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*Dear Reader,*

A somber **Eid Mubarak** to all our valued readers; this somberness forced upon a young and lively people by COVID is most unfortunate, and the wet blanket that it has thrown upon our naturally buoyant selves is regrettable; but regret is not an option, and even as we engage in hand-to-hand combat with the COVID, we must plan for the peace that will surely follow as humanity emerges victorious, Inshallah.

In that spirit we raise the curtain on **Veqar Islam** who is driven by a natural reflex to plan for peace even while in the thick of battle. His is a lengthy and diverse innings that have seen him go from Corporate Top Gun to Tech Entrepreneur and Member of the PM's Task Force.

Infusing us with positivity and faith in the holy month of Ramzaan was OCTARA's line-up of concentrated wisdom, diluted only to the extent of making it comprehensible, and delivered by **Sanam Fatima**, **Abbas Husain** and **Umair Jaliawala** in a series of five (5) Zoominars, three (3) of which featured Abbas Husain. Synopsizing them proved to be an exacting labor of love performed over the Eid holidays.

Also in this issue we feature "Come Dance With Me!" a blog by **Rose-marie Fernandez M.A., CPC, ELI-MP**, Chief Influencing Officer, Coaching Worx from Canada and for trend watchers, a blog on "Future Normal: Unnatural Nirvana" by **Henry Coutinho-Mason**.

So, stay sober, and let those eyes sparkle in anticipation of the good times! 😊

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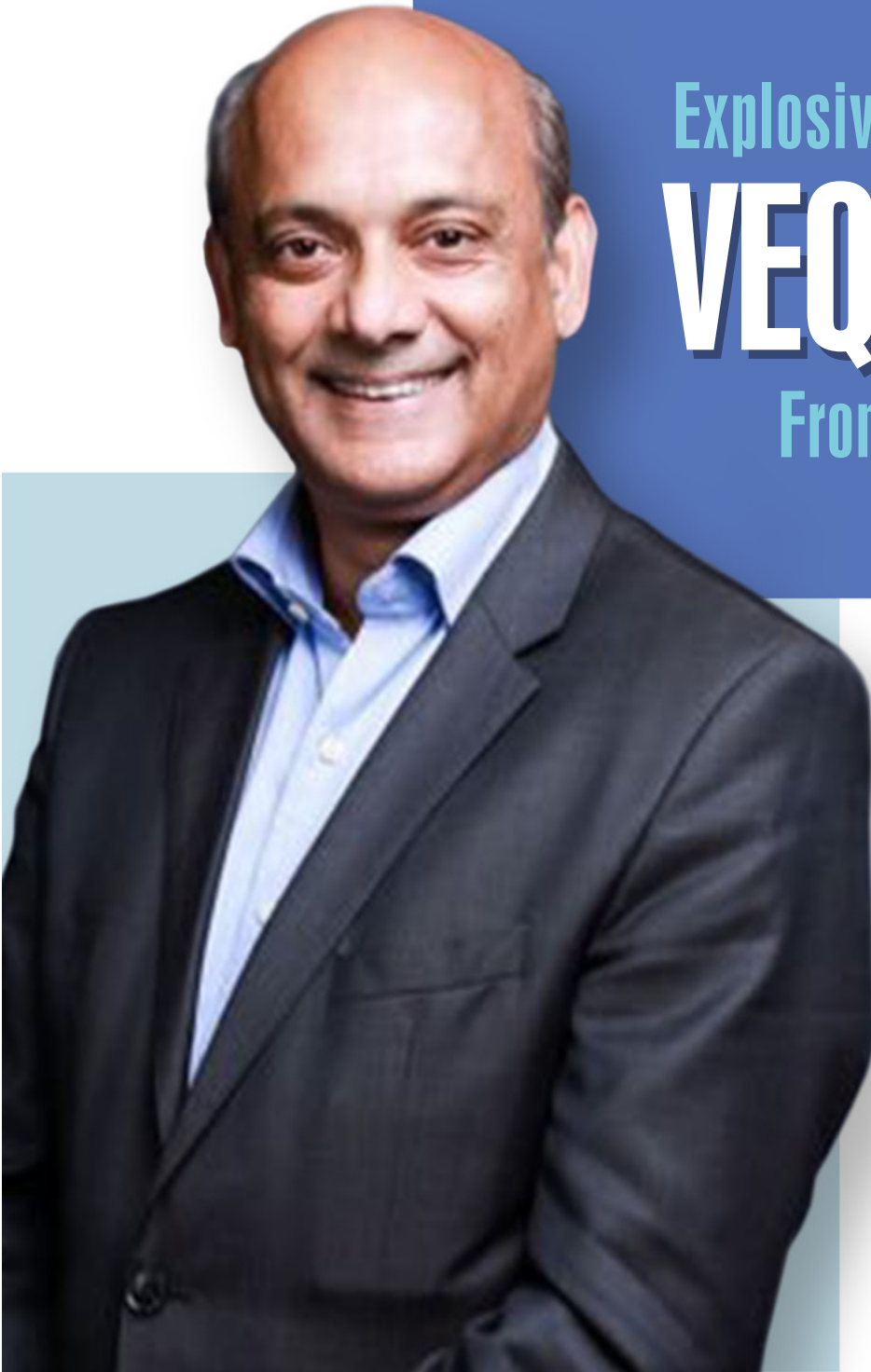
**Digital Marketing Strategy & Tactics**

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# Explosive Innings Well Played!

# VEQAR ISLAM

## From Corporate Top Gun to Tech Entrepreneur

His has been a remarkable success story that continues unabated. Veqar Islam is a product of the “Peela” school as the government school system is affectionately referred to and at one time was credited with producing the top minds of Pakistan before falling into disarray and sinking to its present dismal depths.

**Veqar Islam** has proceeded up the corporate ladder at breakneck speed, notching up one success after another in quick succession. His present designation is Director and CEO of [Jaffer Business Systems](#), a Major IT company having HP, Emersson, Oracle, and Microsoft as its key partners. In addition, he is also the President of Touchpoint Group, offering Self Service, Business Intelligence/Analytics services, Call Center Solutions (based on Genesys), and VAS Platforms.

### Loaded Deck

The other feathers in Veqar’s cap include Founder of Hysab Kytan, Director at Blutech Consulting, and Foreepay. He is a corporate leader turned entrepreneur, and en-route to his

present positions Veqar has remained the Senior Vice President and Member Executive Board for Comptel Corporation; Sub Region Head (Vice President) for Nokia Siemens Networks for Gulf, Levant, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan. Before moving to the Middle East & Africa region he was the Country Director for Nokia Networks, Nokia Siemens Networks and NCR Corporation in Pakistan.

Blessed with a wife who has given him five sons and played a major role in his success, Veqar Islam is firing on all cylinders and going full throttle in his not so new anymore role of tech entrepreneur, and has no intentions of hanging up his boots as long as he has health on his side.

octara.com was privileged to have Veqar Islam agree to be interviewed for its pages, and he provided some remarkable

insights on what it takes to make and leave an impression in a highly competitive business landscape, reinventing each time disruption struck and staying ahead of the curve consistently.

**octara.com:** How has COVID-19 impacted your professional and personal life over the last year and a half?

**Veqar:** I have always found humans to be amazingly flexible. They change, they adapt, they realize, they excel. My only issue over the years has been that we only adapt and change when we are forced to. We should be a lot more proactive and must anticipate change. That's the only way one can grow. With COVID-19, we had no choice but to change.

## Bane of Being Reactive

Many of the changes should have happened even without COVID-19, in keeping pace with the world. As an example, we could have rolled out outcome-based, work from anywhere policies and transformed our work culture long ago. However, we insisted on not changing and continued to live in this mistaken belief that people only work when they are sitting in front of you – called 'body-in-seat' mentality. We don't hire people to be in front of us always, but to produce the work for which they are hired.

We could have moved to online purchases, digitizing our economy and businesses long before. We insisted on manual systems until Covid forced us to adapt to online or digital. Luckily for me, since I am in the Technology field, so change has been a constant part of our lives for a number of years. This industry changes faster than any other. Hence anyone who wants to survive or grow in the industry has no choice but to adapt to change in approaches and strategies. But above all is the change in mindset. Covid for me and others accelerated this change.

**octara.com:** As CEO of Jaffer Business Systems you have been in the thick of the technology action in Pakistan. Where on the curve would you put Pakistan's state and society in terms of tech savvy-ness?

## Ridiculously Manual Nation!

**Veqar:** Way behind. We are a ridiculously manual nation. We love papers, we love complexity, we love to stay and make policies based on the world of the past. Whereas what we decide today or what we formulate today can only be based on how the future will look like and not how the past was seen. We are in the bottom of pyramid in Tech readiness.

COVID-19 provides us with an amazing opportunity to leap frog, to transform, to move away from the traditional brick and mortar mindset to an ideas, tech, and simplified mindset. The world has grown at the back of simplicity and technology. We need to move in that direction. While I am a great admirer of how the government has thus far handled COVID-19 and balanced life and living, however, one area where they have been seriously wanting is to bring policy framework to digitize

**“We only adapt and change when we are forced to. We should be a lot more proactive and anticipate change”**

Pakistan with a concrete execution plan.

Every package, every incentive, every directional decision making done during COVID-19 was for the traditional, physical world. The government must realize not just the existence of the digital world, but also that we need to find our future in it and not just in the age-old physical world. It is about time that technology is not just spoken about as a fashion statement in the country from the PM to everyone else, but to transform our country.

**octara.com:** ENA Pakistan is your latest venture, less than a year old that addresses power and automation snags and heralds you as corporate leader turned entrepreneur with the tagline “Power & Connectivity, Beyond Infinity”. Acceleration to success entails growth pains. What balms do you apply?

## Growth is Living!

**Veqar:** Look, all my life, I have been a growth guy. I love growth. It is not just good, it is great. To me growth is living. Any pain associated with it is welcome to me as it inspires me to grow faster, smarter, better, stronger. Hence the first part of the answer is that I absolutely enjoy doing this. The second and most critical part is how to go about it. One of the key obstacles to any executive growth is their inability to move away from operations challenges so they focus on their part of the bargain.

To manage, run, improve, fix, and transform operations I have a complete backend team. It is their job to be doing it well. The more empowered, enabled, delegated, self-driven leadership and teams I create, the more free I get to design, develop and execute the big picture. My role is to empower, enable, and provide for the right structure for them to perform for what they exist, so I can do what I exist for.

## Stretched KPIs

My role is to define stretched KPIs and measure them for outcome. The rest is what teams do, as the governance is around strong KPIs' achievement, hence it puts pressure on the operations team to continue to improve and hopefully



**“We are a ridiculously manual nation. We love papers, we love complexity, we love to stay and make policies based on the world of the past”**

excel. This leaves my role and that of other C level to that of strategy, vision, and executing the vision.

## Enable, Empower, Train

One key element of it in my view is to enable, empower, train and provide a strong system of corporate structure and governance which promotes freedom, yet have the right accountability matrix. You bring people and companies in a structure, give them initial mentoring and coaching, define KPIs and outcome for them, and have corporate governance around all of it. If they have passion and fire in the belly and are driven for success, they will unleash their potential and will make the magic happen.

## “The Power to Let Go”

I then move to the next stage of growth while the teams work on growing themselves. The model works and has worked very well for me over the years. So the real balm is what I call “The power to let go”. Executives must be willing to let go the power, the ego, the authority, the exclusive to wisdom and decision making, which typically comes with the position, and delegate it to others.

Replace power with humility, ego with empathy, authority with empowerment, Exclusive to wisdom and decision making to enablement, and suddenly you will realize that you have lot of time to grow to the next stage. Not too complicated for me.

**octara.com:** As President of TouchPoint (Pvt) Limited you specialize in self service solutions and in the process you set up business practices in the areas of Business Intelligence, HR Sourcing, Telecom (OSS/BSS) and Management, IT, and Telecom Consulting, with offices in Pakistan and the UAE. Why has our IT sector not come up to expectations where the earning of foreign exchange is concerned?

**Veqar:** In the true sense of the word, Touchpoint has been my first venture as an entrepreneur. The pains of becoming an entrepreneur from a “job” or a corporate life are what I went through here. I am so proud of the entire Touchpoint team for really pulling it off from almost extinction to becoming one of the major forces in the Self Service Arena in Pakistan now.

## People and Ideas

It is a long story as to why we have not lived up to potential in the IT sector thus far. I put a lot more blame on the industry itself more than anyone else. IT industry, unlike any other industry, is about people and ideas. These two are the most expensive pieces in today’s world; not buildings, not business empires, but People and ideas. You look at the top 10 companies by valuation today, and 7 of them are Tech companies. They innovate, they turn ideas into reality, they invest and pay for people, and they value ideas and are willing to pay for them.

## Caught in the Old Mindset

Our own industry started selling Ideas and services either free of charge or at peanuts. While we had no issue in charging for hardware, but we never enforced similar regime for software and services. Our own industry was caught in the old mindset to charge and sell for “Iron”, while ignoring that the value is in software and people. Hence the industry did not grow the way it should have been.

I keep saying that there are two barometers of how neglected the IT sector has been in this country. First, none of the big business houses have invested in the IT business. Some tried it more as a hobby but moved out of it due to complexity and lack of returns. Second, barring two, none of the IT companies have survived beyond 3 decades. Only when we deliver quality services, produce quality software, derive right value for them in Pakistan, can we can use the reference to scale it outside the country. Capacity and references are built in the country on which you scale outside.

We did not create too many such stories for reasons I mentioned, and hence did not have the requisite references and capacity to scale outside. Lately things are changing and I am very confident that IT and Telecom will be key drivers of our exports in times to come.

**octara.com:** Hysab Kytan, which you founded in 2017, is a platform with its core as personal finance for consumers and small enterprises. Have there been many takers, and how difficult has it been breaking into the world of traditional book-keeping?

## Behavior Change

**Veqar:** This is my first venture in life where I founded an idea, created a team, created a company from it and now am

executing for growth with my amazing team. The biggest challenge here is not the technology itself, but asking people and companies to look and do things differently. Behavior change is the most difficult.

So when we ask people to stop using diaries, papers, small sticky notes and instead do entire budgeting, expense tracking, savings, investment management digitally, it is a massive behavior shift which is needed.

We are absolutely delighted with the traction we are getting both with our white label product for Banks, and with our consumer product. We have just gone live with the largest private bank in Pakistan, HBL, and have many others in the pipeline to start offering personal finance to their customers. We also have two more products in the pipeline to release during the year.

It is a journey, with all its challenges and excitement. I believe we are still at the beginning of it. We get very excited when we see the potential of the idea and product, and how it can offer scale to us in the future.

**octara.com:** Then there is Blutech which you are engaged with, described as a fast emerging Big data and Analytics company with its customers in Pakistan and Internationally. Big data and analytics have come in for a fair bit of stick since the Cambridge Analytica affair. What pitfalls are there to be avoided?

**Veqar:** I take lot of pride in introducing the concept of Datawarehousing, Business Intelligence in this country; also the fact that we set up Pakistan's first Global Delivery Center by any Multinational in Datawarehousing and Analytics when I was part of Teradata/NCR.

So Data is in my blood and it was only logical for me to include a Big Data company in our portfolio. Hence we acquired Blutech some 4 years ago, and we are so proud of the progress the company has made since. From one person with passion, energy and a lot of ideas to now a company of close to 150 people, and growing serving customers in Pakistan and also in 7 other countries, it is quite a journey.

However, it confirms one thing. This world is about Data and a lot of it. Only organizations and countries who use data to make informed, timely decisions are the ones who will stand a chance in today's competitive world. I am of the firm opinion that for any good there will always be bad. The world is a better place to live because the good has outpaced and outperformed the bad. Its the same with Data. Once countries, organizations, and individuals have data available, they can use it to produce magic in a positive way, or the evil amongst us can also destroy using it. Of course lots of work is happening around the world in regulating the use of data, and it will further evolve to become secure.

The responsibility of using data for what it is intended for relies heavily on the acquirer of data and for that not just education, but also serious enforcement will be required. What is a given

**“Covid provides us with an amazing opportunity to leap frog”**

is that Data will continue to grow and so will its usage as a strong decision making tool.

**octara.com:** As director of Foree since 2018, the Payment App. Payment Gateway, described as Simple, Fast, Secure, PCI DSS Certified, and Regulated by the State Bank of Pakistan, what more would you like to see happen to facilitate e-commerce in Pakistan?

## Amazon Lends a Hand

**Veqar:** The payment scene in the country is evolving quite rapidly and so is E-commerce. Foree is a Universal payment interface with an amazing potential to disrupt the payment space in the country. The Central Bank is also playing a forward looking role in helping create an ecosystem around Payments by coming up with multiple initiatives, and hence we are seeing a consistent growth of players and investment in this space.

The recent addition of Amazon in Pakistan's E-commerce scenario is a huge development and will further accelerate the pace of growth of Payments and online businesses.

**octara.com:** Since December 2018 you have been a Member of the PM task force on IT & Telecom. What notable measures has the task force notched up?

**Veqar:** It is a consultative and recommendation body, with no authority. Since its formation, the Task force has put forward many recommendations to accelerate the usage and expansion of the IT industry. The initial two years were very disappointing as not much happened at the Ministry which was to take the proposals forward.

## Massive Potential

However, in the recent past many initiatives are being pushed forward, like approval of Right of way policy, setting up of Software Technology Zones, increased focus on exports, working on the supply side of quality resources and many others. The potential is massive and only this year we have so far grown the IT and its export business by approximately 40% to cross the 1.5B\$ mark for the first time in our history. We still have two months to go for year closing and I am confident this momentum will continue.

# A Journey of Corporate Top Gun to Tech Entrepreneur



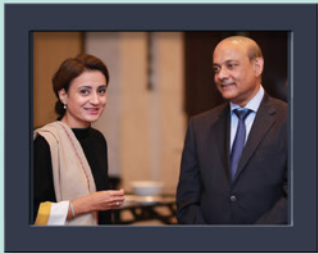
Independence Day Celebration



Agreement Signing Ceremony with EFU Life Assurance for IT Infrastructure Transformation



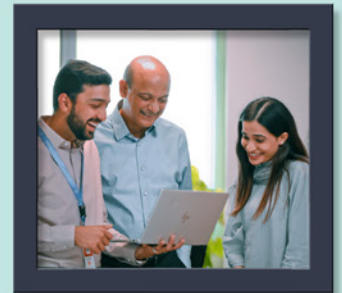
JBS acquires ENA (Energy N Automation)



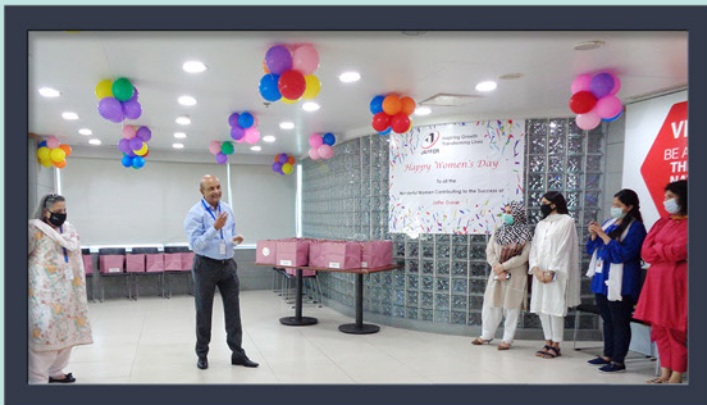
At Marketing Event in Lahore with Nausheen Ashraf, Enterprise Account Manager - JBS



Contract Signing ceremony with PITB (Punjab Information Technology Board) for provisioning of Citizens Services Representatives and Help Desk Services Representatives for Citizens Facilitation Centers



JBS GradNest'21



Women's Day Celebration at Jaffer Group



The Future Summit in Karachi

**octara.com:** Since November 2018 you have been a Member Policy Board of the Securities & Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). What ails our corporate world?

## Keeping It Simple & High Tech

**Veqar:** More than the corporate world, our regulations and the entire policy frame work are complex. This discourages corporatization, and moves organizations away from documentation and entering the formal net. Our focus in the Policy Board has been to simplify regulations, increase reliance on Technology and work on Human resource capacity expansion. I am very proud of the work happening at SECP in the last few years, and clearly it has emerged as a benchmark public sector organization in terms of leading a change.

Amazing work is being done towards simplifying the regulatory framework all across, and also loads of development towards relying on Technology and facilitating the startup eco system in the country. As a result in the last two years around 35,000 new companies have been registered in the country which is an overall increase of more than 35%.

Interestingly in recent months almost 90%+ of the companies are being registered digitally, and a large number within 24 hours. This goes to show that when you simplify things and make it easy, the growth and documentation will happen. When you make it complex, rely heavily on human interactions and manual systems, growth suffers.

For me growth is directly proportional to how simple and enforceable the entire policy and implementation framework is



designed to be, and implemented. SECP is leading this and the Commission deserves lots of credit for it.

**octara.com:** Please share with us the highlights of your time spent as Member Board NADRA (National Database and Regulatory Authority) between March 2006 and February 2009.

## NADRA Underutilized

**Veqar:** In a Technology world it is way too old for me to remember all the details. However, in those 3 years we were able to put in new initiatives, and especially many things were around making the life of people easy when they come and visit NADRA centers to get a CNIC. We also worked on providing NADRA services to various institutions. I still believe NADRA is underutilized. It can transform the entire sphere of how planning is done in the country, with the kind of data it has. Sadly the culture of using data to make decisions is still in its infancy in Pakistan.

**octara.com:** You spent over 4 years with Nokia Siemens Networks, moving from Country Director to Sub Region Head Gulf and Pakistan, to Sub Region Head, Middle East Africa East. What value did these assignments add to your corporate career?

**Veqar:** Massive. From managing business in tens of millions of dollars to managing businesses in 100s of millions of dollars was a massive change for me. I had all along worked in Pakistan, so for the first time I got an opportunity to work in multiple countries, with multiple cultures, having very different ways to look at things.

## Value of Diversity

I truly understood the value of diversity during this time. I understood how to lead when you are not in your comfort zone of leading people with the same nationality as yours. It made me a complete leader and also groomed me to take bigger risks and handle higher pressure in my life.

In between we went through a massive merger between two big companies – Nokia and Siemens, which further added another dimension to my career of learning how to create a unified, high performing culture when two very different organizations come together. So all in all I learnt a lot and it was just an amazing journey.

**octara.com:** Then there was your stint with the Comptel Corporation in the UAE as Senior Vice President and Member Executive Board. Please tell us about it.

## Man Proposes God Disposes

**Veqar:** As I kept growing in my career my aspiration kept getting higher. I was shaping my career to be a CEO of a Global company. Hence this opportunity which came my way was quite interesting as I was in the global executive board,

**“Lately things are changing and I am very confident that IT and Telecom will be key drivers of our exports in times to come”**

and amongst the top 7-8 people in the company; so in a way only one step away from the vision. However, as they say, man proposes God disposes. Only after spending about a year in the company, I had a health scare while in Dubai. It forced me to relook at my life, and reset everything.

Hence I decided to quit the corporate world and started a new career as an entrepreneur in 2013. The experience of both NSN and Comptel taught me how to scale in leadership style, and delegate in a way that you focus on the big picture, while you put strong governance and systems in place to ensure smooth operations. Each experience of life is different and has been an amazing teacher. It is this diversity of thoughts, experience and exposure which is helping me in shaping my entrepreneurial career which as of now is only 7 years old.

**octara.com:** You put in a lengthy spell as Country Manager NCR Corporation that ended in 2005. What was the nature of tech in those days?

## Youngest Country Head

**Veqar:** I can literally write a book on my time at NCR. I stayed for almost 20 years with this top company, starting as a trainee and growing to become the youngest country head in 1999. I owe my successes, my learning, my exposure, my transformation as a business person, my leadership – all to my time at NCR. Everything else improved from there. During my time as a Country head we established NCR and Teradata as top notch MNC in Pakistan and it was literally shaping the direction of the industry.

## Many Firsts

We had a motto to become the most admired IT Company in Pakistan and, within NCR the most admired IT country (NCR was present in 120 countries of the world). To that end we became the first company in Pakistan and first country in the world in NCR to be CMM level 5 certified.

We were the first country and first company to start a Datawarehousing University program in Pakistan. We started an IT Excellence Awards which became an industry recognized platform for top performers in various field.

We had the largest number of Teradata Masters in Pakistan across the entire NCR Universe. All this led to establishing the Global Delivery Center for Teradata in Pakistan, which was a massive achievement as it set the trend for other companies to look at Pakistan in a different league. This helped me set up Center of Expertise for Nokia in Pakistan for Europe and MEA. IBM followed suit to set up Global delivery center.

## Quantum Gains

When I joined NCR the industry was called Computer Industry. To put it in perspective I sold my first PC in 1986/87, which was 640KB of memory, 10MB of hard disk, 360KB of flex drive for Rs. 150,000 (Remember Rupee was equivalent to 10 to a dollar back then). The journey has been just phenomenal in seeing the transformation from Computer to tech to digital, as a way of life.

**octara.com:** You acquired a Masters in Commerce from the University of Karachi, graduating in 1985. Please share with us campus life as it existed during your time there?

**Ve qar:** Clearly I had the time of my life there. I wanted to be a doctor first, but as I did not study enough I didn't make the grade for Medical College. I changed course and got into commerce with the sole aim to do BBA and MBA from the IBA.

## Kodak Moment

I am the product of the proverbial "Peela School", so it needed a lot of hard and smart work for me to prepare myself to get admitted at the IBA. I more or less went through a personality transformation during my time preparing and learning. The tuitions I used to give to fund my studies, and of course pocket expenses, came in handy in preparing. I got ready and appeared in the aptitude test and finally got in. That was the Kodak moment of my life.

## IBA Blues

However, I forgot that clearing the aptitude test and getting into the IBA was not the end in itself but only a means to it. I again relaxed in my studies and flunked in two subjects in the introductory semester. As a consequence and quite justifiably I got fired from the IBA; one of the lowest moments of my life.

Fate then led me to the Karachi University to do Masters in Commerce. I enjoyed every single moment of my time there, and the many preparations I had made to get into IBA got a chance to be applied during my time as a Masters student. It really prepared me extremely well for professional life and it may inspire many that after almost 30 years of being terminated by IBA for not studying, I am a member of their

**"Any pain associated with growth is welcome to me as it inspires me to grow faster, smarter, better, stronger"**

Academic Board. It is how you find opportunity in adversity which makes you a successful person. I learnt that the hard way, but in a great way.

**octara.com:** As a Member of the IBA's Academic Board what is your assessment of how well we are preparing the newer generations of business managers and entrepreneurs for the post-COVID era? Do they have an adequate worldview, and how mentally and physically agile do you find them?

**Ve qar:** There are two dimensions to this question. One is how well our youth is exposed. The second is how good is their energy and passion to succeed in the modern world.

To that I would say I am a big fan of the youth. They are exposed, passionate, impactful and truly ready for the challenges ahead.

## Not Ready

The second dimension is how well they are skilled by our education system to be ready for the road ahead. To that end, it is hugely disappointing. Our education system has not grown and kept pace with the dramatic changes that have taken place in the world. It stays in the old mindset and imparts skills, education and builds a mindset for the old world.

This puts a lot of pressure on the corporate or business world to spend a lot of its time, effort and investment towards building the right skillset. We can't blame the young for it. The fault lies in the faculty which for most part stays with old thinking and learning, and also in the overall eco system around higher education. There is urgent need for a major system reset in my view.

**octara.com:** What co-curricular activities did you engage in during your school and college days?

## Typical Street Boy

**Ve qar:** I engaged with all sorts of sports; lots of them. I



**“The world has grown at the back of simplicity and technology. We need to move in that direction”**

was a typical street boy, full of life, playful, joyful, and sometime studious as well. Besides sports, I loved reading, music and singing. If I had got some encouragement from the family I may have ended as a musician. I have always been a people's man, and love to interact, meet, and enjoy the company of people.

**octara.com:** How do you de-stress and unwind?

## Walking, Music & Being with People

**Veqar:** By being with people and talking it out or just creating or enjoying lighter moments. Walking regularly is another way to de stress myself; and Music, always – of course. I strongly believe that to come out of stress or any negativity in life you must be deliberately willing to change the perspective from problem to solution. The more you think about the problem or why it happened, the more stressful it gets. The sooner you start thinking of how to solve the problem or come out of it, the entire mood and perspective changes. Problems are negative while the solutions are positive. So I always think of what to do to come out of the stress, instead of agonizing over why it happened and staying in stress.

**octara.com:** Please introduce us to your family, and how challenging has it been raising Millennial kids?

## Well Knit, Happy and Fun Loving Family

**Veqar:** I am a truly blessed person with a very supportive wife who has always urged me towards higher goals. Her belief in me has really helped me exploit my potential. I have by the grace of Allah 5 sons of whom two are married with the eldest working for Amazon in Germany having got his MBA from Oxford and Undergrad from Boston University. My second son is an Undergrad from Drexel University and is currently working for Blutech which is JBS's Big Data Analytics Company. The third one is an Undergrad from Bentley University and has just joined us in promoting our product “Hysab Kytab”. The fourth is studying at Umass

Amherst and will be graduating next year. The youngest at number five is currently in Grade 9. They are all into sports and music, and we are a very well knit, happy and fun loving family, by the grace of Allah.

**octara.com:** What books appear on your reading list?

**Veqar:** These days I am not reading books at all, though I do read and listen to a lot material on entrepreneurship, leadership, management philosophies, and the future of Tech. It's all very targeted learning. My all-time favorite book is 'Winning' by Jack Welsh.

**octara.com:** A VUCA operating environment appears as a constant in your journey so far, and promises to remain so into the foreseeable future. What survival secrets can you share with us?

**Veqar:** I always work with vision and targets. That is what keeps me focused, positive, inspired and self-motivated. When I began my journey as an entrepreneur, I had to reset myself from a corporate jet set life with travel all around the world to more or less starting afresh. It hasn't been easy, but with vision and targets it has been a great experience so far.

I have been saying that till I keep working (and I have no intention to retire in life till it lasts), I will have 10 companies, few thousand people and 100M\$ businesses – before I turn 65. As someone who was starting from scratch with zero experience of running his own business, these were real stretch goals.

In some of the areas I am half way through already, and in the other areas the progress is fast. If health and Allah's blessings stay on my side, I will achieve and even surpass these goals. I have another 7 years to get there.

## Having Impact

I am also driven by the purpose of why I exist. I believe people like me exist to make an impact in whatever they do. The impact can be through growing people, helping them in tough situations, facilitating customers to achieve transformation, and just bringing greater good in the areas in which we work. The biggest fulfillment in life has been to see people smile as I contributed in their hour of need, approach me and say “Sir you helped me overcome a problem and grow”. There is nothing better than bringing a smile to someone's face. It is inspiring, it is motivating, it keeps you going from strength to strength – who cares about VUCA times when you can spread smiles and happiness.

**Thank you Veqar Islam ■**

Interview conducted by **Adil Ahmad**, Correspondent, **OCTARA.COM**

# OCTARA IN RAMZAN CELEBRATION!

## Soul Cleansing And Spiritually Replenishing Food For Thought



Sanam Fatima



Abbas Husain



Umair Jaliawala

Between Sanam Fatima, Abbas Husain and Umair Jaliawala a lavish feast for thought was laid out by OCTARA during the month of soul cleansing and spiritual replenishment, and this was one feast that could be partaken during fasting hours! The tech savvy that turned up for the hour-long plus Zoom sessions were privileged indeed and no doubt came away enriched beyond measure.

OCTARA has fought COVID tooth and nail, as it were, boosting its largely pro bono activity across the board to keep its vast clientele engaged through what is a very difficult period in their lives. These five Ramzan transmissions, one each by Sanam Fatima and Umair Jaliawala, and three by Abbas Husain, packed a powerful punch as they delved deep into the human psyche to untie the knots that keep us in a state of F.E.A.R., or False Evidence Appearing Real, with a runaway Ego generating bloated narcissistic tendencies that play havoc into otherwise sane and orderly lives.

## SANAM FATIMA'S

# THE HAPPINESS AFFAIR

**Sanam Fatima** opened with a flourish the batting for OCTARA with her take on **The HAPPINESS AFFAIR** that focused on Finding Your Purpose of Being.

"We live in a fast-paced setting with a constant struggle to have more in life which does not give us opportunity to pause and think about our everyday activities, feelings and emotions," said Sanam who is Certified 'Happiness' Ambassador from University of California, USA, and a seasoned Marketing Communication Strategist whose belief is 'Keep Learning and Keep Teaching'. She has been to 30 countries and 75 cities so far to broaden her horizons by engaging with different cultures, and feels that her personal and professional missions have come together.

"Eliminate any unwanted feelings," said Sanam as she wished all present a happy World Health Day whose theme is 'let's build a fairer and healthier world for everyone.'

## Practice Compassion

"Sit back, relax and smile! Inhale and take in the positive; exhale the negativity; smile even if you don't want to, and feel your depression disappear. Recognize your feelings. Negative psychology fans past assumptions and focuses on the bad. Positive psychology envisions the self in a future setting.



Having a meaningful life leads to happiness. We have historically focused on negative psychology while philosophers emphasize positive emotions. The Dalai Lama says that if you want others to be happy, practice compassion; If you want to be happy, practice compassion."

## Happy Hormones

Sanam talked of Serotonin, dopamine, oxytocin, and endorphins that are famously referred to as happy hormones and promote positive feelings like pleasure, happiness, and even love.

"50% of our happiness is provided by our genes; 40% from our activities; and 10% from our life's circumstances," said Sanam, quoting research, and citing Bhutan as the first country to focus on happiness and general wellbeing.

## Gross National Happiness

"In 2008 Bhutan started focusing on Gross National Happiness rather than the Gross National Product, and in 2011 Bhutan began a dialogue with the world on the personal happiness of people. 20th March is International Day of Happiness and in the 8th World Happiness Report published in 2020 Pakistan has moved from the 80th position to 57th out

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of 156 countries, which is encouraging. Amongst the cities of the world Karachi finds itself at #117 and Lahore at #125.”

## Misconceptions About Happiness

Globally we are facing an epidemic of loneliness and rising narcissism, cautions Sanam. “The world has become more individualistic, and people are beginning to realize that chasing happiness leads to unhappiness. There are misconceptions about happiness. It’s not about having all personal needs met; always feeling satisfied with life; feeling pleasure all the time; and never feeling negative emotions. We are urged to show a happy face on social media even when we are not happy leading to hollow happiness.”

**“ You deal with your problems and difficulties with a positive approach to be happy in the long run ”**

## Positive Approach

Happiness doesn’t mean being in a festive state all the time. “You deal with your problems and difficulties with a positive approach to be happy in the long run; be involved in your community; recognize your own strengths; and perceive life

as one that has meaning. One happiness size doesn’t fit all.”

Amongst the other tips shared by Sanam was the reinforcement of root relationships with family and close friends. “Make good connections that you can rely on and keep old relationships. Communal lifestyle is much needed in life along with embedding forgiving and appreciating each other. Happy parents have happy children. If you’re compassionate and help people then it will come back to you.”

Find the flow in whatever it is you’re doing, says Sanam. “Cooperation is much more fun and joyous than competitiveness as per research. The two must work in harmony, cooperating and competing. Cooperation builds trust, collective efficacy, and higher life expectancy.”

## Enjoy the Moment

“You can use the mind to change the brain to change the mind for the better. It’s a loop. A wandering mind is an unhappy mind. Be in the here and now and enjoy the moment to moment experience. Do one task at a time. Forgive one day and be happier the next day. Let go of grudges; make an apology; reconcile. Give yourself time.”

Happiness is contagious so pass it on and keep it going! said Sanam Fatima. “You are all happiness ambassadors. If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap; for a week, go fishing; for a month, get married! For a year, inherit a fortune; for a lifetime, then go help somebody else.” Bravo Sanam!

Webinar Reviewed by **Adil Ahmad**, Correspondent, **OCTARA.COM**



## ISLAMIC WISDOM FOR TODAY

With *Abbas Husain*  
ISLAMIC SCHOLAR

Session 1

# ISLAM IN ALIGNMENT WITH MODERNITY



OCTARA couldn't have asked for a better middle order batsman to consolidate its innings as Abbas Husain set about occupying the crease with masterly ease, setting the scoreboard ablaze with his five-fold model of Islam that showed the richness of the faith as a culture, a civilization and a history.

Abbas Husain is Director Teacher's Development Centre (TDC) since 1997 and has taught Islamic Studies at Aga Khan University's School of Nursing for 19 years, and has conducted research in Islam and the Quran for the last 35 years. His MA (English) he obtained from the University of Karachi, and M.Ed (TESOL) from the University of Manchester. Alongside Abbas has received professional training from the Universities of Toronto, Pittsburgh, Louisville and Chicago [1998-2009]. He has reached 85,000 teachers in a variety of training sites and settings all over Pakistan and in Muscat, Dubai, Kabul and Dushambe, and in February 2020, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Millennium Institute of Professional Development, Islamabad.

**"Modernity is seen as the compound effect of four forces at once upon our minds, lives and the world,"** says Abbas Husain.

## Overwhelmed by Choice, Speed & Uncertainty

"Firstly, we live in a world of options and choices which are

far more than we can handle in a human way. We are overwhelmed by choice even in minor things. Barry Schwartz's book *The Paradox of Choice* argues that 'More is Less', and the plethora of choices adds more confusion and distraction to our lives. Secondly is speed. Faster seems the new mantra of the millennial generation. 'Business at the Speed of Light' is a book by Bill Gates. We look up to people who are quick on the uptake, intelligent and witty. Thirdly, we have unprecedented uncertainty; and fourthly, enormous capacity for harm in the hands of one individual. Modernity is when all four forces hit our planet and world at the same time, and these four forces have been building up steam since 2000."

"We have a basic need for meaning and stability in our lives. When the flux of our experiences doesn't add up to a story, a narrative, then the sense of being adrift in a sea of impressions overwhelms us. All the great religions offer us precisely these two things. Meaning comes from a narrative of profound beauty, and stability from a web of relationships that connect us to humanity in meaningful ways – the family, the community, and the elders. When meaning and stability are gone the alignment is gone."

## 5 Concentric Circles

Abbas Husain spoke of the 5 concentric circles, one inside the other, with each offering a total vision entirely rooted in the teachings of the Quran and the holy Prophet (PBUH). They comprised Aqaid (articles of faith); Arkan (modes of worship); Islah-e-Batin (inner purity); Muamlat (dealings); Husun-e-Musharat (beauty of the environment).

"Islam in alignment with modernity makes us think. We have reduced Islam to the inner two circles, and we worry too much about Aqaid and Arkan in a limited and limiting meaning. But when we see that Islah e Batin, the achieving of inner purity; and Muamlat, the doing of justice in dealings

// Islam is 'mukammal zabtae hayat', a complete way of life //

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**ISLAMIC WISDOM FOR TODAY** With *Abbas Husain*  
**Session 1** **ISLAM IN ALIGNMENT WITH MODERNITY**  
 Presented by **Abbas Husain** | April 19, 2021



with others; and Husn e Muashrat, the beauty of the environment, are also Islamic Duties, we broaden our horizons. When I understand that not wasting water is as important as being attentive in prayer, my relationship with Islam becomes richer and deeper, and I am better able to deal with the confusion and chaos that modernity throws about, and I achieve some meaning and stability in my life.”

Abbas Husain then carefully connected each of the AQAID (articles of Faith – Tauheed, Risalat, Malaika, Kutub and Qiyamat) to the three outer circles, showing how firmly rooted they are in the centralities of Faith.

**“ We have a basic need for meaning and stability in our lives ”**

## Complete Way of Life

We often say Islam is ‘mukammal zabtae hayat’, a complete way of life, and here we are shown how it is. Aqaid impact the Heart; Arkan impact the limbs; Islah e Batin impacts the Nafs, the self; Muamlat impact society; Husn e Muashrat impacts the Earth, the Planet. Thus, Islam extends from the innermost circle of the heart to the outermost circle of the planet.

If today the Muslim Ummah is in trouble it is because we have focused on the inner two circles and forgotten about the outer three circles that need to be integrated into our personal and social lives. They are Islamic principles and not just social niceties that have been embraced by the non-Muslim world where life is considered attractive, while the Muslim world have gone to the extreme and focused predominantly on the inner two circles to the exclusion of the outer three and made life unbearable for its people.

At the conclusion of Abbas Husain’s first session he presented the audience with a PDF copy of **“The Vision of Islam”** by Sachiko Murata and William Chittick ■

Webinar Reviewed by **Adil Ahmad**, Correspondent, OCTARA.COM

# ISLAMIC WISDOM FOR TODAY

With *Abbas Husain*  
ISLAMIC SCHOLAR

Session 2

## THE QURAN – WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S IN IT?



A week later, after having dissected modernity and examined its alignment with Islam, Abbas Husain was back and this time he brought out the heavy artillery that laid out a devastating barrage which all but obliterated the boundary line.

Abbas Husain started proceedings with a recitation of Sura Taha 20:25-28 “O Lord, expand my breast and make my task easy for me, and remove the knot of my tongue so that they understand what I am saying.” This he suggested was an essential prayer for all communications professionals and indeed everyone.

### Misconceptions

He then went on to rectify FOUR major misconceptions about the Quran, carried by people who do not delve below the surface. Sadly it leads to greater confusion in society, both individually and collectively.

Is the Quran an Encyclopedia? No. The Quran contains everything we need for moral and spiritual guidance.

Is it a Book of Law? No, Laws are one of the subjects of the Quran. But the principles of justice are a greater purpose than the specific laws.

**/// The purpose of the Quran is Guidance (Al Huda) from Allah which leads to harmony, peace, unity and amity ///**

Is it a Book of History? History is one of the concerns of the Quran and it talks of the previous prophets and events. The Quran is sacred history, a grand narrative of the days of Allah (Ayyam Allah); Allah's Words and Actions and the human response to them. But history as a record of events that actually happened is not the point. It is the moral/spiritual lesson to be taken from it is its greater purpose.

Is it a Book of Science? No. This is an all-time apologetic of

modern Muslims to the West. Insecure Muslims say “We are not so bad... see, we too have mention of these scientific facts in the Quran!”. There is something odd about the way we get excited about the mention of some facts of Creation by the best of Creators. How come we find the scientific fact in the Quran only after it has been discovered by scientists? Having put aside four misconceptions, he asked: What is the Quran, then?

### Revelations from Allah

The Quran is The Book in Arabic containing the revelations from Allah to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) from 13th January 610 to 8th June 632 when the Prophet (PBUH) passed away, and the last revelation came 19 to 20 days prior to his passing away in May 632. It has 6236 verses/ayat; 114 chapters/surahs; 540 rukus; 30 paras (for ease of completing the Quran in a month); 7 manzils (for ease of completing the Quran in a week). These are some obvious objective facts about the Quran.

### Al Arabiyyan, Al Furqan, Al Huda, Al Shifa

The Quran describes itself as an Arabic scripture (Quranan Arabiyyan). The words of God cannot be replaced by the words of man. No translation will ever be equal to the original work.

The Quran describes itself as the Criterion (Al Furqan) which distinguishes good from evil, the permitted from the prohibited, the blessed from the cursed, and Heaven from Hell. Dr. Hamid Hasan Bilgrami called it “tameez e khush o na khush,” meaning not choosing the second best instead of the best.

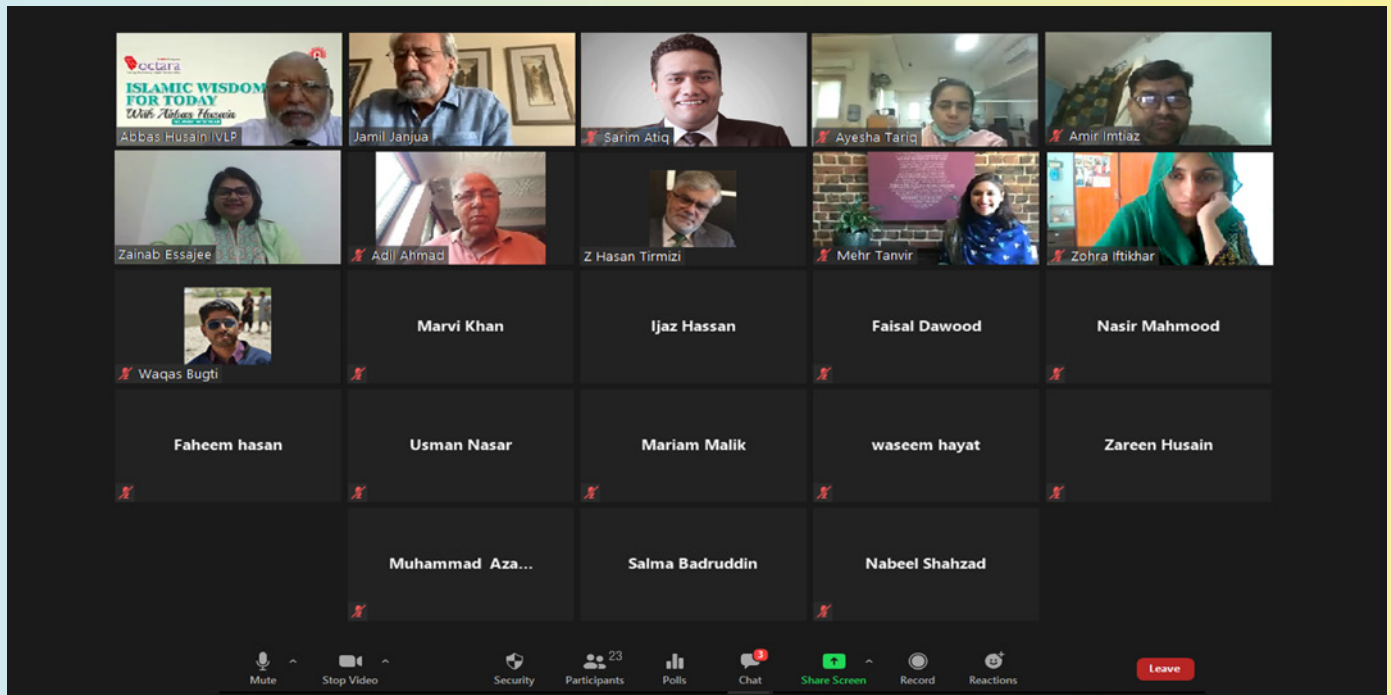
The purpose of the Quran is Guidance (Al Huda) from Allah which leads to harmony, peace, unity and amity; otherwise corruption, fasad, violence, discord are the works of Shaytan.

Finally the Quran describes itself as Healing (Al Shifa) for what is in your hearts, the moral and spiritual diseases. The word disease (marz) occurs in the Quran 12 times and each time it is accompanied by the word Qalb Heart, signifying that the diseases are not physical ones but anger, pride, greed, jealousy, gluttony, and laziness.



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**ISLAMIC WISDOM FOR TODAY** With *Abbas Husain*
**Session 2 THE QURAN: WHAT IS IT? WHAT IS IN IT?**  
 Presented by **Abbas Husain** | April 22, 2021


## Think!

Tafakkur (root Fikr) is a central tenet of Islam and it means to think, reflect, ponder, consider, meditate over, and contemplate. How does this operate in the Quran? To do Fikr is to align one's cognition in the three domains – the Self, the World and the Book. All three are called books in the Quran – Nama e Amaal; Kitab Allah; Kitab Mobeen (Book of the Universe). It's a microcosm (Universe made into a Book). The Universe is a macrocosm (the Book made large). Each individual person is also a microcosm (the Universe made small). To see the essential harmony in these three books (all authored by Allah) is the central insight Abbas offered.

Sura Kahf 18:109 describes the Infinite nature of the Words of Allah – “If all the trees were pens and all the oceans ink, still not the words of God be exhausted even if we added seven oceans thereunto.”

/// If all the trees were pens and all the oceans ink, still not the words of God be exhausted even if we added seven oceans thereunto. /// -Al Quran

There are 42 adjectives used in the Quran for itself, and amongst them are Bayan (argument), Nur (light), Basharat (good news), Hakim (wise), and Kareem (noble). The Arabic of the Quran is to be heard and the translation to be read. The Quran is the best explainer of itself.

## Recommendations

Abbas Husain recommended the English translation of The Quran by Abdullah Yusuf Ali with the text translation commentary published by Sh. Muhammad Ashraf (Lahore); the Urdu translation by Dr. Hamid Hasan Bilgrami 'Fuyuz Al Quran' in 2 volumes (Ferozesons, Lahore); and 'The Study Quran' by Seyyed Hussain Nasr for scholarly reading. Web sources recommended [www.corpus.quran.com](http://www.corpus.quran.com); [www.Altafsir.com](http://www.Altafsir.com) run by the Royal Aal al Bait Institute of Islamic Thought Jordan; [www.iqsaweb.com](http://www.iqsaweb.com) (International Quranic Studies Association). Apps – Qari Rashid al Mishary (Tilawat). He also recommended the TED talk of Lesley Hazelton 'A Tourist Reads The Koran'.

At the conclusion of his second session Abbas Husain presented the audience with the **English Translation of the Quran** by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem [PDF Book] ■

## ISLAMIC WISDOM FOR TODAY

With *Abbas Husain*  
ISLAMIC SCHOLAR

Session 3

# SPIRITUALITY IN THREE TRADITIONS



The third week of Ramzan dawned and with it Abbas Husain's 3rd engagement with OCTARA's international cohort. An air of great expectations pervaded the Zoom Room. The earlier two sessions had taken participants from the euphoria of finding in Islam an antidote for the ills of modernity to a technical understanding of the Holy Quran that equipped the mind with clarity about how best to harness this priceless gift by the Divine to Humanity. OCTARA's middle order had proved ironclad and the innings were far from over, with the tail yet to wag in glorious fashion as Umair Jaliawala warmed up in the rarified reaches of the Karakorum, engaging in high altitude training for the many battles yet to come.

## Being Human

"Spirituality offers us a way of being human," began Abbas Husain as he got into storytelling mode. "It invites us to discover our humanity and moments when we are not really human and behave in unworthy ways. Spirituality alerts us to our errors and flaws and points us in the direction of a better standard of behavior. The great spiritual masters sent out remarkable and powerful messages in the parables they constructed."

Abbas Husain mentioned Allama Iqbal's biography by Khurram Ali Shafiq which is offered as a gift by Pakistani missions around the world and is the official biography commissioned by the Government of Pakistan.

## Extraordinary Genius

"'Stray Reflections' by Iqbal is published in it," said Abbas Husain. "On page 63 he writes – 'To explain the deepest truth of life in the form of holy parables requires extraordinary genius. Shakespeare, Maulana Jalaluddin Rum and Jesus Christ are probably the only illustrations of this rare type of genius.' These stories are so admirably crafted that they enable us to reach the normally inaccessible parts of our mind." With that Abbas Husain chose three stories, one each from the Abrahamic

traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

## Story of the Two Brothers

From the Judiac tradition Abbas Husain provided the story of the two brothers who were farmers and stored their grain in bags in a common warehouse. They lived in adjoining homes on the land. The harvest was divided in exact and equal shares. One day the elder brother, who was married with family felt his younger brother was denied the happiness of a family and had his own hobbies to cater for so he should have a greater share. So he moved silently in the night and shifted some bags to his younger brother's side. Soon after his younger brother woke, thinking that his elder brother had a wife and kids and therefore needed more resources, so he tiptoed to the warehouse and shifted some bags to his elder brother's side. This went on night after night, year after year, and both the brothers were amazed to see that their share remained the same equal amount!

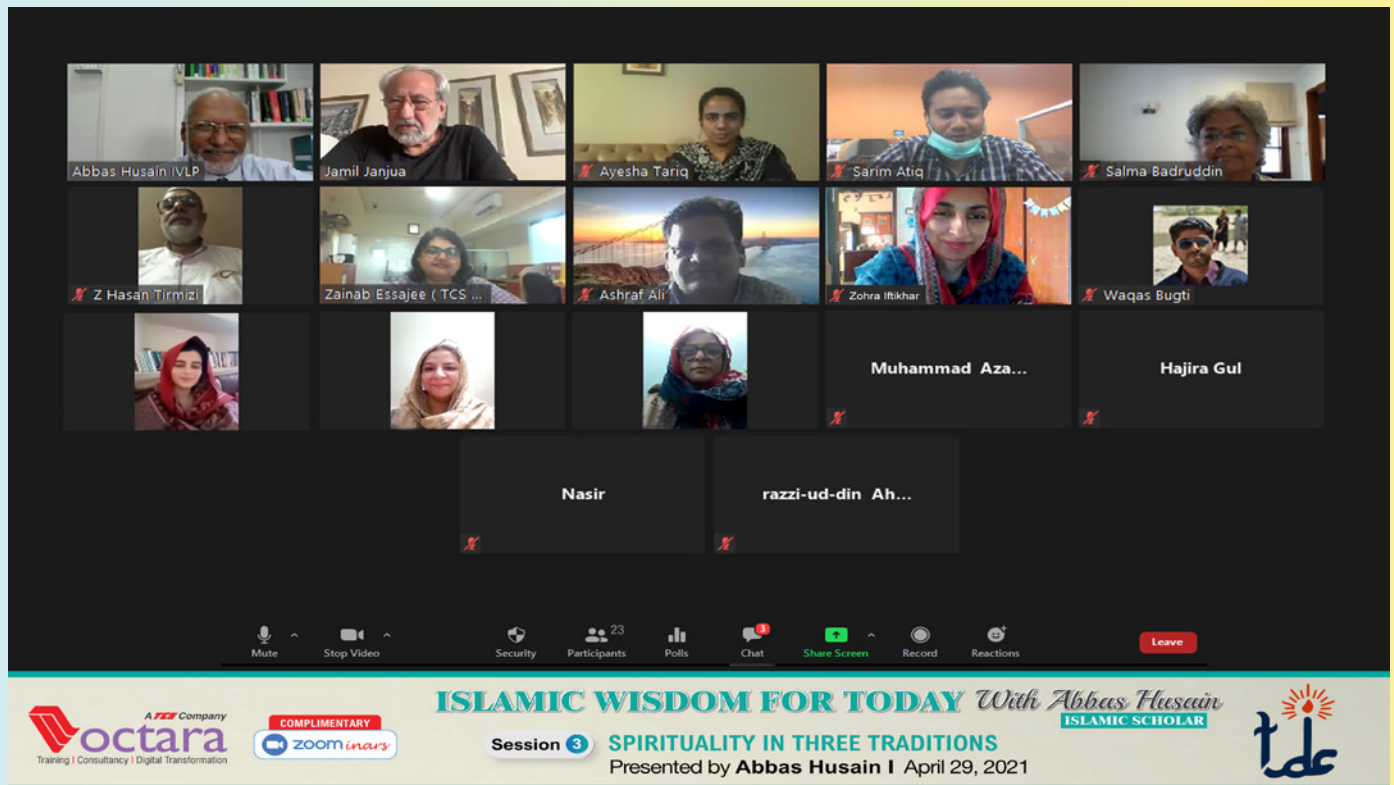
The two brothers represent the diversity of humanity; and the land represents the world, the space of our effort. As you sow so shall you reap. The harvest refers to the fruits of our effort, and the warehouse the demarcation of our shares. Because of their brotherhood the brothers have compassion. The elder brother is large-hearted and wants his younger brother to enjoy life. When I consider that I have received more than I deserve will I be generous.

## Ever Expanding Cycle

Generosity begins with a deep understanding of gratitude. The more generous I am the more grateful I am. It's an ever expanding cycle that enriches all who are in it. The younger brother can empathize with his elder brother's life and needs. Both the brothers are moved by generosity, compassion and empathy, and a capacity to think beyond themselves. And yet when they visit the warehouse their share has not decreased. It's amazing how the justice of

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the universe works perfectly. They were equal before and stay equal afterwards. The compassion envelopes the justice and the justice includes the compassion.

## Rewarding Performance

From the Christian tradition Abbas Husain selected from the Parables of Christ (Book of Mathew, Chapter 25 Verse 14 to 30). A rich man going on a journey summons his three servants. To the first he gives 5 talents; to the 2nd servant he gave 2 talents, and to the third he gave 1 talent, with the talent being the currency in vogue at the time.

The first two invested the money, while the 3rd hid his talent in the ground. When the master returned the 1st servant gave him back 10 talents and received a share of his master's joy. The 2nd servant had doubled his 2 talents and returned 4 to his master who was happy and gave him also a share of his master's joy. The 3rd servant said he knew his master was a harsh man reaping where he did not sow and gathering where he did not scatter seed; so he was afraid and went and hid the talent in the ground, saying: 'Here you can have what is yours.' His master was furious and took the talent from him and gave it to the one with the 10 talents.

So to those who have, more will be given and they will have abundance; from those who have nothing even that which they have will be taken away. The 3rd servant was cast into outer darkness.

## Rich Getting Richer

"It is a wonderful and powerful story that tells us about human nature," exclaimed Abbas Husain. "There is diversity and a strange justice. God does not give unequal talents and expect people to perform equally. {He does not expect the servant with one talent to make them 10.} The Master expects us to work according to our talents. The Master does not expect us to return the talent that He gave us but to use it and multiply it."

"To all those who have, more shall be given and they shall have abundance. From those who have naught shall be taken even that which they have." This is a sad yet true observation of the world in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

## Tough Love

The third story came from the Islamic tradition with Rumi being quoted by Salim Abdali and taken from Idris



Shah's Tales of the Dervishes, with the insight that the opposition of a man of knowledge is better than the support of a fool.

A horseman saw a man sleeping under a tree with a poisonous snake entering his mouth. Before he could reach him the snake had disappeared into his gullet. The horseman whipped the sleeping man, and kept whipping him despite his protestations, forcing him to eat rotten apples lying by the roadside and drink water from the stream until he vomited and expelled the snake.

The man thanked the horseman but asked him why he had whipped him instead of just telling him about the snake? The horseman replied that had he done so the man may not have believed him, or been paralyzed by fright, or run away, or gone to sleep again seeking forgetfulness.

## No Pain, No Gain

These four actions are how most human beings in a state of ghaflat/ignorance react when new knowledge and wisdom is presented to them which are lifesaving or life giving. This is a remarkable parable of being human and helping others to be human.

The wisdom we have is for use and not to be kept to

ourselves. We may well be the recipient of anger from the person we are trying to help and we may have to resort to harsh measures to save the other. It is illustrative of the master-disciple relationship. We all need help and sometimes the help comes in the form of

**// We cannot do good without being good //**

pain which is the most useful thing.

## Be Good to Do Good

"Being human is human being. We cannot do good without being good. Inward goodness flows outward. Do what you can in your circle of influence" were the parting gems that Abbas Husain left the crease with, endorsing a participant's current read "Purpose Driven Life" by Rick Warren as a must read book, and presenting all the participants with **"The Hundred Letters - an unsurpassed manual on human perfection"** by Shaikh Maneri [PDF Book] ■

Webinar Reviewed by **Adil Ahmad**, Correspondent, OCTARA.COM



ABBAS HUSAIN's research is well-grounded in the original sources of Islam. He offers a faith-based reading of the Quran, with a clear eye on the anomalies and paradoxes of modernity.

There is a great need for **Islamiat Teachers** to receive training in better teaching of these concepts to millennial children. Remember, Islamiat teachers receive NO training whatsoever. All opportunities for training are for English, Science and Maths teachers. Urdu teachers...a little but not so for Islamiat teachers.

Abbas Husain is willing to offer the best training to the urban teachers of Islam in Pakistan. He is willing to conduct round the year specially designed Five-day workshops **-THE INTELLIGENT TEACHING OF ISLAM to ISLAMIAT TEACHERS** in our schools. Workshops will explore a powerful model of ISLAM, THE QURAN and THE PROPHET plus other issues of social and moral concern and teach it to primary and middle school students.

One workshop includes course materials, refreshments, training time, venue, videos, web research, PDF books and manual for each participant. Also, the Teachers' Development Centre (TDC) Certificate.

The fee for the workshop is PKR 15,000 per teacher. Abbas is willing to accept PKR 10,000 per teacher and contribute the rest himself. Sponsorships can be for any number of teachers. He will conduct the sessions in cohorts of 20 participants.

And since it is free, numerous teachers are simply waiting to be invited.

Abbas will need support from Corporate Sponsors and Civil Society.

**Let us support him in this noble cause.**

Voluntary contribution for the cause of teacher education may be made to Teachers Development Centre.

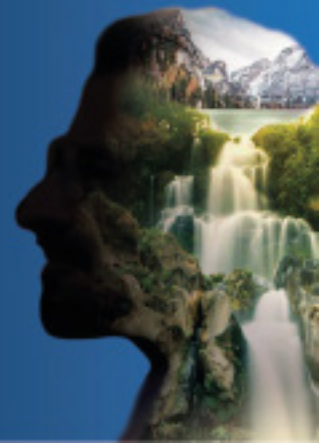
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**Teachers' Development Centre**  
<https://www.tdc.edu.pk/>

# A CONVERSATION WITH UMAIR JALIAWALA ON SUBMISSION: **Being One!**



Enter the dragon! From his cave high up in the Karakorums via the miracle of technology the swashbuckling Umair Jaliawala brought up the rear, as it were, the last speaker on the agenda of this month long festival of enlightenment that had yielded a vast fortune for the select fortunate few who were in attendance.

Umair is a social entrepreneur, activist, trainer and keynote speaker specializing in leadership and enterprise technology. He is certified in Humanistic Integrated Counseling; certified master trainer for social enterprise and active citizens from the British Council; certified trainer for micro-entrepreneurship; Founder and CEO of Torque Corp; and managing director of Jaliawala. He has deliberately hit the road during the pandemic and travelled from Karachi to the Khunjerab Pass, and was catching his breath in Kalam, reading material on submission.

## Rock Star

34 years of age with 12 years of training experience under his belt, Umair's rise in the industry has been meteoric, and not surprisingly, having been tagged as a rising star very early in his career by the late Ramiz Allawala, no less. Almost a decade ago I had the privilege of interviewing him, on the 27th of July, 2011, when he had emerged as a 24 years old rock star, a young and formidable figure in the area of youth development in Pakistan. I was struck by his take on

## Between Inquiry and Amazement

How can I generate a powerful action by submitting was the question Umair posed? "I have to be aware that my concept of God limits my view of the world. If my concept is narrow then my submission is also limited. As awareness increases the dimension of thinking enhances. Our most creative moments are described as 'Aamad' or sent from Above."

In the 19th century man claimed genius for himself and in the process made a display of an unfettered Ego gone wild. The self should position itself between inquiry and amazement was the takeaway from this bit of wisdom.

## Shireen, the Humble, Calm & Collected

"Dr. Wayne Dyer said ego is edging God out," quoted Umair. God is where humility is and offers empowerment in moments of need. Umair spoke of his experience with his mentor Shireen Naqvi. While at the School of Leadership a girl experienced an epileptic fit. Umair froze and let the girl fall. Shireen came and restored her, and subsequently wondered if she had handled it right, having never experienced such a thing before.

"What do you do when you're confronted with an overwhelming situation that you've never experienced before?" Umair asked. On another occasion a commercial flight that Shireen was on hit a bad air-pocket and the plane violently lost altitude. The air was rent with the Kalima-e-Shahadat and food trays went flying. When the plane stabilized there were cries of relief as people hugged each other while Shireen calmly got up and started cleaning and clearing the mess that the flying food trays had made. "Being at one with the Creator makes it possible. He ensures that you do the right thing."

## More Power to Tarzan!

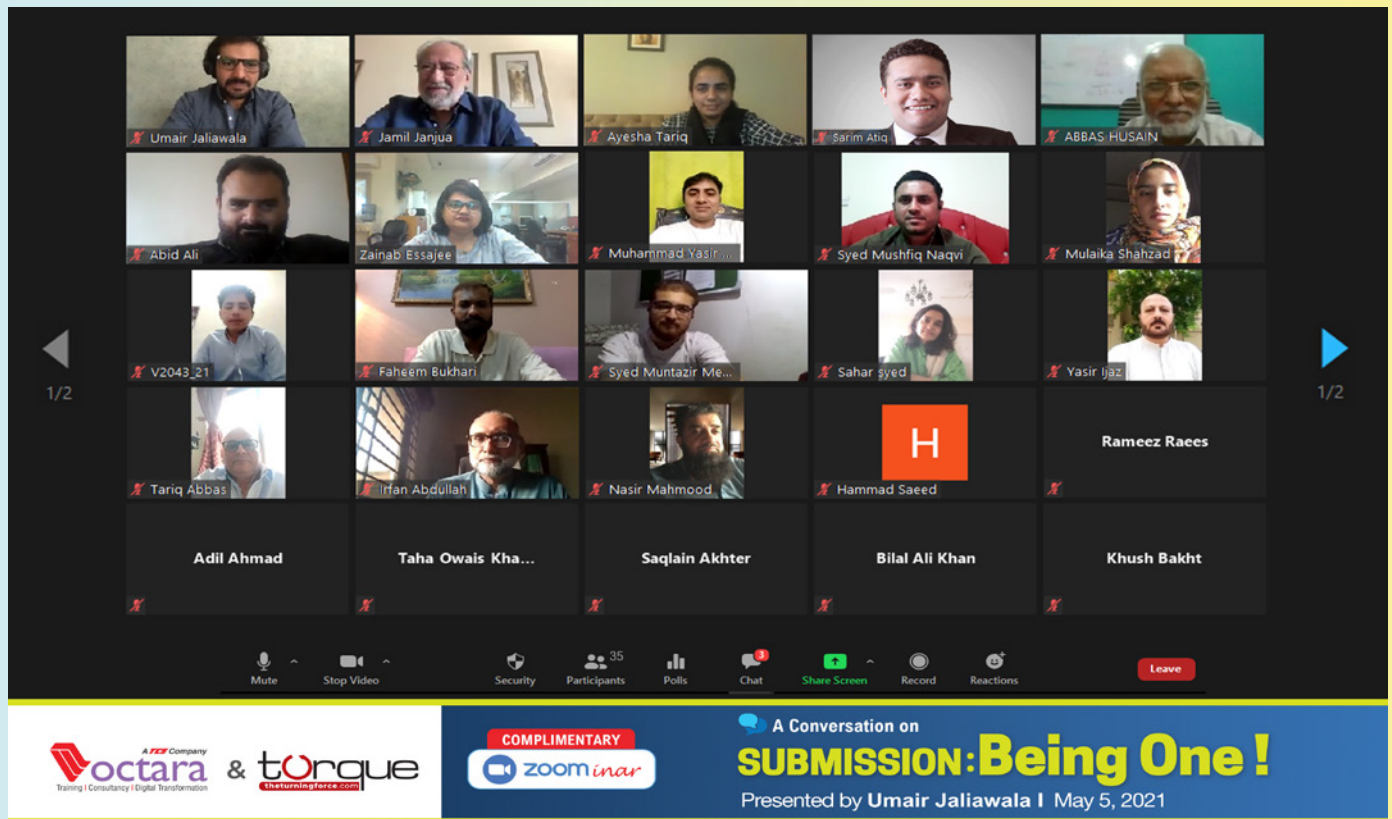
In a brilliant elaboration of the Ego Umair took the audience into a vivid imagining of a dense jungle with tall trees that blocked out the sun and thick, largely impassable undergrowth that instilled fear in the heart of the wanderer, leading his Ego to conjure up a beautifully landscaped

**When you're in fear you're alone. We have to be present and the rest Allah takes care of.**

his profession. "We aspire to take awareness and action to the level where we aren't needed" he had said. Even as he began his climb to the top he was seeking redundancy. Little surprise then that ten years later I would find him in impassioned mode on the subject of submission.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-PnuRp31o0>


plantation in place of the forbidding jungle.

“The ego transforms the dense jungle into its landscaped version,” said Umair. However, if we were to conquer our fear and permit ourselves a deeper appreciation of the jungle we would discover its natural beauty and behold the timeless excellence of the Master Landscaper. SubhanAllah.

“It’s arrogance of the worst kind to call oneself self-made,” Umair almost thundered. “The Pharaoh claimed he made the sea and that is where he drowned. He killed the entire male new born and left just one who was raised in his own house and became his undoing. If you embrace the dense jungle and refuse to let it intimidate you believing that the Creator is much bigger than the jungle, then the beauty of the jungle will dawn upon you.”

## Pimple or a Cancer

Companies come with their own ego sets and structures that you bow down to, said Umair, bringing the audience back to their present realities. “This is not submission; it’s fear driven sycophancy which can show up as a pimple or a cancer.”

Small men with big egos find fault with everything, he said. “They carry the landscape version in their heads. If you submit to the corporate culture then a transformation takes place and you start seeing the good after seeing it as bad. Pakistan is a mess but if you submit to it you begin seeing the

method in the madness and all the hidden connections that make it work. You will see Saylani and Eidhi and all the others. Saylani is in Kalam as well.”

We don’t see the organic, being so mesmerized by the landscaped, said Umair, introducing the two headed dilemma – Faith (presence, infinite, learning, secure, open) and Fear (ego, limited, stagnant, scared, shut).

“The ego makes you absent from reality. Muslims used to learn and that is why they used to rule. When you operate from the basis of faith you feel secure and are open to serve. Animals find their food every day without saving it.”

## Break Through the Chatter

The world has become too ego-centric thanks in great part to social media, Umair said, emphasizing the need to be mindful. “Most of our fears live in our minds and keep hampering us. Break through the chatter. The spirit knows no time and space and is forever young; it’s the physical frame that limits it. When you’re in fear you’re alone. We have to be present and the rest Allah takes care of.”

Submit to your reality. Do not operate from your ego. Cancel out the inferior and the superior. These were the parting shots that brought Umair Jaliawala’s session to a close ■

Webinar Reviewed by **Adil Ahmad**, Correspondent, [OCTARA.COM](http://OCTARA.COM)



# Come Dance With Me!

A Blog by Rose-marie Fernandez



The very word “dance”, conjures up a vision of body movement to sound, that is an expression of joy and happiness. Neuroscientists, and Happiness Gurus advise that dancing creates endorphins the chemicals in our body that are an antidote to depression, anxiety, stress and overwhelm.

Dancing has options, you can dance solo, with a single partner or with a group. Certain societies see dancing as an inherent cultural component. Those cultures in turn are associated with being more expressive and happier. The World of Music that we dance to, has an infinite gamut of genres and thanks to the advancement in technology is all within our reach. Thanks to iTunes and YouTube. When we switch on the television, we find that music forms an integral part of programming that sets the tone for messaging. Fortunately, I grew up in an environment where dance and music were associated with happy times and it has been my rescue in times of distress; an elixir to elevate my spirits.

Does dancing exude happiness? [Learn more by reading this article and the studies shared on the powerful impact of dancing.](#)

This month I want to talk about the ‘dance of life’, which at times forces us to move our mindset to accommodate many different tunes. These tunes that we are compelled to dance to, are at times not to our personal liking or even of our choice. Currently, our ongoing global situation is throwing different tunes at us and we are in a constant state of adjustment, dealing with the uncertain and the unknown.

So, in what way does this compare to the ‘dance of life’? Well, when the music is being played, lack of alignment or resistance to the natural call of movement creates difficulty in moving forward. This makes us feel stagnant and paralyzed, unable to decipher our next course of action.

As they say if you’re dancing to the same old tune, you become oblivious of your movements and the sound, this is when your mindset is fixed. If you change the tune, the steps, and the rhythm, change thus exuding happiness, excitement and life -- the outcome changes. Miracles happen but for that you need to change your tune.

To experience the growth mindset, you have to step out of your Comfort Zone into the Learning Zone and into the Abundance Zone. This calls for a ‘Dancing Mindset’ that is associated with alignment, discipline, focus and control. This requires a deep sense of self



Photo Courtesy: Unsplash Honey Yanibel Minaya Cruz

## Definition of Dance:

To move rhythmically usually to music, using prescribed or improvised steps and gestures.

awareness and acceptance. However, if we could create our own tune and rhythm that aligns with our thoughts and emotions (thinking and feelings), we could dance up the highest peak and come out over the top unscathed. Do you know why? That is because, when our thoughts and feelings are aligned, we create intentions which direct our subconscious onward to achievement of success in all our endeavors.

As the month of May approaches, we are beckoned to engage in movement and welcome the new season. Let the month of May be the month of DANCE, where you create a new

rhythm, that permits your spirit to soar to the sounds of the tune of your choice. It is exciting and fulfilling to dance with someone. At Coaching Worx we dance with the [Cuatro Method](#). Come join me as we touch great heights.

## Dancing Tips:

Let May be the month of:

1. Renewal and enhanced self-awareness where you flow into a rhythm of achieving your dreams.
2. Stating your intentions out loud – once a thought is spoken it embodies our consciousness and once written is a commitment to ourselves.
3. Doing something each day to step out of your old tune and create a new one.
4. Maintaining a log of your new stretches.
5. Encouraging others to dance with you so that they can embrace the new you.
6. Come dance with me and enjoy a Quantum Leap Discovery Session ■

<https://coachingworx.ca/>



Rose-marie Fernandez is a Human Resources expert, worked with several fortune 500 companies in the South Asian sub-continent, USA and Canada. She has been recognized Professional Certified Coach (PCC) and credentialed by the International Coaching Federation (ICF). Rose is also Founder & Transformational Coach at Coaching Worx, Canada. She is exclusively working with Octara for her online trainings.

For Inquiries, [info@octara.com](mailto:info@octara.com)

# Future Normal: Unnatural nirvana

What if 'fake' becomes a sign of superiority?

By Henry Coutinho-Mason

Published on May 11, 2021

This week, a dive into the synthetic rabbit hole. It seems like barely a day goes by without a revolutionary new, 'fake' material emerging out of a hot new biotech startup.

One might argue we've been here before. During the post-War period, synthetic substances (from plastic to polyester) were celebrated. Stronger! Lighter! Cheaper! A brave new world was upon us.

Of course, then the dark side of synthetics emerged. Thanks to their low cost, they were used indiscriminately, while their very durability made it impossible to dispose of them.

Which is why for decades now, discerning consumers have simply **taken for granted that 'all natural' is best**. Luxury is hand-made, locally-grown, artisan-crafted, and sustainably-sourced. It certainly isn't synthetic.

But what if that's about to change? Thanks to a convergence of technologies, falling costs and new attitudes towards sustainability, we're about to witness a powerful inversion of what people consider better and desirable.

Take a look at some of the exciting products emerging from the lab:

## Perfect Day: animal-free dairy

"We've invented the world's first real milk proteins made without animals, so you can enjoy the real taste, texture, and nutrition of dairy, produced sustainably, without the downsides of factory farming, lactose, hormones, or antibiotics."

## MeliBio: bee-free honey

"We harness microbiology to reinvent a 9,000 year-old craft. MeliBio honey matches and improves upon the molecular composition of bee-made honey"

## Shiok Meats: lab-grown shrimp

"'Shiok' in Singapore and Malay slang means fantastic, delicious, and simply, pleasure. Our mission is to bring delicious, clean, and healthy seafood to your table, using our technology to grow meat from healthy cells instead of animals. Same great taste, better for the planet!"

## Hoxton Farms: real animal fat, without the animals

"Starting from just a few cells, we grow purified animal fat in bioreactors to produce a delicious, cruelty-free and sustainable ingredient. Fat is magic. It's the secret to delicious food. Plant oils aren't a good replacement: the world needs a clean source of animal fat to create meat alternatives that look, cook and taste like the real thing."

## GALY: lab-grown cotton

"We create lab-grown applications to disrupt the industry and honor Mother Earth."

## Spiber: Brewed Protein fibers

"Brewed Protein can be processed into a variety of forms, with examples ranging from delicate filament fibers with a silky sheen to spun yarns that boast features such as cashmere-like softness or the renowned thermal and moisture-wicking properties of wool."

## Modern Meadow: Zoa biofabricated leather

"Our biofabrication process creates materials with enhanced performance and sustainability profiles compared to traditional materials."

## VitroLabs: lab-grown leather

Fact: We can make billions of square feet of leather with a single, harmless biopsy from one cow. With the help of a happy, healthy animal, we reproduce the natural conditions that allow those skin cells to regenerate indefinitely.

And it's not just food and fashion. From synthetic DNA to synthetic kerosene, **new fabricated and engineered materials will offer solutions that are better than their natural equivalents on key dimensions such as durability and performance, or ethics and sustainability** ■

Source:

<https://thefuturenormal.substack.com/p/future-normal-unnatural-nirvana>



Author The Future Normal / ex-MD @

TrendWatching / cofounder 3Space & Redo

# Become an Opportunity Magnet

## GROW YOUR PERSONAL BRAND ON LinkedIn®

### Overview

LinkedIn is the best networking platform for professionals. The platform has grown from around million users in 2016, to over 800 million users in 2021. According to various surveys, over 80% users expect LinkedIn to help them in networking and job search.

However, only about 5% or so understand how LinkedIn works, as a result over 95% LinkedIn users do not achieve their goals. As the global job market has become more challenging, LinkedIn has emerged as the largest platform with over 24 million jobs available on this platform.

The course will set you on a journey to improve, enhance and optimize your LinkedIn Profile. You will learn to strategically achieve your single or multi-purpose goals from Job Searching, Networking, Finding the right recruiter/employee, Learning and Development, Marketing or becoming an Influencer.

### You Will Learn To:

- **Create** a great LinkedIn profile
- **Brand** your profile on LinkedIn
- **Create** engaging and powerful content on LinkedIn
- **Target** network building
- **Find** job opportunities
- **Become** a LinkedIn influencer

### Who Should Attend?

This intense training program is designed for mid-career, senior executives and business owners.

To register, please click here: <https://bit.ly/3gHVNQE>

### Workshop Investment

(for 6 hours of on-line training)

**PKR 6,000/-** +PST/SST Per Participant

### Fee Includes:

- e-Learning Material
- Digital Certificate of Attendance

\*\* Entitles card holder to 15% discount on all future Octara Trainings (online & classroom)

- Virtual Business Networking
- Post-Workshop Advisory Services
- Octara Loyalty Card\*\*



### Facilitator

**Hammad Siddiqui**

Founder LinkedIn Impact, Expert in LinkedIn Content Strategy & Curation

**LinkedIn Profile of Hammad:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/hammadcoach/>

### Agenda

**Module 1** 27 May | 3:30 - 5:00 PM, PKT

**Introduction to LinkedIn Opportunities**

**Module 2** 3 June | 3:30 - 5:00 PM, PKT

**Statements vs Keywords in headline**

**Module 3** 10 June | 3:30 - 5:00 PM, PKT

**Content sharing – Dos and Don'ts**

**Module 4** 17 June | 3:30 - 5:00 PM, PKT

**Write Your LinkedIn Growth Strategy**

**...only from Octara!!!**

For Details & Registration contact

Sarim Atique at: [sarim.atique@octara.com](mailto:sarim.atique@octara.com), Mobile 0345-8949470

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ONLINE TRAINING

# BUILDING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE CAPABILITY

June 2, 2021 | 11:00 am – 4:00 pm (PKT) @Zoom Meeting Room

## Workshop Overview:

Are you ready to develop organisational change capability to thrive in the world of change?

With the ever-increasing pressures of change, it has become pivotal for businesses to build the capability of leading and managing change to survive in today's competitive world.

Having in-house change management capability helps organisations become more agile in their response to adopting change and navigating through the challenges, which in turn helps them with realizing the benefits of change at a much faster pace.

The workshop **"Building Organisational Change Capability"** will empower you with the knowledge and practical examples to provide a roadmap to hit the ground running immediately.

## Organisational Impact:

In sending delegates to this workshop, the organisation will gain the following benefits:

- Execute change to deliver sustainable results
- Assess the impacts and measure the change to convert into an actionable plan
- Get people's buy-in to deal with resistance to change
- Communicate the change objectives across people for awareness
- Enable people to adopt change with confidence and ability
- Align culture with change objectives and the aspirations for increased adoption of change

Click Here to Register: <https://bit.ly/3u0Hbzy>

## Workshop Investment

PKR **6,500**

+PST/SST Per Participant

**Group Discount Available**

### Fee Includes:

- e-Learning Material • Digital Certificate of Attendance
- Virtual Business Networking
- Post-Workshop Advisory Services
- Membership for TCS Octara WebMail+ (WhatsApp Group)
- Octara Loyalty Card\*\*

\*\* Entitles card holder to 15% discount on all future Octara Trainings (online & classroom)

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Account Name: OCTARA PRIVATE LIMITED  
IBAN number: PK27SCBL0000001387095201  
Account number: 01-3870952-01

OR

Send your cheque in favor of Octara Private Limited

To: Umair Tariq, Admin & Accounts Executive

Octara Private Limited - 1/E-37, Block-6, P.E.C.H.S., Karachi.

Tel: 021-34520708, Cell: 0343 5940485

### Bring this program In-house at attractive discount

This workshop can be customized to suit specific needs of your organization which may lead to significant savings.

Please contact Sarim Atique at [sarim.atique@octara.com](mailto:sarim.atique@octara.com) or call at 0345-8949470



Workshop Facilitator:

**Uzma Aitqad**

Organisational Change & Culture Design Specialist

## Agenda:

- What is change management and why it is important for the success of projects?
- The process of change; stages and emotions
- Understanding people emotions through the cycle of change
- The competencies for delivering & managing change
- Challenges of managing change in organisations
- A roadmap to managing change and list of tools



For details & registration, please contact:

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# Training Calendar

## Programs in May-September 2021

Topic	Duration	Trainer	Date	Loc.
<b>Grow Your Personal Brand on LinkedIn (Modular Program)</b>	60 min	Hammad Siddiqui	27-May-21	Zoom
<b>Building Organisational Change Capability</b>	5-hours	Uzma Aitqad	2-Jun-21	Zoom
<b>Human Resources in the Age of Digital Transformation</b>	5-hours	Dr. Frank Peter	23-Jun-21	Zoom
<b>Digital Marketing Strategy &amp; Tactics</b>	5-hours	Dr. Frank Peter	24-Jun-21	Zoom
<b>Leadership in Digital Age</b>	5-hour	Mark Stuart	8-Jul-21	Zoom
<b>Aligning Budgeting and Strategy</b>	5-hours	Amer Qureshi	TBC	Zoom
<b>Win Customers through Effective Communication</b>	5-hours	Catherine Bentley	TBC	Zoom
<b>Emotional Intelligence for Leadership Excellence</b>	5-hours	John Bentley	TBC	Zoom
<b>Communication Skills for Finance Professionals</b>	3-hours	Zaid Kaliya	TBC	Zoom
<b>Visually Effective Excel Dashboard</b>	5-hours	TBC	TBC	Zoom
<b>MS Power BI Including DAX &amp; Queries</b>	5-hours	TBC	TBC	Zoom
<b>Competency Based Interviewing Skills</b>	5-hours	Kamran Yameen	TBC	Zoom
<b>HR Leadership Using HR Metrics &amp; HR Analytics</b>	5-hours	TBC	TBC	Zoom
<b>Enterprise Risk Management</b>	5-hours	Christopher Whittle	TBC	Zoom
<b>Team Building</b>	5-hours	TBC	TBC	Zoom
<b>Retail Merchandising</b>	5-hours	Atif Farooqui	TBC	Zoom
<b>Key Account Management</b>	5-hours	David Vachal	TBC	Zoom

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For Details & Registration contact  
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