

"Books Build Nations; Screens Distracts them"

:- Outline:-

1- Introduction :-

- a) Hook: "A room without books is like a body without a soul" - Cicero
- b) Books once built civilisations; screen now threatens to unbuild them.
- c) Transition from books culture to screen dependence in the 21st Century.
- d) Thesis Statement: "Books have historically shaped nations by cultivating knowledge, morality, and collective consciousness, whereas excessive screen exposure today erodes intellectual depth, social cohesion, and even physical health, particularly among children."

2- Historical Role of Book in Nation Building:-

- a) Books as the foundation of intellectual revolutions: Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment.
- b) Education reforms in Europe and Asia built through literacy and reading culture.
- c) Pakistan's creation inspired by literary, ideological, and reformist writings (e.g. Iqbal, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan)

- d) Nations with high literacy rates (e.g. Finland, Japan) have strong civic and economic foundations.
- e) Books preserve cultural memory and stimulates rational citizenship - core to nationhood.

3- Books as Tools of Enlightenment and Critical Thinking:-

- a) Reading books enhances comprehension, reasoning, and moral judgement.
- b) Deep reading fosters empathy and civic responsibility.
- c) Books introduce plural perspectives - essential for democratic societies.
- d) Students who read regularly show better academic and emotional intelligence (OECD Education Report 2023).
- e) In Pakistan, decline in library culture and textbook dependency has limited analytical capacity among youth.

4- Rise of Screen: From Innovation to Distractions:-

- a) Rigid digitalisation - smartphones, tablets, and social media dominates information flow.
- b) While screen connect people, they promote instant gratification over deep learning.
- c) Global average screen time has risen to 6-8 hours daily (Statista, 2024).
- d) Over-reliance on digital media fuels shortened attention spans and misinformation.

- e) The "scroll culture" encourages reaction, not reflection - a threat to intellectual maturity.

5- Psychological and Social Impact of Screen Addiction:-

- a) Digital media promotes dopamine-driven habits similar to addiction.
- b) Continuous scrolling weakens focus, patience, and social interaction.
- c) Studies link heavy social media use with anxiety and depression (Lancet Psychiatry, 2024).
- d) Pakistan's youth (65% of population) spends 4-6 hours daily online, reducing productivity.
- e) The decline of physical libraries and face to face debates mirrors a shrinking intellectual culture.

6- Physical Health Impact: Child Eyesight and Screen Exposure:-

- a) WHO (2023): 28% of Pakistani schoolchildren suffer from short-sightedness due to screens.
- b) Prolonged exposure causes eyestrain, dry eyes, and blurred vision.
- c) Blue light suppresses melatonin, causing sleep disorder among children.
- d) American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends no more than 2 hours of screen time daily for school-aged children.
- e) Overexposure also affects posture and physical fitness, leading to sedentary lifestyle.

f) Books, in contrast, nurture calm concentration and healthier cognitive habits.

7- Impact on Education and Nation-Building:-

- a) Education has become digitalised but shallow - Student rely on summaries, not deep reading.
- b) Decline in book reading results in poor comprehension, creativity and analytical ability.
- c) Nations with screen-centric education show lower literacy and innovation (OECD; 2021; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).
- d) Pakistan's reading habits declining sharply - library membership dropped by 60% in two decades.
- e) Screen dependency creates "information-rich but knowledge poor" societies.

8- The Moral and Cultural Dimensions:-

- a) Books shape moral imagination; screen often amplify superficiality and materialism.
- b) Reading literature builds empathy and values - essential for social cohesion.
- c) Social media promotes divisive narratives, echo chambers, and hate speech.
- d) Cultural decline follows when intellectual discourse gives way to entertainment obsession.
- e) Pakistan's young generation risks moral disconnection due to digital overexposure.

9- Balancing Technology and Tradition:-

- a) Screen cannot be abandoned, but must be regulated.
- b) Encouraging digital libraries, e-books, and hybrid learning can bridge the gap.
- c) Parents and Schools must regulate screen exposure among children.
- d) National reading initiatives, such as "Pakistan Reads", should be revived.
- e) Integrating book clubs, libraries, and reading periods in schools can restore the reading culture.

10- Conclusion:-

- a) Books built empires of wisdom; screens are building empires of distraction.
- b) True national development requires intellectual discipline, not digital dependence.
- c) Final Thoughts: "Nations rise on the strength of their ideas, and ideas are born not on screens, but in the quiet company of books."

-: The Essay :-

"A room without books is like a body without soul". The words by Cicero captures a timeless truth, that books breathe life into civilisation. Yet

in the digital age, screens have become the new soul of humanity, glowing constantly but enlightening rarely. Whereas, books once cultivated reflection, discipline, and imagination, screens now offer distraction, instant gratification, and misinformation. The transformation from a reading society to a scrolling society represents more than a cultural shift, it is a civilisational crisis. Like much of the world, Pakistan has witnessed a huge decline in reading habits, replaced by endless hours of social media consumption. According to UNESCO, Reading rates among youth dropped by 35% globally between 2000 and 2023. The results are visible: intellectual shallowness, moral confusion, and even health deterioration, especially among children. Books have historically shaped nations by cultivating knowledge, morality, and collective consciousness, whereas excessive screen exposure today erodes intellectual depth, social cohesion, and physical well-being. Reclaiming the primacy of reading is not nostalgia, it is a national necessity.

Every civilised nation in the history has build upon the foundation of books. The Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment were born from printed words which challenges ignorance, and cruel and unfair use of powers. Books are the source of scientific revolution and democratic consciousness which shaped the modern world. In the

Muslim World, the ~~eto~~ Abbasid era's House of Wisdom in Baghdad and Al-Andalus libraries exemplified intellectual prosperity. In South Asia, reformers like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and thinkers like Allama Iqbal used literature to awaken the people with the sense of identity and purpose that ultimately inspired Pakistan's creation. Countries like Finland and Japan, with literacy rates above 99%, demonstrates how a reading culture drives innovation and civic discipline. Books have always been more than ink and paper, they are carriers of values, imagination and historical memory. When nation reads, they learn to reason, reform and rebuild. When they stop reading, they start moving towards their decline. Pakistan's early nation builders understood the truth; the challenge today is to revive it in the middle of the floods of screens.

Books train the mind to question, to think, to imagine, and to empathise. Reading books enhances comprehension, reasoning and moral judgement. Deep reading engages both intellectual and emotional phases, fostering critical thinking and moral reasoning, the qualities which are essential for democracy and progress. Unlike the incomplete information from screens, books encourage sustained focus and logical analysis. According to OECD Education Report 2023, Student who reads

literary texts significantly performs better in problem solving and civic participation rather than students who prefer quick screen learning. In Pakistan, the erosion of library culture and the dominance of rote learning has limited analytical capacity among youth. University students depends on short online summaries notes rather than full notes to just able to pass the exam without focusing on gaining knowledge and enhancing analytical skills which are going to help them in future in practical life. Books nurture the ability to connect the ideas across disciplines, an ability screens rarely cultivate. They build informed citizens, not passive consumers. Screens (e.g. AI tools) are so involved in our lives that we can't even resist without them. To restore national intellect Pakistan must revive its reading habits.

The 21st Century introduced a revolution in connectivity. Smartphones, tablets, and social media platforms redefined access to information, offering opportunities for communication and learning. However, this digital revolution soon became a cognitive burden. What began as innovation is now leading to addiction. The people are so addicted to their smartphones that they can't even live without them. They fully rely on them in order to gain information and also use it to communicate with each other rather than having direct interaction.

According to Statista (2024), global average screen time has reached 6.8 hours daily, while Pakistan's youth spends nearly 5 hours daily on mobile devices. Overreliance on digital media fuels shortened attention spans and misinformation. The scroll culture encourage speedy reactions, not reflection which is a threat to intellectual maturity. The human attention span, which average 12 seconds in 2000, dropped to 8 seconds by 2023 (Microsoft Study). In classrooms, students find reading books "boring" and like scrolling tiktok and instagram. The screen age, therefore, has not enlightened humanity but fragmented it. We are connect more than ever, yet thinking less than ever.

In addition, The psychological toll of screen addiction is profound. Constant exposure to dopamine-triggering notification rewires the brain's reward system, creating dependence to substance addiction. Research by Lancet Psychiatry (2024) links prolonged social media use with anxiety, depression, and reduced self-esteem. Instead of promoting real connections, screens foster isolation and superficial relationships. Continuous scrolling screens weakens focus, reduces patience level and social interaction. Sp especially youth has become so impatient as they want every information available in seconds without putting effort to gain it. Reels of 15 seconds on tiktok and instagram makes

youth impatient as they want quick and fast learning rather than focusing on its right and wrong, whether that information is correct or not, they rely on it very easily. Pakistan's youth constituting nearly 65% of its population is particularly vulnerable. Excessive social media use has been correlated with academic decline and reduced attention span. The screen has turned society into spectators rather than thinkers. Unless regulated, digital overexposure will continue to hollow out the social fabric that books once so carefully wove.

Perhaps the most alarming dimension of the screen epidemic is its effect on children's health. According to WHO (2023), nearly 28% of Pakistan school children suffer from short sightedness due to prolonged use of screens daily. Blue light from digital devices causes eye strain, blurred vision and dry eyes, a condition known as "computer vision syndrome", which leads to sleep disorder among children. The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends that children's screen time should be limited to no more than two hours daily, yet studies show many Pakistani children over spend time of about five hours on digital devices, especially during online schooling. Physical activity has declined, resulting

in obesity and poor posture. In contrast, reading printed books reduces glare exposure and encourages concentration without harming eyesight. It promotes calm reflection and imagination, qualities essential for cognitive development.

It also has effect Education. As, Education is the Backbone of nation-building, yet it deeply depends on depth, not devices. It has become digitalised but shallow as student rely on summaries and short notes but not deep reading which enhances their logical and analytical abilities. Decline in book reading results in poor comprehension which leads to poor creativity and analytical skills. OECD (2024) reports that Nation with screen centric education show lower literary and innovation. In Pakistan, the cultur of book reading is collapsing day by day as public library membership have fallen by 60% over the last two decades. A nation cannot progress on borrowed thoughts. Books donot just inform; they transform and only through transformation can a nation rise.