

**Ikram Azam:  
Islam and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leadership. \***

**Future Focus:  
“It’s Your Future”.....  
(Review Article)**

**By: Dr. Ikram Azam  
(Chairman, The PFI & MVs)**

*“The challenge of scenario development is in looking from now into the future..... What can change?..... Why?.....*

*“Primarily, change in your life will be created by forces, either internal forces (your six personal domains) or external forces (the STEEP categories). (P. 122).*

*“Outside forces may impose change on your life that will impact one or all of your domains. During 2008 and 2009, millions of people lost their jobs in worldwide recession”. (P. 123).*

*The youth were the most affected.*

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**\* The PFI:  
The Pakistan Futuristics Foundation & Institute  
& Margalla Voices, Islamabad. (UP).  
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**Future Focus:**  
***“It’s Your Future” .....***  
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**Introduction:**

Fellow Futurist, Dr. Verne Wheelwright, Ph.D., recently sent me an autographed copy of his latest book: **It’s Your Future..... Make it a Good One!** (Publishers: The Personal Futures Network, Texas, USA; September; 2010). It is so interesting that I read it straightaway in a few daily continual sittings, to review it succinctly as under:

**The Author:**

Incidentally he did his M.S. in Studies of the Future (Futuristics) from the UH-CLC-TX, USA: the University of Houston. It is also my alma mater (1987-1988).

*“In 2006 Verne Wheelwright was awarded a Ph.D. for his **groundbreaking research** in the application of futures methods to individual lives. That research led to the development of **The Personal Futures Workbook**..... Wheelwright’s new book is, **It’s Your Future’ .....** Dr. Wheelwright is a member of the World Future Society, the Association of Professional Futurists and the World Futures Studies Federation” (all in the USA).*

**The Book:**

**(i) Its Synopsis:**

*“Knowledge about the future has been available to large organizations for decades. Now that knowledge is available in practical form to individuals in an illustrated, step-by-step format. The author shows and explains how to anticipate the future, how to explore alternative futures with scenarios, how to create a vision of the future and how to achieve that vision”.*

**(ii) Its Audience / Readership:**

*“This book is particularly useful to young people who are facing big decisions about their lives and their future, but is valuable to people of all ages”.*

**(iii) Its Theme and Thesis:**

*“A step-by-step guide to the futuring process, applying futures methods to individual lives”.*

The paper-back, soft-cover 254 pages edition is priced at U.S. \$ 17.50. It is listed under the rubric of *“Self Help / Education / Life Planning”*. That reminds me of the course I did in my M.S. (Futures Studies) Program on: Life-Work Career Planning, Counselling and Guidance. It was a fascinating course which is urgently needed in Pakistan. The PFI has been offering it in Islamabad during the last 24 years of its existence since July 1986. (See: **The Pak. Futurist 24: 2010**).

The book follows a three-step process, and consists of 21 chapters in all, an Appendix and an Index. The Appendix includes a list of the *“Colleges and Universities Offering Programs or Courses In Foresight and Futures Studies”* (pp. 244-248). The PFI (Pakistan Futuristics Foundation and Institute, Islamabad) is listed on page 247. Most remarkably, the book is well-documented and illustrated. There are illustrative diagrams, tables figures, graphs, charts, axis, matrices and datae in every chapter, totaling 110. They are simple in appearance and design, so that they are very easy to follow. That is also true of the very simple style of the book, which makes it readily readable and easily understandable, both for students and general readers, as well as Professional and Academic Futurists.

#### **The Author’s Introduction:**

The author’s single-page Introduction to the book is indicative of its simple-succinct style, which is its key forte and feature.

*“Expect to be surprised”*, is its opening sentence.

And its closing message is:

*“Whether you are young, old, or somewhere inbetween, you will learn something valuable about your future in this book. That’s a promise”.*

The Introduction also mentions the **Three Steps** of the book, which are:

*“First, you will be surprised to find how much you **can** know about your future.*

*“Second, you will be surprised at how much **influence** you can have over your future.*

*“Third, you will be surprised to find that you can discover and avoid many of the unpleasant surprises that are waiting in your future”.*

Thus, the **Three Futuring Steps** --- and **Parts** of the book are, in the writer’s own words:

- “1. Look at your life where you are now.
- “2. Explore your future with scenarios.
- “3. Create your future --- the future you want to live”. (P. 20).

**Step One: Your Personal Self:** (pp. 23):

**“Your first step toward the future is all about you”.**

“There is an Eastern version and a Western version of the map of life. The Eastern version tends to be more philosophical than the Western version, dividing life into four stages of about twenty years each. The Western version is based more on biology and change; traditionally it has included seven or eight stages”. But the author has stretched them to ten, subdivisively (serial no. (vii) – (x)). (P. 26). They are:

- (i) Infancy: birth to 2-3 years of age.
- (ii) Childhood: 3 – 9 years.
- (iii) Adolescence: 10 – 19 years. (Puberty and the teens).
- (iv) Young Adulthood: 20 – 29 years.
- (v) Adulthood: 30 – 39 years.
- (vi) Middle Age: 40 – 60 years.
- (vii) Independent Elder: 60 onwards.
- (viii) Vulnerable Elder (optional): Dto. --- beginning frailty, etc.
- (ix) Dependent Elder (optional): Dto. --- Requires daily care, etc.
- (x) End of life (optional – upto 6 months): Dto. --- terminally ill, etc.

I have tried to cover both the Eastern and Western version, as well as the Islami Vision, in my following two books on Futuristics:

- (i) **Creating The Future.** (The PFI; 2001).
- (ii) **Securing The Future: Now!** (The PFI; 2007).

There is also the Islami Vision and the Pakistani version of the Future(s) which I have to tried to project in many of my books, notably:

- (i) **Islami Futurism and Futuristics.** (The PFI; 1995).
- (ii) **Muhammad ( ): The Sublime Futurist.** (The PFI; 1996).
- (iii) **The Islami Perennial Peace Paradigm and Muhammadi Moral Model.** (The PFI; 2009).
- (iv) **Islami Renaissance and Muhammad Asad.** (The PFI; 2010).
- (v) **Discourse With Allah!** (The PFI; 2010).
- (vi) **“Nazriya-e-Pakistan”: The Vision of Pakistan: Islam.** (The PFI; 2010).

But to return to Dr. Vern Wheelwright’s views, writing in the familiar first person interactive and participatory manner, his book focuses the *stakeholders* or people in one’s life, especially the ‘*significant others*’. Also, the Trends, Issues and Forces or elements

that affect us and impact our lives. Likewise, the “*Events That Will Change Your Life*”, Personal Values, one’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (Personal SWOT / WOTS Analysis). Additionally, the ‘*Futures’ Wheel*’ is another popular futuristic tool for exploring the Futures (Chapter 9, p. 112). It comprises clustered circles around a central circle (Futures, or: My Alternative Futures). The first set of circles diverging in different directions from the central or core circle, can have additional (two / three) circles around it. But they make the process and figure more complex and complicated. This tool is used in brainstorming sessions, or privately-personally, to generate creative ideas about an issue or subject, specifically, one’s personal futures in the present case of Dr. Wheelwright’s book.

### **The “*Elements*”: Futuristic Forces and Features:**

*“In personal futures, we recognize six categories or domains of forces that are common to all people and are a part of every person’s life from birth through death”*; (p. 42). They include the following ‘*six personal-internal domains*’:

- i) Activities.
- ii) Finances.
- iii) Health.
- iv) Housing.
- v) Social.
- vi) Transportation.

The point is to make adequate arrangements for them, both in advance, futuristically, and as we go along. These need to be realistic, pragmatic and practicable.

One’s **Personal Values** are one’s Guides to the Future (Chapter 8: pp. 99 to 105). Incidentally, this is reminiscent of my book: **Moral Values Education: An Islami Futuristic Vision**. (The PFI; 2005).

### **Step Two: Exploration With Scenarios:**

*“Exploring Your Future with Scenarios”*; (p. 117).

These cover the usual incremental-alternative futuristic categories: the Possible, Plausible, Probable and Preferable. The last, because our God-gifted freedom of will grants one the freedom of reasonable choice within realistically enlightened and balanced-moderated limits. That, because we have an inherent, congenital right to our own life and future: to make it creatively, not mar and mess it up foolishly. That is why one’s Personal Values are of central importance. They determine our habits and life styles. The ‘*Stakeholders*’ in one’s life also affect one’s values and choices. So does the family setting and social environment, as well as education. This tool is preferable to the several rounds of the impersonal Delphi Method / Technique of consulting experts by correspondence in strict confidentiality. The Delphi Method is time-consuming, and does not guarantee a cent per cent response.

*“The challenge of scenario development is in looking from now into the future”..... What can change, and why?.....*

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*The youth were affected immensely.*

**Step Three: Normative, Desirable Futures** (pp. 155-156).

By taking this step:

*“You will describe the future that you want to live”.*

But this is not wishy-washy makebelief and wishful thinking, because:

*“If wishes were horses, then beggars would ride”.*

Being a matter of balancing our means and ends, it essentializes, critically, realism and pragmatism. Also, our Personal Values --- Moral-Spiritual-Secular-Material --- are a determining force and factor to reckon with. They include the Perennial Human Values which are common to all of humanity, thereby integrating it into a global fraternity. *“Personal Strategic Planning”* is a core concept and key concern: (pp. 157-160). So is *“A Vision of Your Future”*; (pp. 161-165). That requires *“Strategies to Achieve Your Vision”*; (pp. 167-175). These have to be followed up with *“Creating Your Action Plan”*; (pp. 177-183) --- which requires: *“Analyzing Your Plan”*; (pp. 185-192) --- for a reality-check. *“Wild Cards, Aspirations and Contingency Planning”* are the subject of chapter 19; (pp. 193-200). It is significant that you need to be continuously *“Living With Your Plan”* (chapter 20; pp. 201-203). That requires continual monitoring, scanning, revision, action and implementation.

Finally, the last chapter (21) discusses: *“The Long – Term Perspective in Your Life and Your Career”*; (pp. 205-207).

This implies a life-span, developmental approach, according to Modern Psychology, with its integrative-holistic vision and world-view. The Past-Present-Future is a Continuum as an ambient cosmic spectrum, which needs a matching Vision, like that of Pakistan’s Founders, all of whom were Islami Pragmatic Visionary Futurists. (See: my: **“Nazriya-e-Pakistan”: The Vision of Pakistan: Islam**. The PFI; 2010).

## Key Terms / Concepts:

Vision. Generations. “*Sandwich Generation*”. Aging. Futuring. Stakeholders. Cone of Uncertainty. Wild Cards. Aspirations. Dominant Trends / Forces. Statistics and data. Measurement. Charts, double (two) axis, matrix, quadrants, graphs, drawings, pictures, trends, trend lines, trend projection and extrapolation. Positive, Negative. Past, Present and Future. Stages of Life. Images of the Future. Anticipation. Defensive. Offensive, Proactive. STEEP Categories. Optimistic. Pessimistic. Realistic. Monitoring. Scanning.

*‘Everything is connected’.*

### **Planning for the Future:**

Routine, Strategic, Contingency.

## Conclusion:

The book under review is full of Futuristic common sense and good sense. It is an excellent example of pioneering: the application of Futuristics Methodology or Methods to planning for the Personal Futures. It has filled a long-standing need from the Futuristic perspective. To my mind, it is required reading for all who are interested in the subject, especially the younger generations, for whom it is meant, primarily. It is a very practical, useful book, with real-life applications for one’s personal (and general) futures. Afterall, we can best internalize the Future by interlinking it with ourseleves. For all of us, the Future begins with our persons in the familiar filial context and the family matrix, after which comes the neighbourhood and one’s society with its hierarchy of several religious, educational, socio-cultural and politico-economic institutions. And so the recourse to the “*STEEP*” in Futures Analysis. (Chapter 6, p. 62). The acronym refers to the ambience of one’s ever-expansive world which impacts to influence one’s future. The acronym symbolizes:

S:	Social Change.	} At the local, national, regional and
T:	Technological Change.	} global levels.
E:	Economic Change.	}
E:	Ecological Change.	}
P:	Political Change.	}

(Ikram Azam: **Geosociology and the Future**. The PFI; 2011).

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**Dated:- Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2010.**  
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