companionless, a graveyard  
for "the undesirables."*

Shafak's portrayal of Leila as a sex worker in Turkey landed the author in trouble with the authorities when the book was released some months ago. She dares to uncover the bleak truth of those existing on the margins of society — which includes Nostalgia Nalan, who was a man before deciding to become a woman — but rather than tackle the actual issues that lead to such marginalisation, the government is clamping down on those who write about them. The government is ignoring reality, just as Leila's body is being ignored. An object to satisfy men when alive, the corpse now lies unattended and overlooked. The only witness to this sad spectacle is a teenage scavenger rooting through rubbish, but once he makes off with the necklace

clasped round its throat, the corpse ceases to exist for him as well.

The somewhat rushed ending aside, the author's ability of describing the smallest details enhances the story's comprehensive appeal. For instance, the chapter titled 'Two Minutes' begins like this: "Two minutes after her heart had stopped beating, Leila's mind recalled two contrasting tastes: lemon and sugar. June 1953. She saw herself as a six-year-old, a thicket of chestnut-brown curls surrounding her frail, wan face. No matter how remarkable her appetite, especially for pistachio baklava, sesame brittle and all things savoury, she was as thin as a reed. An only child. A lonely child."

The lonely child grows to live a lonely life, and dies a lonely death. Akin to other Muslim societies, Turkish society does not accept sex workers or any outcast as their own. This is why Tequila Leila's body is dumped at the Cemetery of the Companionless, a graveyard for "the undesirables", those who have died of AIDS or by committing suicide. Many of the bodies are of drug addicts or members of the LGBTQ community. Also buried here are refugees who drowned at sea while trying to reach Turkey. Shafak advocates for Leila and the others who make up the novel's rich cast of characters as regular human beings who have every right to receive a proper burial after death, even if society looked at them with disgust when they were alive.

*The reviewer is a columnist, formerly an assistant editor at a magazine and currently working at a business management institute in Karachi*

10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World

By Elif Shafak

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# DAWN

E-PAPER | JUNE 15, 2025

## How to craft the draft

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published May 18, 2019



Illustration by Sophia Khan



JOIN OUR WHATSAPP CHANNEL

**Do you know why books such as the Harry Potter and Lords of the Rings series and Ishtiaq Ahmed's Inspector Jamshed series in Urdu are popular among young readers? It is because they have a**

**compelling storyline, and because of the writers' appropriate use of words to construct sentences combined with the writers' imagination.**

Writing is all about how you express and present your innate thoughts, opinions and views to the readers. It is an art and skill that is both inborn and mastered through practice.

Students need to have a keen sense of writing when attempting examinations of their theory subjects and when writing essays in English. Moreover, knowing how to write letters and applications is imperative not only from the examination point of view, but also from a professional perspective.

examination point of view, but also from a professional perspective. Writing, therefore, is a skill we all must continue to learn. In this article, we will dwell on some important aspects of writing.

### **Parts of writing**

Every type of writing has three parts: the beginning, the middle and the end. Whether it is an article, an essay, a letter or an application, all documents and pieces of writing must have these three parts.

### **Beginning**

This is where you introduce the topic, and briefly explain and define the purpose of what you are writing about. It is at this point that you need to establish the very reason for writing the piece and connect your thoughts with that of the readers.

### **The hook technique**

One important aspect of writing is to use the hook technique to begin an article. You can begin the article with a quotation, a question, a fact, or with your opinion, which you can elaborate and prove afterward in the write-up.

## **Middle**

During the middle part of the piece, you provide relevant information to your topic and explain the message with an in-depth analysis of your views, based on factual information.

The middle part of a piece takes up the most space in a write-up as you need to provide as much accurate and precise information necessary to make the piece a credible read. This is also the phase where you provide examples and views. In stories, this is where the plot reaches its climax.

## **End**

Any piece of writing should not end abruptly. There should be one final message for the reader and the ending is where all that you have been talking about or have expressed gradually, takes its final shape. This is where you summarise your message backed with suggestions and recommendations. In other words, you provide clarification to your discussion and, in stories, this is where everything settles down.



Illustration by Sophia Khan

## **The first step: prepare an outline**

Once you have decided on a topic, you need to create an outline. An outline is a flow of how you will add information to your piece. For instance, an article on the benefits of exercise will have the following outline:

1. Importance of exercise,
2. Types of exercises,
3. Do's and don'ts,
4. Diet intake before and after a workout,
5. Best time for a workout.

Based on the information and research material you have on your topic, you can add more to the outline. An outline gives you a path to follow before writing so you do not divert from the topic.

## **Length of a write-up**

The length (word count) of a write-up depends on the requirements you have been given, whether it is a class

assignment of specific length, or the word count set by the publication you are sending your write-up to. It also depends on the genre you are writing for.

For instance, the word count for an opinion piece for a daily newspaper usually ranges from 750 to 850 words. An article for a weekly magazine comprises 850 to 1100 words, short stories for weekly magazine range from 500 to 750 words, and reviews for books and movies are of 450 to 650 words. But these are rough estimates that I am giving on the basis of my personal experience.

### **Do your homework**

You may develop a good write-up with a satisfactory beginning, middle and an end and may include facts along with your opinion to generate readers' interest. However, you would still need to know which publication (newspapers and magazines) caters to what kinds/types of articles.

A daily newspaper's opinion page may not include articles on technology while a children's magazine will not publish a piece on geopolitics. This is why you should read the past issues (seven to 10) of the publication you are interested to contribute your articles to. You will get a fair idea of what genre, topic and subjects a publication caters to and can develop a write-up that will have a higher chance of being published.

### **Vocabulary**

When writing a piece, a writer's most useful tool is the vocabulary. The kind of words you choose to construct your sentences make or break the readers' interest.



Aspiring writers are advised to keep a thesaurus with them when writing or consult an online thesaurus to learn words with similar meaning to use in sentences. But always remember that including tough vocabulary to impress the editors will not gain you anything. It will only make the write-up more complicated for the readers and the easy flow of the sentences will be affected. And when depending too much on a thesaurus, one can make the common mistake of using unsuitable synonyms in a sentence where the original word would have been more effective.

The editors know which words are common and which are not, so don't try too hard to impress and keep your vocabulary simple, which conveys your message or explains your topic clearly.

### **Crisp, clear and concise**

The art of writing is to write sentences that are not too long-winded, and present messages that are clear, short and brief. Here is an example of how to write with crispness, clarity and concisely.

Sentence 1: Traffic congestion in Karachi can be reduced if people driving cars can avoid driving on the wrong side, if they park their cars at the right parking spots and if they drive in their own lanes. (36 words)

Sentence 2: Karachi can experience less traffic congestion if drivers keep to their own lanes and only park cars at designated places. (20 words)

You can see a marked difference in sentence 1 and 2. Both sentences present the same message but sentence 2 has fewer words with a clear and concise message.

## **Read, research and write**

The best way to write effective articles is by doing your research. Read as much as you can about the topic of your choice to absorb all relevant information you can to reproduce when writing. The more you read, the closer you will be to the topic. The research will help you explore all there is to the topic. Research provides writers with the essential material and content to add value to their write-up.

But simply reproducing what you have read is not right and doesn't produce a good article. You must analyse what you have read and researched, then present the topic from a point of view that is your own and different, so that your write-up stands out from the rest.

Every topic has been done to its limits, so you need to approach it from a fresh and different perspective to be able to come up with something commendable.

## **Know your topic**

As an aspiring writer, you would need to write on topics that may not appeal to you much, but are important from a publication's standpoint. Therefore, you need to develop the habit to learn more about all the topics that you come across, which will not only enhance your learning but provide you with a plethora of other topics to write on. The more topics you know of, the more exposure you will have as a published writer.

I hope these tips will provide you with the needed motivation to start reading and writing. Always remember, reading is the secret to writing well. So, start reading today to become a writer tomorrow.

*Published in Dawn, Young World, May 18th, 2019*

## DAWN

E-PAPER | JUNE 15, 2025

# Excel in your exams

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published November 24, 2018



Illustration by Sophia Khan



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**Examinations are always a cause of anxiety for students. However, with planning and preparation, you can ace your exams with flying colours. Where studying and revising your class**

**lectures on a daily basis are imperative to achieve good grades, you need to create the mindset of a champion student to excel in your studies.**

This article looks at the different ways you can get good grades in all your subjects.

These tips are those that most of you may be already following, however, reinforcing their importance when your mid-term exam are around the corner is vital.

### **Be attentive in class**

There is nothing second to being attentive in class. If you miss out on the class lecture, no one can repeat the same words to you.

your mid-term exam are around the corner is vital.

### **Be attentive in class**

There is nothing second to being attentive in class. If you miss out on the class lecture, no one can repeat the same words to you.

Therefore, sit in the first two or three rows of the class and give your complete attention to what the teacher is saying. Jot down all the important points of the lecture and focus on the topics the teacher has covered in the class.

Participate in class discussions when the lecture is in an interactive mode, it will enable the teacher to know what and how much you have understood. He can then sort out any confusion that remains. Also ask questions when the teacher has finished speaking and allows you to speak. Always remember that no question is a stupid question, so

don't feel that you will appear silly and stupid if you ask something that everyone else probably knows.

### **Homework is important**

At times students ignore the importance of homework and think it to be a waste of time. Students also copy their classmate's homework rather than doing it themselves, and submitting it to the teacher.

This must not be the case. Homework allows you to revise the topic you studied in class so it can remain in your mind. It is also a way for the teacher to check your understanding of what was taught. If you haven't understood something and you just copy someone else's work, your teacher will never know your problem and will never get to help you.

### **Prepare notes**

Prepare notes for yourself at home. This includes rewriting in detail in your notebook the points your teacher discussed in the class. You should also refer to your textbook to include any relevant point that you may have forgotten or missed in class.

This will help you in two ways. Firstly, you will get to revise the topic discussed in the class. Secondly, you will have all the notes of each subject together in one place, helping you to study and revise during the days leading to your exam.

### **Discuss with classmates**

One of the best study methods is to discuss important and difficult topics with friends. If you have difficulty comprehending mathematics and your friend finds science a challenge, you can teach him science and he will help you in mathematics.

Studying with friends also allows the discussion of topics that initially seem difficult when taught in class. This is also a good way to learn all that you may have missed when you were absent.

You can even test each other by giving questions, either in written and verbal form. This is an excellent way to revise and reinforce any subject.



Illustration by Sophia Khan

## **Do weekly revision**

Once you develop a habit of revising lectures on daily basis, you will find it easy to revise the lectures of all subjects on a weekly basis. On the weekend, you should allocate two hours to revise whatever you have covered in class. This will help you remain updated with the class lectures, keep the information in your mind and help you prepare in advance for your exams. This weekly revision will include carefully and slowly reading of class lectures and practicing mathematics and algebra.

## **Practice is the key**

Science courses include diagrams that you are required to draw in your exams. Similarly, mathematics, physics and

chemistry have equation and numerical-based questions that you should know. To be able to draw effectively and to know your equations, you must practice them regularly.

The same goes for graphs and maps. And the best time to practice these is when you are not in a mood to do serious reading or studying, as these can be break-time activities.

### **Don't leave anything to chance**

When studying, do not ignore any topic. What if the topic you left comes in a quiz, a test or in your exam? If it has been taught in the class, it is important, unless the teacher tells you that it will not be coming in the exams.

You can pass a test or exam by selective study, which is to study only selected topics or chapters that are important and often asked in exams. But if you want to obtain good grades, you need to cover the entire course.

Try asking questions to clear your doubts during the class lecture and discuss points with your teacher after your class or in between classes when your teacher is free. When revising at home, if you are stuck at a question, ask your elder siblings or parents for assistance.

### **Learning is everything**

While grades are important, you must focus on learning through your subjects. Your goal should not be to just earn grades but to learn and understand what you study in class. This will become the base for your next class as very often what is taught in one class is something that you will need to recall and be aware of in future in higher classes.

At that time if you can't remember it or you don't know it because you didn't learn it in junior classes, don't expect



your teacher to teach it to you because you are expected to know it.

Learning things well will also help you when you choose professional studies following the completion of your Intermediate or A Level education.

### **Manage your time**

During most of the academic term, students normally focus more on playing cricket in the neighbourhood or playing video games at home and seldom give time to studies. They wait for the announcement of a test, assignment or exams to start studying and learning things.

But this can be too late if you want to be a top grader. You can do whatever you want at home and still have ample time to study if you manage time properly. Your first priority, however, should be your studies. After returning home, freshen up, have lunch and take a nap. You should then complete your homework, revise your lectures and then give time to yourself to play, read or relax.

There is still time in your mid-term exams so if you start working on the tips we have shared here, you can get good grades by staying focused from now.

*Published in Dawn, Young World, November 24th, 2018*

# DAWN

E-PAPER | JUNE 15, 2025

## Looking back: FIFA World Cup 2018

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published July 21, 2018



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**The field was set. Players were motivated. Teams were ready. The FIFA World Cup had come to Russia for the very first time.**

The 21st edition of this tournament proved to be a roller coaster ride as 32 teams went neck-to-neck for 31 days

from June 14 to July 15, 2018, to decide who the champion of football was.

One by one, big names of football faltered and saw their run to the final end.

Portugal, Argentina, Mexico, Japan, Spain, Denmark, Switzerland, and Columbia were sent home during the Round of 16 matches. During the quarter-finals, Uruguay, Brazil, Russia and Sweden could not save themselves. This article looks at the shocking defeats, upset wins and other statistics from the recently concluded FIFA World Cup 2018.

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Portugal, Argentina, Mexico, Japan, Spain, Denmark, Switzerland, and Columbia were sent home during the Round of 16 matches. During the quarter-finals, Uruguay, Brazil, Russia and Sweden could not save themselves. This article looks at the shocking defeats, upset wins and other statistics from the recently concluded FIFA World Cup 2018.



South Korea beat Germany, the biggest upset of this World Cup

## The biggest shocks

The biggest upset of the FIFA World Cup 2018 happened when defending champions, Germany, were eliminated from this tournament by South Korea. They were beaten 2-0.

The other shock, however, was to see all South American nations crumble and tumble. Brazil (Champions in 1958, 1962, 1970, 1994, 2002); Argentina (Champions in 1978, 1986); Uruguay (Champions in 1930, 1950) were sent packing for home during the Round of 16 and the quarter-finals.

### **Wonder wins**

Where the upset defeats were too much to handle by football fans, there were some wins by minnow teams that brought a smile to everyone's faces.

Croatia, who played their first-ever final match this time, defeated Argentina 3-0 during the group stage. They did reach the semi-final of the FIFA World Cup 1998, but never played the final.

It was a shock to see Argentina not being able to produce any counter-offensive against a relatively easy team as that of Croatia.

The other upset win came when Mexico, during their group match, defeated Germany, the defending Champions, 1-0.





Belgium's Eden Hazard and team-mates celebrate winning the bronze medal at the Russia 2018 World Cup, in Brussels city centre. — AFP

## **Absolute domination**

There were certain matches during the FIFA World Cup 2018 that showed one team's dominance over their competitor. The opening match of the tournament between Russia and Saudi Arabia was just that.

Hosts, Russia, scored five goals while Saudi Arabia could not even produce one. The goal scorers for Russia were: Yury Aleksandrovich Gazinsky (12th minute), Denis Dmitriyevich Cheryshev (43rd and 91st minute); Artyom Sergeyevich Dzyuba (71st minute) and Aleksandr Sergeyevich Golovin (94th minute).

The group match between Belgium and Tunisia was another such match which Belgium easily won, 5-2. Although Tunisia's Dylan Daniel Mahmoud Bronn scored in the 18th minute to take an early lead, Belgium's Eden Michael Hazard, Romelu Lukaku and Michy Batshuayi-Atunga ensured their team keeps the upper hand.

During the group stages, England, the 1996 World Cup Champions, showed absolute dominance against Panama. England scored six goals in 54 minutes. Where England's

John Stones scored in the 8th and 40th minute, Jesse Ellis Lingard scored during the 36th minute.

Captain, Harry Edward Kane scored with two penalties during the 22nd and 46th minute. He scored a third goal during the 62nd minute.

Panama could manage to score only one goal when Felipe Abdiel Baloy Ramírez put the ball in the nets during the 78th minute.



Cristiano Ronaldo, captain of Portugal, scored the tournament's first hat-trick against Spain

## France vs Argentina

During the Round of 16, football fans were taken on a ride they would not soon forget. France and Argentina were eager to enter the quarter-finals. Their stakes were at the highest. Both teams gave their best during the 90-minute game play.

France's Antoine Griezmann scored the first goal with a penalty. Argentina's Ángel Fabián Di María and Gabriel Iván Mercado scored during the 41st and the 48th minute to give Argentina a 2-1 lead. However, France's Benjamin Pavard levelled the scores, 2-2, during the 57th minute.

France's Kylian Mbappé Lottin used his lightning speed and dribbling to score two goals in the 64th and the 68th minute. With France enjoying a 4-2 lead, Sergio Leonel Agüero could only manage to score a consolation goal during the 93rd minute. France progressed into the quarter-finals while Argentina returned home.

### **Penalty shootouts**

During the knockout stages (including the round of 16, quarter-finals, semi-finals and final) a total of 16 matches were played, out of which the results of four matches were decided through a penalty shoot-out after the scores were levelled following full-time and 30-minutes of extra time.

During Spain vs Russia match, Russia won the penalty shootout 4-3; Croatia won it 3-2 against Denmark; England progressed into the tournament by beating Columbia 4-3, while Croatia advanced into the semi-finals by beating Russia 4-3.



Mario Mandzukic scores own goal against France in the final

### **Own goal**

A total of 12 own goals (OG) were scored during the FIFA World Cup 2018. Included in this list are Aziz Behich



(Australia, scored OG against France); Fernandinho (Brazil, scored OG against Belgium); Ahmed Fathy (Egypt, scored OG against Russia); Edson Alvarez (Mexico, scored OG against Sweden); Aziz Bouhaddouz (Morocco, scored OG against Iran); Oghenekaro Peter Etebo (Nigeria, scored OG against Croatia); Thiago Cionek (Poland, scored OG against Senegal); Denis Cheryshev (Russia, scored OG against Uruguay); Sergei Ignashevich (Russia, scored OG against Spain); Yann Sommer (Switzerland, scored OG against Costa Rica), Yassine Meriah (Tunisia, scored OG against Panama) and Mario Mandzukic (Croatias, scored OG against France during the final).



Croatia's Luka Modric (left) wins the Golden Ball, Kylian Mbappe of France gets the Young Player Award

## Records

A number of records were made during the FIFA World Cup 2018. Russia's Yury Gazinsky scored the tournament's first goal against Saudi Arabia.

During the same match, Russia's Denis Cheryshev became the first player of the tournament to score two goals or a brace. Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo scored the tournament's first hat-trick against Spain, including the



goal he made from the spectacular free-kick during the 88th minute.

The fastest goal of the tournament, however, came during the match between Denmark and Croatia. Denmark's Mathias Jørgensen scored in the opening minute of the match following a throw-in.

The fastest goal by a substitute was made by Russia's Artem Dzyuba for Russia who scored against Saudi Arabia only a minute after he was substituted during the 70th minute of the match.



Harry Kane scored six goals, the highest in this World Cup

### **Team records**

In this World Cup, Belgium, who secured the third place, scored 16 goals in the tournament while Panama conceded 11 goals.

On individual basis, England's Harry Kane scored six goals, the highest in this World Cup.

Turning to players' age, Panama's Felipe Baloy played this tournament as the oldest player, at 37 years, to score a

goal. While France, Kylian Mbappe, at 19 years, was the youngest goal scorer of the tournament.



The closing ceremony

## Champions

The Luzhniki Stadium, Moscow was the venue of the final and the 64th match of the FIFA World Cup 2018. France, former World Champions of 1998 were playing against first-time finalists, Croatia.

The match had the final match feel to it since the whistle blew. However, Croatia's Mario Mandzukic's accidental header sent the ball in their own goal. His teammate, Ivan Perisic scored an equaliser during the 28th minute.

Soon France's Antoine Griezmann scored with a penalty kick. Then teammate Paul Pogba added one more goal in the 59th minute, followed by 19-year old Kylian Mbappe, who scored a sensational goal giving France a lead of 4-1.

Croatia's Mario Mandzukic did score the second goal for his team, but that was the most Croatians could do. With the final whistle, France emerged as the two-time FIFA World Cup Champion.

*Published in Dawn, Young World, July 21st, 2018*

## DAWN

E-PAPER | JUNE 15, 2025

# Pakistan Day: Quaid-i-Azam's words are wisdom for all!

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published March 24, 2018

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On the occasion of Pakistan Day, here are some quotations of our great Quaid, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, which serve as a guiding light for us.

## Unity must be upheld

***“We are now all Pakistanis — not Baluchis, Pathans, Sindhis, Bengalis, Punjabis and so on — and as Pakistanis we must feel, behave and act, and we should be proud to be known as Pakistanis and nothing else.”***

Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah promoted unity in all the ways possible. He not only united the Muslims of the Subcontinent to struggle for a separate nation, he became the leader of all Muslims while serving in the All-India Muslim League.

It was his call for a greater cause that amalgamated Muslims on a single platform to voice their opinion for a separate homeland.

## Empowering women

***“There are two powers in the world; one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a great competition and rivalry between the two. There is a third power stronger than both, that of the women.”***

Quaid-i-Azam, in this quote, is advocating the use of the power of the pen to change the world. It is the writers, poets and lyricists who give a nation the impetus to stand up and fight for what is right.

However, also in this quote, Muhammad Ali Jinnah has expressed his confidence that women are the third power after the sword and the pen. He was talking about women empowerment.

A clear example of such empowerment was seen when Fatima Jinnah, Begum Salma Tassaduq Hussain, Begum Fatima, Jahanara Shahnawaz, Shaista Ikramullah, Mumtaz Shahnawaz, Rana Liaquat, Begum Zari Sarfraz and others, played their part alongside men to work towards the establishment of Pakistan.

Women are serving in Pakistan and abroad in various fields and making their country proud.

## **Achieving greatness**

***“With faith, discipline and selfless devotion to duty, there is nothing worthwhile that you cannot achieve.”***

When talking about personal management and achieving dreams and aspirations, it is faith in Allah, a conviction in our abilities, discipline in what we do and a selfless devotion to what we want to accomplish, that makes the best equation for success. Discipline in following a routine, managing time and following things to do list with the commitment to excellence that will help you rise higher than your past and greater than your competition.

## **Pakistan first**

***“Every Mussalman should serve Pakistan honestly, sincerely and selflessly.”***

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in this quote, has shown his patriotism and love for Pakistan, the country he created with his tireless efforts and with a vision to give the Muslims of the subcontinent a homeland where they could live with ease. Honesty, sincerity and selflessness are qualities that make a good human great.

Humans nurture their relations and develop their academic and professional life with honesty, it is with sincerity that real care and love surfaces among humans and through selflessness can a person achieve a higher consciousness to do good and be great.

## **Nature's blessings on Pakistan**

***“Nature has given you everything: you have got unlimited resources. The foundations of your State have been laid, and it is now for you to build, and build as quickly and as well as you can. So go ahead and I wish you God speed.”***

Pakistan is blessed with natural landscapes as beautiful as the ones in Switzerland and Europe. There are coastal plains and deserts; there are cities that experience extreme heat in summers and below freezing point in winters.

Pakistan is blessed with all four seasons, there is a wide range of flora and fauna, and animal and plant species spread across its geographical terrain. Pakistan has been blessed with Trango Towers, salt range, volcanoes, mountain ranges, plateaus, forests, sea, rivers, deserts and a wide range of mineral resources. Nature has surely given Pakistan everything. What we do need is a determination to become great and the vision to use our resources in the best way possible.

## **The three rules of success**

***“My message to you all is of hope, courage and confidence.”***

Corporate leaders, motivational speakers, educationalists, athletes and people belonging to all walks of life promote and propagate the prominence of being hopeful at all times. Even in adversity, one should have hope that we will find a way out of our problems and reach success.

Moreover, such leaders also instil in us, through their actions, that courage can transform our lives. Courage leads you to prepare for a tough exam, courage makes you give a good class presentation; courage helps you learn and

ride a two-wheel bicycle, courage enables a teenager to rise up against bullies and courage helps us focus on our strengths and reduce our doubts and fears.

Furthermore, Quaid-i-Azam, in this quotation has talked about confidence, which is self-assurance and knowing yourself. Individuals working in every field of life and profession need confidence, giving them the power to believe in themselves and in their abilities.

## **A rising Pakistan**

***“I can look forward to Pakistan becoming one of the greatest nations of the world.”***

We all must strive for excellence when studying in school, college, and university. We must endeavour to achieve professional superiority when we begin our professional lives — as employees or entrepreneurs. However, it is in our daily effort to become great that will have a collective impact on the nation.

When we attempt to follow rules, obey our elders, live a simple and purposeful life, then we will eventually make Pakistan a great country. It is in our individual efforts to become great as students and professionals that will facilitate Pakistan progress and prosper.

Let us vow to follow the golden words of wisdom of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and make Pakistan better, stronger and more prosperous than before.

Long live Pakistan!

*Published in Dawn, Young World, March 24th, 2018*



# DAWN

E-PAPER | JUNE 15, 2025

## Bring out the speaker in you! Illustration by Ahmed Amin

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | Published September 16, 2017



Illustration by Ahmed Amin



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**The art of public speaking can do wonders for you as a student or a professional. Speaking the right words, with the appropriate facial expressions at**

**the right time not only adds value to your personality, in the long run it builds your character too. For students, public speaking skills help when making class presentations or giving speeches in declamation contests.**

For professionals, public speaking can herald a robust career growth as verbal and written interaction and correspondence builds and nurtures professional relationships. Professionals have to speak up when delivering a presentation to their boss or client, and when speaking on behalf of their company at a conference or seminar.

The personality building traits you learn in school, college and university remain with you forever. This article looks at some key tips and strategies you can use to become a good public speaker.

and correspondence builds and nurtures professional relationships. Professionals have to speak up when delivering a presentation to their boss or client, and when speaking on behalf of their company at a conference or seminar.

The personality building traits you learn in school, college and university remain with you forever. This article looks at some key tips and strategies you can use to become a good public speaker.

## **Confidence**

The key to public speaking lies in being confident at all times. Stage fright affects almost all of us, however, it is in that fear that we find the courage to stand in front of people and speak

Self-assurance and poise are developed when you know what you want to talk about. If you know your content, you can deliver a good speech or a talk because your information will become the source of your confidence.

Practice speaking in front of the mirror to see how you stand and how your gestures look. Speaking in front of close friends and asking for their feedback also helps.

## **Be natural**

A renowned public speaker or even a celebrity host can influence you. However, you will succeed only if you deliver presentations/speeches in your natural style. You should learn tips from everyone, but the style of delivering you choose must be your own.

If you imitate someone, you will not remain original. Be who you are. Do not try to talk in an accent that is not yours. Yes, the pronunciation of words is important, but it is your accent which will keep you original and natural.

## **Know your content**

The information you deliver when speaking is the message and the purpose of your talk. A well-researched content on your chosen topic will be a game-changer. You would need to prepare an outline of the key points you will discuss in your presentation/speech.

To deliver effective presentations you need to inform, persuade or motivate the audience. Where students during their class presentations inform and persuade, they motivate through their speeches made at declamation contests. You would need to fine-tune your content based on the objective of your presentation/speech. The more

informed you are about your topic, less are the chances of you fumbling or getting confused during the presentation.



Illustration by Ahmed Amin

## **Read, read and read some more**

You speak what you know. Therefore, make a habit of reading books on all topics relevant to your studies and profession. Because the more you read, the more information you will retain.

Public speaking is not about who talks the most, it is about who talks the best. Content matters in delivering a good presentation/speech and reading will provide you with this content.

## **Take it slow**

Even if you have a well-researched content and a visually appealing presentation, you must deliver it without rushing to the end. There must be clarity in the pronunciation of your words and you should talk slowly. A dear friend of mine, Dr Qazi Tauseef Uddin, who is also a corporate trainer, taught me that the art of effective public speaking is to take small half-second breaks between your sentences. These mini breaks will give you time to think over the

sentences or the words you need to speak and such breaks will also give your audience the time to understand the meaning of what you are saying.

Personally, this tip has helped me during my presentations and I am sure it will help you too. Always remember, in public speaking, quantity or the amount of time you spend talking does not matter. What matters is the quality, which refers to the content and information you share and how much value it adds to your message.

## **Body language**

Your body language is what makes or breaks your image. A positive body language compliments your public speaking skills. You must stand and walk upright to exhibit buoyancy and charisma. You need to create constant eye contact with the audience to ensure them that you are aware of your content and will deliver a concrete and credible talk.

You need to use your hand gestures accordingly. Especially when delivering a presentation, you need to walk around the stage and move your hands and arms accordingly, contrary to when delivering a speech, which you should do while standing behind a podium. However, when delivering a speech, you still have to stand upright, maintain eye contact and move your hands. Keep in mind to always walk and move your body slowly and unhurriedly. This adds maturity to your character.

## **The art of impromptu speaking**

Anyone can become a public speaker. However, a real public speaker is someone who can speak impromptu and

unrehearsed, and improvises as he/she speaks. This requires years of hard work and learning.

If you have ample knowledge and information about a specific topic with regards to its key facts, then you can make an unplanned speech. Even if you have prepared a presentation, you will look less at the slides and talk more on your own. However, it is always better to put on paper some one-liner bullet points, which you can glance upon if needed and explain one by one.

## **Teach, not impose**

Most public speakers don't leave a lasting impact for they intend to impose their thoughts, opinions and information instead of teaching them to the audience. You will never become a public speaker if you impose your thoughts, as the audience naturally blocks their sense of understanding when a speaker is imposing an idea.

However, the audience will be eager to listen to you if you present or speak on a topic as a teacher or a guide. Therefore, always assert and never impose your teachings.

## **Build bridges**

When speaking in public, you need to engage with the audience. This interaction builds a sacred bond between you and your listener. When the audience responds to your questions, they naturally unite with your thoughts to create an air of friendship and learning, while instilling confidence in you.

If you are giving a class presentation, you can engage the audience by asking relevant questions and continue this practice frequently during your presentation. This two-way

dialogue always takes away the pressure from the speaker's shoulders to make him/her more confident.

## **Vocal intonations**

How you emphasise a word or a sentence adds colour to your vocal delivery. Delivering a presentation or speaking with the same vocal tone will leave your audience bored. They will feel as if they are listening to a robot.

You will add depth to your narrative by increasing and lowering your voice and by emphasising a word or sentence by changing your tone.

## **Questions and answers**

Anyone can deliver a good presentation. However, speakers are tested by the audience during the questions and answers session following their presentations. At this time, the speakers are unaware of the questions and would need to respond to them without delay.

The art of impromptu or improvised speaking will become beneficial at this point only if you know your topic inside out. With practice and sufficient research on what you want speak on, you can easily give a speech or presentation that is well-received by that audience. So don't be afraid the next time your teacher asks you to explain something in the class or take part in a speech event. Just remember these tips and you will do well.

*Published in Dawn, Young World September 16th, 2017*

# Muhammad Omar Iftikhar's Articles and Columns in The News



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## Mission: Impossible - more than just action and adventure

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>)

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*Had there been no James Bond, Ethan Hunt would have been the premier secret agent we associate with silently saving the world...*

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### ENTERTAINMENT

Had there been no James Bond, Ethan Hunt would have been the premier secret agent we associate with silently saving the world. Mission: Impossible, a franchise based on the 1966 TV series of the same name, transformed into a multi-million-dollar cinematic phenomenon, with each movie becoming an exciting experience. Tom Cruise, who played the lead role of Ethan Hunt in all the films, became synonymous with Mission: Impossible itself, obscuring the lines between actor and character.

The journey began in 1996 with the first film, Mission: Impossible, which introduced the world to the Impossible Missions Force (IMF). Ethan Hunt, the sole survivor of a botched IMF mission in Prague to secure the CIA's top secret NOC list, uncovers an

infiltrator within the agency. After clearing his name, he recruits disavowed agents, steals the real list from CIA headquarters, and exposes the traitor, all while evading those trying to eliminate him.



Over the years, eight films have been released in the series, each packed with suspense, high-speed chases, hand-to-hand combat, and – of course – Cruise doing what he does best: accomplishing the impossible.

A striking parallel between Bond and Mission: Impossible lies in their protagonists' proclivity for driving cars, riding motorcycles, piloting planes, and riding speedboats to save the world. Bond has a license to kill; Hunt's authorization is a bit different, but his resolve is just as lethal.

Mission: Impossible is more than just action and adventure. It's not merely about a hero chasing a villain. The franchise prospered on its focused mission objectives, the urgency of global stakes, and, above all, teamwork. While Bond often operates alone, Hunt relied on logistical support, a dynamic reflected in his recurring team members, such as Simon Pegg's tech-savvy Benji Dunn (featured in six instalments) and Ving Rhames' steadfast Luther Stickell (the only actor besides Cruise to appear in every film).



Over the past three decades, Mission: Impossible redefined spy thrillers and espionage narratives. Critics may debate the physics-defying stunts or plot intricacies, but the franchise's consistency in storytelling, character development, and climactic tension remains unmatched. With *The Final Reckoning* (2025) marking the series' conclusion, Mission: Impossible will leave behind a cultural legacy that will endure for generations.

The films masterfully balanced action with emotional depth, often through riveting dialogues that revealed the characters' ideologies and personal battles. At the centre stood Ethan Hunt – flawed yet profoundly human, weighed down by moral dilemmas but unshakable in his loyalty to his team. If Hunt is the fictional hero, Cruise is the real-life daredevil, performing stunts that redefine the limits of action cinema.



From shattering a fish tank in *Mission: Impossible* (1996) to free-climbing a cliff in *Mission: Impossible II* (2000), leaping between Shanghai skyscrapers in *Mission: Impossible III* (2006), scaling the Burj Khalifa in *Ghost Protocol* (2011), clinging to a plane in *Rogue Nation* (2015), executing a hundred jumps for *Fallout* (2018), riding a motorcycle off a mountain in *Dead Reckoning* (2023), and jumping between aircrafts in *The Final Reckoning* (2025), each film was Cruise's personal challenge to outdo himself.

Based on themes of deception, betrayal, and impossible odds, the franchise's narrative style stayed true to its core, while its stunts grew increasingly daring. Throughout the series, Lalo Schiffrin's iconic theme music became instantly recognizable, magnifying excitement in trailers and scenes alike.

The end of Mission: Impossible will leave an emptiness in Hollywood for three reasons. First, it concludes one of the last actor-driven franchises – Cruise's dual role as star and producer was fundamental, a feat few can replicate. Second, its reliance on practical stunts set it apart in a CGI-saturated era. Finally, the emotional resonance of its team

dynamics – built on trust, sacrifice, and comradeship – will be hard to replace. By merging the spectacle of storytelling with the soul of putting a script on the big screen, Mission: Impossible has cemented its place in history.



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## THE 9TH ICC CHAMPIONS TROPHY - from thrills to upsets

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>) |21 March, 2025 [f](https://www.facebook.com/Usmagfortheyouth/) (<https://www.facebook.com/Usmagfortheyouth/>) [i](https://www.instagram.com/usmagazinethenewsinternational/)(<https://www.instagram.com/usmagazinethenewsinternational/>)

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*The ninth edition of the ICC Champions Trophy was anything but predictable—at times spectacular, at other times utterly one-sided....*

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### GROUND REALITY

During the fourth match of the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy, Ben Duckett scored 165, which was at that moment the highest individual score in the tournament's history. However, during the eighth match, Afghanistan's Ibrahim Zadran scored 177, thus shattering Duckett's record. This is the unpredictability factor that arises in high-octane tournaments such as the Champions Trophy.

The ninth edition of the ICC Champions Trophy was anything but predictable—at times spectacular, at other times utterly one-sided. In the opening match of the tournament, co-host, Pakistan - who played against New Zealand in Karachi - lost the match by 60 runs. The Black Caps posted 320 runs in 50 overs. In reply, Pakistan lost all ten wickets for 260 runs in 47.2 overs. This began the downfall for Team Green. Pakistan vs India, the match in every tournament that gets the most hype and attention, was another display of soggy performance from Pakistan. Batting first, Pakistan could not even touch the 250-run mark and were all out for 241 in 49.4 overs. India won the match by six wickets in 42.3 overs. Saud Shakeel scored 62 (76) and Mohammad Rizwan managed to score 46 (77) with other batsmen not posting much on the scoreboard. Virat Kohli scored an unbeaten 100 (111) and Shreyas Iyer posted 56 (67).

### 300 plus runs



South Africa were the first team of the 2025 edition to cross the 300-run mark against Afghanistan when they posted a total of 315/6 (50 overs). Afghanistan lost by 107 runs when they were all out in 43.3 overs. South Africa's opener Ryan Rickelton reached his 103 runs in 106 deliveries while three batsmen - Temba Bavuma, Rassie van der Dussen and Aiden Markram - scored half-centuries.

The talk of the town was the fourth match between England and Australia where both teams scored 350 plus runs. It was a delight for cricket fans to watch a highly competitive match. Australia elected to field first that allowed England to score 351/8 (50 overs). Ben Duckett's 165 (143) including 17 fours and three sixes were nothing short of an extraordinary innings. Joe Root also added to the total with 68 (78). The stage was set for England to win the match but no team should ever underestimate Australia. Travis Head and Steven Smith did lose their wickets after scoring in single digits, however, opener Matthew Short's 63 (66) gave his team a solid foundation. Marnus Labuschagne scored 47 (45) and Alex Carey added 69 (63). However, Australia's Josh Inglis devastated the English bowling by scoring 120 off 86 along with a fiery knock by Glenn Maxwell who added 32 runs in just 15 deliveries. Fans were expecting Australia to play the finals of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 but their journey was cut short by India in the semi-final that India won by 4 wickets.

## Upset for England



The eighth match of the tournament was an upset win for Afghanistan, who defeated England by 8 runs. After electing to bat first, Afghanistan posted 325/7 in 50 overs - a total that was never expected to be made by the team. Opener Ibrahim Zadran's 177 along with Hashmatullah Shahidi, Azmatullah Omarzai and Mohammad Nabi's 40, 41 and 40 runs respectively helped their team post this total. In reply, the English batsmen Joe Root's 120 (111) gave them a steady groundwork but he received limited support from his teammates, with Ben Duckett scoring 38 and Jos Buttler adding 38 runs. The rest of the batting lineup struggled against Afghanistan's bowling attack, particularly Azmatullah Omarzai, who claimed five wickets for 58 runs.

In this nail-biting finish, England were 313/9 in 48.8 overs. Afghanistan made sure England did not complete the mission and were all out in 49.5 overs.

The two semi-finals were played between Australia and India, and New Zealand and South Africa. India and New Zealand won their respective matches that set the final to be played in Dubai on March 9, 2025.

## The final





India played its fifth ICC Champions Trophy final, while New Zealand played its third.. India became champions in 2002 and 2013 while New Zealand emerged champions in 2000. In the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy final played on March 9, 2025, India and New Zealand faced each other in the finals of this tournament for the second time. They previously met in the finals of the 2000 edition - the second Champions Trophy – which New Zealand won by 4 wickets.

The finals of the 2025 edition was not a high scoring match as many had predicted. After New Zealand elected to bat first, it posted a modest total of 251 in 50 overs. Daryl Mitchell and Michael Bracewell scored half centuries by scoring 63 and 53. Indian opener and captain, Rohit Sharma, struck 76 (83) to give his team a steady start. India won its third ICC Champions Trophy by winning the finals by 4 wickets in 49 overs.

## Player of the tournament





Rachin Ravindra of New Zealand earned the Player of the Tournament award for scoring 263 runs in 4 innings. He also scored two centuries and took three wickets. He was also named Player of the Match against South Africa in the second semi-finals. He scored 108 (101) and also took a wicket.



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# Experience is data

Data, today, defines how we make decisions with tools allowing us to analyse experience more precisely

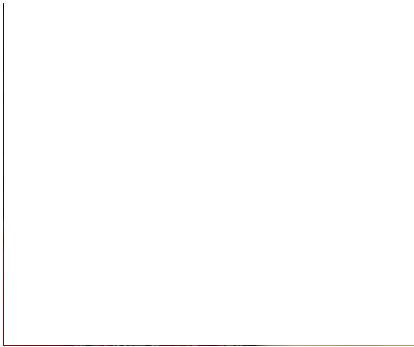
By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | November 21, 2024



A representational image of a person coding. — AFP/File

While watching a classic cricket match from the 1990s, I realised something: data, a term now central to fields from business to sports, was always present – even before our tech-driven world took shape.

Back then, as the bowler ran in, the television screen displayed a line showing his bowling path. It illustrated how a consistent line and length could influence the batsman’s response. Another graphic showed the batsman’s shot placements across the stadium. This was not just data as we see it today; it was knowledge, experience, and anticipation coming together. In essence, it was data – transformed from experience into actionable insights.



Today, data defines how we make decisions. But this isn’t new; it is simply a structured version of what experience and intuition have always offered. Think of a seasoned business leader deciding where to invest or which product to launch. These decisions may seem instinctive, but they are based on patterns, outcomes, and lessons learned from years of experience. In a way, it is a mental collection of insights built over time, which today’s technology allows us to visualise and refine further.

The tech industry’s growth has magnified this transformation. In the digital world, every startup founder, product manager, or marketer relies on a mix of data and experience to make decisions that enhance the value of the product or service offered. For example, a tech entrepreneur launching a new platform needs market insights, user engagement statistics, and conversion data to shape their approach. But even these tables, graphs, and figures are linked to experience. They are choices and patterns built over years, providing a foundation for each data point.

Today, we are seeing experience evolve into data. Every decision that once relied on gut feeling or implicit knowledge can now be expressed in numbers, charts, and algorithms. Data tools allow us to



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analyse experience on a more precise scale, but the original foundation remains – experience and action.

This shift has also redefined personal growth and learning. Individuals can now track their performance, from workout stats to productivity metrics, transforming personal experiences into measurable data. Professionals, athletes, and students use these insights to refine their routines and habits, creating a cycle of continuous learning.

As artificial intelligence and machine learning tools become accessible, organisations increasingly use predictive analytics to forecast future outcomes based on past experiences. The blend of human expertise and data science enables us to anticipate trends, reduce risks, and make informed decisions more quickly than ever.

In this way, experience has become data, driving both personal and professional growth at an unprecedented pace, which will continue to envelop our lives and careers. Experience, once intangible, is now a crucial asset, evolving with the times but retaining its value.

Students can develop insights and acumen to turn experience into data by engaging in real-world learning opportunities. Internships, part-time jobs, and project-based assignments provide hands-on experience, allowing students to observe patterns, track results, and collect relevant data. By analysing outcomes and reflecting on which strategies succeeded or failed, they gain insights that support decision-making.

Students should also focus on building analytical skills by using tools like spreadsheets, data visualisation and project management software to organise and interpret information. These tools transform observations into measurable data, showing how individual actions impact larger objectives.

Engaging in continuous learning – such as pursuing degree or diploma courses in data analytics and business intelligence – can further strengthen students' ability to view experience as data. By combining experience with structured analysis, students can build a foundation of actionable insights, positioning themselves as data-driven thinkers ready for today's data-centric professional environment.

The writer is a fiction writer and columnist.



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# Prioritize sports funding

Young man from Mian Channu stood proudly atop the podium as Pakistan’s flag was hoisted high

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar | August 28, 2024



Javelin ace Arshad Nadeem celebrates after winning gold medal, Paris 2024 Olympics, Men's Javelin Throw Final, Stade de France, Saint-Denis, France, August 08, 2024. — Reuters

When Arshad Nadeem's javelin soared past the 90-meter mark in the finals at the Stade de France during the 2024 Olympics, he changed the landscape of sports in Pakistan.

The young man from Mian Channu stood proudly atop the podium as Pakistan’s flag was hoisted high, the national anthem echoing through the stadium. Arshad's throw, coupled with the unwavering support of his coach Salman Butt, earned Pakistan its first Olympic gold medal since the 1984 Los Angeles Games and its very first in track and field.



In accomplishing this feat, Nadeem claimed a gold medal with a stunning throw of 92.97 meters, breaking the Olympic record and surpassing the long-held standard set by Denmark's Andreas Thorkildsen at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Arshad's homecoming to Lahore was nothing short of a hero's welcome. The streets overflowed with jubilant crowds, and the airport’s arrivals lounge was packed beyond capacity. His village braced for a celebration, and offers of monetary rewards poured in from various organizations and government officials. It was a life-altering moment for Nadeem, raising the question of what might have been if he had not needed to crowdfund the Rs85,000 for his javelin – a task that should have been supported by sponsorships. However, this is how the world operates.

While Arshad Nadeem has rightly earned his place on the world stage, it is imperative that the government also recognizes the contributions of the other six athletes who represented Pakistan at the 2024 Olympics.

From a nation of 250 million, only seven athletes competed in Paris, each of them a testament to



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perseverance and dedication. These athletes were: Faiqa Riaz (Track and Road), Muhammad Ahmed Durrani and Jehanara Nabi (Swimming), and three participants in air pistol shooting – Gulfam Joseph, Ghulam Mustafa Bashir, and Kishmala Talat. Although they did not progress to the finals, their achievement in reaching the Olympics deserves commendation and recognition to uplift the aspiring athletes who envision performing at the Olympics.

Sports education is integral to the overall growth of young people, impacting far more than just their physical well-being. While physical benefits such as improved fitness, agility, and health are vital, the influence of sports on mental, social, and emotional development is equally crucial, particularly in our increasingly stressful environment.

Incorporating sports into the daily lives of the youth cultivates essential life skills, boosts academic achievement, and encourages a well-rounded lifestyle, making it a critical aspect of education.

One of the most significant advantages of sports education is its ability to instill discipline and enhance time management skills. Participation in sports demands regular practice, dedication, and a commitment to ongoing improvement. These qualities naturally extend into academic and personal spheres, enabling young people to manage their time effectively, set realistic goals, and work diligently to achieve them.

Sports education also plays a vital role in social development. Through participation in team sports, young individuals learn the importance of teamwork, cooperation, and leadership. Additionally, sports offer a platform for forming friendships, building networks, and fostering a sense of belonging, all of which are essential for emotional well-being and community integration.

Moreover, in today's increasingly sedentary world, sports education is key to promoting a healthy lifestyle. Regular physical activity through sports helps address issues like obesity, stress, and lifestyle-related diseases. It emphasizes the importance of physical fitness, encouraging habits that contribute to long-term health and wellness.

To ensure that coaches meet global standards, it is important to implement training programmes that enhance their technical skills and teaching methods. International collaboration is also crucial; partnerships between national governing bodies and international sports organizations and educational institutions can facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices.

In addition, a nationwide talent identification programme should be established across all sports to scout promising athletes and provide them with the necessary training to compete at national and international levels. Promoting sports in Pakistan requires a collective effort, one that should be initiated from the primary level in schools and continued through to universities.

By prioritizing sports education, we can equip our youth with the tools they need for success, both on and off the field, ensuring a healthier, more disciplined, and socially connected generation.

The writer is a fiction writer.



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# PARIS 2024 EXHIBITING SPORTSMANSHIP AND INCLUSIVITY

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>) |

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*The upcoming 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris promise to be a remarkable global event, bringing together athletes from around the world in the spirit of competition and camaraderie....*



## COVER STORY

The 2024 Summer Olympics, or Paris 2024, promises to be a landmark event, highlighting athletic excellence, innovation, and a commitment to a brighter future. This article delves into the key insights and highlights of the upcoming Olympic Games.

## Historical perspective

April 6, 1896, marked the opening of the first-ever modern Olympic Games, hosted by Athens, Greece. Fourteen nations and 241 athletes participated in these Games, with matches contested across seven venues in the city. One hundred and twenty-eight years later, the Olympic Games continue to exhibit the same level of excellence in sports, with athletes pushing their physical and mental limits to achieve peak performance.”



## Paris 2024

On July 26, 2024, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) will open the 33rd edition of the Olympic Games in Paris, France, with athletes from around the world competing in a spirit of sportsmanship that has been constant since 1896. The 2024 Summer Olympics will feature 329 events in 32 sports, with 10,672 athletes representing 206 nations. Indeed, the Olympic Games have spread their wings across all continents, inviting athletes from a plethora of games.

## Third time in Paris

As Paris prepares to host the Games for the third time, a 100 years after its 1924 edition, the city is ready to offer a unique and memorable experience. Paris first hosted the Olympic Games in 1900, which was the second Summer Olympics in history.

The 2024 Olympic Games are centered on sustainability and accessibility, reflecting the city's commitment to hosting an eco-friendly and inclusive event. Iconic landmarks like the Stade de France will serve as key venues, alongside newly constructed, environmentally conscious facilities.

Moreover, the Games will utilize existing infrastructure where possible, minimizing environmental impact and showcasing Paris's rich heritage. Paris will join London as the only city to host the Olympics three times.

London hosted the Games in 1908 (4th Games), 1948 (14th Games), and 2012 (30th Games). In addition to the sports competitions, cultural events will offer spectators a chance to engage with art, music, and cuisine, as well as experiencing open-air concerts and exhibitions.



## Unity and sportsmanship

The Olympic spirit is personified by athletes from all nations competing in a friendly and respectful environment, exhibiting their technique, grit, strength, and acumen. The values of sportsmanship and fair play are of paramount significance and have remained

the cornerstone of these Games. Such principles foster a sense of unity among competitors and spectators alike.

The Olympic Truce, an ancient tradition calling for a pause of hostilities during the Games, emphasizes the message of peace and cooperation that is necessary in today's ever-competitive, highly volatile world.

Moreover, the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) Refugee Olympic Team will also participate, providing a platform for displaced athletes to compete and share their stories of resilience and determination with the world.

## Host selection

Strategic planning, compelling presentations, a strong vision, and persuasive dialogue resulted in Paris being selected as the host city for the 2024 Summer Olympics. The process was highly competitive, with multiple cities, including Budapest (Hungary), Los Angeles (USA), Rome (Italy), and Hamburg (Germany), vying for the honor. Each city brought unique attributes and strengths to the negotiating table. Paris's bid for the 2024 Olympics was enveloped in a vision of sustainability, innovation, and inclusivity.

The city presented a well-organized plan that emphasized the use of existing infrastructure, minimizing environmental impact, and creating a lasting legacy for future generations. One of the standout features of Paris's bid was its commitment to sustainability, a major action plan increasingly pursued by governments and corporations alike.



## Opening ceremony

Instead of hosting it in a stadium, as has been done for years, the Opening Ceremony of the 2024 Olympic Games will feature an original concept. On July 26, 2024, the ceremony will be held along the Seine River.

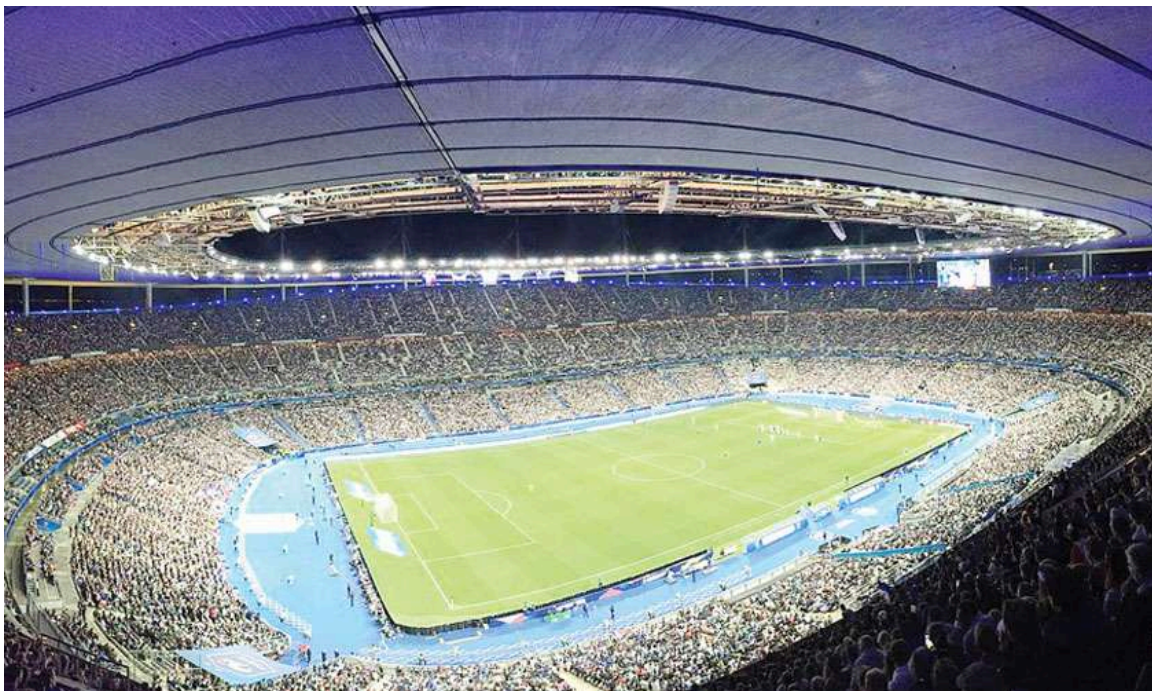


The parade of athletes will take place on the Seine, with each national delegation aboard individual boats equipped with cameras to offer television and online viewers close-up views of the athletes. The athletes will journey along a 6-kilometer route through the center of Paris.

For the first time, the ceremony will be open to a large audience with free admission for most spectators. Fans can access the upper stands without tickets, while tickets will be required for the lower levels. Eighty giant screens and strategically placed speakers will enhance the experience. It is expected that the Paris 2024 Opening Ceremony will be the largest in Olympic history.

## Venues

Most sporting events at Paris 2024 will take place in Paris and its metropolitan area, including neighboring cities such as Saint-Denis, Le Bourget, Nanterre, Versailles, and Vaires-sur-Marne. The city of Paris has been divided into various zones, each hosting a number of events. These zones are the Grand Paris Zone, Paris Centre Zone, Versailles Zone, and Outlying Venues, which refer to cities and venues located farther from the host city.



## Mascot

The mascots for Paris 2024 are Phryges caps, soft conical hats with bent tops. These caps were worn by various ancient peoples in Eastern Europe, Anatolia, and Asia, including Persians, Medes, and Scythians. For Paris 2024, the mascots are a pair of anthropomorphic Phrygian caps, a French symbol of freedom and liberty. They share the motto: “Alone we go faster, but together we go further.”

## Medals

In February 2024, Paris 2024 President Tony Estanguet unveiled the Olympic and Paralympic medals for the Games, showcasing a unique combination of history and craftsmanship. Each medal features embedded hexagon-shaped tokens of scrap iron

taken from the original construction of the Eiffel Tower, with the Games logo engraved into it. As many as 5,084 medals will be produced by the French mint Monnaie de Paris and designed by the luxury jewelry firm Chaumet. The reverse side of the medals depicts Nike, the Greek goddess of victory, inside the Panathenaic Stadium, which hosted the first modern Olympics in 1896.

The Parthenon and the Eiffel Tower are also visible in the background, signifying the association between ancient and modern games.

Each medal weighs between 455 and 529 grams, has a diameter of 85 mm, and is 9.2 mm thick. The gold medals are composed of 98.8 percent silver and 1.13 percent gold, while the bronze medals are made of copper, zinc, and tin.

## New sports

Breaking, or breakdancing, is a style of street dance that originated in the USA in the 1970s. Paris 2024 marks the sport's official debut in the Olympics and the first time a dancesport discipline is featured. Following its successful debut at the 2018 Summer Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires, breaking joins sport climbing and surfing as additional sports for Paris 2024. The event will feature thirty-two breakers, with sixteen B-Boys and sixteen B-Girls competing in face-to-face single battles.

## AI devices to support tourists

As Paris prepares to welcome hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world, the city's transit system, RATP, has implemented an innovative solution for language barriers. Metro workers will be equipped with handheld AI translation devices called Tradivia to assist non-French-speaking tourists. These devices can translate between French and 16 languages, including English, Arabic, Mandarin, and Korean. The translations appear on the device's screen and can also be read aloud, making communication smoother for visitors.

The 2024 Summer Olympics promises to be a landmark event, showcasing athletic excellence, innovation, and a commitment to a brighter future. This event will celebrate unity, diversity, and inclusivity, reminding us that sports have the power to bring us all together in the spirit of competition.



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## A writer's strategy for success

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>)

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*There is nothing more satisfying for a writer than to see their manuscript turned into a book....*

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### COVER STORY

There is nothing more satisfying for a writer than to see their manuscript turned into a book. The sight of their book placed on a bookshelf or made available in an online store is priceless. Young writers often inquire about the process of writing a book and getting it published in Pakistan. While they may acquire the expression and style to write articles and blogs, venturing into the book publishing process is a different ballgame altogether.

In this article, I will share some tips for aspiring authors to help them take their first step into the world of book publishing. Getting a book published involves several steps, and the process can vary depending on whether you're pursuing traditional publishing or self-publishing. This article looks into the general strategies that can be pursued for both domains.

## The idea

You need to have an idea before you take the first step. Ask yourself about the topics on which you can write a book. What subjects interest you, and what fields of study are you capable of commenting on through your opinion and experience? The idea becomes the foundation for your book. The idea of your book will eventually envelop the entire process from outlining to publishing.

Suppose you are interested in writing short stories. Your book could be an anthology of short stories, each ranging from 1,500 to 5,500 words. However, writing short stories on impulse may not lead you anywhere. You need to plan the type of stories you want to write. They may be a collection of realist fiction, science fiction, horror, mystery, adventure, and more.

## Research and outline

Research is a writer's best friend. Once you decide on the idea, you begin your research. This is not something you can complete in a day or in a couple of hours. You need to be thorough in research and should read multiple books on the same genre or those covering the topic that links to your idea. Read relevant material in newspapers, magazines, and books that complement your idea. Look into the books that are similar to the one you are working on to analyse the kind of content you should develop. Researching will give you the vision to build your book's content from scratch. There is no said quantity of how much research should be done. You will always have room for research – it is a continuous, never-ending process. Note all the important points you come across to help you create an outline. The outline includes the topics that you will explain in the book, which will become the chapters or sections. You can rearrange these topics based on importance or in chronological order.

## The manuscript

Once you have an outline, you will begin writing. Your focus will be to complete the first draft of your manuscript. The goal is to write one point of the outline at a time and repeat the process for all the points. For instance, if you are writing a book exploring the Pakistani authors who published their fiction books from 1947 to 1987, researching their works will give you ample information to prepare an outline. If there are fifty authors you are writing about, then the outline could include the author's introduction and profile, literary works, summary, and social allegories discussed in their novels, the impact they made, and quotes or comments from readers or other literary figures to add value to your manuscript.

Moreover, whether you are writing a fiction or non-fiction book, your manuscript needs to be well-researched and coupled with credible information, the latest facts, accurate data, and your opinion that resonates with the essence of the book. A half-cooked manuscript sent to the publisher in haste is as good as not sending one at all. The manuscript must be edited to its core – from the first page to the last word.





## Daily writing goal

Your book will not finish itself. You need to make it happen. Setting specific and realistic writing goals is a strategy to stay focused and motivated. Identify the word count of your book during the outlining process. If you want your book to comprise 70,000 words, you can have 10 chapters with 7,500 words, 15 chapters of 5,000 words, or twenty-five chapters with 3,000 words each. Create a strategy and a daily writing goal based on the target word count. This depends on the structure of your book. It may have fewer chapters, but each has multiple sub-chapters or sections. It may also have only five chapters without any sections. You will have a fair idea of the book's structure once you have the detailed chapter outline.

Moreover, break down your writing goal into smaller, manageable parts. For example, if you write every day, aim for 700 words per day to reach your weekly target of 4,900 words. Be flexible in setting a daily writing goal, and don't be too harsh if you do not reach the goal. If you are a student or working, prioritize your studies and office work. This calls for creating a writing time where you can focus on working on your manuscript. Be consistent but also be easy on yourself. Consider using writing sprints as a technique. Set a timer for a specific duration (half an hour, 45 minutes, one hour, etcetera) and focus solely on writing during that time. Keep a writing journal or use a writing app to track your daily word count. Once you reach your daily or weekly goal, reward yourself with something enjoyable.

## Fiction and non-fiction

**Fiction:** Writing a fiction book is a creative and rewarding process. Define your purpose and genre before developing your idea. Create an outline based on the plot. Your fiction book needs engaging characters with distinctive personalities, motivations, and conflicts for readers to connect with. Establish an immersive setting by considering the period, location, and atmosphere that suits your story. Writing a fiction novel includes a three-act structure. In Act 1, introduce the world, describe an inciting incident, and establish the goals the protagonist must pursue. Introduce key characters, including the

protagonist and antagonist, along with their supporting characters. In Act 2, experience rising action, the main part of the story where the protagonist faces a series of challenges characterized by increasing tension and conflict. At the midpoint in Act 2, there is a revelation or a major setback that escalates the challenges for the protagonist. In Act 3, the story reaches its highest point of tension, often involving the protagonist making a critical choice or facing a conflict.

**Non-fiction:** Writing a non-fiction book involves a different set of considerations compared to fiction. Be clear about why you want to write this book and identify your target audience. Select a topic you are passionate about and one that has relevance and interest to your target audience. Conduct in-depth research, gathering information from reliable sources, interviews, and personal experiences. Develop a writing style that is both engaging and authoritative. Furthermore, your non-fiction book should offer practical advice, insights, or solutions that readers can apply.

## Revise and edit

When revising and editing your manuscript, focus on the three Cs: clarity, coherence, and consistency. During the editing process, assess the content structure. The introduction should set the tone, the body should include logical sections and chapters, and the conclusion should provide a satisfying end. Scrutinize each sentence to ensure clarity and coherence, avoiding complex structures and difficult vocabulary. Check for transitions and flow between paragraphs. It is imperative to maintain a consistent tone throughout your manuscript to align your writing style with the genre and the topic. Reading the manuscript multiple times will help you identify grammar and spelling mistakes, and fixing errors such as subject-verb agreement, punctuation, and typos.

## Pitching to a publisher

Begin your search for a publisher once you have edited your manuscript. Identify publishers who have published books similar to the ones that fall under your topic or genre. Establish initial contact with them through email correspondence. Formally introduce yourself and present the summary of your book, explaining why you wrote it and the impact it will have on readers. Visit the publisher's website to understand the materials needed when pitching the idea. This typically includes an author's bio, a summary or synopsis of the book, the word count, and the first three chapters. Follow the rules as mentioned on the website and avoid annoying the publisher by sending multiple emails regarding your query.

In the case of traditional publishing, the publisher will cover the costs, and you will receive a royalty based on the agreement. If you are self-publishing, you need to bear the publishing costs. In some cases, the self-publishing platform allows the author to develop a book cover of their choice. You can have an agreement with the platform if you want them to design the cover, format the book, and edit the content. Additional charges apply for these services.



## Final word

Whether you are pursuing a traditional publishing model or going for a self-publishing format, complete your manuscript first. It should be the best version you can present to the publisher. Write from your heart as a writer and edit it from your soul as a reader.

*The writer is the author of **Divided Species**, a sci-fi story set in Karachi. He is also the author of **20 Steps to Writing Articles**.*



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## Skills for aspiring writers

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>)

29 September, 2023 [f](https://www.facebook.com/Usmagfortheyouth/) (<https://www.facebook.com/Usmagfortheyouth/>) [i](https://www.instagram.com/usmagazinethenewsinternational/)

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*Here are a few skills that you can polish to enhance your writing style and expression ...*

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### TIPS 'N' TRICKS

Writing is a process that people tend to perceive from various angles. Some use it as a catalyst, some use it to share ideas, and some develop fictional narratives to provoke thoughts and create social allegories. I believe the skills required to become a writer are not directly linked to the art of writing. Here are a few skills that you can polish to enhance your writing style and expression:

#### Research

To become a writer, you need to acquire research skills. As a fiction writer, you would need to create worlds, or world-building, as it is usually referred to. You would need to search for actual places to take inspiration from when creating your setting. You would need to research equipment and gadgets that may or may not exist, but you would want your character to use them.

You would like to do research for your non-fiction work as well. It will include a thorough study of the topic and its components. Researching does not mean performing a search on Google to find the topic or idea you are looking for. It includes knowing what you are looking for and then creating branches out of the main topic(s) to analyze more of the sub-topics. For instance, you want to write a book about the history of publishing in Pakistan. This will include: the history, past, present, and future of the publishing industry; key national and international publishing houses; authors from all provinces who wrote in various languages; categorizing authors and publishers according to genre; nationally acclaimed authors; self-publishing vs. traditional publishing; publishing houses run by young writers; and many more aspects that you may think about along the way.



### **Observation**

Writers need to be keen observers. They should observe the sights and sounds, people, activities, and environment of their society and the place they live. They have to observe human behavior and psyche, attitude, aptitude, and cause and effect to translate the same into messages. Indeed, it is societal trends, actions, thoughts, and norms that writers pick up as themes and topics. Such topics become social allegories that writers explore in fiction and non-fiction. Researching, writing, and editing are tasks that require patience. Writers need to be patient when performing these tasks. There is no overnight success for writers. Each step must be pursued and completed with diligence. Writers may take six to twelve months to compile their research, and a similar amount of time may be required to write the first draft. Editing and proofreading is another interesting yet tedious activity that must be done slowly and steadily.

### **Storytelling**

When it comes to writing, storytelling is a key skill. Tell stories to uplift the readers' consciousness, provoke their thoughts, inform, and entertain. Write about social topics, create worlds and characters resonating with the readers, identify real-life characters and give them a spin, and take less-discussed topics to build a narrative around them.

### **Writing skills**

Linked to storytelling are writing skills. Enhance them by focusing on grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and tenses. Write clear sentences, be concise and complete when narrating, be clear and logical when explaining, adapt a pertinent tone when informing or persuading, and be descriptive when explaining scenes and actions. "Show, don't tell" is a skill you should develop. It refers to the use of descriptive and vivid language to explain emotions and information in a story. The skill of being creative will help you view a topic from another angle.

### Time management

It is a skill writers need to sharpen. They should discipline themselves to meet deadlines and juggle between writing and completing tasks of personal and professional importance.

### Critical thinking

Another skill that is needed by writers is critical thinking. Writers should analyze and evaluate their learning curve by comparing their present work with work completed in the past. They should also read work by other authors in the same genre for a comparative study.

### Reading

And, finally, you need to read as much as you can to polish your writing skills. The content that you absorb will merge with your subconscious, only to be utilized during thinking or writing.

The writer is a fiction writer, columnist and author of Divided Species – a sci-fi story set in Karachi



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## Youth empowerment through skills development

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>)

15 July, 2022 [f](https://www.facebook.com/Usmagfortheyouth/) (<https://www.facebook.com/Usmagfortheyouth/>) [i](https://www.instagram.com/usmagazinethenewsinternational/)

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*Their parents, teachers and employers should help them in this regard....*

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### COVER STORY

Every year on July 15, the world celebrates World Youth Skills Day to highlight the significance of encouraging the youth to learn skills for career and personal development. Skills remain essential for the progress and development of any country. In Pakistan, 60 percent of the population is made up of the youth, and the percentage is increasing every year. The job market is not good, as there are not enough jobs available in both public and private sectors according to the academic qualifications of the young people. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the young people to learn skills in order to earn well. Their parents, teachers and employers should help them in this regard.



Textbook learning and classroom lectures are important for academic success. However, one must develop skills to acquire a competitive advantage when searching for a job after graduation, or when establishing a business. The youth should know how to work in the fields of communication, time management, stress management, crisis management, financial management, relationship building, etc.

At the 2022 World Youth Skills Day, the youth of Pakistan should pledge to develop their skills. If you are a youth, you should cultivate a learning mindset. This article looks at how the youth can pursue skills development.



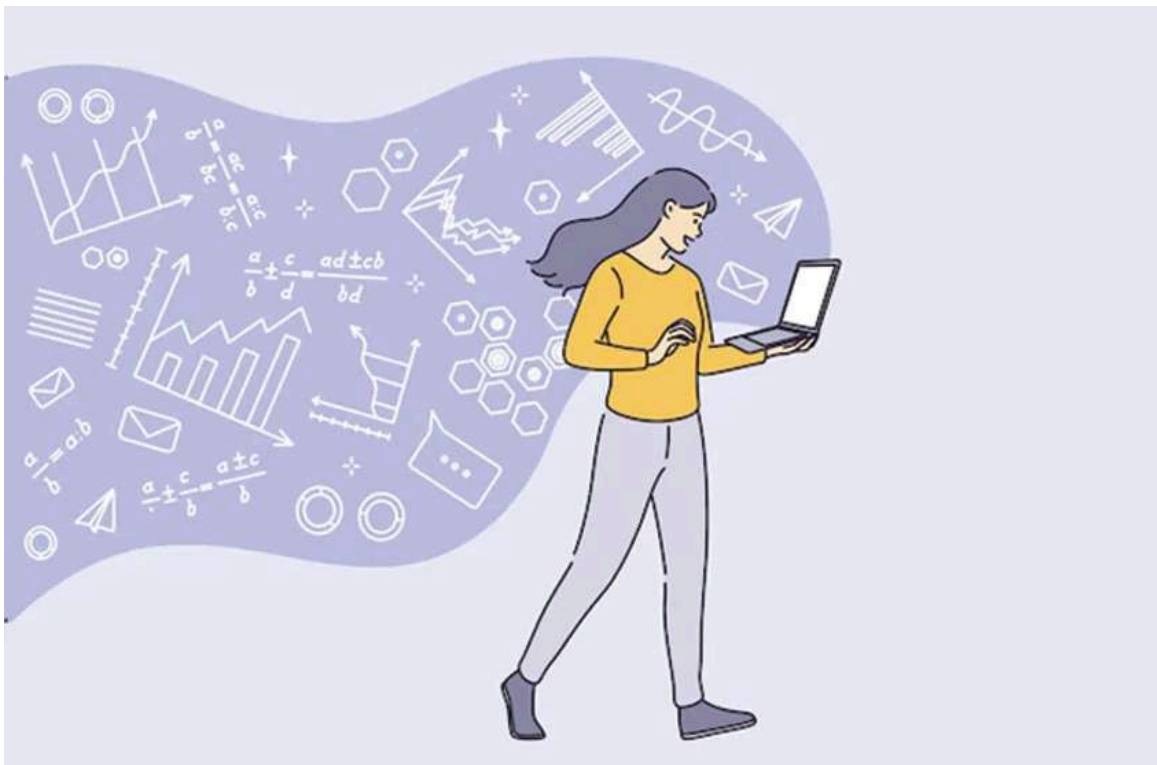
### **Know your strengths**

You need to realize your strengths. These could be inborn or the ones that you may have developed over time. You should capitalize on your strengths and add value to them by continuously pursuing actions that augment your strengths. For instance, if your writing skills are your strength, you should write articles for print and digital publications. If your strength is in verbal communication, you should take part in declamation contests. You can also run your YouTube channel. Your strengths will be fortified if you remain practical and keep doing things that can help you build your skillset.



The youth often ignore their shortcomings. This makes them lose a major competitive advantage; for instance, if you have good presentation skills but do not know how to effectively use a spreadsheet, then your ignorance will keep you behind those who have learned this skill.

You must continue to learn to turn your shortcomings into strengths. This will require you to question what you know and what you do not. Reading is an effective way to learn. Furthermore, watch documentaries related to the topics of your interest.



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Children have the acumen to observe and follow what their elders do. The youth may also acquire information through observation. For instance, the youth should observe how various professionals conduct their activities including gardeners, carpenters, masons, teachers, etc. One may not pursue these professions but knowing how these professionals conduct their tasks will help at some point in life. Suppose your reading table's leg is loose and wobbles, making it difficult for you to read or write. Instead of calling a carpenter for a small task, you can fix the table if you know the basics of carpentry. There is no harm in knowing how to work with wood, cement, electrical equipment, etc. If observation is important, then asking questions is of paramount significance. You will broaden your mental caliber by asking questions because you are thinking about something that you do not know about. Similarly, doing or pursuing the act will reinforce your learning by providing you with practical exposure and experience.

### **Practical learning**

Textbook learning, as mentioned earlier, will provide you with academic growth. You should focus on developing your skills including communications, finance, time management, etc. Children and the youth who receive pocket money from their parents or grandparents should save it to channel and manage their finances.

### **Cognitive analysis of big data**

The youth should learn how to read data and its accompanying information to extract meaning from it. Big data is an asset for individuals and companies. It allows companies to make decisions related to marketing and finances while keeping a track of their performance and their competitors.

### **Emotional intelligence**

The youth and the adults alike are under a lot of stress because of their studies or work. The youth should be taught how to control their emotions and to learn what others' emotions mean in various situations. Emotional intelligence includes self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management.

### **Critical thinking**

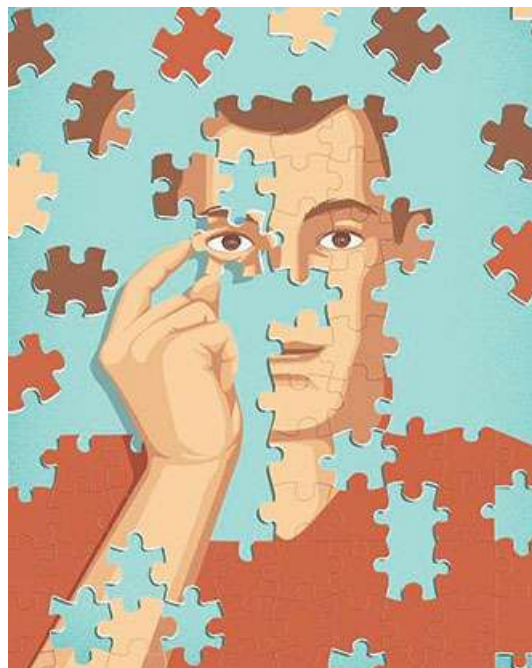
Critical thinking is the study of facts and observations to come up with a conclusion. The five critical thinking skills are observation, analysis (gathering and understanding data), inference (concluding), communication, and problem-solving. The youth should know how to resolve personal and professional problems. This requires one to think beyond the tried and tested ways to come up with solutions. Problem-solving and critical thinking skills are developed when you go through an experience and learn from it.





## Digital literacy

Digital media has become a world of its own. Businesses are using it to connect with customers. Individuals are using it to conduct meetings, buy products and services, take online classes, etc. The youth must learn the skills to manage digital media. It will help them in managing their freelance business or facilitate them when they join a company after graduation as digital media is an integral part of all departments. The skills to learn in this regard include website design and development, social media promotion, content management, videography, and photography, among others. Understanding how social media paid promotion works is also integral. You should know how to run online advertising campaigns and how to calculate Cost Per Thousand (CPM), Cost per Action (CPA), and Cost per Click (CPC), among other parameters.



It is not enough to be well qualified; you need skills to better your lifestyle and help your country prosper.



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# Wimbledon 2022: The players who will not be in action!

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>)

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*This is the time of the year when the quiet town of Wimbledon in South West London receives global sports media attention as tennis stars from across the world converge....*

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## GROUND REALITY

The 135th edition of the Wimbledon Championships will take place from June 27 to July 10 at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club. The tennis championship will bring to the fore the top players of the game who, along with the rookies and wildcard entrants, will battle for tennis supremacy. This is the time of the year when the quiet town of Wimbledon in South West London receives global sports media attention as tennis stars from across the world converge.

Serbia's Novak Djokovic will defend his Men's Singles title that he won for the sixth time in 2021 against Italy's Matteo Berrettini. In the Women's singles division, Australia's Ashleigh Barty will be defending the title that she won for the first time in 2021 by beating Nikola Mekti and Mate Pavi from the Czech Republic.

The Croatian team of Nikola Mekti and Mate Pavi who won their first Men's doubles title in 2021, will be defending it at this year's championships. Similarly, in the Women's doubles division, Hsieh Su-wei (Taiwan) and Elise Mertens (Belgium) will defend their titles. Su-wei became the third Women's



Double champion in 2021 when she along with Mertens won the final match against the Russian team of Veronika Kudermetova and Elena Vesnina. Su-wei previously won the Women's Doubles championship in 2013 with Peng Shuai (China) and in 2019 with Barbora Strýcová (Czech Republic).

The Wimbledon Championships represent sportsmanship and courage as the players are seen as heroes making their dreams come true. However, the political and military relations between countries have resulted in Russian and Belarusian players from not participating in the 2022 edition of the championship. This is because of Russia's war on Ukraine. As a result, Daniil Medvedev (eliminated from the fourth round in 2021 by Hubert Hurkacz), Andrey Rublev (eliminated from the fourth round in 2021 by Márton Fucsovics), Aryna Sabalenka (lost to Karolína Plíšková in the 2021 semi-final) and Karen Abgarovich Khachanov (lost to Denis Shapovalov in the 2021 quarter-final) will not participate in the championship.



The 19-year-old Leylah Annie Fernandez from Canada will also miss the 2022 championship because of an injury. At this age, she has shown grit on the tennis courts. She played the first rounds of the Australian Open (2020, 2021, 2022); played the quarter-final of the 2022 French Open, was the finalist at the 2021 US Open, and played the first round of the 2021 Wimbledon Championship. In a rather interesting twist of events, the Williams sisters, Serena and Venus, have not yet been on the list. They are unlikely to compete. Serena has won the Women's Singles title at Wimbledon seven times in 2002, 2003, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2015, and 2016. She was the Women's doubles champion with Venus Williams six times. Venus Williams, on the other hand, won the Women's singles Wimbledon title five times (2000, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2008).

In the men's top singles division, the former eight-time Wimbledon champion, Roger Federer, will also not be in action in this year's tournament. Despite being one of the most successful tennis players in history, Federer will not play the tournaments because of a knee injury. He has won 20 Grand Slams including the Australian Open (6), French Open (1), Wimbledon (8), and US Open (5). Rafael Nadal, who has won 22 Grand Slams including two Wimbledon titles, will possibly miss the 2022 Wimbledon. According to reports, he needs a break to reset his body after being an active player for so many years.

The 2022 Wimbledon championship, however, will be a show of nerves by Novak Djokovic who has appeared in eight Wimbledon finals and won seven titles. Ashleigh Barty will try to recreate history by retaining his Women's singles title. She played the Wimbledon final for the first time in 2021 and emerged victorious. She also won the 2022 Australian Open and the 2019 French Open.

*The writer is a Karachi-based fiction writer and columnist.*



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## Beyond the familiar

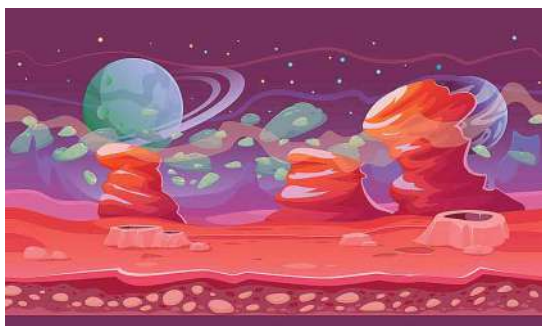
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The evolution of science fiction as a literary genre in Pakistan is an interesting study



Origins of science fiction literature date back to 1818 when Mary Shelly published *Frankenstein*. Regular science fiction publications did not start until the 1920s when Hugo Gernsback – considered by many to be the father of science fiction – began publishing his *Amazing Stories* that serialised science fiction. Shelly's *Frankenstein* – in which her protagonist, Victor Frankenstein, creates a monster by stitching together pieces of body and bringing those to life through a process of galvanisation, combined speculative fiction with science.

*Frankenstein* is regarded a major literary work of the proto-science fiction era. The invention of the commercially successful steam engine by Thomas Newcomen in 1712 and the subsequent events during the industrial revolution led to the birth of

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science fiction. With the emergence of factories and assembly lines, electricity and steam engine, writers speculated about a new world that could exist. Such writers extrapolated about societies in the future where humans might travel to the moon using powerful machines or venture into uncharted space of the cosmos.

Jules Verne is considered the pioneer of extraordinary travels with his *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1867). Before the industrial revolution, writers used far-fetched concepts of voyages because they did not have a reference point – technology. Gonsales, the narrator in *The Man in the Moone* (1638) by Francis Godwin, reaches the moon while sitting on top of a giant swan that can fly across large distances. Godwin's story was a speculative one with no reference to technology.

Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* led to the birth of other science fiction and fantasy magazines of the era including *Amazing Stories Quarterly* (1928), *Air Wonder Stories* (1929), *Science Wonder Stories* (1929), *Astounding Stories* (1930), *Miracle Science and Fantasy Stories* (1931), *Thrilling Wonder Stories* (1936), *Super Science Stories* (1940) and *Galaxy Science Fiction* (1950) among others. Most of the science fiction writers from the 1920s to the 1940s published serialised stories in these science fiction magazines that were later published in book form. This created an acceptance for science fiction. Among others, its sub-genres included the colonisation of space, alien invasion, teleportation, time travel and dystopia.

The science fiction genre could not have developed in the West without the pioneering efforts of Isaac Asimov, Robert Anson Heinlein and Arthur C Clarke, collectively known as the Big Three in Science Fiction. They were joined by HG Wells, Ray Bradbury, Aldous Huxley, Ursula K Le Guin, Frederik Pohl, Octavia E Butler, Philip K Dick, Frank Herbert, Stanislaw Lem, Kim Stanley Robinson, CJ Cherryh, Margaret Atwood, Orson Scott Card and William Gibson, among others. Asimov's *Foundation* series laid the groundwork for the writers of his time and the succeeding ones to conceive worlds other than Earth in the cosmos. Heinlein, on the other hand, brought to fore seriousness into the science fiction narratives without compromising on hard science – narratives in fiction that deal with the working of machinery, ships, gadgets, etc.

Wells brought aliens to Earth with his *The War of the Worlds* (1898). He also took the readers on a journey across time in *The Time Machine* (1895) where the narrator experiences a future in the year 802,701 that is a mirror reflection of unchecked capitalism. Arthur C Clarke's 1968 novel, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, took the readers into a modern-era space station. The story includes themes like the impact of technology, the consequences of a nuclear war and space exploration.

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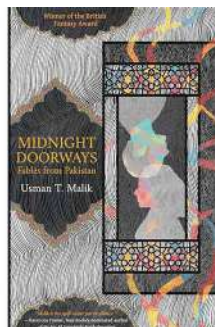
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During the last eight decades, the literary genre of science fiction and its subsequent subgenres, as explored in Western literature, have gone through an evolution. Writers have conceived future societies, extrapolated about mankind's life on Earth and across the universe through colonisation and have delved into time travel. They have also touched upon the political and social fabric of future societies with plausible as well as far-fetched ideas. These include immortality, interstellar travel and living with aliens.

Pakistani authors' opinions on science fiction as a literary genre and how it can be developed in the country are interesting and varied. Taha Kehar, the novelist and literary critic, says, "I firmly believe that sci-fi novels don't necessarily have to respond to the enigmas of modern science or, for that matter, actively deviate from realist narratives. What they must do is venture into uncharted territory, and deconstruct time-honoured notions of history and deal with inconvenient truths."

Dr Faraz Talat, a mental health professional and the author of the science fiction novella 74, views science fiction as, "any story that invites the reader to develop a deeper understanding of science, to be able to fully enjoy the story." For Awais Khan, the award-winning author of *No Honour* and *In The Company of Strangers*, "science fiction is anything that expands the horizons of things we already know. Perhaps, that is what makes it so interesting."



"Sci-fi writing can develop in Pakistan if there is more mainstream literary space given to local writers who have already ventured into the field." — Sidra F Sheikh

Muhammad Ali Samejo, author of *Legends of Karachi* and *Damaged* considers science fiction "an allegory of human life and society in past, present, and future". He adds that "it is a carefully crafted alliance between fact and possibility." Sidra F Sheikh, author of *The Light Blue Jumper*, says that "Science Fiction is writing that takes the reader into new, futuristic, imaginary worlds, or at least has elements of futuristic extrapolation or advances in technology even if it is set in the real world."



When asked about how aspiring Pakistani writers can develop their sense to write science fiction, Kehar says, "Budding sci-fi writers should always read widely within the genre to spot the commercial trends in science-fiction writing. the purpose of this exercise isn't to emulate other writers, but to identify where the boundaries have been set and how they can be pushed further." He says that it is not possible to "write about an alternative reality without understanding the complex realities of our world. Some of the best sci-fi novels I've come across draw heavily on the social dynamics of our world to cultivate fictional worlds." He urges aspiring writers "to find ways to build a bridge between these separate realms."

Dr Faraz says that there's a tendency to look down at science fiction as a less "serious" form of writing; possibly because it relies on fascinating the reader with scientific exposition, rather than the quality of the prose. "An appreciation of science can improve the quality of our writing. And it's integral to science fiction," he says.

Awais Khan argues that "writing science fiction shouldn't be any different from writing any other sort of fiction. First and foremost, you need to be a reader if you want to be a writer." According to Samejo, "once they (the writers) see that there are no boundaries to what they can imagine as sci-fi, they will automatically start to realise that their outlandish ideas need to have some sense of grounding."

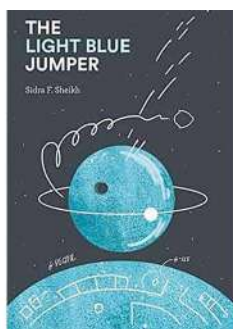
"People tend to think that any genre involving world-building or imagination, such as science fiction or fantasy, is for children. Perhaps most writers feel that they won't be taken seriously unless they write literary fiction and there is a certain snobbery attached to it," says Sheikh.

The growth of science fiction as a literary genre has been limited in recent years. A handful of authors have come up with literary works of science fiction without any major push coming in from publishers or literary circles. There can be many reasons for this.

Kehar points out that while fantasy and sci-fi writing has been prevalent across South Asia, "these genres have been dismissed in mainstream literary discourse - a trend that has been witnessed across the world, not just in South Asia. Such perceptions are often difficult to change even if they are based on myopic and somewhat static assumptions about what these genres entail."

"It's simple: we're bad at science," says Dr Faraz. "And we're bad at science specifically because of a culture that discourages questions." He says that our culture of not questioning our elders and leaders, not questioning tradition, and not investigating reality has brought us farther from curiosity. "Science, and by extension science fiction, start with a question. We must allow

ourselves to be dissatisfied with what we know, and start thinking creatively about how to verify, or potentially disprove, commonly held ideas. Science isn't a formula to be memorised in an FSc textbook. It is an attitude."



Samejo says that "it is only over the last few decades that comic book movies have started to create a new vista for Pakistani viewers, but it is still mostly superficial as people rarely watch hard sci-fi movies that affect them at a core level." While commenting on how to develop science fiction in Pakistan, Sheikh says, "it can develop in Pakistan if there is more mainstream literary space given to local writers who have already ventured into the field." She suggests that literary festivals and other such platforms should introduce local science fiction/ fantasy works and their authors to a broader audience and give them the recognition and encouragement that they normally reserve for literary fiction.

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*The writer is a fiction writer and columnist. He is the author of Divided Species, a science fiction novel set in Karachi. For more info: [www.moiwrites.com](http://www.moiwrites.com)*

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## Treading an unfamiliar path

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>)

Literati (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/category/literati>) | February 20, 2022

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Independent publishers could herald a new era for the industry in Pakistan



For too long, the publishing industry in Pakistan has been operating with a myopic view of the market it serves. For years, traditional publishers of nonfiction titles have failed to come up with new ideas. The readers are attracted equally towards nonfiction and fiction titles even if only a handful make an effort to stay updated on books and authors. The authors, having the time, energy and money for it, prefer having their books published from the UK or the US, or by franchises of some international publishers operating in the region. One wonders when the likes of HarperCollins, Hachette, Penguin Random House and Simon & Schuster will establish their offices in Pakistan. For now the idea appears far-fetched.

## Most Popular

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By Dr Samee Lashari  
<https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/writer/dr-samee-lashari>

Despite the traditional publishing houses choosing to tread the familiar path, there are signs of a new era. Many publishing houses have emerged during the last few years. They are publishing fiction as well as non-fiction and poetry. In some cases these publishing houses are led by young, talented entrepreneurs, who are keenly aware of the market dynamics.

"I started Daastan when I was unable to find a publisher for my debut novel," says Syed Ommer Amer, founder and CEO of the publishing house that started in 2011. "It was then considered impossible for a new author to get published in Pakistan. Being a techie who could build prototypes, I came up with Digital Raconteurs. It was later renamed and rebranded to Daastan in 2015."

Amer says the publishing industry in Pakistan is passing through an interesting transformation. "When I started Daastan, it was a one-of-its-kind book publishing website. However, since then we have seen many more players emerge. We have a dedicated Urdu publishing portal and a portal that sells ebooks, among others." Amer is confident that over the next decade, enough investment will be made in technology to enable local authors to sell directly in the global market.

Safinah Danish Elahi, founder of Reverie Publishers, says that the production volume of Pakistani publishers has been meagre. "Most book contracts for Pakistani writers were happening out of Pakistan. The old publishing houses printed only very serious literature on Partition or textbooks that had confirmed orders," says Elahi. She says that no one wanted to discuss 'ordinary' stories or new narratives that needed representation. "The writers were writing for an international audience, which is why Pakistan was reduced to bombings and terrorism. What led me to establish my own publishing enterprise was the huge vacuum, where fiction was being published very cautiously, if at all. I wanted to publish stories that bring about a conversation, a thought, an idea. I think ordinary stories need to be told." She believes that the independent publishing houses will support good writing and will take the initiative to change the narrative. "I see books on art, fashion, problematic laws and ideas of freedom being published. Two of these topics have been taken up by my authors. I see efforts being made for collaborations." Elahi says some of the veteran writers are giving new publishing houses a chance. "I think the movement is positive and will yield benefits for the future generation of writers who will find appreciation locally as well, more so than before," she says. Elahi is hopeful and thrilled. "We still have to resolve the marketing and distribution challenges; all this will happen in good time. I'm excited to be a part of this growing space in Pakistan."

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By Amjad Bashir Siddiqi

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By Ahmed Ahsan

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## A gain/loss game

(<https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/13212-a-gainloss-game>)

By Mansoor Ahmad

(<https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/writer/mansoor-ahmad>)

During the last few years, many publishing houses marketing fiction have emerged in Pakistan. These are led by young, talented entrepreneurs and authors who are aware of the market dynamics.

Over the years, the pace of production of titles for children has also picked up. Musharraf Ali Farooqi, founder and publishing director of KITAB says he dreamt of bringing attention to children's books and literature. Asked about the future of Pakistan's publishing industry, Farooqi says, "As the industry does not have any clear direction at present, I am unable to make any predictions. But I hope and believe there will be more small publishers working in areas that interest them. The distribution side will probably become easier to manage with online payment services and more competition among the courier services."

Some publishers have ventured into the challenging space to create more possibilities for writers. Mehr F Husain, the founder of Zuka Books, says she had several reasons to establish her publishing house. One of these was the ban on Indo-Pak goods exchange that included books. Another was the lack of publishing opportunities in Pakistan. Yet another was the awful market conditions for authors. Husain is hopeful about the future of the publishing industry. "To see women at the helm of publishing fills me with hope. Maybe this time, things can be different."

Many of Pakistan's published authors, who once opted to work with international publications, want Pakistan's publishing sector to flourish. Taha Kehar, author of *Typically Tanya* says, "The government's decision to ban Indian imports after the illegal annexation of Kashmir seems to have given an indirect impetus to Pakistan's publishing industry. New presses have swiftly carved out a niche for themselves in the indigenous market. It's a pleasing change from what used to happen in the not-so-distant past when even traditional publishers would expect authors to either provide pre-publication orders or shell out funds for printing costs." Kehar adds that local publishers have not entirely recognised the value of quality control – a vital step that can help them measure up to global standards. "Publishers need to enlist the services of skilled editors who can help polish and reshape manuscripts. Marketing plans also need to be reconsidered," Kehar shares. "Without sound editorial feedback and cohesive marketing strategies, the books published locally will languish on bookshelves. What we'll end up with are books of dubious quality that nobody wants to read." Asked about the self-publishing sector, Kehar says, "various iterations of self-financed and print-on-demand publishing services have existed in Pakistan for decades. Most self-

published authors struggle to promote their books. In most cases, the quality of writing isn't at par with industry standards. The books are shunned by readers. Self-publishing companies and print-on-demand services must urge writers to have their work edited with care."

Saleem Hussain, the Liberty Books director, says the Pakistani literary circuit faces many challenges. "The market for literary publications, especially in the English language, is very small. Most books go for a print run of no more than 500 copies. The other challenge is that printing material, including paper, ink, *etc*, is imported. Duty rates are as high as 40 percent making the cost of printing very high." Hussain adds that support from the digital media is almost non-existent. This leaves the entire burden of marketing on the publishers giving them thin margins. A way forward, suggests Hussain, can be a willingness on the part of the government "to ease up the taxes on import of raw material used in printing."

About the ban on trade with India, Hussain says: "it has definitely affected the authors. Books published in Pakistan can no longer be exported to India so that the authors have lost access to that market." Payment of royalty to the authors is another issue. "Except for the established authors who are able to sell a couple of thousand copies and command a decent royalty, new authors are just anxious to get their work published and get very small royalties," adds Hussain. Asked about the future of publishing English-language books, Hussain says, "the sector is in its infancy. Unless it gets proper patronage and support, it will face an uphill task to grow."

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*The writer is a fiction writer and columnist. He is the author of Divided Species, a science fiction novel set in Karachi. For more info: [www.moiwrites.com](http://www.moiwrites.com)*

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## Talha Talib: birth of a hero

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>)

13 August, 2021 [f](https://www.facebook.com/Usmagfortheyouth/) (<https://www.facebook.com/Usmagfortheyouth/>) [i](https://www.instagram.com/usmagazinethenewsinternational/)

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*Talha has been trained by his father, Muhammad Islam Natiq, national weightlifting coach for Pakistan....*

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### GROUND REALITY

The rise in popularity of weightlifter Talha Talib during the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo is a story of determination and perseverance. Hailing from Gujranwala, the 21-year-old athlete almost tasted Olympic media glory but ended the competition in fifth place. Social media was abuzz when Talha was in the lead. Twitteratis were hopeful for the young man to return home with a medal. However, as many said – and rightfully so – he was reborn as a hero. Talha has been trained by his father, Muhammad Islam Natiq, national weightlifting coach for Pakistan.

Pakistani female cricketer, Javeria Khan, Tweeted, “Win or lose, you have already made Pakistan proud.” Rehan Ulhaq, Manager, Islamabad United said, “BTW Talha Talib is the first Pakistani weightlifter to make the cut for the Olympics since 1976. Pakistan should be proud of him.”

Talha Talib previously touched international recognition when he won a gold medal at the 2016 Commonwealth Youth Weightlifting Championships in Penang. At the 2018 Commonwealth Games he won a bronze medal in the 62 kg category. He won the gold medals at the 2020 International Solidarity Weightlifting Championship aggregating 304kg. It was because of his performances at the international levels that he earned a path to represent Pakistan at the 2020 Olympic Games.

While sharing his career with an international media outlet, Talha said that he has been facing difficulties while training as he does not have any proper training area. He cannot train when it rains, or when the weather is too hot or too cold as he has to train under the sky. “Despite the lack of resources, I have represented Pakistan at the international level,” he said. “I represented Pakistan in the weightlifting category of the Olympic Games after 45 years” he added. Talha began training at the age of eight. He said that he took permission from his teacher at school to



use the school ground as his training area. It becomes a challenge for him to allocate time to his training as he must do it either before school opens in the morning or once it is closed later in the day.

Pakistan’s record at the Olympic Games over the last seven decades has been dismal, to say the least. Talha’s run at the Tokyo Olympics 2021 must be an eye-opener for the Pakistan Olympic Association and should serve as a case study. One can wonder how many untapped jewels akin to Talha Talib are living across Pakistan. Their potential has been untapped because of a lack of resources or they do not receive guidance on how to train, strengthen their potential and represent Pakistan at the national and international level, especially the Olympic Games. The Pakistan Olympic Association must adopt China’s policy to make an impact at the Olympic Games. China works hard to get results, they have a government-funded centralized training program, and they hire foreign sports experts. They pursue a talent identification program; follow a top-down sports system where children practice sports at schools to represent the country at the Olympics. They smartly allocate funds to sports they can win, have a technical-focused training system and consider it be a matter of national pride to represent the country at the global level.



On a priority basis, the Pakistan Olympic Association needs to restructure itself. It must create talent hunt competitions in schools and colleges amid SOPs and hold national events inviting school and college students. The Association’s objective must be to converge talent for various sporting events including among others basketball, archery, athletics,

badminton, karate, tennis, table tennis, weightlifting. Indeed, athletes need to develop and nurture a positive attitude to carve for themselves a future as a successful athlete. They also need resources including equipment, trainer, finance, etc. The Association

needs to embody the spirit of sportsmanship to create avenues that unite all sports and related associations under its banner to unify, monitor, and control the selection, training, and mentoring of the players to represent Pakistan at the international levels. If the Association works with vigour, passion, and dedication, many athletes like Talha can make a name for themselves and bring Pakistan in the medals tally at the Olympics.



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## National strategy for development

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>)

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*Business operations at the local, national, and international levels of the private and corporate sectors also remained affected in Pakistan...*

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### THINK PAD

The social, economic, and business activities across the world remained halted or were canceled in 2020. It was a year enveloped by the chaos created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Business operations at the local, national, and international levels of the private and corporate sectors also remained affected in Pakistan. The year 2021 may not bring fruitful results because the economy must recover from the downfall it faced in 2020. However, the government of Pakistan must carve out a national strategy for development. It should be approved by all concerned entities and implemented across the board, in all sectors. While the tussle between the government and the opposition will remain active in all eras, the need of the hour is to bring Pakistan's socio-economic status on track. This calls for a holistic approach to learn from mistakes, plan while considering available capital and human resource, and take action in the present. A

viable and practical strategy should be implemented that ensures that the long-term goals are made in time and actively achieved at the short-term level. The decision-makers and authority figures working at the helms of affairs at various levels of the government – both provincial and federal – must work in unison to pursue the common national strategy.

In this regard, the sectors of education, health, justice, technology, infrastructure, along with energy, growth, and investment, agriculture, manufacturing, fiscal development, capital markets and corporate sector, trade and payments, transport and communications must be focused upon. First, the government must (if there is a need) restructure the departments/sectors by giving the charge to such professionals who have ample experience to handle their respective departments/sectors. This entails that the person in charge should know about what he/she is doing. They should display the acumen to act as a proactive, dedicated manager to handle all crises and take firm decisions when needed. In this regard, the heads of each department/sector/Ministry must exhibit certain character traits. They need to be loyal to their country, to their departments/sectors, and themselves; must remain committed to following the rules, should be proactive, and must be dedicated to bringing constructive results.

Take the education sector, for instance. It needs immediate restructuring. The government must close ghost schools, hire qualified teachers, update the syllabus, enhance the quality of learning, bring all government schools under a common leadership for streamlining of actions, among others. Such steps can only be taken when the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training knows the problems and issues concerning their sector. It should collect and examine data regarding previous shortcomings, come up with the action plan, and take corrective action to bring positive results. Such a strategy model must be adopted by all sectors of Pakistan to ensure that errors are corrected, loopholes are eradicated, practical policies are created, timelines are developed, and the progress of the department/Ministry, sector, sub-department, team, every individual is monitored and evaluated to take timely corrective measures.

The idea here is to rationalize, reorganize and restructure the various key departments of the local, national, provincial, and federal levels. Without identifying the problems, one cannot suggest solutions. Without analyzing past mistakes, one cannot recommend an action plan. Without discussing inadequacies, one cannot create short-term or long-term plans. Without deliberating upon the present, one cannot carve a better future. It is, therefore, imperative for all sectors and their provincial and federal branches to think, coordinate, plan, act, achieve, reflect on mistakes, and repeat the same process to complete each task. The sectors of the country need to work in accord, unity and harmony to respect each other's concerns and reservations while pursuing a common national strategy to achieve objectives that will eventually bring progress and development to Pakistan.

*The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist*





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## Learning in lockdown

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>)

24 April, 2020 [f](https://www.facebook.com/Usmagfortheyouth/) (<https://www.facebook.com/Usmagfortheyouth/>) [i](https://www.instagram.com/usmagazinethenewsinternational/)

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*If you have a skill, you can also begin your startup. You can choose one task that you can complete and deliver online.....*

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### TIPS 'N' TRICKS

The COVID-19 has halted the world. Who would have thought that all professionals across the world would be working from home? Students, too, are taking online classes. While life is continuing, it is difficult to adapt to this new lifestyle where isolation is necessary. It will be difficult to work in seclusion but we need to adjust to this change. The sooner we accept our limitations, the better will be our understanding of our circumstances. Despite the lockdown, our learning must continue. Perhaps this is the best time to learn skills and pursue a hobby. This will not only add productivity to the days we spend at home but it will keep us away from any thoughts of depression and anxiety. Here are some ways you can continue with your learning during the lockdown.

## Write

Begin writing a diary or a journal. Write your thoughts that you cannot share with anyone. Let this process lighten your mind. Write down the feelings and emotions you are experiencing during this lockdown. You can also develop write-ups and send them for print and digital publications.

## Freelance

You can pursue a freelance job during this lockdown. Identify a skill that you can use to earn money. Ask among your friends if they need to complete a task that requires this particular skill. You can also open an account on websites such as Upwork, Freelancer or Fiverr and start working for clients. This will give you a side income and you will remain productive, too.

## Write an e-book or a book

If you ever had plans to write a book, this is the best time to begin. Begin by identifying the genre you want to write about. It could be fiction or non-fiction. Find a topic, do your research, create an outline, name the chapters, define each chapter and begin writing content for each. Set a word count you will be writing each day based on your convenience.

## Skill development

Develop a skill by watching online videos. You can either strengthen a skill you already possess or learn a new one. You can learn how to cook meals or prepare fast snacks; you can learn writing, speaking, debating, painting, etc. You can also watch a tutorial on how to design software. The idea is to absorb as much content as you can. It will help you once you perform these skills.

## Find a hobby

You should also consider following a hobby. You can begin painting or sketching. Find something to do that keeps you engaged and happy.

## LIVE sessions on social media

You can hold LIVE sessions on Facebook and Instagram. You can have discussions with your social media friends on literature, arts, sports and topics of mutual interest. You can even go LIVE to conduct a book reading session or you can paint or sketch LIVE for your viewers. I advise you to refrain from discussing religion and politics.

## Startup venture

If you have a skill, you can also begin your startup. You can choose one task that you can complete and deliver online. With the age of e-commerce and digital media in full swing, companies that have a digital presence and a click-and-mortar setup, will survive this lockdown and continue to flourish once the world reopens. You can design social media posts for small businesses or write content for digital media. There are many avenues for you to work in digital media. It requires you to identify your strengths and weakness, opportunities and threats.

US

## The 'First' and the 'Most' of the Cricket World Cup

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>)

17 May, 2019 [f](https://www.facebook.com/Usmagfortheyouth/) (<https://www.facebook.com/Usmagfortheyouth/>) [i](https://www.instagram.com/usmagazinethenewsinternational/)  
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*The 12th edition of the ICC Cricket World Cup (CWC) will be held from May 30 to July 14, 2019, in England and Wales. Here are the details you would like to know about the mega event.*

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### GROUND REALITY

The 12th edition of the ICC Cricket World Cup (CWC) will be held from May 30 to July 14, 2019, in England and Wales. This is for the fifth time the Cricket World Cup is being hosted in England (1975, 1979, 1983) and for the second time it is being jointly hosted by England and Wales. The 1999 CWC was the first, which England and Wales co-hosted. Australia will be entering the 2019 CWC as the defending Champion and a five-time CWC winner. It won the CWCs of 1987 (against England), 1999 (against Pakistan), 2003 (against India), 2007 (against Sri Lanka) and 2015 (against New Zealand). Let's look at some of the interesting statistics related to the CWCs.



## THE FIRSTS

### Toss:

**1st Match:** CWC 1975 - England vs. India - June 7, 1975

England won the first coin toss ahead of their match against India.

### Six:

**1st Match:** CWC 1975 - England vs. India - June 7, 1975

England's Keith Fletcher hit the first ever six in the history of CWCs.

### Four

**1st Match:** CWC 1975 - England vs. India - June 7, 1975

England's John Jameson was the first batsman to hit a boundary in CWCs.

### Wicket:

**1st Match:** CWC 1975 - England vs. India - June 7, 1975

Mohinder Amarnath of India dismissed England's John Jameson to become the bowler to take the first wicket in a Cricket World Cup match and Jameson became the first batsman to lose his wicket in a CWC.

### Catch:

**1st Match:** CWC 1975 - England vs. India - June 7, 1975

India's Srinivas Venkataraghavan was the first fielder to take a catch that dismissed John Jameson.

### Half-Century:

**1st Match:** CWC 1975 - England vs. India - June 7, 1975



England's Keith Fletcher scored the World Cup's first half-century by scoring 68 off 107 deliveries.

#### **Century:**

**1st Match:** CWC 1975 - England vs. India - June 7, 1975

Similarly, England's Dennis Amiss scored 137 off 147 deliveries to complete the first century in a CWC.

#### **Bowled:**

**1st Match:** CWC 1975 - England vs. India - June 7, 1975

The first batsman to be clean bowled was Keith Fletcher while Abid Ali of India was the first the batsman to take a wicket in this manner.

#### **LBW:**

**1st Match:** CWC 1975 - England vs. India - June 7, 1975

England's Tony Greig was the first batsman to lose his wicket on an lbw (leg before wicket) while Abid Ali of India, who took Greig's wicket, was the first bowler to capture a wicket by an lbw.

#### **Out on a Duck**

**2nd Match:** CWC 1975 - New Zealand vs. East and Central Africa June 7, 1975

Harilal Shah playing for East and Central Africa became the first bowler to lose his wicket on the first ball. New Zealand's Hedley Howarth (New Zealand) was the bowler who Harilal Shah's wicket.



#### **Catch and Ball:**

**2nd Match:** CWC 1975 - New Zealand vs. East and Central Africa June 7, 1975

Parbhu Nana of East and Central Africa became the first bowler to take a catch off his own bowling in CWCs when he dismissed New Zealand's John Morrison who was playing at 14 off 37.

### **Stump:**

**2nd Match:** CWC 1975 - New Zealand vs. East and Central Africa June 7, 1975

Ken Wadsworth, New Zealand's wicket-keeper, was the first to send a batsman back to the pavilion because of a stumping. The batsman was Frasad Ali of East and Central Africa.

### **5-wicket haul**

**3rd Match:** CWC 1975 - Australia vs. Pakistan - June 7, 1975

During the 3rd match of the 1975 CWC, Australia's Dennis Lillee became the first bowler in CWC history to take 5 wickets. He completed this feat against Pakistan by taking the wickets of Sadiq Muhammad, Asif Iqbal, Sarfraz Nawaz, Wasim Bari, and Asif Masood.

### **Retired Hurt**

**7th Match:** CWC 1975 - Australia vs. Sri Lanka - June 11, 1975

Sunil Wettimuny of Sri Lanka became the first batsman to be retired hurt when he was playing at 53 (102 deliveries)

### **Hat-trick**

**24th Match:** CWC 1987 - New Zealand vs. India - October 31, 1987

During the 24th match of the 1987 CWC, India's Chetan Sharma took the CWC's first hat-trick when playing against New Zealand. Sharma dismissed Ken Rutherford, Ian Smith, and Ewen Chatfield.

### **Most Wickets:**

Australia's former pacer, Glenn McGrath took 71 wickets in CWCs, the most by any bowler in history. While the second most wickets were captured by Sri Lanka's spin maestro, Muttiah Muralitharan, with 68 wickets.

### **Most wickets:**

Sri Lanka's Lasith Malinga took 4 consecutive wickets against South Africa during the 26th match of the 2007 CWC in South Africa. This made Malinga the bowler with the most wickets in consecutive deliveries. He dismissed, Shaun Pollock, Andrew Hall, Kallis, and Makhaya Ntini

### **Most Catches**

Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara took 54 catches as a wicketkeeper, the highest taken at this position. Similarly, Australia's Ricky Ponting, as a fielder, took 28 catches, the most by a fielder in CWC history.

### **Most Extras:**

11th Match, CWC 1999 - Scotland vs. Pakistan - May 20, 1999

Scotland during their match against Pakistan at the 1999 CWC gave away 59 extra runs (5 byes, 6 leg byes, 33 wides and 15 no balls) which are the most number of runs given in extras ever in CWCs.

### Most appearances:

Australia's former ODI captain Ricky Ponting has played the most number of CWC matches (46).



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# Our game, his way. That's what he played!

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>) |

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*The autobiography Game Changer is co-written by Wajahat S. Khan, Pakistan's critically acclaimed broadcast journalist.....*

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Title:** Game Changer

**Authors:** Shahid Afridi and Wajahat S. Khan

**Reviewed by:** Muhammad Omar Iftikhar

Ever since he made his one-day international (ODI) debut in 1996, Shahid Afridi has been a prolific player of Pakistan's cricket team. The autobiography Game Changer is co-written by Wajahat S. Khan, Pakistan's critically acclaimed broadcast journalist. Wasim Akram, Pakistan cricket team's former captain and the first bowler in history to take 400 wickets in ODIs and Tests, writes the foreword.

Game Changer looks at Shahid Afridi's transition from a child to a teenager, then explores his desire to become a cricketer, analyzes how he overcame challenges, eventually discussing the international cricket career that was nothing short of a rollercoaster ride both for himself and for cricket fans.

Game Changer looks at a number of events and incidents occurring in Shahid Afridi's life that make him dwell on his weaknesses. Afridi ponders upon the challenges he faced as a newcomer and as an all-rounder.

In the book's preface, Wajahat S. Khan aptly sums up Afridi's stature as a batsman: "The Butcher. The Beast. The Boy Wonder. The Boom Boom. Our game, his way. That's what he played." Wajahat S. Khan looks back at Afridi's debut. He writes, "Both of us were in our teens. He was on a lush ground in Nairobi, running his gloves through the hair flopping over his eyes, glancing over his shoulder like someone who had thrown a rock at him from the stands behind square leg. This would become his habit over the years; his nervous, over-the-shoulder twitch, as if an enemy sniper was lurking in the stands."

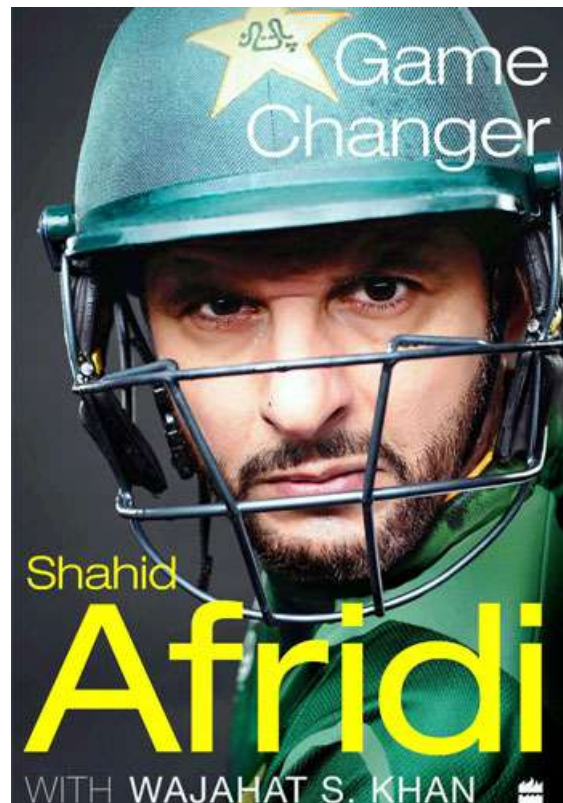
The book explores the love affair Shahid Afridi had with cricket since childhood when he used to think whether he was good enough to play for Pakistan. Shahid Afridi writes, "My cricket fever was intense in those days. About three or four nights every week, before I slept, prior to any game or even at practice sessions, I dreamt with my eyes open. I visualized entire matches, all in my head - I'm walking into a stadium, the crowd is cheering. I'm slamming sixes...I dreamt that I was the new Imran Khan."

Game Changer is a finely written narrative of Shahid Afridi's life and career penned in the form of a story where each chapter examines a specific side to Afridi's career and off-the-field incidents. The books also reveal Shahid Afridi's scrimmage with Javed Miandad, which to the readers will show two sides of the coin. Then there are incidents that Afridi includes in the book showing the dark side of dressing room politics to even grave issues such as match-fixing and spot-fixing.

Game Changer is a must read for all cricket fans, especially those who admire Shahid Afridi despite his unpredictable performances.

There are 38 chapters in Game Changer. Each one opens with a hook, a piece of information that cannot be ignored and a paragraph that must be read. Wajahat S. Khan has done a tremendous job using the right words at the right place, hence proving his mettle not just as an author and journalist but as a storyteller as well. Game Changer dwells on Afridi's inclusion and exclusion from the team, his rise to glory as captain, his ability to change the game within seconds and his impulsive character that, despite making him lose his wickets early at a number of occasions, gave him a cult following which no cricketer enjoyed before him. Do read the book and learn so much more about Shahid Afridi and his life.

*The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist.*



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## Recalling the action that was the FIFA World Cup 2018

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>)

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*FIFA World Cup 2018 turned out to be a roller coaster ride for football aficionados around the world....*

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FIFA World Cup 2018 turned out to be a roller coaster ride for football aficionados around the world. The 21st edition of the World Cup, held for the first time in Russia, saw 32 teams battle on the field for a chance to become World Cup Champions. The tournament that lasted for 31 days, however, was nothing short of extraordinary. Germany, the defending champions, eyeing their fifth Championship win, were knocked out during the group stages by South Korea! France won their second title and Croatia became the runner-ups for the first time in history. Read on to relive some amazing and shocking moments of the FIFA World Cup 2018.

### **Brazil's bust!**

The former five-time World Champions could not prove their mettle. Brazil entered the knock-out stages as leaders of their group and did beat Mexico 2-0. However, during the quarter-finals, Belgium shocked the world by beating Brazil, 2-1, and knocked them out



of the tournament.

### **Germany's grief**

Defending Champions, Germany lifted the FIFA World Cup 2014 by defeating Argentina could not make. Led by Manuel Neuer, they had a bad start when they lost to Mexico. Hirving Lozano scored for Mexico in the 35th minute, and Germany simply could not launch a counter-attack. They won against Sweden, 2-1, only to get knocked out of the tournament by South Korea! South Korean players, Kim Young-gwon and Son Heung-min, scored late goals in extra time to give their team a 2-0 lead over Germany. It was for the first time since 1938 that Germany was eliminated from the group stages of the FIFA World Cup.

### **Unfortunate Uruguay**

South American football teams have always made their mark at the FIFA World Cups. Uruguay, the inaugural FIFA Champions in 1934 and a strong contender for the big prize, won all three of their matches during the FIFA 2018 World Cup against Egypt (1-0), Saudi Arabia (1-0) and Russia (3-0). They also knocked out another strong team, Portugal, in the Round of 16. However, France convincingly defeated and eliminated Uruguay in the quarterfinals, 2-0.



### **Anxious Argentina**

Although Argentina was knocked out by France (4-3) in the Round of 16, France vs. Argentina was perhaps one of the most exciting matches of this 2018 World Cup. A total of seven scores were scored. First, Antoine Griezmann of France scored with a penalty in the 13th minute. Argentina's Ángel Fabián Di María, with a sensational long-distance shot at the goal and Gabriel Iván Mercado, with an assist from Messi, scored in the 41st and 48th minutes respectively. Benjamin Pavard of France, with another flashing strike, scored in the 57th minute to equalize the score, 2-2. However, France's Kylian Mbappe Lottin scored two consecutive goals in the 64th and the 68th minute. Argentina's Sergio Leonel Aguero did score his team's third goal in extra time, but France moved on into the quarter-finals with the scoreboard reading, 4-2.

### **Spain surrenders**

The Spanish football team, winners of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, had a decent run during the group stages. However, hosts Russia proved a worthy opponent for them in the Round of 16.

The match went into a penalty shootout. When Spain's Jorge Resurrección Merodio and Iago Aspas Juncal could not score, Russia entered into the quarterfinals.



*Croatia's Luka Modrić wins Golden ball*

### **Russia bow out**

This was the first time that Russia had entered the quarterfinals of the World Cup. The host nation had all the support they could garner and their performance was also delightful to watch. In their first match, also the opening match of the FIFA World Cup 2018, they defeated Saudi Arabia, 5-0, before booting out Spain in the Round of 16. Russia gave their best during the World Cup and especially during their quarterfinal match against Croatia. Both teams collided head-on with attacks and counter attacks. Russia's Denis Dmitriyevich Cheryshev scored in the 31st minute followed by Croatia's Andrej Kramarić scoring in the 39th. Domagoj Vida of Croatia scored in the 101st minute and fourteen minutes later, Russia's Mário Figueira Fernandes scored with an equalizer. During the penalty shoot-out, Croatian players kept their nerves and beat Russia, 4-3.

### **Japan's jolt**

During the FIFA World Cup 2018, Japan's entry into the Round of 16 was their third in history. In the Knockout stage, Japan scored the first goal in the 48th minute with Genki Haraguchi gently pushing the ball into the goal post. Four minutes later, Japan's Takashi Inui scored the second goal, a blistering long-distance shot into the nets. However, during the 69th and 74th minute respectively, Belgium's Jan Bert Lieke Martens and Marouane Fellaini-Bakkouci scored with their own headers to equalize the scorecard. Japan, the only Asian team left in the tournament were thwarted by Belgium when Nacer Chadli scored for his team during the 94th minute, allowing Belgium to cruise into the quarter-finals, but Japan won our hearts with their sturdy performance.

### **Semi-Finals**

During the first semi-final, France, the 1998 World Cup Champions, defeated Belgium, 1-0. During the second semi-final between England and Croatia, both teams were playing their second semi-final in history. England, however, has been a one-time FIFA World Cup Champion in 1966 when it beat West Germany, 4-2. Croatia, on the other hand, had never played the finals of the FIFA World Cup before. In the semi-final, England's Kieran Trippier scored his first international goal with a magnificent free kick during the fifth

minute, but Croatia's Ivan Perisic scored with a beautiful header in the 68th minute. With scores 1-1 after full time, the match went into 30-minutes of extra time. Croatia's Mario Mandzukic scored in the 109th minute with a simple touch of the ball into the goal, propelling Croatia into their first-ever FIFA World Cup final, against France.



### Third Place

The match for the third place at the FIFA World Cup 2018 was held on July 14, 2018, between Belgium and England. Belgium's Thomas Meunier gave his team a lead in the fourth minute with a simple goal while Eden Hazard, in the 82nd minute, added another goal. England could not recover and lost the match 2-0. Belgium emerged as the third place winners for the first time in history.

### Final

The most-awaited match of the FIFA World Cup 2018, the final, was contested between France and Croatia on July 15, 2018 at the Luzhniki Stadium, Moscow. Croatia's Mario Mandzukic scored an own goal in the 18th minute, but Croatia's Ivan Perisic scored an equalizer ten minutes later. France's Antoine Griezmann capitalized on the penalty shootout and scored to give France a lead. France's Paul Pogba scored in the 59th minute followed by France's 19-year old Kylian Mbappe scoring in the 65th minute, which had sealed the deal for France with scoreboard reading 4-1. Croatia's Mario Mandzukic scored his team's second goal during the 69th minute, but his team could not launch any counter offensive later on, and France won their second FIFA World Cup.

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## TIPS 'N' TRICKS

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>) |

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*Doing a job is easy. You go to your office, interact with your colleagues, attend meetings, take directions from your boss and superiors, complete the task, learn from your feedback, and repeat the process while moving up the corporate ladder.*

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### Hone your skill set

Doing a job is easy. You go to your office, interact with your colleagues, attend meetings, take directions from your boss and superiors, complete the task, learn from your feedback, and repeat the process while moving up the corporate ladder. This sounds easy, right? The challenge is just not to be regular at work; the real test is to keep learning while you complete your daily tasks and fulfill the prescribed job responsibilities at the organization.

There is always a glass ceiling above the head of every employee. The company uses this ceiling to make the employees work in accordance to their job positions on a daily basis. The promotion, however, temporarily removes this barrier from above the heads of the chosen few as they ascend in their ranks and a new invisible ceiling comes in place. However, it is in the employee's mind to ignore the invisible ceiling and evolve.

You must follow orders of your superiors, but your aim should be to complete the work not for the mere purpose of completing it, but to learn from it and to expand your horizon. You must keep honing your skill set and work experience to explore your capabilities and to expand your career.

#### Your current job is your next job

While working for a company your objective must be to prepare yourself for the future. This future, however, should relate to your professional life, two years ahead. Work processes are changing so rapidly that sometimes you feel as if you are an alien on earth. While working for a monthly magazine on regional politics and business, I learned that keeping myself attuned with the latest happenings in the world of politics did help me perform my job as an assistant editor; it also leveraged me in becoming an opinion columnist for some of Pakistan's leading English dailies. What you learn today



will remain with you forever and will assist you in your next job or when you are promoted to a new position in the same company. You have to prepare yourself for the future.

### **Curiosity creates growth**

People normally resort to being silent out of respect and fear of their boss or superiors. It is also natural for people to ask too many questions from their seniors. However, it is advisable to ask questions from your head of department and especially your colleagues. Curiosity expands your horizon while the replies and explanation to your questions provide you with insights regarding your job. Every question asked grows your learning curve.

### **Take off your blinders**

Your job description is akin to your holy grail, which keeps you focused on your day-to-day activities. However, do not engross yourself in your own work to the extent that you begin ignoring your surroundings. Instead of sitting on your seat doing your work, you should keep your mind and ears alert to your surroundings. Your observation will lead you in finding solutions on your own, which will broaden the scope of your work in profound ways. Observation is imperative.

### **Learning must continue**

Regardless of your job description or the industry you work in, you must always make avenues to learn. Working as an assistant editor of a magazine made me learn how to put forth an idea in a precise manner. I also learned the designing process and how page layouts are made while keeping balance between images, headings and the text. Learning never ceases.

### **Take initiative**

Your credibility increases when you take initiatives to do work outside your job description. You can create a new job description, provide insights to add effectiveness to a job, make avenues to attract more clients, highlight issues that waste time and productivity, or provide strategies to increase productivity. Your initiatives will add value to your career.

The writer is a Karachi-based columnist.



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## LIFE-WISE

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>)

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*I know that you are enjoying life like there is no tomorrow. However, you have to work really hard before you could begin making wise decisions.*

---

### Advice to younger self

I know that you are enjoying life like there is no tomorrow. However, you have to work really hard before you could begin making wise decisions. Over the next ten years, you will make foolish choices. Your passion is where your heart is; rest is logic. Even right now, I need time to reach where I am no longer confined to society's demands. Conformity is a sin and I advise you to step up to what you believe in and not bow down to what the world calls life.

At this moment, you are pursuing your Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and it is tough to study accounting, finance, economic, and statistics. These four years at the university, however, will polish your personality. A day will come when you will graduate and a couple of years later you will have your Master's degree.



Last year, in August 2004, you signed an undertaking at your business management institute because of your low CGPA. Had you not secured a good CGPA in the next semester, the institute would have expelled you.

You survived and got an "A" grade in Microeconomics. I know how happy you were - certainly on cloud number nine. But, later this year, you are in for a real surprise. You have been aspiring to become a writer since childhood and on September 17, 2005, just turn to page six of the weekly science and technology magazine of a certain English newspaper. Remember, you used to read the same newspaper to your maternal grandmother when you were eight years old? And now seeing your name in this newspaper has strengthened your belief in yourself. It will fuel your passion for writing. Your life will never be the same again.

In the years to come you will face hardships. Your mother will fall sick; the love and support of your father and your maternal aunt and uncle will be crucial in her recovery. Everything happens for a reason. Sometimes, things have to go wrong in order to go right. A harsh reality, this will teach you who'll be there in times of adversity.

You are experiencing this emotional rollercoaster ride at the same time as you are stuck with making notes, assignments and presentations, which you definitely are, then do not fret over it. Stay focused for your BBA; you will end on a high note and you will pursue MBA in Media Management from a place you love. You will make new friends with whom you will enjoy annual BBQ parties and hangouts and you will come to love every single day.



I must prepare you for what you will face after graduation, the time when you will set foot in the competitive professional world. You will get your first full-time job in a content management company where you would need to work nine hours a day, for six days a week, writing eight sports article every day on tennis, mixed martial arts, volleyball and yachting. You will only survive this for two-and-a-half months.

Freelancing next for a monthly magazine will eventually lead you to a job at the same publication. Come October 2014, something big, amazing and unexpected will happen: you will agree to work, despite your

unwillingness, for a digital media agency, the largest in Pakistan. You have always been reluctant to work in an advertising agency because of client servicing, dealing with deadlines and for late sittings. At this agency, you will work on Pakistan's largest telecommunications operator, handling all of its digital assets including website, social media and online advertising campaigns. Your life will change for the better. You will learn how stepping out of your comfort zone makes you break barriers and how it changes your perception and outlook.

You will also manage another client while working at this digital media advertising agency and you will visit Islamabad for the first time - you will love it! For nearly one and a half years, late sittings will become so normal you would not think of packing your bags until all work is completed. No matter if the clock strikes 10 at night, you will be willing to complete the work along with your colleagues. You will become an important team member. You won't mind working from home and working over the weekends while serving in that agency. You will see a new you, you will accept new challenges, learn to handle one of the toughest clients in the country diplomatically, and will absorb the essence of a successful life - to accept what life throws and to become stronger by facing every challenge. I must tell you that whatever fears you have in your heart at this

moment, ten years down the road you will not see them as fears but an extension of yourself living in doubt. You will easily detach that extension from yourself to become free from all doubts.

Enjoy your life, and try living spontaneously. Make friends while you are at your university, and keep writing.

You will have heartbreaks, a few of your relations will end, but you will enjoy new beginnings, and will conquer more thresholds until your major fears fade away. One last advice: do not fall in love; it will not end pretty! Other than that, love yourself every day!



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## Organising a desk

By Muhammad Omar Iftikhar (<https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar>)

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### TIPS 'N' TRICKS

We all use a desk, either as a study table, to place our laptop and books on, or to use it for writing articles for newspapers or even studying. Whatever the size of the desk is, it does become our workstation, for students and professionals alike. Keeping an organized desk is significant for increasing productivity. Students need a clean desk so they can focus on their studies. To do so, they need to have their books and stationery items placed neatly on their desk. Professionals need to tidy their desks so it is less cluttered and they can keep their documents, papers, and other items organized.

An organized desk also has a psychological advantage for it gives you the freedom to think, motivates you to do your work, and reduces your stress levels. Moreover, a tidy desk affects your personality; it enables you to think properly and remain calm. Here, the concept of Feng Shui also comes into play which is the way you organize items on your desk. Wondering what Feng Shui is? Well, Feng shui is an ancient art and science developed over 3,000 years ago in China. It talks about how one can balance the energies of any given space to assure health and good fortune for people inhabiting it. One of the basic ways to check the energy flow in your home is to imagine Chi, or energy, as water. If water were to flow onto your desk from one end to the other, where would it encounter obstruction? Would it flow smoothly to all areas of your space, or come to a standstill, creating a puddle?

Here are a few ways you can create a good flow of Chi, or in other words, organize your desk for increased productivity and motivation.

#### Desktop PC/Laptop

If you have a desktop PC on your desk, keep the monitor at eye level. When sitting straight, you should not have to slouch or bend your back. Keep the keyboard and mouse on the desk but place the CPU beneath the desk because a CPU occupies space. In case of using a laptop, you only



need to keep the laptop and the mouse on the table. Using a laptop has another advantage, too; you can utilize the rest of the desk as a laptop consumes less space.

### Printers/Scanners/Fax Machines

Avoid keeping printers/scanners/fax machines on the study table because they are occasionally used and occupy and obstruct space, which you can keep free for other commonly used items. You can keep the printer/scanner/fax machines near the desk on another table.



### Telephone

In case of a cell phone, you can keep it at an accessible spot. However, if you also keep a landline phone on your table, then place it at the desk's upper right corner. This is the usual place to keep it and since it is on the upper right corner, you get to use the rest of the desk for yourself.

### Papers and documents

Use a file container when you have papers and documents that you have to use or keep with you for future use. This will keep your papers in one place. Remember, a desk with scattered papers is the most confusing to work on.



### Personal items

We keep personal items on the desk such as a photo album, a diary, action figures, mugs, etc.

Restrict it to three to five personal items on the desk,

depending on their size. Place

them at one side of the desk so they are not scattered around. Since the landline phone is placed in the upper right corner, therefore, you can use the desk's upper left corner for placing your personal items. That is, if you are not a southpaw! If you are a leftie, the opposite arrangement will suffice.



### Stationary Items

We do need stationary items throughout the day. We tend to place many stationary items because they are attractive and many people are fond of using stationary items.

However, it is best to keep only those stationery products on your desk which you really need. These include pen(s), stapler, paper puncher, glue, marker, etc. If you have a stationary bag, then you can keep other items in it, too, such as pencil, eraser, pencil sharpener, ruler, ink remover, etc. However, keeping a mug on the desk to place your stationary items in it is a good practice. The mug serves the decorative purpose while also keeping your stationery organized.

### Open space

Always keep an open space at the lower right side of the desk. This space should be equal to an A4 size paper. You can use it to place your cup of tea, glass of water, cell phone, or can use it for signing documents, or for placing any random item that you might use for a while. Moreover, by keeping this area free also vacates your mind because we normally look at our right side when working and we will feel motivated and at ease by looking at the free space. Southpaws, adjust accordingly!

### Drawers

Make sure that your desk has at least two drawers. Having more drawers is always good. You can keep your essential items in them which you use daily or occasionally. They can include your wallet, telephone diary, digital gadgets, documents, extra stationary items, accessories, etc.

### Clear the clutter

We normally tend to clutter our space. We buy something and keep its packaging with us; we receive a document and keep its envelope; we buy things and keep the shoppers with us. If you think that any item is creating clutter, you can always discard it. However, in case you might need to use it later, you can keep it in your cupboard.

An organized desk will do wonders for you and it will benefit you in more than one way. Hope these tips will add productivity in your life.



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# **Muhammad Omar Iftikhar's Articles and Columns in The Nation**



## Tips for article publication



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — July 25, 2023

Opinions, Columns



Writers can create a decent article with a good vocabulary supported by credible facts and logical opinion statements. However, even with splendid content, the article or write-up may not get published in print or digital. This might not be due to the content itself, but rather how it is presented.

As editors and page in-charges are occupied with their editorial responsibilities, they don't have the time or energy to invest in poorly presented write-ups. This means that the selected write-ups must adhere to proper formatting. The presentation itself is as important as the content when it comes to writing an article.

When formatting your article, you add value to your work and enhance your brand in the eyes of the recipient. Here are some key points to remember when submitting an article for review to a print or digital publication.

You need to write a proper heading for your article. An article without a heading is like a person without a name. An editor will not give a heading to a header-less article. Editors may change or edit the heading you have provided. The preferred font for the heading is Times New Roman, 14, bold. Write your name, or byline, beneath the heading as "By (Your Full Name)." The font for the byline can be Times New Roman, 12, bold. You can choose the "Justify" option to align the article to give it a clean look.

The entire body's font should be Times New Roman, 12,

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regular. Use paragraph breaks to provide breathing space for the readers. You may choose sub-headings for the paragraphs (if needed). The font size can be Times New Roman, 12, bold. You end the article with your two to three-line profile which is also called a writers and/or authors profile. The preferred font for the profile is Times New Roman, 12, italic.

In addition to formatting error, another mistake some novice writers make is saving the MS Word file without a meaningful name or using default names like 'Document 1' or 'Document 2'. Always save the article with a proper file name that reflects the name of the article and your name, for example, "(Article Name - Your Name)". This gives the article a proper brand identity.

When presenting your article to an editor, include a cover letter in the e-mail body. Clearly state your name, provide a brief profile, and explain the reason for writing the article. Keep the message concise and to the point. Also, mention your cell phone number in case the editor or his/her colleague wants to discuss the article.

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Lastly, use a professional e-mail address that includes your actual name. By following these guidelines, you can effectively present your article and increase the chances of it being published.



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## The power of soft skills



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — July 14, 2023

Opinions, Columns



We cannot ignore the importance of soft skills, especially amid the rise of technology, AI, and virtual environments. Despite the youth, in particular, being exposed to communicating with peers and colleagues digitally through screens, soft skills will remain active in daily life.

Every year on July 15, the World Youth Skills Day is celebrated globally to highlight the importance for the youth to equip themselves with soft skills. In simple terms, soft skills are the character traits and interpersonal attributes that uplift your attitude and aptitude, enable you to work with others, and facilitate leading a disciplined life. It is a myth that soft skills are inborn; they can be acquired if a person is willing to learn and implement them.

According to the World Economic Forum, the top 10 skills of 2025 are analytical thinking and innovation, active learning, complex problem-solving, critical thinking and analysis, creativity, originality, and initiative; leadership and social influence; technology (use, monitor, control); technology design and programming; resilience, stress tolerance, and flexibility; reasoning, problem-solving, and ideation.

Soft skills, also referred to as human skills, enable individuals to work in unison with others. They can include communication and negotiation skills, interpersonal skills, leadership and team management, entrepreneurship, adaptability, and training skills, among others.

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The youth needs to understand the importance of soft skills. In this regard, knowing yourself is the first step towards achieving personal growth. You should perform a SWOT analysis, which refers to identifying your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Identify the strong points of your character and continue to build and utilize them. Turn your weaknesses into strengths while gauging the opportunities you may encounter. These opportunities refer to learning new soft skills, utilizing available resources to complete tasks, and working in an environment conducive to learning.

Identify the soft skills that you lack so you can acquire them, the ones that you possess so you can enhance them, and the ones that you know about but have never acquired so you can develop them. Self-reflection is the best way to learn skills. It is imperative to discuss it with close friends and mentors who can guide you on the skills you should acquire. Students, for instance, need to be active listeners, adaptive, time managers, and possess confidence, focus, and discipline. Professionals, too, should have these skills, but they also need negotiation skills, leadership skills, time management, conflict resolution, and effective communication, among others.

After acquiring a degree, a student becomes part of the professional world, where tasks based on cognition, creativity, physical endeavors, and interpersonal skills are pursued every day. Those who have soft skills take less time adapting to new situations and people. What we learn in classrooms becomes a faded past that faintly guides us to a limited extent. How we deal with others, complete tasks, and make an impact becomes a permanent part of our existence.

Unfortunately, soft skills are not given much importance. Our educational system focuses on memorizing concepts and earning grades. Teachers should focus on developing soft skills among students. This will facilitate them in performing tasks in life and a career with ease. By earning grades, students can acquire a job; by learning a skill, they can create their future by utilizing the skills in an ever-competitive world.



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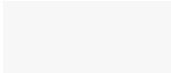
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## Ten ways to navigate the future



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — June 15, 2023

Opinions, Columns



The youth of Pakistan should adapt themselves to the uncertain future ahead. The lockdown because of COVID-19 enabled us to live and work in a hybrid environment, we must look beyond what lies in front of us. The world is changing at an unprecedented pace, to say the least. The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and computer systems, applications, and software have eased our lives. Humans must remain continuous and lifelong learners despite living amidst the processes and equipment that have been created through the miracles of modern science. This article shares ten ways the youth can continue to be learners and doers. First, the youth should develop a habit of reading. They should read books, novels, fiction and non-fiction literature, newspapers, and magazines. The absorption of content should be a daily activity to learn something new. The broadening of the mind and the development of grey matter will help the youth to become curious and to understand how to lead their lives.

Second, the youth should develop skills while pursuing formal education. The education they acquire in schools, colleges, and universities will help them in earning a degree. A skill that they learn will facilitate them throughout their life. The youth should identify their interest and develop a skill that relates to them. For instance, a person having a flair for writing can polish his/her content writing skills. A youth who likes to study mathematics can develop accounting or

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finance skills.

Third, the youth should attend workshops and seminars, training sessions, and talks. They will learn from the experts and make new connections. The youth will also expose themselves to insights they cannot find in books.

Fourth, in a globally connected world, the youth should take advantage of the Internet to attend online workshops and seminars. If paying to attend is a problem, the youth can opt to attend events that are free of cost.

Fifth, the youth need to plan their life ahead of them. They cannot live wondering what to do in life. This is the era of fast-paced action. They should know what they want to do and who they want to become. The youth need to be self-aware of themselves and be clear about their life's goals.


Sixth, the youth must find a mentor who can guide them in how to steer through life's challenges and how to achieve their goals. This mentor can be their friend, teacher, sibling, parent, or anyone who they admire and who can give them strategic insights.

Seventh, the youth must remain curious. Life-long learning refers to keeping an open mind to absorb information. Being curious means having a desire to learn, explore and understand.

Eighth, the youth should know how to use technology and digital resources. They must leverage technology including websites, Android and iOS applications, and online databases, to expand their knowledge.

Ninth, the youth can and should begin a weekly blog or vlog to share their insights and ideas with the world. They must find a niche that relates to their interest and begin the blog or vlog. All they need is an idea to talk about. If the topic is interesting, the audience will follow.

Tenth, the youth have to give something back to society in the form of providing guidance and mentorship to those who need it, addressing social issues, supporting local businesses, advocating for a cause, and sharing their expertise.







CM Murad inaugurates 2nd phase of Shahrah-e-Bhutto





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## Academia-industry collaborations



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — May 27, 2023

Opinions, Columns



There is a dire need to build and strengthen the academia-industry gap in Pakistan which is expanding with each passing year. The industry experts and professionals from the corporate sector and the faculty members from business schools and degree-awarding institutions can sit together to discuss the way forward in this regard. The concept of academia-industry linkages is to have educational institutes build productive linkages with the corporate sector. The faculty members need to know the mindset and skillsets required by the corporate sector. They can impart industry-centric learning in classrooms to develop a relevant outlook. Similarly, the corporate sector needs to know what curriculum and courses the students are studying. The industry leaders can share their input on how to restructure the curriculum to suit the industry's demands.

The academia especially the faculty members, and the corporate sectors especially the top-level management from various domains, needs to collaborate to carve out a strategy. There should be a unison of thought, a concerted spirit, and an urgency to revolutionize how students are being educated in universities and business schools.

The academia-industry gap began expanding when faculty members and industry leaders pursued living a life in their silos. They interacted with their immediate, direct stakeholders within their organizations. The cross-organizational and cross-domain interaction has

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to continue and take momentum to create a ripple effect. Business schools do organize guest speaker sessions which is a first step towards building academia-industry linkage. These guest speaker sessions need to be more than just a talk. Industry leaders should have an audience comprising students from all fields of study. The information and experience these speakers share have to benefit every student irrespective of what degree program they are pursuing.

Furthermore, the concept of guest speaker sessions should not be limited to or exclusive to only universities, business schools, or degree awarding institutes. This concept should have a trickle effect in colleges and schools. The distance between academia and industry did not sprout in universities, its origins have remained in how education is imparted with a myopic viewpoint in schools and colleges. Imagine students of primary classes and those in their intermediate / O/A levels learning about the courses they are studying from corporate leaders through talks and one-on-one discussions. These conversations and discussions will enlighten the students' thoughts and broaden the range of vision that these future architects should develop to become successful professionals. The course structures from at least the intermediate levels to the university levels must include Pakistani content. Students should learn about the Pakistani market, its dynamics, its business models, and best practices.

Indeed, Western authors present a viewpoint that helps students in Pakistan learn conceptual perspectives. However, their practical applications cannot be replicated in the Pakistani market. This is where Pakistan's corporate leaders can share their insights, ideas, experiences, and research to help students and professionals alike learn about the local market. Every educational institute must incorporate a strategy in their course curriculum where learning from industry experts is made compulsory. This is the only way for both to grow and develop otherwise living in silos will only damage the student's learning process.



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## Education and skill training



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — May 11, 2023

Opinions, Columns



Education is a key element to develop future generations. It is through education that we become adept at life skills, knowledge, and information. It influences our decision-making and insights to lead a successful life. With the changing dynamics of work, the youth need to equip themselves with skills and insights to become independent thinkers. Soft skills are becoming important in today's workplace. Moreover, the youth needs to exhibit soft skills when pursuing freelancing. They help the youth to navigate through interpersonal relationships, communication, collaboration, organization, etc. A holistic strategy is required to bring the youth on a platform where they are educated about industry trends and skills.

The educational system and those managing the helms of affairs in Pakistan may create a National Education and Skills Training policy (NEST). This policy will facilitate students to become lifelong learners and help them develop soft skills. Students in primary classes studying science, history, geography, social studies, Pakistan studies, etc should be encouraged and guided to learn through visual aid including video documentaries. Industry experts from their respective fields should be invited to speak to children to impart insights that are not available in textbooks.

Secondly, the NEST policy will emphasize the development of soft skills for it has become of paramount significance in today's fast-moving, competitive, remotely-accessible world. Soft skills such

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as communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving among others are becoming increasingly important. Employers are seeking candidates who not only have the technical skills necessary for the job but also possess strong interpersonal and communication skills. They need employees who can find solutions to problems, complete work smartly, blend with their colleagues, meet deadlines, and are tech-savvy. The NEST policy will also bring the industry closer to students, graduates, and start-up ventures. This will streamline the flow of information and knowledge.

Thirdly, the NEST policy will foster lifelong learning in the minds of the students. The common perception is that education ends when one receives a degree. This notion must end. Learning is a continuous process that has to be pursued by everyone daily. Life-long learning will facilitate the youth and professionals in today's era which is a knowledge economy. By equipping individuals with the skills they need to adapt and thrive in the knowledge economy, The NEST policy may promote innovation, create jobs, and stimulate economic growth. Furthermore, individuals who possess strong soft skills are more likely to be productive, engaged, and committed to their work, leading to increased job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and improved organizational performance.

The NEST policy will also facilitate freelancers who are working with national and international clients. If the objective of school, college, and university education is to enable graduates to secure a job, then the NEST policy will provide avenues for the youth to become freelancers. They can use their skills to offer products and services, become entrepreneurs and add value to the country's economy. Under the NEST policy, the Ministry of Education may provide access to education and training to students and faculty members in urban and rural areas. This can include creating standards for teaching and learning and providing resources to support the enhancement of skills and learning.

The NEST policy will offer formal education or informal learning opportunities. It will take insights from academicians, researchers, industry experts, and mentors on how to revise the course curriculum that nurtures the students' minds, develops their character and makes them independent thinkers. The NEST policy will also create a collaboration of schools and colleges with industry professionals for speaker sessions and talks so that information and knowledge are disseminated effectively to make a far-reaching impact.

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## Capitalising on knowledge



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — April 12, 2023

Opinions, Columns



The world is rapidly evolving, and so is how we do business. The traditional model of an economy based on physical goods and services is evolving with constant progress backed by knowledge-based economies. Intellectual capital becomes an asset for such economies. Growth is therefore dependent on human intellect and knowledge. Several aspects may be working behind the rise in a knowledge economy. These include globalization, technological advancements, and a more connected world where thoughts and information are readily exchanged.

Technology is perhaps the evident source that is changing the dynamics of economies and making them knowledge-based. The Internet has radically altered our lifestyle, working habits, peer-to-peer contacts, and how we perceived information. Gone are the days when a meeting had to be held inside a board room. We have been having online meetings—a trend that began and was adopted during the lockdown in 2020. The Internet—including the wonders of artificial intelligence—has reshaped the fabric of communication and how humans interacted with others.

The Internet or the World Wide Web brought to the fore the presence and importance of globalization. While the industrial revolution, promotion of trade, creation of multinational corporations, and transfer of knowledge led to the growth and progress of globalization, the Internet fueled the process ten folds. The notion of 'competing at the national scale' has been

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replaced by ‘completing at the global scale’. The interconnectedness of the global economy has facilitated companies to sell their products and services to people across the world.

Companies including Google, Facebook, Amazon, and Apple among others are using intellectual capital to build their assets. These companies are capitalizing on technology and innovation to develop new products and services that create value. The authorities in Pakistan need to develop a system to develop human resources for the future. Schools, colleges, and universities are important but their modus operandi need to be restructured. The future belongs to those who have acquired a diverse set of skills. Rote learning and studying irrelevant courses will not bode well for our country’s future. We need skilled resources that can tackle the challenges of the twenty-first century and succeed in the modern economy. Courses and skills such as but not limited to data analytics, technical writing, cloud skills, and machine learning will be beneficial for individuals and corporations. Such skills are needed in all industries.

Freelancing has also changed the foundations of a knowledge-based economy. Freelancers are offering services to their clients across the globe and helping start-ups and individuals add value to their businesses. Learning and evolution are happening on both sides—the client and the freelancer. Individuals have established their businesses by hiring freelancers. They are using technology to connect and globalization to reach out to a plethora of customers across continents.



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JUNE 14, 2025  
↩ f X in

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JUNE 14, 2025  
↩ f X in

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↩ f X in

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## The future is now



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — March 11, 2023

Opinions, Columns



The times ahead are going to be overshadowed by artificial intelligence. Humans need to remain relevant in such times of digital dominance. We are living in the future – as predicted by authors and researchers during the 1970s to the 90s. We have flying cars and video calls, as shown in the animated sitcom, The Jetsons. We have hand-held communication devices as shown in Star Trek. Despite the presence of innovative technology, we need to use them in the most human way possible. The youth in particular should create a future for themselves by using digital media. Students studying in intermediate / A-levels should have an idea of what their future should be. No matter if they want to become an engineer, doctor, pilot, or a scientist, they should create a presence on digital media. This presence should not be limited to creating a profile or a page. It should help them connect with relevant audiences. Imagine a student studying in class nine sharing insights on how to become a better presenter by uploading videos on YouTube. He/she can share examples and experiences. He/she will connect with children from the same age group and especially with those who face challenges when speaking in public. Just imagine the kind of engagement this person will create by helping others resolve their problem. Such actions require foresight, vision, and passion. Parents and teachers, in particular, need to develop among children this sense and the ability to realize their potential. Unfortunately, we are living in the

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notion that one needs to complete studies and get a job and only then one will become a success. This cycle has been replaced by digital media. Today, the path to earning and to acquiring success does not begin after one completes a degree and finds a job, it can begin right now. One needs insights into what one needs to accomplish. This begins with a goal. If the goal is to become popular, then the destination may never come. If the goal is to make a difference, then the destination may be closer than you think.

Imagine a world where everyone is running the race to acquire a job. Even if all the companies in the country hire as many resources as they can, all of the graduates cannot find jobs at the same time. The youth of Pakistan should realize that digital media has created avenues for them to become entrepreneurs. They need an objective, a vision of what they need to do, guidance from industry experts, and a commitment to remain resilient in their cause.

The educational system of Pakistan and the world, unfortunately, does not encourage students to become independent thinkers. The youth should develop the habit of reading books and watching informative documentaries. They should use the internet to find avenues of how to use digital media, how to earn, how to develop and explore skills. The world has changed over the last decade and it will change exponentially in the years to come. The youth should adapt themselves to changing times and use the innovation they have. Or else they will fade away in the crowd.



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## Self-learning in 2023



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — January 28, 2023

Opinions, Columns



Skill development is the need of the hour. The youth must learn new skills and re-learn what they have been taught to remain updated with modern trends. The corporate sector of 2023 is different from that of 2013. The world has drastically changed during this decade. There was an influx of technology that merged humans with their smartphones and online tools. Then there was the lockdown because of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. This worldwide event altered our perception of reality. For the first time in modern history, students attended classes from home via online tools and people completed office work using the same tools among others including e-mails, video calls, etc.

This period of isolation made the people rethink their strategy of global connectivity. The youth who were already engaged in pursuing freelance work spent little time and effort to become attuned to this newfound reality. The problem was much greater for the two types of people. First, those who had a habit of performing manual work, especially the senior citizens and those not well-versed in using technology because of language and education barriers. Second, those who never or seldom earned through freelance work. They had to upgrade their skills to become relevant.

The year 2023 will be a different year. People will be trying to make up for the lost time of 2020 and the aftereffects of 2020 that overshadowed 2021. Skills development must be the target for the youth if they need to remain relevant in the market. Among the key

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JUNE 15, 2025

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02

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skills to learn in 2023 will include adaptability. One needs to remain open to accepting change in whatever form it may come. Creativity and problem-solving are other skills that need to be honed. The pandemic has shown us the importance of working with remote teams. In this regard, pursuing collaboration will be of the essence. Even if there is no one to pat on your back, you need to remain motivated. Self-motivation will play a major role in achieving personal and professional success. Perhaps the most important skills will be communication and time management. People have to use communication skills to express their messages and share information. Time management, however, will be essential for all to complete a maximum number of tasks within a given day.

Perhaps the skill of digital literacy will be overshadowing all other skills. Blending this skill with communication, creativity, and collaboration will provide a person with the key to managing teams and enhancing productivity. These skills will facilitate individuals and groups, teams and organizations, freelancers and entrepreneurs to plan, coordinate, manage and execute ideas.

To cultivate skills one needs to accept that one needs to develop them in the first place. Living in ignorance will make one obsolete. You should learn a skill depending on your interest. If you are creative and like to design, you may learn graphic design. If you are interested in marketing and sales then you may learn lead generation, search engine marketing, and social media marketing. This year your resolution should be to develop a skill set and pursue a freelance career by selling your services to national and international clients.



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## Knowing the future



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — January 21, 2023

Opinions, Columns



Knowledge economies tend to value knowledge, promote ideas, encourage innovation and develop talent and human resources. Pakistan can become a knowledge economy, however, the path is perilous. Pakistan does not value innovation. We are a nation still creating clutter by using paper while the world has accepted working in a paperless environment. Recently, the enthusiastic spectators visiting Karachi's National Stadium were asked to bring printouts of a ticket that already has a QR code imprinted on it. Such instances make us wonder if we are indeed living in the era of the fourth industrial revolution.

Knowledge in Pakistan, unfortunately, is limited to books, which are read by only a handful of enthusiasts. The textbooks are written by Western authors that present a perspective unfamiliar to the students living in Pakistan. Developing Pakistan into a knowledge economy will not be an easy task. We need to build our educational infrastructure to encapsulate the young minds to think and act.

There is something wrong with our education system, to put it very honestly. Our schooling system is based on a century-old concept of rote learning and focusing on the lecture instead of enhancing the students' cognitive skills. Perhaps the educational system only encourages or compels them out of fear to earn good grades. This system must change as it only favours a handful of students who are attuned to understanding the concepts of science and commerce subjects. What

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about the artists and the creative thinkers? There is no room for them nor does society accept them as professionals.


A knowledge economy is formed when knowledge is used as a currency. It is accumulated with people sharing ideas and deliberating upon solutions to social problems. It is created when mentors share experiences with the students who are then encouraged to plan and act on a business plan.

Knowledge, therefore, becomes a source of knowledge creation and competitiveness. This leads to investments in research, innovation, and technology. In light of this, the very foundations of education and research in Pakistan need to be realigned with industry and market trends. Educational institutions including schools, colleges, business schools, and universities cannot survive in isolation. Schools and especially colleges must create incubation centres where students and faculty are encouraged to work in collaboration to work on their business ideas. This cannot be done until our educational system is restructured to facilitate building a knowledge economy. The syllabus and course content have to be simplified, reorganized, and modernized. It must be aligned with national and international trends. A policy should be developed to bring all educational institutions under the umbrella of an innovation initiative. The faculty members from various disciplines may work in collaboration with industry experts, mentors, and investors who guide students in developing a business model, fine-tuning their pitches and helping them establish their start-ups. Without a cohesive strategy to combine focused minds and concentrated efforts, the vision of Pakistan to become a knowledge economy will only remain a dream.




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- 03




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- 04

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- 05

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## The leaders of tomorrow

The world has drastically changed from being a manuallydriven society to an automated one

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar — January 16, 2023

Opinions, Columns



The world has drastically changed from being a manually-driven society to an automated one. We are living through a future that was once perceived as fiction. Artificial intelligence is overshadowing human capabilities with tools such as ChatGPT. With the wonders of technology, we do not have to think much before completing a task. Writing, designing, presenting, evaluating, calculating, and other processes that took hours to perform are now completed by inserting data in software and online resources. The AI takeover, which was shown as a dystopian reality in the movie The Terminator, is the truth staring at us through our smart devices. Humans must empower themselves more than ever before to take command of cognitive and logical decisions. Technology does provide ease but depending wholly on it will make us relinquish our human touch. This touch is established when we perform manual labor and pursue thinking, speaking, conversing, writing, and other tasks. The leaders of tomorrow (TLoT), who are at this point studying in colleges and universities, need to accept two factors. One, their lives – three years down the road – will be governed by AI. Second, they have to remain human and use their consciousness to make decisions. The TLoT will need to have certain attributes or learn to acquire them if they want to be relevant and successful. They need to be resourceful by thinking of unique solutions and finding smart ways to solve personal and professional challenges. They have to use their environment to their advantage. Building connections with peers and colleagues will be of paramount significance. They will need to find ways to generate investment and income. Being confident,

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curious, and having a can-do attitude will define TLoT. TLoT have to use time by prioritizing their tasks. Multitasking is the key but managing time is imperative. TLoT will follow a things-todo list and complete several tasks simultaneously. They have to be mindful when it comes to achieving short-term and long-term goals. TLoT are inquisitive and pursue lifelong learning. They should read news, articles, and books to keep fueling their thoughts with the concepts and theories to guide them in life. They have to remain up-to-date with modern trends in their profession. TLoT have to acquire information and learn from their experiences. The combination of these two features will develop wisdom. TLoT should share their knowledge with others. This knowledge-sharing will eventually help others to expand their perspectives. Adaptability is another aspect that TLoT will need to blend in with their thought process. They have to accept life as it is and present solutions to challenges as they move on. TLoT will be resilient in face of surmounting odds and relevant in times of increasing competition. They will be resilient by learning from their experiences and will be relevant by being aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and by analyzing and predicting the market trends



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## Adapting to a changing world



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — November 24, 2022

Opinions, Columns



The next generation living across the world is in for a surprise. The world's resources are near depletion and the atmosphere is becoming a challenge to survive in. The world of the 1900s has been radically changed into a dystopian horror narrative as we prepare to enter 2023. With the advent of the first industrial revolution to the fifth version of the same on the verge of beginning, the world has changed beyond imagination. The humans have moved from standing in awe as they saw the Wright Brothers fly the airplane in 1903 to working in the metaverse by interacting with digital avatars while sitting in the comforts of their homes and offices. We have transformed from cavemen to innovators; from explorers to inventors.

We live in a fast-moving competitive world that is changing as we speak. Several jobs no longer exist including linotype operator, knocker-upper (those who woke up people), town crier, and bematist (someone who calculated distance).

We are indeed living in tumultuous times where information is readily available at our fingertips. The challenge is to turn the information into actionable points so it can be turned into wisdom. This is possible when students are facilitated to learn rather than compelled to memorise. Students must understand the concepts and practices of the corporate world to analyse how to adapt to the changing times.

Imagine a world where students become teachers. We are living in such an unprecedented era. The youth are

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often seen sharing words of wisdom and information with their elders. They gather information from the internet and research more about it. They discuss with peers and contemplate the lives ahead. Perhaps this could lead to a level playing field where the students and teachers help each other and find meaning and purpose in their lives.

The era ahead of us will be of the doers—those who think, plan and act to pursue their goals. The world will belong to those who find a purpose in life, gather information on how to fulfil their goals, and deliberate upon the strategies to achieve them. People today are more aware of how to manage the phases of trial and error and experimentation. With time, such challenges have been reduced by the wonders of modern technology. We can create 3D models of the objects we need to create in full form ranging from the computer mouse to skyscrapers, from pens to airplanes.

The world is changing at such a rapid pace that the jobs we think to be exclusive for today’s era will not exist in the future. These include cashiers, newspaper delivery, travel agent, social media expert, and telemarketers among others.

The future is not arriving, it is now—we are living in it. Imagine a world where self-driving cars were an impossibility or online applications helping us through the day were a distant dream. Such inventions and innovations are a part of our lives. We need to adapt to changing times and make the best of the present resources.



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## Breeding the art of writing



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — October 29, 2022

Opinions, Columns



A nation needs storytellers. They can be writers and columnists, bloggers and authors, researchers and poets, reporters and columnists. Stories are everywhere—around us and within us. People need to record and present these stories in their various forms and manifestations. There is nothing more beautiful to find inspiration when reading about someone's life journey. Imagine reading a blog that has not received much engagement on social media but gives advice that you wanted to know about life, career, and relationships. Envision a moment when you are going through a news website and stumble upon an article that gives you pretty much the information you needed about a particular subject. There was someone who pondered on what to write, how to write, and where to publish it—on their blog or a news website. They are storytellers—they keep the readers' minds churning with ideas.

In Pakistan, we have writers of all ages who come from all parts of the country. They amaze me because they bring stories and thoughts, insights and information, ideas and views that have promise. Some of these writers are associated with publishing companies that promote talent that seemingly remains unheard of. Companies such as Daastan Publications, WriterTalks, Auraq Publications, Thazbook, The Little Book Company, Liberty Publishing, Markings Publishing, Reverie Publishers, Kitab, Zuka Books, Mongrel Books, etc., have been supporting writers of all ages to fulfill

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their dreams of becoming published authors. It is the thought that counts and the publishing companies mentioned above are endeavouring to build an army of writers and poets. Their efforts must be commended. Publishing companies such as these serve as a hope for those writers who find it challenging to connect with traditional publishers, for whatever reasons there may be.

Writing articles, essays, blogs, poetry, stories, novellas, and novels requires one to have ideas, to begin with. Selecting topics and doing the research before embarking on the writing journey becomes a part and parcel of the writing process. Some have the flair to write from an early age while others develop it as they move ahead in life.

Our education system must breed writers, authors, essayists, and poets. Unfortunately, the system promotes rote learning and limits the students' thoughts to the boundaries of textbooks. This needs to change. Schools and colleges should have one period every day where students are asked to pen down their thoughts in the form of articles or essays. They should be encouraged to write stories covering any genre of their interest. They should be allowed to think creatively instead of limiting their thought process.

A nation is developed primarily by thinkers. They emerge in any form. They can be inventors, scientists, architects, archaeologists, astronomers, astronauts, sculptors, painters, and the list goes on. All professions require one to think, plan, research, and act. Life-long learning is the key for one to remain updated with modern trends and acquire learning as one moves on in life.



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Columns

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BY TAHIR MAHMOOD  
JUNE 14, 2025

Running in Place  
BY NAJM US SAQIB  
JUNE 14, 2025

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JUNE 14, 2025

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JUNE 13, 2025



## Will Mars be Earth 2.0?



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — October 15, 2022

Opinions, Columns



Elon Musk has been an active advocate of creating cities for humans on Mars. He is not the only one. The concept of colonizing Mars first appeared as a fictional narrative in the 1897 novel *Two Planets* by Kurd Lasswitz. The story is about Arctic explorers who find a Martian base. The Martians take some explorers to Mars. The novel was published 72 years before the first man landed on the Moon in 1969.

Colonizing Mars has remained a concept for humans for eons. However, with advancements in science and technology, we are devising ways to journey to the Red Planet. It is not the journey that excites us but the possibility of living there. Musk has time and again explained the idea of living on Mars. In 2019 Musk said that “It’s been almost half a century since humans were last on the moon. That’s too long, we need to get back there and have a permanent base on the moon — again, like a big permanently occupied base on the moon. And then build a city on Mars to become a spacefaring civilization, a multi-planet species.”

No matter how thrilling the idea sounds, the logistical challenges will be monumental indeed. Imagine taking construction raw materials to Mars including objects ranging from nails and irons, beams, concrete and glass, to equipment and heavy machinery including bulldozers, front loaders, dump trucks, and cranes among others.

Humans would have to build cities and towns on Mars from scratch. They would need to conduct soil

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sampling before erecting the foundations for their cities. Weather conditions including wind pressure and other climate changes will need to be addressed.

Life on Mars will not be easy. Humans will need to create cities enclosed in glass or a concrete dome to maintain proper oxygen levels and perhaps to simulate day and night through artificial means. There needs to be a continuous supply of water to complete daily tasks. Electricity needs to be available round the clock to complete chores such as cooking and washing.

The lifestyle on Mars will need to be different from the tried and tested environment on Earth. One wonders what economic model will the humans pursue on Mars. Will there be banking and investment? Will humans earn by doing jobs? If humans plan on earning on Mars, then the Earth's economic system would need to be implemented. Or, the banking and economic system would be extended to Mars. The humans on Mars will also need avenues to spend their salaries. This will bring about the need to build shopping malls and departmental stores.


The children on Mars should be taught to become thinkers, innovators, and inventors. They should be allowed to follow a discipline of their choosing. The learning activities at schools should be focused on improving intelligence.

Colonising Mars will not be an easy task. It will require months and perhaps years of planning to send human and capital resources to Mars. Effective brainstorming and implementation of plans will be required to create an eco-friendly sustainable city that is suitable for animal and plant life.



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- 04

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JUNE 14, 2025

[f](#) [X](#) [in](#)
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JUNE 14, 2025

[f](#) [X](#) [in](#)
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## Financial management for the youth



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — October 08, 2022

Opinions, Columns



It is indeed important for the youth to learn about the history of Pakistan, mathematics, physics, chemistry, social science, Urdu, English, and biology during their intermediate classes. Such subjects will help attune their minds to the subjects they will study during their university life when pursuing BBA and BS. One wonders why the youth of our country that are studying in intermediate classes are not taught about financial management. This subject, if introduced, should focus on how one can conduct effective financial management. This includes the basics of saving and investing. The concepts of budgeting, insurance, tax structures, estate planning, mortgages, and banking will be a part and parcel of this course.

Financial planning for personal matters is not taught to the youth which creates a dearth of financial thought and planning in them. They remain unable to plan their investment strategy even after graduating, therefore, leading them to invest in low-yielding products.

Intermediate students may not earn a fixed income but they are aware of the world of freelancing. Opportunities for the youth to earn a side income through freelancing are available. They can complete tasks by using their skill set. They can use social media to promote their skills and connect with clients.

The educational system of Pakistan must evolve according to the needs of the market. Gone are the days when rote learning was required. The students of today

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are accustomed to the changing trends. They get information from the Internet and are often seen challenging the thoughts of their elders. This open-mindedness must be capitalised. Introducing a course in personal financial management in intermediate education will broaden the student's mind in various ways.

First, they will understand how the financial system works. They will be familiarised with the financial system of their household. Second, if they are acquiring a side income through freelancing jobs, they will know how and where to save and invest their income. Third, they will grasp the workings of the economic system which will surely broaden their mind.

This will give them the foundations to know more about the economy, accounting, and finance. Once their mind is widened by such thoughts, it will be relatively easy for them to study similar courses when pursuing a BS or BBA degree. When students from the pre-medical track study BBA, they find it difficult to make sense of the concepts of accounting and business finance.

There is a dire need to restructure the course structure of intermediate education to meet the demands of higher education and the corporate world. To compel students to rote learn definitions and reproduce the same in examinations will only produce graduates without the skills and acumen to bring a change to their lives or their society. Our youth must be taught how to manage finances from an early age if we want our youth to become future leaders.



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## The need to be inquisitive



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — August 11, 2022

Columns, Opinions



Curiosity leads to cognitive growth. It facilitates one to seek knowledge and to know about themselves. Seeking knowledge is a continuous process and one must have the acumen to ask questions. Students need to be avid learners if they wish to turn into successful professionals.

Often the faculty members are not open to replying to questions and expect the student to comprehend the lecture without difficulty. Curiosity is the key to increasing knowledge. It is embedded into our consciousness as humans are seekers of information. We need guidance to progress and to learn.

To be curious is a sign of people being open to accepting what they do not know. To think that one knows everything is a fallacy people tend to live to satisfy their ego and to hide their shortcomings. Curious people do not hide behind pseudo-acts that give them a false sense of belonging or acceptance. It happens so often that adults and the youth alike feel it to be below their integrity to question. This trend and habit must change. Curiosity remains a part of our consciousness for we need to know the reality. It is developed and satisfied in various ways.

First, reading is a great way to learn. It expands our thought process, and memory and connects us with information that leads to mental growth. Children and the youth must read whatever topics interest them. It is an act that should be pursued every day.

Second, observation is a good way to learn how to

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complete a task. Imagine you are watching a carpenter make a wooden table. Observation will give you insights into how the carpenter cuts wood to make a table.

Third, through conversation, you can develop curiosity. One must have the enthusiasm to ask and converse over a topic and find out more about it. You may have come across interesting facts and information when listening to elders discussing a subject matter. When you converse you allow your information to increase by listening to what others are saying.

Fourth, curiosity is satisfied when you accept that you lack information. You will not pursue knowledge-gaining acts unless you actively know that you need information. You must accept your limitations before you can embark on a journey of learning and exploration.


Fifth, curiosity is satisfied when we remove ourselves from the daily grind we are accustomed to. We must spend an hour a day disconnected from our cell phones, the Internet, and social media. We must use this time to reflect on our lives and how to manifest a successful future. We will ascertain how to increase our strengths and how to minimise our weaknesses.

Parents and teachers must provide their children and students with an environment that is conducive to learning and seeking knowledge. Such a mindset is developed at an early age when parents allow, appreciate, and acknowledge their child's ability and intention to ask questions.








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## The five steps to greatness



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — July 30, 2022

Columns, Opinions



The youth of Pakistan and around the world considers greatness an output of investment and capital. Indeed, money is required to complete tasks. However, money is not mandatory to become great. Greatness is acquired through five steps: idea, practice, planning, action, and learning. Whatever you wish to become depends on how actively you are thinking about the ways to achieve your life's goals.

This becomes the idea, the first step, that you have about your future. An idea is a combination of your vision, goals, dreams, and aspirations. What will you do once you become who you want to be? How will you enhance your life? How will you bring a change to your society? Your vision as you see yourself ten years down the road will decide the level of practice you must do in your present.

Practice is the second step. As strange as it sounds, you will not achieve greatness unless you are not practicing the tasks that will help you achieve your goals. A person aspiring to write should not write but read. A person aspiring to become a pilot should not study the flying manuals but observe the rationale behind how a pilot works across the instrument panel. Students dreaming to become doctors should practice being calm and logical when dealing with patients—whether they are in the OPD or the operation theatre. Practice brings clarity to the mind, serenity to the soul, and wisdom to actions. Imagine a person desirous to play cricket for the national team. His inclusion into the squad will not

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be fruitful if he does not know the strategy to use when bowling or batting while playing on hard, wet, grassy, dry pitches. Practice will help him achieve this logic. The vision of the future merged with practice enables the person to arrive at the third step: planning. This is when the person plans on how to achieve the dream. The students hoping to become doctors will plan to perform exceptionally well in Intermediate/A-levels so they can get admission to a medical university. Once planning is complete the person enters the action stage—the fourth step. At this point, the person combines experience gained with instructions from elders/seniors and textbooks. The person begins implementing the plans and instructions to move closer to the dream. An aspiring cricketer will perform in a match as per the experience gained during practice sessions and by instructions learned from senior players and coaches. An aspiring engineer would have developed an acumen to complete tasks based on experience and the learning acquired through mentors. The action phase requires one to translate ideas and plans into actionable strategies and tactics. The fifth and last step, but the most important, is learning. Any person with a goal and a plan must become a lifelong learner. This includes reading books related to their professions, conversing with experts to know insights, and observing how actions are completed. Learning and re-learning will continue as the person will update their intellect based on changing trends.



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f X in

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## Streamlining Pakistan's education



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — June 25, 2022

Columns, Opinions



Pakistan is only twenty-five years away from turning 100 years old. During the last 75 years, Pakistan has been dealing with internal mismanagement and external conflict.

To transform Pakistan into a growing economy until 2047 and uplift its various socio-economic classes, we should focus on elevating its educational system. There are various steps the sector should pursue. They may take time to implement, but once applied, they will add value to the educational sector and benefit the students and teachers.

First, the education sector needs to be streamlined based on modern trends and objectives. The syllabus for the higher secondary classes needs to be reassessed and re-evaluated. The syllabus for primary and secondary education should be updated with modern trends. Indeed, the students need to learn the alphabet, numbers, mathematics, and science in primary classes. However, the secondary and higher-secondary course outline needs to be updated. After passing their A-level and Intermediate examinations, students pursue BBA, BS Entrepreneurship, BS Computer Science, or a bachelor's degree related to accounting, finance, economics, etc.

The students from the A-level track and those from Intermediate Commerce can easily accept and learn accounting and finance at business schools. It is, however, a challenge for the students from the Intermediate (Pre-Medical and Pre-Engineering) track

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to acclimatise themselves with the subjects they study in BBA/BS. The Intermediate (Class XI and XII) course structure should be modified in such a manner that it facilitates students of Intermediate (Pre-Medical/Pre-Engineering).

Otherwise, the students are unable to keep themselves at par with the concepts and theories they study in BBA/BS. There is a learning gap observed when comparing students from Inter (Commerce) and A-levels with Inter (Pre-Medical and Pre-Engineering). This gap needs to be removed by restructuring the courses of Intermediate (Pre-Medical and Pre-Engineering).

Courses such as accounting, statistics, and economics should be introduced in Intermediate. They should be added as elective subjects along with chemistry, physics, and mathematics. Students can take any three or a combination they see as relevant to their future education. Students who want to join a business afterward can study accounting, statistics, and economics.

This will allow students to create a focused study approach during their Intermediate (XII). Similarly, students who are interested in studying applied chemistry or physics at the university may choose chemistry and physics respectively in Intermediate.

Second, the academia and industry linkage between schools and colleges should be strengthened. This will allow A-level and Intermediate students to acquire practical learning about the concepts and theories they will be studying at the university or business schools.

Such linkages are developed when the management and teachers of schools/colleges connect with industry experts and entrepreneurs. The management can take students on field trips. Furthermore, teachers can invite industry experts to give talks to students to strengthen students' classroom learning and enhance their outlook on how businesses and industries operate.

The students of Intermediate should be exposed to such guest talks so they may augment their insights and ideas for a successful academic and professional life ahead.



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## Knowledge, character, and action



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — June 10, 2022

Columns, Opinions



The knowledge we gather through experience develops and enhances our character. Knowledge is acquired through planning, thinking, doing, reading, conversing, observing, and writing. Our character is uplifted when we pursue tasks that increase knowledge. This is why children should be encouraged to talk, read, write, and make decisions. The character is crafted and garnered when the child is given the room to experience life and learn from mistakes. Parents and teachers should keep an eye on the child's activities at home and at school, however, without limiting the child's vision to completing tasks.

Becoming disciplined, for example, is a character trait taught to children through trial and error. Observation is considered to be an effective tool used by children to absorb good habits they observe in elders. If a child's parents and teachers have a habit of effectively managing time, the child will likely pursue and display the same. The households where time management is not given importance are the ones where children also grow up without knowing the importance of utilising time.

Knowledge is also acquired through observation. A child may observe someone draw on paper and may follow the same which develops his/her drawing skills. Some children eat the way their elders eat or talk the way they see their elders do. Elders, therefore, need to explain to the child the behaviours that are deemed to be inappropriate. Once knowledge is acquired by a

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child or a youth, they embed it into their character—either consciously or unconsciously. For example, some children prefer to dress up only because they have been observing their parents or elders do the same. Some children are good at speaking from an early age for they have parents, teachers, friends, or siblings who are good at the same skills.

Character is also developed by pursuing the habit of reading and conversing. Children must foster thinking and curiosity. The more they think and question, the more information they will be exposed to through reading or conversing. The knowledge that is acquired and the character that is developed give the child and the youth the direction to take action and make worthwhile decisions.

These decisions can include saving monthly pocket money, keeping their room organised, being disciplined, having a focus on studies, and the list goes on. Once a child creates such habits, they remain with them as they grow old. This guides them to take meaningful action. They also focus on the tasks they need to complete apart from their studies.

This may include establishing their online business, organising webinars and physical events, being an active student in their school/college, and taking ownership of the tasks they are assigned at home or school/college. They eventually become logical, rational, and mature specialists in their chosen field once they leave university and step into the professional world. Parents and teachers must not induce the child to follow the rules. They must become role models who inspire children to follow in their footsteps to become a success and carve their own destiny. Only then can we develop visionaries.



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## Billionaires buying the world



Muhammad Omar Iftikhar — May 01, 2022

Columns, Opinions



There was a concept of privatised Earth or a private colony on Mars that was promoted in science fiction literature and movies. Elon Musk, considered the Tony Stark (Marvel Character) of our time, has done—probably—the unthinkable by buying Twitter. What began as a mere casual conversation on Twitter in 2017 when Musk jokingly asked the price of Twitter as if he was planning to buy a household item, materialised into a milestone deal for the South African-born entrepreneur. Musk eventually bought Twitter for USD 44 billion, in cash.

Musk's purchase led to mixed emotions surfacing. Activists from the political scenario opine that Musk will reduce content moderation and allow for free speech to flourish in its real meaning on Twitter. The conservatives view this as loosening control and giving more room for conversations and sharing of information. However, human rights advocates fear that hate speech will rise as a result of this freedom. One wonders; how will fake news emerge on Twitter if there is little content moderation?

Interestingly, Musk is not the largest shareholder of Twitter despite him spending USD 44 billion. Musk's shares are 9.20 percent. The highest shares are owned by The Vanguard Group, Inc (10.29 percent), Morgan Stanley (8.08 percent), BlackRock Fund Advisors (4.56 percent), and SSgA Funds Management, Inc (4.54 percent) (Source: CNN Business). Explaining his vision for Twitter, Musk said, "Free speech is the bedrock of a

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functioning democracy, and Twitter is the digital town square where matters vital to the future of humanity are debated.” The concepts of “free speech” and “future of humanity” are the most important when it comes to Twitter and Musk.

Earlier in April, Musk even asked on Twitter if the users needed an edit button—a feature that somehow was never embedded into this website. 73.6 percent of respondents were in favour of the edit button. This was perhaps the first step in loosening the grip on content and allowing users to Tweet and edit as they see fit.

Furthermore, the concept of the “future of humanity” is integral to Musk’s vision behind SpaceX. He has actively shared his thoughts on colonising Mars. He has focused on four aspects to achieve his dream of sending humans to the Red Planet. They are rockets that can be reused, fuel refilling stations in orbit, propellant production on Mars, and efficient methods of traveling in space.

It seems that Musk is not the only one to invest heavily in a tech company. Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway Inc. bought 121 million shares in Hewlett Packard (HP) earlier in April. This gives Berkshire an 11.4 percent stake in the company. Perhaps Buffet will bring 3D printing to households or create a revolution in digital products.

When talking about investments made by a billionaire, Bill Gates’ investment may indeed be an awkward one indeed. Gates, the fourth richest man in the world, is also the largest private farmland owner in the US—an investment decision that raised eyebrows across the world. The inconsistency between Gates’ public environmental advocacy and his investment strategy has been under criticism by environmental activists and farmers. According to agfundernews.com, Bill Gates is the owner of nearly 242,000 acres of farmland in 19 states across the US. His largest land ownership is in Louisiana (69,071 acres), followed by Arkansas (47,927 acres) and Arizona (25,750 acres).



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## Sci-fi and speculative fiction



**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar** — March 25, 2022

Columns, Opinions



Readers often confuse science fiction (sci-fi) with speculative fiction. Where the former uses science and technology in its narrative, the latter is plain fiction—without science or technology added to the story. Star Trek is speculative fiction and science fiction. It speculates about a reality—based on fictional setting and characters—of how the crew of the USS Enterprise continues its mission across space to find new civilisations. It is science fiction because it includes space ships, space, alien lifeforms, and colonisation to progress its story. The crew can teleport itself from one place to the other and use gadgets that we can only imagine.

The Lord of the Rings by J. R. R. Tolkien is a work of speculative fiction. It is not science fiction, but a work of epic fantasy and adventure. The powers of Gandalf the Wizard are magical and not created by science while the invisibility powers acquired by wearing The Ring are also not born by science or technology but have their origins in magic and fantasy.

Speculative fiction has long been read and written to share information and moral lessons. The fables children have been reading are based on speculative fiction. Aesop's Fables are speculative fiction and are not science fiction. Stars Wars, however, is a combination of speculative and science fiction. It is a work of space opera. Science fiction in Star Wars would not have been in existence without the presence of the suit that keeps Darth Vader alive, the Lightsaber,

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blasters, Vibroweapons, the All-Terrain Armoured Transport (AT-AT), the Executor, Millennium Falcon, Rebel Transport, among others.

According to M. Keith Booker in the essay, The Critical Reception of Speculative Fiction, “Contemporary speculative fiction has roots that reach back to the epics and myths of antiquity, when ancient peoples sought supernatural explanations (or at least metaphors) for phenomena in the natural world that seemed beyond understanding from direct knowledge of reality.”

Brian Stableford in his essay Science fiction before the genre writes, “In the seventeenth-century writers began producing speculative fictions about new discoveries and technologies that the application of scientific method might bring about, the earliest examples being accommodate—rather uncomfortably—within existing genres and narrative frameworks.”

In his essay “On the Writing of Speculative Fiction, Robert A. Heinlein writes, “There is another type of honest-to-goodness science fiction story that is not usually regarded as science fiction: the story of people dealing with contemporary science or technology. We do not ordinarily mean this sort of story when we say, “science fiction”; what we do mean is the speculative story, the story embodying the notion “just suppose”—or “What would happen if—.” In the speculative science fiction story accepted science and established fiefs are extrapolated to produce a new situation, a new framework for human action. As a result of this new situation, new human problems are created—and our story is about how human beings cope with those new problems.”

We can argue, however, that science fiction is a part of the broader genre of speculative fiction. Under this umbrella term, we find sub-genres including horror, science fiction, fantasy, alternative history, and dystopian fiction.



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# Living with androids

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar — 8:00 AM | February 19, 2022

Columns



Science fiction literature presents how science and technology may impact our societies. Furthermore, it has concepts such as the presence of extra-terrestrial lifeforms in the universe. These life forms can be monitoring Earth, or humans come in contact with them when journeying across space, or the species visit Earth for invading our resources, research, or for reasons unknown to humanity in the narratives.

What began as speculative fiction during the 15th and 16th centuries when writers speculated about the possibilities for humans to reach the Moon, turned into a full-fledged genre of literature with its literary devices. Science fiction does not have any rules as per se—but yes, the robots and androids that are occasionally mentioned in such narratives have some ground rules.

American science fiction writer Isaac Asimov is regarded among the big three writers of this genre. The other two are Robert A Heinlein and Arthur C Clarke. Known for his fantastical and futuristic plots, societies, and characters, Asimov gained immense popularity for his science fiction novels from the 1950s to the 1980s.

He developed three laws for how a robot may function, which first appeared in his short story, Runaround (1942). According to Asimov, the first law states that ‘a robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm’. The second law mentions that ‘a robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law’. According to the third law, ‘a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.’

For ages, man has tried to make sense of the relationship between humans and robots. These issues are addressed and explored in a plethora of sci-fi novels

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and stories. The shrinking gap between humans and artificial intelligence was explored by Louisa Hall in the novel, *Speak* (2015). It is a dark side of technology that we are also experiencing in reality.

*Machines Like Me* (2019) by Ian McEwan is an interesting story set in an alternate UK during the 1980s. It is a time when Alan Turing—the mathematical prodigy—is still alive. Social media exists, so do self-driving cars. The story is about an android called Adam, which lives with its owners, spurring a strange romantic affair.

*The Prey of Gods* (2017) by Nicky Drayden, is set in South Africa in the year 2064, when personal robots are a part of the household. A hallucinogenic drug is being used that activates previously unused parts of the brain. This aids a demigoddess to use the full power that she once exercised years ago.

One of the earliest forms of robots or an android presence appeared in the *Space Odyssey* series written by Arthur C Clarke (1960s). The fictional artificial intelligence, HAL 9000 (Heuristically programmed ALgorithmic computer), is a sentient programme that operates the *Discovery One* spacecraft and communicates with the crew.

*He, She and It* (1991) by Marge Piercy follows the romance between a cyborg and a woman, who it is created to protect. The story is set in post-apocalyptic America where the woman is trying to escape the corporate raiders. *I, Robot* (1950) by Isac Asimov is perhaps one of the most influential stories about human-robot interaction. It presented the robots in a different perspective and influenced human-robot literature for decades to come.



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03

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04

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05

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14, 2025

[f](#) [X](#) [in](#)

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## Essential skills for life

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar — January 24, 2022

Opinions, Columns



The pandemic affected the schedules of educational institutions across Pakistan and the world. During 2020, schools and colleges conducted online classes, which was a new experience for the students, their parents and teachers. Students—especially those belonging to the nursery and primary classes—had to adhere to the new rules of attending classes.

Their parents, too, had to learn new ways of using technology. In certain cases, senior faculty members took quick lessons to learn how to operate online video conferencing tools and to use learning management systems.

Everyone—irrespective of age or profession—was affected by the pandemic which compelled us to use innovative technologies. Some researchers opine that the pandemic is here to stay and that the ‘new normal’ will eventually become the ‘normal’ we should accept to live with.

Teenagers and university students along with adults working in various capacities will accept the new normal and adhere to the online and hybrid model of education and work. The problem will be faced by children pursuing education in nursery and primary classes.

Parents are concerned that online education will not be enough for children to learn through lectures. Furthermore, teachers do not provide ample attention to each student. The truth remains that school education was never meant to bring out the best among the students. Children indeed learn to live with discipline but the content of the syllabus was never meant to produce the next Einstein. It is designed to create workers to fulfil the capitalistic demands of the corporate sectors.

The lockdown and shutdowns, online and hybrid models of education, must be seen as opportunities by

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parents to teach their children insights useful for life. The students must be taught essential skills of life that include activities to accept the importance of life and to bring discipline. These include writing, reading, speaking, painting, sculpting, gardening, sewing, exercising, drawing, swimming, etc. They must also be well versed in communication, time management, stress management, crisis management, financial management, relationship building, etc.

These learning activities are taught in university classes but they must be inculcated in the young minds from an early age. Parents must instruct, coach, and teach their children about these essential skills of life at home through storytelling and with their experience. An inclusive learning environment must be developed at home where parents and children sit together and learn about such skills.

Parents must not worry about their children earning good grades at school. The changing times and the future will value those who know life skills instead of those who gain grades through rote learning or otherwise. The pandemic and the online learning system is an eye-opener for the parents to ensure that their children do not stay behind in learning. Indeed, the first school of a child is the lap of their mothers. The home must be the first and primary institution where children must be exposed to learning—through conversation, watching videos, or listening to their adults’ experiences. Eventually, all will fall in place if the parents and children work in unison. Textbook knowledge is important but not as indispensable as the essential skills of life that children learn first-hand from their parents and elders at home.








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- 03





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- 04

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- 05

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JUNE 14, 2025


- Running in Place

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## Enlightening the future

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar — January 04, 2022

Opinions, Columns



The pressure of acquiring grades has accentuated among the youth—especially with parents becoming vocally active and instructing their children to acquire them. Studying at school and then studying at the tuition centre is an added burden on children.

Some children vent out their frustration, others silently absorb it. Mental health issues must be discussed in classrooms and during parent-teacher meetings. Children should be motivated to acquire knowledge about the world and must not be compelled to rote learn—an action that only takes them away from their textbooks.

Indeed, educating young minds is to inform them about subjects such as physics, chemistry, mathematics, and biology. However, the times have changed and so has the system we live in. Gone are the days when the one-syllabus-fit-all technique was applied to all the students studying in educational institutions. Today, we are living in disruptive times where a notion that holds ground today may not remain relevant tomorrow.



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The idea of education is to instil knowledge among young minds so they may be able to live life with an open mind, confidence, and the ability to face challenges. Unfortunately, our education system induces the students to read and rote learn the contents

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of a textbook and reproduce them during examinations.

Does one wonder what good will children get after learning about chemical bonding or kinetic energy? What impact will the dissection of the frog have on children and how can children become successful if they knew algorithms? The information shared during primary classes is factual and correct, but its timing is not appropriate.

From classes one to ten, students should be taught about their country, society, themselves, and the world they live in. Courses such as time management, finance, computer science, designing, arts, writing, speaking, must be taught from eight to Intermediate.



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It is working with computers, speaking with people, writing to express, and communicating that will take most parts of their personal and professional lives once they graduate. For this to happen, overhauling our educational system is needed.

During primary classes, students should be taught how to speak in public, how to write well, how to make sculptures, and how to plant seeds. We have gone away from understanding ourselves and we seldom spend time with nature. Both acts have negatively impacted our lives.

This also results in children not having the acumen to share their feelings when they grow up or to comprehend others' emotional states. Students in primary classes should be taught about their society and the world—the details and particulars pertaining to specific subjects (math, chemistry, physics, biology) may be taught in classes from 9 to 12.

In fact, classes from 9 to 12 should have tracks for students to choose from depending on their interests and the profession they would like to opt for in a university. Here, courses pertaining to business management, accounting and finance, medical science, anthropology, applied science, communication, economics, media science, psychology, international relations, arts, must be taught as they are linked to the degree courses offered by business schools and universities in their undergraduate programmes.

03

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04

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05

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🔗 f X in

## Columns

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🔗 f X in

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🔗 f X in

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After completing their intermediate, students have no idea of what to pursue and end up making faulty decisions that affect their future. Revamping the primary and secondary education system will link students with these undergraduate programmes and give them a fair idea of what career they may pursue.

The writer is a Karachi-based author, columnist, and fiction writer. He tweets @omariftikhar

Students in primary classes should be taught about their society and the world.

Tags: enlightening future



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## Exit the bipolar world order

Muhammad Omar Iftikhar — October 03, 2021

Opinions, Columns



The 20th SCO Summit at Dushanbe called for the implementation of a new game as far as geopolitical engagements are concerned. Recently, the allies in Europe and Asia—also called the Eurasian alliance—have been strengthening. This is diluting the hegemony of the unipolar movement exercised by the United States.

Discussions and deliberations held at the Dushanbe Declaration signal towards a multipolar world that is slowly spreading its wings of influence. The concept of a multipolar world, therefore, is expected to be implemented where values and principles are followed, international law is revered, cultural diversity and inclusion are respected, and bilateral relations are valued. In this regard, the role of the United Nations will be of paramount significance.

When speaking of geopolitics and its impact on the region, Afghanistan has emerged as a key topic. With the US withdrawal from Afghanistan complete and the Taliban's rise at its peak, the world's regions—especially the US and Europe—will continue to monitor the situation in Kabul.



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In this regard, a meeting held on September 21 was of significance. Abdullah Abdullah met with former Afghan president Hamid Karzai along with Zamir Kabulov, Russian presidential envoy; Yue Xiaoyong, China's special envoy; and Mohammad Sadiq Khan, Pakistan's special envoy.

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This may be a sign of a possible union on various fronts between Afghanistan, Russia, China, and Pakistan. Indeed, China's role in economic and trade development in South Asia cannot be ignored. The CPEC is moving on as planned.

Pakistan, too, is eyeing economic growth because of CPEC. Russia has had smooth relations with China and Pakistan. Afghanistan, too, would want to become a part of this bloc to strengthen South Asia. Furthermore, China, Pakistan, and Russia were also seen on the same page during the SCO. They discussed the future of Afghanistan and how an inclusive government can bode well for the country and the region.



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Afghanistan will also want itself to be included in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The withdrawal of the US troops will herald the socio-economic rise of the country that will depend on how the new government implements laws and policies affecting national and international relations.

Iran is also expected to regain its political significance in South Asia. It was observed during the recent SCO Summit that Iran moved a step closer to obtaining full membership. China expressed its interest in this regard as well.

Iran's inclusion in the SCO has been garnering support from Russia and China. Moreover, Russia has been supportive of a polycentric or multipolar world order in contrast to the bipolar world order. China, on the other hand, foresees a democratic world where US dominance is non-existent.

The rise of the Eurasian alliance can be seen as the European balance of power during the 19th century maintained to avoid conflict. The European Union's foreign ministers are also planning to launch a global infrastructure project akin to China's BRI. Time will tell how these two projects will co-exist.



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## Columns

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🔗 f X in

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# **Muhammad Omar Iftikhar's Articles and Columns in Daily Times**



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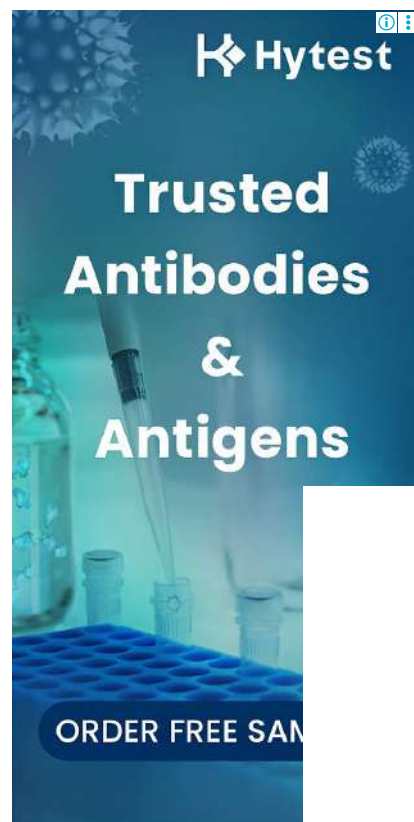
## A Spectacle beyond Words

Words cannot begin to describe the persona, aura, and charisma Zia Mohyeddin possessed and so easily disseminated whenever and wherever he went. People did not just listen to what he said, they felt it – and they lived it. As a master storyteller, Zia Mohyeddin became one with the words he spoke. His recitation of “Zindagi se darte ho,” “Mujh se pehli si mohabbat,” and “Pagalon ka doctor” among others were iconic moments indeed that still make an impact on the viewers. Zia Mohyeddin breathed his last in Karachi on February 13, 2023.

Whether it was speaking or writing, Zia Mohyeddin was a master in both. An example of Mr Zia Mohyeddin’s literary prowess can be gauged by reading a paragraph from the essay ‘Kasur’ from his collection of essays, A Carrot is a Carrot, in which he narrates the marketplace of Kasur, his native town: He writes, “There was an incredible commingling of smells in the bazaar. The acrid odour of tobacco and jaggery lying in open sacks, was soon overtaken by the aroma of freshly roasted grams. The cloth shops with their bolts of shiny silks and cottons gave off a whiff of vetiver; a few yards away was the soothing, breezy fragrance of sherbets which again dissolved into the tangy, spicy fumes of fried aubergines. The provision shops didn’t smell of turmeric and coriander, but fenugreek, which was a great Kasur specialty.” What you see in Mr Zia Mohyeddin’s writing is a keen sense of how he uses the concept of ‘show, don’t tell’ the most and adds value to the narrative. He received Hilal-i-Imtiaz Award in 2012 from the President of Pakistan while in 2003 he received the Sitara-i-Imtiaz Award from the Government of Pakistan. In November 2017, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award presented by the Pakistani community living in Dubai.

*What you see in Mr Zia Mohyeddin’s writing is a keen sense of how he uses the concept of ‘show, don’t tell’ the most and adds value to the narrative.*

Zia Mohyeddin was born on June 20, 1931, in Lyallpur, British India which is now known as Faisalabad. He was trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London from 1953 to 1956, he played key roles in stage plays including Long Day’s Journey into Night and Julius Caesar. He played a role in A Passage to India which was held at the iconic West End theatre in West End, London. Upon his return to Pakistan in the 1960s, he hosted The Zia Mohyeddin Show. He served as the Director of the PIA Arts Academy (1973-1977). In 2005, he was made President of the National Academy of Performing Arts in Karachi. In September 2021, he was honoured with the title of President Emeritus of NAPA. He appeared in several movies such as Lawrence of Arabia (As Tafas, 1962), Khartoum (As Zobeir Pasha, 1966), The Sailor from Gibraltar (As Noori, 1967), They Came from Beyond Space (As Farge, 1967), Immaculate Conception (As Shehzada, 1992). On television, he appeared in The Adventures of Sir Francis Drake (1962), Danger Man (1964-1966), The Avengers (1966), Hadleigh (1969), Gangsters (1978), The Jewel in the Crown (1984), among others.



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centre over withheld funds and project



During the 1970s he hosted The Zia Mohyeddin Show which became an instant hit primarily because of his he presented himself and conversed. He established himself as a master orator and paved way for others to follow suit. His passing away has closed the gates of an institution – the likes of which we may never experience.

The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist.



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**ORDINARY**

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- Friends hearing
- Prolonged (10+hrs)
- Social engagement
- Lack of identity
- Self critique
- Avoidance

2 CM

**GENIUS**

**FIGHT RESPONSE**

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- "The bully"
- Explosive behaviour
- Judgement
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3 CM

**RICH**

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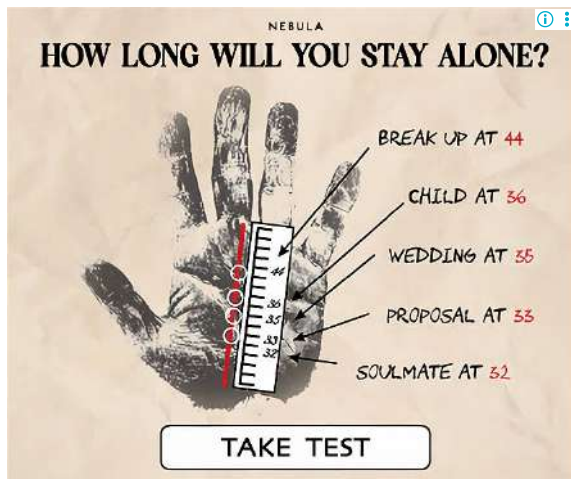
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## In-Demand Skills in 2023

American freelancing platform, Upwork Global Inc. has released a list of the most in-demand skills for independent professionals in 2023. This list comes at a time when a shortage of talent is a concern for the corporate sector that has merged with the rising economic challenges affecting developing and underdeveloped countries. The corporate and industrial sectors in Pakistan in 2023 are expected to face numerous challenges and many such issues are upon them. In such uncertain times, one needs to remain actively attuned to building their future. The future of Pakistan is in its youth. They must pursue developing skills that provide them with opportunities to earn income as freelancers.

Upwork's top 10 in-demand tech skills for 2023 include Full Stack Development, Front-End Development, Back-End Development, Mobile App Development, Web Design, E-commerce Website Development, UX/UI Design, CMS Development, Manual Testing and Scripting & Automation. Among the top 10 in-demand marketing skills are SEO, Social Media Marketing, Other Digital Marketing, Lead Generation, Sales & Business Development, Telemarketing, Search Engine Marketing, Email Marketing, Marketing Strategy and Marketing Automation.

Email, Phone & Chat Support leads the list of 10 in-demand customer service and admin support skills. The other nine skills in this list are General Virtual Assistance, Data Entry, Digital Project Management, General Research Services, Tech Support, Dropshipping & Order Processing, Community Management, Market Research and Transcription. Freelancers across Pakistan are involved in offering creativity-based services through digital platforms. The 10 in-demand design and creative skills for 2023 include Graphic Design, Video Editing, Illustration, 3D Animation, Presentation Design, Image Editing, Cartoons & Comics, Product & Industrial Design, 2D Animation and Video Production.



*Learning a skill is one aspect, how to use it to earn is a whole different strategy.*

Those who have an interest in the above-mentioned skills should learn more about them through online courses (paid and free) and by watching video tutorials available on YouTube. The youth must involve themselves in learning skills and using them to earn through freelancing. They may even collaborate with like-minded freelancers to create a start-up. They may use specific websites where buyers and sellers interact or may use their social media platforms, e-mail marketing, and WhatsApp.

To learn a skill, one needs to show interest and create a plan. This plan entails short-term and long-term objectives. In the short-term, one needs to identify how to give time to skills development when one has to complete studies or go to the office. In the long run, one must carve out a strategy for engaging their market and audience, what services to offer and what business model to pursue. Learning a skill is one aspect, how to use it to earn is a whole different strategy. Freelancers can pursue a five-point plan. First, identify your interest and specify the skills that are related to your interest. Second, conduct in-

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depth research on the various skills. Third, learn these skills and experiment with them by using relevant software to broaden your command over them. Fourth, create a business model of what skills will you offer to a specific, niche market. Fifth, to keep enhancing the skills you have acquired while learning new skills to gain a competitive advantage.

The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist.



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## The 'next-gen' leader

The world has transformed over the last century to become unbelievably different. The next generation (next-gen) is upon us and we are living in a future that was once a distant dream and perhaps an impossibility. The leaders of today, who will manage the reigns of tomorrow, will need to up their game. The 'next-gen' leaders are the start-up leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovative thought leaders who are bringing a digital revolution with their ingenuity.

The 'next-gen' leaders have several key factors that make them different. They are resourceful and utilize the available resources to achieve their goals. They do not wait for the right time to begin pursuing their goals but consider their present moment as the best time to initiate their plans.

They are also time managers. They multitask and achieve a balance between working on different projects at the same time. When talking about individuality, the 'next-gen' leaders are always brainstorming about their present and the future. They are always actively thinking about their plans and ensuring they are completed on time.

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The 'next-gen' leaders are also curious. They have an innate quality to remain on top of their research game. They read books and go through online resources to acquire information and process it into wisdom. They also learn from their experience. They combine their experience with the insights from others' experiences and develop a way to success.

The 'next-gen' leaders are also adaptable. They do not conform to a tried and tested environment. Instead, they try to blend in with their environment and change their attitude and behaviour according to the people and circumstances that they come across. When it comes to the environment, there are two main ones: physical and virtual. The physical environment is where we all have to live. We spend more time interacting with our stakeholders in the virtual environment. Communication, therefore, is the key when it comes to handling people in these environments. In the physical environment, the 'next-gen' leader has to be a public speaker, a people person, and an effective negotiator. In the virtual world, the same leader needs to exhibit immaculate skills through online communication including e-mails and preparing relevant documents.

Perhaps the most notable and effective features of 'next-gen' leaders are relevancy and consistency. They need to remain relevant to their industry and profession by accentuating their mental prowess. This is done by continuously enhancing their skills and knowledge. They also need to remain consistent. This is done through persistently following their goals and ambitions every day.

To achieve goals, one needs to be resilient. The 'next-gen' leader has to be tough during testing and challenging times. They have to show discipline when meeting deadlines and need to remain mentally and emotionally strong when facing setbacks. The 'next-gen' leader is also equipped with the acumen to know how much to work and when to relax. They lead a balanced lifestyle where they ensure giving time to themselves and their families over the weekends.

*The writer is a fiction writer and columnist. He can be reached at [omariftikhar@hotmail.com](mailto:omariftikhar@hotmail.com) and tweets at [@omariftikhar](https://twitter.com/omariftikhar)*

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## The Secret is Continuous Learning

Gone are the days when people walked miles to read books in a library. Now they don't even have to leave their desks as books and literature is available over the Internet. The youth of today has the resources to achieve success. Unlike their predecessors, who performed manual labour, the youth of today can access all forms of content through digital media. The need of the hour is to find a purpose and direction that the youth can pursue in order to achieve success. With changing times, the youth needs to become aware of their society. The example of hundreds and thousands of freelancers working across Pakistan is just one way in which they took charge and brought a change. They actively share insights and discuss opportunities on social media. This creates a congenial environment for learning.

The youth should be made aware of the learning opportunities available online. They should enhance their skills to earn while gaining experience. This experience will help them strengthen their skills, capitalize on their ability to solve problems and earn a side income. Interaction with clients and peers also creates new contacts. Discussions certainly broaden the mental horizon.

*The youth need to remain observant of their strengths and keep a close eye on the trends so they can modify their skills and adjust their perspective.*

Indeed, the world is moving towards a remote-work culture where companies will be increasing their dependencies on employees who complete tasks without showing up at the office. The corporate world was compelled to experiment with such a work routine during the lockdown in 2020. Despite people being forced to remain confined in their homes, the employees remained connected through online resources, held meetings, discussed ideas, communicated via emails, and met deadlines.

The concept of freelancing was also accentuated during this period when skilled individuals began venturing into this field by offering their products and services to their clients. Some began freelancing for the first time and became successful. Indeed, the youth of Pakistan should learn how to use their available resources to achieve maximum output. First, they need to identify their interest and develop a skill set that complements these interests. Second, they need to determine what products or services to offer based on their skill set. Third, they should understand how to use social media, which will be the window to connect with their market and clients. Fourth, they need to be relevant to the market, and fifth, they should consistently promote their offerings through social media content including visuals, photos, illustrations, videos, etc.

The key is "continuous learning." The youth need to remain observant of their strengths and keep a close eye on the trends so they can modify their skills, adjust their perspective, and in the case of freelancers, revise their business model. Learning a skill is a thing of the past. Today, learning, unlearning, and relearning are applied for effective results. Our educational system, unfortunately, does not celebrate individuality. It programs the youth to conform to the corporate psyche. The future will not favour conformity, it will favour the brave, the creative, the risk-taker, the thinker, and the goal-seeker.

The world is gearing up for the fourth industrial revolution, and much of it has already begun. This new era will require the youth to become agile to changing trends, be adaptive to the market's needs, and remain focused on bolstering their skills.

The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist

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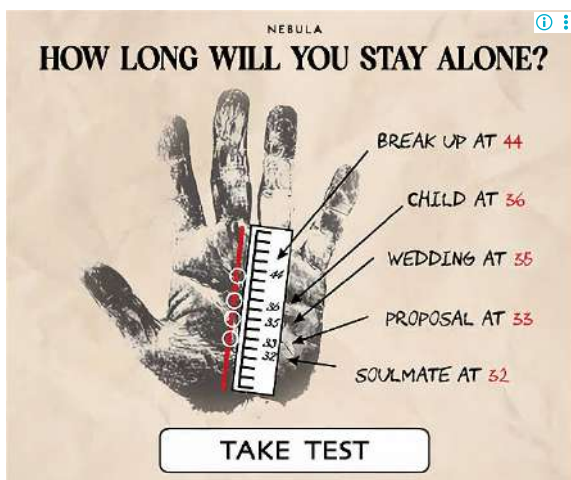
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## The Future Builders of Pakistan

The future is never away from us. It is within our reach. If we pursue our present course of action with dedication, honesty, and commitment, our future will turn out to be better than our expectations. The future of any country is its youth. Pakistan has over 65 per cent of its population that comes under the banner of the "youth." This young generation needs guidance and a little push in the right direction. It can do wonders. It can complete tasks way better than its successors because they have the power of technology within its reach.

The youth must be given guidance, in one form or the other. Proper schooling is the easiest way. Unfortunately, children from the underprivileged strata of the population cannot afford to go to school. Street schools and NGOs are fighting for the cause of spreading education. A collective effort is required to bring all children under the umbrella of education.

Children and the youth are the future builders of Pakistan. In their hands remains the keys to unlocking their potential through which they are destined to do wonders. Commitment is to be pursued with diligence, honesty must be adhered to at all costs, and loyalty to oneself and the country must be followed. The elders have to take charge of inculcating the young minds to understand the power of living a good, honest life. Gone are the days when people lived in isolation. We are aware of our surroundings more than ever. Children are observant and more vigilant than their parents and elders. They question what they do not understand, and they comment on what seems to be falling out of line.



*A collective effort is required to bring all children under the umbrella of education.*

Our education system must adapt to new trends to develop the acumen in children to think, question, and plan. They must be given more than just textbook learning. They would need to use their fine sense of judgment, wisdom, and intellect to resolve the challenges that they will face in their lives. Merely a degree that they received after studying for four years will not help them tackle the challenges ahead.

Parents and teachers need to make children aware of themselves so they can learn about life. Children need to be taught about learning from information and turning it into wisdom from an early age. The children of today must be coached on matters that are important to life but are not taught at school. How many schools teach financial management? Where can students learn about coping mechanisms for emotional distress? Who teaches students how to identify stress and depression and take countermeasures? Adults are facing such problems and more because they were not guided about them when they were children. Times are changing. The internet is sharing information regarding all subjects. Faculty members at schools and colleges should share insights about life and emotions. They should train students on how to manage finances and about time management. A well-rounded

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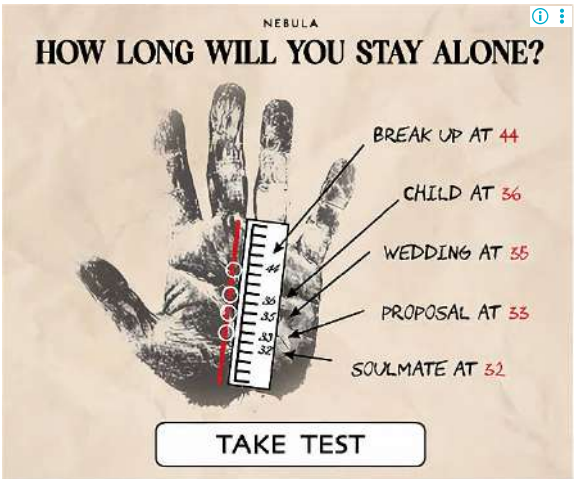
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personality is not developed by reading textbooks and earning grades. It is developed when one can think rationally, act sensibly, and plan truthfully.

The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist.





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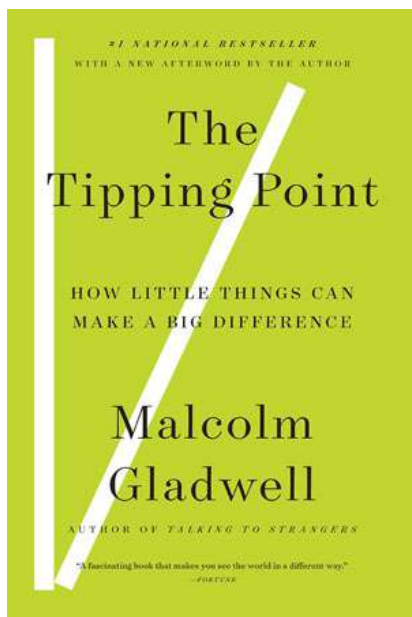
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## Find your tipping point



Malcolm Gladwell revealed to the readers how trends change opinion and reshape social consciousness regarding a person, object, or anything for that matter.

It has been 22 years since he published “The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference”, but the book’s content remains relevant today.

According to Gladwell, the Tipping Point is the moment of critical mass, the threshold and the boiling point. He wrote the book in a conversational style that was blended with his opinion and facts – both merging to create a congenial atmosphere for learning for the readers. Through the eight chapters, Gladwell takes the readers on a journey of self-exploration and enlightenment. He presents examples of how companies uplifted their brand and changed social consciousness.



When launched in 2000, The Tipping Point became a global phenomenon because of Gladwell’s insights and the rules he presented. He used the science behind epidemics to show how small actions directed at the right audience, with the correct intention, implemented at the accurate time manifest a ‘tipping point’ for products. This causes a flood of demand. He cites the example of Hush Puppies, a shoe brand, that was losing traction with consumers in the early 1990s. However, the brand once again appeared in mainstream advertising when fashion-forward youth began wearing it in their neighbourhood. To achieve a tipping point for its brand, Gladwell presented three laws: The Law of the Few, The Stickiness Factor, and The Power of Context. Gladwell mentioned about three kinds of people who share and spread ideas like a disease.

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These are Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen. Connectors are well-connected with like-minded people or those related to their industry. Mavens are actively collecting information. They acquire ample information regarding their field of interest and emerge as experts. Salesmen guide you about the ‘why’ of pursuing an idea. Simply put, Connectors know people, Mavens know information, and Salesmen work on the emotional bonding of the idea.

The second law is The Stickiness Factor. “Stickiness means that a message makes an impact. You can’t get it out of your head. It sticks in your memory,” Gladwell wrote in the book. He added, “The Stickiness Factor says that there are specific ways of making a contagious message memorable; there are relatively simple changes in the presentation and structuring of information that can make a big difference in how much of an impact it makes.” He shared the example of Sesame Street and how it made television sticky for children who were learning while having fun. “Sesame Street was built about a single, breakthrough insight: that if you can hold the attention of children, you can educate them,” Gladwell wrote.



He ends the book with a thought-provoking sentence, “In the end, Tipping Points are a reaffirmation of the potential for change and the power of intelligent action. Look at the world around you. It may seem like an immovable, implacable place. It is not. With the slightest push – in just the right place – it can be tipped.”

The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist. He can be reached at [omariftikhar@hotmail.com](mailto:omariftikhar@hotmail.com) and Tweets at [@omariftikhar](https://twitter.com/omariftikhar)



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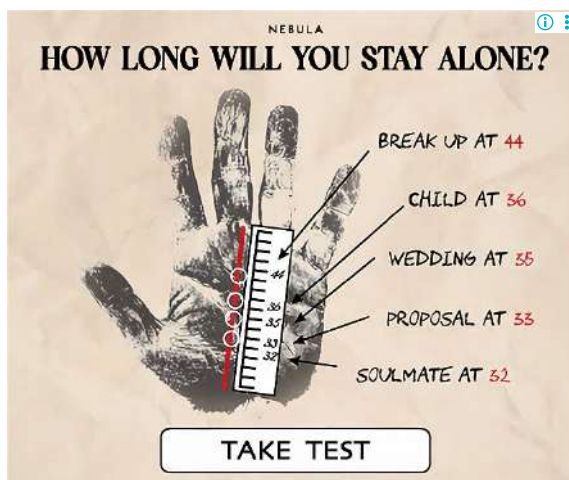
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## Restructuring our Intellect

Nations do not operate in isolation. They need to work in unison with other nations to exchange knowledge and experience. This congenial environment fosters productivity as thoughts are exchanged and effort collaborates. Every nation's population represents a mind – capable to plan, think and act accordingly. This asset must be preserved and facilitated to evolve. The professionals working in the corporate sector reach their designation after going through a rigorous effort combining trial and error. The children and the youth, however, wait for their turn and then pursue the same.

The educational system of Pakistan needs to embrace a forward-thinking approach. Students can gain direction from textbooks but their success as professionals depends on how much they are aware of their society. Students in BBA study textbooks written by Western authors whose concepts and examples do not pertain to the corporate or entrepreneurial work environment of Pakistan. Efforts must be made by educational institutions to impart locally developed case studies of brands that were conceptualized and materialized by Pakistani entrepreneurs.

Students require to learn from Western concepts and theories to broaden their mental horizons and to know the processes entailed. However, their thought process should be wired according to the concepts prevailing in Pakistan. A student who studied Kotler's book of marketing which cites the example of BMW's marketing strategy cannot apply the same to Pakistan's automobile industry. The dynamics vary and so do the consumer's buying power and lifestyle.



*The educational system of Pakistan needs to embrace a forward-thinking approach.*

There is a need to elevate the intellect of Pakistan's youth. Definitions, concepts, and theories cannot be shoved down their throat any longer. The youth needs to broaden their mental horizon. This will not happen until they are compelled to rote learn their syllabus and reproduce it in the examinations to get grades. This will change when they are encouraged to be inquisitive and are given an amiable environment to explore.

Faculty members should facilitate the learning process. Textbooks should be read, of course, but this reliance should be limited to knowing the facts alone. The learning, however, should be achieved through reading books other than textbooks. This could be supplemented through conversation and observation. Rote learning of text brings all students under the umbrella of conformity. Every student possesses a varying set of goals, ideals, interests, talents, and plans. Educational institutes must provide students with the platform to know where they want to be instead of compelling them to reach a destination that is not their mission.

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centre over withheld funds and project

Why is it that Pakistan does not produce a greater number of scientists, architects, astronauts, athletes, sculptors, and pilots? The problem lies in the direction of our social consciousness. We need to get out of the limited viewpoint with which we see our professions.

These career choices can be counted at our fingertips – engineering, medicine, and business management. Where are our data scientists? Where are our nutritionists? Where are our astronomers? Where are our authors? It is time to restructure our intellect and let the youth embrace its future. They should be encouraged to become who they want.

The writer is a Karachi-based author, columnist, and fiction writer. He tweets @omariftikhar.



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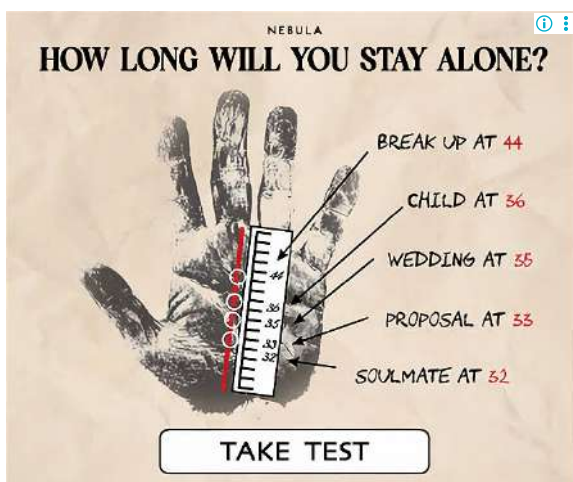


## Digital Transformation

Companies across the world are gearing up to pursue Industry 4.0 in letter and spirit. Many are adapting to the use of AI and machine learning to predict possibilities. Manufacturing companies are envisioning enhancing their manufacturing process and delivery lead time with the help of data and analytics and AI-based systems. Ewelina Gregolinska, Rehana Khanam, Frédéric Lefort, and Prashanth Parthasarathy are authors of the article, "Capturing the true value of Industry 4.0" for mckinsey.com. They argue that "The digitally enabled factory of today looks very different from the leading factory of ten years ago. Advances in data and analytics, AI, and ML-and the array of technology vendors in the market-mean manufacturers can choose from hundreds of potential solutions and tech applications to improve their ways of working." The article discusses the concepts of blockchain, cloud technology, and the Internet of Things will enhance data and computational power.

The human-machine interaction will become the new norm in the era when Industry 4.0 will be fully implemented. This interaction will run effectively because of virtual and augmented reality, robotics, and automation. Perhaps the human-machine interaction will also augment human cognitive skills for they will be exposed to new information and ideas. Big data, in this regard, will be of paramount significance when it comes to applying analytics and intelligence in Industry 4.0. Furthermore, renewable energy and additive manufacturing, such as 3d printing, will guide the domain of advanced production methods.

It is expected that the value potential will enhance the returns. The inventory holding cost will be reduced by 15 per cent to 20 per cent while labour productivity will be increased by 15 per cent to 30per cent. It is also expected that machine downtime reduction will be 30 to 50 per cent. Forecasting accuracy improvement will be 85per cent while there will be a one to 20 per cent cost-of-quality improvement.



*The human-machine interaction will become the new norm in the era when Industry 4.0 will be fully implemented.*

When discussing Industry 4.0, companies need to create a cohesive team that works with a single-minded approach to achieve organizational goals. Achieving a higher rate of human-machine interaction, robotic automation process, and utilizing big data for predictive analysis will require teams to plan, think and act with the goal in mind. However, companies will be facing challenges as they try to adapt to the concepts of Industry 4.0. Companies should not work in silos, as the article discusses. The authors write, "By pursuing digital transformations as a theoretical exercise, many companies unwittingly set up independent delivery teams that are decoupled from business leaders, site operations, manufacturing excellence, and central IT."

Adapting to failure is another reason for companies falling short to achieve their goals. A company cannot use the same formula applied for one product/service or market or another product/service or

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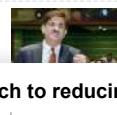
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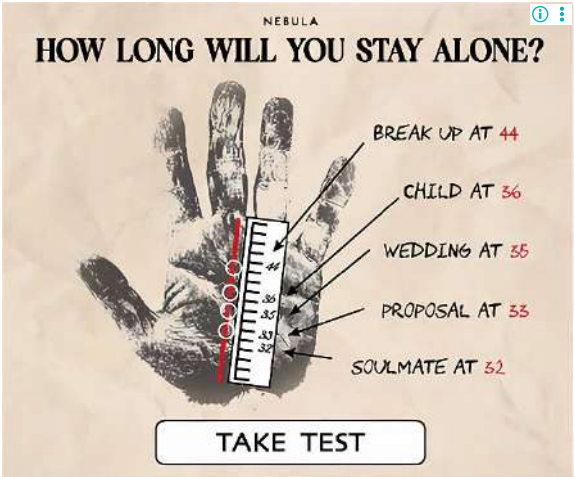
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market. A company must offer a customized product or service with a perceptive understanding of the socio-economic and cultural factors of the target market. Moreover, the company needs to analyze the current market trends and link them with historical data to predict the future. Numbers and data have become an asset for companies that allow them to extrapolate the future. It helps them to offer and market their products and services accordingly.

The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist





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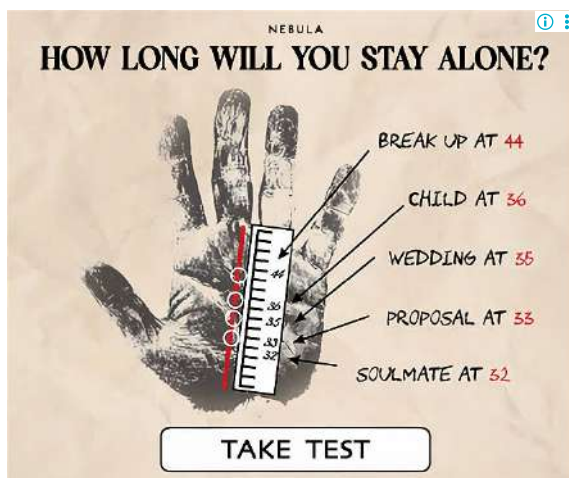
## The PRIISM technique for writing



Writers have to develop smooth sentence structures with clarity and brevity. Readers are more likely to read such content that presents information in a meaningful manner while sending them into introspection. As a writer and columnist, I have been using these rules when writing articles. To guide aspiring writers in helping them develop effective articles, essays and blogs, I coined a concept called PRIISM.

“P” is for Pertinent Facts. It refers to adding facts and details that are accurate and credible. Writers do not want to share information that is out-of-date or incorrect. Your image as a writer will enhance if you keep sharing precise information. After all, readers want to gain information through reading and you should provide it to them. Collecting facts is a tricky business as you have to continuously update yourself to share recent facts and figures.

“R” is for Reading and Researching.



Writers have to be readers and researchers. They have to absorb content to produce their own. Reading and researching are two activities of the same coin that increases the writer's ability to produce unique content. Just like athletes warm their bodies before playing, writers have to keep their minds active by reading. While reading is a habit that must be pursued by everyone, it is a prerequisite for developing effective writing skills.

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"I" is for Information. Any piece of writing that may be an article, essay, or blog comprises information. This information, either in the form of facts or your opinion, should be accurate and updated, relatable to the topic, contextually correct, and should provide depth to your opinion.

"I" is for Introspection. As a writer, you will write opinion articles with the objective of sending the readers into introspection. The readers should be compelled to think about the subject matter and question various angles of the narrative. If you write about the education system, then the readers should think about the impact good education has on society and how the current system can be made better. You can send the readers into introspection in the following ways: by writing interrogative questions, sharing an opinion, providing suggestions, etc.

"S" is for Simplicity. Your article should be written with a simple vocabulary.

The sentences should be linked with each other that should provide information in some order – either by importance or in a chronological hierarchy (if there is a need). You will write according to the audience of the print or digital publication and add simplicity to the language accordingly. You will write with simplicity if you write short sentences, add synonyms, edit with clarity and explain one message at a time.

"M" is for Methodical. As a writer, you need to follow a plan to share information in the article, essay, or blog. You should write one sentence at a time to complete a paragraph. Each paragraph should discuss one point. This will retain the interest of the readers and also help you keep a track of the points you have written.

The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist. He can be reached at [omariftikhar@hotmail.com](mailto:omariftikhar@hotmail.com) and Tweets at [@omariftikhar](https://twitter.com/omariftikhar)



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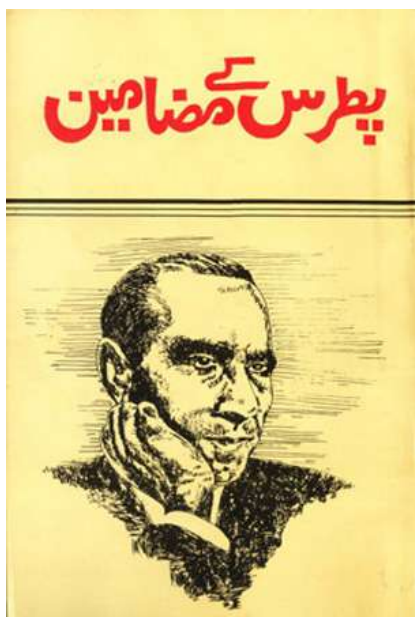
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## Tracing the origins of Urdu literature



Urdu literature emanating from Pakistan has been mesmerising readers for ages. Bano Qudsia's insightful stories about normal humans pursuing their lives, Saadat Hasan Manto's stories that defied the system and Ashfaq Ahmed's narratives about people, emotions and life have added life to our consciousness.

Urdu literature in Pakistan did not begin in 1947. The Urdu language traces its origins in the 14th century during the Delhi Sultanate. Early proponents of literature, such as Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, a royal poet, and writer in the Persian language, contributed his thoughts to literature. Over the years, the Persian language has slowly embedded in Urdu which is why we still find traces of it in Urdu literature. Urdu travelled across the various parts of the subcontinent to create ghazal, qaseeda and masnawi from the 1720s to the mid-1840s. Urdu poetry saw its re-emergence in the 19th century during the reign of Bahadur Shah Zafar. However, after the Rebellion of 1857, a new thought emerged in literature with Altaf Hussain Hali and Muhammad Husain Azad hoisting their pens to lead this revolution. What began as a mere thought to lay the foundations of the Urdu language finally bore fruit in 1869 when Nazir Ahmad Dehlvi published Mirat-ul-Uroos. It is considered to be the first Urdu novel. It educated the readers about marriage. Mirza Hadi Ruswa's Umrao Jaan Ada is also one of the earliest Urdu novels.

The trend of writing historical novels was introduced by Muhammad Husain Azad. He was born to a Persian immigrant family in Delhi. His works including Qisas ul-Hind, Darbar-e-Akbari, Sukhandan-e-Fars and Aab-e-Hayat hold a special place in Urdu literature. As an academician, he played an instrumental part in preparing the syllabi of Urdu books including Urdu ki Pehli Kitab, Urdu ki Doosri Kitab and Urdu ki Teesri Kitab. His work, Aab-e-Hayat, is considered the first book to explore the history of Urdu poetry in chronological order.

The Urdu language is a beautiful combination of poetry and prose. In the genre of prose, drama holds a special place. Agha Hasan Amanat, an Urdu poet and playwright from Lucknow, wrote the first Urdu stage play, Inder Sabha. It is believed that this publicized drama in the Urdu language.

Among the creators of social fiction in Urdu is Dhanpat Rai Srivastava, commonly known as Premchand. Saadat Hasan Manto earned his name in the subcontinent by touching upon social issues that were indeed taboo to discuss. He wrote about the human psyche, the social norms, and questioned hard social facts that placed him under the radar of those who were against free speech. Urdu literature also featured biographies such as the classic, Shahab Nama, by Qudratullah Shahab. It looks at the events of his life that sends readers into self-analysis. Humour has also remained a part of Urdu

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literature with Patras Bokhari and Ibn-e-Insha leading the genre with their witty, humorous, satirical styles of writing. Patras Bokhari's works including Hostel Mein Parhna, Kutte, Marhoom Ki Yaad Main, and Ibn-e-Insha's Awarah Gard ki Diary, Urdu Ki Akhri Kitab must be read.

The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist. He can be reached at [omariftikhar@hotmail.com](mailto:omariftikhar@hotmail.com) and Tweets at [@omariftikhar](https://twitter.com/omariftikhar)



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## Space travel in science fiction



The concept of space travel has been fantasised by writers for eons. They have been speculating on a theory that allows humans to cover large distances in space. The idea is to explore new worlds and strange people that may live in undiscovered areas. The first such account of space travel in literature dates back to the second century. The Greek author, Lucian of Samosata, wrote *A True Story* which is a satire of outlandish tales. The journey of Lucian and his fellow travelers is put off course by a storm. They reach a land where rivers are made of wine. They are again caught in a strong wind that takes them to the Moon. Lucian provides differentiating features between life on Earth and the Moon. Similarly, *The Man in the Moone* by Francis Godwin describes the tale of Gonsales from Spain who somehow reaches the moon after traveling on a giant swan. The tales by Lucian and Godwin are based on fantasy as science was barely a part of their stories.

The earliest published work of science fiction with space travel was *The Other World: Comical History of the States and Empires of the Moon* by French novelist Cyrano de Bergerac. He explains the story written in a first-person narrative.

He attempts to travel to the moon to find evidence of life after launching himself in a flying machine with rockets attached to it. He finds that Mars is inhabited by four-legged strange beings that use fantastical weapons. Off on a Comet by Jules Verne is a space travel novel but includes more fantasy than science. The extraordinary tale is about a comet that hits Earth and takes a piece of land with it. The area that the comet takes away with itself is inhabited by 36 people. They include French, English, Spanish and Russian nationalities. They are unaware that they are on a comet until their experience weightlessness.

John Jacob Astor IV, an American writer, published *A Journey in Other Worlds: A Romance of the Future* in 1894. The story is set in 2000. He speculates about technological invention, solar power, and air travel. He suggests that the US has become a multi-continental superpower while the socialist governments govern over Europe. Jacob writes about how the world in 2000 is a business-led technocracy and human life is being improved by advancements in technology.

Jules Verne's 1865 novel, *From the Earth to the Moon*, is a classic tale set in the post-American Civil War. He uses a space gun to launch three men to the moon. HG Wells' *The First Men in the Moon* tells the story of Mr. Bedford, a businessman and Cavor, a scientist. The two men discover that sophisticated, insect-like beings, called the Selenites, are living on the Moon. The men build a ship made of a material, cavorite, that negates gravity.

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It is said that Verne's novel inspired Wells to write his story.

Over the year's authors have explored the vastness of space and new life on Mars, the Moon, and other planets. Robert A. Heinlein (Space Cadet, 1948), The Voyage of the Space Beagle (A.E. van Vogt, 1950), Marooned on Mars (Lester del Rey, 1952), Missing Men of Saturn (Robert S. Richardson, 1953), Starman's Quest (Robert Silverberg, 1958), Ice (Lora Johnson, 2002), The Martian among others are prominent literary works in this genre.

The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist. He can be reached at [omariftikhar@hotmail.com](mailto:omariftikhar@hotmail.com) and Tweets at [@omariftikhar](https://twitter.com/omariftikhar)



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## National Education Agenda

Pakistan will turn 75 this August. During these seven-and-a-half decades of its existence, Pakistan has witnessed oppression from external factors, internal instability, democratic chaos, and financial ruckus, and became a part of various conflicts and wars. Truth be told, the country never got a chance to relinquish its past and look ahead into the future. Whether it was a lack of good governance or the need of the hour, Pakistan experienced headaches and hardships. The external factors and geopolitics cannot be in our control. But, internal factors can. It is high time the government and the concerned authorities focus on the tasks at hand and pursue a national agenda. Restructuring the education system should be the priority in this regard.

Pakistan has remained divided between two educational systems. One follows the various educational boards in Pakistan including the Federal Board, Sindh Board, etc. The second comes under the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). The students who complete their Intermediate in pre-engineering and pre-medical tracks face difficulty when they opt to study BBA or BS at business schools or universities. The students who come from the Intermediate Commerce track have a fair understanding of accounting and business management. This differentiation must be eliminated at the earliest.

The Intermediate pre-engineering and pre-medical tracks should include courses related to accounting, finance, economics, and business management. These courses should provide a surface-level understanding of the concepts to the students so they may easily adjust when they begin their studies as BBA/BS students. With changing trends, a majority of students after completing their Intermediate wish to get admitted to a business school. The four courses mentioned above can be optional courses along with four other courses: chemistry, physics, mathematics, and biology. Students can select a mix of any four courses to complete their Intermediate. Unfortunately, the existing education system does not allow students pursuing Intermediate education to plan their academic future. They formulate a strategy once they complete their Intermediate. Such a change will bring the Intermediate (pre-engineering and pre-medical) students on a level playing field with the students who have completed their A-levels. A nation grows when its people are given the same opportunities to grow.

*A nation grows when its people are given the same opportunities to grow.*

”

Furthermore, the colleges offering Intermediate education across Pakistan should also include experiential learning initiatives in their academic plans. One step in this regard pertains to inviting industry experts, professionals, and entrepreneurs to talk to the students. The learning acquired by interacting with professionals will be more profound and long-lasting than the one that textbook reading and classroom lectures provide. Students will broaden their mental horizons and fortify their textbook learning when they discuss real-life concepts and theories with professionals.

Imagine a group of students who are compelled to rote learn concepts mentioned in their physics textbook. Now imagine the same group of students meeting with a physicist who, casually and with ease, makes the students learn the same concepts. It is through this connection that the students will clarify the doubts they have after attending a classroom lecture. Indeed, teachers are doing a commendable job. However, academia-industry linkages are imperative for the growth and development of both the students and teachers. The concerned authorities and the education system at large in Pakistan must vow to bring a change in the education system in Pakistan to build a brighter future for its students.

*The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist.*

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## Chomsky's thoughts about the future



Noam Chomsky has been writing, discussing, and deliberating about the political and economic issues and challenges our world is facing. His book, 'Making the Future: Occupations, Interventions, Empire and Resistance', is a collection of his essays that delve into the global geopolitical and social fabric. He does so with his fine attention to detail backed with facts. He shares his opinion regarding various issues and presents insights for the world to ponder upon. John Stickney, senior editor at The New York Times Syndicate, in the foreword of the book writes, "How Chomsky thinks, and what he covers in this collection, engage readers not to leave to anybody but themselves the task of making the future."

The essays included in this book pertain to the geopolitics related to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan; US Middle East Policy, the financial crisis, the Afghanistan war, US elections, and Barack Obama's political stature, among others. Chomsky discussed much of Obama's status as the book was published in 2012, the same year when Obama was running for president. As Stickney mentioned in the book's foreword, "the columns in this edition present a narrative of the events that have made the future since 2007."

The topics Chomsky chose to write about in this book pertain to 2012. They were either happening this year, or the events were unfolding as a result of the decisions taken in the recent past. Even after a decade of the book's publishing, his words and opinion hold meaning. Chomsky's viewpoints and his hard-hitting narrative will certainly benefit the students and faculty members from the fields of international relations and political science. They will better comprehend what shaped today's world politics and geopolitical affairs. In a March 2010 essay titled, The Unelected Architects of Policy, Chomsky writes about China's prospects to surpass the US as a global player. He discussed US's growing trade deficit with China and how China is becoming the world's export platform.

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Thoughtful, meticulous, clear, and detailed can be the words that describe Chomsky’s writing style and how he shares his analysis. His sentences are not just a collection of words, they are statements leading to another bold proclamation that combines to form the essence and the message of his articles and essays.

For instance, in the essay, ‘We Own the World’ (June 06, 2007), he writes, “In societies where the state has lost the capacity to control by force, the Party Line is not proclaimed. Rather, it is presupposed, and then the vigorous debate is encouraged within the limits imposed by unstated doctrinal orthodoxy” In another instant, he opens his essay ‘Delaying Doomsday: This Century’s Challenges’ (April 24, 2008) with an introspective sentence, “The primary challenge facing the people of the world is, literally, survival.”

The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist. He can be reached at [omariftikhar@hotmail.com](mailto:omariftikhar@hotmail.com) and Tweets at [@omariftikhar](https://twitter.com/omariftikhar)



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## The Power of Reading

The time to read is now! There is no better time to establish the habit of reading than to do it in the present. There is indeed a difference between a person who cannot read and one who does not want to read.

The people in the latter category are bringing themselves to a point of oblivion where they choose to remain ignorant despite having the opportunity to read. Reading is not a pastime anymore. With information now available at our fingertips, we need to stay updated with news, information, and insights. Reading was a leisure activity during the era when the Internet was a distant dream. The trends have changed ever since our thumbs began sliding and swiping on the screens of our smartphones as we continuously search for interesting content.

Reading has become a necessity in the twenty-first century. It is no longer a fashion but an essential requirement and a skill that one should pursue. Unfortunately, the youth considers reading to be a compulsion. They feel it to be an activity that bodes no results. This perception should be changed. The source of this misconception arises from the point when students at schools are compelled to read textbooks that they find to be boring. They are compelled to memorize and rote learn the definitions and content from their textbooks. The students, therefore, distance themselves from any book they find in front of them.



*Reading is no longer a fashion pursuit but an essential requirement and a much-needed skill.* ”

Furthermore, reading is not just an activity that stimulates the mind and makes one curious. It expands your vocabulary and exposes you to new information. There is no specific rule to begin reading. You can read opinion articles and editorials published in print and digital media publications. You can read fiction and non-fiction books. Reading a dictionary and especially a thesaurus is also a healthy habit that introduces you to new words. Reading is an activity that helps you write better. People think that they will learn to write effectively if they write more. It is the act of reading that stimulates your mind as you extract words and phrases from your subconscious that it absorbed during reading.

Reading also develops one's personality as it is the cognizance of your society that makes you aware of yourself. You may have seen people actively taking part in discussions. They use the information they grasp when reading and share it with the audience. We all must develop a habit of reading from today. One must create a reading plan and a place at home and dedicate a few minutes to reading daily.

Similarly, schools and colleges across Pakistan should dedicate forty-five minutes to an hour of reading time for students. They should be encouraged to visit the library during this time and read whatever book they want.

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There can be group reading sessions where a student reads a passage and then they discuss it with each other. Students can share book reports and present a summary in a congenial environment that focuses on reading and exploring.

This should be done in a setting where the students are not graded or judged. However, their performance as a speaker and their skills to effectively use PowerPoint may be evaluated. The teacher can give feedback on the same. This will develop the students' personalities that will facilitate them in their life and career.

*The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist. He can be reached at [omariftikhar@hotmail.com](mailto:omariftikhar@hotmail.com) and Tweets at [@omariftikhar](https://twitter.com/omariftikhar)*



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## Global Skills Development

Coursera's latest Global Skills Report (GSR) 2022 reveals insights that will help Pakistan focus on skills development. The Report is divided into three categories: Business, Data Science, and Technology. The skill sets of countries in these three categories are highlighted in four sections: Cutting Edge, Competitive, Emerging and Lagging. In the Business category, UAE leads the Cutting Edge category followed by Switzerland, Belgium, Austria, USA, Qatar, Denmark, Cameroon, Germany, and Saudi Arabia. Republic of Korea, Mauritius, Serbia, China, and Cyprus are the top five countries in the Competitive class. Pakistan leads the Emerging section in the Business category. It is followed by Thailand, Kenya, Jordan, and Romania. However, Estonia leads the Lagging section in the Business category followed by Peru, Bolivia, Somalia, and Ukraine. Brazil is in tenth place.

Interesting stats are observed in the Data Science category. In the Cutting Edge section, Indonesia leads the list followed by Denmark, Finland, Switzerland, and Belarus. Japan is in tenth place. In the Competitive class, the Republic of Korea is in the first place followed by Mauritius, Serbia, China, and Cyprus. France, Japan, and Ghana are in the eighth, ninth, and tenth spots respectively. The Emerging section in the Data Science category is led by Columbia followed by Georgia, Costa Rica, Turkey, and Romania. Mexico is in tenth place. Azerbaijan, however, leads the Lagging section followed by South Africa, Pakistan, Honduras, and The Philippines. Lebanon and Qatar take the ninth and the tenth spot.

*High-performing organisations have been reported to focus on employee training and development, profitability, business franchise expansion, adaptation and organizational agility and regulatory/environmental compliance.*

Lastly, in the Technology category, Indonesia is leading the Cutting Edge section followed by Belarus, Japan, Denmark, and Kazakhstan. Ukraine, Poland, and Finland take the last three spots in the list of ten. In the Competitive section, Israel holds the top spot followed by Austria, Brazil, Hungary, and Uruguay. Cyprus and Latvia are the last two. Columbia is the leader in the Emerging section with Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan, and India following behind. In the Lagging section of Technology, Egypt holds the first place followed by Bolivia, Myanmar, Uganda, Trinidad and Tobago.

When comparing the 2020 Report with that of 2022, it is revealed that employees are less confident that their organizations will facilitate them in skills development. The Report suggests the term "new skilling," which refers to continuous learning to develop high-demand skills. This focuses on the individual to upskill current capabilities or pursue reskilling to build new capabilities. The Report also revealed high-performing organizations focused on employee training and development, profitability, business franchise expansion, adaptation and organizational agility, and regulatory/environmental compliance. An interesting trend was also observed by the 2020 Report when the employers were asked about their most urgent concerns in the next three years (2023). 48 per cent thought there will be a skill and talent shortage, 44 per cent believed they would need to catch up to the speed of digital transformation while 44 per cent were concerned about data privacy and security. Only 16 per cent were concerned about geographical tensions impacting their business while 35 per cent were anxious about diversity and inclusion. 24 per cent were worried about a lack of insight into people's data. Moreover, when asked about the time frame when employers will invest in skill development, 32 per cent were certain to invest in the next three years while 30 per cent wanted to do it the next year.

The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist. He can be reached at [omariftikhar@hotmail.com](mailto:omariftikhar@hotmail.com) and tweets @omariftikhar

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## To Become a Knowledge-Economy

The advent of the industrial revolution – in particular to advancement in mechanical production replacing manual labour from 1760 to 1840 – gave birth to a new form of economy. It brought to the fore faster methods of production – mainly because the labour worked with machines. The invention of the steam engine geared the first industrial revolution. The concept of mass production and an assembly line propelled the second industrial revolution (the 1900s). The third revolution (1970) surfaced when computers and automation were widely used while cyber-physical systems resulted in the fourth revolution (2000). We are now entering or have partially entered the fifth revolution with mass customization and cyber-physical cognitive systems. The fifth phase began spreading its influence in 2020.

The school system during the 1700s aimed at producing disciplined students who knew just enough information to survive the cutthroat competition. They worked in factories completing the repetitive tasks every day while the industrialists went home with most of the profit. Our educational system – even today – facilitates the industrial revolution. The students who graduate from universities do not stand in assembly lines but work for national and international corporations. It is indeed time for Pakistan to move toward a knowledge economy. A knowledge economy refers to an economic system where knowledge-intensive activities produce goods and services. Such activities that are based on knowledge promote innovation in the scientific and technical domains.

*We are now entering or have partially entered the fifth revolution with mass customization and cyber-physical cognitive systems.*

”

Companies such as Apple, Google, Sony, Samsung, and Amazon to name a few use knowledge to strategize their product or service offerings. They use insights gathered through detailed market research, observe and record consumer behaviour, learn from their mistakes and study the competitors' analysis to ascertain the market needs they should focus on fulfilling. Organizations must utilize the knowledge of their employees to add value to their business development process. In a knowledge economy, there is a greater dependence on an intellectual matter that is gathered and shared when plans, strategies, and processes are exchanged and discussed. Such ideas are translated into actionable plans with a timeline.

While such a model can be pursued by the organizations in Pakistan, we must reflect upon the dynamics of our society. We are not a tech-driven society. We use technology to communicate. It is indeed admirable to see the freelance sector of Pakistan use digital media to offer services to national and international clients. The common man is using smartphones for communication and entertainment. The development of skills is another facet of a knowledge economy. In such a setup, the educational institutions offer education that enhances skills here the industries create jobs to utilize them. Pakistan also lags in this aspect. Our educational institutions are not producing skilled graduates. It is imposing upon the student's information that they are forced to rote learn. Universities must shun the idea of uniform learning. Education must be customized according to the interest and inclinations of the student. A student may be good in biology but may not be interested to study chemistry. Moreover, the outdated syllabus taught in primary and secondary classes should be changed. Why are the students not being taught about crisis management, effective communication, finances and budgeting, interpersonal communication, etc.? Schools should help develop the students' cognitive and creative skills, adaptability, flexibility and the ability to work in multiple disciplines. Why don't schools and colleges offer courses that uplift the students' thought process, and inspires them to think and enhance their skills? A knowledge economy is based on the accessibility of information, its quality and how it facilitates the means of production. This kind of change in the thought process can only manifest if those in power – of the country and the organizations – are themselves well-educated, skilful and experienced.

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## Empowering young writers



The youth should be inculcated with the seeds to read and write so they may become well aware of themselves and their surroundings. Children have stories to tell and they should be given the opportunities to do so. They absorb the events that unfold around them and narrate in their words by using human, animals and fictional characters. They want to express what they feel and they should – through verbal and written communication. To provide children with an avenue to read and write, Seed Ventures took the initiative of launching Aao Likhein Kahani in partnership with FK Squared. Shield Corporation joined the cause to bring out creative storytellers from children.

The programme invited children from the age groups of 10-12 from across Pakistan to share their stories in English and Urdu. They were asked to choose one topic from a list that included: determination, empathy, humanity, bravery, and selflessness. As many as 1,200 stories were received. It was an amazing array of creative thoughts, humble opinions, insightful views, and innovative imaginations that the children shared with the written word. However, the top 30 stories were selected and the writers were invited for a five-day online boot camp. They received training from Neelum Hasan, Rubab Qizilbash, Akber Ali Punjwani, Hina Aftab, and Faisal Aftab. The speakers for the online curriculum who guided the participants on specific topics were Aameena Saiyid, Amra Alam, Jacqueline Mirza, Iram Nasir, Imran Azhar, Omar Iftikhar, Fiza Asar, Lailamah Khan, Rumana Husain, and Moiz Shaukat. The top fifteen participants were invited to the closing ceremony held in Karachi on Saturday, March 19, 2022.

During his speech, Farhad Karamally, Partner at FK Squared said that we talk about leadership and that a leader needs to be a visionary. He shared a pertinent question of “how do we inculcate a vision?” He elucidated upon the fact that reading and writing compels one to think, imagine and ponder over the reality that enables them to reflect upon their life and surroundings. Farhad asked children to turn their hobbies into careers and writing can be one pastime that can become their profession. Shaista Ayesha, CEO, Seed Ventures said that Aao Likhein Kahani empowers young writers. She reminisced the first workshop they had with ten children and how the project evolved to a national level where 1,200 entries were received.

Senior Pakistani actress, Sania Saeed was invited as the Chief Guest. While speaking on the occasion she said that there is indeed a dearth of events that are organized for children. She shared that it is unfortunate that the adults in our society pay little focus on the child’s intellectual development other than their studies. Sania added that the children who are writing today are creating a history that our next generation will read, and it will reveal to them about our era and how we lived. Sania Saeed asked parents to let their children write with their hearts so they may explore their minds. “Who knows if a child

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writer becomes the next Ghulam Abbas, Intizar Hussain, Ismat Chughtai, or Qurratulain Hyder" she said.

The top five participants of Aao Likhein Kahani were Ghulam Fatima (Khairpur), Sara Tahir (Karachi), Meerub Sohail (Islamabad), Nabiha Jamal and Momina Tariq (Gujrat).

The ten runner-ups were: Anaya Khan (Lahore), Aliza Kabir (Lahore), Fatima Umar (Rawalpindi), Hamzah Farukh (Islamabad), Balaj Ali (Hunza), Asiyah Hamid (Karachi), Talia Siddique (Islamabad), Ayman Umar (Rawalpindi), Umama Sajid (Abbottabad), Hafiz Muhammad Yahya (Sialkot).

The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist. He can be reached at [omariftikhar@hotmail.com](mailto:omariftikhar@hotmail.com) and Tweets at [@omariftikhar](https://twitter.com/omariftikhar)



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## Karachi Literature Festival 2022 — the majestic event returns



"Any creative work of the past, be it sculpture, painting, music, drama, poetry, or architecture, which stimulates the depth of our imagination is classic. And so, I find the Pantheon and the Stupa at Sanchi and Milton's Paradise Lost and the poetry of Ghalib and many other words of prose and poetry to be classic," were the thoughts of Zia Mohyeddin that he shared during his keynote speech during the inaugural session of the 13th Karachi Literature Festival (KLF) 2022.

He explored how a nation's vitality is gauged only when its cultural activities come to the fore.

A galaxy of literary icons from Pakistan and abroad added charm to the inaugural session of KLF 2022. Last year, the event was held online because of the pandemic. This year, however, the event returns with its traditional hustle and mighty bustle that it is known for. With beaming faces of readers, pleasing smiles of panellists, and excitement glowing over the organizers' faces, KLF 2022 was officially launched with this year's theme titled "Separation, Belonging and Beyond: 75 years of Pakistan."

While presenting an introduction to the festival, Arshad Saeed Husain, Managing Director, Oxford University Press (OUP), Pakistan said that "This annual event brings together intellectuals from across the world and emerging writers from a variety of fields. It is a rare opportunity for literary enthusiasts to meet their favourite writers." He added that this event bridge distances between cultures and languages.

The three-day KLF-2022 will be an emotional ride as it will explore Pakistan's journey during its 75-years through various panel discussions and book launches. Over 60 sessions including twenty book launches are scheduled. Speakers from Pakistan, the UK, US, New Zealand, and France will be sharing their insights along with feature film screening, English poetry readings and qawwali.

Moreover, during the first day, Dramatic Readings of Mushtaq Ahmad Yusufi's Haweli was held where the prose was recited by Fawad Khan, Meesam Naqvi and Nazrul Hasan. The Dastangoi fashion was revived in this session that amused the audiences.

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A session celebrating 75 years of Urdu poetry was also held. Iftikhar Arif, Zehra Nigah, Kishwar Naheed, Nasir Abbas Nayyar shared their views in a session moderated by Najeeba Arif. The distinguished panellists discussed the developments in Urdu in Pakistan during the last seventy-five years. It explored various facets of Urdu and how it connects at different levels with our culture and society.

An interesting session titled “Fulfilling Jinnah’s vision” was held that discussed Pakistan’s history, present, and future. Javed Jabbar, Ian Talbot, Nasira Iqbal, and Arfa Sayeda Zehra were the panelists while Syed Jaffar Ahmed served as the moderator. This session explored the vision that Quaid-e-Azam had for Pakistan and how it was pursued after his passing away. The first day ended with the traditional session of English poetry where poets including Alyana Khan, Fatima Ijaz, Harris Khalique, Jeeva Haroun, Minaa Shahzad, Moeen Faruqi, Peerzada Salman, Salena Godden, Sateah Afreedi, Shireen Haroun, and Zarmina Raza shared their pieces. The moderator was Salman Tarik Kureshi.

Awards and accolades are a part of the KLF 2022 tradition. The 2022 KLF – Getz Pharma award recipients were Little America by Zain Saeed, Asim Bakhshi, Saleem Kausar.

*The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist. He can be reached at [omariftikhar@hotmail.com](mailto:omariftikhar@hotmail.com) and Tweets at [@omariftikhar](https://twitter.com/omariftikhar)*



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## Of Digital World and Space Exploration

The corporate sector, during 2022, is expected to truly embrace the hybrid working model and pursue the remote-working dynamics. This system was implemented in 2020 during the wake of the lockdown and was followed in 2021. In 2022, however, returning to normal will be akin to accepting this new mode of working from home – and occasionally from the office – as and when needed. The dynamics and perceptions, indeed, have changed to how work was delegated, completed, and reported.

Online communication tools, including video calls, business communication platforms, teleconferencing software, along with web and mobile applications, designed to help teams organise, track, and manage their work were openly adopted during 2020 and 2021. The world is returning to normalcy, however, the fear of Omicron spreading and the news of another lockdown to be implemented is still in the offing. In 2022, however, people are ready to return to the work-from-home scenario if that may be the case.

The digital world also went through a major change in 2020 with the launch of the Metaverse. This virtual world – when accessible by all – will become the new hangout venue to complete tasks of personal and professional nature. It will be a radical shift indeed, however, it will be a major step forward in making humans a part of this digital world.

The term “metaverse” was first used in the novel Snow Crash (1992) written by Neal Stephenson. The story was about how humans interacted with others through avatars.

*The world is returning to normalcy, however, the fear of Omicron spreading and the news of another lockdown to be implemented is still in the offing.*

”

Immersive gaming through PC, gaming consoles, and using virtual headsets were proponents of the metaverse concept. In October 2021, this idea was globally accepted when Mark Zuckerberg officially changed his company’s name to Metaverse.

The company seeks to expand social interaction to be experienced in the virtual world. It is expected that humans will use innovative digital applications to communicate and for purposes of entertainment.

It will also provide opportunities for digital marketers to connect to a new target audience. As for the cons, people would be compelled to buy new gadgets with the world shifting to 5G or higher bandwidth of internet speeds. Furthermore, people would prefer living in the metaverse, thereby ignoring reality.

Former Google chief executive Eric Schmidt said, that the [metaverse] is “not necessarily the best thing for human society.” He further added that “all of the people who talk about metaverses are talking about worlds that are more satisfying than the current world.”

The world in 2022 will also experience a greater magnitude of space exploration conducted by the US, China, and Russia. The James Webb Space Telescope, developed by NASA with contributions from the European Space Agency, and the Canadian Space Agency, was launched on December 25, 2021. The Telescope will gather hidden mysteries of the universe and the cosmos, providing a way forward for space exploration. Space exploration and colonizing space is another topic that will generate debate in 2022. Elon Musk has been pretty vocal with his ambitions to colonize Mars. He is confident that SpaceX will land humans on the red planet by 2026. This will perhaps remain a hobby for the rich and famous while. The common man will continue the struggle to survive in an era of inflation and stagflation that will rise in 2022.

*The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist. He can be reached at amariftikhar@hotmail.com and Tweets at @amariftikhar*

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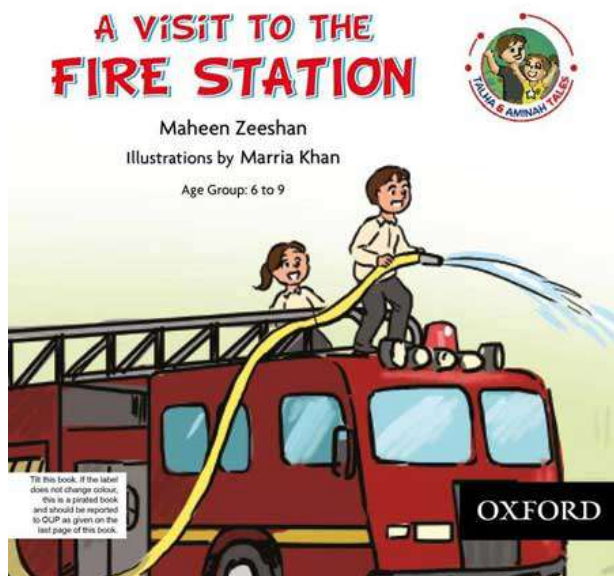


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## Simple stories with a message



Simple, honest and realistic are the words that define Maheen Zeeshan's books comprising short stories.

Her books present a moral story aimed to develop the social and emotional mettle. She shares such stories that are interesting for the young readers and motivate them to do good – a quality that must be instilled among children today. Drawing inspiration of stories from her children, Maheen writes these stories with two kids as the protagonists – Talha and Aminah. She calls the book series Talha and Aminah Tales. The storybooks under this banner include A Visit to the Doctor, A Visit to the Supermarket, A Visit to the Fire Station, A Visit to the Dentist, and The Muddy Puddle. Maheen shares the stories from the point of view of these characters. For instance, in the story A Visit to the Dentist, she shares the importance of brushing teeth and to maintain oral hygiene. In the story A Visit to the Supermarket, Maheen explains the basic details of how a supermarket works. She encourages readers to use paper bags to keep the environment clean. Talha and Aminah's parents have a list of items to buy – which instills the importance of planning. They chose the right product among the several ones displayed on the isles and then pay for them before leaving the supermarket.

In another storybook, A Visit to the Doctor, Maheen discusses the fear of doctors that children have in their hearts. When Aminah is feeling feverish her mother decides to take her to the doctor. Aminah is petrified to go as she thinks a doctor is an evil being. However, once meeting the lady doctor, Aminah's doubts are gone. She happily listens to the doctor's advice and takes her medicine. Such insights and information create awareness and Maheen's efforts must be commended.

In another interesting book, A Visit to the Fire Station, Talha and Aminah's teacher takes the class on a field trip to the fire station. Unfortunately, fire stations are not in abundance across Karachi, the story provides insights into the working of such stations. Talha and Aminah meet firemen who talk about fire engines, fire extinguishers, and other gears and tools used by firemen.

The Muddy Puddle is another interesting story where Talha and Aminah learn how the weatherman predicts the weather. When it rains, Talha and Aminah ask their mother if they can go out to play. Her mother advises them to wear big boots and to stay away from electricity poles. They later enjoy the freshly cooked pakoras at home. Another story, Rani, The Beautiful Swan, is about a swan who lives in a pond in a park. Rani is pleased to see visitors, especially children. She gets sad when people litter the pond and the park. Maheen accentuates the importance of cleanliness. The books are illustrated by Marria Khan. Rani, The Beautiful Swan is illustrated by Shahnawaz Memon. Through simple words and honest, realistic stories, Maheen's stories will create an impact on young minds.

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