Meet Aaj and Kal, two young men in Pakistan. Aaj (meaning “Today”) is from a humble background and believes in working hard, while Kal (meaning “Tomorrow”) is the complete opposite. Their beliefs and decisions put them on different pathways with opposite effects on their lives, the environment, and society.

The story of Aaj Kal ka Zamana (The Times of Aaj and Kal) personifies the two paths Pakistan can take as it is coming of age – one of change and success, and one of business as usual – and how youth can help shape a better future for their country.

Learn more about Pakistan’s future paths in a World Bank report Pakistan@100: Shaping the Future, which discusses what it will take to boost and sustain growth and transform Pakistan into a strong upper middle-income country by 2047, when it turns 100 years old.

Download the Pakistan@100: Shaping the Future report at worldbank.org/PakistanAt100

#PakistanAt100 #AimingHigh
I've told you pesky beggars for the last time that I- oh?

Hello! Our house has been blessed with a beautiful baby boy! Please, have a box of sweets from us to celebrate in our happiness.

Sir, wasn't your son born today as well?

I can't believe you forgot the sweet boxes!!!

But sir! You didn't tell me about the sweet boxes!

You absolutely can't leave until you've seen our beautiful, humble home.

Tap tap tap!

Huh!
THESE CURTAINS ARE SPECIALLY IMPORTED! ONLY THE FINEST VELVET FOR MY HOUSE!

AND THIS SOFA! PLEASE ADMIRE THE CRAFTSMANSHIP, AND LOOK HOW SOFT IT IS!

AND THIS...

... IS A PORTRAIT OF MY GREAT GREAT GRANDFATHER! HE PRACTICALLY STARTED THIS TOWN ON HIS OWN.

OH DEAR ME, IT IS QUITE LATE JUST LOOK AT THE TIME. I’VE GOT PLACES TO BE, MY APOLOGIES! OKAY BYE BYE!

OH! THAT IS ONE REALISTIC PORTRAIT YOU HAVE THERE.
I could’ve sworn I had more boxes...

Oh that slimy little snake!

One second! I’ll be right there.

A hearty congratulations from our family! My employer recently had a baby boy...

One second! I’ll be right there.

A hearty congratulations from our family! My employer recently had a baby boy...

One second! I’ll be right there.

A hearty congratulations from our family! My employer recently had a baby boy...

The story of the sweet boxes was retold many a time, with each family telling their own version of the story.

The little con artist had the nerve to reap the fruits of our hard labour!

You should’ve seen his face when I chased him down the street with my broom!

My child, when you get an opportunity to make your life easier, you take it! Just wait and let things come to you, or in this scenario, the sweets.
The two took different lessons from each story yet through all that, they grew up to be fast friends.

I'm not running a charity here! You better work harder if you want that internship letter!

Kal's family told it from the viewpoint of taking advantage of an opportunity as it arises.

Aaj was taught that taking shortcuts never works out... you're going to do great things; all this hard work will pay off.

Dropping out of university may have been a blessing in disguise. I know you'll run this shop well and make us proud! I can retire easily now!

... as in the end those shortcuts always catch up to you.
PRESENT DAY

WELCOME MADAM!
WELCOME TO MY HUMBLE SALON!
PLEASE, COME IN!!
COME IN!

I'M JUST A SIMPLE BUTCHER, I DON'T KNOW WHAT THESE STYLES MEAN! DIDN'T YOU ENROLL IN CLASSES?

NOPE! I USED ALL THAT CASH FOR A MUSIC PLAYER! WHO NEEDS CLASSES IN HAIR CUTTING?

JUT A SIMPLE BANG STYLE.
YOUR MOTHER RECOMMENDED THIS SALON TO MINE SO YOU BETTER NOT DISAPPOINT, I'VE GOT A VERY IMPORTANT JOB INTERVIEW AT THE BANK LATER TODAY!

I'M SO SORRY ABOUT THIS, OUR STYLIST IS MORE BUTCHER THAN BARBER, HE'S STILL TRAINING!
PLEASE TAKE A SEAT AND I'LL FIX IT UP FREE OF COST, IT'S THE LEAST WE CAN DO.

BANG ... THAT'S GOT TO BE IT, IT MAKES SENSE. HEH, OH WELL.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
YOU'VE RUINED MY HAIR! YOU LITTLE CHEAT!

YOU'VE BUTCHERED MY HAIR! I'LL MAKE SURE THIS PLACE NEVER CUTS AGAIN!!
Thank you! It’s not what I had in mind, but it’s actually a pretty good style. You clearly have talent since you fixed it from the train wreck before!

I feel like my talents lie elsewhere, but you’re welcome ma’am!

Please, call me Parsaun.

I’m never coming here again!!

They’re going to make so much fun of me at school.

Kal wait! Your whole family, your late parents, they spent their whole life in that house! You grew up in it...

Are you sure you want to sell it just like that? Think about what you’re doing for a second.

My family left me this house because they wanted me to live a better life. I’m just honoring their wishes!
Wait! Nephew! You’re being too hasty with spending your savings!

You’re living on borrowed time at this rate! You’ll be living on borrowed money soon!

Oh Kal! What a surprise!

Are you here to apply? It’ll be awesome having you on the team.

I can put in a good word for you with Parsaun, she’ll love bossing you around!

You guys need to stop working so hard and live a little! At this rate, you’ll get old before your time.

I can’t work a bank job anyway, I’ll die of boredom. I don’t know how you two do it.

You’re telling me that after all this and investing all this money, all I can afford are two measly silk carpets?!

Why do I, a common citizen have to pay taxes in the first place?! Pfft!

We’re always scammed by our government! The nerve! Plus these bankers? More like thieves!!
Hey! Watch it you blind—

Oh I'm terribly sorry, this was my mistake!

The name's Jee. Double Jee! Double the Jees, double the cash!

Sorry I was in a rush, I'm actually the head of an investment company and was on my way to deposit all this cash into my client's account.

That's what all these banks say too and then you're left with nothing at the end!

Pfft banks? All they do is talk! Me?

I walk the walk! See this? I double my client's money in the first month. Guaranteed!

This is it Kal! Your moment's finally here!

No hard work! No heavy thinking! Just lots and lots of... Money!!!
KAL! WAIT!

KAL!!

STOP! I NEED TO SPEAK TO YOU! YOU'RE MAKING A BIG MISTAKE. DON'T YOU KNOW WHO THAT IS?

NOT NOW AAO! I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING, SO BE A BUSYBODY SOMEWHERE ELSE! MR JEE, LET'S HAVE A LITTLE CHAT.

BUT...

NO GOOD WILL COME OF THIS, MY FRIEND!

THAT'S THE INFAMOUS DOUBLE JEE... HE'S ALREADY SWINDLED SO MANY INNOCENT PEOPLE OF THEIR HARD EARNED MONEY...

WE ALL THOUGHT HE'D DISAPPEARED BUT CLEARLY HE'S OUT IN SEARCH OF MORE VICTIMS TO SCAM...

MONEY!

CARS!

HOUSES!

FAME!

HUZZAH!! I'M SOLD!
I'm so glad you talked me into taking this job, we can actually make a difference here.

You left your job at the bank knowing the current job situation just to help people. Always working hard without giving up... I'm so proud of you.

For as long as I've known you, you've always wanted to help people. Case in point, you fixing my hair all those years ago.

It's the least I can do, I know that no one is going to hand me anything for free. Might as well make the best of a situation and work to my full potential.
Who says you need to pay someone to design and build a house. Free material and willpower is all you need!

I’ll live like a king!
Goodbye old friend! Take care!

Ah he’ll be back, they all come back in the end!

Two years later

Goodbye Kal! Wish us luck in the big city! We’re so excited!

I can’t believe all my hard work paid off!

Kal,

I’ve known you since you were a young boy and even now you are too carefree. You need to be more responsible especially with your family depending on you.

I’ve seen everyone I know leave this place “for greener prospects.” Me? I’m going to stay here because I have a plan that’ll put an end to all my problems!

I’ll make the greener prospects come to me!
Well that takes care of that!

You must be joking!!

You thief!

Jackpot! I don't need some big fancy city job to change my life!

You think you can run this scam in my town? I'd better not see you here again, you little runt!
Especially someone like Kal who won’t be able to keep up this carefree lifestyle forever.

This project has helped so many. I see it changing everything around me but our old neighbourhood... it’s just getting worse.

Most of the people there have all but left save for a few... I worry for those left behind.

Change is powerful which is why people fear it. Sometimes it is painful and other times, great, but it only happens if one takes charge.

You cannot help someone who doesn’t want to be helped, remember that.

But, someone needs to figure out a way to make them take charge...

Especially someone like Kal who won’t be able to keep up this carefree lifestyle forever.

Aaj, it fills my heart with joy to see the life you’ve made for yourself, your family, and everyone around you. You always were such a thoughtful person... even when you were young.

Thank you grandmother...

What’s wrong? You look troubled.
CHILDREN, GET INSIDE...

IS THIS A SCHOOL THEY’RE RUNNING?!! ARE YOU KIDS SURE IT’S NOT SOME FIVE STAR HOTEL?!

ALRIGHT, YOU, YOU AND YOU ARE GOING TO SCHOOL! AS FOR MY GIRLS... UMM... EARLY SUMMER BREAK FOR YOU!

YAY!!

BOO!

BABA! OUR THROATS HURT!! YOU SAID SUMMER VACATION WAS SUPPOSED TO BE FUN!!
We need to go to the doctor!

Pfft! Doctor? More like frauds! All they do is prescribe some fancy medicine laced with sugar and toxic chemicals!

Never fear kids, "Doctor" Kal is here!

Turmeric, milk, and red chili! Perfect for clogged noses!

Boiled beetroots! Good for the stomach!

The ripest onion you can find! Perfect for breaking a fever!

Who knew raising children was this hard?!

Who knew! A rush, I’m actually the head of an investment company… Oh wait! It’s you! Already done this with you!

Seeds for you! See? We don’t need a doctor! Now everyone relax, I’m going out for a bit. Feel better!

The government and their geo-engineering! It never used to be this cold! Ooff!

As I recall, you gave it to me willingly. You made your choices kid, now live with them.
Curse this government!
They've never done anything for me!

Well, at least the kids are spending the night at Uncle's place and won't complain about this!

So this is what's become of my existence, can't catch a break!

Pfft, life is always out to get me.

Finally, some warmth!

Time for some much needed rest...need my strength, the bridge toll won't collect itself!

What to do... what to do...

Aaj! We need to get to Azaadabad! The pollution situation is getting out of hand, there are reports of massive fires that are setting the garbage mounds alight!

At this rate, we won't have much time before those poor people are beyond help!

What has become of this place?!
This is worse than the report!

Oh well, this explains a lot! I should have known it would be my old friend up to no good.

Kal!
Open the door Kal! I know you're in there!

Get back! I've got this.

Hello old friend! Planting more trees huh? Mind if I borrow some to build a sign for my bridge? I sure could use the money... you know... bills and all!
How could you let yourself sink this low?! How could you be so selfish? You have lost your home and your respect.

I had no choice, no one helped me when things went bad, especially the government! I was content with my salon, but the people and their horrible taste in hairstyles drove me out of business. Then I got swindled out of all my money! I had to find a way to make ends meet!

What's next, your family, your life? You had everything and now you have nothing!

No more excuses old friend. You have a choice now. Either you take these saplings and plant them to make a difference, or take the axe and continue down this path of destruction to no end.
It is all in your hands now, Kal. I cannot keep watching over and helping someone who does not want to take an ounce of responsibility for their own destiny.

Goodbye, old friend.

And so ends the tale...

Of Aaj and Kal...

I...I know what I must do now....
THE CHOICE IS YOURS!

Learn more about Pakistan’s future paths in a World Bank report Pakistan@100: Shaping the Future, which discusses what it will take to boost and sustain growth and transform Pakistan into a strong upper middle-income country by 2047, when it turns 100 years old.

Download the Pakistan@100: Shaping the Future report at worldbank.org/PakistanAt100

#PakistanAt100 #AimingHigh
This comic book has been developed by the World Bank in partnership with Department for International Development (UK) and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia).