For well over a century, the aura of the alluring acronym ‘GC’ has been fostered by the magnetic charm of the divine clock tower. This 176 ft beacon has entranced hordes from urban isles to remote margins of the land into espousing the epithet Ravian. The ‘magic’ of ‘Government College’, though it’s officially GC University now, has always been its polyglot aroma filled with fragrances from Khyber to Mehran. In a land bitterly fissured by parochial and sectarian segregation, the tranquil acculturation at GCU is surprising but it is a gift that comes with great responsibility.

This year’s Ravi hits the deck with the country under ominous clouds yet again. ‘Right’ and ‘Left’ wing juntas influence developments in every polity that is under siege. The immediate question that is dividing the nation into two watertight compartments is that of the way ahead; is shedding the tarnished raiment of tradition the panacea for all evils or do we need a revitalizing dose of orthodoxy to resurrect the pristine past of Islam?

We find ourselves in a world that reeks more profusely of civilisational clash with each passing day. Mediators have proposed cross-cultural consciousness as the only pragmatic antidote for the ‘you’re with us or against us’ bandwagon. Simply put, it is the ability to understand that the ‘other guy’ may seem erratic but that doesn’t mean he’s the devil’s disciple. But you cannot lecture empathy for foreign cultures when your own house is on fire. Polyglot cultures such as ours can only exist in an atmosphere of open debate and assimilation of anomalies. First and foremost, we need to debunk the myths we live on. The fact that the silent majority of this country does not see eye to eye with obscurantists is settled but it is not tantalised by the tunes of the westernised secular elite either. The reticent middle class that has always had the most at stake in this country, that has always suffered and sacrificed, may be lethargically ambivalent on more than one score but it is not going to swallow a hypocritical theocracy and neither can it be forced to adopt a collision course. The ugly turn of events we are witnessing did not take place overnight and it is not a conflict between ‘progressive’ and ‘regressive’ forces in the country. The tale goes for back in our chequered history. We need to understand that religious militarism had its genesis as a reaction to the advent of the British Raj in Delhi and is still venerated in our text books as ‘holy war’. Add to this the fact that many in the Muslim world interpret current events not as a
The conflict between the ‘free world’ and ‘barbarians’ but as the continuation of the bloody medieval wars between two faiths – a view strengthened by the likes of Lt. Gen. (r) William Boykin, former chief of America’s Delta Force, who believes his country is waging “a Crusade against the heathen” and that his “God is the real God and the enemy is a guy named Satan (who will be destroyed) because our roots are Judea-Christian.” To pile on the agony, there is a trigger-happy cowboy president who “talks with God”, a fallen premier who wanted to “bring God back in to the lives of the people” and a new Scotsman who will bring his country to “the path of God”. The pervading tenor of these post-modern leaders is resonant of Pope Urban II who launched the First Crusade in 1095. This, coupled with the ‘collateral damage’ of the boomeranged Iraq and Afghanistan invasions and the protracted illegal occupations of Palestine, Bosnia and Chechnya (where an armed insurgency is continuing for almost a century!), provides centripetal cohesion to an otherwise schismatic and ethnically estranged populace dispersed from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific. So, for the descendents of Rudyard Kipling’s pax Americana ‘white’ horsemen it’s War on Terror but for the resuscitated sons of Saladin it’s a case of déjà vu.

What is important to understand is that not all of these people are obscurantists and that many of them may be boorish and conservative but they are our own people. We need to sway the hard bounded away from all sorts of violence and bring everyone on board. What Pakistan needs is three Ds: rigorous Debate, meaningful Dialogue and apt Determination to reach consensual cohesion and forge a holistic modus operandi to arrest internal disruption. Only an island of peace can demonstrate to the world that the relation between Islam and harmony is more than transitive and that our faith can serve as the Mecca of universal tranquility. The origin and source of the fissure between the two rival camps in the country lies in the segregation of ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ education that was artificially conjured up in the 19th century. There is no distinction between the two types of learning in Islam. This is amply illustrated by the fact that the world’s oldest educational institution in the Guinness Book of Records is the University of Karauine, Morocco, founded in 859 AD and the second oldest varsity is Jamiatul-Azhar of Egypt established in 970 AD – the former preceding England’s Oxford by a hefty margin of three centuries. Most scientific disciplines and many subjects in the humanities begin with an eulogy of a bearded Arab look-alike who happens to be the founder of the discipline – Averoes (Ibn-i-Rushd), Abubacer (Ibn-i-Tufail), Avicenna (Ibn-i-Sina), al-Hacen (ibn-Haithem), Geber (Jabir ibn-i-Hayan), Ibn-i-Khaladun – all bear a resemblance to our madressah-appareled genus more than to the coveted ‘English medium’ lot.

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The need of the hour is to knot the fragmented nation together again. This is where the ‘magic’ of ‘GC’ can play its role. The clock tower in itself is just a pile of bricks, it is the *Ravian Spirit* that turns it into a beacon of enlightenment. The *Ravian Spirit* is the ‘Courage to Know’. We need the ‘Courage to Know’ to delve into reality ostracized to the subterranean haunts of our national consciousness. We need the courage to know our ethnocentrism as individuals and our paradoxical xenocentrism as a nation. We need the courage to know what exactly we have managed to churn out after six decades of independence and compare our position with that of our former colonial masters and our neighbors where civil society, democratic institutions and individual consciousness has leapt miles ahead. This does not necessitate imitation of foreign cultures. You can take a leaf out of someone’s book without plagiarizing the contents. It’s about time we baptized ourselves in the founding dictum “Work, work and only work” with everyone, who ever and what ever he is, doing his share with utmost devotion and sincerity. The celebrated maroon blazer has always inspired respect throughout the country; let’s entrance the world with the ‘magic’ of ‘GC’ and show them how high the clock tower really is.
The sixties were a heady time to be a student. Bob Dylan’s “The times they are a-changin” was the song that summarized our aspirations and attitudes to a great degree. And yes, we in Pakistan listened to Bob Dylan. Students were bringing about unprecedented change in many parts of the world and like them many of us also became involved in politics. It was to a great extent such participation by students that brought down the decade old military government of Ayub Khan.

Today I still think of myself as an un-reconstructed sixties liberal, this liberal identity developed during my years spent in Lahore and continued to evolve for many years after that. It is perhaps now a cliché that the Lahore of yesteryear was so much better than that of today, and indeed there might be some truth to that statement. The best thing about it was the relatively uninhibited intellectual environment that existed at that time.

Liberalism as we understand it today at least in the Pakistani context is far removed from what it truly means. Whenever somebody is called a liberal in Pakistan the implication is that that person probably imbibes alcohol, does not adhere to established norms of public piety and most likely speaks English and was educated in ‘English Medium” schools and received further education in UK or the US.

However liberalism means something much different. It includes concepts like democracy, individual rights, freedom of speech and the press, equality for all under the law and especially the right to practice any faith without fear of discrimination. These were some of the values I had already imbibed when I left for the US in 1971. As far as being a Muslim was concerned, I knew that I was one and would remain one.

When I arrived in the US, I was entirely surprised by the reception I got. I was immediately accepted as an equal, and was never made to feel that I was in any way different from my hosts. Interestingly, all of my friends from Pakistan who arrived in the US at the about same time were treated very much in the same fashion. Clearly how we were treated had little to do with our beliefs, the colour of our skin, our accents or our political points of view.
At that time there was still a tremendous residue of bigotry and the famous riots in Newark, Los Angeles and other places by black Americans (now called African Americans) were of recent memory. Anti-Semitism was alive and well as were other forms of discrimination though there was among the younger generation an evident need to do away with all forms of discrimination. People like me benefited tremendously from this new wave of multiculturalism that over the years became established as the norm.

Most of those I came across to start with in the US were relatively ordinary people, nurses, and physicians in training and other hospital workers. Few of them would be thought of as intellectuals but there was one thing in common among most of them. They were secure enough in their own individual cultural identities to accept us for what we were. Interestingly, in the US then and even now there is no unique American culture that is uniformly applicable.

The US is often called a “melting pot” where supposedly immigrants come from all over the world and then assimilate into one seamless national and cultural identity. This is obviously incorrect. I would compare the US to one large salad bowl, where different ingredients are put in together, covered with some salad dressing and then shaken to mix well. However each ingredient retains its individuality while taking on the flavor of other components. To use a cliché, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Whenever the question comes up about how people like me fared in the US, the answer is, quite well! We continued to be what we were, accepted many of the basic values that are inherent in the American system and went on to make good lives for ourselves. The basic values were mostly of a political rather than a cultural nature. As long as we were willing to abide by the laws and conventions of public behavior, we were pretty much left alone.

We celebrated our religious holidays, played our music, prayed and congregated as we chose and most importantly brought up our children whichever way we wanted as long as we sent them to the schools accepted by our local governments. Today, even home schooling is acceptable. As such most of us never had what might be called a crisis of identity. That does not mean that there were not some who found things a little difficult.

It is an established paradigm that more intensely a person identifies with his or her own cultural identity the more difficult it is to accept something different. The
corollary being that those Pakistanis who were either devout Muslims or else were extremely attached to their parochial cultural values had much more difficulty in accepting the world they found themselves in. A problem that has become more acute after 9/11.

Here I would like to debunk the idea of “tolerance” that is much bruited about these days. Nobody wants to be just tolerated. It is acceptance we crave. In a multicultural environment, acceptance is a two way street. Others cannot accept us as for what we are unless we accept them as they are. Religious excess poses the greatest threat to cross cultural acceptance. Not just from the Muslim world but perhaps more so from the Christian right in the US.

The rise of the Christian right in the US has been spectacular and over the last two decades, the old fashioned conservative political movements have been almost completely taken over almost by fundamentalist Christians, evangelical Christians and born again Christians. These groups have been joined by the neo-conservatives better known as Neocons. The present US government is a collection of such groups and is motivated by their ideological underpinnings.

The Christian right is essentially concerned with a return to “Judeo-Christian” values. They want an end to abortion on demand, they are for protection of the sanctity of marriage as a union between a man and a women, and they are against groups like homosexuals and lesbians being given the status as a protected minority. They also believe that only those will find salvation (go to heaven) after death that believe what they believe in.

Being literalists when it comes to interpretation of their holy texts, they also believe that all of the Biblical lands promised to the ancient Israelites should belong to Israel in the modern world for only then can the second coming of Christ take place. The Neocons agree with them on this issue for their own reasons and add on a desire to export “American values” especially democracy by force if necessary.

This idea of exporting democracy to the Middle East is one of the intrinsic parts of the Bush Doctrine that led to the war in Iraq. As such, we saw a new Cultural Imperialism emerge during the last six years. Fortunately, the political underpinnings of this movement have been entirely debunked in Iraq. Even though it is unlikely to last much beyond the second term of President Bush, it has
already done much harm by destabilizing the Middle East and creating a lasting chasm between the Muslims and the US.

More important for the young men and women living in Pakistan and elsewhere today is the non-political ascendancy of American culture driven by electronic media, the Internet and Microsoft. As Thomas Friedman, columnist for The New York Times and a prolific writer on issues of globalization has said frequently, the world is becoming flat. In other words, modern communications is making local differences progressively immaterial. It is this flattening of the world that poses the greatest threat to development of local and regional cultural identities.

The questions that we have to wrestle with are, whether it is possible to develop and maintain such an identity and more importantly, is it even important or necessary to have such an identity in this essentially post modern world. There are two ways we can respond to this challenge, either we accept that but for minor differences, most people in the future are going to be very much alike or else withdraw from this globalization movement entirely and isolate ourselves in cultural and political enclaves with little outside interaction.

The choice it would seem then is between Talibanization and Globalization. It is here that my early experience in the US becomes worthy of consideration. That I was able to survive and even thrive in that environment was to great degree because I was secure in my own cultural and religious identity. I accepted the good things that that culture had to offer and kept what I believed was good from mine own. It is therefore possible in my opinion to similarly accept many of the benefits offered by Globalization while adhering to our intrinsic cultural and religious values.

As long as humanity exists in its present form, individual differences will persist and so will the need for a unique form of personal expression. The fight between the impersonal and the personal will continue and the young of this generation as of all past generations will eventually find new meanings and a new balance in their lives. Some at the fringe will implode or else fall away but most will survive and participate in whatever tomorrow brings. However, those that survive and benefit most will be the ones that are secure enough to accept rather than just tolerate those that are different.

Perhaps I can sum up my point of view in the words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt the president of the US at the end of the Great Depression and during the Second

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World War: “So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.”
Her smile just bewitches anyone. A bank clerk has only to look up and that habitual ‘No’ freezes on his lips as he beholds her radiant smile. And when she gently says “Mera passbook bhar deejiyee,” his jaw drops. It’s the same story wherever she goes. In government offices the baboos instantly cease their gossip, stop sipping their tea, ignore their clients and, fall over themselves and rush about trying to sort out her problems; the subziwallah lowers his prices for her and the bus conductor makes sure she gets a seat. That is Valerie, a five foot eleven tall salwaar kameez clad lady from the USA. She is one of a few foreigners who speaks the local language, and wins over the hearts of everybody she meets in the Kangra Valley in Himachal.

Valerie has made Sidhbari in Kangra her home for over a decade and this story is about one of her experiences. Every six months foreigners with long term visas have to leave the country, get their passports stamped, and return. This, I am told, is a reciprocal gesture of the Indian government to USA laws for Indians in America. The foreigners residing in the Kangra Valley usually head for Nepal while others head for more distant lands.

We were sitting together discussing this impending biannual ritual. Valerie was dreading the long haul to Kathmandu on her own. It suddenly occurred to me that the Wagah border could provide an alternative and shorter route out. I had been there once and had watched enviously the ease with which Europeans and Americans just ambled across the border. It was a privilege denied to the Pakistanis and the Indians. For us, we had to derive our satisfaction by sitting in the mini amphitheatre that had been constructed for our entertainment as it serves as a vantage point from where one can watch the border guards of both sides stiffly goose step marching up and down on either side of the white line drawn across the road that connects the two countries. What an incongruous sight that is, so reminiscent of the Nazi soldiers! The border guards march by first lifting their legs up to impossible heights almost up to their chins, and then bringing them down with a bang. The Pakistani guards replicate the same goose step. I couldn’t tell whether it was the height of the raised legs or the banging down that was meant to emphasise their respective patriotic zeal. Were they trying to outdo each other through this ludicrous march? They seemed more like...
mechanized toy soldiers than ordinary soldiers. At the flag lowering ceremony every evening their body language, I was told, becomes even more aggressive.

I had gone to Wagah for a Peace Meeting where my father was the Chief Guest. On the dias, a loudspeaker was positioned to face Pakistan. During the meeting, one speaker after another extolled the virtues of peace and friendship with the people on the Pakistan side of the border. I asked one of the organizers whether their speeches could be heard in Pakistan. He assured me that there was no question of the sound reaching Lahore. An aged Punjabi gentleman got up and recounted how, in the old days, he used to cycle to work daily from Lahore to Amritsar. It took him nearly two hours. I wondered how he would have judged that time now, for governments have strange ways of promoting national identities and one of them is to put the clock forward or back. We walked up to the white line that divided our countries. We pleaded with the Pakistani guards to allow us to step onto the other side of that white line. We were permitted to do so with one foot only as it was strictly against regulations to be let in fully without a visa. I placed one foot into Pakistan. One of my legs was half an hour behind the other one!

I came out of my reveries and emphatically announced that Wagah was the best option for Valerie. It was close by. It was a mere five hour bus journey to Amritsar and another 30 kilometres from there to Wagah.

“Stay for a few days in Lahore, which you will love, and return.”

We caught up with each other a few months later.

“Did you like Pakistan?” was my first question.

“I never got there. Just walked across the border and walked right back.”

“Why?” I wailed.

“It seemed so desolate on the other side of the border. Hardly any vehicles or people.”

“If only you had spoken a bit of Hindustani they would have eaten out of your hands!!”

“I did.”

“Then?” I wouldn’t let go.

“The Pakistani border officials were dumb struck. ‘Aap itni achchee Urdu bolte hain,’ they said. I kept insisting that I spoke Hindi, but they just nodded, and repeated with a smile, ‘Kya baat hai, bahut khubsoorat Urdu bolte hain…’ Each
one of them invited me to visit his home. They offered me tea and mithai and were so kind. And just like in India, I was bombarded with endless questions about my family, children, my work. The moment they discovered that I was a physiotherapist one of them yelled out to somebody outside. Immediately the tiny room got filled up with all the marching giants. One man pointed to his knees and asked me if I could help him. He was in agony. That hard stomping of feet had affected his knees. Another took off his socks to reveal his swollen heels and ankles. They were a terrible sight – those poor guards. I demonstrated a few exercises that could help them. At that moment I regretted not carrying my Physiotherapy Manual of exercises ... To cut a long story short, that lecture demonstration seemed to have gone on for quite a while. All of a sudden I realized that the sun had set and I chickened out. I couldn’t bring myself to visit Lahore alone, without Jimmy. Even the Pakistani officials could not understand my decision to return.”

This year Valerie (along with her husband, Jimmy) is once again heading for Wagah. Her baggage includes several xeroxed manuals on leg and foot exercises which she plans to distribute to the guards on both sides of the Border before enjoying a ten day holiday in Pakistan.
I spent the weekend ironing. The pile of wrinkled linens was monumental, as I had avoided the chore for months, but my home is well equipped. I may be one of the last Americans in history to own forty feet of clothesline, a huge cement washtub with an aluminum scrubbing board, and, the centerpiece of it all, an antique Ironrite mangle. The mangle stores in a cracked masonite box, but when set up, the machine unfurls long white enameled wings attached to an elegant black and white deco control board with prismatic red indicator lights. In the middle sits a heavy roller atop a sleekly curved steel heating plate, like the highly specialized beak of some exotic bird. It is my favorite possession, even though I rarely use it.

The reason I have this arcane equipment is the same reason my chore is so huge: my grandmother died two months ago, at the age of 100, and left me her house, her furniture, and her laundry. The house is charming, small by today’s standards, filled with light from plate glass windows and ingenious little nooks shaped with metal lathe and textured plaster to accommodate old black telephones, sonorous doorbells with long brass pipes, and antique dolls. The furniture is spare and unadorned in the mid century fashion, covered in equal measure by dust and pink ceramic knickknacks. And the laundry is, well, wrinkled. At eight on a sunny Saturday morning, I settle to my task.

As I busy myself setting up the machine, I think about my students. I am a history professor in a small town on the Colorado prairie. My students rarely dress in anything other than the ubiquitous uniform of middle America, jeans and t-shirts and sometimes a slightly dirty billed cap. I’m pretty sure my students own as few irons as they do dictionaries or books of poetry. Even their grandparents probably don’t iron any more, busy with the vigorous recreations of the modern elderly.

While my students don’t have much use for tradition, history or high culture, they are not so thoroughly modern as their urban contemporaries. Few can afford the icon of the moment, an Ipod, but almost all have a computer of some vintage and a cell phone. Still, though tied by a hi-fi umbilicus to popular songs and games, friends and employers, most of my students lack the roots which bound their forefathers to time and place. These kids often take history classes because they need the credit to get a degree, and they read precisely as little as necessary to get
the grade they want. This is not because my students are willfully ignorant or lazy, but because they are incredibly over scheduled, with jobs and classes and children of their own. Their parents are of the “baby boomer” generation, an iconoclastic and peripatetic crowd who disdained the rules of their parents and moved their families, on average, every two years in pursuit of better jobs and opportunities. Their grandparents, often ensconced in a warm state far away, are vague memories to most of my students, the source of small unexciting gifts at Christmas and maybe an occasional birthday greeting. What kind of culture does this generation have anymore? I ponder the question as I work.

Though laundered, some of the antique linens which lay at my feet have unfortunate little brown stains. I rub these with lemon and salt against the old scrubbing board, as my grandmother had taught me, rinse them well and hang them on the line in the winter sun to bleach. I change the oil in the old mangle, and struggle to adjust my stool. I am too tall and fat to fit under the machine properly. It was the first gift my grandfather gave my grandmother after they were married in 1932, and theirs was a smaller and less well fed generation than mine. I find a more or less comfortable cross legged position, plug in the heavy cotton wrapped cord, flip the switches and experimentally operate the old knee controls with my hands. The red lights blink on, and the machine starts to shudder slightly as aging gears slide into place. Waiting for the steel plate to heat up, I sort the laundry into piles from the delicate to the most coarse. Around me, the familiar scent of aged linen arises from the yellowing roller as the mangle warms. I push the umbrella shaped infuser into the dampening bottle and squeeze it experimentally, then sprinkle each batch of linen with a mixture of water and scented starch. I fold each damp cloth upon itself and slip it into a plastic bag to wait its turn.

First come the dress up aprons. I remember my grandmother working on these, her sturdy fingernails carefully painted, her thimble finger oddly off kilter from a long forgotten accident, her hazel eyes squinting through thick glasses as she pushed the needle through the layers of cloth. Of fine linen with delicate French cotton lace, these aprons were ethereal garments, not intended to cover up but to decorate the wearer as she hosted dinners for the men who worked with my grandfather. I adjust the lovely gathered pleats of the first apron carefully over the heating plate and heard a gentle hiss of steam as the roller dropped. After the pleats set, a sharp bang on the right hand pedal of the mangle releases the apron strings at just the right point above the skirt. I miss the first time and accidentally press flat the pleats I just made. I start again, and when the apron is nicely stiff

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and hot from the iron I pin it to a hanger to cool. It billows slightly, as though filled briefly with the plumpness of my grandmother as she poured coffee from her silver urn into a rosy porcelain cup. I will frame the aprons, I think, behind a display of silver and porcelain, an homage to a more congenial sort of networking than that done today.

I continue with the lace tablecloths, with their elaborate patterns of pulled threads and delicate embroidery, and the pillowcases, worn from decades of silver heads and fitful sleep. I pick up a needle and thread and tack a stray piece of tatted lace back on an edge. My grandmother never tatted, but my great aunt did, working the tiny loops with the hook of her plain tin shuttle, never seeming to glance down as her hands danced through and over, around and back with the thread as it formed the line of lace. The mangle roller catches the edge of the rumpled linen and I work to keep it straight as it is rolled flat and emerges from the back in a neat pile. I think of my great aunt, with her high pitched voice and busy hands. A stern woman, she never married and never owned even the most modest piece of jewelry, but her tatting adorns my sleep.

I go outside to hang the pillowcases from the line and stand there, observing the heavy snow of the last difficult months melt under the bright January sky. The clothes pins are weathered gray and slightly fuzzy to the touch by the rain, the sturdy Ts of the clothesline frame rusts slightly at the edges. I own an electric clothes dryer, of course, but the clothes never smell as sweet, the towels never dry as thoroughly as they do when hung outside. I think of the generations of women who stood at this line and all the lines before it, hanging out the drawers of husbands and the bibs of babies, watching the wind swell the crisp white sheets that made their homes complete.

The embroidered towels come next. These were part of my great grandmother’s trousseau, and were done on plain coarse toweling with 15 stitches of cross stitch to the inch. Brightly embroidered with a cheerful oriental pattern from some magazine, the reverse side of the towels hold the merest shadow of color, for floss was dear and had to be applied with discipline. My great grandmother had been a tiny woman with a hint of red in her waist length hair even in her 80s, married to a giant of a man whose hands encircled her waist when they danced. He worked deep underground in the mines of Colorado, and then in the smelter in Pueblo before dying young and leaving her a widow. In her world, idle hands were a sin, and she embroidered tiny patterns by lantern light when her troubles kept her awake. As she completed them, she laid her linens in a chest, never to be used until I found them decades later and started placing them on my kitchen table.
Finally I come to the biggest tablecloths with their elaborate jacquard patterns woven in shiny rayon against the fine damask. Over twenty feet long, I have to fling one end over my shoulder to keep it off the floor as I let the roller press the other end into sleek flat folds. These cloths cover the massive table, a remarkable piece of furniture with room for the whole family when you move all the chairs out of the living room and pull it to its full length. Grandma supervised the last time I laid out her silver and that of my other great grandmother on that table – two forks on the left side, a knife and two spoons on the right, cut crystal goblet just touching the knife. I cooked for days, and the cousins came, with babies on their hips, the bigger kids struggling to look grown up in their unfamiliar dress clothes. I searched high and low for a dress for my grandmother in stores full of things fit only for teenagers, and at last I found the perfect one, white with pink and blue eyelet lace and a huge fuchsia bow. She looked regal at the head of the table, her white hair freshly coifed, her shiny green crystal earrings just so. It was close to her 100th birthday, and we all had a sense of finality as we sat and listened to my grandmother’s tales of Aunt Al and Uncle Walt, of riding horses to town in her youth and seeing Charles Lindbergh’s plane, and staying up nights during The War, waiting for news of her husband. Hers was the entire 20th century: she was born in an adobe cabin and got her first telephone when she married, danced the lindy with beaus who played Cole Porter on the piano, traveled the world in an airplane, entered old age with an artificial joint and a computer on her desk. We didn’t know it, but soon my grandmother would fall in the night, never to recover.

It is late afternoon by the time I finish my ironing and the sun casts long yellow rays into the now tidy basement room. I fold the mangle back into its cracked box, tuck the dampening bottle back into a pocket under the machine, roll up the cord. I need to check for emails from my students. In my local history class, I assigned essays which required my students to interview their grandmothers or their oldest living relative about their families. This is one of my more popular assignments, and the students often produce elaborate portfolios of family memorabilia as their final projects. I wonder if any of my students will inherit a mangle someday. I smile a little, looking at the pile of neatly folded linens before me. My grandmother would be pleased.
If you want to convince people that you're insane, tell them you're moving back to Pakistan.

When I told people that I had come back to Pakistan after six years of college, graduate school, and work, I always received one of two replies. "Wow, are you sure? Life out there is tough, especially for girls." The other: "Are you crazy?!??"

So according to them, my decision to come back to Pakistan was based neither on logic, reason, or simple desire. It was either that something was fundamentally wrong with me - I wasn't tough enough to brave it out - or that I was mentally unstable.

My first experience with America had been when I was two months old; my parents traveled to Virginia hardly a few weeks after I was born so that they could attend graduate school. They sent for me soon after that, and I grew up for the first five years of my life in an idyllic small university town, nestled in the beautiful foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. I grew up no different from any other little American girl, watching Sesame Street, eating hot dogs, drinking Kool Aid, playing with friends in the snow and at the pool. There are photographs of me in a Raggedy Ann dress for Halloween; sitting with my Montessori class on a wooden bridge in the back garden of the school; on Virginia Beach with my best friend wearing a red-striped bathing suit.

For me, America was home, Pakistan, the home of my parents, a strange place that I couldn't remember. Twice a year my parents dressed me in Pakistani clothes and took photographs, recorded my voice on a tape to be sent back to my grandmother in Karachi. They taught me words to say in Urdu and fed me aaloo-keema, but I had no sense of what being a Pakistani really meant. It was as much a costume as my Halloween costumes were.

My father eventually earned his PhD and it was time to go back home to Pakistan. What was meant to be a joyful journey back to the loving arms of family instead turned into a nightmare for me, as I faced absolute and total culture shock. All of a sudden, I was in a hot, dirty, dusty place, where people spoke a language I didn't want to understand; ate food that I hated; pinched at my cheek and
questioned why I spoke with an American accent or why I couldn’t speak my native tongue. I hated Pakistan. America was my home. I wanted to go back there with all the yearning of a salmon needing to go back to its birthplace, even if just for a moment, to beat its way upstream, and then eventually die.

My parents enrolled me in a private American school, probably the best of its kind, for the children of diplomats and foreign businessmen. I excelled academically, but socially I became even more confused. The American children told me happily that I was “half-American and half Pakistani”, while the Pakistani children just called me “angreze” and nobody really understood what I was all about. This was in the days before the influx of Pakistan-American children back to their homeland – travel to and from America was lengthy and costly. There was a divide between both worlds, and nobody really dared to cross it. Except that I had already crossed it once; and I was planning to do it again. I studied hard and got such good grades that my grade point average was above the 4.0 maximum, thanks to AP classes.

Determined to flee back to what I saw as my homeland, I planned to return to America after graduating from high school, but I faced some tremendous opposition when it came time to make the dream a reality. I was to be the first woman from my conservative Sindhi family to go to America to study further, and for a while it looked like the cultural constrains and traditions would overwhelm my dreams and goals. But with the help of my incredibly supportive mother and my overprotective but ambitious father, I made it to America, gaining admission in first a top-level college, then an Ivy League university for a master’s program in education. I was only seventeen and I had enough energy to propel a rocket to the moon. What I didn’t realize was that the quest to go to America was really a search for that mythical homeland that I thought I’d left behind so long ago.

Four years of college became one year of graduate school were easily the most amazing and fulfilling experiences of my life. I met people, learned things, went places, had ideas that nothing but an American liberal arts education can give you. Anyone who’s been through it already knows; those who haven’t can only dream. My education in America was the first thing in my life that made sense to me. I felt as though I was a goldfish who’d been tipped out of her bowl at the age of five and had been gasping for air ever since. Only now had I been put back into my bowl.
I made friends, argued with professors, ate clam chowder, went to rock concerts. I changed and mutated so many times over those six years that a chameleon would have been jealous of me. First I was an innocent; then a tough girl; I experimented with being a punk and a goth, and then I was a sophisticated grad student, and finally, a career woman. My American dream progressed from degrees and diplomas into a full-time job and an apartment, roommate, and car. Except that sometimes the dream, which I'd worked so hard to make a reality, wasn't so pleasant. I found myself alone on holidays. I found myself lonely. I was cold all the time. I burst into tears for no apparent reason in the evenings; right after the sun had gone down. When I was sick, I had to go to the doctor all by myself. This despite the mountains of friends I'd made in school… Things changed once I was working and commuting and living in a cold impersonal apartment block.

I was stubborn, and more than a little foolish. I would never have admitted that I was sad and missing home; I was torn between the idea that America was my chosen home and Pakistan my birth home. I struggled with this dilemma throughout all the years that I spent in America as an adult, and many times I tried to sweep the entire issue under the carpet of my beautiful apartment. But when things took an unexpected turn and I came to a crossroads in my life – should I stay or should I go, in the words of those immortal punk rockers, the Clash – Pakistan was the first and the only place I thought of going. It took one month to wrap everything up and then I was on a plane out of Logan Airport and on my way home.

Did I make up my mind too quickly? Did I make a mistake in leaving so fast? I didn't think so. After six years in 'exile', the need to return home - to my family, to my country, to people that looked and thought and felt and worshipped like me - was instinctive, unshakable, and utterly true. I suppose I was returning to the home of my heart, in a way.

But everyone around me here in Pakistan questioned my reasons. "I wanted to come back" just wasn't good enough for them. Who would want to come back to Pakistan? And why? They seemed even more astonished when I told them no, there was no family pressure, no, not to get married, no, no boyfriend here. So in addition to the not insignificant task of adjusting back to living with my family, making new friends and reestablishing contacts with old ones, and finding a job, I had to contend with a lot of very weird attitudes which probably said more about them than it did about me and my reasons for coming back.
I became aware that Pakistanis living in Pakistan carry a feeling of failure with them. If you have made it to the West and to America, you have "made it". If you are trying to go, your life is on hold or in limbo until you get the anxiously awaited call from the Embassy. If you go and come back, you are undoubtedly the biggest jackass that ever walked the earth. This is true whether you are the richest family living in Defence or a lower middle-class one from Gulshan. No matter how powerful your connections and how influential your reach, if you don't have some sort of connection to the West - a child studying abroad, an apartment in London, money in a bank account somewhere overseas - you have failed.

Not only this, but there is a bad feeling between Pakistanis that live here and those that are there. Whenever someone overseas criticizes Pakistan and its inhabitants, the immediate reaction is "Who the hell are they to say this? Why don't they come back here and then they'll have a reason to talk." The feeling behind this being that if you are living in the West, you are enjoying all the amenities denied to us back here (especially after you have gotten your education, your funding, and all your emotional support from this country). If you have running water, electricity on a regular basis, and can go to work or school without fear of getting shot or bombed, you have no right to criticize anything in your country of origin. There is a deep-seated and little-admitted jealousy of the riches that expatriates have. In Pakistan, we try to cover it up with claims that we have a better family life here, a better culture, higher morals. This is supposed to compensate for the low standard of living.

Some days I agreed with these ideas, other days I fought them and told myself they were irrational, mean-spirited, and untrue. All this contributed to my nagging fear that perhaps I really had made a mistake coming back here. Things were taking longer than I expected to settle down. A year on, I still hadn't made many friends, I hadn't found work I really liked, and conditions in Pakistan were incomprehensible to say the least. I missed America, I missed what I had given up. I wondered if I had made the right choice, but a "no" was not the answer that I really felt in my heart.

I did feel from time to time that I had failed; that the purpose of my entire life - to get to America and stay there no matter what - had been thwarted. It's hard to give up a life purpose and start all over again, especially when your own mother says to you, "I wish you had stayed on in America". I heard about other girls that were still in America, working dream jobs, engaged to suitably lovely desi boys. I saw
them at weddings and engagements held here in Pakistan for the benefit of adoring families. They had succeeded. I hadn't.

But something in my head - or maybe it was my heart - told me to have patience, to stick it out, to wait and see. You could say that I learned to swim in strange waters. I learned the language properly, I grew comfortable wearing Pakistani clothes as well as jeans and trousers. I learned to like Pakistani food. I picked up the ragged edges of my faith and reclaimed my religious heritage as a practicing Muslim. I learned to appreciate Eastern cultures and values, and I found friends that were like me in spirit, as well as in background and appearance. It was the first time I was spending life as an adult who wasn’t “the other”. Again, I was growing and adapting, and I liked the person I was becoming. With more and more exposure to the West, I was no longer the oddity I had been back in my childhood. People didn’t question my accent, except to ask in a friendly manner if I “was visiting”. “No,” I said, and say, to this day. “This is my home.”

Ten years on my return, I have “made it” in a way that I couldn’t fathom if I’d stayed on in America. I’m now a productive writer, with popular columns in newspapers, on Web sites, and several books to my name. I’m ever active in finding out all I can about women’s issues and writing about them, raising awareness for issues such as honor killing, gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and the need for girls’ education. I found consulting work with an NGO that creates educational opportunities for rural and urban underserved populations throughout Sindh, the province where I live. I started to teach Personal Management and Oral Communications at a local university. All this while being able to reconnect with my family and my culture, to see my siblings grow, my cousins marry, my best friends have children. It’s been a thrilling and fascinating decade in this city, this country.

I’ve also been able to witness the coming of age of Pakistan through some very difficult and intense recent events. September 11 was a moment that changed history for more than one country – all of a sudden Pakistan was center stage, and the world looked to see what the newly installed President would do in the face of incredible international pressure to throw his lot in with those who were waging the war on terror. Political issues in Pakistan have become ever increasingly complex since that time, four years ago. Not only this, but Pakistan is approaching modernization and globalization in ways that are fast-paced, exciting, and sometimes daunting. The city where I live has blossomed: the media has exploded, with cable and satellite television, mobile phone technology, print

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media freedom, and FM radio stations and private television channels testament to the fact that Pakistanis have a lot to say and need plenty of space to say it.

And I have something that I never had in America – a rootedness, a belonging, that I never felt over there. America took me in and accepted me in a way that soothed the tumult in my soul: that of a girl looking for her home. America was kind to me and gave me a home until I was ready to face my real home, and for that I will be forever grateful to that country and its people, no matter what happens in the outside world of politics and world events. That is not the America that I knew, the America that loved me for who I was and what I could bring to the table. Now that I’m in my real homeland, I can look upon my time in America as a crucible that formed me and melded me into a woman that any country would be proud to claim its own.

Coming back to Pakistan? I may be crazy, but at least I'm happy.
The taunting across the street had reached a crescendo, and finally, Richard blurted out, “You bloody wog – go back home!”
Then he looked at me a little embarrassed and quickly said, “Well… you’re not one of them”.

Richard and I had been friends – neighbours, in fact - for about five or six years and spent most of our free time together having after-school adventures in the West London suburb we called home. We were about thirteen years old then, and Britain had seen a wave of South Asian immigrants from its erstwhile colonies particularly in the early 1970s. Our suburb had growing numbers of people like me – or not like me, as Richard would have it. There was no way I could be like them, according to Richard… after all, he and I were like brothers.

“Wogs” (an acronym of “Western Oriental Gentleman”, I was always told) and “Pakis” (Pakistanis) were “taking our jobs and our homes” according to some of the more radically outspoken and racist politicians. These were derogatory terms for Indians and Pakistanis at that time in Britain. The British equivalent of the “N” word in America!

It might sound strange to say it, but racism in those days, three decades ago, was almost innocent. Richard’s racism was innocent – certainly naive. If the kids he was arguing with had been fat instead of South Asian, he probably would have called them “fatty”.

In those days of innocent racism, people were judged by the colour of their skin in the first instance, but then usually accepted into the fold with a little time and proper introduction. People would get to know one another and any suspicion based on skin colour was pushed aside in the interest of friendship and exploring the exotic.

It was a slow process, but Britain began to absorb the new cultures and cuisines thrust upon it. Immigrants in Britain were allowed to be themselves and the resident Anglo-Saxon population hardly noticed as the years passed and “curry” joined “fish and chips” to become a national dish, and ethnic colours and patterns became “cool”.

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Now, Britain even has Members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords who are from ethnic minorities. Theatre shows feature Asian themes. Television is full of ethnic minorities - no longer filling affirmative action quotas but actually earning respect based on their abilities.

Mainstream television news is delivered by a number of popular Asians (Incidentally, I was the first mainstream South Asian news anchor/presenter on both the BBC and on CNN – boy, how times have changed in twenty years!) By and large, until more recent events changed things, Britain was a country enjoying a relatively fluid integration of its ethnic minorities.

The U.S.A. is a little different in its approach to immigrants. In the same way those emigrating to the U.K. have never sought a “British Dream” as such – they’ve either wanted to escape problems back home or join relatives who emigrated earlier – those heading further West to the shores of America definitely want to become part of something bigger.

People speak widely of the “American Dream”. But to be part of this dream it means more of a buy-in to the programme. The kids have to become mainstream Americans and make the most of the amazing opportunities the country affords. Subtle aspects of original cultures can remain – though curries have become milder - and kids are still generally encouraged to marry someone of a similar background, but generally, immigrants to the USA are here to stay, and happy to be American.

People in U.S.A., by and large, are incredibly hospitable people, willing to accept those around them especially if they don’t seem to contradict the American way of life – and they will actively embrace those who are fully immersed in the patriotic dream.

Then came September 11th 2001.

Racism stopped being innocent. It was no longer about the colour of one’s skin but about a person’s beliefs and how those might not conform to the greater good. Skin colour became only one, initial marker in identifying the threat… there were now others, such as excessive facial hair on men, or a dress code that now suggested they were not part of the American Dream – which, after all, involves being fashionable.

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Oh – and, of course, there’s Islam.

Suddenly it’s about a “clash of civilizations” or religious fanaticism. There is nothing in Islam that says America is evil. America didn’t even exist as the religion found its early roots. In the same way that there are extremists in every religion, Islam has its problems. However, for many, including Muslims themselves, Islam itself has become a problem. The voice of moderation has been lost – if it ever spoke up in the first place – and the voice of extremism negatively paints a religion that is followed by one fifth of the world’s population – including millions of Americans.

Innocent racism has definitely gone.

Now racism is based not on losing jobs or homes, it’s about losing lives and security.

Who was it who said, “There is nothing to fear but fear itself”? I’ve watched with sadness as America has taken itself down an empty path of baseless fear that has generated more deep-seated hate and divisiveness than anything in recent history.

It’s a cycle where fear and hate generate more fear and hate on both sides. It has become almost institutionalized in laws and regulations that are meant to act in the interest of national security but serve only to divide communities that would be stronger and more secure if given the chance to work together rather than against one another.

It’s actually very sad to watch this rapid demise.

Fear is the factor that can most effectively destroy the American Dream – something I’m sure Franklin D. Roosevelt realized when he spoke that quote. Which takes me back to Richard, whose most notable quote in my memory of him appears to be, “You bloody wog – go back home!” He was a nice guy, honestly – rather innocent… and his words were not based on fear.

It kind of makes me wish I was back in the day when I was simply a “wog” or a “Paki”.

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Houston, Feb. 2006
Dearest Cambeyse,

I know you have your heart set on joining the US Army. Admissions to West Point and the Citadel are very competitive and you are preparing yourself in every way you can: academically, physically and mentally. You have also applied for a job as a councilor in training at the Citadel where you will learn, among other things, leadership skills. Weather you achieve your ambition or not - and I pray you do - the experience will have taught you a lot. At fifteen, your life shines ahead of you. To belong to the mightiest army of the mightiest nation in the world is a heady thing; but it carries with it a special responsibility. No matter what direction your life takes, I pray also that you will carry within you compassion and a sense of justice - values so dear to our Zoroastrian faith.

But this is getting way too preachy. Knowing of your interest in science fiction let us instead conjure up a visitor from some advanced planet in outer space. Next, let us imagine how he might report back on us and our view of creation, were he to descend on earth and land in America. The scenario might go something like this.

"At first the Earthling’s God said: 'Let there be light!' And there was a Big Bang, and a whole lot of light. And then God said: 'Let there be the Universe,' and there were the galaxies, stars, black-holes and quarks. And when God said: 'Let there be the Worlds,' there were the First, Second and Third Worlds, and a bewildering constellation of countries christened the “Axis-of-Evil-World”.

And commenting on the way we Earthlings conduct ourselves he would end his report thus: “There these primitive entities remain: stereotyped, branded and locked in their separate and warring worlds.”

Why does this strife between our species exist? Is it because it entails a loss of national or religious pride to grant other cultures their wisdom and humanity? And, after degrading them with generalizations, arrogantly assume we know them sufficiently to brand them as Evil?

The enemy everywhere is always evil.

Globalization has caused our world to shrink; it is time we see people as human.

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beings - whether they are in Ethiopia, Mexico or Bangladesh; whether they are Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian or Jew. The human race is too closely linked to be so simplistically pigeon-holed. To do so is dangerous as was demonstrated to us on 9/11

The Twin Towers in New York stood tall as modern marvels - beacons of our hope for the future, of our faith in a New World in which races and religions are defined by tolerance. In attacking them the terrorists destroyed more than just a miracle wrought of glass and steel; they undermined our trust in American ideals, and alarmed us with the realization of how fragile our freedoms are.

The measures Homeland Security has adopted is turning us into a Police State. Anyone who does not think exactly as the Captains-of-the-Universe do is “evil” by the standards of the comic-strip language used by our leaders. Except for a brief visit to Soviet Russia, I have never felt the need to glance over my shoulder, or mind what I say. Now I do. A few months ago an Indian friend, a delegate to the Human Rights Commission in Geneva, called to say hello. The talk turned to politics and suddenly he cautioned me to speak in Gujarati; “Don’t you know how many people have been spirited away from their homes and locked up?” United States Human Rights activists had supplied the information. The District Judge Gladys Kessler directed that their identities be revealed. A few days later she had to issue a stay to give the government more time. The ‘stays’ continue and we continue to lock people away at will – not to mention the hundreds of prisoners from 39 countries rotting in a state of legal limbo in our naval base at Guantanamo Bay.

Does anyone believe war will stop acts of terror? The attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq – which even Jerry Springer likened to “whacking a bee-hive with a baseball bat,” have created only humiliated and embittered nations increasingly mired in civil strife. Who dares to predict the consequences of the chaos, fury and hatred our ‘shock & awe’ bombs has generated? Where are the weapons of mass destruction Sadam was supposed to unleash? And this unprovoked preemptive strike, which our founding fathers wisely forbade, sets a dangerous precedent. Any country can now attack another with impunity!

Even if we hide every plastic knife in America, will it stop an attack from a man who is desperate enough to commit suicide? Shouldn’t we instead address the grievances that are generating so much anger and hopelessness---the suffering of the larger world community whose misery we so callously disregard or take for granted? Who ordained that we may pamper ourselves with Nike shoes and Victoria’s Secrets underwear, while millions in Afghanistan and Rawanda can’t even get badly-fitted artificial-limbs?

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We think of people from far-away countries as somehow inferior. Superficial
differences – of color, dress, gesture, language - rob *foreigners* of their humanity. In
other words, we render these people faceless. We stop seeing them as individuals,
and see them only as remote blobs: Chinese, African, Arab, American, Asian blobs.
The scariest aspect of this is that faceless people become like figures in video games;
it doesn’t tax our conscience to bomb and destroy blobs.

A journalist friend at CNN told me that he was taught that whereas the death of three
Americans was news, the death of a thousand Africans or Papuans or Afghans was
not. Given the self-centered nature of our species this is perhaps globally true. But
sadly, people in the Third World, who are absorbing the demeaning Western media’s
images of themselves subconsciously, are finding their self-esteem so eroded, that
they are beginning to look down even upon themselves – or moving towards religious
extremism to maintain their sense of identity and self-worth.

There are other forces that turn people faceless within the same space and time. This
happens during ideological, racial and religious crusades and, often, when one
community or group wants a larger portion of a country's wealth and power. It
happened during the Holocaust. It is happening right now in the Middle East - the
bombing of the Palestinians and their homes – and attacks on civilians by suicide
bombers in Israel. And it happened during the partition of India in 1947, when the
religious and cultural biases and economic pressures within the country tore it
savagely apart.

I want you to realize that whatever you think, say and do as an individual is of vital
consequence. The *butterfly effect*, which explains how a flutter of wings in Houston
can end up creating a cyclone in the Atlantic, joins our fragile flutters to those of
others’. It is up to our thoughts, words and deeds to shape our world; to stabilize, or
destabilize it. Often when I talk about characterization in my writing classes, I insist:
"Name your characters straight away, so that they are not just a 'he' or a 'she' but
individuals. Describe them - the texture and color of their skin and hair, the timbre
of their voices; and, on the very first page, state where they come from. This gives
the reader a hint of the forces that have shaped an Indian Sita or an Israeli Adina, or
an Arab Abdul, or an American Rosie or an African Achebe."

If the reader is not aware of these particulars she/he cannot become involved with the
characters and doesn’t care much what happens to them; in other words, the character
becomes faceless. And, to bring my point to its conclusion, faceless blobs are easy to
kill. Do we care if a lot of Lebanese, Afghans, Angolans and Sri Lankans die? We
would care more if we knew someone from these countries. So I urge you to meet

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and become friends with a person from Cambodia or Haiti or Chile or Ghana or from whichever culture appears remote to you. For once you do, these people will develop faces, and they will begin to bear worth. They will become humanized.

The validity of the butterfly effect was brought home to me in a striking way. Beginning with a Feminist conference in Amsterdam in the 1990s, I have often mentioned how vital our awareness of names, and the cultural implications they convey, is. During a Q & A in 2001, after the screening of Earth [a film based on my novel Cracking India Ice-Candy-Man] at the University of Georgia at Athens, I again talked about it. A few days later President Bush, in his Address to the nation following the attack on 9/11, said something to the effect: ‘Tell them we have a Rosie in America.’ Baffled anchormen remarked on it. I felt smug. I, alone in the entire world, knew its context. Constraints of length rather than any lack on the part of the speech-writer must have prevented him from explaining the idea.

But my flutter had somehow found its way into the President’s speech.

Surely this is what we need – a greater awareness of our common humanity and how each of us affects the other - and less Big Brother.
A VISIT TO MY GRANDFATHER’S HOUSE
NAMITA TANEEJA
Participant, Pakistan-India Intercollegiate Drama Festival

Before leaving for Lahore, my Nanu’s parting words were, “Munni, Lahore ko mera salaam kehna”. I could not understand the emotion and his constant yearning for just a single glimpse of the place where he spent his entire childhood. I left with a strong desire to visit his old house, if only for his sake. The moment I set foot on the Lahore land his words came back to me and for some unknown reason I had goose bumps all over. I actually found myself thinking as if the land were my own. The days just flew by in the company of very warm and hospitable people. Every morning I used to wake up with anticipation of visiting Nisbat road. Two days before we were leaving for Delhi it was finally decided that I would visit his house. The scene was called off due to the strike. I was very disappointed. Abu Bakar noticed and promised to take me the next day before his college duty began.

As he had promised he was there at the hotel lobby at 8.30 and I left with my friend, Mansi. Once we reached the given address it took us a few minutes to find the entry to the house. As Abu Bakar rang the door bell I suddenly felt nervous and silly standing at the doorway of complete strangers. A little boy of about 8 answered the door and called the lady of the house. She asked what I wanted and I was lost for words. It took me a couple of minutes to muster up enough courage to inform her that I was the great granddaughter of Dr. Diwan Chand Aggarwal and asked if that is where he had once lived. Even though I knew the answer, I was very relieved to hear her say yes. She invited us in and with uncertain steps I climbed the never-ending stairs. We waited till she called her husband, Prof. Jamil Khan while the butterflies in my stomach were just going crazy with excitement. He entered with such enthusiasm that all my nervousness and uncertainty just vanished. While he told us about how they had moved in his wife offered us tea and biscuits. After we all had finished he took us on a grand tour of the house which is now divided into 4 major parts. He apologized for one section being locked up as the tenants were away on work. Most of the house is still the way it was when my grandfather used to live there. The flooring, the ceiling, and the old roshan daans- even the old cupboards are still there. It was extremely touching. He explained how the rooms were used earlier and even showed us his private rooms. As he was showing us around he told us that the house was once located in a posh locality and was extremely beautiful. I was trying to picture Nanu and his brothers and sisters playing around the verandah, hiding from his mother in the storeroom. I kept throwing questions at him even before he could answer them. He too wanted to
know how things were back in India. It was like meeting an uncle living in a far away land. Before we left his house he handed Mansi and me some money as a token of blessing; and when we tried to refuse he said that it was a tradition to give something to the daughters of the house and we were in no position to refuse. I was clutching on to those notes till the very end of the grand tour.

We took leave of his wife and moved to the lower level of the house where another family is now living. The lower level was my great-grandfather’s clinic and had been very popular. The people living there now insisted we stay on for lunch but due to shortage of time we couldn’t. By the time we reached the front portion of the house (which is now a commercial property) my eyes were moist. The old gentleman working in the garage still remembered my mom’s uncle who had been there some years ago. He still has his visiting card tucked away in some safe corner of his house and hopes to visit India someday.

The earlier drive-in has now been converted into a printing press space and the owner was kind enough to allow us to take a look around and click pictures. Prof. Khan told us that he had spent his childhood playing cricket in the long, then empty and spacious galleries. I now began to understand the attachment to one’s childhood house and my Nanu’s excitement. I could feel sunlight pouring in from the now walled in windows and light breeze blowing in from open arches. It reminded me of the time when I used to play around carefree in my Nanu’s house back in India as a kid. When we moved to the rooftop I realized that this was not only nostalgic for me but for Mansi as well. She tried to hide her emotions behind her sunglasses as she took photos. Neither one of us felt the same way, I couldn’t feel what she was going through and neither could she but deep down we both understood what the other was going through. The rooftop was still the way my grandfather’s family had left it. There are some bricks piled in a corner for some renovation my great grandfather was planning.

When the time to say goodbye came, I didn’t want to leave. I felt a sense of belonging in a strange land. It was like leaving your own family behind knowing that you may never see them again. He too had tears in his eyes. The car ride back was very quiet. Mansi and Abu Bakar left me with my thoughts and we reached the university. As soon as Abu had left us alone, Mansi and I hugged and I couldn’t express how grateful I was to her for sharing this memorable moment with me. We sat dazed for a long time as neither one could really talk. We just sat together. I remember Prof. Khan’s parting words. He said, “Beta, Hindustan ko mera namaste kahena”.

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It was a hot, humid afternoon in July; I was sitting in the elegant office of the Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Khalid Aftab. Khalid Sahib asked me if GCU Dramatics Club could organize a Pak-India Drama Festival, as the Pakistan National Council of Arts D.G. Mr. Naeem Tahir was very much interested in such a project, my immediate response was yes sir! Not realizing then, what kind of administrative and financial difficulties we might face. I immediately started working on the project and in August 2006, I along with Daniyal Talat started to collect email addresses of Indian Institutions in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore. We sent emails to about ten institutions in India and to all institutions in Pakistan who have drama clubs or societies and asked them to respond by September 10. September passed, but we got no response. We emailed all the institutions we had invited earlier once again but to no avail. Meanwhile we got busy in the rehearsals of GCU Dramatics Club’s Production of William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*’s Urdu/Punjabi adaptation Sawan Raen da Sufna which was to be staged at Punjab University Inter-Varsity Performing Arts Festival and G. B Shaw’s *You Never Can Tell* which was to be staged as the annual play, 2007. In first week of December Daniyal Talat and Fahad Noor met a few students from India who had come for the Pak-India Debating Contest and got email addresses of certain students who were active in the Indian college/university drama circle, we sent them an invitation again and immediately got a response from six institutions from India, namely Lady Shri Ram College Delhi University, Kamla Nehru College, Delhi University, JNU Delhi, Symbiosis Society Law College, Pune, Hans Raj College, Delhi, Gargi College, Delhi. All these institutions were very keen on coming over. The Institutions from Pakistan who had confirmed by that time were: NCA, GIKI. Indus Valley School of Arts and Design Karachi, QAU Islamabad, LCWU, UET, Lahore, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi, BZU Multan, Punjab University, Balochistan University of Information Technology, Quetta. It was for the first time that so many institutions from all the four provinces of Pakistan and from India were getting together for a theatrical activity. It was decided that the final dates of the festival would be from March 15 to 22, 2007. After getting these initial confirmations, the most important thing was to get funding for the project. PNCA which had shown keen interest initially in the project promised a certain amount but unfortunately it was not
enough to cover the total expenses of the festival. Dr. Khalid Aftab came to our rescue and promised that he would get the remaining amount through the Governor of the Punjab, and the Governor was gracious enough to accede to his request. The next important stage was to get visas for the Indian troupes. I thought it would be an easy thing as the Pakistani High Commission in Delhi is full of Old Ravians but I was proved otherwise. I will not go into the details of how we managed to get visas for our Indian guests but I would certainly like to mention that it would not have been possible without the efforts of the Governor Lt.Gen. Khalid Maqbool (Retd), Vice Chancellor Dr. Khalid Aftab, and Mr. Johar Saleem DG (Europe) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Islamabad. With the Samjhota Express bombing making its impact finally only three teams from India namely Kamla Nehru College Delhi University, Hans Raj College Delhi University and Lady Shri Ram College Delhi University made it to the festival and were warmly received at Wagah Border by GCUDC management committee and were brought to Amer Hotel where they were housed.

The Festival opened on March 15, 2007. Federal Minister for Culture Dr. G. G Jamal was the Chief Guest. Danish Jahangir Khan Secretary GC University Dramatics Club conducted the proceedings of the ceremony. Prof. Dr. Khalid Aftab welcomed troupes from all over Pakistan and India and congratulated the entire team of GC University Dramatics Club. Mr. Naeem Tahir, DG Pakistan National Council of Arts lauded the efforts of GCUDC for hosting the festival in such an efficient manner. Dr. Minoti Chatterjee Principal Kamla Nehru College Delhi University expressed the delight of the Indian Troupes on being invited to participate in the festival. She also hoped that they could reciprocate and invite Pakistani institutions to India. After the speeches, Students of Pakistan and India lighted the festival candle to signify that the festival had officially begun.

The festival kicked off with GCU Dramatics club’s presentation of G.B. Shaw’s biting comedy of manners You Never Can Tell. Madiha Gul enacted Dolly, the luscious Victorian teen who carps at her own mother’s devout prudery. Danish Jehangir Khan played the devil-may-care dentist Valentine who manages to live up to his name. Zain ul-Aziz Khan played the laid-back wise guy who utters one of Shaw’s funniest lines telling his mother he’s reasonably sure “she probably knows who their father is.” Fasiha Afghan played the new blue woman who dumps her husband for his abominable temper and devotes her life to a solitary feminist existence. Najwa Farooq as Gloria captivated the audience with her stunning performance as a typical Shavian young woman just ‘waiting’ to fall in love with the ‘right’ man. On top of this family hierarchy was the cramped grouch
Crampton, played by Sameer Ahmad eager to leap out of his skin to give everyone a piece of his cranky but funny mind. Umer Khan was loyal to the role in portraying the jovial waiter of the world Balmy Walter. The GCUDC team put up an excellent effort in showing the proletariat in its spiraling evolution towards the higher clouds of Victorian Olympus. You Never Can Tell proved the ideal start for the Drama Festival and got a standing ovation from the packed Bokhari Auditorium crowd. Madiha Gul, Danish Jahangir Khan and Umer Khan stole the show with their remarkable performance. The play was directed by Danish Jahangir Khan. The hallmark of the play was its beautiful sets conceived by Dr. Farhan Ebadat and the swiftness with which it was changed in each act. Music by Danish Jahangir and Lights by Daniyal Talat were exceptional. But this was not enough as GCUDC had one more cannon in its arsenal for the final day of the festival.

The gap between the two home productions was amply filled by successive exceptional presentations by other participating institutions. The UET Lahore presented a spell-binding action mime, employing lighting and special effects in such spectacular manner that it was undoubtedly a truly unique stage performance which made both the Pakistani and Indian teams cheer to the fullest as the whole auditorium gave UET a standing ovation at the end of their twin productions – Death Beat the mime and Basti Dad.

BZU, Multan staged a social comedy Kuttay painstakingly showing that the whole society had gone to the dogs. Next was a ballet Teri Ishq Nachai by Fatima Jinnah Women University. The music and lighting effects coupled by scores of graceful females from the federal capital enthralled the audience. Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi won accolades for presenting a bold social play Eight Directed by Shilpi Gulati. The Punjab University made their mark with Kuch Aur Kaalay Harf, a dramatic rendition of a tragic incident that shook the University’s New Campus in 2005. Kamla Nehru College, Delhi University, chose to present Saddat Hassan Manto’s controversial Toba Tek Singh. The play was directed by Moitreyee Banerjee and had Medhavi Gandhi, Saloni Arora, Shaziya Abbas. Saba Siddiqi and Sana Khan who played the role of Bhesham Singh. The Indus Valley School of Arts staged a soul-stirring Rooh ka Natak. NCA, Lahore carried the day with an extravagant mime Thread Mill Alif Adab and a wonderfully hilarious comedy Pind Dadan Khan by Nautanki. Hans Raj College, New Delhi chose to adapt Shakespeare’s Macbeth on stage in Hindi/English. The play was directed by Sanyukta Saha, the cast included Karam Veer Chawla, Aman Chand, Diksha Lamba, Sanyukta Saha as Lady Macbeth and Sidharth Singh as Macbeth. Hans
Raj College’s performance got a standing ovation from the packed Bokhari Auditorium crowd. The Balochistan University of Information Technology participated in their first drama festival by presenting their home production *Udas Ghar*.

A surprise performance by the Mekaal Hassan Band was a much needed break from all the nervous excitement resulting from making sure that the festival ran smoothly, staging plays and working with a mind that is chasing a thousand different thoughts in a thousand different directions.

The Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute lit up the stage in a lavish presentation *Meray Paisay*. The Lahore College for Women University staged *Sana Khwan-e-Taqdees-e-Mashriq Kahan Hai* – the play was definitely more successful than the name. The final show of the festival was GCU DC’s adaptation of Bano Qudsia’s short story *Amar Bail*. Bano Qudsia was in attendance on the occasion. The proscenium was dominated by Madiha Gul as Zari followed by Danish Jehangir Khan who played the patronizing and regretful uncle. Fasiha Afghan proved her mettle yet again in her moving portrayal of the bereaved mother of Zari. Umer Khan played the father the play was directed by Dr. Farhan Ebadat who was assisted by Azhar Iftikhar, who also managed the music. Daniyal Talat the production and Light Manager did a wonderful job which contributed a lot to the overall impact of the play. *Amar Bail* drew thunderous appreciation from the crowd. Madiha Gul as Zari was exceptionally remarkable, managing to pull off her challenging and emotionally stimulating role with much apparent ease. The play was much appreciated by all present especially the Indian troupes who were not expecting that they would witness a play on such a sensitive theme in Pakistan.

The play was followed by the Closing Ceremony of the Festival. Speaking on the occasion students from India and Pakistan thanked GC University Lahore and GCUDC for inviting them. All of them were delighted to be a part of the festival. Mohtarma Bano Qudsia affectionately known as Bano Apa in her speech lauded the efforts of her alma mater in arranging the festival, she gave full marks to the young performers who enacted and adapted her short story with such ease. She remarked “I wish I could bring Abid Ali and Resham today who performed the roles of Zari and Asif when this short story was adapted for TV”. In his concluding remarks Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Khalid Aftab thanked everyone who came to participate from India and all over Pakistan. Dr. Sahib very graciously praised the efforts of GC University Dramatics Club’s management.
team and said that it was only because of their efforts that this First Ever Festival could be organized.

All in all the festival was a brilliant success and we practically had to beg the Indians to leave and go back where they came from. We fell in love with them, they fell in love with us, but we were over worked and tired therefore it was imperative that we part ways.

Accolades for the Indo-Pak Festival from various national newspapers:

“GC University Lahore in collaboration with Pakistan National Council of Arts is organizing the first-ever Pak-India Inter-Collegiate Drama Festival from March 15. Students of three educational institutions from India and 10 from Pakistan will perform in the festival, which will be opened by the Punjab Governor Lt General Khalid Maqbool (retd).”

-The Nation, Tuesday, 13 March 2007

“Dr. Minoti Chatterjee, the Principal of the Kamla Nehru College University, Delhi, said the drama festival was a tribute to the youth of the subcontinent.”

-Daily Times, Friday, 16 March 2007

The GCU artists exhibited a versatile performance with elegant theatrical presentation…the chief guest of the inaugural ceremony Federal Minister for culture, Ghazi Ghulab Jamal, highly commended the performance of the young artists of GCU and termed the activity as a useful means of nurturing the young talent of the country.”

-The Nation, Friday, 16 March 2007

The first Indo-Pak Drama Festival…maintained its momentum of fine theatrical performances…at the Bokhari Auditorium of the Government College University (GCU), Lahore.”

-Daily Times, Tuesday, 20 March 2007

“…at the Government College University, Lahore, in connection with the ongoing Indo-Pak Drama Festival…the tremendous performance of youth talent from India and Pakistan continued to captivate the attention of the audience.”

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GCU Lahore has the honour to host such a cultural activity in a disciplined manner, which not only is a means to extend an opportunity of interactive sessions to the students of both India and Pakistan to learn from each other’s experiences, but also an effort to keep alive the cultural traditions.”

“The chief guest of the concluding ceremony was eminent writer Bano Qudsia…(who) commended the teams from both India and Pakistan for their energetic participation in the festival and stated that this activity would go a long way in refining the cultural activities in Lahore.

“During the week-long festival, both Pakistani and Indian theatre groups came up with good performances.”

Dawn Lahore, Friday, 23 March 2007
"In such condition there is no place for industry; because the fruits thereof are uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor increase of the commodities that may be imported by the sea; no commodious buildings; no instruments for moving and removing such things as require force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continuous fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." (Hobbes The Leviathan)

Fifty years have passed since I wrote the Editorial for the Ravi called “The Promised Land”. We the first generation of Pakistan, had a dream for Pakistan as a role model of a Modern Democratic Welfare State Muslim Civilization; yet their have been four interludes of dictatorship and the life of the Pakistani peasant, chained to poverty and debt, continues to be nasty, brutish and short. When will the bells of Independence tolled at the midnight hour on 14 August 1947 give rise to the dawn of Freedom: Freedom from Want, Freedom from Ignorance, Freedom from Violence and Freedom to Work.

Is there any light at the end of the tunnel. Conventional wisdom propounds that during the first sixty years of Pakistan the only light has been a train moving very fast in the opposite direction and, with the assault and arrest of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, on the Black Day of March 9 2007, the Driver of the train switched off the lights. Departing from this mood of doom and gloom, a cheerful pessimist, or a cautious optimist could argue that the backlash on the streets of Lahore represents a quest for civilization.

A Journey of a Thousand Miles starts with a single step. Salute to the zest for life and liberty of Lahoris. for taking that first step outside the Lahore High Court on a Spring Morning in March 2007 on the Long March to Enlightenment. “What is Enlightenment?” asked the philosopher Immanuel Kant in an essay published in 1784 in far away Prussia at the height of the Age of Reason. “His answer became the Motto of the Government College, founded in far away Lahore, on the banks of the River Ravi, seventy years later:”Courage to Know”.

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T.S.Eliot defines Culture as “a way of life”, either civilized or uncivilized which gives rise to the question posed by this Article: ”Why some Cultures Do Not Become Civilizations” A similar question was posed by Sigmund Freud in the seminal essay “Civilization and its Discontents”. Freud describes the pursuit of happiness as the purpose of life. While he specifies the human condition which makes happiness so elusive. ”The gratification of instincts is happiness” Freud observes “but when the outer world lets us starve, refuses us satisfaction of our needs, they become the cause of very great suffering”.

Civilization is the product of a Social Contract which organizes Society with a Code of Life and Institutions to build a just society by just means. An essential Imperative of Kant’s Enlightenment Philosophy is Humanity as an End in itself and not means to an End. The Holy Quran also describes Homo sapiens as the best of all creations. According to Freud “The substitution of the power of a united number for the power of a single man is the decisive step towards civilization”. The evolution, from what Marx called, Oriental Despotism to trial and error Democracy represents the turning point from Culture to Civilization. Modern history has witnessed three forms of State Structures: Totalitarian, Authoritarian, Democratic.

Authoritarianism is power of the whole people for that of a Monarch or a Dictator. This claim is predicated upon an Ideology. In the words of Rousseau, if the people are not free they must be “forced to be free”. Rousseau’s Concept of the General Will enabled Hitler and Stalin to send millions to the Concentration Camps and execute opponents within and outside their own Party and establish a reign of terror based on Absolute Power. The subtext of Rousseau’s premise “Man is born Free but is Everywhere in Chains”, blames civilization itself for a great part of our misery. Thus, according to Rousseau, who handed over his children to the Foundling Hospital, we would be much happier if we gave up the bondage of civilization and go back to the life of the Noble Savage. In juxtaposition, Hobbes savage was not noble at all. Since the fate of mankind in the state of nature was akin to the English Civil War of the Seventeenth Century, during which Hobbes lived, the primary function of the State was to maintain Law and Order irrespective of Fundamental Human Rights, which find no place in Hobbes political theory. Hobbes Ideal Ruler was something like Plato’s Philosopher King. Muslim Political Theory is based on Platonism.
The thirteen attributes of the Ideal Caliph among the Muslim Philosophers Ibn Thamiya and Mawardi in Baghdad, where Greek thought had been first translated in the Twelfth Century A.D. while Europe was sunk in the Dark Ages, are borrowed from Plato’s The Republic. Unfortunately the Muslim Baghdad did not have access to Aristotle, the teacher of Alexander the Great who passed by the Indus Valley, which is Pakistan today, leaving behind the Great Ghandara Civilization. Aristotle ‘Logic is Inductive where Plato’s is entirely Deductive where the conclusion is Immanent in the first Premise leaving no room for Experiment, and thus for Science.

It is the Social Contract of John Locke which envisions a Civilization protecting humanity from the two threats it faces: namely protecting humanity against nature and regulating the relations of human beings among themselves. Locke believed that the consent of the Governed is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for Good Governance. Locke’s famous prescription “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of happiness”, inspired the enactment of the first Bill of Human Rights in 1689, thus laying the Foundation of the Glorious Revolution of England of 1689 in the aftermath of the throes of the Civil War and the comedy of the Restoration earlier in that century.

A country attains a high level of civilization when we find that the benefits of nature are exploited, the soil is intensively cultivated and planted, the means of communication frequent and rapid. The mineral wealth wrought into commodities and there is beauty, cleanliness and order.

A culture becomes a civilization when the common good and a Government based upon the Consent of the Governed replace Despotism in the form of One Party Rule. Absolute Monarchs and Military Dictators which is the cruel fate of the World of Islam. It is only when the strength of the united community prevails as the rights of citizens against the brute force of any dictator that a Culture becomes a Civilization. “The fateful question of the human species “concludes Freud “seems to me to be whether and to what extent the cultural process developed in it will succeed in mastering the derangements of communal life caused by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction”.

The Twentieth Century was the crucible which tested the three theories of the Social Contract: Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau predicated upon different mythical premises as to the human condition before the advent of civilization. The conclusion that Hobbes drew from his concept of the state of nature, quoted at the
beginning of this Essay, is that of an Authoritarian State. Only such a state, headed by benevolent despot could curb the destructive instinct of aggression which poses a threat to civilization. Rousseau, at the other extreme, described the life of his noble savage in the state of nature as Idyllic, free of all conventions and bondage such as marriage or family. Locke distinguished between liberty and license. State and Society are necessary, according to Locke, to ensure that humanity lives in a tolerant society with respect to the fundamental rights of others including the right to life, liberty and property. Locke’s hypothesis was based on the doctrine of inherent Natural Rights which was the birthright, neither granted by nor forfeited by the State.

What is to be done?

In an essay printed in The daily Time of Lahore on 31 March 2007, the philosopher Francis Fukuyama, well known for his essay on “The End of History” and also for first supporting and then opposing the invasion of Iraq, probably the most unjust War in Modern History without any causus belli, repeated his argument that “if a society wanted to be modern, there was no alternative to a market economy and a democratic political system”. The challenge facing the World of Islam is to reconcile the Eternal Faith with Modernity. It is only through Science and Technology that we can liberate Palestine and Kashmir from the yoke of Occupation. In order to reconcile Our Muslim Culture with the Modern Age we need to look no further than to the writings of the Greatest Ravian of all time Allama Iqbal, our poet and philosopher and the Architect of the Idea of Pakistan. The dream of Iqbal is to be found not only in his verses but in his Lectures on the Reconstruction of Muslim Thought and in his Address to the Allahabad Session of the All India Muslim League in 1930 where he spelt out his vision of a North Western Muslim State comprising the present territories of Pakistan as the final destiny of the Muslims of South Asia.

The Ides of March have come and gone, yet it is morning in Pakistan as we move forward to our true destiny of a Democratic Welfare State: towards Civilization.
A CLASH OF TWO “MONOCULTURES”
KHALED AHMED
Former Editor, The Ravi, Political Analyst

Note: The views expressed are those of the writer and do not represent the publication.

It is said that globalisation imposes a culture on third world states. People start dressing the same way and begin to eat the same sort of things. It brings with it the English language which in turn imposes its own rational and libertarian thinking. This uniform culture is also called “monoculture” these days. Third world societies seem to have no defence in the face of this global culture. Many thinkers are upset with this trend. They think our societies should do something to oppose the “monocultural” wave coming from abroad.

The negative sense is expressed through the charge of “uniform culture”. We tend to convey that we want our culture to be variegated and composed of many regional and ethnic colours. We may be saying that we want to enjoy the variety of identities our people have and wish to achieve an overarching national culture that contains all of them and is therefore much richer in content than the “monoculture” of globalisation. When we think of culture we tend to think less of the cities and more of the countryside. We have in mind the rich creativity of our folklore rather than the drab and barren urban prose produced in the newspapers.

Why is urban culture so unidirectional? Why is our urban way of life so keen to coalesce with the global way of life? It is because of the pursuit of commerce and industry and the need for investment from other countries with larger savings. If foreign money wants to come to Pakistan it will bring with it foreign managers who would live here more easily if our culture is cosmopolitan rather than national. Most cities of the world that do good business have the global “monoculture” that we have decided not to like. We used to call it “cosmopolitan” culture.

The state usually gives freedom of culture, but if it is ideological it restricts cultural expression. When we think of defending ourselves against the culture of globalisation we immediately think of Islam. Let’s fall back on Islam and preserve its culture against the global onslaught and we will be safe. But we soon
learn that it is very difficult to define what culture is permissible in Islam. The “monoculture” of globalisation conquers us because it is based on the “pleasure principle”. The “monoculture” of Talibanisation conquers us because it is based on intimidation. There is a difference between the two “monocultures”.

The handiest meaning of culture – in the absence of a permanent and consensual definition – is the ability of a people to have fun. Much of what we call culture is the creative ways in which a society entertains itself. If a hard religious reform gets rid of this kind of “permissive” culture, it affects economic development. India may be less easy in its terms of trade for foreign investment than Pakistan, but because of its “permissive culture” it attracts business-related foreign residents. Therefore it is not only tourism which suffers in a non-permissive state; a non-permissive state also fails to attract foreign business.

Culture is affected by what the state wants to do with the identity of the people who live in it. The state may change popular culture to set the population apart from the population of a neighbouring “enemy” state. It may have a “transformational” ideology requiring the removal of an “inchoate” traditional culture. An ideological state is differentiated from a democratic state on the basis of its transformational “mission statement”. Pakistan’s transition from a “low-church” (Barelvi-Sufi) society to a “high-church” (Deobandi-Ahle Hadith) society since 1949 has increasingly defined culture as “accretion” and rejected the traditional expressions of popular culture. All transformational ideologies are highly prescriptive and intolerant. They view pluralism with suspicion and are inclined to “exclude” parts of society not amenable to change.

High-Church Islam was accepted by a Low-Church Pakistan Movement because of the need to legislate according to the sharia. The seminary won over the shrine around which Pakistani culture had accreted. What came later was a wholesale removal of culture. A high water mark was achieved in the 1990s when the population actually began to feel the duress behind the change. The change was called Talibanisation, hinting that it had come from the west of Pakistan.

In the 2000s, under pressure from international opinion – exercised by states where Pakistan exports 60 percent of its products - a counter-movement of “normalisation with India” began as a kind of antidote to Talibanisation. Separated by conflict in the past, India and Pakistan are actually drawing close today because of Pakistan’s need to get its culture back. This unspoken subliminal process is important because Pakistan lacks the intellectual resource to
deconstruct its ideology or even to diagnose the internal dynamic of the destruction of culture in Pakistan.

Can we “find” culture? If it is a spontaneous phenomenon, what use is any “finding” of it for the purpose of “prescription”? When we are challenged on any theme, our natural reaction is to reach for Islam. Is it a fair treatment of one’s religion? Who is to blame if we use religion to fashion a culture that would counteract something we don’t like, and in the process destroy the most curative aspects of our religion? Why do we have to study the Islamic civilisation which stretches from the Maghreb to Indonesia with a vast array of different Muslim cultures? If we have the intellectual capacity to somehow grasp a unique Islamic culture, how shall we make people “assimilate” it without state coercion? It takes long years of evolution to assimilate anything. It takes a short time to impose a culture – which usually ends up destroying the culture that existed – through a fiat.

Culture is how the population lives through its folk memory. There is a lot of religion mixed with the aesthetic of poetry and there is a lot of simple entertainment. Its magic is in its variety. Anything monistic will have bad chemistry with culture. The religious purist will find it difficult to accept culture as anything other than accretion, an encrustation that mars the face of true religion. Islamic civilisation itself may not be acceptable because of its ballast of variable culture. Any counsel in favour of “distillation” of true Islamic culture from Islamic civilisation may in itself be reductive.

At times we wish to retain tolerance by recommending an identity that is “mixed” rather than “pristine”. If we have to develop tolerance of a culture that differs from ours, we have to let our culture “cross-fertilise” with the target culture. But how shall we achieve a “cross-cultural consciousness” if we have assumed that our culture is either dead or dying under a Western assault?

Have we first quantified what the presumed Western assault has destroyed? Was it the culture our ancestors enjoyed? And who has actually destroyed it? Has the culture of our parents and grandparents – which we are told was good – been destroyed by the West or by the ideological state? Today as we discuss the possibility of “recovering” our culture, the West is not in a position to prevent us from doing so, or to punish us for undermining its “monoculture”. It is quite possibly the state we will confront. We might find that it will punish us for attempting to stop it from destroying the culture that exists.

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The state performs two functions. It nurtures a popular cultural identity that it finds in its interest. This can be coercive. At the same time it prevents non-state centres of power from imposing an identity of their own. The measure of its sovereignty lies in its capacity to prevent vigilante activities of duress in civil society. It will normally not allow a private entity to forcibly change the culture of the people. But when its internal sovereignty - or monopoly of violence – is not intact, then culture becomes the culture of intimidation which destroys the standards of tolerance established by our “cross-cultural consciousness”.

Pakistan separated from India after quarrelling with the Congress Party which it thought was Hindu-dominated. In Pakistan, the state inherited a cross-cultural popular mind which it disliked because it militated against the “two-nation” doctrine. It began “defensively” purging the culture of its Hindu and non-Muslim elements. After it was done, the private sector in the shape of the jihadi groups took over the function of purifying Pakistani culture. Today, it is difficult to talk of culture because any right-minded, intellectually endowed person would soon find that there is nothing to do but allow freedom of practice to culture. Culture is the product of laissez faire that the vigilante groups will not allow. The demise of culture has accompanied the gradual and still ongoing demise of the state in Pakistan.
In order to define the essence of culture around which the life of human beings revolves, it is necessary to start the argument from defining what mankind actually is. Human beings are considered to be the highest species of God Almighty on earth as He has bestowed them with the ability to acquire knowledge and wisdom. Animals lack sense so they cannot act in an intelligent manner, neither can they enjoy the intensity of emotions as experienced by man. They can only act as has been preordained for them and cannot move out of their cycle of life.

However it is in the nature of human beings that they want to live according to specific norms and habits. The primitive man was just like animals, who used to live in the forests. However with the passage of time, his mind matured as he steadily developed means to acquire control over Nature. Gradually the human population increased so much that human beings got divided into sects, classes, races, communities, civilizations and so on. In this way many civilizations came into being and thus a whole history of Homo sapiens evolved.

Now-a-days, mankind is divided into large groups called countries, or continents, and so on. Every province, country and even religions have their own peculiar culture or way of life. Each country, sect or religion boasts of its respective culture. People of various places and religions discuss among themselves the superiority of their respective cultures. In some instances severe hostilities have arisen among nations as a result of their cultural conflicts, ultimately leading to wars.

People usually consider their culture to be precious and praiseworthy. Even in Pakistan, there are various cultures or different ways of life prevalent in the four provinces, and even within the provinces there are sub-cultures. The Punjabis feel proud of their Punjabi culture and likewise do the Sindhis, Baluchis and the Patakhans. Each of these cultures has its distinguishing features which impart depth and richness to civilizations.
All human beings are equal in the eyes of God. Islam grants great freedom and liberty to man, but does not compromise on the equality among mankind. According to an international charter, freedom is the birthright of every individual. Every person has certain rights granted and guarded by society, and in return he ought to perform some duties. It therefore requires of a society to evolve a set of laws, which ensures security and peace, for the smooth functioning of society.

Cultures should be respected and honoured in their own right. No culture is inferior to the other.

A brief overview of the world reveals that there are various cultures coexisting in this world even within the Islamic community. Culture is the product of circumstances and environment. The preservation of cultures is very important as it is a part of the collective heritage of mankind since only those nations become successful who do not forget their roots. However cultural differences between civilizations should not be stressed so much that they become problematic. There should be an atmosphere of respect for the rich varieties of cultures in the world but the feeling of cultural superiority should not exist.

Globalization is a big threat to the diversity of cultures. If the world starts moving towards a mono culture, mankind might lose the charms of life.
AN INTERVIEW WITH SARMAD SEHBAI, POET AND FORMER EDITOR THE RAVI. CONDUCTED BY MEMBERS OF THE EDITORIAL BOARD: SIDRA SAJID, AMNA WASIF, RAFAQAT ALI AND AZMAT HAROON

Sidra: Would you shed some light on the meaning of culture?

Sarmad Sehbai: There are two things involved in this, one is culture and the other is civilization. We come from Monjedharo, we have the Indus Valley Civilization. Culture keeps on changing, for example the colonial rule left deep marks on the sub-continent. It changed our culture in many ways. Today the mobile culture is a product of the technological advancements. But civilization is the foundation of culture. For instance, we can’t escape our ethnicity, we can’t escape our history. Before partition, there was intermingling between different religions, many Central Asian and other races were melting. You can see its glimpse even today. If you go to an Urs, you’ll find a culture of popular Islam. Malang is a hybrid image of Dervaish and Jogi. Dervaish represents Middle East and Jogi, India. Similarly, in terms of music and other things you can find a blend of cultures. Civilization changes after centuries but culture constantly evolves.

Amna: Do you think given the present world scenario, we are heading somewhere, so far as our civilizational evolution is concerned?

Sarmad Sehbai: It will remain the Eastern civilization. Even though culture changes, cultural difference is very important. Without realizing the cultural difference you can not have a cross-cultural complementation. The Western societies are trying to assimilate other cultures. You can not call it globalization, its gobbling of cultures. They have set the western culture as the sole criterion, the other must change, learn their habits and their ways. This is not cross-cultural communication but vandalism.

Azmat: Do you consider it an invasion of other cultures?

Sarmad Sehbai: Yes, it’s the invasion of cultural, territory, and freedom. When different cultures come together, it is in fact, an organic evolution of societies and civilization. There is a coercive and mechanical way of mingling cultures which is
very conscious. Today America promotes inter-cultural and inter-faith harmony very strongly. But the Americans themselves are creating a primitive war of crusades. It’s the most regressive thinking. Inter-faith and inter-cultural slogans are all empty because it’s the assimilation of cultures, it’s not organic.

**Rafaqat:** But even then, these slogans do leave an impact; we have adopted various western concepts. Doesn’t it show that we are deviating from our cultural roots?

**Sarmad Sehbai:** We can never loose contact with our roots. People have this misconception that others can take over people’s roots. They might change, they might not dress up in the same way, they might start eating with a knife and fork but at home they will always be the same.

**Sidra:** But is there a way through which we can explore our cultural identity?

**Sarmad Sehbai:** It’s not a conscious effort that we make, you only have to be aware of the primary sources of culture. For example we have music and poetry. If our parents do not tell us about this music and this poetry then we shall always feel intimidated by other cultures. If someone quotes Shakespeare and Keats to you, and you feel intimidated it’s because you feel that you don’t have anything. No doubt they are brilliant but you should introduce Waris Shah, Shah Hussain, and Bulleh Shah to them. Give exposure to your poetry as well.

As for music, the western play music on alphabets and numbers. A drummer fascinates us, but ask him to play the seven beats ‘Dha Dik Dhik Thid and you’ll see the uniqueness of eastern culture. A man deprived of his roots will feel intimidated, leading to an identity crisis in the presence of another culture. He’ll embrace whatever is available, because every man wants to have an identity.

Even if you take the students who are studying at Harvard, they see South Asians and suddenly they start using kajal. They adopt easily because they are deprived of their cultural identity.

**Azmat:** What is cultural identity?

**Sarmad Sehbai:** Identity comes from richness. There are two kinds of identity, one is a living experience and the other’s tagging. A person may wear western clothes, but knows his roots; he has complete knowledge of his civilization. He
may appear socially different, but he lives his identity. People who don’t live their cultural identity, easily wrap themselves according to their surroundings. But their identity disappears eventually. When they have grown old, they start breaking up, and face severe crisis because they are empty from inside.

Rafaqat: Where does Pakistani culture stand among the cultures of the world?

Sarmad Sehbai: To see things in duality or in sharp binaries is an outdated perspective. The modern concept is of multiple layers. Culture doesn’t have a single identity or a stable meaning; instead it has a floating meaning with multiple layers. So there is no such thing as pure Pakistani culture or pure Indian culture or pure Persian culture. There are layers of culture.

The media for example projects the state’s culture. During General Zia’s regime, it was the will of the state to project Islamic values, so it was the Pakistani identity, officially. But the real world was very different. The state wanted women to wear veils but not all of them wore it. The shrines in Pakistan represent will of the people, they have their own culture. Hence, there’s no one single cultural picture but there are multiple forms of the same culture.

Amna: How is National Identity formed?

Sarmad Sehbai: The concepts of National identity are dated. They came into existence during colonialism. There were nationalist movements, like the Iranian nationalist movement and the nationalist movements of the third world against colonialism. Now there’s post-colonialism and then post- post-colonialism. No nation can remain purely nationalist today. We should open our minds, and participate in everything that is happening in the multiplitistic world.

Azmat: How can we strengthen our identity?

Sarmad Sehbai: We need to draw from our primary sources. For instance, you should know Punjabi first and foremost. After that you can learn English, French, or Italian, its up to you. You should know your music, and later you can play guitar and other instruments. It’s your primary experience which stays with you forever. There are other things as well, but they are temporary, they change according to time.
At the same time, one should not look at changes obliquely. This is wrong to think that the primary source is the ultimate source. You are the citizens of the world; it’s your right to inherit the whole world. There are so many beautiful things in the world, take Spanish music. If you start thinking that it’s not my culture so I shouldn’t learn it, then you will remain deprived of otherwise beautiful possibilities. This attitude will stagnate culture, and so your values.

Every new person is a new experience in the world. All of you have inherited certain traditions and values but you want to experience the world afresh. The old might tell you that this is wrong and you might agree as well, but you would always want to experience it. Particularly the new generation, they should question because they have to authenticate their interpretations. The young generation with their curiosity makes evolution vibrant.

**Sidra:** If every new person holds to a new set of values, wouldn’t the old values fade away?

**Sarmad Sehbai:** It depends on the survivability of something. There are certain things which are primordial solutions to certain things. Culture and civilizations resolve human inherence, it’s perennial. There is an antagonism between male and female. The master slave relationship is different throughout the world. These problems are resolved through religion or cultures which lay out a pattern. But these patterns keep on breaking. Satti is not practiced anymore, but its imprints remain. Women sacrifice themselves as a metaphor, psychologically not physically. They can take another form but the primordial and human inherent problems; its instinctual being remains the same.

**Azmat:** What are the forces which guide our instinct?

**Sarmad Sehbai:** The instinctual being is fished against nature. They are the constant factors but other things such as philosophy and technology vary. The sun sets in the same way, and seasons change. Society resolves through the relationship of nature and instinct. We began from tribalism, then came feudalism, then monarchy, democracy and then Marxism and socialism. This shows that human consciousness is trying to resolve the structure of the society. It is in fact, trying to resolve the relationship between instinct and nature. For example, hunger and sexuality are instincts but societies resolve these issues through different methods such as religion or philosophy. They try to resolve the problems which are inherent in humans.
Rafaqat: What kind of impact does it leave on the new generation?

Sarmad Sehbai: Every new generation passes through this instinctive experience. The resolutions set out by the society are sometimes not accepted by a generation. In this sense, every generation pushes the society towards change. Sometimes you make personal resolutions, as well you create your own universe and you fight to survive in society.

Amna: How is language a major tool in transmuting the culture?

Sarmad Sehbai: In every society there is a linguistic hierarchy which has power codes. If you speak good English, people will consider you an educated person, with a good background. If you speak Punjabi, it will have a different code.

Rafaqat: What kind of role has Urdu played in this regard?

Sarmad Sehbai: Urdu became the power code, when it was granted the status of national language; it was placed next to one God, One Quran and One Language. The status of Urdu became supreme, consequently we lost Bangladesh and we are still facing upheavals.

The role of Urdu was very oppressive in Pakistan. We committed the same mistake of uniting the country through language. It was very mechanical in the sense, if I were a Punjabi, or Sindhi or Balochi, I was not allowed to receive education in my language or to have magazines and books published in my own language. The hegemony of one language oppressed other languages. When Maula Jutt was released in the 80’s, the Urdu cinema was closed. When you tried to impose Urdu on Bangladesh, they went their separate ways.

Amna: What could have been a better solution?

Sarmad Sehbai: Well, if they had declared Urdu to be the national language but left free the public to publish their own newspapers and allowed them the freedom to education in their own language, it would have given confidence to both sides. Instead we saw a negative vibe which spread the message that if a Punjabi or a Sindhi spoke his respective language, he would be an anti-nationalist. It became
fascism. You can not preserve your cultural integrity without recognizing cultural differences.

Azmat: What role can artists play in cultural exchange programs?
Sarmad Sehbai: Roles are defined by certain custodians and social moralists. Artists have no role of such kind, they only live their experience. The ones who play cultural roles become shopkeepers or director generals. A true artist is not bothered about this. He carries on with his guerrilla war. He doesn’t write for fame, neither for social change, he is on an entirely different plane.

Rafaqat: Some people believe that religion is more important than culture; others tend to exclude religion from culture altogether, where do you think the point of balance lies?

Sarmad Sehbai: Religion is the need of man because there is a level where the known becomes unknown. Human consciousness has a limit. As long as there is unknown, there will be religion. There is, however, a difference between religious experience and institutionalized religion. When you institutionalize religion, it becomes a power centre. Christ said that don’t make my church, but it was created nonetheless because it generated power. Pope uses his authority; all the wars in Europe were due to the institution of Pope. That is why I believe that Sufi experience is far better.

Amna: What is the place of tradition in civilization?

Sarmad Sehbai: Traditions have a very strong place in civilization, it’s actually a collection of traditions. Some traditions change while others remain. The spring time in Pakistan is different; the winds of Chetar that blow here are not the same throughout the world. Have you read the poem “The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock”? It reads;

Let us go then, you and I
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table

The evening is the etherised patient because the colour of evening is like that in London. But the evenings here are full of romance. The summers of London are not very warm because of the cold climate but here we have scorching heat. So
these civilizational experiences such as climate influence the poetry and similarly, food. Just as the flavour of mangoes in Pakistan has its own uniqueness.

Traditions of Lucknow, Iran, China and the Greece are all important part of the civilizations of the world. Civilizational stand remains which is dependent on birds, rivers and the winds of a country. When I went from Pakistan to London, a man asked me about the weather in Pakistan, I told him it was nice. He asked; Badal aye san? It’s the civilization which he could not forget. The seasons, the taste of garlic, he could not forget the flavours.

**Sidra:** Does this mean that the civilization that comes to us is a part of God’s design?

**Sarmad Sehbai:** Yes, precisely. This is true that you are born in a certain atmosphere. A white man may go to India and might embrace Hinduism but genetically he’ll remain white. His culture changes but his civilization stays the same because of the childhood that he has spent in his home country.

**Azmat:** Do you think culture can ever become a binding force for the world?

**Sarmad Sehbai:** Different things become reasons for binding people together in different circumstances. It depends on the political atmosphere, when something is challenged, we can foretell its consequences. So accordingly, different elements can become the binding force, it sometimes is religion, and at other culture. However, you can not make people uniform, or program them to work in a certain way; it would be criminal, fascistic, whether it’s in the name of religion or cultural history. It’s an evolving process, a conscious effort to bring change. The organic development of knowledge remains. The theory of knowledge says that we cannot change historical determinism. Only its awareness can free you from its chains, otherwise you remain a victim of history. For example if you can’t understand a man, it will be a hostile relationship. Ancient men could not understand fire, but once they understood how it worked, they learned to control it. It’s the awareness of determinism, you can’t neglect it.
The essence of Islamic life style consists of the idea that it is not enough to practice Islam in the personal life only. Islam has essentially to be practiced in the social, economic, and political fields as well. In other words, it implies that the establishment of the sovereignty of Almighty Allah both in the "religious" as well as the "secular" domains is a must. There is no dichotomy in Islam between collective and individual life. The underlying and pervasive idea in this context, which is also an integral part of the Islamic revolutionary thought, is that the struggle to establish unqualified and unconditional ascendancy of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (saw) is obligatory upon all the Muslims. The goal of this struggle is, to achieve the domination of the True way of life (Deen al-Haq), so that the Islamic System of Social Justice - which is the most balanced synthesis of human freedom, fraternity, and equality, and which embodies the Divine attributes of Benevolence, Providence, and Justice - can be established on earth.

Unfortunately, the conception of many of our traditional ulama appears to be seriously flawed and misguided in this respect. They are usually of the opinion that implementation of the Islamic laws or Shariah is all that is required to turn an un-Islamic society into an Islamic one. But they seem to ignore the fact that the laws always sub-serve the system. If the system were corrupt, the Islamic laws would simply protect and enhance the corruption. As such, an Islamic society would be that, where politico-socio-economic system is based on justice and equality. In order to make Islamic Laws effective, prevailing feudal and interest based banking system, which are the biggest tools of exploitation and corruption, must be abolished. However, since these form the power basis of the prevailing corrupt system, the only way to abolish them is through revolution. In this context, it is not difficult to imagine why the Islamic revolutionary thought is
condemned and denigrated by the West as one of the most despised evils in today's world. The reason for their extreme aversion is based on the fact that only the system of social justice of Islam with its dynamic interpretation and the revolutionary process can bring about the fundamental change. It is therefore the revolutionary Islam that poses a real challenge to the corrupt and exploitative capitalistic system based on greed, lies and deception that was born in Europe but which has come to dominate the entire globe.

What is Capitalism? Is an economic and social system, which evolved from the association of individuals, who possessed an ability to dominate their respective societies? Because of their dominance, it provided these individuals with an opportunity to exist and flourish relatively free of restraints. A free spirit is the natural breeding ground for innovative discoveries, and rapid development, as the rapid progress in Western technology triumphantly confirms.

The dominant members have therefore always promoted the system as the ultimate expression of freedom for an individual. That certainly might be true for the dominant members, but the reverse is true for the remaining members of that society. This type of economic system surfaced in earlier Western societies as Feudalism, which now dominates the entire globe.

Collective affairs of a feudalist/capitalist society are decided by the privileged class: the elite. Such a concept is diametrically opposed to the basic teaching of Islam. In Islam, there is no discrimination on the basis of wealth or power; the only basis of differentiation would be the following of Islam.

The Holy Qur'an describes Islam as Deen-ul-Haq, the true way of life. The very connotation of the word Deen - as contrasted with "religion" - is a declaration of war against discrimination and exploitation. This is because the word religion is commonly used in a rather narrow sense, its scope being limited to a set of dogmas, some rituals for worship, and a number of social customs to celebrate important life-events. Deen, on the other hand, is a system of life in which human beings consciously surrender themselves to the sovereignty of a Higher Authority, and live a life of total obedience to that Higher Authority. Islam is a Deen not religion, which means a system of life where Almighty Allah (SWT) is worshipped and obeyed in each and every aspect of human life.

The true way of life, Deen-ul-Haq, is not meant to survive submissively, as religion, under the umbrella of financers; instead the Holy Qur'an makes it
abundantly clear that Islam is meant to dominate all the man-made systems and ideologies, without which a significant portion of Islam would remain confined to the realm of theory only. It's not that Islam cannot survive or support itself without political authority; rather, it is the political authority that grows more and more corrupt unless it is subordinated to the commands of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (saw).

The struggle to establish the domination of Islam is one of our basic, though unfortunately forgotten, duties. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) established the System of Social Justice of Islam after a relentless and unyielding revolutionary struggle of twenty years and many sacrifices of men and material. In the same way, the true believers shall establish the system of Islam once again in the world, according to the sayings of the Prophet (SAW).
The relationship of words and meaning is quite complex, what is more complex is the history of meaning. History of meaning in turns becomes the history of relationship of the word with the metaphysical structure of a particular universe! This relationship is governed by Signs and Symbols. What relationship they have with the universe itself is a matter of great academic controversy! At the apex of modernity when Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote in *Tractatus*, “The limit of my Language, is the Limit of my world” perhaps he was becoming aware of this paradox of the relationship of Language [signs and symbols] and the world [the universe]. The realization becomes complete, to what extant completeness is possible is another question, with Michel Foucault when he wrote “even the history of “Man” has a history”. All these: the word, the meaning, the Language, the sign and the symbol, the man are the characters of what I call “The Myth of Culture”. Culture is not the representation of the essence of humans life , neither it is the expression of an interiorized reality of human existence in a society or if I use the more politically correct term the “social formation”. It is just expression of various ideas of thinking and ideas of “how to think” which can be traced to specific origins in history; the project of creating identities and Subject.

With the above I have defined the limits of my article and I will explore these limits. What exists beyond these limits is not the object of my work! The definitions I have chosen for “culture” are the expression of these limits. Before I go into semantic history of culture, I want to give the definitions of culture by two of the greatest sciences of Modernity, which in certain ways are representation of the spirit of Modernity; Sociology and Anthropology. For me these definitions are “rationalization” or attempt to rationalize these practices of “Identity formation” and “subjectification” of humans. Sociologists tend to define culture as “All the behavior and related products which men, as members of human society, acquire by means of symbolic interaction...". Boudon’s definition is more suitable for my thesis, though I don’t consider any of those to be detrimental to my work. “Culture stems from the development and transmission of human belief in
symbols” "The language system is a series of symbols used to transmit cultural beliefs among members of a society" "Messages about cultural expectations can be found in the media, government, religious institutions, educational systems, and the like.”. yet another is “society relies on a culture that has unwritten rules and guidelines”

As for the Anthropologists, they tend to define culture as “Culture is learned behavior” A person is not born with a culture. Culture is a universal, every human being possesses it by virtue of their biological state” Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning." -- Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures. (Cultural Anthropology) is inherently pluralistic, seeking a framework in which the distinctive perspectives of each cultural world can be appreciated.

A glance at the definitions establish few facts [the word has a great metaphysical presence], first is the extreme “tension” visible in the text! This actually represents the expression of the intrinsic paradoxes of the modernity. Secondly, the absolute paradoxes that the definitions seem to rationalize, thirdly the relationship of entities like symbol, sign, language meaning and thought with the culture is established! Though the texts have been laid as to manifest culture as expression of intrinsic activity of self, they also seem to imply the “Alien to self” nature of culture that the Self cannot seem to escape. This is the Paradox of Individual and the “Other”. This is the intrinsic paradox of Modernity! The text seem to have statements and unspoken gestures. Whilst culture is defined as not being a property of human essence [not born with culture] yet it’s a “Universal” and every human being “possesses it” by virtue of their biological state!. The text here is extremely unstable and tense as here the Paradox is ready to manifest! Possession like possession by demons! Or an Alien. It appears culture some how becomes part of the activity of the “self” to” become”. This than becomes yet another absolute paradox of being- in –itself and Being-for-itself!

The next thing that manifests itself in text of definitions is the “grand power structures” that are both implicit and explicit. [in different threads] , the anthropological definitions express the confusions and paradoxes of “universalism” and “Pluralism”. The relationship of Power with culture has only recently got academic attention. The definitions show a great degree of “Power relation” and intention to exert “control”, consider the definition by Marven Harris which I find suffocating "Humans cannot eat, breathe, defecate, mate,
reproduce, sit move about, sleep or lie down without following or expressing some aspect of their society's culture. Our cultures grow, expand, evolve. Its their nature." – it seems to give culture “the absolute control” over the human beings. This relationship of the Myth of Culture and Human Beings becomes the prime object of my study! Perhaps a more explicit, power and structure obsessed definition of culture is what is given by Dictionary of Modern Sociology: "The total, generally organized way of life, including values, norms, institutions, and artifacts, that is passed on from generation to generation by learning alone". This definition completes the “integrals” that I need for the power analysis of this Myth.

Before starting the above mentioned analysis, I want to touch the semantic history of “Culture” that in my understanding clarify the role of “culture” as a “identity forming” and “subject forming” control and power related apparatus.

Culture derive its original meaning from Latin, from “Cultura” which means “To cultivate the Soil”. Civilization also derives its meaning from latin, from civis, that is the status of citizenship. The recent discussions on culture always involves its relationship with civilization. Both of these entities had acquired secondary meanings in Latin as well, for example Cicero uses cultura in a transferred sense when he identified cultura amini [culture of soul] with Philosophy and learning in general. Civis denotes not only the status of roman citizenship but also sense of superiority over the primitive condition of the foreigner or “barbarian”. [both of these meanings become important in textual analysis of culture esp in understanding the “identity formation and subjectification”] Both these meaning lingered on in the modern times and were combined [on going process] with other constructed meanings.

The word “culture” and “civilization” themselves did not gain currency in European thought till the mid eighteen century. But the “meaning” proliferated so rapidly that by the late eighteen century when great German Philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder sat down to analyze culture he wrote “Nothing is more indeterminate than this word!”

Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), was perhaps the most influential if not the first who created the dichotomy between the “Real World” which he called the World of Nature and world of Culture, which he called, the world of Men. This dichotomy never left Modernity. He boldly declared boldly declared that since the “cultural world” was the construct of men; it’s more likely to yield its secrets to...
human inquiry than the world of nature which was created by God. This premise became the bedrock of all speculation on genesis and development of culture! This rationalization of the practices of the control [world of men was world of nation, ultimately the Nation State of Europe] continued with Herder, Kant and Hegel. Rousseau questions though not rejects this bias of modernity when he criticizes the “Civilization”, in discourse on origin of inequality he assails the “natural law theorists” for mistaking the “artificial” for real and for giving the name of “natural law to practices and norms they find expedient. Thus rationalizing the existing practices and institutions like “Private Property”, they have failed to realize what this has done to the traditional cultures, Private property might have developed civilization but it has destroyed the traditional culture. It now becomes the interest of men to appear what they were not, to be and to seem became two totally different things”. This clash of civilization and Culture became the “Culture” of the colonial world. In his land work Orientalism Edward Said gives extensive textual evidence that proves “Orient” is a construct of the “occident’, the Geography, Psychology, politics every thing was constructed. From the “Barbarian’ blood thirsty sub humans to great, obedient, wise and calm oriental gentlemen all traceable to various ideas of the orient in the occident. Even today I find it hard to transcend this colonial construction, the expressions visible in the texts of today, the manic barbarian of the tribal area, the Sufi pacifist of the city, the kite flying libertarian of the capital, human rights activists opposing the “western imperialism”, the Rational, enlightened civilized statesman all present on the pages of The Dawn and all explainable by the conflict [primitive] of culture and civilization explain by Rousseau!

Why this is needed, the process of calling individuals by names, of setting up institutions, norms, values, artifacts, than transmitting them via signs and symbols, making them so “Present” that they become a “belief”. A belief so imposing that it become “essence” or “nature” of a human even before his existence is established?. This problem in existential context was taken up by one of the leading intellectual of the previous century, Jean Paul Sartre. Sartre established that “Existence precedes Essence” a revelation that “condemned” the humans to Freedom. What is required of us is to analyze why a human who is condemned to be free is a “Slave” every where?. Sartre gives his analysis at the level of self, individual and being. In order to deny the absolute freedom that humans have, he assumes the role of an inert object totally at the mercy of circumstances, thus he assumes social roles and value system the only remedy he has as “conscious being” to deny the freedom available to him. Sartre called this “Bad Faith”. Its this bad faith, that converts a human into a “waiter”, always
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smiling and ready to help, though he may by nature not friendly at all! The analysis applies to every “cultural creature” from “Man” to “Woman”, From “National culture” to “Regional culture”. It was Sartre life long companion the great existentialist Philosopher Simone de Beauvior, who in her legendary book “The Second Sex” proved the Socio-cultural construction of “Woman”. Her thesis summed up in the revelational sentence “No human is born a Woman”

The “bad faith” when examined at a social level, reveals the mechanisms of its creation, maintainance and its non genetic trasmission into next generations by a series of institutions, norms, values, ideologies that have been named as “Culture”, whose perception as a “Analytical Phenomenon” merely recored by us I call “the Myth”. It was the great Itallian Marxist Philosopher Antonio Gramsci who in his “Prision Notebooks” first of all systematically examined this phenomenon. This was the problem of sustanance of this capitalist system despite logical contradictions. He reached the conclusion that this oppressive systems maintains itself not only through the oppressive powers of control and state but also by what he called “Cultural Hegemony”. The creation of culture, the “ideology”, or the “ways of thinking” where the values of the status quo become “common sense”. The masses are “Programmed” to think in ways that are good for the ruling elite and against their own interest. This is what culture does! It takes away the insight into their savely which is accepted happily as “freedom” Gramsci’s thesis will change every thing for the future cultural theorists and Philosophers and will influence almost every part of “Critical Theory”, from Frankfurt School to the mainstream humanities. Its strongest influence would later be felt in PostModern School .Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault will develop this thesis to general academic acceptance!

Louis Althusser in 1968 published “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation” that for the first time presented the first fully systematic analysis of the role of ideology, the ways of thinking and the apparatuses that made and maintained these ways. He identified the methods and mechanisms which the state employs at the level of ideology to maintain status quo. The various state ideological apparatuses – and he included among them especially the schools, the family, religions and religious institutions – worked not by power and politics (as did the RPA) but rather by ideology. By this he meant that they functioned to inculcate children and adults in specific ways of thinking about and thus understanding their relationship to the societies within which they lived. ISAs work by ideology, which in Althusser’s view means by “interpellation”. That is, institutions such as families, churches, schools, and so on
function by “calling” individuals by names and in terms that prescribe and enforce (a) thinking in specific ways about their relationships with other individuals and with institutions and practices in society and (b) acting accordingly. In his subtle formulations, Althusser focuses on the “subjectivity” of such interpellated individuals. He sees the ISAs as quite literally imposing the particular subjectivity that individuals assume and internalize as self-definitions. Modern capitalism presses ISAs to subject individuals to a particular ideology of the “subject” that provides crucial conditions of existence for (that reproduces) capitalism.

A glance at the above will make one thing clear, all the sets indentified by Althusser as ISAs are nothing but the institutions, norms and values which the sociologists haved defined as “culture” and them selves confessed to be “non genetically transmitted beliefs”, or symbols and signs that humans identify to speak and think!, here the original meaning of culture “To Cultivate” makes all the sense, the terminology of “Cultural creature” makes all the sense, the dichotomy between real world and cultural world makes all the sense in the world! Michel Foucault will take this analysis further and with his extensive research into history showed how various realities are just “socio-cultural contract”, his main interest was the relationship of Power and Cultural identities, the role of power in formation of Subject. His work is of paramount importance. Amongst his most important contribution is his work on the history of “Man”, he showed that “Musculinity” is a Socio-cultural construct. Also important is his study of the “Pervert” and “Normal” which in his views are also social constructs. He considers all these subjects that have different relationships with Power!

In modernity capitalism worked by making identities that worked in contradiction to sustain the system. The greatest of this identity was that of a Nation, the National culture, its closely associated with the Nation state. The creation of the national culture renewed in the colonial countries the conflict of civilization and culture. The indiginous cultural identities grew in reaction to the more civilized national culture! The trauma further resulted in conflicting cultural identities based on nation, nationality, ethnicicy, religion, cast and creed, it becomes totally impossible to investigate the “originality” of any of it when one takes into account the “Orientalism”, and the reactionary nature of most of these cultural identities.

In the 60s the French Philosophers declared the “death of nation state”, the analysis was further tranced to its origins in the modernity and Lyotard declared the start of the epoch of Late Capitalism or” Post modernism” [though the
question remains that when continuous progress of Modernity itself became a statis, how this stasis be transcended to become “Post” Modernity?] With it the dominant school of Philosophy in humanities became post modernism, its essence was “cultural” and most of its founders were cultural historians and theorists. Perhaps the most eminant of todays’s cultural philosopher is Jean Baudrilard , who has given a very influential critique of mass media, his work is in opposition to that of Foucault. His thesis of Simulacra and Simulation is very influential in mass communication and semiotics. He asserts that Mass Media has created so much copies and simulation that the “real” is totally lost. The Societies have become a Simulacrum. Whilst the Modernity created identities, Post Modernity is utter confusion, so far as that a copy cannot be separated from Real. His famous thesis is “There is no Real World”

The epoch of the late capitalism , in which we are now living has been described in the cultural analysis as similar to Schizophrenia . This started with the great Philosopher and Cultural theorist Gilles Deleuze who published his masterpiece “Capitalism and Schizophrenia” . The most important cultural realities [though the term Real is absolute contradiction in this scenerio] are given by Peretti who discusses the “lack of identity” Identity of this era” “In many respects the media culture of the late twentieth century simulates schizoid experience. The rapid fire succession of signifiers in MTV style media erodes the viewers sense of temporal continuity. To use the same words that Jameson uses to describe schizophrenic experiences, the images that flash across the MTV viewers' retina are "isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence." This postmodern montage can have the effect of disorienting the subject, and may contribute to the egolessness that is characteristic of schizophrenia

In terms of the Psychology of the Cultural history we have entered from “Mania” of Modern Culture to the Schizophrenia of the Post Modern one! As the Mania was “cultivated” so as this schizophrenia. The issue of “lack of identity” in this era and the precise “schizo analysis” is a matter of dispute. Deleuze’s understanding of Schizophrenia is bit different, though it is beyond the scope of this article! Yet another thesis about the genesis of lack of identity is that of “Multiple identities” that the “Internet” has made possible, yet another of the post modern cultural institution! World Wide Web has made it possible for one to assume as many identities as possible to an extent that a Virtual Universe exists with nothing “Material” about it! Every thing exist in a “click of Mouse”, the very notions of “reality”, “actuality”, “existence” and “nonexistence” have become

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meaningless! Here we meet thanks to “culture” with what Modernity use to call “Madness”

Perhaps it was this that led the great philosopher Deleuze to declare: “I hate Culture”
The word culture has a wide range of meanings, however, generally it implies the way of living, norms and traditions, festivals and arts of different kinds of any country. Each land and its inhabitants are peculiar in their culture and the factors of this peculiarity also differ. For instance, the history of a nation, its religion and way of living, geographical condition including weather affect its culture.

Being an Islamic country Pakistan is the upholder of Islamic culture and having been part of subcontinent for several centuries. It has also extracted the various regional distinctions. So Pakistan’s culture is broader and deeper.

The characteristic which Pakistani culture adopted from Islamic culture include tolerance, sacrifice, strong family relations and social gatherings. By raising the slogan, (there is no violence in religion), gave the non-Muslims those unique rights which are not only the part of constitution of Pakistan but also an eminent feature of its culture. Religious festivals express the sentiment of sacrifice while joint family system distinguishes it from the so-called western culture where any relation which is no more beneficial to you is worthless and it is regarded appropriate to get rid of it. People share each other's joys and grief. Besides religion, the regional conditions also affect culture. The region of sub-continent is rich in 'sufism' which is further rich not only in literature, but music, dance and festivals also. The immortal stories of Heer Ranjha, Sassi Punnu and Mirza Sahiban, the energetic Dhamal nad Bhangra of the devotees which make them forget their worries are the salient features of Sufi Culture. The message of this culture is love and tolerance.

The literary arts are the front page of any culture. They have the status of eyes in human body which respond to internal as well as external stimuli. In poetry Pakistan and the Muslims of subcontinent have taken much from Iqbal, Ghalib, Haali and Meer’s contributions to literature.

Folk culture has deep roots in our society –different folk dances which are an effective way of our cultural expression. Music has been seen as a controversial matter by many people. It is thought that Islam dislikes it but very few people know that Farabi, a Muslim scholar, was an expert in music and had great skill in playing musical instruments. Ibn-Seena was a scholar of music and knew how to
utilize this art for treating the sick. Today’s Pakistan is rich in the art of music and promotes its culture through music.

Whatever maybe the land and its history its culture is rooted deeply in religion. Forgetting one’s own roots and adopting the culture of any other country is mere selfish deception. We, as Pakistani’s, should have full knowledge of our culture and so that we might be able to promote it in its real essence.
One man, who can be credited with influencing Western culture, Art and Literature, almost as much if not more than Jesus Christ, is Sigmund Freud, whose pseudo-scientific theories have penetrated deep into the recesses of Western thought. So great is his fame, that all other great thinkers, philosophers and patrons of arts and literature pale into insignificance beside him. It is largely thanks to him that child molesters nowadays get scot-free because they had been “ill-treated as children” themselves, thieves get off lightly after being diagnosed as “kleptomaniacs” and ruthless murderers conveniently get labeled as “schizophrenics” and so are reserved a place in an asylum rather than the guillotine! All of this happens because of the illuminating theories of psychoanalysis which have been increasingly used over the years to give undue advantage to the above mentioned group of people more than they are used for the right causes. It’s not as if Freudian theories have not been used for the right purposes, and I am sure that Freud himself meant no harm. He was, what we would call, a victim of “his own surroundings and circumstances”. A child who was so haunted by the demons of his own past that he thought everyone else’s childhood was necessarily as eventful as his was. For someone, who was part of a Jewish setup that believed that the first seven years of a child’s life to be extremely important, it is but natural to formulate the stages of development that lend force to the same Jewish belief. Also, his undermining of the women’s psyche and his claims that women suffer from penis-envy and as a result, are confused about their role in the cosmic scheme must have stemmed from the attitudes prevalent in the Jewish culture where men daily thanked God in their prayers:

‘I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou hast not created me a woman,’
and women prayed in submission:

‘I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou hast created me according to Thy will.’

So all in all Freud cannot really be blamed for this “intellectual mess” that he came up with. No- the blame lies largely with those “pseudo-psychologists”, who to this day consider Freud’s word as “the law” and so interpret everything from a harmless piece of gossip to courtroom trials in Freudian terms. By pseudo-psychologists, I do not mean qualified clinicians or practitioners but the laymen who pride themselves on their superb understanding of Freud and his theories and
forget meanwhile that psychologists today have largely abandoned Freud and the classical psycho-analytic techniques. Dear old Dr. Freud is a thing of the past and so is his Anna O, Little Hans and all those fantastic cases that he refers to in his Memoirs. However, people belonging to all fields, with the exception of Psychology, have trouble letting go of Freud. Economics, Literature, Fine Arts, History- nearly all these major disciplines enlist the help of Freud and his psycho-analytic theories to explain the basic concepts to their students. It may sound utterly preposterous but is nevertheless true that Marxist theories have come to rely as heavily on psychoanalysis for interpretation as the Surrealistic paintings or Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex! And so, it points to the fact that Freud has an endless fascination for everyone.

Take Literature teachers for example. It is amazing but nearly all teachers who taught literature to me, with the exception of a few, have confessed to be die-hard fans of the great Austrian doctor, and the greatest compliment a literature teacher would bestow upon you would be that you have the penetration and the quickness of mind of not Einstein or Newton, but…Freud! One wonders what is so fascinating about the id, the ego and the superego and the ego-defense mechanisms. Or the Oedipus complex and the Electra complex for that matter? Is libido and thanatos really as earth shattering stuff as it is held to be? It is not as if I am really that cynical of Freudian theories but it irritates me to distraction, that a pseudo-scientist like Freud be given precedence over all other scientists. Of course, Freud wrote about things that have an endless appeal to the human mind, and so the author of Interpretation of Dreams became famous overnight, but Psychology has come a long way since. He was certainly a pioneer in a field that relied heavily on Aristotle and Locke prior to the publication of his theories but that is really all there is to him. His own beloved group of students, who came to be known as Neo-Freudians later, discarded his theories after a while. They remained faithful to psychoanalysis in general, but not to Freud particularly.

The original psychodynamic model of Freud had some key limitations including lack of substantial grounds to experiment upon, with the result that these fascinating theories have continued to fascinate people to date but have garnered little research support, since it is next to impossible to observe the working of the id, ego or the superego.

A likely reason of Freud’s popularity might be due to his ability to get through to the people. He is not terribly highbrow like some other psychologists and of course it saves a lot of trouble if you can diagnose someone as being fixated

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orally than explain it in utterly complicated medical jargon. At least that is what these pseudo-psychologists do. They would label anyone fond of Cadberries as being fixated orally, someone with a streak of eccentricity as one suffering from Histrionic Personality Disorder and would often confuse a Displacement Reaction with Sublimation! This is what a little knowledge can do.

Would it not be better perhaps if the train is kept on the track instead of being off it? Why cannot a person be a little eccentric without everyone quizzing him about his past? Would it really make that big a difference in our lives if we stopped looking for excuses for our personalities instead of just accepting ourselves as we are? And last but not least would it really enable an individual to be a better human being if he knows The Interpretation of Dreams back to front? If you ask me I would definitely say no. It certainly did not help Freud! He died a miserable man, forced to take his own life towards the end, due to mouth cancer. And he certainly would not be pleased, were he alive today to witness a breed of pseudo-intellectuals insulting him so thoroughly. The irony could not be more pronounced when we consider that the man who spent his whole life dispelling rumors, legends and myths has become mythical himself.

But when all is said and done, Freudian psychology is really as good as it gets and I really cannot bring myself to poke any more fun at the pseudo-psychologists when I myself have spent two hours writing on this subject!
Music is medicine for our soul

Man has sometimes believed that sound was cosmic elemental force present at the beginning of the world and taking a verbal form with the passage of time. There are a number of legends and theories on the creation of the universe in which sound had played a major role. Darwin’s theory of evolution discusses the biological origin of sound and also elaborate the significance of expressive sounds produced by all species of living animals, especially of birds whose voices can express various emotions such as distress, fear, anger, triumph, happiness, charm or as a call note to the other sex. Since the creation of mankind, man has observed with curiosity and interest the effects of music (a pleasant sound) on himself and others. He has speculated and wondered a certain phenomena, which were occurring again and again under the influence of music. On the whole, music has made on man the effects he expected from its use, either integrated with various functions or as a purely aesthetic experience.

Since centuries, philosophers, physicians, social scientists and musicians have tried to explain the mechanisms of the responses to music according to their own school of thought. These schools oscillated between two theories; some of them believed that music primarily effected the emotions and created moods which in turn acted on the body; others thought that the process worked in reverse, from the physiological to the psychological. It is always difficult to dissociate the physiological and psychological effects of music. Today it is known that music is evocative of sensations, mood and emotions. The character of music and the effects it provokes depend on the different elements of sound and their relationship. These are; frequency, intensity, tone colour, interval (creating melody and harmony) and duration (creating rhythm and tempo). Some elements, pitch, intensity, and tone colour are inherit, parts of the sound as an acoustical substance, and even animals react to them. In science this is called ‘thalamic responses’, to sensations, which need not be interpreted by the higher functions of the brain, as they do not carry a symbolic or intellectual meaning. Nevertheless each of them is a vital factor in the emotional power of music. The other elements, which give music, a form and an expressive meaning are those produced by a relationship between sounds, usually rhythms, melody and harmony. (Alvin, 1996).

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Music had played an important role in the history of mankind and the early literature highlights number of cases in which people were treated successfully by music when nothing else could work. Therapeutic effects of music were also recognized by the ancient Greeks and Romans, including Pythagoras, Democritus, Aristotle, Galen and Celsus (Schoen, 1946). This approach was not limited only to the west, as traditional Chinese medicine refers to specific musical instruments and sounds, and their beneficial effects on various organs of the body. Similarly, many Muslim scholars, e.g. Al-Ghazali, Jalaluddin Rumi, Abul Kalaam Azad, Al-Razi and Allamah Iqbal have also argued the importance of music in human life and its therapeutic effects (Joomal, 2003). From around the turn of the twentieth century, music has been employed in Western hospitals as a form of treatment under the rather vague assumption that it might affect patients’ metabolic functioning, and may relieve mental strain and fatigue.

Music therapy is defined as the use of sounds and music within an evolving relationship between therapist and client to support and encourage physical, mental, social, emotional and psychological well-being (Bunt, 1994). Modern music therapy emerged after the Second World War when musicians were employed on a regular basis to help rehabilitate returning soldiers, and this produced a need for music therapy training courses. Today, there is an active World Federation of Music Therapy that organizes international conferences and continues to develop standards in training and ethics, and Maranto (1993) noted that at the time there were 3000 practising music therapists in the USA alone. The British Department of Health now recognises music therapy as a paramedical discipline for treating a wide range of physical and mental diseases. In the modern era music therapy can offer a valuable supplement or alternative to traditional psychotherapies for clients with a variety of psychiatric problems, such as anxiety disorders, depression, eating disorders, substance abuse, schizophrenia, affective disorders, personality disorders and organic brain syndrome. The flexibility of music therapy means it can be used in a variety of different treatment formats, adjusting to meet the needs of a vast variety of individual functioning abilities while at the same time complementing the goals and philosophies of other psychiatric treatment methods.

Numerous clinical and experimental studies have indicated the efficacy of type of music in reducing stress; enhancing comfort, relaxation and communication; allowing self-expression; improving psychophysical activation; providing insight and facilitating emotional processing; offering a distraction from pain; and improving cognitive performance. For example; ‘Beethoven's Symphony No.2’
helps to cope with feelings of depression and doubt; the popular "Bach" will decrease sleeping disorders; and research had also highlighted the positive outcome of 'Mozart Effect'. In addition, several other factors may play a role in mediating the effect of music. These include the situation in which it is experienced, the mental phase of the listener, whether the listener is alone or in the presence of others, the nature of other people there at the time of the experience, the distinction between recorded music versus live performances, and listening to music versus performing music, etc.

One important issue that pertains to music is that some people think that man can respond only to music of his culture, which conveys to him some meaning and emotion. His culture is not only ethnographical, since even in the same society people responses to artistic experiences vary according to their social or educational background. In the same society we may find people who have been deprived of certain musical contacts or have had music forced on them; others have discovered music by themselves without any guidance. Today, it is believed that music is clearly a cultural phenomenon. However there is accumulating evidence from different fields of science that music also has deep biological roots. Indeed, the field of bio musicology suggests that music is a result of evolutionary processes. Merkur (1999) in his work The musical ability and musical behaviour of Homo sapiens argued that the best answer to the question ‘Why do we have music?’ is that ‘It is an essential part of human nature’. If arguments such as these are correct, then the importance of music in human life is considerably greater than commonly thought. As research in music expands, we can expect the findings to enlighten our understanding of the universal roles of music in human development and behaviour. The biologically based elements of musical behaviours could well be universal, occurring across the world and across different cultures. The extent to which those processes illustrated here are biological in nature could indicate the extent to which they are universal, and the extent to which these processes are universal could indicate the extent to which they may have biological and psychological bases.

To sum up, the aim of the music therapy is the restoration, maintenance and improvement of physical and mental health of not only those with mental disorders, but it is equally effective for healthy individuals as well. It also aims at to bring about positive changes in behaviour, to improve self-esteem and promote feelings of health and happiness of the individuals. Considering the importance of beneficial effects of music therapy, it is possible to look to a day when music therapy will provide more better and effective ways to improve the health,
happiness, and general quality of life of people from all cultures. It is hoped that in near future *Music Therapy* will play an important role in answering few fundamental psychological questions facing humans, namely how to reduce depression, relax, enjoy and enhance happiness.

“The music which reaches farthest is the beating of a truly loving heart”
Rafaqat: Sir lets start from our university, some students believe that music detracts one from religion, what do you think about that?

Tariq Farani: The debate about music is not religious but political. Sadly, the Mullahs and feudalists have been very influential on music in our society. They have limited its growth. For me, music is the language of God.

Amber: How can you say that?

Tariq Farani: The world was formed with a bang and it will end in the same way. Everything in this world has a frequency. (Taps the cup with a spoon) – This has frequency. (Claps) – This has frequency. The sound of rain drops and wind – all have different frequencies. Out of all these frequencies, notes are made by a melodious frequency. God is the creator of these frequencies, no human can deny it.

Azmat: So it’s true when they say that our ancestors could do magical things with music?

Tariq Farani: Yes absolutely. It’s purely scientific because it’s based on resonance. If I have control over a certain frequency, I can do anything with it. Whether it’s about breaking glass or extinguishing a candle, anything can be achieved through a frequency. In fact, certain illnesses can also be cured through music.

Sidra: You talked about the influence of feudalists in our country, what is their interest in music?

Tariq Farani: For the feudalists, all performing arts including music is entertainment. Landlords and businessmen sponsor musical events in our society, so their only motivation is money. Through religious blackmailing, they exploit music for their own benefits.
**Rafaqat:** Sir, why do you think female musicians are discriminated in our society as opposed to their male counterparts?

**Tariq Farani:** It’s the feudalistic approach once again. All female singers are entertainers for them. They prefer listening to female singers but would never have their daughters or sisters sing. We need to change the outlook of music in our society. Music is the purest form of art; we should appreciate its aesthetic value.

**Azmat:** Why is music such a debatable topic in our society?

**Tariq Farani:** Our society faces a strange dilemma; we don’t have a definite approach towards anything. Neither do we have a philosophical approach nor a confirmative one. Our educational system frequently changes. We need to set our minds straight and promote music as an educative medium.

**Amber:** How can we do that?

**Tariq Farani:** I think music should be included in the policies of our government. An individual’s fight alone won’t make much difference. Here in GCU we take music strictly as an educative medium, so that the students can learn from it. If music prevails in every institution of Pakistan, then perhaps, people will take music seriously.

**Sidra:** How would that help our society at large?

**Tariq Farani:** The impact of music is so strong that it completely changes the composition of an individual. You might have observed that musicians tend to be serious towards life in general. They have delicacy in their personality. That’s because music is an organized form of art, expression becomes easier. Hence, music would help our society become more organized.

**Rafaqat:** Perhaps that’s the reason why students who play musical instruments are more mature than other students?

**Tariq Farani:** Precisely.

**Azmat:** Does music come more naturally to some people?
Tariq Farani: Even if you have a natural ability, you are able to develop your talent only through practice. You need passion for music. Musical geniuses are born one in a million years.

Amber: Sir can you tell us something about the relationship between culture and music?

Tariq Farani: Culture is the representation of soil. Just as poetry is an expression, music expresses the emotions of the soil as well. However, expression varies from country to country. Just as symphony is an important part of Western classical music, vocals are the essentials of Eastern classical.

Sidra: It seems as if western music is dominating the world today, even in Pakistan, the new generation is more inclined towards Western music, why is that?

It’s not the western music; rather it’s the western instruments which have become obsolete today. We are using the electronic instruments such as guitar and keyboards.

Amber: Why did our own oriental instruments decline in Pakistan?

Tariq Farani: Few decades ago, ghazals – a popular form of eastern classical music, became restricted to a limited group of people. Masses were devoid of proper learning of classical instruments. Whenever such a musical vacuum exists, it’s usually filled by an external force. We lost touch with our roots and hence, western dominance took over.

Azmat: But why is there so much craze about Rock music?

Tariq Farani: Rock music is merely a form of expression just like any other genre of music. For instance, the notes of our oriental music are based on Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha Ni. Western notes are based on English alphabets. However, since our dialects are different, no matter how hard we try; our expression of music can never be the same.

Rafaqat: Don’t you feel that if we emphasize too much on our music, we are limiting its scope?
Tariq Farani: I don’t want to place any restrictions on the abilities of students. All I am saying is that expression varies. For example, African-Americans introduced the genre of Jazz music. No matter how good I play a trumpet, it can never be as good as them. Similarly, no one can play a guitar like a Spaniard can. Every region has its own musical dynamics because of its expression. We can imitate, but it can never be a part of our identity.

Sidra: How can music bring together different civilizations of the world today?

Tariq Farani: Music is an art which inspires through notes and sounds. All the ancient civilizations were successful because they gave importance to the development of aesthetics. Farabi, Tusi, Sina, all belonged to the golden time period of Muslims. They worked for the development of arts.
Milton composed his *Paradise Lost* with the avowed objective of "justifying the ways of God to man." But when the epic was oft the anvil, it transpired that instead of hitting the target, the shell had blasted the gunner. Instead of justifying the ways of God to man, Milton had succeeded only in justifying the ways of Satan to man. The epic is not a theodicy. It is purely a Satanodicy.

Milton sponsored a bout between God and Satan. Satan was defeated. But it was a victorious defeat. What could be *more* victorious than being routed by the Supremest-Cosmic Power? God crushed Satan. But it was only a physical crushing. Satan's soul was absolutely unbruised. Milton gave Satan a crush-proof will at God's expense. God succeeded only in inflicting a defeatless defeat on Satan. Poor God!

The beaten Satan trumpets: “Although the field is lost, all is not lost. My unconquerable will is as unconquerable as ever. My immortal hate is as immortal as ever.” God overcame an adversary who overcame his defeat. It was a victoryless victory for the victor. Does not Milton want man to learn Satan’s ways?

Milton was eternally at the mercy of his wild in imagination. His imagination had over-glorified himself. He had gone emotionally blind before going physically blind. He saw everything Miltonically. Anything that did not exude a Miltonic aroma was utterly nauseous to Miltonic nostrils.

As in *Paradise Lost* he glorified Satan at the expense of God, so in 'The Nativity Ode' he glorified himself at the expense of Christ. The Ode, inter alia, proclaims that at Christ's birth universal peace was established on earth. No battle's sound was heard around the world. The spear and the sword were hung up to dry. The war trumpets lost their voice. The war chariots stood unstained with hostile blood. In sum the proclamation avers that Christ's birth was the death of war and strife in the world. Milton requires us to believe that the moment Christ was born, all the war-lords of the world instantaneously embraced Buddhism and at sea the big fish stopped eating the small fish and turned vegetarian.

But the St. Matthew Gospel laughs the Miltonic universal-peace-hallucination out of court. The Gospel narrates: “… an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, saying ‘Arise, and take the child and his mother and flee into Egypt and remain there until I tell thee. For Herod will seek the child to destroy him.’ So Joseph arose and took the child and the mother by night and withdrew into Egypt.
and remained there until the death of Herod..."

Then Herod was exceedingly angry; he sent and slew all the boys in Bethlehem and all its neighbourhood who were two years old or under according to the time that he had carefully ascertained from the Magi. Since there was apparently no protest or violence on the part of the slaughtered babies, Milton comfortably assumed that the holocaust was a peaceful affair. What a universal peace!

Christ was born in Bethlehem. He chose a December for his birth. Milton was born in London. Emulating Christ, he too chose a December- for his own nativity. Normally, winter is damnably severe and snowy in London. Just as Milton, in the teeth of Herodian butchery, invested the entire world with an imaginary peace, similarly at Christ's birth in December he wrapped a snow blanket around the entire world. Milton's wild enthusiasm never allowed him to know that in many parts of the world winter is neither Londonically severe, nor Londonically snowy. Being Christ-drunk, he fancied, that as peace was universally established at Christ's birth so 'innocent snow' was universally showered all over Nature. "It was the winter wild... and Nature had her guilty front hid with innocent snow."

It was not only in Bethlehem but all over the world that Nature covered herself with snow. Was Christ, according to Milton, born in the Glacial Age?

The Gospels are silent about the nature of the weather which enwrapped Judea at the time of Christ's birth. The universal peace and the universal snow are purely Miltonic myths. If the myths could be condoned as a poetic licence, surely it is a pretty licentious licence.

Presumably, at Christ's birth the Bethlehem weather did not have the snowy severity of a London December. We are inclined to this belief on the ground that according to the Ode the Babe was 'meanly wrapt' and lay in a 'rude manger' and yet was smiling. Now, would an inadequately wrapt newly born baby lying in a 'rude manger' in a London-like winter radiate smiles? Milton is not Milton if he doesn’t out-Milton Milton.

The Ode is a shambles strewn with the carcasses of the pagan divinities. To celebrate Christ's birth, Milton crucified all the pagan gods. This is a merciless massacre of Christ's fundamental teachings. Christ came to the world with the sacred mission of establishing peace through love. He must have been shocked at Milton's appalling ignorance of his teachings. The Ode is a blasphemous sermon against the Sermon-on-the-mount. It is a terrorist's missile fired at the pagan shrine.

Once the Pharisees asked Christ: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?"

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Christ replied: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." Had he been asked a similar question about the pagan deities, he would have returned a similar answer. The answer might have been somewhat like this: "Render to Moloch the things that are Moloch's, to Isis the things that are Isis's and to Dagon the things that are Dagon's." Had the Pharisees addressed their question to Milton, he would "bluntly have answered in an anti-Christ vein: "Snatch from Caesar the things that are Caesar's, from Moloch the things' that are Moloch's and from Isis the things that are Isis's." Milton wanted to establish peace through war. Christ wanted to establish peace through peace. No wonder Milton could never get into Christ's soul, If a black were to portray God, he would portray Him as a hulky heavyweight guy with a frog-sized snub-. nose, protruding thick lips, kinky hair and a glossy-black complexion. "Man is the measure of all things," said Protagoras. Man conceives everything in his own image. Milton conceived Christ in his own image. Christ was all peace and compassion, love and forgiveness. Milton was all passion and fury, strife and revenge. Christ would surely have forgivingly smiled over the Miltonic persecutions of the pagan gods. Milton never knew that destruction never destroys. Christ knew it. He would have shuddered to harm even his bitterest enemies. His prayer for the salvation of his executioners seems to have sailed over Milton's heart. Is the Ode an ode on Christ or an ode on Miltonic fury? One wonders if Milton forgave Christ for Christ's universal forgiveness, Christ forgave even his executioners. Milton would have been offended with God had God not made it possible for the House of Commons to get Charles executed. That paganism was a thorn in the Church's flesh and that the Church sometimes resorted to violence for suppressing paganism is illustrated by Hypatia's gruesome murder. Hypatia, an Alexandrain maid, was generously endowed by nature with a double excellence: an excellence of looks and an excellence of the mind. Gibbon relates that “Hypatia publicly taught the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. In the bloom of beauty, and in the maturity of wisdom, the modest maid refused her lovers and instructed her disciples; the persons most illustrious for their rank or merit were impatient to visit the female philosopher; and Cyril (the Alexandrian archbishop) beheld with a jealous eye the gorgeous train of horses and slaves who crowded the door of her academy. A rumour was spread among the Christians that Hypatia was the only obstacle to the reconciliation of the prefect and the archbishop. And that obstacle was speedily removed. On a fatal day, in the holy season of Lent, Hypatia was torn from her chariot, stripped naked, dragged to the church and inhumanly butchered by the hand of Peter the reader and a troop of savages and merciless fanatics: her flesh was scraped from her bones with sharp oystershells, and her quivering limbs were delivered to the
flames. The just progress of inquiry and punishment was stopped by seasonable gifts; but the murder of Hypatia has imprinted an indelible stain on the character and religion of Cyril of Alexandria." Cyril was canonised. If the canonisation was a reward for sending a pagan dame to hell, how much more does Milton deserve for despatching the entire pagan pantheon to the inferno?
JUSTIFYING THE WAYS OF EVE TO MAN
ANA ASHRAF
MA I

Note: The views expressed are those of the writer and do not represent the publication.

Since I was a little child, I was made to believe by my worthy elders that the root cause of all troubles in this world is ‘woman’. According to the myth of Adam and Eve, it was the woman who first ate the forbidden fruit and brought woe and misery to mankind, and womankind has been subjected to endless misery ever since for causing misery in the first place!

In my childhood I could say nothing to those wise, knowledgeable übermen, for fear of being ridiculed as I am myself a woman. But now that God has bestowed upon me the power to ponder over different ideas and view things in a different light altogether, I would like to express my views about this issue in particular.

However, before I do so, I want to make it very clear to all those chauvinists who ridicule at the audacity of a mere girl to challenge their views that I do not aim to challenge any one’s authority. I am merely presenting my stance on this matter. Milton wrote Paradise Lost in order to justify the ways of God to man. I am writing this article to justify the ways of Eve to man, who by a unanimous vote of men of all races, ethnicities and nationalities, is accused of masterminding man’s fall from grace.

Milton the great poet of course asserts that Eve ate the fruit to fulfill her inner lust and to bring happiness to herself so her act is utterly selfish, whereas Adam ate the fruit to express his loyalty towards his mate. He was faithful in his love to the end.

Ever since that, men believe that sincerity and chastity are essential attributes of men, not women. However, if we reevaluate the legend of Adam and Eve, we find that if Eve disobeyed God by eating that forbidden fruit, so did Adam. The aim of Adam’s existence was to please God. God created him in the first place to worship Him. God was Adam’s first love. But instead of remaining sincere to his first love, Adam violated God’s orders. Eve found happiness in tasting the fruit and following her own will, Adam found happiness in obeying Eve rather than obeying God.
So we can say that both of them are equally responsible for the consequences as both followed their free will.

Also, some enlightened souls propagate the idea that womankind has an innate tendency to be unfaithful, much like their mother Eve. I would like to point out that if anyone is guilty of faithlessness, it is Adam and not Eve. Adam voluntarily chose to follow in the footsteps of Eve, forgetting a greater duty towards his Creator.

When a person commits a sin, it is not the act itself that is painful, but its consciousness that has serious repercussions for the sinner. Eve committed the sin in a state of daze. Adam however, knew what he was doing and was also aware of the consequences of his act. Instead of praying for the redemption of Eve, he chose to be her partner in crime. Eve was a partner to man. She shared the blissful seat of heaven with man, when she committed the sin, she shared it as well.

We might also argue that all religions think of God as All-Knowing, All-Powerful, Almighty. As God plans everything that goes on in His Kingdom, He must have planned this one too. Just like He permitted a serpent to creep into Heaven, he planned for Eve to taste the forbidden fruit and for Adam to follow suit. If the religious scholars are looking for someone to blame at all, I suggest blame it all on the Almighty. And if blaming God is blasphemous, so is blaming Eve!

I sum up my argument by suggesting that instead of blaming poor Eve for all the nuclear explosions, earthquakes, tsunamis, in short everything that goes wrong, men should realize that it is in the nature of human beings to be attracted towards the “forbidden fruits.” If God had wanted perfectly docile and submissive creatures to worship Him, He would have been contended with Angels!
BABA BULLEH SHAH
HASSAN MAZHAR

Old Ravian

Bulleh Shah is one of the most famous poets of the Punjabi language. Bulleh Shah’s poetry is profound and moving in nature, circulating around his love for his Murshid, mysticism and fierce denunciation against oppression. His era was that of social and political unrest in India in general and the Punjab in particular. It is a matter of prime importance to see how time and circumstances affected the poetry of one of the greatest Sufi poets of the Punjab. The purpose of this paper is to examine the life and times of Baba Bulleh Shah, to gain an understanding of the social and spiritual forces that determined his life, and to explain the worldview which motivated his poetry.

Bulleh Shah’s real name was Abdullah Shah which later transformed into Bulleh Shah, Bullah Shah or simply Bullah (puri, apna.org). He uses his real name in some of his poetic compositions. Not much is known about Bulleh Shah’s early life. Even his year of birth and place are not known for certain. 1680 CE, 1659 CE and 1703 CE are all quoted as his year of birth. Similarly, Malakwal, Uch Gilaniyan (Bahawalpur) and Pandoke village (District Kasur) are all cited as his birth place (Kohli, pp 225-228). However, scholarship agrees that he received his early education on conservative terms in Pandoke from his father, Shah Mohammed Dervish, who was an imam in the local mosque. He was sent to Kasur for higher education where he studied under patronage of Hazarat Ghulam Murtaza (Puri, 3). Later on, Bulleh Shah got interested in Sufism and became a disciple of Shah Inayat Qadri. Baba Bulleh Shah was a Syed while Inayat Shah was an Arain, a lower caste. Baba Bulleh Shah was strongly criticized for becoming a disciple of an Arain but he ignored all the admonition. Under the tutelage of Shah Inayat, he went on to cover the four Manazil of the Sufi path. He also developed a peculiar poetic expression and composed poetry in various forms including kafi, Dohra, Bara Mah, Athwara and Gandhan in the Punjabi language. Bulleh Shah died, according to some in 1753 or 1758 and according to others in 1781 or even later in Kasur. The clerics refused to bury him in a Muslim graveyard but today a fine mausoleum stands on his final place of rest and “the privileged of the city pay handsomely to be buried next to the saint” (Puri, apna.org).

Due to Baba Bulleh Shah’s controversial views and practices, the question arises as to whether Bulleh Shah was a Sufi or not? Traditionally there have been two
kinds of Sufis. One, who adhere strictly to the religious practices prescribed by the Sharia. The others are those, who feel that they are free from any restrictions or laws of the religion and follow their own path towards attaining internal satisfaction. They often compromise on the fundamentals of the religion and are referred to as Majzoob in Islamic terminology. They are focused on trying to gain an understanding the spirit of the religion and are so much overtaken by the matters of “heart” that they often over rule the matters of jurisprudence (Fiqh) and Sharia. Baba Bulleh Shah was a Sufi of the second type (Kohli, 260-261). "These Sufis typically spend their lives trying to penetrate the meaning of life while searching for God. Those among them who were poets articulated this exploration through their poetry. They asked questions like "who is the Creator? What is the truth? And "who am I?" (Sayyed, apna.org). These questions are reiterated in the poetry of Bulleh Shah. Sufi thoughts and concepts are also represented profusely in his poetry. the concepts of Wahdat-ul-Wajud, Fana-Fil-Sheikh and that of ‘Wifely Devotion’ or Urs are to name a few.

The time of Bulleh Shah was very tumultuous for India and was marked by foreign invasions, palace revolutions and rebellions by Sikhs. After the death of the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb Alamgir in 1707, the Mughal Sultanate started to dwindle (Sabir, apna.org). Aurangzeb himself was a very strict ruler who endorsed conservative Islam and brought hardships on non-Muslims and adherents of Sufi Islam. He had his Sufi brother Dara Shikoh and the ninth Guru of Sikhs, Guru Teg Bahadur, executed (Kohli, 238-239). Hindus and Sikhs were persecuted and forced to embrace Islam (Sharda, 49). It was a change of atmosphere which led to a great deal of unrest in India. Punjab was the worst hit area as there was a clash between not two, but three different religions: Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. “The decay of Mughal administration gave rise to small local tyrannies which lasted into the 19th century” (Ahmad, 6). The massacre carried out by Nadir Shah in his invasion of Punjab in 1738 simply exacerbated the situation. Bulleh Shah also lived to see three attacks by Ahmad Shah Abdali (Ahmed, 7).

The affect of all the havoc on Sufis was double-barreled. On one hand Sufis like Shah Inayat Qadri and Dara Shikoh of Qadri order were busy writing on Hinduism and Sufism to set up the unity amongst different religions. In fact, Dara Shikoh translated the Upanishads (Hindu sacred text) into Persian and Shah Inayat wrote four books comparing Sufism to Hinduism (Singh, 5). On the other hand, Sufis like Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai did not try to reconcile one religion with another, rather they embraced everyone with open arms and spread the universal message of Sufism that is ‘love for all’. They embraced the whole community
without compromising their Islamic values. Taking into consideration both groups, the general note of Sufis was that of love and acceptance. The Sufis deviated from the practices of the conservatives in the sense that they did not intimidate or raise concerns against non Muslims. The solution they proposed to achieve harmony and peace was to develop ‘inner self’

Bulleh Shah was an intellectual and a sensitive person. He could not have remained immune to the frenzied atmosphere of the Punjab. The social unrest triggered Bulleh Shah to search for a spiritual mentor and found one in form of Shah Inayat Qadri (Mehmood, 411-412). Thus, Bulleh Shah made his way to a Sufi life and found peace. He also preached the sermon of ‘love for all’ and no distinction on the basis of religion. He reverted from conservative Islam and even went on to pay homage to Hindu gods. He borrowed terms from Hindu mythology, a characteristic not to be seen in contemporary works of Waris Shah or Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. Furthermore, Bulleh’s expression was stronger and robust when he admonished *mullahs*. In fact, it is quoted that his spiritual mentor Shah Inayat showed displeasure on his outspokenness (Puri, p 15).

On a superficial level, Bulleh Shah seemed concerned with the political situation of India in his poetry. He made direct references to the political situation in his *kafis* “ulte hor zamanay aye....” “uth gharare maar kurre...” and “aa mil yar pyarya...”. He also makes direct refernece to tumultouys situation of Kasur in his *dohras*. however, on a deeper level his poetry is written from the point of view of an ordinary man. Even the instances where Bulleh directly pointed to the political unrest, he in fact, tried to reach his own moral end. In his *kafi* “ultay hor zamany aye...,” he talked about disorder in Punjab and Sikh revolutions but then, finished off with the message that all of this is from God and no one can do anything about this. Similarly in his *kafi* “sanoon aa mil yar pyarya....,” he longs for a meeting with his *Murshid* in this chaotic time. In his third *kafi* “uth ne gharare maar kurre....,” he showed the transitory nature of this world.

What is more interesting is the fact that there was a tendency in his poetry to refer to these events indirectly. Baba Bulleh Shah responded to the situation and tried to paint a picture of social conditions prevalent. His *kafis* “apna dhas tikana....,” “ik alif parho chutkara hay...” are just a few examples. As another reflection of the times in his compositions, we notice him raising his voice against increasing conservatism as a reaction to the turmoil of his era. There is no doubt that Bulleh Shah’s poetry was an amalgam of many religions and reformist movements. Immediately before and during Bulleh’s time, there was a reconciliatory effort
between Islam and other indigenous religions. Dara Shikoh and Shah Inayat Qadri were in the vanguard of this effort. Given the effect of Inayat Shah’s teaching on Bulleh Shah’s life, it is no surprise that Bulleh Shah got inspired and incorporated certain elements of other religions in his poetry. However, he was more open in his expression than his spiritual mentor. For instance, he openly paid homage to Guru Tegh Bahadur or identified God in *Krishna* or *Rama* in his poetry (Kohli, pp. 276-282). we also see him raising his voice against doctrinal injustice. He took pains to address the looming issue of Hindu-Muslim unity. He often talked against the *mullah* and strongly criticized the higher authorities who created hindrance in bringing different communities of India closer to each other. Bulleh Shah’s poetry gave a hint that traditional religious practices lost their meaning and were only being considered for worldly affairs. He boldly and valiantly opposed the fundamental practices and rituals of all religions. The explanation given for this was that that these religions were ‘institutionalized’ by clerics. *Mullahs* or *pundits* had become a proper institution of the society and were undoubtedly amongst the ‘*istehsali quwwa*’. He blamed *maulvis* for the prevailing differences between Hindus and Muslims and accused them of sinful conduct. His poetry was filled with direct reprehension of anyone claiming control over religion.

The Sufi Baba Bulleh Shah did not stop short at referring to atrocities of his time or admonishing *mullahs*. The context of his message i.e., no discrimination contains a simple solution for administering peace, but, through a complex path. His elucidation was more radical from the one proposed by his contemporaries. He preached pure inner realization of soul through complete submission of will to that of the Almighty. He emphasized love for God and all His creations. He contended that the objective of life is its submission to God and for this no rituals are needed. For instance in “*Masjid dha de, mandir dha de*.”

The English translation of these lines is:

“Tear down the mosque and the temple; break everything in sight. But do not break a person’s heart; it is there that God resides…” (Saleem, stp.uh.edu)

He placed the essence of his proposed solution in one of his most famous *kafis* "*ek nuqte wich gal mukdi ae*...". In this *kafi* he clearly stated that people wasted their time in rituals and then think they have attained purity, but, purity of heart and peace of mind only comes from following the spiritual guide to the path of becoming one with the Mighty One (Puri, 233).

The tides of time played an integral part in making Bulleh Shah what he was. It was the era around him that molded him into hating conventionalism of religion.

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His expression dared him to speak his “rebellious” mind in a way his contemporaries never dared. He used social situations surrounding people as an indirect tool in his poetry to make his audience feel at home. This is what made him as one of his own league among the Sufis of that era, and the ones following and preceding it.

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Notes:
1 Gurumukhi is a Punjabi script similar to sanskrit script
2 Qadri order is one of the oldest Sufi tariqas and derives its name from Abdul Qadir Jilani.

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3 The four stages of Sufi path are Shariat (Path), Tariqat (Observance), Haqiqat (Truth) and Marfat (Union). It starts from the rules as laid down by Islam, and ends up at a point where the Sufi accepts the existence of God, everywhere, eventually coming closer to God.

4 A concept developed by mystic ibn-Al-arabi. It implies that everything in this world is a reflection of God.

5 In Sufism the student first has dissolve into the soul of his Teacher (FANA FIL SHAYKH), then into the light of Muhammad (p乙肝) (FANA FIL RASOOL). Finally this leads to "fana-fil-Allah" (merger with the Lord).

6 A raja is a king or princely ruler.

7 Alexander the Great. He is known as Sikandar-e-azam in Urdu.

8 Yusuf is a prophet in the Quran. The romance of Yusuf and Zulaikha is described as one of the most beautiful stories in Quran and is a theme which several eastern poets have used.

9 Urdu Sufi Poet

10 Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth and last of the Ten Gurus of Sikhism.
In the beginning was the stone. And man stood before the stone possessed by the need to live and the urge to be. In the end too, is the stone and man stands before it as unsatiated as in the beginning.

Between these two points there is movement — movement that cuts and chisels the stone to form the axe, that strikes two stones against each other to rouse the slumbering spirit of fire, that smothers the stone to fragments to touch off the multifaceted dance of water, that splits the very being of the stone to release demons whose dance is infinitely subtler and infinitely mightier. The movement breathlessly explores the mazes wrought by its own course and then shapes the stone into forms of pain, pleasure and silence, to envision through them what is beyond pain and pleasure and silence.

It is this movement which is the history of man — past, present and future. Within the course of this movement is contained all that man has felt, thought and done. Also within the course of the movement lie the dimensions of unrealised potentiality. Whatever man has felt, thought and done carries the memory of what he could feel, think and do — the memory of the stones that hedge the movement.

This two-fold character of human history points to only one direction— inexhaustible continuity. No action is 'decisive, no ideology is absolute. What has been is always accompanied by what could have been and no end is completely and finally achieved. It is only the limited perspective of day-to-day life which gives us the illusion of finality and deceives us into believing that in what surrounds us now life has finally fulfilled itself. Men, objects and events in one's immediate vicinity seem to wear a finished and independent look. One is never prepared to bargain the smug solidity of familiar objects for the chimerical flux of unending time. There is nothing surprising in such an inhibition. No one can actually see or feel the movement of the earth. To most men a complacent belief in the solidity and permanence of their surrounding is a precondition of existence. The set of beliefs, ideas and attitudes in which I have grown are the benevolent Himalayas that stand as eternal guards around the smug rotation of my mornings and evenings. My rigidly conditioned emotional reflexes stretch round me a steel shelter of psychological security.
Loosen a rivet and you smother my soul, you threaten to blot out my very being. Study of history is the means of loosening the rivets of this steel shelter. And this explains why we maintain a hidden, unacknowledged suspicion of history. It is only within certain limits and with certain reservations that we admit our connection with history. Instead of discovering what trends in history are responsible for our frame of attitudes and emotions we zealously busy ourselves in fitting history to our frame of attitudes and emotions. The nature and extent of our willingness to associate ourselves with the past, present and future time is determined by our own impulse for personal security. Such an attitude towards history represents a consciousness which has foregone the opportunities of expansion, marking out a narrow path in past and future, sidetracking discovery and challenge. The awareness of time we thus achieve is a projection of a private sentiment, an exaggerated dramatization of personal frustration and daydreaming.

Any vision of history is thus both an index of, and a primary factor in, the spiritual make-up of a person or a group. Once you finally commit yourself to a particular limited vision of history and your hedged place in that vision you deliver yourself in the hands of ruthless gods who are jealous of the intrusion of human will in their realms. They grip you, mould you and set you in motion according to their own designs. And ironically you maintain the belief that your actions and thoughts are the results of your own conscious will. You scarcely have the detachment to reflect that your conscious will itself has been harnessed by the image to which it surrendered itself. The physical or ideological tyranny to which our honest hands subject others is only a reflection of the tyranny of a partial vision of history to which we submitted ourselves.

The individual sentiment is comparatively flexible but the group sentiments and attitudes pile up in the course of ages and harden to a degree where it is difficult to successfully resist or dislodge them. The group sentiments appear in obsessive touchiness about the vision of history: as a spokesman of the group one does not find oneself prepared to tolerate any individual deviation however genuine. The individual deviation which is an internal challenge and an agent of dynamic development is thus suppressed. The deviating individual instead of acting as a source of enlargement and modification is compelled either to become a desensitized appendix to the mass of social sentiment or to remain socially unacceptable. In the centre rests the mass of passively conformist elements which, in the absence of necessary circulation progressively decay into a dead weight. On the fringes or outside them the deviating individual is kept ineffective in his alienation. When a community continues to subscribe to a
partial vision of history it runs the risk of ultimately destroying the basis of a creative relationship between itself and its members.

It must be seen now what is the difference between a complete and a partial vision of history and how this difference has been important in the evolution of human consciousness. Once, though not long ago, man lived in caves and hunted for his food like his fellow animals. Man preyed on his fellow animals and fell a prey to them. He remained in perilous communion with wind, rain, heat of the day and chill of the night. In his intense physical experience he had only one relation with time — the direct personal relation with the current moment that glared at him from behind a thicket, the moment that suddenly thrust its glistening teeth and claws into his flesh. He sought to conquer this vital current moment by contemplating it in an abstract eternal frame. He caught the current moment in all its aliveness on the walls of his cave and felt that he had entered into an inner relationship with the moment and with what lay beyond the moment. There was an intense synchronisation between the act of artistic creation and the act of contemplating. The artist-man was perhaps not conscious of his contemplation as one is conscious of an expressible idea. He lived his vision of time rather than formulated it. He felt himself to be a part of the creation and not a product of a creed or ideology. He found his fulfillment by affirming his contact with the current moment. And art was not a by-product of his internal deferred living. The distinction between internal and external living is of later origin. It was after the synthesis was disturbed that human consciousness found it impossible to retain the spontaneous wholeness of experience. ', And those who still sought a personal contact with the current moment were termed as artists, mystics, heretics or lunatics.

These designations are less the products of convenience and more of fear — man's fear of his own inner impulse that urged him to look beyond the silence of the stone. In fact the "artist" and the "mystic" were only a disowned part of the ordinary man; they themselves were more genuinely ordinary than was realised. It was left only to "the artist" or "the mystic" to retain an intimate relationship with time. The artist knows time as an ever-present reality. To him the moment is an ever-open door — a door which within its shape integrates his entire experience as a unit of creation. He finds himself perpetuated within the door. He knows that the door is not the final end — and nothing that he knows, is. He constantly yearns to realise what is beyond the door. The artistic creation too is not an end in itself; it is an act within the door. Associating the performance of Ragas with particular seasons and particular hour of the day is a really significant phenomenon. The Raga itself is a comprehensive

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formulation of human experience. It is the door. The performance of the Raga is an act within the moment — the moment which is physically present as an hour of the day or a season of the year. The performer and the listeners with him try to enter into an intimate relationship with the moment. The artist's relationship with time is not one of antagonism resulting in either his surrender or the conquest of time. This relationship is undertaken as a dialogue between man and the moment. But as the moment itself is not the end man strives to wrestle out of its embrace. The cherished attainment of the performer is to arrive at a point where the moment wanes and the Raga itself is left behind.

The example of the classical Raga indicates the nature of the artistic effort and its goal. Art is essentially an act of impulsive meditation in which life tries to measure and stretch its limits; the knowledge of the limits implies the strength to stretch them. The artist has little use for chronology. For him past is not made of events but of experience; and experience lives when events are dead. And for a communion with experience he does not go to events; he goes to his own consciousness — which contains the past in a living form and which contains the future too. He is not haunted by fear of the past or fear of the future nor is he shy of facing the present because in his consciousness they live as one intimate experience — an experience not based on any principle of moral or dogmatic selection but comprehending all harmonies and discords implicit in the fact of existence.

The poet Bulleh Shah is one deeply stimulating representative of the class of artists who felt intensely the need of discovering time through live contact.
"Bullah! Can I know who I am. I neither join the faithful in their devout affirmation in the mosque nor I find myself scaling the subtleties of denial. I do not raise my finger with the righteous nor do I bare my breast with the condemned. I am neither Moses nor the Pharaoh either. The sacred scriptures from this world or from that contain no clues for me.

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I do not discover myself in the sensual surrender. I am neither concealed by the profane ecstasy of intoxication nor made manifest by the holy Vedas. I am not contained in what is uncovered by the wary eye of wakefulness or in what is revealed by sleep. No form of pleasure or pain, revelry or remorse, finds me out. I am not disposed by fire, air, water and dust. I am neither a Hindu nor a Turk, my identity lies neither in the wilderness of Arabia nor within the walls of Lahore. I am not the secret essence strenuously revealed by creed and religion. I was not born of Adam and Eve. I did not adopt any name nor can I own any. I am neither stationary nor adrift. Can I know who am I? It is myself I know to be the beginning and the end. Neither do I recognise any other being. It is nowhere else but within myself that perception and knowledge are embodied. Then who is he that stands as the Other? And who am I? Can I know Allah?

The popularity of this poem, as of several others of Bulleh Shah, has been largely responsible for blurring its virtues. Popular applause where it may indicate the aliveness of any poem also signifies that the poem has, in the course of its life accumulated a certain amount of dead matter. There is no surer signal for a poet to overhaul his wares than an undefined acclaim. The popular reading of this poem takes the refrain to be a suave abstention from commitment of any kind — who knows and who can know, so let us shelve the ungainly business of knowing altogether. The appeal lies in the satisfaction yielded by the escape supposedly implicit in the refrain, from an essential inner questioning about reality. The popular interpretation is the result of a conveniently indifferent way of reading the poem. For a better appreciation of the poem it is necessary to rediscover the subtleties of tone and gesture inherent in each phrase. Also there should be an awareness of the cultural background of the form used here by Bulleh Shah.

The present English rendering in its effort to indicate the content of the poem can do little justice to the other levels of the poet's intention which are served by form and manner.

Bulleh Shah here undertakes a contemplative self-questioning. The questioning takes the shape of a riddle — a riddle posed by the poet to himself. This reference to the pattern of riddles which are asked of children is vital for the understanding of the poem. In his own self the poet combines the awareness of the grown up person who has posed the riddle and the bewildered curiosity of the child who has been asked the question. This peculiarity of the form represents a consciousness which works towards a solution through all the intricate levels of mature reflection and experience, and yet retains the insistent curiosity of the child in face of every conclusion. The stanzas of the poem are the suggestions of mature reflection and experience; the refrain is the child's
quarry which breaks and dissolves the suggestions.

Those conversant with the form of Punjabi riddles would know that the children demand certain clues as a matter of right. "In what direction lies the answer — in eatables or in things of ordinary use?" In the riddle of Bulleh Shah a series of negatives dismisses all the possible clues. What is left is the elemental question. And the question itself is worded with a view to suggest a deliberate vagueness. The three possible literal translations of the refrain would be:

(a) “How do I know who I am?
(b) “How do I know who He is?”
and (c)“How can I know the whoness?

And the three translations do not exhaust the subtlety which the apparent simplicity of the refrain's syntax hides. The "I" of

Bulleh Shah represents man in his very essential capacity as a unit of creation. The "I" is inevitably confronted by "who". And in answer to this chimerical question the poet with an amazingly casual touch recreates the entire panorama of human experience in Time. For an ultimate fulfillment man took up the search for identity and affiliation. Each level of experience deceived him with an answer which took the shape of a dogma, an institution, a belief, a value, an attitude or a relationship. But in the elemental tussle of "I" and "who" the child dismisses all the answers provided by the experience of man, breaking one toy after another in his frenzied curiosity. The poem is a dance of negative phrases accompanied by the double interrogative of the refrain. The only positive phrase is contained in the beginning of the last stanza.

This affirmation is a climax to the passion of denial. Where do I go from here? Where does the endless road lead? I have distinguished myself from all that has existed in identity. I know what I am not; then how do I know what I am?

Bulleh Shah's question embodies a moment containing past, present and future time. The moment contains the total individual and social experience of human history. The rejection of suggested identities and affiliations when it comes is complete and indiscriminate and implies a passion for being anew, for recreating the I? There is no preference or more exactly, all preferences have fallen in favour of the unknown positive. The artist's vision of history of which Bulleh Shah provides an example is the vision which alone is responsible for the creation of an inner dynamism and is thus the direct opposite of our parochial view of history.

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“The central principle of all the Magic of power is that every thing we formulate in the imagination if we formulate it strongly enough, realizes itself in the circumstances of life, acting either through our souls or through the spirit of nature.”

One may wonder whether it is reasonable at all to spare one’s time to read about and think over as notorious and academically ignored terms as magic and occultism. They need, however, greater and more serious attention from the intelligentsia and academia all over the world, in spite of all the superstitious connotations they induce.

Occultism and magic through their invisible operations on human imagination may bring the people from diverse cultures together and push them towards the attainment of much dreamed yet never realized “collective personality” at individual, and “universalism” at collective level. It explains W.B. Yeats’s seriousness in learning magic and actually experimenting with it as the member of the Hermetic Society and the Golden Dawn.

Magic for Yeats was a “means of breaking down the barrier between the phenomenal or conscious and the spiritual and super-conscious world.”

His belief in magic was rooted in three postulates:

1. That the borders of our minds are ever shifting and the minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.
2. That the borders of our memories are as shifting, and that our memories a part of one great memory, the memory of the nature herself.
3. That this great mind and the great memory can be evoked by symbols.

Yeats’s belief in magic was strengthened by his readings in the Kabbalah and the Vedanta. Yeats’s introduction with the latter was occasioned by his meeting with an Indian monk, Shri Purohit Swami. For Yeats it was a surprising fact that the west owes a lot, for its spiritualism to the east. He writes in the introduction to An Indian Monk:
The West impregnated an East full of spiritual turbulence, and the turbulence brought forth a child Western in complexion and feature. Since the renaissance, literature, science and fine arts have left the church and sought elsewhere the variety necessary to their existence. Perhaps the reverse impregnation has started, the East as male.

And he observes further:

Then I think of the sensuous deliberation Spenser brought into English literature,…the magic of Christable or Kubla Khan, of the wise peddler in the Excursion,…and wisdom, magic, sensation, seem, Asiatic. We have borrowed directly from the East and selected for admiration and repetition every thing in our own past that is least European, as though groping backwards towards a common mother.

Which “common mother”? It is the point I intend to emphasize on. By “common mother” Yeats seems to refer to the repository of the Ancient Wisdom contained in the religious teachings of the oldest religion on the face of the earth-Hinduism. What is that attracted Yeats towards the Bhagvat Gita and the Vedes? Surprising though it may seem but the inspiration for poetry seems to be coming to Yeats from” the vision of the formless.” Yeats acknowledges: “The English hymn-writer, writing not as himself but as the congregation, is a rhetorician; but the Indian convention, founded upon the most poignant personal emotion, should make poets.”

Here the creative process becomes a worship-worship of the self “for a God is but the Self.” Such concept of creativity disregards the historical development in terms of chronological sequence, cultural differences and civilizational oppositions. Hence the fact that saints/monks never preach war in whatever holy terms. Instead, indifferent to history, India delighted in vast periods, which solemnized the mind, seeming to unite it to the ageless heaven.” The Indian monks never “cared to discover in these great periods a conflict of civilizations and of nations.” It relates to Yeats’s assertion that no two civilizations are erected on the same things, “but behind both hides the unchanging experience of simple men and women.”

This “unchanging experience” may be an abstract notion for most of us, but for Yeats it was an experimentable reality. His Autobiography and Journals are
replete with the instances of the mystical experience he subjected himself to while he was the member of the Golden Dawn under the patronage of Madame Blavatsky. The Golden Dawn was a secret society established in Ireland, dedicated to initiate the students in the art of magic, of invoking visions, and reincarnating spirits. Through these practices the initiates learnt how to benefit from the ancient wisdom of the Rossicrussians, the Kabbalah and the Vedanta. What is important here is not Yeats’s fascination with the miraculous happenings,

rather his effort to employ the symbols in his poetry through which he could invoke visions. What is the contribution, one may ask, made by such invocation of symbols in Yeats’s life? Yeats’s role in Irish political and nationalistic affairs is so significant that he may aptly be called the maker of history of the Ireland of his own times. How the image of a passive contemplator of symbols can be reconciled with quite a contrary image of a dynamic politician? Here lies Yeats’s greatness as a complex and multidimensional personality. He amalgamated all of his mystical beliefs with the real life. If he had faith in “the supremacy of imagination” and in the strength of imagination to influence others’ imagination, then would it not be the appropriate practice for Yeats to segregate himself from the hum-drum of life, and throwing himself in sheer loneliness, to concentrate on the symbols to make his imagination more potent so that it could be used alter and adapt the political opinions of his rivals? And here, just think, here Yeats once and for all emancipates humanity from apparently unavoidable political war of brains and arms leading to disorder and anarchy. If by the use of magic and occultism, as defined by Yeats, it is possible to bring any human being residing anywhere in the world around to act or react in any required manner, then the possibility of the invasion of wars is simply out of question.

And Yeats counters the possible objection even before it is raised: what if magic is used to orientate the imagination of people towards inhuman acts? Yeats labels such form of magic as “black magic,” and advises the members of the Golden Dawn that if they would start thinking in terms of jealousy and hatred for each other, individual imaginations, instead of pooling towards the creation of one unified force would start distracting each other and canceling out each others’ effects. The result would be an internal chaos, that would disturb the relations among the individuals, create mutual distrust, while the desired objects of the betterment of the country in particular and the world in general would never be attained.

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Imagination is a common asset of all human beings. If this asset remains unused it will be much greater loss than any physical and visible harm caused to humanity. Customs, appearances, rituals and rites-all may be different for each civilization. So let us stop intellectual and even martial wars on the basis of appearances-on growing beard or getting shaved, on wearing veil or exposing face, on allowing mixed gender marathon or disallowing it. Let us transcend the transitory identities. Also, let us demolish the utopian slogan of ‘unity in plurality.’ We have a system where there is no concept of plurality at all- the system notoriously called occultism-called notorious justifiably or not, you are to decide. If it is thinkable now that “our history speaks of opinions and discoveries” while in ancient times “it spoke of commandments and revelations,” then it is time to return to the Great Memory, the store house of all the symbols and the source of all the revelations, wisdom and peace.
If all the positivistic advancement in pragmatist sciences has led man to nowhere, and man is still suspended in the state of angst, then let us see through Yeatsean perspective and averting our eyes from “parliaments and laboratories,” look once again towards “Sinai and its thunders” to let our soul be enraptured by the words of Moses.\(^xvii\) No need to be disappointed if Godot never comes; be sure “the Second Coming is at hand.”

Notes:


ii Ibid. 90

iii Ibid. 87

iv Ibid. 55


viii Ibid.

ix Ibid. 434

xi Ibid.
xii Ibid.
xiv Ibid.
xvi Ibid.
"Is it proper to suppress human freedom and natural desires? This crucial question is being asked by the socio-political intellectuals of the world after the downfall of the Russian socialistic system. We are fully aware of the fact that nothing ruined the large USSR but the oppression inherited in its manifesto-oriented mechanical super-structure. During and after the Oct. 19 17 revolution, Maxim Gorky and scores of other enthusiastic revolutionary writers and poets, were jubilant about the massacre of thousands of upright creature, who were being labelled as reactionaries in the most reckless fashion. At that time it was the common cause of the revolutionary men of letters to use socioeconomic formulas in the weaving of their literary fabric so they had little patience for individual proclivities, human feeling or instincts. "Revolutionary" was the name of the "novous homo" and that was the only acceptable commodity in the new world. It is interesting to note that Russian theoretician considered man, only as an economic or social animal, even a passing reference to his individual personality and subjective idiosyncrasies was apprehended as political crime. Maxim Gorky had died long ago along with his big mouth slogan-mongers but in reality he was buried last year by his country men. The ice was broken a few years before this burial. Russian intellectuals and readers began to discover rather rediscover their great writers. Soon their aesthetical tastes struck Pushkin, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Alexander Blok, Chekhov, Vladimir Nabokoy, Boris Pasternak, Sergey Yesenin, Yevgeniy Zamyatin and Mayakovsky. These writers, poets, playwrights and novelists had grasped real human and social problems and created a visionary world of their own, no doubt a world of living souls. Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago dealt with the problem of individual in the flux of human situation. There the matter under discussion was the contradiction between the mechanical set up and the being with flesh and blood. Here the hero was victimised by a revolutionary" King Cong". This sort of unnecessary victimisation paved the path for bleak chapters of the revolutionary experience. Zhivago could not survive but the result was the dance of the creative fire, which jolted sleeping mechanical beings out of their slumber. Alexander Solzhenitsyn desire to melt big glaciers creating obstacles in the way of human freedom, emotional expansion and natural instinctual flow with the help of his creative lava, he was forced to pass his life in exile. But by these brutal measures did the survival of dictatorship of the proletariat was made possible? Had man fulfilled his basic needs? Had the country become stable? Obviously every thing was counter to this. Now the
people living in this era have forgotten the poisonous communist literature like a terrible dream. The new Russian readers are fully satisfied with the traditions created by Pushkin and Dostoyevsky. Now Gorky is not their goal. They have rejected that literature which does not reflect their total relationship with life.

It seems that they have awoken from a deep slumber. They want to be a part of the world around.

Existentialist philosophers and intellectuals are using Dostoyevsky's characters to formulate their views. Scenarios are alien to the visionary world of this great intellectual has characters are not mechanical. We can not divide them into various apartments reserved for revolutionary or reactionary Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Herbert Marcuse, Eric Fromm and several other thinkers who have based their studies on the real psychic and emotional conditions of human being in the mechanical and exploited societies. They have taken their basic data from the universe of written words especially of fiction. And modern fiction without Dostoyevsky is a lonely desert. Critics like George Lukacs, Roger fry, Jean Cacteau and Christopher Caudwell played a vital role in bringing forth the real human situations. They explored human nature, subjective complexities, emotional crises and in this perspective Gorky never inspired them.

When we enter the Dostoyevskin world we find life and living souls. Even in the cities of death life is blossoming like self growing flowers. If you want to pass a successful life, beware of his novels. Their characters can make you human and to be human in the age of materialism is not a suitable proposition.

A new found love for the soil and man is on the surge in Russia. It is an admitted fact that the affirmation of life in art and literature does not necessitate the adoption of unipliable formulae for its expression. To disregard the vital questions of being and quest for truth, can hardly be deemed advisable in a discipline entertaining claims of circumscribing life in its entirety. Dostoyevsky’s oeuvre does fulsome justice to these questions. His imaginative mind worked wonders and the dead words were resurrected. His writings carry a delicate poise between historical perspective and universal relevance. Dostoyevsky made a daring effort to recreate the world around him without forgoing the artistic right of transcending the temporal bounds. He never lost focus of the characters, scattered in the God-forsaken shanties, cold basements, dubious restaurants, filthy lanes, disgusting public houses and dim-lit gambling dens bedraggled in the choking quagmire of poverty. Using his keen observation, he drew remarkably life-like
pen pictures of the world around him. His narrative is pregnant with multidimensional meanings it evokes meditative response from the readers. His characters in his great novels are victims of psychic strains, spiritual crises and social stresses. Dostoyevsky's consciousness is a pervasive force. He has been influencing readers of world literature by his extraordinarily impressionistic style. The questions raised in his novels were essentially human without losing the ethical overtones. Explaining his ethical views, he says "Voluntary, fully conscious and entirely unforced sacrifice of oneself for the benefit of all, is, in my view, a mark of the highest development of an individual, the highest development of one's moral power, the highest development of one's self command, the highest form of freedom of one's will. Only an individual with highly developed personality can lay down his life for the benefit of all, only he can carry the cross or go to the stake."

Although modern literary and art movements having their roots in the former capitalist world have laid great emphasis upon the expression of individuality, yet it doesn't imply by any stretch of the ideological debate that the realisation of individual potential is something abhorrent to basic fabric of the socialist paradigm. People entertaining any doubts in this regard should study “The Philosophical Manuscripts” by Karl Marx. In this book, Karl Marx expounds his famous theory of alienation. This theory deals with the dynamics of individual's alienation in the industrial society. I find no harm in the application of the theory of alienation to a society industrialised along Socialistic lines.

Maxim Gorky played a vital role in the intellectual domain both before and after the ill-fated Revolution of Russia. His novels, plays, short stories and other writings initiated a whole new era in the literary history of Russia. Gorky endorsed a peculiar way of looking at literature. His directed thoughts, channelled emotive patterns and determined mechanics of social interaction, gave birth to unprecedented legends of bravery and defiance offered by human spirit, hitherto unknown in the realm of literature. He wrote with a singular passion for ameliorating the existing society. His supremacy remains unchallenged in the world of socialist realism. His sarcastic foray against the feudal and capitalistic pettiness has lost none of its effectiveness. One can quite justifiable call him the doyen of Russian socialism.

Eugene Lampert says, in one of his articles, entitled modernism in Russia: 1893-1917, "the man to whom the role of literary Savonarola belonged during the period in question was Maxim Gorky; the "stormy petrel" from the lower depths, who sent shivers down the spines of the cultural elite and whom they dubbed ' the
great cad'. He was no longer able to believe in the possibility of even ideal escapes from real situations. "The 'elite' at that times wanted to assimilate the movements of the Western world. It was not possible for them to confine themselves to the formula literature introduced by Bolshevik party. Gorky championed the cause of stark realism relentlessly. He was not sympathetic to these writers. As a consequence, they became increasingly isolated. The ensuing alienation told heavily upon their individualities. They were yearning for a breath of fresh air. Democratic values were flinging over board by the revolutionaries. The respect for individual expression and the old Russia of Pushkin was forgotten like a nightmare. "Support the dictatorship of the proletariat" was the order of the day. the only truth allowed to prevail in the intellectual circles was 'hail communist manifesto'. Killing in the name of revolution was no crime. Gorky failed to apprehend this situation and did little justice to his duty as an artist. His ideological obsessions were so strong that his ideas governed realist literature for about half a century. All of a sudden, there rose a voice in agony, "Do not kill me. I am a human being. Do not disturb my emotional life. I want to live with my dreams. Please do not “But this voice was muffled ruthlessly. A dream was shattered. Many hundred thousand characters with such complaints were killed during and after the Bolshevik upheaval. A symbolic history of these martyred souls was recorded in a great novel “Dr. Zhivago.” Boris Pasternak refused to submit to the rhetoric of Gorky. He had a fascination for Dostoyevsky's universe. Now when countless replications of Dr Zhivago have overthrown the intellectual monarchy in Russia, one remembers the day when new existentialist writers of Urdu were criticising progressive Writers movement because of their slogan-oriented writings. Anybody concerned with the positive role of literature should link himself with the existentialist movements. And of course Dostoyevsky can proffer the right kind of light along the not so complacent avenues of self-exploration.
Human beings, all over the earth have the curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way. And this way can be defined by a law called “the Law of Nature”.

Now a days when we talk about the “Laws of Nature”, we usually mean things like gravitation, or heredity, or the laws of chemistry, or the laws of genetic engineering, etc. but viewed from another angle, “the laws of nature” can also mean “the laws of Right and Wrong”, “the laws of Decent Behavior”, “the laws of Human Nature” in the real sense.

A falling stone is governed by the law of gravitation and a chemical change is governed by laws of chemistry, similarly man also had his law----- with this great difference that a stone could not choose whether it obeyed the law of gravitation or not, but a man could choose either to obey the law of nature or to disobey it. Everyone knew this law by nature and need not to be taught. This does not mean that you might not find an odd individual. There are exceptions, as some people are color-blind or have no ear for music. But taking the race as a whole, the human idea of Decent Behavior is obvious to everyone.

The question arises that how do we recognize this law of fair play or decent behavior or of morality or whatever you like to call it. Everyone has heard people quarrelling. They say things like this: “that’s my seat, I was there first” ---- “you are breaking a traffic signal”---- “you think you are really mind-blowing”---- “the remote is in my hand so choice is mine” ---- and so on. People quarrel over small things, no matter whether they are educated or uneducated, children or grown-ups. Quarrelling means trying to show that the other man is wrong. And there is no sense in saying so unless you and he had some sort of standards to measure as to what Right and Wrong are; as there is no sense in saying that a hockey player had committed a foul unless there are some rules (standards) which give the definition of foul play. So, in different ages and in different civilizations, there have been always some defined standards distinguishing Right from the Wrong and it is through these standards we recognize this “Law of Nature”.

All human beings, whether they like it or not, believe in the Law of Nature. A nation may say that treaties don’t matter, but the next minute, they make an “excuse” and spoil their case by saying that a particular treaty which they want to
break was an unfair one. These excuses, like the above, are the proof of how deeply we believe in the “law of nature”. If we did not believe in Decent Behavior, why should we be so anxious to make excuses for not having behaved decently? The truth is that we believe in decency so much --- we feel the Law pressing on us --- so that we are breaking it and consequently we shift the responsibility by making excuses.

In a nut shell, every human knows the Law of Nature; but they break it.
Writing the history of his own times, Eric Hobsbawm called the Twentieth Century as *The Age of Extremes*. And this turned out to be the title of his book. In his long introduction to this book, certainly the most substantial of all his contributions I would add, Hobsbawm suggests that the events in the Nineteenth Century were in many ways better than the Twentieth Century despite all the inventions and discoveries that were made. In his view, there has been a marked regression from the standards then regarded as normal in the developed countries and in the milieus of the middle classes and which were confidently believed to be spreading to the more backward regions and the less enlightened strata of the population during the short Twentieth Century.

The Marxist Historian adds: ‘… this century has taught us, and continues to teach us, that human beings can learn to live under the most brutalized and theoretically intolerable conditions, it is not easy to grasp the extent of the, unfortunately accelerating, return to what our nineteenth century ancestors would have called the standards of barbarism.’ The basis for his concluding this way was the large number of civilians being killed in wars between nations and the departure, during the short twentieth century, from the medieval era where it was unethical and even considered unfair to indulge in such acts during a war.

Hobsbawm makes a simple point: That the wars that nations fought in the twentieth century were far more barbaric than the ones fought between kingdoms in the middle ages. In other words, in the middle ages, guided by revanchist notions of justice, killing of civilians during a war was forbidden by custom. And in the modern times, despite all the changes in the notion of justice, we find nations and their armies having killed more civilians than armed soldiers.

Now, the 21st Century has been no different. And in less than a decade after we were ushered into this millennium and the United Nations setting for itself a set of goals, the world seems to be moving in the same direction and at a pace faster than it did in the last century of the last millennium. And human lives are becoming more and more expendable now than anytime in the past. The perpetrators of this barbarism have also managed to couch their design and deeds in a language that sounds noble.
The US establishment and its cohorts indulged in the barbaric and criminal acts that are carried out in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine; seek to couch their deeds in such phrases as the war against terror or the axis of evil. And that they could manage, in the past few years, to not just invade nations but also kill innocent civilians in those nations is a fact that must make any conscientious human being hang his head in shame. But then, the saving grace and a cause for hope is that the myth about their intentions – to restore democracy in those nations – is no longer saleable in their own countries.

The number of demonstrations that greeted George Bush across Latin America a few months ago and the expression of anger against the Republicans in the US or the fact that Tony Blair will find another electoral victory difficult in England are signs that there is some basis to dream that the world would be a better place to live by the turn of this century. In other words, there is hope that we would have learnt our lessons from experience and the history of this century, when it is written by someone like Eric Hobsbawm, will not sound as harsh he did about the Short Twentieth Century.

But then, for this to happen, the youth of the present times and those who will turn into young men and women in the coming decade will have to set out on a course that is anything but preserving themselves. And they will have to search for a set of leaders like Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada, Joe Slovo, Desmond Tutu and Alan Boesak; these are few names that come to mind when we think of the liberation of South Africa from apartheid. The important point is that the liberation of South Africa, perhaps, is the only instance in our recent history where the movement identified the enemy in a concept and not in those who represented the oppressive system. In other words, the movement created the space where the reconstruction of the new order could be carried out without resort to retribution.

The experience of the Truth and Reconciliation, a process that was set going after South Africa was liberated from the clutches of apartheid was rooted in the philosophy outlined by someone from our own region: Mahatma K Gandhi. And that was how the blacks and the whites got to live as citizens in the Republic of South Africa. They made it possible because those who led the battle against apartheid were clear that the enemy was a concept and not the individual or a set of people. And they learnt all that from our own Mahatma K Gandhi!
This does not mean that Gandhi was an apologist from sterile living and inaction. And this was also clarified by Steve Biko, a medical student in Cape Town. Biko arrived on the ANC scene in the mid-sixties (and he was only past his teens then) to formulate a strong sense of Black Consciousness. Like Malcolm X, Biko too criticised the blacks who took their own subjugation as given and inevitable. And Biko did succeed in his mission. Biko had this to say as the objective of his Black People’s Convention: “We operate on the assumption that we can bring whites to their senses by confronting them with our overwhelming demands.”

Biko, a student at that time, could achieve this much and hence find a space for him in history books. It is then possible for the students of today to do things of the kind that Biko did in his own times. And in doing all that, it is important and necessary that the enemy is identified in the concepts and the causes for the ills that face our present and not in the personalities who represent this injustice.
ONCE UPON A TIME
ASLAM IQBAL
Former Editor, The Ravi

It's a pleasure to share one's memories. Everything remembered is dear, endearing, touching, precious. At least the past is safe though we didn't know it at the time. We know it now. Because it's in the past; because we have survived. ~ Susan Sontag

A very pleasant memory of my college days is about attending my English honours class (we were only four students). It was winter and we sat out in the open air theatre under a benevolent sun listening to our professor, after he had given us some written assignment, reciting (sotto-voce, of course) the following lines of Thomas Moore’s poem:

Oft in the stilly night
Ere slumber’s chain has bound me
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me.........

It is a beautiful poem ___sentimental, nostalgic with a touch of measured pathos. When I was asked by the editorial staff of “The Ravi” to write something for their forthcoming issue centring around my memories of the beautiful six years I spent at the college. I immediately remembered one of my teachers, about to retire, and his nostalgia for the days that were no more. Someone has rightly said that you are old when your dreams are repeated by memories. So be it.

We often used to discuss while enjoying someone’s hospitality at the canteen, as to what made a Ravian a breed apart. It wasn’t the magnificent Gothic structure atop the small hill surviving like a monarch the activities of the students, or the excellence in the academics, though proudly we could boast of a long line of eminent personalities who had distinguished themselves in all walks of life. It was, we felt, the amalgam of a distinct cultural breed of scholastic excellence and fine tradition. I remember the words of a senior naval officer from Karachi explaining the reason, as to why he had come to the college. He said that in the course of his navigation across the seas from 1945 onwards, whichever country he had visited, and met someone from South Asia in a prominent position turned out to be an Old Ravian. He frankly admitted that he wanted to see “the college” which had produced so many people. How the Ravian tradition fashioned the

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behavior of a student was illustrated in the year when strong student protests erupted in Lahore over the massacre of a large number of Palestinians. Students of various colleges took out processions forcing our boys to do the same. The principal called me (I was the secretary of the College Union) to explain to the students that it was against the tradition of the Ravians to indulge in hooliganism and agitation of a non academic nature. When this was explained to a gathering of three hundred students in the Oval, all the students without exception went back to their classes. We did pass a resolution condemning the incident.

As Secretary of the Union I remember we had bagged seven team trophies, apart from many individual prizes in various inter-collegiate debates held in colleges from Karachi to Peshawar. And we always took part in these debates wearing our college blazers, so that the college could get credit for our performance. And talking of debates I was pleasantly surprised when after elections two students came to us and confessed that, they had persuaded their entire clan to vote for me as they thought I was very learned because I had quoted Shakespeare in my speech. I had concluded my election speech “if you don’t vote for me then I can only say with Shakespeare, *o judgement thou art fled to brutish beasts and men have lost their reason*”, in the open air theatre prior to voting. In retrospect I think, tongue in cheek, that voting was a better alternative. But I was grateful to the board for helping me out.

When I was on the editorial staff of the Ravi, Prof. Dr. A Salam, the Nobel laureate was appointed as professor in-charge of the Ravi. He used to give valuable guidance to all of us. It was very unfortunate that he left the college after a very short stay.

In keeping with the old tradition we were lucky to have a set of very able, dedicated and devoted teachers who consciously shaped the personality of their students like a sculptor chiseling the rough edges and polishing the final product. I am reminded, among others of Dr. Ajmal my teacher in M.Sc Psychology. Regularly he used to give me books from his personal library and brainstorm us in the evenings. It literally left me exhausted, but at the same time a satisfied and knowledgeable person. He taught me the intricacies of analytical thought and of not taking things for granted. I think this was the tradition of individual attention and guidance of our teachers that made our alma mater probably the best in the country.

One could just go on with reminiscences but all good things must come to an end.
Turks captured Constantinople in 1453. It marked the end of the eastern wing of
the Roman Empire, also called the Byzantine. The capital of the Byzantine was
called Constantinople after the Roman emperor Constantine the great who had
embraced Christian faith. Will you call it a mere coincidence of history that Islam
triumphed in the extreme east of the European continent as soon as it was driven
out of Spain in the extreme west of Europe? Turkish empire included Tripoli,
Egypt, Syria, Arabia, Asia Minor, Armenia and the entire eastern Europe.
Countries now constituting the Middle East such as Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon
also form part of the Turkish empire. It was also called the Ottoman Empire.
Spread over three continents of Africa, Asia and Europe, it was really extensive
with no end to its power and glory. With invincible armies, the wealth and
prestige of this state knew no bounds. The sultan of Turkey besides enjoying all
the grandeur, pomp and power in the secular sense was also the Caliph of Islam.
Most Muslims looked up to the Ottoman emperor as their spiritual leader as well.
Both Jews and Christians lived as loyal subjects of the sultan’s of Turkey and led
quiet and contented lives thanks to the tolerable and moderate rule of Turks.
Taxation remained mild and outlook of the rulers was cosmopolitan. It is not for
nothing that in Voltaire’s candied, the eponymous hero and his friends choose
Constantinople as a refuge away from the rough and tumble of the then European
life.

But whatever goes up, comes down. The great tidal wave of conquest which had
touched the very walls of Vienna, the capital of Austro-Hungarian Empire, at last
receded and died down. During the painful process of its disintegration one
province after another broke away. The chafed under the Turkish rule as they
found the centre too weak to hold. Revolts, rebellions and insurrections became
order of the day just as conquests and annexations of new territories used to be
once. Russia, being the neighbouring part, was the natural beneficiary of this
dismemberment. At last, it secured recognition from the sultan that the Czar was
the guardian of the Christian subjects of the Turks. A formal treaty was signed to
this effect at Kutchuk Kainardji declaring the Russian czar the protector of
Christians in the Turkish empire. Turkey admitted a servitude to its sovereignty.
The rot once started was difficult to contain. Things began to fall apart.
The British were wide awake to these changes. They themselves had been the first to induce the Turkish governor of Egypt, an Ottoman province then, to become independent and throw away the yoke of foreign rule. They had their eyes fixed on the strategic location of Turkey and its significance in maintaining their hold on India. They were also to be the last to deal death blow to Turkish empire during the first world war. What concerned them most was the danger of Russia becoming too strong and may disturb what is and has been the cornerstone of the British foreign policy, viz., the balance of power. Russia had to be stopped from gobbling up parts of Turkey which were breaking loose from it.

Then a strange thing happened. In defense of a Muslim European power, two Christian powers, England and France, joined hands to fight Russia, another Christian power, who was also the protector of a number of Christian peoples in Europe. But power politics, capitalism, national interest, markets and empire building proved to be far more important considerations. However, faith did play a role, since Russian church, also called the Greek orthodox church is different from the protestants, Anglicans, and Roman Catholics churches. The church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, where Christ was born, was used by the Roman Catholics and the Greek orthodox clergy. There had not been any dispute and they shared it between themselves. They both held keys of this holiest of the holy place. The Greeks, however, possessed keys of the great door while the Roman Catholics had keys of a side door only. Not to be outdone, the latter demanded a key of the great door as well. Their cause was supported by France, a Roman Catholic country, the keenest and natural champion of the cause. Palestine was under the Turks. They were approached by both the parties who employed every kind of pressure tactic in pursuit of their claims. Turks decided in favour of France. The Russian ambassador, Menshikov left Constantinople in a huff. War was in the air. The ensuing war saw Russia expelled from the Turkish territories, which was the main aim of England. But you may depend on it that the love of Turkey played no part in it. She was only an incidental beneficiary. It was during this war that the profession of nursing was born. Florence Nightingale along with some other British women went to Crimea with humanitarian considerations to nurse the sick soldiers who were dying of disease and neglect in the war. She set up a hospital at Scutari with which commenced the noble profession of nursing.

5. In terms of heroism, the Crimean war will be always remembered for the Battle of Balaclava. During this battle the Russians made a surprise attack to push the invading French and British out into the Black Sea. A brigade of the British cavalry was ordered to attack the Russian heavy artillery. There must have been...
some misunderstanding either in issuing these orders or the understanding of them but regardless of danger, the horse riding British soldiers armed merely with swords and lances, charged heavy Russian guns. Even wrong orders were obeyed faithfully and unquestioningly. A new history of valour and courage was created. It is not difficult to imagine the cost in terms of loss of British lives. This unquestioning obedience and high sense of duty was celebrated in the famous poem “Charge of the Light Brigade” by England’s poet laureate Lord Tennyson:

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”
Was there a man dismay’d?
Not tho’ the soldier knew
Someone had blunder’d:
Their’s not to make reply,
Their’s not to reason why,
Their’s but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley’d and thunder’d;

Storm’d at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley’d and thunder’d;

Storm’d at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro’ the jaws of Death
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

Of further interest are the facts that the general responsible for this disaster was Lord Cardigan, and it was he after whom the warm woolen open sweater with front buttons is called cardigan. Then of course, we have the balaclava hat; both remind us of the Battle of Balaclava.

The rest of the painful story can be easily told. Modavia, Wallachia and Serbia became independent. Bulgaria followed suit. Greece also gained its independence from Turkey. Montenegro and Rumania became independent while the British took away Cyprus. Then came the first World War in which Turkey sided with Germany and the British, as a revenge, incited the Arabs to throw away the Turkish yoke. This story has been told by the great actor of this adventure, Lawrence of Arabia, in his book: “Revolt in the Desert.” Thus, the new Muslim states of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Jordan etc, were born traumatically during the final fragmentation of Turkish Empire. Turkey itself was reborn after a baptism of fire. It lost its own independence in the aftermath of the First World War but Ata, the father of modern Turkey; made it a strong, modern and respectable state after doing away with a lot of deadwood of the past. It will be rewarding for a student to read further details of the rise, fall and rise again of Turkey. It is only a question of time that she becomes a member of the European Union. If it comes through she would be the only Muslim Country to be so.
A LEARNING EXPERIENCE
MUHAMMAD MEHDI
BA (II)

I have always considered human life as continual learning experience. Individuals might turn to ashes, but the quest to unveil the hidden and to discover the undiscovered would never end. My experience at Govt. College University, a most celebrated, traditionally strong and culturally embedded institute has been full of learning and profoundly influential in shaping up my character.

Recalling some of the great, I repeat, great days as there were many of them to remember for a lifetime. But I have to be precise as well as brief at revealing some of them. Well starting with when I entered GCU and became the fifth generation to have set foot in this paradise of an institute. It was a very satisfying and an over-whelming feeling. Later on I got interested in joining the Gazette which was at that time under the editorship of Adnan Falak Sher, who was a simple but profound and a jovial person. Besides him was a very polite, well read and of a philosophical realm, Sarah Kazmi as the Co-Ed. Adnan Bhai, was always a source of encouragement and entertainment. I cannot forget the little time I spent with both of them, it was little but was meaningful and productive for me. (I was not a part of the Gazette in this session).

The incidents that are unforgettable amongst others were: the walks to press, the Shaz & Vaz shows, the cricket match where I was being laughed at and criticized for wearing bermuda shots, the visit to the old GC of Chunna Mandi (known to many as Aasif Jah Haveli ), the lunch and dinners with the Ravi team, the meetings at the Ravi Office, my getting into Dramatics and the days and nights we worked for the play, and off course the grinding by the Spin Doctor’s Deja vu. There are other incidents that cannot be disclosed here. All this time and its happenings have been treasured for a lifetime.

As a reporter my lucky and a little delayed entry into the Gazette, was a very nice and joyful feeling. Furthermore, the first meeting was held…and a session of setting the priorities and responsibilities of the office bearers was conducted followed by a lecture of Umer Bhai. I was made the center of attraction…correction repression in this meeting. But that’s part of life.

The time I spent as the reporter on the Gazette was a learning experience and it formed a baseline for me to continue with my endeavors for the following years.

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Umer Siddique, the Editor, was a very humble, well read and contended soul. His way of guiding me throughout and still has been very helpful.

Nasir Bhai, Ahsan Saeed and Hashmi were great people to work with and I had some wonderful time with these guys. Ali Usman, was amongst other guys who was a very fun to be with a person.

I was an enthusiast by nature and had this habit of making my presence known at every place. After serving at the Gazette I wanted to go ahead into something more extensive. So I applied for the post of Asst. Editor of the Ravi. I still recall the day when this written test was conducted and I was half hour late to reach the hall, which was full of like-minded people. But I thought that half hour was more than enough for my thought to be reflected onto a piece of paper. I was short-listed for the post of Asst. Editor. The first meeting at the Ravi Office was a bad dream come true as I saw people of the alien clan sitting all around. These included people who wont laugh for hours without very little feeling of this fact. But to my amazement they were not all that boring. I took my chances to make them have fun at times teasing one or the other and than things would go on and on...

Sameer Bhai, was our editor, a very polite and self-confident person. He would try doing everything in this world by himself whether he was successful or not. I really appreciate this quality in him. We had some good time during the Ravi session and later when he was asked to do a role in the annual play. Thanks for having me with you.

Sidra, our Co-Editor was a very sweet and helpful person. She was amongst the forefront and decisive people who would like things to happen. She always hated me for things better known to her. And would call me as they call it the ‘devils advocate’. Our other Co-ed was busy in a world of her dreams and fantasies. Her world constituted only two people one was herself and the other was her all time friend, chum, pal, classmate, roommate and god knows what not. I hope they are still having such inspiring friendship.

Amongst the Reps. Imran and Jibran were always helping hands. Hira, could give very little time to the Ravi because of her other preoccupations. She would always join the meeting in the last and would just run away in 10 mins mere formality perhaps. Lucman, was also a person whose ideas and suggestions were very different and progressive. Thank you all for tolerating me all this time.

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A very fresh November afternoon I was sitting with other members of the DS (Debating Society) having a camp. My friend Danish alias DJ was also present there with a pile of papers and seemed slightly worried. We started to talk over things and after a while he started to look at me from different angels and to my questioning in a comparatively prosaic mode he handed me a script and asked me to read the lines. Here I was being chosen to do a role for the annual play of the Dramatics Club it was ‘You never can tell’ by G.B.Shaw. After this the days and nights were spent at the Doc’s office, Bokhari Auditorium and wherever our 10-member crew could find place to sit and read the script on our respective roles. The play went off very nicely and all of us were appreciated. Thanks to all the members and to Doctor Farhan for giving me this opportunity. I thoroughly enjoyed all the time rather quality time at GCU.

I want to take this opportunity to tell the girls and guys who are joining this institute that they need to go beyond the ordinary and make their worth known. I personally feel that every individual is blessed with some sort of talent. What needs to be done is to explore oneself for the talents and capabilities he/she possesses.

Last but not the least I would like to thank the faculty members who always appreciated and encouraged me in all my endeavors. Mr. Saboor Khan for his support and for always listening to my problems and sorting them out. Dr. Khalid Aftab, our patron the man behind every act rather successful act that was undertaken to make GCU proud and most glorious. He is to be thanked a lot.
Are you brainwashed? What about some of your neighbors, are they brainwashed? Before you answer that, let me ask you a few preliminary questions: Do you believe that the United States was struck by a terrorist attack on Sept. 11? Do you think that the people behind that attack were "Arabs" and that its "mastermind" was this fellow Osama bin Laden, operating from a cave in Afghanistan? Do you believe that the way to stop terrorism is to hit them hard, to hit them at their "bases" in such places as Afghanistan, and to hit the nations who might sponsor them, like, say Iraq?

Well, the answer suggested by most of the people is “yes”. But wait for a minute and ponder over it: Just because the majority of people might BELIEVE something to be true, doesn't make it true. All it means is that you and most of your neighbors are suffering from a mass delusion--or, put more bluntly: YOU ARE BRAINWASHED. So, the question is, really, how did you get this way? How did you come to believe things like those statements in the first questions were true? "Well, I heard it on.... Well, I saw it on.... Well, I read it in...." You needn't bother finishing those statements; it seems as if you and your neighbors were told the "truth" by the mass media. But the reality is somewhat different. The American "news" media, which is so proud of calling itself "free," and has been patting itself on it back for the wonderful job it has done for all of us during and after Sept. 11, is the largest, most expensive, mass-brainwashing machine ever assembled in human history.

Project MK-ULTRA was the first episode of deprogramming the human mind. It is the code name for a CIA mind control research program that began in the 1950s, and continued until the late 1960s in the United States. It involves the use of psychotic drugs like LSD and mescaline to manipulate the human neural cell. There is also an evidence that the project involved not only the use of drugs to manipulate persons, but also the use of electronic signals to alter brain functioning.

TERROR CAMPAIGN, which dates back to the bombing of Dresden in the World War II, is the second episode of deprogramming the human mind. This campaign was a brand of warfare whose aim is not to disable military targets, but to sap the overall will of a nation and its people by creating a state of
psychological terror. Dresden had no military value as a target. For centuries, it had been a center of German cultural heritage—a heritage that had everything to do with positive developments in human civilization, and nothing to do with the Nazi disease that had been imposed on Germany. Dresden was chosen for destruction as an act of TERRORISM, directed, not against the Nazi’s, but the German people. The message of Dresden bombing was the same as planned—to inflict a psychological terror on German people that would break their will to fight, leaving them fearful, frightened, and disorganized. This terror would have a lasting effect on Germany, removing that nation from among the great states of Europe.

The attack on the U.S. Sept. 11 was designed for a similar PSYWAR brainwashing effect. The targeted population was the Americans, in particular, and the whole world, in general. In today’s global world, there are new methods, not available at the time of the Dresden attack, for maximizing the psychological effects of a TERROR CAMPAIGN that parallel standard brainwashing techniques. One involves the repetition of terrifying images, the kind that would make person recoil, and then compelling that person to continue viewing them. Such terrifying images weaken the ability of the mind to reason, making it more susceptible to suggestion and manipulation.

In the hours following the attack on the World Trade Center, every television media outlet broadcast, again and again, the images of the airplanes, smashing into the Twin Towers, from all conceivable angles, and then, the shots of the two towers collapsing. It was easily the most terrifying real-life image that most Americans had ever seen. A population induced into a state of terror and shock was then bombarded with SUGGESTION: Osama bin Laden, the "evil mastermind" behind the deed. To understand the logic behind this suggestion one needs to look at a nearly 30-year span of news reporting, that led us to this point, where some character, a former and current asset of U.S.-British-Israeli intelligence networks, operating from "caves" and other bases in one of the most remote and isolated areas of the world, has become U.S. "Public Enemy Number One."

Bin Laden’s enemy image is a morphing process that begins with the television image of the Black September terrorists of the 1972 Olympics. Then, continue to the 1973 images of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat; later, there are the images of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini and the fanatic mullahs.
Given these past figures and images, within minutes of the World Trade Center attack, Americans had decided that this was done by "Arab terrorist". They had already been conditioned to believe it by thousands of televised hours of repeated misreporting. Therefore it was not difficult for the targeted population to imagine the enemy--- there is the swarthy complexion, the beard, the burnoose, the weapons in hand--it is all there, all as expected, an ideal subject for the projected rage and hatred of an injured nation. No matter that bin Laden is not really the "evil mastermind."

And, you still believe that you weren't brainwashed?

Ok, lets move on to another argument--- “MOVIES”
The Movies in Our Heads "God, this is just like a movie;"
Somewhere in our memory banks, were planted the picture of the WTC attack, to shape our suggestion and opinion. In the last five years, before Sep 11, there have been at least half-dozen movies, whose plots have centered on a terrorist attack on the United States. Hollywood statisticians have estimated that these have been viewed, both in movie theaters and home videos, by more than 100 million people. And, many of these movies, in the recent period, have portrayed "Arabs" or "Islamic fundamentalists" as being behind the terrorist assaults.

How often have we listened to these words [since Sept. 11]? The statement of fact: 'The worst terrorist bombing since Oklahoma City.' The promise: 'Make no mistake about it--we will hunt down the enemy, we will find the enemy, and we will kill the enemy. This is a time of war; ' the fact that it is inside our border means that it is a new kind of war.'

All the lines quoted come from 'The Siege;' a 1998 thriller directed by Edward Zwick.

The plot of this movie involves a network of "Arab" terrorist cells, which commit acts of increasingly violent intensity, against civilian targets in New York City. Video clips of President Clinton commenting on the attacks launched, by his administration, against the networks of Osama bin Laden are spliced into the movie footage. As the terrorists wreak more havoc and kill more people, New York City is placed under martial law; anyone who looks "Arab" is rounded up and placed in internment camps, even as the violence continues. In the end, the movie becomes a sermon on how to moderate attacks on the Constitution, and on ethnic profiling of Americans, while the nation goes on to fight the foreign,
"Arab"-terrorist enemy.

In this way our opinions deals with indirect, unseen, and puzzling facts, controlled and manipulated by the brainwashing machine. Infact, the process of watching television is itself a brainwashing mechanism. Regardless of content, habituated television viewing shuts down the cognitive powers of the mind, and has a narcotic-like effect on the central nervous system, making the habituated viewer an easy subject for suggestion and manipulation. And in the end we are left with the notion of hopelessness and inevitability that nothing can be done about it--- it is just “the way it is”.

"The end of the world, details at 11. Now back to your regular programming."

Remember: The first step in deprogramming yourself from mass-media brainwashing, to freeing yourself and your neighbors, from its evil clutches, is to recognize that you and they are, indeed, brainwashed. It gets a lot easier, and things begin to get much clearer from there on.
Countless scenarios have emerged & disappeared on the canvas of my mind but at this very moment I am trying to determine what 'existence' is? - Water exists for example and fish lives in it. I have no purpose in life or may be unable to achieve anything in life. My breath is coming and going, blood is circulating but I don’t feel truly alive; I want to die at once-but I am still alive-there is something which is holding me back, what is there which doesn’t let me die? Who does not let me draw my last breath? .... Maybe I am leaving behind something incomplete? ---but what is it? Neither do I know the answers to these questions nor am I able to make any guesses. “ I have given you all that I possessed, until my rosy face turned pale, but now what can I give you?..... my life?” “What do you want from me; may be...you want to bless me with something; but what is it?” “ How can I know?” I closed my questioning eyes & allowed my unconsciousness mind to engulf my consciousness, to take me to an unknown time-less world.

The Omnipotent ordered the seraphs to bow down before Adam as He preferred man bestowed with the faculty of thought over unconscious and instinctive worshippers, it was an indication for man that he must not surrender in front of any other might except that of the Almighty. Man was thus honored by the angels as he was considered to be sublime; the supplications of the angels for thousands of years were of no match to man's knowledge. Curiosity is an integral part of man’s nature and due to excessive and unruly curiosity manifested by Adam by tasting of the fruit of the forbidden tree, he was exiled from paradise and sent to earth where the life of Adam's progeny thereafter became a quest for values, in this world which is not more than an ‘Inn’.

If the world is a 'land of wonder' than man can certainly be taken to be a wanderer upon this land, someone who has already passed countless centuries in this world & will stay here for some unknown period of time. He has been blessed with the complete freedom to think and speculate and then to follow the selected course of his heart, he has been sent to reveal as many secrets of the universe as he can. His main job is to decide what he would like to explore; the Cosmos or the Microcosm; man is the preface of this world based on impressions. Some knowledge about his destination can make a man a successful traveler, but not a true achiever, he may have the knowledge about the way (which can lead him on to different destinies or to the same destiny) but he may not know the correct path.
that he should follow--- he has no idea (even if he stays very close to his goal; he
still remains un-aware of his fortune). Man's first priority therefore should be the
knowledge of his task. In this world which seems to be a child’s play, he must
know what he needs, or at least what he wants from life-contentment or
deception, enlightenment or ignorance, truth or mirage, tears or laughter, bliss of
soul or lust for luxuries.

Understanding is the key to the intellect which can be nourished through the
speculation of the self. Nothing can be more deplorable than self-deception. Man
remains busy in recognizing and putting up a fight against his fellow beings
whom he conceives as cheats, that he brilliantly ignores the faults of his own self.
Man usually deceives himself in this way unconsciously; he does so when he is
not ready to face the truth. There happens to be a great difference between truth
and reality, the sight acquaints one with reality as it appears and insight with the
truth hidden behind it, one must not confuse them. Lack of self knowledge
produces people who are afraid of acknowledging that they have been rejected,
deceived, or ignored, due to their own shortcomings and to make up for it they
blame the judgments of other people about them. Another category of human
beings who deceive themselves comprise of those who are spell-bound by self
approbation & remain busy in their pursuit for someone who would flatter them-
such fools are skillful enough to make a mountain of a mole hilly-they perceive
that they well deserve to be praised at every occasion & their appreciator is the
only being who actually knows and understands them.

Man has been bestowed with superiority above all other creatures due to his
wisdom but what is the benefit of his intellect when he is unable to decide
between the devil and the deep sea? Man's lust for appearances fortifies him in
the beauty of the outer-world, skin, and he ignores the importance of the inner-
world which is beneath the surface of the skin. Cosmos has been made to
facilitate man in interpreting the microcosm. It is man's inquisitive nature which
leads him to formulate logically impressive theories which he deduces from his
own personal observations, but it's his lack of self knowledge which stops him
from the proper application of his treasure that is his wisdom and understanding.
Man feels insecure due to the contradiction between appearance and reality. He is
restless because he seeks permanence in this mutable world. In fact it is man’s
desire to live and to escape death. Truth is a reality which remains un-changed in
all circumstances. Death is the detachment of man’s soul from his body which
occurs in a moment which comes once in one's life and then stays forever. A lie is
a facet which suffers changes from time to time molding itself according to the

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situation whereas age is caprice in nature, infants grow up to become youngsters, youngsters become elders, elders turn into old people who are ultimately victimized by death. Man feels helpless because he recognizes that his life revolves around this tournament between truth and lies, appearance and reality and even death does not solve the mystery. These incomprehensible realities unfold their drama at the cost of man and perturb him to no extent and then it is he who is perished at the end.

The desire of the mortal to become immortal has always persuaded him to struggle for a state of stability. Eternity can also be called as freedom; it means to be free from the shackles of time. It is man’s delusion however if he believes that he can achieve this sublime state of the soul in the cage of the body. This universe and man’s existence in it has not been made alluring to enslave man in their charms as such a beautiful mirage tends to be eye capturing, but they have been created to activate his imagination which enables him to unveil the veiled, and provide an opportunity for man to wonder, to think, to deduct, to apply and of course to convict. Death is a pledge to immortality; only death can give man a chance to escape from this perpetually exhausting material world and to become immortal.

Man strives to get rid of his delusion but the poor fellow has so many worries to resolve that he scarcely finds any time to recall his early resolution to redefine values. Death is not a tragedy but something that prepares man for a new beginning; one has to wait to know what its reality is. By changing his priorities, man can make himself a saint but its man who is going to decide the course of his life, he must make his decision immediately as time waits for no one, who knows when will his time come to an end and he would be left empty handed like me..... To what should I adapt my life to and what should I avoid ... would I get applauded or cursed in the after life? --- Man should remember whether he desires to live an able and fulfilling Life or acquire a splendid Death.
If there’s one civilization which took a complete turnaround in the last few centuries, it’s the Arab civilization. Most people today associate fanaticism to Arab Muslims, but few realize that Arabs have a history that predates the achievements of Arab civilization by thousands of years. Having lived in an Arab country myself, I see now how unappreciative I have been of the majestic history of the Arabs, especially in view of its everlasting impact on every culture of today.

The ‘Arab World’ consists of twenty-one states stretching from Morocco in the West to Oman in the East. For most of us it brings pictures of Deserts, Camels and oil rich countries. In reality majority of Arab countries have borders on the Mediterranean Sea; countries such as Lebanon and Morocco have vast expanses of cedar forest and mountain ranges which receive enough snowfall in winter for skiing. Contrary to popular belief, all Arabs are not rich and only few states possess petroleum and natural gas.

The Arab civilization originated from the Arabian Peninsula; its inhabitants the Semitic people established the earliest of civilizations. Southern and Northern Arabia belonged to two entirely different Semitic people, the Sabaeans to the South and the Bedouins to the North. The Sabaeans had two major trade routes, which enabled the Bedouins to exchange goods with Sabaeans. Trade created a portal through which they connected with the rest of the world.

The Sumerians in Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) not only invented wheel but were also responsible for developing the first civilization of the world. They introduced the first written language and also kept their books in a central library. Its beauty encompassed forests and a great variety of cultivable plants and domestic animals as irrigation also originated from this land. In 2000 B.C., the famous city of Babylon was founded on the Euphrates River. Jericho, the oldest inhabited city on Earth was founded in Jordan valley around 6000 B.C.

Influenced by three major monotheistic religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the Arabs developed traditions which dominate the existing era. However, it was because of the rise of Islam in the region in 622 AD that Arab civilization
reached its epitome. Born in the ancient city of Mecca, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), the last Messenger of God, received his first revelation while meditating in the cave of Hira. Persecuted, the Prophet (PBUH) migrated from Mecca to Madina and marked the beginning of the Islamic era in the Arab civilization.

In the first decade after the death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the Muslim empire stretched across Africa to Europe. With its expansion, changes began to take place in the dialect of the Holy verses of Quran which was revealed in the Arabic language. The Caliph Uthman took the initiative and compiled the verses of Quran in the form of one complete book as it exists today. Arabic soon became the language of power for a large section of the world, as Islamic culture flowed to the East and West.

In 633, under the rule of second Caliph Umar al-Khattab the Muslim rule expanded as Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Palestine were conquered. He introduced the Islamic calendar consisting of 12 lunar months which begins in 622 CE with Hijra. After the death of third Caliph Ali, disputes arose between two distinct groups of Muslims. One wanted political leadership to be elected and the other wanted the political authority to reside within the family of the Prophet. When Imam Hussain, the Prophet’s grandson and a son of Caliph Ali, was killed at the battle of Karbala, the Shi’a tradition emerged which divided the Arab Muslim community into two groups — the Sunnis and the Shi’as.

Ancient Arabs had the ability to transform and build on the civilizations before them. They translated the ancient works of Greek, Babylonian, Syrian, Persian, Indian and Egyptian researchers into Arabic. The Arab Muslims produced distinguished works for medicine, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and geography. Notable among these are Al-Kindi, the first Muslim philosopher, Jabir bin Hayan the father of chemistry, Al-Khwarizmi the inventor of Algebra. Ibn Battuta traveled the globe and described his adventures in *Travels of Ibn Battuta*.

The Arab architecture is recognized for its domes and distinct features. The Great Mosque at Cordoba, now known as Mezquita and the magnificent Alhambra palace at Granada are the finest examples of Arab-Islamic architecture. Arabic calligraphy also flourished during this period as Arabic inscriptions appeared on mosques and other prominent buildings.

The stories of genies, magic lamps and flying carpets are often associated with the Arab mythology. They were in fact, part of a medieval Middle Eastern literary epic; *One Thousand and one Nights* or *Arabian Nights*, which included the
famous stories of Ali Baba and Forty Thieves and Sindbad. Sufism, a mystic
tradition of Islam came into the limelight with the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam
and Masnavi by famous mystic Jalal-ul-Din Rumi.

As the Arabs entered Spain under the command of Tariq ibn Ziyad, the Islamic
control reached its farthest extent of Europe. Abdul Rehman I, survivor of a
family of caliphs of the Arab empire, established the Umayyad Dynasty and
became the first Caliph of Al-Andalus, the Muslim part of Spain. The Muslim
society here had a literary base and their social and economic progress was
unparalleled for centuries.

The Arab invasion of Southern France, China, Asia Minor and Sudan in the South
had a prominent influence on the language and culture of these regions. As more
and more people embraced Islam, a new concept of Arab imperialism came into
existence. The term ‘Arab’ no longer referred to ethnic Arabs belonging to the
Arabian Peninsula, but non-Arabs who converted to Islam also merged into
Arabs. People in Sudan, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria and nearby countries came to
be known as Arabs after Islamic revolution in these regions.

The contributions of Arab scholars are not restricted to one specific field.
However, the downfall of Arabs approached when the Mongols sacked Baghdad
and burned down the great House of Wisdom and 36 public libraries with their
vast store of manuscripts. After this initial setback, the consequent cultural and
political decentralization of the Caliphate further divided Muslims into various
independent states.

Despite the fact that Muslim scholars paved way for most of the modern research,
our Arab counterparts could not do much to keep up with the advancement in
science and technology. Orthodox traditions and excessive concentration on
political agendas deviated them from a path which could lead to a renaissance of
the Arab civilization.
John Quincy Adams observed, “Literature has been the charm of my life” so is the case with me.

My first encounter with literature was through story books in my childhood days when I always asked my dad to borrow me some story books and always wish if I could get story books of enchanted places and splendid characters in the form of gifts on my birthday. Later I developed the habit of reading more and more newspaper where I find interesting comic characters like Garfield, Dennis, the menace, Archie etc. the beautiful Cinderella story, sleeping beauty and snow white and the seven dwarves where the bedtime stories always make my dreams sweet. Then as I grew up in my teenage I got hold of novels like Great Expectations, David Copperfield which were in abridged forms. I read in school days Shakespeare plays Romeo and Juliet, Twelfth Night, The Merchant Of Venice and, King Lear etc.

Literature first come to me as a pure subject of delight and taste when I choose it to be a part of my education, it became more vast and explanatory for me. The different genres of literature whether poetry or novel or drama open new canvas of life with its various colours each describing a new painting, a new set of values in life each picturing a different aspect of life of poets and characters of great classics like Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Swift, The Bronte Sisters particularly Charlotte Bronte, Shakespeare, Chaucer, Browning, Eliot, Wordsworth were my favourite literature through the works of these writers was a flavoured and spicy dish for me. The social theme and sympathetic element of life was being served by me and every aspect of life full of joy and sorrow came from within the heart and soul of literature. actually literature belonging to any region of the world English or Urdu, Russian or Latin American all are clad in one dress of universality i.e making one realize about the colors of nature and life making people familiarize with those elements of universe and of life of human beings that imparts beauty and truth to each and every one who come near it.

Stories and fantasies of far off places, beauty and imagery of strange characters added a sense of familiarity to the mind and at the same time extending it to imagination of human mind in literature. for me even in the simple story of Cinderella or a snow white there was a hidden meaning or message delivered by
the writer. With the study of literature of different regions international communication was found e.g. Foster describing India and its culture in the *Passage To India*. One comes to know what people are and how they think poetry the oldest genre in literature gives sense of pleasure to mind and soul. It has a direct influence on heart. Urdu poetry full of Ghalib, Mir Taqi Mir, Moman, Jiger Murad Abadi, Hali, Allam Iqbal, Faiz and many others poetry opened new avenues of thinking for people. The universality in literature is that written some three or four hundred years ago or still more back it remains fresh for the coming generations to enjoy and make use of what delivers.

Literature has inspired me to study it more and more and benefit myself from it and it is for literature that I owe to write as I am writing this. It has given me strength and style to think, act and learn the many dimensions of human existence and the world around it. So literature for me is the soul of my life and as I have said before it is indeed for me a charm of my life.
In my early childhood, I was very inquisitive and sensitive towards my surroundings. Stars, moon, wind, trees, streams and rivers, all elements of nature fascinated me a lot. This fascination with nature, at a later stage, inspired me to write poetry.

To a poet, the whole universe is like a brightly colored magazine, and he, beholds with awe the images, the contours and everything in it. The cosmos to him is a master piece of God, an ever-changing, smelling and singing painting, and he through his poetry, makes the most of it.

Any one, who wants to discover his real self, has to recall and relive his childhood. A poet remains a child forever. His childhood never dies. Whatever views and perceptions he has in his childhood continue to inform him in his adulthood and the divinity that is present in him as a child remains with him throughout his life and inspires his poetry.

A child is a keen observer of the natural phenomena. Everything is new to him and yet, nothing is new. In my early childhood I started to think about God. To me God was a Big-Milky-Being, someone very kind and benevolent. But my teachers and my elders taught me otherwise. They portrayed God as someone who would punish me severely if I told lies or indulged in ‘wrongdoings’. This narrow-minded view of God caused me to turn away from religion at a later stage and now I still believe in God but deny religion.

Religion, I believe, is a product of a conscious and collective effort of a certain community. I do not believe in the ‘revelation’ of religion. It is something man-made and has nothing to do with God.

I have discovered that my childhood dreams and aspirations have contributed to my poetry. As a child, I dreamt of moneybags, something that is symbolic of the greed and possessive nature of man. Similarly, as a child I had a burning desire to outdo my friends and cousins. I wanted to climb the top most branch of an oak tree, higher than than anyone else, and I find that this desire to aspire for ‘higher things’ in life and compete has remained with me and is present in my poetry.
I composed my first verse in the womb of my mother. The very first sound that I heard was the beating of a woman's heart. The first sensual pleasure I had was derived from the touch of a woman. The first scent that I smelled was that of a woman’s body. The intimacy of my relationship with my mother, I believe, has had the greatest effect on my poetry.

Nature is most beautiful when left untouched. If attempts are made to ‘refine’ nature, its beauty is spoiled. Similarly, poetry has a rhythm, spontaneity and rawness of its own that is spoiled by the use of language. To reach out to the common people, a poet has to make use of language. But language, I believe hampers the natural flow of poetry.

When I write poetry, I just let it flow and follow a rhythm of its own. Every poem has its own music, music that can only be heard if poetry is free of the complexities of language. Only when poetry is expressed in the simplest possible language, can it be truly effective. Just like nature had better be unadorned, unnecessary embellishments spoil the beauty of poetry.
The stark lesson from history reveals that the League of Nation, which was established in the aftermath of World War-I miserably failed to ensure durable peace and stability among member countries due to the ruthless power game of powerful member nations. On the debris of World War-II, U.N.O was setup with the noble mission of settling disputes among the nations peacefully, amicably and ensure long-lasting peace & to ward off holocaust of war for future generations. However, in reality the U.N.O has been almost totally unsuccessful & unable to assist the Muslim countries at times of crisis and various forms of aggression against them. One of the major factors responsible for ineffectiveness and failure of U.N.O to comprehensively discharge its obligations under its charter is the veto power of its five global masters, who have exercised the veto power indiscriminately and ruthlessly to grind their own axe. Inspite of its $5 Billion budget during the fiscal year 2005-06, it posed itself unsuccessful to achieve the aim of security and maintenance of peace throughout the world.

In 2003, on of the greatest super power who profess itself as “the champion of democracy & freedom” occupied Iraq without any legitimate & plausible cause under the guise of W.M.D in possession of Iraq, which has been never proved. At that time, the U.N.O remained a feeble and silent spectator when the sovereignty of Iraq was trampled and nothing remained sacrosanct. On the contrary, UNSC hurriedly adopted a resolution at the behest of vested super powers allowing incursion and invasion of Afghanistan on the pretext of War against terrorism. Nevertheless, the state terrorism unleashed by a big power coalition in Iraq continues unabated in the eyes of world peace-keeping body.

UNSC has remained dormant & inactive in case of non-Muslim countries who have acquired or are attempting to acquire Nuclear capabilities like Israel, North Korea and Latin American countries, whereas Iran is now the biggest target of super powers politics through UNSC.

Most recently, after one month of ruthless Israeli aggression, UNSC adopted a belated resolution calling for cease-fire and deployment of troops between Israeli and Lebanese borders under UNIFIL. Such a delayed action by UNSC has not only totally tarnished the image of UNSC but also inflicted great catastrophe in
Lebanon in terms of more than one thousand persons killed, several thousand wounded, & at least a loss of $6.5 million in the monetary terms.

In nutshell, where was the UN to protect & preserve the sovereignty of Lebanon from one of the mightiest armies of the world? Has it ever been able to achieve its objectives and aims proclaimed on the eve of its formation? Where was the UNSC resolution No. 1291 to stop the Second Congo war, which resulted in 5 million casualties? Was U.N.O able to take any action against occupying Muslim territories and paying no heed to the UNSC resolutions for dismantling of settlements on West Bank and Gaza? Has it served the purpose for which its charter was formulated & adopted? The Kashmir issue remains unresolved for the last 60 years, isn’t such a justice delayed is justice denied? Last but not the least, will it be able to withstand and face the future challenges in the wake of violation of its obligations and its charter by the nations patronized by its powerful clientage wielding veto power? The answer is anybody’s and everybody’s guess.
Sports have a long history. Alongside physical development, it seems, sports have evolved as a discipline. With the development of market capitalism, sports also have become highly commercialized. There are large numbers of sponsors who are willing to put their faith and money in players and the advertisements have contributed to this scenario. The profession of Sports provides a living, not only for the players but also for the managers, the coaches and organizers etc.

The fact that there is now so much money involved in sports now, attracts lots of people towards it. When it was not as professional as it has become today, men and women took it as a hobby, and not as a job. They would play for awhile but did not try hard enough. But now, they become millionaires in a matter of months. With the advent of sponsorship deals, the competition has become more intense than ever.

Commercialization has led to the establishment of a professional environment in sports. Special emphasis is placed on the organization of major sporting events, and a great deal of attention is given to the surroundings in which the event has to take place, the seating arrangement, the arrangement of tickets, stalls etc and so on. There are a large number of hired officials and workers who make painstaking efforts to try to ensure that the sports events run as smoothly as possible. Not being well-organized would result in bad arrangement, rowdy crowds, less seating capacity, problems in the availability of tickets etc and all of this would pile up together to give the game a bad name.

Commercialization has also helped to provide sports with a dignity which they did not enjoy earlier. Just like in the world of entertainment, there was a time when it was thought that the actors and other performers are not so respectable; sportsmen too were thought to be in the same league with them. And just as money has given the actors and others associated with the entertainment industry a reputable place in society, it has also provided dignity to the sportsmen and women so that the leaders of the countries including their royalty do not feel ashamed anymore to attend matches and other sports events.

However not all the effects of commercializing of sports have been good. The fact that in the field of sports only the fittest can survive has put a lot of people
off. Too much competition has also resulted in discouraging people who were into games just for enjoyment. Nowadays, more people are choosing to become spectators rather than players. This is bound to happen when something becomes so competitive. The fun seems to have gone out of it. Some of the fields of sports have become so high spirited and wrought with emotions that they resemble the fights of warriors in the past. It seems as if to replace the swords and shields, the players now just carry rackets and hockey sticks but the bloodthirsty nature of the game has not changed. Since money is at stake, the players of even mild games like tennis and cricket develop feelings of hatred for their opponents instead of developing feelings of love and companionship.

Commercialization has made the process of making money, easy for the sportsman. It has also encouraged gambling. Several cases of gambling have come to the limelight where gamblers have promised sportsmen a huge sum of money if they adhere to their wishes. In this way matches have been fixed and the teams with the biggest chances of winning the matches have become losers so that they can make money as they have gambled on the match. When sports became a business then naturally the ugly side of this field, also became manifest. Another demeaning factor of sports is that it has given rise to an extreme type of patriotism where supporters not only shout at each other but even resort to fighting in favour of their respective teams. There have been several cases in which even the referees, players and officials have been assaulted by the crowds.

On the whole commercialization has definitely given sports a lift however; it is regrettable that some aspects of it have also put a negative light on sports.
THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL LIBRARIES
ABDUL WAHEED
Chief Librarian

Information Technology not only affects the all fields of life but also Libraries are affected. Traditional concept of Library has changed and now we can see it in the form of Digital library. Digital library launched by Higher Education Commission Pakistan for the Universities of Pakistan is best example of modern library set up. The concept is still in progress due to information explosion. Now question arises. What will be the futures of digital libraries? At present which services are provided by digital library and how much it will be extended?

Data and information are captured and represented in various digital formats and are proliferating rapidly. However, the techniques for accessing data and information are rudimentary and imprecise, mostly based on simple keyword indexes, relational queries, and/or low-level image or audio features Digital library should become an institution for capturing and transferring human knowledge, instead of simply for accessing data and information

The integration of digital libraries, data grids, and persistent archives is an actively underway allocation is not a simple task. Getting the right stuff to the right person has many aspects, and means supporting a variety of technologies, and understanding their benefits, costs and interactions. The total of available attention in the world may well be less than the total available information. We talk about billions of on-line webpages, and a hidden web that is yet larger. And yet, because so much potentially valuable information is lacking, many initiatives are funded to put more on the web. A crucial task is hence the reduction of available information to actionable information, i.e., the specific information that will cause a change in behavior, a reduction in further work, or the making of decisions. Digital library research aims to develop the engineering and science for generating, capturing, accessing, and utilizing data, information, and knowledge in various digital formats, for a variety of applications, and in a global, collaborative human and system network.

Digital libraries will soon become a global knowledge resource for education, training, and (international) collaboration. Its impacts will be felt in all aspects of human activities, from industries to governments, and from education to research. Many basics technical, social, and policy issues remain to be developed and researched. It calls for a long-term (ten-year), systematic research agenda to
develop digital libraries into an institution of human knowledge. HEC of Pakistan is providing access to more then 23,000 journals through digital library.

In 3-5 years (mid-term), we expect to see significant advancement in knowledge creation for various digital library applications and domains based on more advanced algorithmic techniques and proper human-computer interaction principles. Instead of accessing low-level, fragmented data and information pieces, high-level, abstract and decision-relevant knowledge will be accessed in a seamless manner. In 8-10 years (final exams), we expect the systematic science and theory for digital library knowledge creation to be developed and validated. The library users we will be able to access human knowledge in a multi-lingual, multi-media, library through mobile phones, and semantics-based digital library knowledge network.

Innovation in technology, test beds, and tools development marks some of the major accomplishments for the first decade of digital library research. As an emerging field, this is a normal and expected path of growth. The road ahead, however, requires a broader and better connection to all other aspects of society if digital library (DL) is to become a viable discipline sustainable not only technologically but also socially, politically, and economically.

Over the last ten years there has been enormous progress. We now know how to convert not just the traditional books, pictures, sounds and video to digital form, but also fossils, buildings, and sculptures. Text searching is now used effectively every day by millions, while research is active on searching 2-D images and sound recordings, both music and voice. The current research frontier in searching and organizing is in 3-D images and in the combinations of techniques needed to search video. The following are components are to be considered in this context:-

a) Data resources
The research work on computer networks had to be supplemented with electronic support of the costs of the actual network service. The research on digital libraries produces a need for longer-term support of the data collected, particularly during the time that the library system needs to run duplicate paper and electronic support systems.

b) Economics
We know how to do digitization large scale, but we're still groping in the dark for how to pay for them. The standard solution so far is site licenses to university
libraries. The good part of this is Minimal administration, Fairly sophisticated local support, Retaining the libraries in the role of information’s supplier, Encouragement of libraries to find attractive things and scan them and no charges per item. The bad parts are no access for individuals to databases, limitations on use imposed by the license agreements and no new money entering the system either from individuals or university departments, at a time when library budgets are under pressure

c) Copyright
Some copyright issues are bundled with economics, but a large part of the problem perceived by the libraries is our inability to get cheap permissions to scan and put online materials that are obviously of no commercial value. The copyright office is considering something to do about "orphaned" materials (out of print but not out of copyright). Some kind of administrative compulsory license "orphaned" books, music and movies would help a great deal. This would be similar to recorded music, although it is likely that payments would be made to a society rather than to individuals.

There is also a need of some understanding to deal with items that are not labeled with any producer or date and whose copyright status and permissions can be extremely complex. Again, some kind of compulsory license system with fees paid to an authors/composers society would be best.

There is an apprehension of complete loss of material, which is produced but kept under the control of the publisher. Often it is insisted that such material has not been "published" (since that would invoke a requirement to deposit a copy with National Library (like Library of Congress and National Library of Pakistan). It also that it has not been "sold" (since that would give the purchaser the traditional rights of first sale, such as the right to sell the copy onwards to some used book dealer). Instead the publisher says there is only a "license" to access the material from some publisher website or to decrypt some kind of protected medium. If the publisher goes bankrupt, or just decides that the number of licenses sold no longer justifies maintaining the operation, the material can disappear. If it was protected by strong cryptography, there is no practical way to get at it without the cooperation of the publisher; merely getting permission will not be good enough. We should have a copyright law that requires legal deposit of a clear-text version of such material.

d) Scientific data
The people had like to have people use data as easily as they now use text. Only one decade ago it was generally believed that people had to be experts to do full text searching; postgraduate departments of university library science schools include short term courses in it and we thought competent searching meant taking such a course. Now we have everyone using search engines like Google, Yahoo etc. without any training at all, and getting results they consider satisfactory.

There have been several research projects in data visualization, but not enough about interfaces. There are serious problems trying to understand the user's knowledge. After all, is anybody other than a professional chemist going to want direct access to a pure scientific database? But just how much computing and chemistry should be required for the interface? Nobody don't know yet. Among scientific areas where digital data libraries are already making a huge difference are molecular biology, astronomy, and geology.

e) Humanities Computing
Working with humanities scholars is a major effort in the digital libraries research program, along with scientific and medical collaborations. It has been one of the most encouraging areas both for extended collaborations and new technologies. In how many other areas of computer science do practitioners work with literary scholars, architects, historians, and art critics?

New technologies are developed out of the needs found when humanities data are analyzed. New image processing techniques have been found in many university courses in USA and UK. Humanities computing can also introduce us to entirely new problems, such as the need for multi-lingual or multi-cultural collaborations.

f) Interface techniques
Surprisingly, most digital library interfaces and Web search engines still act as if the typical user didn't have a graphics terminal, but only some kind of "glass teletype". Why can't we have better interfaces, making use of graphical displays? Some systems are doing work in this area, but not enough.

g) Software libraries
There are relatively few digital libraries of computer software itself. Why not? What kind of organizational techniques or searching techniques will work for software? Since we can parse and understand the semantics of code, why can't we do better than for English at enabling search and retrieval of programs? This has been only a brief overview of the extent of both progress and prospects in digital
libraries. There are many other important issues, problems and opportunities, but we have to have some focus.

**The Proposed and Suggested Program**

A hugely fertile area for research and development to support the curation and communication of scholarly information in the sciences and other disciplines thus falls under the broad topic of organizational design. Electronic resources do not need to be managed within existing organizational structures, but to persist they must be managed within some organizational context, and as the previous section has demonstrated, the emerging cyberinfrastructure presents substantial new challenges in organization and governance. On the one hand, with investment in technology, barriers to entry for the creation and management of digital resources can be lower than they are when the storage of physical items requires large capital investments in physical objects and buildings to house them, but small institutions that want to develop, provide, and manage electronic resources often lack the sophisticated curatorial, legal, financial, and other organizational skills that are necessary. On the other hand, the huge economies of scale that are possible with digital databases are difficult to manage over current institutional boundaries. Clearly, new organizations and organizational models are needed that are sensitive to the dynamics of particular scientific communities, driven by academic mission, and able to sustain themselves over time as integral parts of the broader cyber infrastructure. To foster the development of appropriate organizations and organizational models, the following programs and features may be considered as part of the Advanced Cyber Program (ACP):

1) There would be two broad objectives to this research. On the one hand, it would identify the organizational variation within an academic community or set of academic communities that would affect the requirements and parameters for research, development, and operation of new technology funded as part of the ACP. A second objective would be to take various scenarios of research, development, and operation, and explore the advantages and disadvantages for the emerging cyber infrastructure of different mixes of organizational features. The research on organizational design should focus on different organizational variables like types of mission, types of governance, leadership qualities, policy issues and risk management approaches to the ownership, use of intellectual property; and financing options. Funded work could employ a mix of empirical case studies and theoretical approaches, and it could be embedded as part of a larger project or conducted as a standalone initiative.

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2) In order to create a sustainable cyber infrastructure, the new centers and content-management organizations should have access to highly specialized organizations, which can provide expert advice on questions of mission, leadership, governance, and general business practices. The supporting organization(s) must be sensitive to variations in need among academic communities, as well as to differences in size and trajectories of growth. It is evident that despite of all the efforts, currently there is a serious lack of quality digital contents. Thus, one of the most significant areas for the next decade will have to be related to quality content development. Quality is to be defined by information seekers as most up-to-date, comprehensive, authoritative, etc. as they see fit. For example, for some countries, although their rich cultural and heritage resources are heavily sought after by others, these resources may not be considered by their government and/or university educators as the most important when compared with the current scientific and technical information resources. Clearly this is tied with the national policies. Yet, these current resources are simply difficult to obtain and be sharable for public free access. One of the most serious barriers is related to copyright and intellectual property (IP). With these issues clouding over the sky, it is difficult to develop large-scale quality multimedia contents for operational and functional Digital Libraries. In addressing these “legal” issues, we need to go far beyond the “technological” solutions like digital Water Mark.

One of the potential remedies for addressing the need stated above is through global and multidisciplinary collaboration by networking various distributed digital contents. This need was advocated with and fully shared by many international DL partners. Currently this willingness is still doubtful, and efforts will have to be made to find ways to create more effective infrastructure and to provide more attractive alternatives for sharing. If this is possible, then large-scale “digitization” will be needed to create much more digital multimedia contents quickly. Million Book Digital Library projects have made progress in creating large quantity of digital contents, which can have great research and development potential. Even “quality” issues remain to be difficult ones. The most materials scanned are older materials and free of copyright concerns, thus they are mostly historical or materials of native languages. There is a genuine need for more widely used languages like English, Arabic, Chinese and Urdu etc. and current contents, which are not readily available due to copyright and IP issues. More international and interdisciplinary collaboration was deemed a must. It is beyond a shadow of any doubt that world rather we have a great future toward a global digital library!

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The interior of the study-room of a scholar of literature. On the left side, there is a large wooden rack of books, and a big door opening into the entrance hall. There is a similar door at the back opening into the common room. On the right side, towards the back wall, there is a computer table and a chair. The time of action is nearly mid-night. The room is lit by a tube-light at the upper left side of the room. The fourth wall is facing the audience. A figure appears busy in doing some written work. He is a man in his middle years, reasonably good height, extremely thin and wiry with haggard expression showing marks of deep renunciation and philosophical brooding. When the curtain rises, he looks up towards the audience in an empty gaze as if lost in deepest thought. Then suddenly with a start, he jerks off his thoughts and calls it a day for his writing project. He gets up and turns the light off. There is utter darkness on stage. Long silence. The eye opens into a different world. A terrifyingly long monologue ensues:

It is still the same everyday, then night comes and thickens into blackness, I wake up. Something comes out of the hiding place, gathers momentum with the passing moments, engenders hyper-activity of deepest layers of thought-processes, many conclusions are drawn, much is settled, redundant evaporates, moments of self-wholeness are attained, sleep is pushed off...it never ends; the cycle continues day after day till this very moment. I am grown weary of it but continue to relish the flow of thoughts. What is it that I am going to settle after every night with the active tragic sense? Then the preoccupations of the day give a funeral morning call, I drag myself up to face the light of the coming day. I play the puppet to the mechanical routine and forget about the glories I attain during the darker hours. I am never the same at my work-place. The puppet enacts its assigned role with delinquent ease; its momentary spark of oblivion sustains itself till it is finished for the day. The journey towards my room all sums up the myriad of impressions gathered for the consciousness to settle. I go to bed to wait for the mid-night to come. There is nothing to talk of myself except the assumption of a unique posture at this time of the night. The whole world flickers into light under the auspices of darkness. The dark inside and the dark outside find parallels with each other; there is a deep affinity between the two...Let it be so because it has to be
so...nothing to be repented of...events happen to me but I won’t let them affect me, and still they affect me deeply somehow or the other.

_Suddenly the stage is lit with a flood of light. The gentle violin notes give way to short rhythmical jerks, and lose harmony with lulling flute tunes, which in turn rise above the violin and become a long sustained note and still further commingle with unperceived drum beating._

_A thin spectre wearing gorgeous golden yellow costume appears on stage._

The Scholar: What is it that I see? It seems like none of us...Who art thou?

The Spectre: Humble apologies that I came here without your kind permission but you can’t help it. It is for you to discover. You would get to know who am I during the course of our conversation.

The Scholar: But I don’t want you.

The Spectre: You can’t do anything without me.

The Scholar: It is your bold presumption.

The Spectre: Let us see. Let us see.

_Silence ensues for a while, during which time they glare into each other’s eyes. Suddenly the scholar winces away from the sight and mumbles unintelligible words to himself. The spectre comes closer to him which really terrifies the scholar._

The Spectre: Why to give way in my presence? It is I who am to grumble. I am neglected, abandoned, and victimized by sheer tyranny. I have a miserable tale to tell you. You are the writer of my woes. Why have you done this to me, the dear part of yourself? Recognize me not in fear and loathing but with understanding sympathy.

The Scholar: I had no other choice.

The Spectre: It is a poor excuse.
The Scholar: It is not. I did it for my better part of being.

The Spectre: It is here you bleed me to deathliness under the guise of the sublime. You owe me for this. You stand on trial for all that you did to me. Yes, you did it with the ruthless weapon of your intellect.

The Scholar: (With contorted expressions full of chagrin and distaste) You are too small for me.

The Spectre: Now it starts again. You are mortifying me. I can’t stand your assaults. You have made me very weak…It is the root cause of nearly all bloodshed and destruction hitherto inflicted upon man; this very sense of superiority whether intellectual or moral.

The Scholar: I don’t need counsel from such as you are. I care a damn as to what you conceive of me. I owe you nothing of the sort. I make choices, so I did make a choice once and done away with you with the judgmental sweep of my intellect.

The Spectre: This is not the way of the world.

The Scholar: It might not be the way of the world but it is my way. I take delight in fashioning my own world. I am its prime mover and prime enchanter both.

The Spectre: I bet you repent over it.

The Scholar: Let it be so.

The Spectre: You move not a centimeter. You stifle me.

The Scholar: I have no choice.

The Spectre: Then mark my words: if I die, you die too.

The Scholar: It is a wretched argument… I have chosen for eternity.

The Spectre: What solid grounds your arguments stand? You oscillate in the air. Who knows what eternity is like? No definitive proof of that…Take me and you'll have life-full of joys and pleasures. Take me to my proper sphere, and see
how much you feel…I believe you failed in it and threw me out; so your consequent refuge in a fabulous phantasmagoria.

The Scholar: I think, therefore I am…It was possible only through a cataclysmic choice I made…You are mere nothing for me. If I had followed you, I would have ended up in a flimsy trifle. The greatest drawback in you is that you are short-lived and the promises you hold are fleeting. You know nothing of permanence.

The Spectre: But still you could have kept me, even subservient to your almighty intellect…You have terrible excuses for this neglect.

*Long silence pervades for the moment. Sudden blackout follows.*

*Loud music with high notes of guitar added to the already played background music.*

*Now there is remarkably dim light on stage, barely distinguishable from the dark.*

*A witch-like dark mummy clad in sooty black appears on the stage. Presently, she is singing a gay song which is hilarious.*

*The sight of this weird creature creates a deep impact on the two already on stage. The scholar seems to be undergoing epileptic fit of distaste and confusion: whereas, the spectre trembles at the sight.*

*She looks at both of them in manner as if of mocking irony. She greets both of them in an uncouth manner.*

The Mummy: (Her body continuously swaying while she talks) I don’t ask for recognition, I come unannounced and uncalled for. I don’t beg pardon for my deeds. I believe in just doing it. If I am curbed under the horrible sham of self-control, I just hit back and destroy because I am undeniable force.

The Scholar: (Trying to overcome his precariousness) How dare you…speak to me thus? Do I recognize you? Who might you be? I have never seen the like of you in my entire life.
The Mummy: (In her usual boorish manner) look into yourself and see who I might be. You don’t recognize me because you have carefully guarded yourself against the best part of yourself. Above all, you are blind, sick and damned.

The Scholar: (Failing to sense the implied mockery in the last remark; instead showing signs of mounting pride) Ha, ha, ha…You, an abominable, morbid sight, suddenly appeared from nowhere in the thick of the night, and have the audacity to tell me that hitherto ‘I have carefully guarded myself against the best part of myself’. There can’t be more facetious remark than this. Ha, I remember, you belong to the pernicious sphere: who can believe such as you are.

The Mummy: (Getting more and more interested in the argument with the earlier repulsion somewhat removed) I don’t need prior affirmation for the recognition of my existence: I am indeed, regardless of anything. I belong to the dark sphere but I am the urgently necessary human component. I am Sublime though ugly in your case.

The Scholar: (With growing consternation) What are you exactly trying to prove?

The Mummy: (In a piercing outcry) You’ll see it for yourself in the end.

The Scholar: (Getting agitated) You are far beneath my idea of dignity. Just get lost and let me be what I am.

The Mummy: (Assuming a very humane expression) In that case, the very idea of dignity needs to be redefined. You in your scholarly pursuits envisage that there could be nothing worth pursuing except what you pursue.

The Scholar: (Scowling) What do you mean by all this?

The Mummy: First answer my basic but most essential question: What is life?

The Scholar: I can’t answer it precisely.

The Mummy: I am not asking you to answer it precisely. I suppose you can’t answer this; you full of your disciplinarian zeal and intellectual pride! So far you have tried all your life in fending off ‘what essentially life is?’

The Scholar: How do you say so? What right have you to speak to me like this?

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The Mummy: (In a very touching manner) I have all the right in the world to speak to you like this. Because I am your life. You with all your intellectual pursuits are nothing but a squirming victim having imperfect grasp of what life is. The reason why you still lack the vibrating ring of inspiration in your intellectual disputes and writings. Your perfectly logical and balanced arguments move others by the beauty of the rhetoric but soulless in the end. You are technically perfect but soulless in essence. It is clear enough that by failing to recognize me, you have failed to recognize life. I am the very sap of life.

The Scholar: (Wiping his brow with a sense of shame) There you are! Oh, there you are! Let me embrace thee, come dear Spectre, you too, my darling…

The scene is suddenly changed into a large pastoral landscape glowing with luxuriant plenty. The time is the early hours of the day. The light is flickering through from all sides. It is filled with the music of the deciduous forest. The gentle breeze is blowing. The flowers are emitting fragrance. The trees in their majestic beauty are adding to the grandeur of the whole scene. But the tree of knowledge shines brilliantly than the rest.

Where am I? But it is lovely and desirable. Ha, I see two human figures. Who might they be? Ah, they are enjoying themselves in the purity of their primordial union. Have they sinned already?
It was the middle of March. The mango tree had already started to blossom. And my, it was a sheer delight to watch it steadily progress in the mellow sunshine of spring afternoons. Its rich dark foliage splashed with a dash of ochre, its pungent odour lending a touch of summer to the breeze and successive flights of neighbourhood parrots descending to nestle down cozily in its luxurious branches were indeed odes to the mango tree.

Children could now and then be heard making plans to ensure that parrots would not be the sole beneficiaries of the sweet and sour fruit to be made available in due course of time. They had a reasonable supply of stones and improvised gadgetry to ensure that a respectable portion of both the unripe and the ripe delicacy should fall to their lot.

Standing in the backdrop of two flamboyant Sumbal trees in full bloom, and a couple of majestic eucalyptuses, the mango tree was not at all overwhelmed by their aura. In a vague sort of way, it seemed to be aware of its own significance. The anticipation of the children and the instinctive restlessness of the parrots offered it sufficient reason to enhance its floral shade to a few degrees dark. The mango tree was also concentrating, i.e., within that primordial limit in which a tree is entitled to concentrate, to bring about the necessary chemical change in the composition of its sap in order to hasten the burgeoning of tiny baby fruits on its branches. Bringing itself to fruit prolifically was for it the only reason raison d’être of existence. What joy would be left in life without a steady, juicy supply of those heavenly treats all summer long? Life would be so drab without them and the Mango Tree was at no cost willing to partake in such negativity. At least this is what it felt in a blunt nebulous way. (Isn’t it funny to think that trees and more so a commonplace tree like a mango tree can be attributed with the quality to feel in howsoever a remote or subtle manner). Nonetheless, feel it did. Later, when the regular summer had set in and the folks criss crossing the streets in hot afternoons would make a short stopover under its welcome canopy, panting and gasping, their eyes searching in vain for a semblance of cloud in the skies above. How the mango tree wished it could do something to make thing a bit easier for them. But then it was merely a mango tree. Nothing less, nothing more.
It used to spend the entire months of intense dry heat in a sort of reptilian sleep that comes so naturally to a fruit laden mango tree. They say it is in fact the heavy scent of the fruit that opiates the tree. However, this season the mango tree found its slumber being intercepted by brief spells of strange intuitive moods. “Perhaps it’s just the heat,” the bewildered tree would console itself.

Summer solstice now past, monsoons had finally arrived. Rains were making a real mess of the city. To make things worse, power failures were becoming a regular feature of the season. The mango tree was now slowly coming out of that sluggish state which had held it captive in the dry heat spell. Soaked with rain water, its body was rejuvenating. (The poor thing being a tree was soulless. It was just the body that was there.) Long settled dust on its leaves had been washed away and their lost luster had now been restored once more. The fruit still left unpicked had been washed down by the lashing rains. Mango tree’s load being shed, it was for once feeling light and invigorated. “It’s wonderful to be alive,” it whispered to itself as it quietly settled down for a good night’s rest.

It was an unusually clear cloudless night so rare in rainy months. The moon was brilliant and the stars were twinkling in the sweetest possible manner. One could even attempt to read a bold print under the heavenly lit night sky. Just when it was about to hit the sack an unholy flash of intuition ran through its entire length and breadth once more. That split second left it totally exhausted. It shuddered with the thought of it being something more than a heat stroke. In its desperation, it tried to banish this very thought with a quick prayer before mercifully reverting to a peaceful vegetative state.

But with that dreadful feeling in the background, would life ever be the same again?
Shahbano’s Love
Humayun Rashid Peer
Old Ravian

(A short story dedicated to the Memory of our esteemed Professor Ashfaq Ali Khan, whose continuous advice, guidance and instructions gave impetus to my English writing capability as also to the language.)

Shahbano was sitting on a high-rising boulder looking down the tantalizing, lush-green valley, with large floating clouds playing hide and seek between her and the tall, forest-covered mountains, on the other side of the valley. Inhaling fresh early-morning cold breeze, blowing through the whistling pines, she could also hear a far-off, melodious sound of flute, echoing in the valley. This sound was gradually closing-in on her. A little later she realized -- from rustling sound of shrubs under the feet -- that someone was drawing closer, on the path behind her. This path, reaching near the boulder she was sitting on, swerved away towards the valley below. When she looked back, she saw a young man moving up the path in her direction. On spotting her, he abruptly stopped playing on his flute; took a few steps forward; stood in a dazed state, looking blankly at her, and then suddenly lowered his eyes.

It was here that she had first seen him. He was a young man with handsome Roman features; his fair face and bulging lips, flushing radiant with blood; his forehead, broad and square, shining under his auburn, longish, fluffy and curly hair, covering both his ears, like a canopy on his head; and his large green eyes, like lakes in that cold northern hilly countryside summer. She suddenly had the urge to move up to him and boldly ask him his name. ‘Ali Reza’, he shyly responded, looking up at her, shrugging his shoulders and then dropping his eyes again. This time looking at the flute he was fidgeting with. She tried to ask him a few more questions but found it almost impossible to communicate with him. He had mumbled a few incoherent words, evidently too shy to respond. But, no sooner had she told him her name and, that she had just recently moved into this neighborhood with her parents and a younger brother, Ali Reza raised his eyes to take a deep look at her, emitting a very frank and friendly gaze. Then, abruptly, with the agility of the youth of twenties, he took the curb, running past her and down the path that snaked through the bushy forest, into the valley. Looking back a few times, over his shoulders, he had ventured to observe if he evoked any reaction in the young female, so keen on starting a conversation with him.
Stunned and aghast, looking in his direction, she could hardly move. For her, it was love at first sight.

She had, later, made frequent visits to that boulder, in the hope that, during one of these visits, she would be able to meet that young man again, but without any luck. Then, one day, sitting on the boulder enjoying the scenic beauty of the valley in the background, with an eye on her younger brother running after the butterflies, she started musing over the possibilities of her ever meeting that handsome, shy young man, again. In the calm and soothing surroundings she suddenly started hearing loud noises from the valley down the path. First there were screams of females and then the shouting of men folk at the top of their voices, which, after a while, turned into wailing of a crowd. There appeared to have been some serious crisis, somewhere down the path, but not too far from her rendezvous. Her curiosity to know what had caused this commotion, prompted her to go there. She also wanted to know if she and her brother could be of some help to them. On reaching the place of crisis, she found that it was a hamlet of about seven to eight houses and male and female alike, were standing and wailing around a Charpoy, on which lay the body of a young female, with large stains of blood on her clothes. When Shahbano threaded her way, through the crowd, near the body, most unexpectedly, she saw those large, ‘lake-like’ green eyes of the shy Ali Reza, looking straight and hard at her, his hands and body tied with ropes. Gripped with fear, she asked a female, next to her, as to what had happened. “This man has killed his wife. He suspected her of being disloyal to him”, she replied, pointing at Ali Reza.
The clock struck five to nine in English class, yet the voice of my teacher kept on drawling endlessly. Bored; I took my eyes away from the board which was overflowing with text I could not comprehend. My eyes caught sight of the girl with soft blue eyes, sitting in far left row. She was my “best friend” with whom I most wanted to spend my entire life. I looked at her long silky hair, and wished her mine. I could even smell her scent; there were many people between us, though. After the class, she walked up to me for the notes she had missed the day before. I held my breath as I handed them over to her. As much as I wanted to pour out my emotions, I was tongue tied. She looked up at me, and all my thoughts faded away. She stood there for a while, casually extending thanks for my help. I heard myself stammering, "You are welcome...always". She smiled and walked away. Those were beautiful times, I remember. I would lose myself in fantasies at any hour of the day. Sometimes I dreamt of introducing her to my parents as their would-be daughter in law. At other more frenzied moments, I would visualize her confessing her love for me.

Time flew by and we had reached 11th grade. I was having a cup of tea while sitting beside the fire on a shivering cold evening, when suddenly the phone rang. My heart skipped a beat. I instinctively knew it was her. I looked out through the window before picking the receiver. Mellow street-lights barely shone in the snowy night. On the other end, it was her, weeping and mumbling on and on about how her lover broke her heart. It took me a while to calm her down. I assured her I would come to her house next day, so she must not feel alone. Putting down the receiver, I felt a lump forming in my throat. It was always a charming delight to hear from her. She would often call me up to discuss one problem or another. In fact, over the years we had formed the habit of keeping in touch as friends. But tonight I felt lost after talking to her. It seemed my passion had resurged out of the blue. I tried to concentrate on my reading but words seemed to glide out of sight. ‘How long can I deceive myself?’ I sadly thought and lit up a cigarette. The long night slowly passed as the pain kept slithering into rings of smoke. The following afternoon, as I sat next to her on the couch, I could not help but look into her soft blue eyes again. My heart ached as tears streamed down her cheeks. But after a two hours long conversation, one Drew Barrymore movie, and three bags of chips, she recovered herself. I wanted to tell her then

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how much I loved her but I was just too shy and adamant. ‘What if she takes me wrong? What would I do if she refused straight away? Would she ever see me again? ...’ These and many fearful notions forced me to keep silent.

Days and weeks swiftly passed, followed by months and years. In the blink of an eye, it was graduation day. I watched her as she floated like an angel up on the stage to get her degree. After so many years, I felt the same clot in my throat. Forcing the tears back, it took me all the courage to confront the moment of reality: ‘So be it. We’ll part ways today…she’ll never know her place in my heart’. My broken thoughts lost their echoes in the tumult of applause. After the ceremony, she came to me in her gown and hat, and cried as I hugged her. Then she lifted her head from my shoulder and said, “You are my best friend”. I felt as if I had lost my voice and could not utter a single word.

A few years later while I sat in the pews of church, I heard her say “I do” and she drove off to a new life, married to another man. My palpitation increased but I was helpless. It seemed like the end of my life. However, before she drove away, she came up to me and said, ‘You came to attend my marriage, thank you’. My heart broke that moment.

Today I stand looking down at the coffin of a girl who used to be my “best friend”. At the service, they read a page of her diary she wrote in her high school years. It reads, “I gaze at him wishing, if he could be mine, but he does not notice me like that. I want him to know that I don’t want to be just friends. I love him but I’m just too insecure, and I don’t know why I hesitate. I wish, he had said how he loved me!”

I wish I did…I think to myself. Tears held captive for ages, break loose from a lonely heart as I stand chanting a belated promise: ‘You are the one, my only one...’
He puffed a thick plume of steamy white smoke out of the rusty, metallic chimney perched at an angle on his head like some burlesque hat. The smoke slowly drifted away with the evening breeze, drawing countless indescribable shapes in the air and writing strange cryptic messages across the darkening sky. The railway station was unusually quiet that day and the life seemed to have come to a momentary halt. On moments like these he would fall into a deep reverie...

His presence in the world was no more than those clouds of smoke that spewed out of his steam valve, reminding every body of his presence momentarily but then disappearing in the air; dispersing to distant, forlorn places with the eddies and currents of the breeze. How many sighs, how many dreams, how many fantasies, how many yearnings- all wafted about aimlessly in the form of these foggy hieroglyphs in the distant valleys and desolate wildernesses for no one to understand.

He often wondered if it was his poetry- this white smoke emanating from the inner chambers of his fiery, metallic heart- his mode of expression; perhaps a source of catharsis for him.

Being an old metallic beast, a quaint steam railway engine, wasn’t all that easy after all, he often mused. One appeared so cold and heartless to others for no one knew about the inferno that raged inside his metalline being. But that was only a part of the tragedy of his existence.

His forehead still bore the date and place of his birth several decades ago at a mechanical workshop where dozens of workers created his powerful being, his iron constitution and his metallic hull. He had distant and vague memories of being affectionately adorned by them and being smothered with soothing, balmy metallic polish. It appeared as if they loved their creation and admired both the mechanical beauty and might of their affectionate handiwork. Who knows, it was perhaps them who had secretly planted a heart in his metallic chambers. But no one could tell.
Times had changed and so had he. The figures etched across his forehead seemed to have been worn out like some distant, spectral memory, eroded by the flux of time. One had to strain one’s eyes to discern the faded script that alluded to some vague historical event. The sparkling glint in the once bright gleaming lamp that adorned his forehead was long gone- a rusty, sooty, dark object was all that was left of the once most striking feature of his being. His steel frame seemed fragile and vulnerable now- it appeared as if it had grown mellow with time. His entire frame jangled and rattled in a jarring dissonance every time he moved, creaking and squeaking at every effort he made. He lived in the cacophony of his own imperfections. He looked like the artifact of some aboriginal workmanship-some forgotten footnote to an archaic age.

The cheerful whistle that once announced his arrival and attracted dozens of children around the tracks was now replaced by a doleful horn that echoed the emptiness of his fragmented mechanical shell. Now the whistle was no more a harbinger of happy times; rather a sad, nostalgic reminder of a past that was nothing more than a figment of his imagination. The children no more gathered around the track to hail his arrival. They had long grown up and gone with the winds of time. He had lost the romance of his existence and so had those who once admired him.

He had labouriously towed thousands of people in his life in the drab, silent trolleys attached to his back, to their loved ones and away from them. He had witnessed countless emotional partings and rendezvous in his life- sights that at times almost melted the crucibles of his metallic heart. Nobody could ever imagine that his metallic heart contained such a sea of emotions. Looking at some of the listless face that he came across at the railway station, he would often chuckle to himself for he knew he had more of a heart than some of the people he carried on his back. Who says machines do not have a heart. But that too was only a part of the tragedy of his existence.

When he brooded over these abstractions, away from his mechanical work, he puffed out very thick clouds of smoke and the firemen had to shove in loads of firewood and coal in the boiler to keep him going. The firewood and coal that had been fed in his fire-hole over the decades perhaps contained the remnants of the freedom of some dead wild animals that roamed free till their dying days. The fumes of their charred legacy infused his being with strange feelings and quite often, the sinews of his metallic heart seemed to give way to the warmth of these emotive sensations, conjuring up strange dreams before him. 

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How he would have loved to roam free in the green fields that he used to transverse so often; scale the snow capped, misty mountains he passed on his way; splash his way through the cold, pristine water, taste its cold vintage as he crossed over it on the railway bridge; feel the evening breeze wafting about on the green prairies; watch the evening sun go down, bathing and basking in its golden rays; behold the twilight dancing where the sky and the earth embraced each other- how he would have loved it all. How he yearned and dreamed of all these pleasures. But he was a slave- a vassal to the course of the two metal tracks that defined his very existence and essence. They were his destiny. He knew he would die cherishing these dreams in his metallic heart. And that was the tragedy of his existence.

He dragged wearily the load of sightseers to these natural marvels but could never relish them himself. The happy crowds would simply jump off his back and merrily make their way to the mountain tops; meandered their way through the fields; picked delightful flowers that waved and swerved about merrily in the grasslands; tasted the juicy fruits of the exotic trees- leaving him drowned in the sea of fretful misery with the heat of unfulfilled desires pulsating the sinews of his heart. How he longed to follow them. How he longed to break free from the prison of his own destiny-the cage of his existence. How callous of them, he often wondered. They would not bother to thank even once the metallic beast that brought them there, straining his every tendon, every inch of his constitution, bearing the pangs of the metallic pain that surged through his body as he huffed and puffed on. What ingratitude, he often vexed.

On moments like these, he would puff out thick clouds of black smoke out of vengeance and desperation that would vent out the fury brewing in the latent depths of his fire-hole. His whistle would be very shrill on occasions like these, like a beast whithering with pain. How he longed to break free!

…His train of thoughts was interrupted by the footsteps of a few people that came out of the station building. He glanced at them and guessed from their overalls that they were the engineers from the workshop where he was born. Had they come to thank him for all these years of selfless service he did and pains he endured, he wondered. But he could discern no glint of affection in their eyes, no signs of recognition. Those who had created him were long dead and those who stood in their shoes needed him no more. He meant nothing to them. He was a chunk of useless, noisy metal for them. They cast a few nonchalant glances at him
and then shook their heads in unison. Instinctively, he knew the moment of truth had arrived. He had no time to fret over the thanklessness of the world as the images of freedom that he had cherished for so long unfurled in a wild spree before his eyes. He was nearing his freedom at last. The iron chambers of his heart throbbed with apprehensive excitement.

He was detached from the compartments which he had carried on his back all his life. Now that the moment of freedom had come, strange sparks of pain emanated from his entire frame on parting from those tracks that had enslaved him for so long and those silent passenger compartments that he had so laboriously dragged all his life. He cast a last glance towards them, wondering whether to love them or hate them after such a long association. He was no more a serf to the prison of those tracks- at least that is what he thought.

He was hauled to the same workshop where he was first made. The engineers tore his constitution apart to cannibalize it for other engines that drank diesel and made angry jarring noises- keeping all their thoughts to themselves as they emanated no steamy, white smoke. Times had indeed changed.

They melted the fire-chamber, the boiler and his metallic heart and melted all the dreams that it contained into molten magma. The molten chambers of his metal heart and all the desires and dreams it had, were taken back in a huge metallic crucible to the railway station. Then, they were spread over the railway tracks worn out by years of his toil like a thin layer of chocolate, to make them smooth for the other trains.

Life is so sad.
He could see the green moths trembling on the branches of the frigid Jacaranda. Each leaf seemed too much in love with flame within the sterile tree stems. In the cold breeze he could make out the traces of naked wounds inflicted by inconsiderate summer on the Araucaria umbrellas. He sat down by the window as usual and started relishing the breeze fondling the boughs mercilessly. He wished he could merge into this green immensity, this overabundance. It sought nothing but filled him with yearning and empathy, the intention of which he knew he could never discover. ‘Do I not tell you all that you have known and not known?’ An indifference that left him all the more attached to the trees he conversed with. They were all content and he could feel his angst giving way to flaccid adulation...a festival, a detachment, an association, euphoria. Who was he save all that is there? His thoughts fused with his engorged surroundings.

He loved to walk among these dappled vistas, on his restless legs, to the stream at a distance of five hundred steps. He counted each step daily until he came to the school where he could see the school girls and their teachers, busy in intellectual pursuits, oblivious of the lessons latent in their surroundings. He loved to watch them but remained at a distance that could hardly invite attention. He defined his locus because he believed distance had its beauty. It was a promise to reach. Distance covered is the act of giving up in the name of achievement. He would maintain distance. He had remained remote from all the sublime things with the aim of never reaching them, although getting closer and closer. He had seen thirty seasons and twenty were spent in suburbs where his voyeur expeditions kept him breathing. He loved to watch birds build nests in the deepest recesses of woods, saw lasses bathe in streams, caressed the blushing flowers unknown to many. Prostrating on this mossy stones instilled in him a sense of fertility. It was as if he captured the urge to live in these inanimate cold milestones of ages past. He had always despised the idea of procreating merely for the sake of natural obligation. Children are good to watch but he was not inclined to have a family of his own. He did not want to know about things that chained him. Could he live among the silences of his life? Could not a wailing child break the music within them? He could not be what he never was. He had been myopic many a time in his life but he would not defy the logic of his being. He could never be a parent. Let all the parents in the world do it. He could not dismiss his trees, his guilt, his pleasures, and his loneliness for mere extension of his genes. He would dissolve in his death and leave no trace of his being behind him. Yes, he was selfish in his
extermination.

He marched to the stream with enthusiasm and guilt. He had forgotten to shut the windowpanes but he did not care. He liked to remove dust from his books and cassette player. It did not only keep him busy but also gave him a sense of accomplishment among his daily fiascos. There seemed to be no limit to the misery he could attract to himself. Was misery his element? If misery did not exist, what would he do with himself? He would see the lady with epic features teaching alphabets to the country girls.

The evening was lonely and he wanted to devour all her playfulness from distance. He watched her for hours and she remained oblivious of the pleasure she yielded by her indifference. He must remain elusive and understand this external torment. Is weighing morality and intensity in the same scale possible? He knew he was pleasing in appearance but not so much as to make his company delightful. His conversations, which more than often began with himself, lasted well into the night. The solitary paths between the hillocks invited him to mount these with aroused emotions. 'Am I not desperate to climb them, seduce their natural attributes and enjoy their assurance?' He stayed there until it was evening and he knew he must envelope all that he has attained. It meant much for him and energised him. It was a harmless expedition which bordered the territories of sin. An adventure that was rightly criminal but not punishable. An aesthetic indulgence that, once made public, is perverse and devoid of decency. He left the place with confused and intriguing pleasure.

He lit the candles in his room and hung there consumed with thirst to know more. ‘Misery is a school for the soul. From the waters of misery one emerges on the far bank purified, strong, ready to take up again the challenges of a life of art.’ He knew happiness taught him nothing. He knew not the origins of his intense desire. He could see the Mulberry tree laden with fruit at a distance. The fruit looked beautiful from distance.

The fragrant breeze whirled the luscious handful of Mulberries out of his reach. He pretended he never made an effort to pick them. And then he traced the opulent bough as he sat sipping tea. He relished the taunting movements of the bough. He saw in boughs the wayward form teasing him and coaxing him. But he must resist the irresistible charms of abundance. He must not let Isis succeed in captivating him. She must feel a mortal somewhere making futile effort to draw her attention. Was he trying to decipher and detect the nucleus around which the other elements gathered? He laughed at his madness.

At times he felt he would lie down on the worn out carpet and beat his breast.
Who has given birth to the fruits of the earth? He looked for rustic explanation in his uncouth imaginary rites. He never longed to be encircled with nimbus of moral purity. He had always been fond of spiritual evolution but despised the idea of mysterious sanctity attached to it. He knew he had a troubled mind and burdened heart but he never wanted to ease this solemn composure. Gone were the days when he could sit by the window performing his silent rituals that sliced the night into convenient eras. He remembered his adolescence.

He was always fond of keeping an eye on who was going with whom but never felt the force of indulgence when it came to him. He loved to watch from a distance and kept his mouth shut. Women appealed to him but their tempestuous devotion only shocked and repelled him. He was never there and loved this invisibility of a philanthropist. He lit a cigarette and a vague memory edged its way to the numb part of his thoughts. He remembered how he used to climb the Mulberry trees with his siblings. His sister used to be very agile and would give him the best fruit. His mother would get angry and shouted at them. He remembered very well. What was it that fixed his memory? He did not know as far as he could remember. It was anger and guilt and still he felt it wrong to think so. The times when he felt most lonely were when he thought about his incapacity to convince others. They had begun to sense his moods and left him. He lifted his eyes and looked at the old paint falling from the walls in despair. He could only smile and say nothing at his inability. He wanted to be a painter, a musician, a sculptor, a gardener.

He went to the Mulberry tree. The smell of the fruit reminded him of his childhood, of things he had lost, of morality, of desire. He could not eat the fruit. Under the burden of grief he could cajole blissful immortality. He stayed there fixed in time as time passed. It was the festival of fecund guilt, far from barren salvation. The supine trees still waited on him and the hammock tossed here and there.
Today has gone by like just another day. A year back, I remember, a scared girl sitting in a dark corner of her closet was looking back at the events of the day, trying to figure out where life had taken her. Day by day, the year resolved and turned to ashes. Time was of no hindrance now and the past was as clear as today.

She was living it, just as she had been living it the past one year. A fragile shell was broken and she became someone she had been scared of all her life. She started falling into the pit of nothingness and today she was in the middle of nowhere, in a dark and empty pit.

She looked beyond the bridge and saw nothing but mist. Or was it her eyes that had water in them. A person who never liked carrying extra baggage now was burdened by the events of her past. Everywhere she went a ghost of darkness, which haunted her state of non-existence, followed her.

Why do the imprints of our footprints cast such a shadow over our souls that we get scarred for life?

Why is there so much pain involved in being there for someone?

She sits and thinks out loud in the silence of her mind; can it be possible that by bringing a smile on someone’s face you spill tears?

Impending fears and apprehensions are over taken by prevalent bleakness of the miserable hour.

She tries to scream out loud but her voice is scuffled in her throat. She tries to run away but her feet are chained to an invisible entity. She tries to bury the past but the deeper she digs, the more she unburies.

Life, or something like it, was always ironical; she knew that but such irony to be nowhere and yet be convicted of being present was horrendous.

It saddened her, the way she kept on clinging to nothing at all.
She looked around to find something to hold on to, to have someone to stand by, to have some hope to survive, but there was nothing at all.

Improper being, that she was, she was tired of failing others. She was tired of giving up on people. She was tired of disapproving of herself.

Hence, she was tired of life in general.

Confiscating memories remained and made moments harder to live by, life kept on crashing in turmoil. Terror of losing herself was always there, but giving up on her own self was even scarier.

She took the step.
She went a head.
She is no more.
Mr. Iftikhar arrived at the Lahore Railway station. It was 3:30 in afternoon. He knew that his brother would be there to receive him with his entire family. After all, it was three years since he had last seen his brother, what with all the factory management and supply monitoring at the Sukkur Steel Mills. He descended the stairs of the train carriage, and got ready to disembark his baggage. As he turned, he caught sight of the Haroon family.

Mr. Haroon, one of the prestigious members of Lahore’s business conglomerate, approached him with a beaming smile.

“How are you, Iftikhar? Hey, you have gained weight. This means that you must be prospering.”

After the exchange of cordialities, Mr. Iftikhar was informed that he was to be given a welcome ‘hi-tea’. He had never been to one before, but he dared not admit it in front of his brother. His baggage was accordingly lodged in his brother’s Camrey, and he was whished away in the hub of the Lahore street.

Mr. Haroon filled up the information gaps of three years by informing Mr. Iftikhar of how his business has shot up in the recent years.

“Haroon & Co. has wiped major rivals off the market, gushed Mr. Haroon, with the result that our goods are selling like hot cakes. There are a group of potential rivals though. But, we will soon send them packing. They ill think twice before challenging us.”

He gave Iftikhar the smile of an all time winner. Iftikhar reflected on the success of his materialistic brother and realized that Haroon’s ambitions were always to be at the centre, the controlling pivot. Mr. Haroon interrupted his thought, with the exclamation.

“Here we are! It is one of the finest five star hotels of Lahore. The cream of the Lahore business community comes here. And that bro, is what we are.”

Mr. Iftikhar was escorted by the Haroon family into the luxuriant and richly lit lounge of the hotel, from where they proceeded to the hall reserved for ‘hi-tea’. They confirmed the booking, and entered the hall. Mr. Haroon immediately said, “Come on, man! Let’s grab the grub.”
Mr. Iftikhar took up one of the sparkling China dishes stacked neatly beside the rows of daintily decorated tureens that seemed to stretch on forever. He figured that it must be a buffet of some sort. He looked at Mr. Haroon’s plate, which was already crammed with goodies. He, for himself, was not too keen on eating so large an amount, as his physician had already warned him of the dire consequences. His stomach was particularly sensitive. Yet, he had a host to please. He took one item from each container, and figured that it would take at least five or six goes for a person to taste everything that the place had to offer.

Seated, he took up the task the rest of the Haroon family was already engaged in. He dug into the chicken wings, savored the taste of the impeccably fried fish, smeared the shami Kebabs with rich tomato sauce, and ate the assorted variety of sandwiches on his plate. His plate was ready for another round.

Mr. Iftikhar took up the sweets department this time. The variety of cheesecakes astonished him, and the cookies and pastries were the finest of their kind. He cleared the plate this time as well, but to his horror, he realized that his appetite was amply satisfied, and that to take up the round of the Pakistani and Chinese section would be to upset his stomach, so long trained to a well-balanced diet.

“Came on Iftikhar! You are not eating. I am already on my fourth shift,” Mr. Haroon volubly remarked.

Mr. Iftikhar got up and bravely took up two more shifts. But his head was swimming, inflicted by an unbearable pounding, and the bright lights were hurting his eyes. He felt that he was eating just for the sake of eating. He tried his best to finish the remaining items on his plate, but he determined that it would be a folly and pushed his plate away. No exhortation of his brother could convince him as to eating another morsel. The Haroon family quit some time later, having taken a bite or two of the final items before abandoning their plates.

Mr. Iftikhar looked at the leftovers their shapes, their colours, their potential, so attractive to a ravenously hungry man, and yet a revulsion to a stuffed to the throat glutton. Oh, how he would value that shawarma, a day later, but now… oh no! Not now.

“Let’s call for tea,” Mr. Haroon at last gaped out, as if tired after all that eating.

After tea, thankfully, it was time to retire to the Haroon mansion. Haroon paid the exorbitant charges of the Hi-tea, flashing his cracking notes before Mr. Iftikhar.

They reached the Haroon mansion at 7:00 Mr. Iftikhar was exhausted, but stayed up with the family till eleven. They walked, chatted and watched television. Eventually, they retired to bed.

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Mr. Iftikhar tossed and turned, because of his disturbed stomach, but finally went to sleep. Some time during the night he got up, as he had to answer the call of nature and he rushed to the bathroom. He felt suffocated, and realized that the ventilation of the room might be faulty. He ventured out for a breath of fresh air. The air refurbished his spirit to an extent and he breathed deeply. He looked down into the street and saw a beggar sleeping on the footpath. A wave of nausea hit his throat and he looked away. So much waste… waste written in the very corridors of the place, where every door leads to the dead end. He stumbled inside, and collapsed on the bed, knocked out by the blow of difference and waste.
He lay in his bed, feeling utterly miserable and dejected as he realized that he had been left all alone to battle with the loneliness and darkness surrounding his life. At 63, he realized that time was gradually slipping through his hands and still, he did not have the answers…

Who really am I? he muttered softly. Strange, he thought, to be asking this question and still failing to answer it even after all those decades! He felt that his was an alien spirit trapped in a strait-jacket like device, striving to be free of all bonds and all the while, trying to establish its identity.

He was vaguely aware of his surroundings. He tried to move his limbs but only succeeded partially. His body refused to obey him anymore. His mind was always in a fix and he himself lay there trying to make sense of all of it, trying to answer the one question that had always haunted him. Trying to know, who he was…

For someone with a German mother, an Indonesian father and an American bringing, such questions were really perplexing. For him, it was a matter of establishing his own identity. An identity that was lost somewhere, somewhere in the war torn *Deutschland*, the dismembered *Indonesia* or the land of dreams-*America*. His parents who had fled their respective countries in the wake of The War, had embraced America wholeheartedly. After all, it held promise for everyone. For his parents, after witnessing all the horrors of the war, it was like being in heaven. A glittering, bright future awaited them and with it, a new identity. But their only offspring did not share their enthusiasm and optimism. For him, America never was that dreamland it was made out to be. It was nothing more than a melting pot, where the different ethnicities, identities of people were melted together. Individuality for these so-called Americans was nothing more than an elusive dream—a dream unattainable, yet a dream that had been haunting them forever!

“What a mess!” he thought. He had always considered himself, his very being to be a mess. This intermingling of nationalities, of different identities, German, French, Spanish, Indonesian—what a mess. He remembered that his own mother always playfully accused him of being a staunch Gestapo supporter. She said that her son firmly believed in the great *Fuhrer’s* philosophy of ethnic cleansing. “But Mother”, he always argued, is not it better. At least you are sure of yourself, of
who you are. *Purebloods* never have such doubts as I have, these doubts of identity!”

He had passed his entire life searching for that identity. He remembered with a pang of what he had been through all his life. At school, he was endlessly made fun of, for having copper hair and dark complexion. For the harshly blended features of his father and his mother. “The new punk tradition”, as he was sarcastically referred to as in his school. Oh, it had hurt so much. And then, there was this question of your religious identity. His father was an Orthodox Muslim, his mother, a devout Roman Catholic. And he—a nonbeliever. God, had not been kind to him. He had made him wander the endless labyrinths of life, without providing a way out! Well, he thought “at least it will end now. I won’t have to grapple with these questions forever” as he felt the life draining out of his body and ridding him of the pain of finding an identity for himself.
BETRAYAL
KIRAN FAHEEM
Old Ravian

It was just a matter of a few seconds if only he could do it. Loud horns and the screeching cars did little to divert his attention. Life is sometimes so gruesome, he thought. He closed his eyes and two images flashed in his mind; his father and himself. Ali was hankering after something in the market which his father couldn’t pay for. Then a more dreadful picture disturbed him; his mother’s death followed by his father’s. He remembered his lonesome figure roaming aimlessly looking for someone to guide him. All he could remember were the wagging tongues. It didn’t matter if he was an orphan, so were thousands of others in the country, someone had remarked spitefully. The brutality of the situation contrived to make his outlook of life brittle. Too many shattered dreams make a broken house. Endless hardships led him nowhere. Whoever said that hard work pays off? He thought. There wasn’t work for qualified people so he didn’t even hope to find work as an uneducated pauper.

Dreams just don’t die like that. There was a hunger in him that would not satiate. There were others around who were just as ruined as he was but somehow their pain remained a distant thought. It is a selfish world after all; we care and empathize with ourselves only. He wanted to have all he could only dream of. Ali often looked at the numberless cars going up and down the roads. He wondered if some people are born lucky and if it was true why he was left out. He wasn’t satisfied with his meager earnings. He was terrified by his growing craving for fame and money. He felt he had to break the shackles that constrained him. He knew after that his sanity would be a trifle being, incapable of existing on its own. It wasn’t for the first time that a person let desires overcome his sanity. It was smooth sailing for a time and Ali relished all that came along. The life of sin fed his ego but his sanity lurked somewhere in the shadows. Life just wasn’t so simple. The burden of sins overwhelmed Ali when he had almost obtained everything he desired. His notions had somehow changed, but it was rather late.

He dreaded his life and longed to be naive again. Everything comes with a price, he learnt. He felt life had betrayed him. He yearned to seek a tantalizing revenge. It is easier to let go of dreams if they are never to be fulfilled but living those dreams makes you crave for more till you are exhausted. He was glad he could betray life and defeat it on his own terms. Ali sighed with relief as he jumped; a sea of faces whirling in his mind till he could remember no more.
A MOMENT OF ENLIGHTENMENT
HIRA NAFEES SHAH
MA II

I tossed and turned on the bed. I had a blinding headache and despite the fact that I had taken two tablets, the pain had not subsided. I had been experiencing a vague sense of emptiness and boredom for some time and this night had not been any different. My family was still at the social gathering to which we all had been invited but after a while the petty talk of the elites got so unbearable that it gave me a headache and I left for home early.

I got up from my bed and went to the bathroom and looked at myself in the mirror. A respectable looking 29 year old male named Raheel was staring back at me, who had everything he could wish for since childhood. After having done my A levels, I had been send abroad to study so that even if I did not take over my father’s firm, I could easily provide for myself. I came out of the bathroom and my eyes fell on a picture of my dearest friend Adnan. I smiled sadly as I recollected all the good times that we had had together. Adnan was as well off as I was. Ah… That was our life, not a care in the world! We were the greatest of buddies and all the things we did together…well, the very thought of it choked me up. Adnan had been taken away in a road accident.

Adnan’s death had been a huge blow for me. Every time I thought of it, the same question haunted me-why him? It was this event which had wrought a big change in my life. I had stopped taking interest in anything. Things which had seemed so important once seemed so trivial and useless now.

I took some sleeping pills and fell into a deep slumber. The next day I went to the beach to try to clear my mind. I felt very listless and felt that my life had no purpose. It was a blank slate; I couldn’t recall a single good deed that I had to my credit. Nothing to make my life worthwhile, nothing to redeem myself in my own eyes! It had been Adnan yesterday, it could be me tomorrow, death after all was inevitable. And suppose, if I really had to die tomorrow…I knew that I was being stupid, why all these thoughts of death all of a sudden? I knew that my depression had gotten the better of me. Perhaps I should try to find peace in religion. And yet I did not believe that his problem was of a spiritual nature. But then, what was the cause of all this misery? Why this dejection that was eating me up? What does life mean and what would everything lead to? And why, why despite having access to all luxuries of life, I was still in search of solace?

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I had seen virtuous, hardworking men toiling away their entire lives, yet it took them nowhere while the knaves made all the money. Why did the forces of good in this world seem to be so weak and so easily overpowered by the forces of evil? The feudal lords subjugated the villagers who never had enough to feed their children. Corrupt politicians made the citizens suffer; women’s rights were badly neglected when all kinds of injustices were meted out to them in the name of society or religion even though they are so essential to the well being of humanity. Honest people couldn’t survive in this system; hypocrisy was the order of the day. Lies, deceit and crimes were rampant. Wars, calamity and disaster were everywhere. Had God forsaken the world? Why was everything happening the way it was?

I had no idea what had come over me, I had never been so cynical, so skeptical…I briefly considered consulting a psychiatrist but what could he do for me? Not much! Well, come to that, I doubted if anyone could do anything for me. I stood all alone, against all odds, or so I thought.

One day I returned home early from office and saw my 70 year old gardener watering the plants. Looking at his fragile body, I was reminded of the time when this very person had been hail and hearty and had given me rides on his shoulders. But when I had grown up, I had learned the ways of the world. Servants should be put in their places and so I had put my old friend in his place. At that moment I had a sudden urge to go and have a word with him. Baba jee first exclaimed with joy on seeing me and patted my head but probably recalling my unpleasant behavior, hesitated and was unsure how to act next. I, experienced something very unusual for me- a sudden rush of affection for him.

“Baba jee, is not it unbelievable? Seventy and still going strong”, I said massaging his shoulders.

Baba jee, at first, couldn’t believe it but after a while warmed to me. We remembered old times and baba jee reminded me how I had always loved to drink lassi made by baba jee’s wife. Upon this I promised him to visit his house the next day and sample the said drink. Therefore the next day I set out for baba jee’s house on foot. His house was located in the katchi abadi. The narrow, winding streets filled with filth and dirt made me wonder how people could survive in such conditions. Baba jee cordially invited me to his small, two roomed house and

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asked me to sit on the charpai. Looking around me, I realized what it must have meant to him. Having his “sahib” at his humble abode!

I was distracted from my thoughts with the arrival of Baba jee’s wife and was immediately distressed to see how weak and wrinkled she looked. Age might have wrought changes in her physiognomy but her sweet temperament had remained unchanged. After the refreshing glass of lassi, I asked baba jee several questions.

“Bus chotay sahib, life has been tough since my brother died. I have had to take care of his family in addition to my own.”

I realized with a pang what life must be like for him.

“But I have nothing to complain. I am very thankful to God that He provides us with two meals a day”.

The conversation was interrupted by a small boy of the neighbors who announced that his mother was sick and needed assistance. Baba jee’s wife got up immediately to do whatever she could. I was pained to see all this and offered some money but Baba jee wouldn’t hear of it.

Meanwhile, all the children of the house had gathered round me and I could see how proud my gardener was of them. He told me that one of his sons had passed his Intermediate examination and he wanted him to be a doctor and wanted his daughters to study as well. The whole household treated me with so much warmth that it was overwhelming.

When I left the house, I felt as if I had been reincarnated-literally! All my depression and frustration had vanished. I realized that lack of struggle in my life had been the root of my problem. God had given me everything yet I had remained unthankful. I felt that perhaps I had not been as negligent in performing my duties towards God as I had been in performing my duty towards my fellow human beings. It was not in my power to wipe out all evil or injustice in the world, but I could still try to work for the betterment of the lives of deprived people. The system was going to remain the same; neither did I have Herculean strength to make such a difference in people’s lives that I would be remembered for all eternity, but I could still contribute in a small way. Baba jee had contentment of heart since he thanked God for the small resources that he had. It had been money that had made me proud; it had made me become so absorbed in myself that I had even forgotten the basic human qualities of love and kindness.

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Jolted by Adnan’s death, I awoke to an acute perception of what was wrong in the world. But was the glass really half empty? Was it not rather half full?. Life had been there calling out to me all along but I had been too absorbed in my so-called miseries. It had taken a small incident to awaken me, and I on my part, resolved to remain awake.
She could feel the life draining out of her body. Her legs were giving away. All hope was lost and there was nothing she could do about it. Tears had long gone dry leaving two streaks on her once pink cheeks now deadly white.

“I am sorry my dears but according to the law of our land, you people have to die and there is nothing I can do ….” and the rest of the words faded away as her mind raced back to the day when it had all began.

It was their convocation day and they had all received their degrees. She had made quite an impact by obtaining an overall of ninety four percent marks in her Masters in the Media Studies and hence had secured the first position. They were all gathered in the university ground for their last meeting before entering the professional world. Suddenly, a stranger approached her and introduced himself as a representative of the BBC. He forwarded her and her friends an invitation to join the team BBC. Now that really made the day for them. What possibly could any one want, you are not out of your university yet and you get a job and a really good one on that. They were all ecstatic and accepted the offer right away.

Soon, she found herself hurled up along with her other team mates in a Toyota van, speeding into the interiors of a desert. They were there to make a documentary on the lifestyles of the locals, but had lost their way in the wilderness. Though it was still early spring, but the temperature was quite high as it is in the desert and their air conditioner had also broke down.

Six hours of continuous drive in no direction made sure that they ran out of water and their van broke down in the middle of nowhere. They had no camps or anything to protect them from the sun, but the burning metal of the van forced them to step out and try to look for alternatives even if the odds were against them. But lady luck finally found them when one of their team members spotted a desolated and almost fallen-down well. They all scurried to it and hastily started to pull water out of the well by means of an old bucket and rope that were found lying idle on its side.

Just as she was about to take the first gulp, a huge cloud of dust rose on the horizon from the east. Slowly but surely the cloud drew nearer and with it came
the sound of thunder. They could feel the earth shaking under their feat, their heart it froze from the awe of the distant sound and shaking of the earth. And then, from the cloud emerged about a dozen horsemen. They were all covered in black dresses and were armed to their teeth. In a jiffy they came around to the intimidated team and formed a circle around them. One of them then came forward and bellowed in his heavy thunderous voice, “don’t you know that this well is sacred and is forbidden to all?”

No one answered. No one had the nerve to do so. They were all horrorstruck. “Well?” and looked at them as a hungry wolf measures a weak lamb before divulging into the delicacies of it. But still no response came. “Alright then, tie them up and take them to his Excellency’s court, he’ll decide their fate”.

In no sooner than a minute they were all roped, blind-folded and thrown into the van like some discarded baggage and driven to some unknown place.

The passage was dimly lit with few sunrays that succeeded in penetrating through small air-vents made at irregular intervals. There were no rooms on either side of the passage, but cells or rather you can say cages. They all contained inhabitants who were lying motionless in one corner or the other. Few were crawling, but one thing was common in all of them, they had no hope and desire to live.

She had no time to ponder over them as she was being hurried into a room at the end of the passage. The room was surprisingly brightely lit with sunlight filling the room through the three windows present on the three sides of the room, and was very well furnished. An old man wearing clean white cloths and a white turban was sitting on the highest chair in the room. He looked at them all with a blank expression and then turned on to the man who had brought them all there. A fierce conversation ensued between the two in which many a time fingers were pointed in their direction.

Finally, after what seemed like hours, they fell silent. He threw a look of hatred on to the man in black and turned to them.

“I am sorry my dears but according to our law, you people have to die and there is nothing I can do about it. I know you are strangers but then this is how it goes here and we are honour bound to follow the laws formed by our ancestors. And then, you people have seen too much, we can not make the error of letting you go.

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I am sorry”. And with these words he turned his head away. The man in black pointed a gun to her back and beckoned others to follow them.

It all felt like a dream to her. She felt herself gliding through the corridors, into a dimly lit dungeon where five other men were already loading their guns. She couldn’t feel anything any more. They were all pushed against a wall. She felt its coldness and turned around to look at others. They all had the same hopeless and resigned-to-fate expression on their faces. No one was crying, no one was moving; they were all staring into an oblivion. The moment came, she heard a metal click and closed her eyes, happy memories of her parents floated in front of her eyes, wet hot tears escaped through the corners of her closed eyes and bang, the guns roared simultaneously, she felt something sharp and metallic hit her forehead and pierce her skull, the pain was unbearable, “ah…!” escaped her mouth and than all went dark.
GARDENS AT GIVERNY
SANDRA MANUEL

I long to explore Monet’s gardens at Giverny when an explosion of mauves, purples, pinks and blues splash the landscape. How successfully would life imitate art? Monet was totally enraptured by his gardens. Lovingly he planted the classic living painting. I am thoroughly enchanted by his artistic illuminations of his creation. Gratefully I feed my soul with their beauty. I wonder which would charm me more: the gardens at Giverny or the gardener’s love-struck renderings?

THE UNKNOWN
HUMAYUN RASHID PEER
Old Ravian

( A Verse, dedicated to the Memory of my revered Professor Syed Ghulam Raza, whose masterly captivating elucidations of English poetry, instilled in me the spirit to enter and enjoy the ecstatic and fascinating World of Poetry. )

Remind me not of the shedding year, For to death it draws me near, And my heart sinking ever deeper, Drowns in an agonizing fear, Of the world hitherto unknown.

Remind me not of the days by-gone, For tears come rolling and I am torn, Betwixt joyous past, and my sorrows anon, Alas I am graying and shall soon be gone, Into the abyss of the unknown.

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A spanking stretch of silken frame
lay slim on ground
waiting to be tied by the knot

Hurled in air
she swings a dive
Wavering against the delicate pull
her kinky tail teases the wind
The wild lover lifts her up
and there she glides
into a will-ing hold

Thrilled by the April sun
Up and up
the Parri goes
till she finds her aerial gait

Parri flies
in her freedom
soaring above the sparkling heights

We let her fly
until we feel
the pulse of clouds
in our hands

A string
rustling
our mail from Heaven

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BASANT
AMBREEN RAZA
Old Ravian

Colourful kites soar everywhere
Floating through the winter air
Fluttering, dancing, gliding,
Drifting, skimming, sliding.
In shades, tints and hue
Of auburn, red and blue.
Swift, frolic, dainty, gay.
Alluring, bewitching, faraway.
So are the fleeting moments of joy
They gleam-n-fade, bloom-n-die.
Yet they remain in life’s sky
Sometimes low and sometimes high.
Colourful
Countless
Transitory

LAHORE
AMBREEN RAZA
Old Ravian

Picking my way
Through the winding lanes
Set ablaze with riot of amaltas,
Bare headed I walked
In full summer heat,
Drunk with the romance of Lahore.
Deserted roads
In blistering June
Were bronze
With the carpet
Of crunching leaves
Beneath my feet,
Familiar to the eye
And dear to the heart.
IT WAS QUAKING-GRASS AWHILE
ALAMGIR HASHMI
Old Ravian, Poet and Educationist

It was quaking-grass awhile
and hearing it breathe
like an old man, wheezy,
through the snooze,
kept me dreaming
about a bit of fluff
gathering to sing
in the moors of Yorkshire.

Then it shook a leg,
rhythmic ground.
Awake now, I saw my house tilt
to a side,
then spring back
aright beam and column
and hard brick
inside the quirky plaster
of this moment.
The windows are still chattering.

This house will probably
dance through the night.
And I too,
in and out every now and then,
with it; will not let me sleep.

My friends hear the castañetas
round the corner, a form of ancient art
they know the place
will give way for, any new start.
SINGULAR SURVIVAL
MAHRUKH NISHAT
Lecturer, Department of English

Such relish in extinction!
Such rapture in mayhem!
When mortal being's left beneath
Though ruined, plagued, pauperized
Down and out,
But lifting up the medulla,
Of yours and mine
In regions where is no discourse,
But sentence
And silence is the whole debate.
Tread light oh friend!
This treading hurts the silent rule,
of quietude.
I say, tread not, for stillness here's the queen,
Then bow, adore her.
But you won't go,
You say tis but a mad pursuit, Impossibility annihilation . . . !
If fruition be the ruin,
Then hail destruction!
Come oh nemesis! Envenom me,
With wine of ecstasy,
Come! Undo this being.
For what's this being?
But a possession,
That you don't owe,
Then venture it to out and out,
Imperil it,
Spill to it the ultimate!
For no pleasure in protection
No ravish in refuge!
They walk, and walk on an endless road
Futile foot-steps make heavy thuds on the frozen trail
Their conduit is dead
The past is now a prison-cell
Where pain and joy in concert wail
Bewildered, entangled and misled
They look up to a figure deceased… or look down upon.
Many a times they’d scuttle and dart hither and thither
But running away would bring no help in this journey unchaste.

Our stories remain untold.
Our pain remains unshared.
The grief will one day become a part of the past.
Another history will become,
The present will surrender to the defaced past.

Desperately I run, like I’ve never run before
Never to be stopped
Never to be chased
Always on a run.
It suffices, whatever is out before me!

In the eyes of the dear departed, I feel lost
Somewhere a milky dream distends drowsily
But then I cannot see
I’m blind
By choice to not see what this world has done to me
What this world has made of me
And I get scared
The full-length mirrors in my rooms are broken
And my house is made of glass…
PASSING DAYS...
MUHAMMAD MEHDI
*Old Ravian*

I see
moments and hours
days and nights
months and years
overlap to decry:
young and old
my kith and kin
their glee and mirth
in the clasp of Time
shall soon die
for life is passing by…

Days passed,
through sorrow and joy
ardor and zest,
regret and repair,
force me to think
of the half-shed boughs
verging on a discreet abode
just about the end of road…

Only
if I could hold!
if I could
revive
and rejuvenate!
all that is lost
in an empty bait.

For it shall never wait,
never does it wait.
for those who are late,
life slips by…

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EYE TALK
TOOBA AHMED
M.A. II

Your eyes tell me
everything,
Which I want to know
and you want to show.
The words, lips can't utter,
Eyes can say better.
Your smile, their dance,
Their depth, your glance,
are the words for me
The words that mean
the world to me.
I read them
and i think
If only you could read
My eyes too.

OCEAN OF LIFE
KIRAN FAHEEM
Old Raviann

Feeling like a drop of water
Deep inside the ocean of life
Each day I faced
Some menacing shadowy Strife.
Soul searching brought no aid
As Vision too was lost
I wished for the whole sea,
But the shore became my coast.
My way I couldn’t regain;
Eyes closed, I prayed at length,
Only some miracle could mould.
When I opened them again
Barren desert was all to behold.
NOTHING LASTS
KHURRAM ANSARI

The day has left its mark.
The moment lingers on
and harks back to a blue twilight
which gnaws the soul.
Time heals, I wonder.
Hollow laughter
under a grey moon.
Sadness falling like autumn leaves.
Wither so ever the wind blows
doesn’t really matter.
After a rainstorm
water drips from the leaves,
like faint notes of a sad symphony
A day came and went
in the land of the blind-hearted.