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PERSONAL NARRATIVE 1:

Dear Dada Abu,

It has been decades since we last spoke. At the time you left us, it was unimaginable that everything would change so drastically. Things change, times change, circumstances change and humanity adapts to it. The ones who do not welcome transformations are forgotten over time. That is the lesson I have learned from choosing the industry you pioneered.

With an unavoidable push into newer technologies, I want to tell you that our field of business has evolved into something simpler, probably more magnificent, given that it is done mindfully. Then I question myself that isn't mindfulness required for anything one does?

In my chaos, searching to find answers, I put myself in your shoes, imagining what you would possibly do with the challenges I face. It was in those moments, the countless hours of thinking, that melancholy and exhilaration, I discovered that my chaos was not unique. You began from Radio Pakistan and found yourself working for Pakistan Television. That was a huge change and a futuristic transition of those times.

And with that answer, I discovered the road that may lead to my evolution. Your son has mentored me to take battles head-on and end them with victory. Dada Abu, these are times where technology has surpassed everything. It dominates and dictates the world by greater margins than anything else. So we have a new battle to fight.

As mentioned that our business has been turned into something simpler, it means that the level of equipment and professionalism required back in the day has transformed into taking out your phone, recording something and sharing it with the world from there. We do not necessarily need any more tapes, VCR or professional cameras to develop content that people would appreciate.

Now, ordinary people watch, observe, learn, record and share it with the world. It is as simple as I sound, but there is a thin line. The current practice, as I have tried to explain does sound absurd, and it is. The content that is developed with urgency, where a lot of thought is not given to it, survives for very little time and then it is forgotten. People come to limelight, and disappear without a trace. Yes, this has been the way of the world since the birth of this planet, but as you and I know, things that were made to last always survive. They leave a trace that is permanent. That permanence is a juxtaposition of a perfectly aligned thought and its evolution.

After finding direction, I started off with learning about the abilities of my phone and the level of recording quality it offered. This one has a built-in stabiliser that is nearly as good as the older day Steadicams. The light sensors are good in daylight, but they do give a lot of grain at night. The options to customise your video settings are limited, but we have 30hrs of video recording in our pocket. Overall, despite my critical overview, it can record better than a 5-year-old professional HD Camera. You are recording at a resolution of

1920x1080p at any given time and the phone is waterproof! My phone itself is 3 years old, so you can imagine what the present day can offer.

The good thing about smartphones is that they can quickly adapt to different situations. Any equation where a professional setup would require at least 1 hour to arrive and another hour to setup, your smartphone will do it in less than 5 minutes. The only time required would be to review your framing, figure out a background, analyse the light and press the record button. This effort is also for someone who wants to add value to their footage.

Then you have the basic accessories beginning from pocket size tripods to professional lights and audio recording equipment. These things are easy to carry, very low cost in comparison to professional equipment and sturdy enough for their price. Adding them to your list makes a broad difference to your production quality. It can be said that if things are done right, it would be hard to differentiate between amateur and professional recording. Oh you have to believe me on this!

I have maintained your car, kept it alive. It needed a new engine, and you know how technical the swapping process is. There are hardly any people who know how to do it. Keeping that in mind, I had to stay on top of things. The engine swap happened and worked out very well. The additional thing I did was that I documented the process as I wanted to make a film out of it. I turned the entire event into a learning experience. Something that other enthusiasts can see and cherish. It turned out to be great. This documentation helped me gain all the knowledge I have shared with you. My smartphone was my tool to capture my experience. I treated it through the eyes of a professional and that has paid off very well. Now it is time to start another project. I want to design modular productions that can be produced without my presence. You know that I have so many other jobs to do. Maybe you can enlighten me on it. I am still thinking on how to go about it.

For a long time, believing in our old-school ways, I had a resistance to accept this change. It was hard to breakthrough, but admitting to the needs of these times, I had to unlearn and embrace the present. I am changing my disadvantage into an advantage. Old days worked in a detail that is still present and it wont go anywhere till eternity. While everyone can shoot a video, I can use my past knowledge and skills to capture something that has meaning. The eye of my smartphone carries messages, speaking a language that can resonate with the hearts of many and stay there forever.

It is late and I am exhausted. I have been meaning to write to you for a while now. You know the sloth inside me. My new learnings can be a bit confusing, the technological advancements may also sound impossible, but both of us know that man is a genius. We can be great species after all.

Do write to me. Your letter will be received in my dreams soon.

With Love,

Adeel

PERSONAL NARRATIVE 2:

My Dearest Adeel,

It is wonderful that you have put your thoughts into words. Make it a habit and it will lead you to better answers. I do not need to say much as far as your evolutionary process and the battle accepting change is concerned. You have already figured out a way for yourself. That is indeed all what was needed. Stepping out of your comfort zone, taking the initiative to unlearn is not an easy task but do remember that change is the only thing that will keep you relevant. Survival is difficult, yet many can figure it out. Being the best amongst survivors is what distinguishes you from the rest.

I am rather entertained by your discussion on the evolution of technology. You are forgetting one important thing about my life. It started from transistors and capacitors but my life ended when the computers had been invented and VCR had become obsolete. I have seen the computer age evolve at a rapid pace, but it is also true that imagining a phone turn into such a resourceful gadget is hard to absorb.

My heart is filled with joy when I read your letter. It reflects that my grandson is critically aware and understands the role of leadership. This puts you in a position where you have to give more than you receive. You may not have mentioned but I know that you are becoming a teacher. That is a huge responsibility as the generations coming after you will be people who learn from what you do in your life. Hence there are a few things that need to be shared with you.

Democratic teaching aims to make the people powerful in a host of ways, but perhaps most importantly in the realm of culture itself the web of meanings we weave with language and symbols out of our experience and the heritage of the past. In a democracy, people should be educated to be powerful, to tell their stories, to make their own voices heard, and to act together to defend and expand their rights. Culture might be said to be a shorthand word for all the ways that people and their imaginations and identities grow—how we construct the world and make ourselves at home in it, and then reinvent it fresh.¹

You have seen all the major cities of Pakistan. Since you were a child, I have made sure that you travelled enough, looking at the world with an open heart and mind, absorb a diverse surrounding and deal with unpredictability. This has given you the advantage of viewing things more critically. Your awareness helps you in balancing extremities that are generated around you. It means that you cannot be settled with one ideology. Instead, you are an integral part of every idea, belief, concept, and sentiment. When you sit amongst two or more people, you have to constantly navigate a common ground. The history of our people connects us through very strong bonds, yet it is natural for them to forget as they all are victimized by hostility. We are a poor country after all. Hence it is your burden to remind them that we are strong as one. Our unity comes before every other narrative and belief.

That is indeed a challenging position, but you must have seen a lot of people who were associated with me. They keep coming to you, telling you who I was, how I helped them realize their abilities and how they learned to be generous with them. You will not see them withholding knowledge, they will instead show you a more balanced perspective about the world.

¹ Ayers, W. (2015). *To teach: The journey of a teacher*. Teachers College Press.

You have to assume the position of the other person. Just the way you are trying to struggle in teaching, the learner is making an effort too. Your primary communication will be rooted through your personal experiences, and those can be transferred only through an experience you generate. Construal in intentional or incidental learning involves the use of language to articulate our experience to ourselves or to others. A third type of construal Heron (1988) describes as presentational. In presentational construal we do not require words to make meaning, as when we experience presence, motion, color, texture, directionality, aesthetic or kinesthetic experience, empathy, feelings, appreciation, inspiration, or transcendence. We use language here only when we experience a problem in understanding or want to share the experience.²

So go back to your drawing table. Remember what we have been doing for generations. Our language and tool is media production. We identify a problem, look into the cause through research, then we align people who can translate it into words. This text is then visualized and executed. There are newer questions raised, whereas the likeminded praise it.

You welcome critique, absorb it, reshape your learnings and then a new episode comes to life with more relevant information. This is a cyclic activity. If you become consistent with it, there is nothing stopping you from fulfilling your duty.

So my Son, you are now well aligned with the present. You have a ripened age that gives you the wisdom to understand and speak. Given the tools of your time, communication is far easier than it ever was before. Keep going, make mistakes, reflect, learn, and unlearn. Then rise again and keep moving forward.

You know that I watch you from the stars, but that knowledge should not be taken for granted. Continue with your letters, write your thoughts as they will keep you aware of yourself.

Best,

Nazir A.W.

² Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult. *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*, 3-33.

VIDEO NARRATIVE:

Talk shows are content formats that can shape the opinion of a society. As their context may differ, they have been a substantial tool in influencing people and the governments. In Pakistan, this tool has been used for personal gains, often promoting half-baked information that have little substance to it, however, it is often communicated in a way that the viewer cannot fully understand, leading to chaos. This is my personal opinion by being part of the media industry for generations.

In view of the current practices exhibited in the electronic media, I conceived a stop-motion animation that highlights sceptic and extremist views, exploring stereotypes that influence our masses.

This project did not only bring questionable intellectual personalities to limelight, but it was also used a training program for my production team. My idea was to introduce them to modern technologies, focusing on the ways these can be used for professional content making.

I am currently forming 'Modular Content Production' that will be shared through various digital platforms. 'Modular Content Production' primarily means that a group of trained professionals will be executing video programs through predefined methods. This process covers a working order beginning from problem identification, research, script writing, set design, art direction, lighting, videography with smartphones as a primary tool, editing and sound direction. I personally took a two-day workshop for developing a script along with two additional team members, namely Rabia Oneeb and Mariam Ansari.

After refining my skillset over 2 years, primarily focusing on working through smartphones, a stop-motion animation was executed and has been submitted along with this narrative. It is based on (1 + 3) format, where the host is accompanied by 3 pseudo-intellectual figures that have misrepresented agendas. All four characters continue with disconnected arguments, spreading chaos, not maintaining the sanctity of a meaningful debate that should ideally enlighten an audience, eventually leading to a physical fight.

The training of my team has been documented in a series of time-lapse videos followed by an interview with my Director of Photography and Editor, namely Mr. Adeel Nisar. Below are some of the key pointers that were formed through brainstorming and research:

The Ideal Talk Show:³

- Form collective identity for a fragmented society
- Deny social cleavage
- Satisfy curiosity
- Provide democratic tools for gaining information
- Research based learning
- Build narratives
- Analytical tool guided through expert opinion
- Monitoring tool guided through expert opinion
- To form an independent opinion

³ Dines, G., & Humez, J. M. (2003). *Gender, race, and class in media: A text-reader*. Sage.

- Content made for unbiased information

Learning to filter and absorb information:

- How to debate
- Parsing information
- Gaining information based on cultural context
- Narrating a travel experience
- Differentiate between factual knowledge and rationalising information through common sense
- Effective communication through language
- Basics orientation of ethics
- Binary and organic information

Exposure to skills in a Digital Production:

- Production Planning
- Scriptwriting (creating a storyline)
- Sound
- Research
- Adapting and overcome
- Editing
- Post Production
- Acting
- Adjusting to smartphones
- Set Design