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My marriage was arranged when I was still inside my mother — Noor Jehan

Over 51%

of used car listings on PakWheels.com are for white vehicles

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A truce that never was

The TTP had informally called off a shaky ceasefire by Sept [four months after announcing] after being frustrated by the slow pace of negotiations and targeted killing of its big guns in Afghanistan. Why did it take this long to announce it? There could be more than one possibility

BY NAVEED HUSSAIN



The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has “formally” announced what we knew for at least past two months: its shaky ceasefire with the government has collapsed. The group “directed” its field commanders to resume attacks across the country “in retaliation” for the “relentless operations” by the security and intelligence agencies in “violation of the truce”. The TTP claimed that it had “exercised restraint for too long to keep the negotiation process on track” – but the government didn’t honour it. Significantly, the announcement came from the self-styled “defence ministry” of the TTP and carries the signature of its military strategist Mufti Muzahim. It also coincided with another announcement from Mufti Burjan, the head of TTP’s military commission (South-Zone), of a ban on meetings of senior commanders with their emir Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud for two months. He didn’t give any reason, but it’s believed the group fears the emir could be targeted after the resumption of hostilities.

The ceasefire was announced by the TTP in June 2022 following months of unannounced negotiations with the Pakistani government. Sirajuddin Haqqani, the interior minister of Afghanistan’s new Taliban rulers, had brokered the process which Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, then corps commander Peshawar, reportedly oversaw from the Pakistani side until he was transferred in August 2022. However, the process couldn’t move beyond “confidence-building measures” as the demands set by the TTP for a final peace agreement, especially the reversal of FATA’s merger with K-P and withdrawal of troops from these regions, were akin to the state’s surrender.

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The group was not happy with the slow pace of negotiations. On and off, its leaders would voice this unease. However, the simmering frustration came to a boil after some of TTP’s top commanders – including Abdul Wali, alias Omar Khalid Khorasani – were killed in mysterious targeted attacks in Afghanistan in August 2022. The TTP informally called off the ceasefire on September 3, 2022 in text messages to some journalists by its spokesman “Muhammad Khorasani”. Publicly, neither side confirmed it. Instead they sought to hush the report even though the TTP officially claimed credit for a couple of attacks that particular day. Since then the group has stepped up violence, carrying out nearly 60 bomb and gun attacks in November alone, including one on Nov 16 in which six policemen were killed in Lakki Marwat district.

This begs the question: if the truce had already ended, then why did the TTP announce it now?

There could be more than one possibility. First, the TTP’s statement came hours after the foreign ministry said that deputy foreign minister Hina Rabbani Khar will be leading a high-level delegation to Kabul for talks with Taliban officials. Rumours have it that the TTP was also invited by Interior Minister Haqqani to Kabul, but the group declined the invitation. Sources say the TTP appears to have lost trust in the “Haqqani faction” of the Afghan Taliban, which is considered close to the Pakistani establishment, and instead seeks to align itself with the rival “Kandahari faction” led

by Defence Minister Mullah Yaqoob. Some Afghan media reports also claimed that Mullah Yaqoob refused to meet the Pakistani delegation in Kabul. An Afghan defence ministry official, however, denied such a meeting was ever planned. There is a possibility that the TTP’s move might have been choreographed by the Kabul regime to use it as a pressure tactic in their talks with Khar and her delegation because they believe Pakistan is again ditching their regime after warming up to the United States.

Second, the TTP announced the truce collapse a day before Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa was to pass the baton of army command to Gen Syed Asim Munir. This could be a message to the new army chief to revive the negotiation process which has stalled since the transfer of Lt Gen Faiz Hameed out of Peshawar. Gen Munir has inherited far too many challenges in the politically volatile and economically near-bankrupt country. The most pressing task could be resisting the temptation to be sucked into the political quagmire by ensuring the “political quarantine” of the military and restore affinity with Pakistani people which has been undermined during Gen Bajwa’s tenure. The TTP declared resumption of violence because, in its assessment, Gen Munir may not want to add more to his daunting to-do list.

Third, there could also be a possibility that the TTP wants to break away from the Afghan Taliban after the loss of some of its big guns in recent months in Afghanistan, suspecting a role of the Kabul regime which has been under increasing pressure from Islamabad to dismantle TTP sanctuaries. If that is the case, then we may next expect the TTP drifting towards the Khorasan enterprise of Islamic State terrorist group. And if that happens, the Taliban regime’s worst nightmare would come true. The TTP knows that its alliance with Da’ish could create the most potent threat to the Taliban’s nascent regime – and that it would try to prevent it at any cost. The TTP timed its truce collapse announcement with Khar’s arrival in Kabul to give a message to Islamabad that the Taliban would no longer speak or negotiate on its behalf. Or this could be a message to Kabul to put pressure

on the Pakistani side for a deal with the TTP.

Whatever may be the reason for its latest move, the TTP has zero motivation to give up violence and disband, especially following the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban in August 2021. Instead the group has been emboldened by the Taliban’s bewildering victory over foreign forces which gave it a hope that it could also bring the Pakistan government to its knees. That was the reason the group stepped up attacks in the border regions of Pakistan following the fall of Kabul. It only agreed to engage with the government because the process was brokered by the Haqqanis with whom the group enjoyed close ideological affinity and organisational ties throughout the Taliban insurgency.

The Pakistani government also knew that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to sell a

“TTP announced the truce collapse a day before Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa was to pass the baton of army command to Gen Syed Asim Munir. This could be a message to the new army chief to revive the negotiation process

peace deal with the TTP – which is responsible for some of the worst terrorist atrocities – to its people. However, it agreed to engage with the group for two reasons: 1. to break up the TTP by cajoling the “reconcilable” elements, and 2.) to pre-empt an “IS-TTP nexus” which, the government feared, could be exploited by the hostile agencies with disastrous consequences for Pakistan. If these were the objectives, then we should be worried because neither has been achieved and the government doesn’t seem to have a plan to deal with a resurgent TTP which is seeking to capitalise on growing polarisation and political and economic chaos in Pakistan to stage a bloody comeback.

“There could also be a possibility that the TTP wants to break away from the Afghan Taliban after the loss of some of its big guns in recent months in Afghanistan



WHERE HAVE ALL THE COLOURS GONE?

A simple glance suggests white automobiles dominate our roads, with black and silver making up for much of the rest of our traffic. While many first time owners dream of buying a car with exotic colours, what drives them to settle for a neutral shade?



By NABIL TAHIR

Colours have a great deal of symbolic meaning. They represent a variety of concepts, emotions, personality, and cultural significance. Every person has their own choice in colours. A colour can influence how we feel. Colours can also evoke memories within us. On another level, colours are effective means of communication that can signal movement, affect mood, and even affect physiological responses.

Interestingly, colours also have a significant role in purchase of a car. Once the make and model are decided, the next thing you're looking at is the colour of the vehicle. When planning to buy a car, people always think of their dream car or the favourite colour. Some people take into consideration the different aspects of how the colour of the vehicle can impact their long-term planning. They often go against their will and buy a car that is in the most popular or in-demand colour.

There is one colour that is much more preferred than the others. Can you guess? According to Axalta's rankings of the world's most popular car colour for its Global Automotive Color Popularity Report, like in previous years, once again, white turned out to be the most popular car colour. Thirty-five percent of the new purchases were white. If you guessed white, that is probably because that is the colour you see most on the roads.

Familiar with the popular old joke? What do you get if all the vehicles in the country are painted white? The answer: A white car nation. Well, according to the stats, that is not far from being the case globally.

The most popular car colours in the world are black and grey, followed by silver, blue and red. The complete rankings of the world's most popular car colours in 2021:

white (thirty-five percent), black (nineteen percent), grey (nineteen percent), silver (nine percent), blue (eight percent), red (five percent), brown/beige (three percent), green (one percent), yellow/gold (one percent), and other colours (less than one percent).

Pakistan's most favourite car colour

disliked by most buyers, and even factors like the place of your residence play a role in deciding your car's worth as select paint shades enjoy a higher preference in some locations.

Resale Value

Colour affects a car's resale value. Depreciation is the most considerable ownership expense for a car owner, although this fact usually only becomes apparent when it's time to sell the automobile. While numerous elements go into determining the resale value of a car, one crucial aspect that the seller frequently ignores is the colour of the paint.

The exterior colour of a car significantly influences its resale value,

prospective buyer would be wary of putting their money on a vehicle that would be difficult to maintain. The combined effect leads to a poor resale value. Popular colours, white and silver, are known to be easy to maintain as minor scratches can be easily concealed. As some paint shades are known to lose their sheen slower than other colours, a used car with a silver exterior might look newer than a similar model in a dark or an odd paint shade.

Recently, in Pakistan, we have seen a rise in the prices of cars, resulting in the cost of car increasing from the original price at the time of buying. Farrukh Javed, a car trader in Karachi, says that white and silver cars are found to depreciate less than the other coloured

sumption and less contribution to pollution.

Munj highlights that in the late 2010s, there were no white cars in London, and people only preferred dark blue and other shades. "Now you will see white cars in London too. In Dubai, a white car is preferred due to the hot weather, and as some of our choices are influenced by Dubai, we also have more white cars." He adds that the geography of a region also impacts the decision of which colour to choose. Some colours look good in desert and others in the snow.

Colour Availability

Even if you have done all your research and considered all the complications of buying an odd colour car,

soon. I chose the colour because, as a child, I had always wanted a red Ferrari. I could not afford a Ferrari, but I was buying my very first car, and that is what pushed me to go for the red colour." However, it went differently than what he had planned. "While the dealership booked the colour happily and gave me a tentative delivery time of four months, I was astonished when upon inquiring after five months, I was told that the company had stopped manufacturing the car in red colour. The car delivered to me was white. I don't deny that I still like my car very much, I would have been happier had I gotten it in red colour as per the commitment made to me by the car company at the time of booking."

A brand marketer at one of the famous car manufacturers in Pakistan explains why the odd colours are challenging to get. According to him, when a company introduces a new model, it manufactures all the colours that have been advertised. Depending on the market demand for colours, production is focused on those colours. He explains, "In Pakistan, whenever a new model is introduced, the most selling colours are white and silver. This is a fact known to every car company in Pakistan. So, if a company is getting more orders of white and silver, why would it stop its production line and work on the limited units of odd colours? It is not that they completely halt, but considering the demand, manufacturing is more focused towards those colours."

Are colours vanishing from the world?

Well, this question can be applied to cars and other things. Brands, construction sites, restaurants, or cars, we see that globally, the focus is towards the safest or neutral colours. Are car colours really vanishing? In some parts of the world, this can be considered valid, but in other parts, different colours, predominantly yellow, are becoming quite popular. According to an analysis by iSeeCars.com, after comparing prices of more than 650,000 three-year-old used cars that were sold, it was discovered that yellow, orange, and purple co-



and therefore, people usually go against their choice to buy a colour that is safe and easy to sell. A car enthusiast, expert and co-founder of Pak Wheels, Suneel Sarfraz Munj, says that even if you go back to the 1990s, every year, car companies highlight and advertise their signature colours. "You can see that the signature colours are not the basic colours, but when you check the buying pattern, you will see that people mostly go for the safest colours, which are black and white." Munj, owner of multiple cars of

cars. "If a person bought a white car and plans to sell it within a year, it might depreciate at an average of just 4.5 percent over a three-year ownership period, which is seventy percent less than the depreciation for cars with odd colours. That is why people go for white and silver cars, new and used, more than any other car."

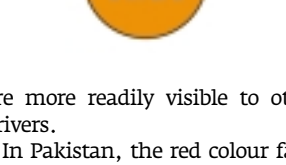
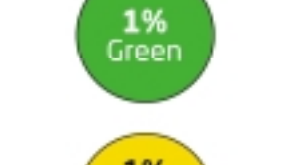
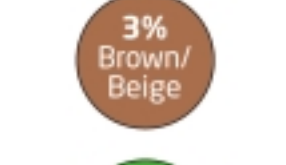
Impact of weather and area

Every region has different seasons throughout the year, and weather patterns significantly impact the

you still have to face a barrier. You will have to wait longer to get your car in Pakistan if it is an odd colour. While introducing a new model, car companies advertise the range of colours they offer, some of which are limited editions. A limited edition usually attracts people who want to stand out instead of blending in. Other colours are also challenging.

In Pakistan, the top three car brands are Honda, Toyota, and Suzuki. These three are the most purchased brands in Pakistan; Suzuki tops the list, followed by Toyota and

WORLD



For Pakistan, it is no different. White takes the top spot as the most popular car colour. According to the 67,137 used car listings on PakWheels.com, there are 34,542 (51.45 percent) white, 12,526 (18.65 percent) silver, and 10,912 (16.25 percent) black as the top three listings. Grey and blue are the next most popular colours with 6,957 (10.36 percent) and 3,333 (five percent) respectively.

There are several reasons why people opt for neutral colours like white and black. Impact of weather, resale value or demand, availability, a colour that will not be

multiple colours, adds, "Even if you buy an old car from the 1990s or 2000s, you will naturally go for neutral colours considering the ease of selling the car. Also, as the demand for the other colours is low, it may become difficult for the car owner to sell a car if they are planning to switch to something else."

Maintenance of car also matters in setting the resale value. There is a high chance that the darker shaded vehicle won't look as pristine as, say, a silver or white coloured one, and that is something that has already affected the resale value. A

choice of colours of cars. Impact of colour on a car's resale value differs, depending on the area. In Pakistan, the most popular colours, in all regions, are white, silver, and black.

According to a study of the Berkeley Lab Environmental Energy Technologies Division, cars with darker shades absorb more heat than lighter shade cars. Vehicles with darker shades are thirty-three degrees Fahrenheit hotter than lighter shaded vehicles. The study showed that due to this, cars with a lighter colour use less air conditioning, resulting in less fuel con-

Honda. But these brands also focus on neutral colours that have a higher demand.

Sometimes, even if you plan to buy an odd colour, you may end up purchasing a neutral one. Some people consider the resale value aspect, but some car buyers go for the colour they dream of having but cannot get their hands on it.

Humayun Ahmed Khan, who recently purchased his first car, opted for red, following his childhood red Ferrari dream. "I booked my car in red last year, hoping I'd get my hands on a cherry red car very

low cars had the lowest depreciation rate. Overall, yellow is the vehicle colour that holds its value best, depreciating seventy percent less than the average vehicle. According to the website, yellow vehicles are so novel in the secondhand marketplace that people are willing to pay a premium price for them.

There are some benefits of buying bright colour cars. According to a Mapfre study by the University of Auckland, New Zealand, brown, black, and green cars are involved in more accidents than grey, red, and yellow ones because the latter

are more readily visible to other drivers.

In Pakistan, the red colour family is gaining some popularity, but the focus of buyers is still towards white, silver and black, which are considered the safest colours. This is because every buyer, while buying a car or choosing a colour for their vehicle, believes that someday they will have to sell it. They go against their desired colour, and drive for years a car that is of the colour they didn't want just so that it could be sold at a higher price someday.



THE SLUM DWELLERS OF SUKKUR

One man's initiative changed the lives of the underprivileged communities living in Katcha Bunder, Sukkur, along the banks of River Indus in Sindh

By SARFARAZ MEMON

Not very long ago, there was a time when education was believed to be 'the forbidden fruit' for people living inside the Bunder wall or the slums scattered on the banks of the Indus River and its canals, and other areas of Sukkur. Before the 2010 floods, thousands of families lived in settlements on the banks of the Indus and its canals but were got vacated in 2011 and most of them moved to Achiyoon Kubiyoan, near Rohri.

"Neither boys, nor girls were sent to school, because everyone thought that our children are supposed to be our helping hands, so why should we educate them," explains the elderly Noor Jehan, a resident of Katcha Bunder. "So much so, that children at the tender age of five or six would help their parents around the house."

Most women worked as domestic support and would take their little girls along to train them to enable them to work in-

their home to Achiyoon Kubiyoan near Rohri, the children began going to the newly-established Riverside High School (RHS) in their new locality.

The school's name might sound fancy, but that's about it. The RHS was simply an initiative of the Riverside Development Organisation (RDO), a non-government and non-profit developmental organisation, working to equip viable lives of sequestered communities, especially children and women, through improvement of health and education. The community school Noor Jehan's children went to in Katcha Bunder previously was also an RDO establishment.

The organisation has taken the initiative of educating the children belonging to slum areas of Sukkur. According to Noor Jehan, the RDO provides free schooling and medical facilities to their children. Apart from that, they have also empowered slum women through various programmes.



Neither boys nor girls were sent to school because everyone thought that our children are supposed to be our helping hands, so why should we educate them?



dependently in the future. The little boys worked at roadside hotels and workshops, where they would probably get jobs too, when they grew older.

Out of Noor Jehan's nine children, three are boys, and her four daughters are married. She and her husband Manzoor Hussain have never been to school, but realising the importance of education, she made sure that all her children went to school.

Hussain works as a daily-wage labourer and makes about Rs 700 to Rs1000 a day, while Noor Jehan is an expert at hand embroidery and applique work. But with poor eyesight, she cannot do much embroidery now.

In 2008, their children started going to a community school in Katcha Bunder. When they moved

But that's not all. RDO had another challenge in the form of the age-old custom of child marriages. Marrying off girls of ages 10 to 12, without their consent was a social norm. "My marriage was arranged with Manzoor when I was still inside my mother," says Noor Jehan, with a chuckle. "Things are much better now and people have started marrying their daughters at a proper age after seeking their consent," she adds.

Sanam Aijaz Ali, 21, was married off right after she completed her tenth grade at Riverside High School, while her siblings are still in school. "My husband and in-laws are very cooperative and encourage me for further education," says Sanam. "But I feel that I cannot continue with my education, because of my domestic re-

sponsibilities."

Sanam's husband and father-in-law, both work as daily-wage labourers at the wholesale fish market in Sukkur, and each of them earns Rs 800 a day. Humaira, 19, the eldest among the six siblings wants to continue her education after completing her intermediate. Her problem is a financial one. "Since my parents cannot afford to pay for my graduation, I teach at a private school in Achiyoon Kubiyoan and give tuitions at home," she explains. "Once I have enough money for my education, I will graduate. I want to become a teacher and support my family."

Hajani, a student of class 10 at RHS, is the youngest of nine siblings. Her father works at her school, while her mother is a housewife. But Hajani has set a huge goal for herself, that of becoming a general duty pilot.

Another student of class 9, Komal Shahid Hussain, along with a brother and two sisters study in the same school. Komal also wants to be highly educated, secure her future and to support her family.

Farwa Gul is in class 10, while her younger sister Faiza and two brothers are in class six and one respectively. "I want to be a lawyer," she says with a confident smile on her face. "My father works as security supervisor at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Disease, in Karachi, and is very supportive of our education."

Condemning the custom of early marriages and karo kari, Farwa Gul says that a few years ago, girls living in the slum were treated like animals. "Men would either marry them at an early age or declare them kari for their own benefit," she says. "But, with per-

sistent counselling by the RDO staff, this inhuman custom is almost gone and now the girls are respected as equals."

Sadoran Ali Ahmed is currently doing her intermediate and wants to join the Pakistan Army's intelligence agency, once she has completed her education. "I don't know why, but it is my dream," she says smiling.

Shahana Yasir, the principal of the RHS, says the school provides the facility of free education from KG to class 10. "The total enrollment of the school is 731, of which 415 students are girls and the rest, 316, are boys," she says. "It is interesting to note that girls living in the slums are more talented than the boys, which is why girls always get better grades."

The founding chairman of RDO, 52-year-old Munawar Gill, is the man behind the upliftment of the slum dwellers of Katcha Bunder. He shares how his dream of bringing revolutionary changes in the lives of slum dwellers materialised. "In 2005, along with couple of friends, I was at the left bank of River Indus, when a fire broke out in the huts on the bank of one of the canals of Sukkur barrage," Gill says. "We ran to rescue the people, but before we could reach, flames had engulfed most of the huts and people were running for their lives. This horrific incident proved to be a turning point in my life."

Gill mulled over the idea of helping the poor and needy slum dwellers and soon RDO came into being working on the slogan "To serve humanity is to serve the God".

"In 2006, the organisation got some support from Kindernothilfe (a German charity organisation) and we established free medical camps on the riverside," says Gill,

recalling the organisation's earlier days. "This gave us the chance to closely interact with the slum dwellers. In 2008, we established a school in a hut at Katcha Bunder, with three basic components such as basic health, non-formal education and clean drinking water, in mind."

Talking about the socio-cultural challenges he came across in the slums at the time, Gill says that the people were totally against education and were quite complacent about living without civic facilities. "Social evils and crime were rampant, along with sexual abuse and maltreatment of women and girls," he says. "Waterborne disease was common as people consumed water directly from the river."

Gill distributed earthen pots from the local market that would filter, store and provide cool water for domestic use. People had to be educated about basic cleanliness and tidiness. Gradually, the RDO organised over 100 self-help groups of local women, who are now engaged in various small businesses and supporting their families.

After the fire incident, Gill along with some like-minded friends established RDO, with the aim to provide basic health facilities, non-formal education

and clean drinking water to the slum dwellers especially living in Katcha Bunder, Sukkur. Formally registered in 2014, RDO's initial projects were free medical camps in the slums. Later, when they had developed a relationship of trust with the slum dwellers, RDO started working for education of the community, starting off with a school in a hut for non-formal education.

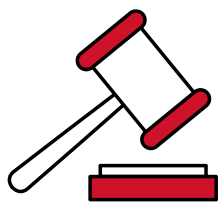
While the Gills of this world will always come forward to help the under-privileged, but what about those who are responsible for giving them a civilised life? Only once the authorities accept and acknowledge the existence of slums, these slum-dwellers can be included in the city's development plans. There needs to be concrete planning, development programmes, and policies in place by the government authorities for the communities living along the banks of River Indus. They need safe housing especially in the wake of climate change, safe water to drink, basic amenities, health, and education facilities. And the government needs to plan with the slum dwellers, not for them, just the way Munawar Gill has done.

Sarfraz Memon is a freelance writer. All information and facts provided are the sole responsibility of the writer



My husband and in-laws are very cooperative and encourage me for further education, says Sanam. But I feel that I cannot continue my education because of my domestic responsibilities





Damned if you do, tort if you don't

Story by: **Shahzad Abdullah** Design by: **Mohsin Alam**

A tort is a civil wrong that has caused a person – anyone who we owe a ‘reasonable duty of care’ – to suffer some form of harm or loss, through an act of negligence on our part. But while torts are aplenty, from the mild to severe to critical, the law of torts does not exist in Pakistan

In the year 2020, an Airbus flying in from Lahore, owned by the national airline carrier crashed into Karachi, moments before landing. 97 passengers were killed that day. That seems rather incendiary, doesn't it? Apologies. Ninety-seven passengers died that day.

Actually, no. Memory serves that those that perish in disaster automatically achieve martyrdom. So, the correct thing to say would be that 97 innocents embraced martyrdom. That sounds right. And more fortunately, it was the month of Ramzan. The heart swells at the thought; to have become martyrs, that too, in Ramazan. Could anyone possibly ask for a more shining departure? Oh, how that mitigates the grief!

Not that the incident could be amplified in severity but two out of those 97 were my friends. And through merely a spike in perception alone, that definitely took a toll and bewilderingly enough, no, nothing really mitigated the grief. Nothing reasonably ever can. I was telling M about this somewhat recently. It seemed to pop up organically, somewhere between the entrées and dessert.

Surely the affected had been given some sort of relief. Perhaps, if you could somehow put a price tag on a life. But then surely, those responsible would be brought to justice. Again perhaps, if a legal mechanism (strict liability) existed to address it.

Identifying my response as somewhat reflective of doubt, M asked – doesn't it?

My answer to her question that night, was no, it does not.

The law of torts, or quite simply, ‘torts’ govern the dominion of civil society. A tort is a civil wrong that has caused a person, a fellow member of our community, our “neighbour” if you will, anyone who we owe a ‘reasonable duty of care’ – to suffer some form of harm or loss, through an act of negligence on our part.

This detriment, the spectrum of which is quite ambitious (but not impossible), ranging from irritation to manslaughter, is addressed and compensated via the intervention of the legal system. As per tort law, the ‘tortfeasor’ (the one who causes the harm) is liable to fully compensate the party which has suffered the harm caused by his or her negligent or harmful conduct. So, while torts are aplenty, from the mild to severe to critical, the law of torts does not exist in Pakistan.

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Where criminal law focuses heavily on the presence of mens rea, or malice, tort addresses the merits of the incident itself. One might not have intended to become a source of detriment to someone, but should they have reasonably been aware of their actions?

Where criminal law focuses heavily on the presence of mens rea, or malice, tort addresses the merits of the incident itself. One might not have intended to become a source of detriment to someone, but should they have reasonably been aware of their actions? If not through their direct effort, then did through their direct negligence did anyone else suffer? If one did suffer through the unintentional act of someone else, they might not be awarded remedial action through the criminal justice system. But they could potentially find some solace in the latter. The latter being torts.

Akin to train travel, the union jack, afternoon tea and colonialism, the law of torts achieved landfall on the subcontinent during the British Raj. Through the Parliamentary Charter of King George I in 1726, the application of common law was to be implemented through the entire Commonwealth. Mayor's courts, proxies of the Crown's legality, were established in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay and the King's Law was to be enforced thereon. The fledgling legislation that governed “justice, equity and good conscience” (unfortunately, this has dwindled down to “judicial discretion” since then) were to be adjusted in line with indigenous practices and great strides were made in this arena, until Independence. And after the departure of our British overlords, the law of torts has remains undeveloped. Some might even say, consciously so.

One of the first things we learnt in law school, circa Jurisprudence 101 were principles of legal legitimacy. “All are equal before the law and are entitled without discrimination to equal protection of the law.” A system of law perpetuated by equality. A sublime thought. Furthermore, any law that lacked the equality quantum, could render its mere existence being brought into question. Quite simply, a law which is not equal to all, is not law, or atleast does not deserve to be.

The cardinal importance of torts resides in the fact that this domain specifically secures the civil rights of the people, especially those of the common man, who, often, might not possess the resources to pursue justice on their own. It is a basic means of securing rights, a cordial substitute for revenge, a mechanism of distributive justice, a system of compensation, protection against the culpable and unjust invasion of moral rights – to name a few. In the absence of such, the rights of the people (or more correctly, the antithesis of affluent) would be trampled upon with impunity and there would exist no legal machinery to address this. Apathy would become the norm and chaos would ensue – in principle.

Some might believe that if a thing is remotely understood, its articulation is not essential to comprehend it. But some could be wrong. The significance of any law is put into actionable effect, the second it is written down – codified. If it is not written down, it will not be referential, and thus unfamiliar. Torts in Pakistan, to this day, remain uncoded.

Does something necessarily have to be written down for it to be real? Debatable. The spirit of tort does somewhat exist. A scattered spectre, existing in the shadows and corners of various legal procedures and statutory bodies including Code of Civil Procedure, Code of Criminal Procedure, Pakistan Penal Code, Companies Ordinance, Workmen's Compensation Act, Fatal Accidents Act, Social Security Ordinance, Factories Act, Pakistan Environmental Protection Act, Consumer Protection Act, but a tome manifest of its own? Not yet.

In the absence of such reliability, the standard then becomes a spontaneous inclination towards criminal proceedings, which have their own set of financial merits to covet. The focus on rewards for criminal categorization are reflected in their appropriation and usually, offer up better rewards than a measly tort.

Possibly all torts where intent is grievous like assault, batter, false imprisonment are legitimate veins that exist within criminal law. Slightly vague items such as emotional distress simply do not exist unless indirectly claimed under something else. Similarly, trespass is often claimed under property disputes but rarely, if ever, by itself. Negligence, liability and nuisance for example do possess a quantum but only if paired with



a juicier criminal counterpart. The gravity of a rare few, ebb and flow, subject to the appearance of the moon, like right to privacy, which can suddenly be rendered draconian depending on the stature of the politician caught in a honey pot scandal du jour, but suddenly become dormant if finances are publicly demanded to be revealed; a ruling party member may suddenly become virginal in his pursuit of innocence. A few lesser torts include interference with business relations and product liability.

Take for example, the tort of defamation. The PCC recognizes defamation as a crime. For context, defamation in law is compromising another person's reputation by a false statement, that is, being communicated to a third party, that brings about said person's disrepute. The concept is an elusive one and is limited in its varieties only by human inventiveness. In Pakistan, defamation has been promoted to a crime which means that the reckoning of the accused would be far more prickly and recover more damages. Ultimately however, simply criminalizing a few 'intent intensive' torts, the rights of the common man cannot be secured.

Treating defamation as a criminal offence is frowned upon today by international standards, because it can be used by those in power as a threat to curb naysayers. A law prejudiced to a choice few, would then reasonably be outdated. After all, there is no history of defamation cases being helmed by the 'downtrodden' against the 'powerful'.

At this point, the rational conclusion would be to codify the whole nine yards and be done with it. If only matters that trickled into practicality were so utopian.

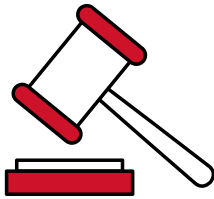
There are some who argue the public is not (cannot be) sufficiently educated to understand this law. Another is that our flourishing litigation machinery discourages such suits to impede the floodgates that would open as a result. One conspiracy enthusiast even suggested that the British made sure this would always remain the case in the subcontinent and willfully did not advance torts as much as they could have because they wanted the protection that this law might provide, unreachable for the poor masses.

A slightly more grounded opinion is that the law of torts belongs to the branch of common law, not necessarily statutory law, because its dominion is far too fluid to encapsulate in meticulous detail “The common law...covers everything which is not covered by

“
The law of torts achieved landfall on the subcontinent during the British Raj. Through the Parliamentary Charter of King George I in 1726, the application of common law was to be implemented through the entire Commonwealth

Types of Law





statute. It knows no gaps: there can be no ‘casus omissus’. The function of the court is to decide the case before it.”

Legislation is a compounded exercise for which there is no one sole custodian. Not just the judiciary, not just legislation, not just lawyers; not anyone in singularity. The entire Pakistani justice system has not shown the same enthusiasm for the law of torts that they have bestowed on other areas, especially criminal law. The philosophy remains that where there is a right, there is a remedy – ‘ubi jus ibi remedium’ but this is not a one shoe fits all. Lack of knowledge then evolves into lack of expertise and therefore lack of advice. Then there is plenty to be said about self-serving elements within the legal fraternity especially where criminal proceedings often fetch loftier amounts in damages than any other body of law.

Once ideated as the primary vehicle for compensation, the sanctity of tort law has been compromised by poverty, ignorance and economic pressure. Elements that fell through the cracks have been stimulated by external opportunists. Medical negligence, loss of poverty or financial detriments are being taken care of by the insurance sector. Bodily harm is being addressed by social security agencies. Emotional distress is being milked by big pharma while various other ‘avoidable’ calamities are simply (and conveniently) chalked up to ‘God’s Will’.

Another major reason of the neglect of law of torts in Pakistan are doctrines of champerty and maintenance. Doctrine of champerty means that legal representation who maintains the litigation for a person can get his reward from the damages awarded to

the litigant. Maintenance, on the other hand is “stirring up of litigation by giving aid to one party to bring a claim without just cause or excuse.” These doctrines were introduced as reprimands, to snub frivolous litigation while providing a mechanism to encourage the settlement of disputes without recourse to litigation. But in Pakistan , both doctrines have become the bedrock of business practice in the legal industry. The bulk of litigation has then become a hefty chunk of the damages rewards as well as all miscellaneous costs attached. Brilliance, on the other hand, although spectacular to behold, remains elusive, with accomplished intelligence too far and few in between.

“The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.” The law of torts in Pakistan needs to be given modern form and implementation if the rights of the less privileged citizens are to be protected and secured, as it after all, exists for their protection. But would arming the masses with a medium to voice their grievances benefit the greater good? Could the status quo risk the ‘temple’ to fall? Maybe that’s a discussion for another day.

Circling back to the conversation from which this monologue erupted – the Airbus crashing minutes away from Jinnah International, did not simply crash into air. It crashed on land, into a densely populated neighborhood, no less. There is actual video footage of houses being destroyed underneath it. Did a civil claim ever see light of day? It did not. Additionally, in an effort to somewhat quantify the culpability at hand, please note that the mode of failed transport was estimated to being in use for 16 years, with a new engine having been installed 2 years prior. The last routine maintenance check on the plane was conducted a year before that and the most comprehensive check was last performed even before. With such evident and rampant negligence afoot, was there any palpable, concrete modes of justice that followed in the aftermath? Not in the standard sense, it did not. Then again, I’m not an aviation expert. My opinion does not matter as much as an engineer’s or a pilot’s.

Luckily for all of us, wiser heads prevailed and a formal enquiry was swiftly mobilized (with understandable pomp). Interestingly enough however, one of the many experts induced and published technical and data led findings was that the deceased pilot had always conveyed a knack of being “too overconfident”. Top notch expertise right there.

Not all for naught, there were several condolence tweets that came in – those were nice, the incident trended for a whole week. On a good day, even globally. Good times.

Oh, and then there was governmental compensation – 10 lakhs to each family who lost a loved one (and 5 lakhs to the 2 that survived) – so yes, there is a price tag to life (the sum is halved if you “fortunately” survive).

The irony does not escape the observer where those who were to rightly atone and learn from their actions were not admonished by national stakeholders but instead flagged by those with higher, more foreign, sensibilities. A month later, one third of the active flight faculty was indefinitely grounded for holding “bogus or suspicious licenses” and a week later, the carrier was banned from flying into the European Union and United Kingdom for six months for failing multiple safety tests as well as failure to properly implement a safety management system by the European Union Air Safety Agency (EASA). A month later, the airline was banned from flying to the United States.

Some factions commented how some of these reprimands taken by the international bodies were far too disproportional to the “accident”, and the losses that this chastisement would undoubtedly expound were beyond catastrophic. If not for the airline itself, its employees et al, then to the national public image on its own – they were entirely reprehensible.

Shockingly, an ill-advised PR stunt which highlighted one of the survivors travelling on the airline again (post medical treatment) did not absolve the sins of the airline. Tragic, that this veritable stroke of genius failed to vindicate in the court of public opinion (often held loftier esteem than a court of law).

I say, chalk it up to ‘God’s Will’.

Shahzad Abdullah is a freelance writer who contributes to a number of different publications. He is a lawyer turned PR and communications professional based in Karachi. All information and facts provided are the sole responsibility of the writer

“The cardinal importance of torts resides in the fact that this domain specifically secures the civil rights of the people, especially those of the common man, who, often, might not possess the resources to pursue justice on their own

What is the most common tort?

The most common tort is negligence. It occurs when a person or company does not act with the care that an ordinarily prudent and careful person would act in a similar situation.

A negligent driver, for example, will violate the standard of care by driving too fast for conditions or without paying attention to what is happening on the road.



Tort classification

There are three main ways in which torts can be classified in order to identify them.

1 Intentional Torts

Injuries can be sustained by an intentional tort, which is the act of inflicting emotional or psychological injury upon someone else with the intention to cause harm. Intentional torts can include defamation, slander and false light invasion of privacy.

The law defines an intentional tort as "an egregious and malicious wrong inflicted without just cause or excuse on one who has not provoked it".



2 Negligence Torts

Negligence torts are those that are committed by a person who owed a duty to another person and then failed to uphold it. These duties can be anything from the duty of care, the duty of loyalty, or even the duty of honesty.

There is no set list of what these duties might entail but in general, they deal with protecting your rights and not infringing on someone else's rights. To be found negligent you must have breached one or more of these duties through either an action or omission; failing to act when there was a clear obligation to do so.



3 Strict Liability Torts

The term "strict liability" means that someone is liable for damages, without a need to show fault or negligence. There are two main kinds of strict liability torts: those based in contract law and those based in tort law.

Strict liability torts primarily happen when there is an injury caused by a defective product or dangerous condition at business premises such as slipping on something wet while walking into the store (liability for negligence).



The Four Elements of a TORT:

Presence of Civil Duty



Ex. A taxi driver has the duty to follow the rules of the road and not drive recklessly.

Breach of Civil Duty



Ex. The taxi driver chooses to drive in a reckless manner.

Injury



Ex. The passenger in the cab was injured.

Breach of Duty Caused the Injury

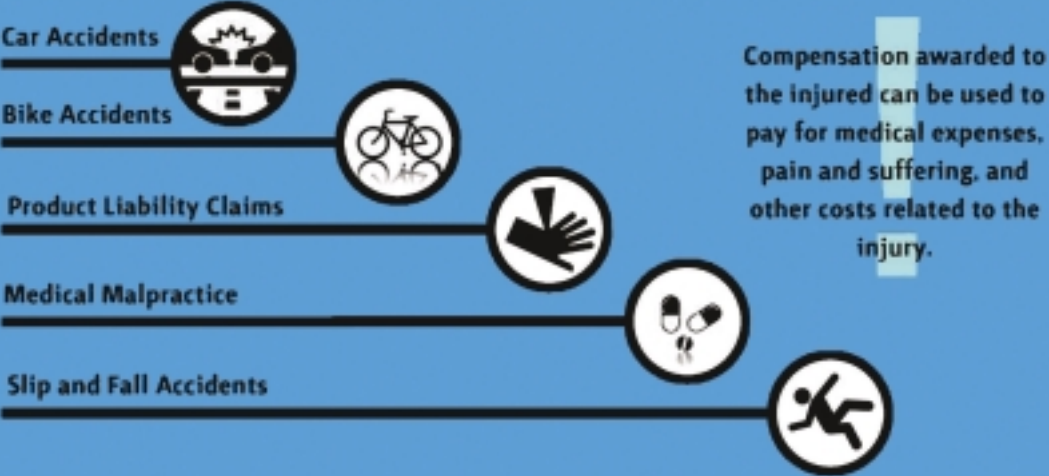
Duty + Negligence =



Ex. The driver's reckless actions directly caused the passenger's injury.

TORTS: Righting the wrong of recklessness

Negligence should never be tolerated, especially when it puts innocent people at risk of serious injury. Torts offer the chance to “right the wrong” of recklessness, and individuals may be able to take legal action for:





THERE'S DECEPTION IN THE AIR

A red-hot housewife with a personality disorder is taken hostage in her house by a terrorist wearing his heart on his sleeve, while the husband accused of cheating on his wife tries to get her back. There are two versions of reality, you have to find out which one is true. Dhoka Round D Corner is a tale of lies, harsh truths and suspense. Don't look for too much logic, it's a Gulati film not Anurag Kashyap's

By **FOUZIA NASIR AHMAD**

Being a die-hard R. Madhavan fan, I couldn't wait to see his latest film once I had spotted the preview on Netflix. His work has been on my watchlist ever since he appeared in the role of Ashley Alexander, a young priest in Zee TV's drama series Banegi Apni Baat (1993). Much later came hits films such Guru, Ramji London Wallay, Tannu Weds Mannu, Tannu Weds Mannu, Tannu Weds Mannu Returns, 3 idiots increasing his visibility, fandom and popularity.

His more recent successes such as Rocketry: The Nambi Effect, the web series Decoupled and the latest Dhokha Round D Corner establish him a seasoned craftsman and only add to his versatil-

ity as an actor.

The title of Dhokha Round D Corner instantly reminded me of Vastav: The Reality, Aatish: Feel The Fire, and Daag: The Fire because all such titles always make me wonder why did they think we would not understand the first word in the title if we are opting to see it and what is there that needs to be decoded. But in some cases the definition is used when the title has been used pre-

viously for a film.

I'm ranting. Let's get back to Dhokha Round D Corner, directed and written by Kookie Gulati who made his debut as a director with the Abhishek Bachan starrer The Big Bull (2021).

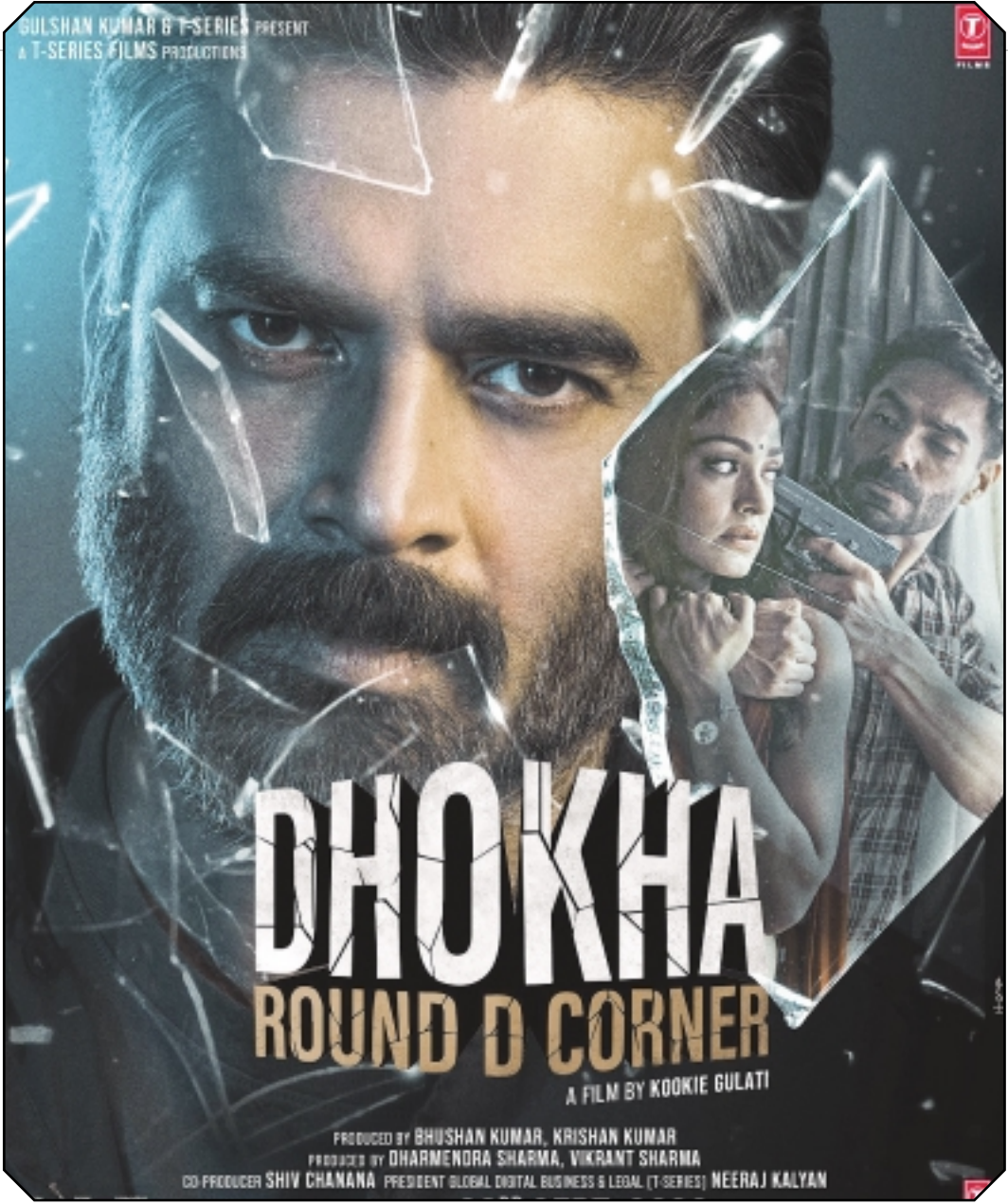
Ever since Dhoka... was announced, the cast has been the talking point, and now after watching the film, it all seems perfectly baked.

Dhoka... is a crime thriller that stars R. Madhavan and debutante Khushalii Kumar (producer Bhushan Kumar's sister for irrelevant trivia lovers like myself) as an unhappy married couple. Aparshakti Khurana plays a terrorist, who breaks into their home, and wants a cop (Darshaan Kumaar) to accept his demands in return for her

of-a sari [no, not tightly wrapped up like a joint of meat ready for the freezer aka Nirupa Roy-style but more like Deepika Padukone in the Badtameez song, and who on earth dresses like that at home in the morning, but never mind!] and Saanchi seems to be in a very seductive mood especially after having a row with her husband. You start wondering, is she mad, or is it an act? You'll find out in the end.

The film cuts back and forth from the flat from where the terrorist is demanding money and a getaway vehicle, and the posse of khaki cops down below, with a battery of TV reporters noisily standing around doing pretty much nothing.

Within minutes of the opening, the director has given you



kidnapper' story. But with a Lashkar terrorist? No. Since that is not a hot theme with Bollywood these days, you can put that random thought away.

Dhokha Round D Corner earned INR 1.25 crore at the domestic box office on its opening day and its final box office collections would deem it a flop, but it is not a bad film to watch for its unpredictable end. Remember Ram Gopal Varma's psychological suspense thriller Kaun (1999) with Urmila Matondkar the protagonist, who in the end turns out to be the antagonist? It is a hint, not a spoiler.

There were numerous twists and turns woven into the screenplay and none of them seep into over-the-top territory, keeping you on your toes to the very end.

Khushalii Kumar, who could be a fresh entrant to the femme fatale slot that the likes of Huma Qureshi and Mahie Gill have so far dominated, gave a fine performance as her role required her to be sensuous, vulnerable and devious at the same time. Darshan Kumaar makes a good support while for Madhavan who is a fine actor who has way more demanding roles and convincing performances to his credit, this was a piece of cake and perhaps something light that he wanted to do after Rocketry. The camera-work, editing and background score combine well to amp up the suspenseful and mysterious atmosphere. Is the terrorist going to shoot someone, is the woman going to kill him or will the police stop picnicking and

move their backsides and kill everyone?

Admittedly, there are a few moments in Dhokha Round D Corner where your fingers are crawling towards the remote but Gulati's clever direction stops you. Too much logic isn't his cup of tea, his target mostly is to make a commercial thriller.

It could even be called predictable until the very end and the final twist. You could slot it with Madari (2016), or Kartik Aryan's Dhamaka (2021), and if you enjoyed those films, here is another one to watch. At best, it is a taut, edgy, claustrophobic thriller that keeps you engaged with perfect pace. For R. Madhavan fans, it is a lot more because you can't go wrong with a Madhavan movie.



T Magazine's picks



Binge this week:
1899

TV Show



Ghost ships are so intriguing. Especially if they are 100-200 years ago with people crawling all over them in period costumes. This slow-cook supernatural mystery series will haunt you and there are enough storylines so keep the popcorn going. Each character is a puzzle, but deeply engaging and grows on you. Don't scroll your phone while watching, there are flashbacks, hallucinations, weird visual motifs and eye-widening cliffhanger twists that can't be missed. The characters also all speak different languages so subtitles will come in handy.



Listen this week:
Mahi Mahi

Music



Shafqat Amanat Ali is back with a new Punjabi song that you will listen to again and again. With Naveed Nashad's composition, Mahi Mahi gives us a peak into the fervent romance in the newly launched web series Sevak: The Confessions. The song captures the robust Punjabi culture, and the sweetest lyrics by Qamar Nashad are such a refreshing break from the inane, and what appear to be totally off-the-cuff lyrics thrashed around Bhangra beats in most factory produced Punjabi songs these days. This song will make you fall in love!



Watch this week:
The Canvas

Movies



Incredible content in the form of mind-boggling analyses on various forms of art media and history. Did you know that the Philippine Revolution was inspired by a painting? Did you know that Emil Nolde, one of Germany's most celebrated artists, was a Nazi, yet Hitler still censored him. Despite that, Nolde remained a Nazi. What can we learn from the fascist artist who, despite being persecuted remained a fascist nonetheless? Yes, some next level but low key, well-portrayed, and striking insights await you in this channel.

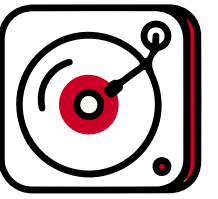


Play this week:
God of War Ragnarok

Gaming



After the Santa Monica studio revamped their unique interpretation of Norse mythology in the God of War series in 2018, we had high expectations and the sequel of God of War Ragnarok is so much more. It expands on its predecessor's successes in virtually every aspect, offers an interesting and grandiose plot, and several gameplay surprises. Visually rich and full of varied content, there is lots of room to express yourself with gear customisation reaching deeper levels. It doesn't skimp out in the gameplay department. Warning: You'll be hooked for hours!



STORIES THAT NEED TO BE TOLD

Acclaimed for his artistic, bold, quirky and realistic work on TV, Mazhar Moin has been dishing out drama for over two decades. In an exclusive interview, the director talks about his latest YouTube venture, 'Meem Kahani', and how it allows him to portray bold and controversial characters and stories that he couldn't depict on TV

By **YUSRA SALIM**

In a social climate where censorship is on the surge, and films are being banned for touching upon sensitive topics, the best way to take creative content to audiences is to put it up on digital platforms. Available anywhere, anytime, this is possibly the best option to put out the word on controversial topics that the society majorly frowns on. This is probably the reason why bold and tendentious subjects rarely make it to the silver screen or the idiot box.

One such endeavour in short films has been by producer and director Mazhar Moin. His latest venture Meem Kahani, a YouTube channel targets mature audiences from different walks of life. Meem Kahani consists of 15 different stories on topics that

to adjust themselves or to be accommodated, which can only be understood by an open-minded and mentally mature viewer. For that matter, age doesn't count because some people become mentally mature at a younger age while some don't even mature in old age," he explains.

Representing the diverse communities that live in Karachi, where every person has a story of his own, whether he/she is a Christian or a Hindu, Meem Kahani explores various aspects of their lives, which the majority of people are not aware of. "I have tried to make Meem Kahani a platform where people from minorities and marginal communities can voice their concerns,"

meem in Meem Kahani stands
for the meem in Mazhar's name.

"Every frame is organic," he says, "Each and every story is real and comes through in an uncontrived manner. The audiences will be able to relate to the characters and happenings because these things happen with people in reality."

They stories will connect to the audiences because these are not forced stories but very much from around us. "These are emotional dramas based on realistic characters," says Moïn. "Each story revolves around the main character supported by other characters but none of it is fiction. The inspiration comes from real-life people and their struggle in life," he says emphasising that the characters shown are not right or wrong, good or bad, they are people and every person has good and bad in him according to circumstances.

The first short play to be launched in Meem Kahani is titled Babar and is about a trans-

“

Each and every story is real and comes through in an uncontrived manner. The audiences will be able to relate to the characters and happenings because these things happen with people in reality

the backlash that he might face for covering bold topics given the recent controversy over banning a film for 'questionable' content, Moin says that when one creates such content, one has to be strong enough to fight for the content and stand by it. "One should have a fighting spirit because differences of opinions can be there and you can't make everyone happy," says Moin. "But I have not used or promoted anything to sabotage something. I have only depicted a good story around a character."

Moin plans to release the 15

short plays of his current project from the beginning of December, followed by one story every week. Another similar project will start in January 2023 with different topics but the same basic idea. All the stories are in Urdu with English subtitles as the target audience is Pakistani. "The reason for keeping the plays short is that the attention span in people has shrunk to very little so anything prolonged gets boring and people lose interest," he says.

Sharing a few stories which are to be released in the first phase, Moin says that after Babar, there is one titled Mummy Jee, which is a story of a one-unit family where a mother, her son, and her daughter-in-law reside together but the mother has a mental condition because of which the son and daughter-in-law face difficulties. It also touches several other aspects such as partner support, bonding, and the positive impact that comes after hardships.

Another similar play is *Amma*, where the title role is played by Samina Ahmed. It depicts how a mother sacrifices so much for her children, but her life becomes difficult later when none of her children care for her, and also later in life when parents get older, they start to fear their children.

Another short play titled *Anjum ki Larki*, with Hina Dilpazir in a main role, tackles the common issue of self-medication in our society. The story is about how harmful self-medication can be and its consequences on mental health. Other stories deal with topics such as ego, double standards, and guilt in life where you hide something wrong that you did previously, and how it affects several other aspects of your personality. This particular story titled *Naseem* is mainly portrayed by Yasra Rizvi.

Meem Kahani doesn't just offer serious taboo topics, but there is also comedy and lighthearted content for viewers of all ages and groups. One story in the comedy genre is Kanastar, where things from a house keep disappearing while the family keeps blaming the maid, but most of the time it is not the maid but someone in the family is the culprit. "It is about who is who in a house," Moin explains. "Rashid Farooqi, Hina Dilpazir, and Saife Hassan are playing roles in this play titled Akoo Chacha where everyone is worried about things disappearing from the house." Another light-hearted play is based on fears that people have in life, and what someone who fears darkness has to deal with.

When Meem Kahani hits the web, Moin says he is prepared for all kinds of reactions to his work. "I am excited to put up my work that people may love or hate, but I'm ready for anything that will come my way," he reels off and then pauses. On a more serious note, he adds, "But if my work is appreciated for the progressive thought behind it, I suppose I Meem Kahani will have served its purpose."

are supposedly unsuitable for TV audiences. "The stories are 10-18 minute short plays with topics that are expected to face backlash or censorship especially on TV," says Moin, the director of Meem Kahani. "I chose YouTube to narrate these stories on homosexuality, transgender and other taboo topics because I cannot work with these on television."

A couple of decades ago in his early days, Moin was known as the 'new wave' director, for his artistic plays that focused on low-middle class themes sans artifice. His critically acclaimed works include Burns Road Ki Nilofer, Saraye Ghat Ki Farzana, Qudoosi Sahib Ki Bewa, Mithoo Aur Apa, Haiwaan, Piyari Bitto, MeherPosh and Iltija to name a few. A meticulous workaholic, he speaks fast as though there is little time and tons to do.

With an aim to cater to a bigger audience and viewers who can absorb the awareness such topics bring in, Moin has left a disclaimer even in the short film teasers that the content is meant for a mentally mature audience. "This does not mean that I have used foul language or profanities to just unnecessarily add spice to my stories. I have simply tried to portray the misery certain people go through in our society

says Moin, emphasising that the stories of the diverse communities of Karachiites need to be told. "Through these stories we can portray what they face in their lives. I have specifically picked serious topics but at times I have also tried to illustrate the issues in a lighter vein because stories are stories and they can belong to everyone and anyone."

The concept for Moin's YouTube channel came rather spontaneously and suddenly to him, one day, as he sat chatting with his friends over cups of tea. The channel was named by See-min Raheel, one of Moin's dear friends, where the Urdu alphabet

gender who hides his reality from people. The story depicts the difficulties transgenders face in everyday life in society, how society treats them, deprives them of their rights, and provokes them for wrongdoings.

"Adil Hussain, the actor who has played Babar has touched the character so purely," says Moini. "One has to understand that the character is just a character and you can't play a role when you make fun of it because the journey you have to depict is painful. I can't bear the idea of exploiting the journey of my character as the topic is very sensitive."

Sharing his point of view on





PAKISTAN, THROUGH INDIAN EYES

Pakistan's hospitality will always remain an unforgettable memory because of our friends making our visit so special. Thanks to them, I have seen the real Pakistan that a few people can ever hope to see

By **NITUPOLA SHARMA**
VIRGINIA, US

When I first met Pakistanis in Bangladesh, I was just plain curious, but their honest warmth and good nature put me at ease straightaway. And what I saw and learnt of my Pakistani friends — yes, we were instant friends — stood tall in my visit to their beautiful country as well. Fear that had been instilled in us was completely falsified. As I write today, I cannot help but smile at my memories of my visit to Pakistan.

Fully confident, we flew from Dhaka and landed at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport. My visa stipulated that despite being an Indian I did not need to report at a police station, and my visit was not restricted to only three specific places, as is the normal rule. That had a given me my first positive vibe. Unaware that fate had something else in store for us, we walked confidently to the short immigration queue for foreigners. What a perfect start to a holiday, I thought as I handed over our passports stamped with visas. The lady at the counter took one look at our Indian passports and stretched out her arm, asking me for the visa form.

I had forgotten that ours was not a normal relationship. So engrossed was I in my effort to explain the process to her, I did not notice a huge Pashtun officer who gently tapped on my shoulder and asked me to follow him. Even more confused, I gathered our passports and followed him, trying to make sense of what he was saying as I tried to keep pace with his long legs and manage my son Ryan at the same time. Then I heard something no traveller would ever want to hear. "We will have to deport you." After that he handed me over to another gentleman. The bubble of exhilaration that had enveloped me so far burst instantly.

At that moment it dawned on me that I was an Indian travelling from a third country. The Pakistani ambassador who had so graciously gone out of his way to get me a visa had explained to me that he had to obtain a special permission. I shared my story with the officer and implored the officer, "There must be a way, please don't send us back." The officer who had already become busy with his work looked up and smiled. "Why don't you call the ambassador and ask him to fax me the documents?"

"Yes, yes, I can do that" I gushed, fervently trying to locate my phone in my overstuffed bag. But of course, I had stupidly brought my Indian phone that had international roaming, which does not work in Pakistan. My heart sank. I am not destined to see Pakistan. As I dejectedly looked up from my phone with a look of surrender on my face, the first officer smiled and said, "Give me the number and let me try." The ambassador answered at the first ring. Long story short, he informed the officer that he would ensure that the documents were faxed the next day.

That was my first encounter with the country that was a part of mine not many years ago. It had all started with a simple dare from an ambassador, my neighbour, who thought that I was merely doing lip service when I expressed how much I wanted to see Pakistan. I am sure he had no idea how keen I was to see the Indus Valley and other parts of Pakistan.



Formalities over, we were two and a half hours late, but we still hoped to see a bit of Karachi that was reputed to come alive at night. As we walked out of the airport wondering if the gentleman, brother-in-law of one of my Pakistani colleagues Saad Ahmed, would be there waiting for us so long after the plane landed, we saw him waving at us. Double yay!

Karachi still left an indelible mark on my mind with its quaint gadha gaadhis, the vibrant throbbing busy streets, minus the familiar rickshaws,



and a generous sprinkling of vroom vrooming young bike drivers, weaving in and out of the unmanageable traffic. Jasmine bangle sellers were a first for me. I bought some gajras, and that is something I have kept to date.

The serene Arabian Sea with sea gulls having a full-fledged party on the jetty was a near-perfect romantic view as the evening sun dived into the womb of the sea. In the few hours of that evening, Karachi looked like a mall and eatery capital with queues of shops and restaurants trailing the waterfront with their twinkling, alluring lights. Dinner could not have been anywhere but on the Arabian Sea with the most succulent reshmi malai kababs, Peshawari karahi chicken and garlic naan at Devil's Point and Do Darya. The evening of excitement came to an end, and we were dropped back at the airport.

We arrived in Lahore on the wee hours of Ryan's birthday, 15th of October, and were picked up at the airport by another ex-colleague, Saad Iqbal. The flight had been an interesting one as in the seat next to me was a young naval officer who shared with me his interesting experiences. Open and friendly nature of people was so evident even in that short encounter.

The next afternoon found us meeting another ex-colleague,



Nauman, and going together as a huge group of mischievous children and adults to the walled city of Lahore. I felt a familiarity with one part of the city with its similarity to Gurgaon. Interior Lahore was more like Old Delhi with its abundant share of historical relics and cosy small outlets selling curios, antiques and artifacts, and snack sellers competing in their persuasive methods to entice you to stop by their colourfully decorated stalls.

The sight of the Badshahi Masjid, sharing its walls with the Ranjit Singh Curudwara, and the Shahi Qila with the Minare-Pakistan standing guard in the front like a torch to these three

precious historical treasures, was an exceptional experience worth its weight in gold. Shahi Qila with its paintings framed in precious stones, sadly most of them scrapped out. There is a huge step that was created for elephants to carry their royal riders directly inside the fort.

A very strange thing happened to me in the Badshahi Masjid, which I somehow feel was God's way of showing me that He was there. At the gate was a man sitting with a basketful of what looked like sweetmeats packed in cellophane paper. As we passed by, the gentleman standing next to the seller picked up a packet and offered it to me. I declined

politely. He shook his head and said, "Prasad nahin lena?" [Don't you want prasad?] Astonished, I immediately accepted.

Prasad at the doorstep of a mosque? How had this stranger identified my religion? I was dressed no differently from the other women. Or was it the mosque offering sweets? I showed the packet to Shaista, my colleague's wife; She enlightened me to the fact that mosques do not offer any sort of prasad like temples do.

Midnight on the eve of Eid was another discovery for me when Shaista took me shopping. At that hour of the night, I would

ton candy added to the festive atmosphere that enveloped us. Tiredness eluded us as the children enjoyed a screaming pram ride uphill before we proceeded into the darkness of Ayubia. Roads were not too familiar for Saad, and before we realised the road ahead turned into a misty darkness as we fumbled our way through. Children had dozed off, happy and content with full tummies. We finally made it to the hotel safe.

I cannot for my life recall the name of the hotel, but the view of a deep ravine, depths of which played hide and seek with my eyes, with golden streaks of sunlight piercing through thick trunks in the early morning is a mental image I will treasure forever. That early morning welcome sight more than made up for the bone chilling water that greeted us when we went inside to take our baths.

The previous evening had ended with us sipping sweet, brewed tea out of glasses as we discussed world politics, India, Pakistan, and the future of our region. Children added spice with frequent appearances as we tucked our toes into our chairs, trying to keep them warm in our long coats. There seemed to be a univocal agreement on the worthlessness of the enmity of our two countries.

Nathiagali greeted us with a sumptuous breakfast of hot parathas and fluffy masala omelettes in the fresh, crisp, mountain air. As we feasted, I shared the story of my arrival in Karachi. A concerned and protective Shaista kept shushing and warning me on my choice of words — I was using the word Indian too much — as she gestured to a group of men in grave discussion at a nearby table, with their rifles casually leaning on the side of the table pointing upwards. I could not help wondering if they were the Taliban!

After breakfast, we splurged on some quick shopping and curio hunting. I mused on the prices I had paid for my shopping; things were unbelievably cheap. Saad explained that the priority of those shops was to sell their wares so they could have food at home. It was inconceivably sad.

The day was spent chilling our feet in the waters of the Kunhar River. Just a furlong away towered Abbottabad, seemingly calm at the world's curiosity.

My impression of Islamabad was of a completely planned city. Islamabad was quiet and sleepy after the Eid celebrations, and there was not much for us to do apart from trying out restaurants and enjoying hospitality of our friends. But despite the calmness, there was still a mad rush to the airport. Thankfully, Saad won this race against time. We were the last ones to check in, but we were practically waved in as we were already checked in.

Pakistan's hospitality will always remain an unforgettable memory because of our friends making our visit so special. Thanks to them, I have seen the real Pakistan that a few people can ever hope to see. I could not go to Harappa, but I made a promise to myself to return to Pakistan one more time to travel to places I could not visit on my first visit.

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