



Genre Analysis: Move Structure in Letters to Editor from English Newspapers of Pakistan

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Abstract: *Genre and genre analysis are considered to be important constituents of Discourse Analysis. This paper presents the results of the genre analysis and move structure in a corpus of letters to editors from three leading English newspapers of Pakistan, The Dawn, The Nation and Daily Times. It was observed in the analysis that the letters to the editor normally contain six moves having different steps in each move. The first move tends to have heading and salutation in it and the last carries personal details of the writer such as name and the address. The moves in the middle usually have reference, response, narration of the incident or statement of the problem, presentation of facts and figures, argument for or against the notion and suggestion or opinion. It is also found that some of the letters have some minor variations in their steps, which are presented using A, B and C options. It is hoped that with this analysis of move structure of letters to editors, the result of the current study may serve as a basic guideline for the novice writers to produce a proper letter to editor for publication.*

Key words: Discourse Analysis, Genre Analysis, Move and Structure, Pakistani English Newspapers, Leech and Short.

Introduction

This paper discusses what is genre and genre analysis in various contexts as perceived by linguists and discourse analysts. It will highlight the concept of move structure in different genres of language generally and letters to the

editor specifically. The corpus for the analysis of move structure in letters to editor has been collected from three leading English newspapers of Pakistan. Keeping in view the previous research in the same area (Swales 1990; Paltridge 1994; Bhatia 2008a) move structure in letters to editors; moves in the sampled corpus will be formed. It will be observed, analysed and described that the formed moves are found in the corpus sampled for the same purpose.

Literature Review

Genre and genre analysis

Genre and genre analysis are considered to be important constituents of Discourse Analysis. Many linguists and discourse analysts comprehensively and interestingly define and describe the terms, genre and genre analysis. It is argued that written language is used for action, information and entertainment. These various purposes of written language are reflected in the characteristics of the text. For example poetry is different from research article and a hard news item is different from letters to editor. Such differences are made clear when we consider the concept of genre analysis. It is stated that such differences can also be highlighted at the level of sentence and text structure (Halliday 1985). Martin (1984) defines genre as a purposeful social process through which the culture of its language is highlighted. Genre can be associated with different contexts, like folklore studies, literary studies, rhetoric and in linguistics (Swales 1990). In linguistics genre analysis is a vital part of text analysis especially in the realm of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and it has particular focus on academic writing (Swales 1981; 1990, cited in Dudley-Evans 1994). Nunan (1993) argues that the term was initially used for types of literary discourse such as romance, tragedy and sonnet. Genre can be identified by the type of discourse shape and generic structure.

With the passage of time certain changes have occurred in the concept and meaning of genre. Lately the functional linguists have reconceptualised the word genre. Genre is described as different types of communicative events (Martin 1984; Swales 1990 cited in Nunan 1993). This further illustrates that these different kinds of communicative events formulate different kinds of discourse. And each type of discourse will have its distinctive features. Some of these events become political speeches and others religious sermons. However, each political speech or sermon will have something in common and each of it will have some different characteristics which will

set them apart from other discourse types.

Georgakopoulou and Goutsos (1997) argue that “the genre is essentially a classificatory concept, referring to a class of communicative events, the participants in which share a certain set of conventions defined in terms of formal, functional and contextual properties”. Every society has a set of less popular and more popular genres. And this development is never static; it keeps on growing and is subject to change. Genres are never fixed and rigid. They should be considered as dynamic compositions of text and its context. The popularity of one genre over other is mostly due to social and technological changes. Each society also sets a particular nomenclature for such genres, like science fiction, romantic comedy, text books, and media texts etc. It is observed that genre analysis is a very helpful way of “constructing, organizing and interpreting meaning” (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos, 1997).

Move and Move Structure

The early work on move and move structure was done by Swales (1990) on the research article. He argues move structure was initiated in the introduction part of research article. Moves and Steps were highlighted in the model of ‘CARS’ (Creating a research space) (Swales 1990). This model captures the ways in which academic writers justify and highlight their own contribution to the on-going research profile of the field by first establishing a topic for the research and summarising the key features of the previous research, then establishing a gap or possible extension of that work that will form the basis of the writers’ claims. The model proposes three main Moves for the introduction and a number of Steps are used to express each move:

Move 1: Establishing a Territory

Step1: Claiming Centrality and/or

Step 2: Making Topic Generalizations and/or

Step 3: Reviewing Items of Previous Research

Move 2: Establishing a Niche

Step 1A: Counter Claiming or

Step1B: Indicating a Gap or

Step 1C: Question Raising or

Step1D: Continuing a Tradition

Move 3: Occupying the Niche

Step 1A: Outlining Purposes or

Step1B: Announcing Present Research

Step 2: Announcing Principal Findings

Step 3: Indicating Research Article Structure (Swales 1990)

Move is “a configuration of optional and obligatory elements of structure for each genre” (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 1997). Dudley-Evans (1994) that genre analysis emphasises on the structure of moves. It is argued that moves are used to divide text into different sections and to develop arguments in the given text. The framework of genre analysis maintains that the structure of written text can be thought of in terms of moves and steps. “Move is a bounded communicative act meant to achieve one main communicative intention that helps fulfil the overall communicative purpose of the genre; and step is a smaller functional unit under the of move to help realize the communicative intention of the move” (Feng, H and Shi, Li., 2004)

Bhatia (2008a) presents seven different moves in the ‘letter genre’ given below:

- 1 Looking back
- 2 Identifying important themes
- 3 Elaboration on themes
- 4 Expectation and promises
- 5 Expression of gratitude
- 6 Looking forward
- 7 Positive and Polite closing

A fundamental assumption of all these move-based models is that they are common to all academic disciplines. It is noted that the different steps may be used in different disciplines, but it is also suggested that many of these steps will be widely distributed across the disciplinary areas (Swales 1990).

The concept of genre in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) assumes that, “A genre is a means of achieving a communicative goal that has evolved in response to particular rhetorical needs and that a genre will change and evolve in response to changes in those needs”. As cited in (Miller (1984) and Martin (1989), cited in Dudley-Evans (1994).

Bhatia (2008b) states that genre analysis has been variously discussed within the general backdrop of contextual factors emerging from relevant professional practices and cultures in British traditions.

Studies of professional genres and professional practices are invariably seen as complementing each other, in that they not only influence each other but are often co-constructed in specific professional contexts. However, professional genres have been analysed in isolation, leaving the study of professional practice almost completely out, except as providing context for specific analyses, thus undermining the role of indiscursivity in professional genres and practices. (Bhatia , 2008b).

Paltridge (1994) highlights two main approaches of genre analysis; on one hand it is argued that have ‘linguists and language educators’ who aim to focus on systemic or Hallydian insights of genre analysis and on the other there are few other linguists in the field of foreign language learning and teaching who look at genre analysis with the perspective of English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Move Structure in Letters to Editor

Methodology

Corpus of media texts, letters to editor, was collected from three leading English newspapers (The Dawn, The Nation and Daily Times) of Pakistan. The move structure of the letters to the editors has been formed in lines with Swales’ (1990) CARS model and studies of Bhatia (2008a). Thirteen (13) letters to editor were randomly selected to apply on and analyse the formed move structure with description. The sampled corpus is given numbers (letters: 1 to 13); the letters are referred with numbers in the description and analysis section. The titles and numbers are given below.

1. Garbage, garbage everywhere
2. English language complex
3. A swing to the right
4. Swat is just a symptom
5. Women in Pakistan

6. Neutral expert subverts the IWT
7. Clean Siachen, Green Siachen
8. Who bothers to admit?
9. Hate, fear and hope
10. Decline of Cinema
11. The enemy within
12. Culture of ad hocism in KU
13. Encroachment by buses and hawkers

The formed move structure in the letters to editor is given in the table below

Table 1: Move structure in the letters to editor (Dawn Newspaper)

No.	Moves with Steps
1	Beginning Step:1 Heading Step:2 Salutation
2	Background Step:1 Reference Step:2 Response Step:2(A) Response to a news item/report OR Step:2(B) Response to an editorial OR Step:2(C) Response to a previous letter to editor OR Step:2(D) Response to a previous article
3	Sharing Step:1 Personal experience or problem OR Step:1(A) Narrating event/incident/story OR Step:1(B) Appreciating any statement/decision
4	Arguments and Facts Step:1 Presenting arguments, Facts and Figures Step:1(A) Presenting argument in favour of the notion OR Step:1(B) Presenting argument against the notion OR Step:1(C) Presenting facts and figures
5	Solution/Conclusion Step:1 Suggestion Step:2 Presenting an appeal/request/hope Step:3 Giving personal/general opinion
6	Personal details Step:1 Name and Address

Analysis and Findings

It is observed that step 1 of move 1 (Heading) is explicitly found in all

letters, all of them are having a captivating heading; some of the headings are short and pithy such as 'English language complex', 'Garbage, garbage everywhere', 'Women in Pakistan' and 'Hate, fear and hope'. While in others it is noticed that they contain more than three words and form a sort of phrase. It can be argued that step 1 of move 1 seems to be a very short introduction of the text for readers.

Step 2 of move 1 is not 'obligatory', it appears to be 'optional' (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 1997). It is observed that this step is found in the corpus collected from the newspaper 'Daily Times'. It is seen in letters no. 3,4,5,6 and 7; the remaining texts do not commonly follow the salutation. However, this may be considered, as an integral and indispensable part of the letters to editor therefore remains unmentioned.

Move 2 has got 2 steps, step 1 is used in almost all the letters hence performs the function of informing readers about the background of the story. It can be considered optional as it is not found in all the texts. It is obligatory in the letters which are written in continuation of any previous letter or issue on the same topic. This step may be seen in letters 2,3,4,6,9,11 and 13. Except letter no. 13, which starts with step 1 of move 2 with words like "the confessions by Minister of Culture", all other letters this step either begins with words like "this is in apropos of" or "this is in response to". In letter no. 6 this step begins like "I refer to".

Step 2 of move 2 has got four parts, some letters contain A, some B, some C and remaining texts contain D. This step describes the response to already published news item, news report, editorial, letter to editor, or any article in the same newspaper. Part A is observed in letters no. 7, 8, and 12, part B in 3 and 11, part C in 6 and 2 and part D is seen in 4 and 9.

Move 3 is interesting and complex, its steps seem to occupy vital place in the text. The essence of the letter lies in move 3. It states the experience or problem of the writer and narrates any general event or incident. It can be safely said that move 3 has got all the writer writes for. Move 3 has got 3 optional steps; A B and C. Letter no. 1 and 13 in paragraph 1 of their texts talk about writer's personal experience and the troubles he is coming across, it can therefore be called as step 1 in move 3. Whereas, step 2 of move 3 is observed in letters no. 1, 7, 8, 12 and 13. Step 3 of the same move is noticed in letter no. 11 in first line with words like "I commend for...."

Move 4 consists of 3 steps; these steps highlight arguments in favour or against and facts and figures used in the texts. Letters no. 5, 7, and 12 give

statements and arguments in support of the notion raised in letter, whereas letters 2,3,4,6,8,11 and 13 present argument against the notion. It can be observed that majority of the letters written to editor are directed to go against the notion and therefore portray dissatisfaction or disagreement on the part of reader. Facts and figures are also important to present a clear and convincing picture in the letter to editor. Letters no. 1, 6, 8 and 12 present facts and figures hence seem to have C part of step 1 of move 4.

Move 5 is divided in 3 steps e.g suggestion, opinion and request/appeal/hope. Letters no. 2,3,4,6,8,11 and 13 share writers' opinion about the issues discussed in letters. Writers somehow convey their personal opinion to readers in direct and indirect ways. Appendices no.1, 2, 5, and 8 present suggestions to be considered either by higher authorities or concerned departments for solving the problems raised by public or individuals. It is also observed that some of the writers instead of giving suggestion and being assertive rely on the request/appeal/hope mode, they request the people in charge to help in solving the problem or they sometimes turn for rather more polite way and use words like 'appeal' and 'plead'. One category of writers opts for 'hopes', keep their fingers crossed and leave the decisions to high-ups and super natural powers. Step 3 of move 5 is shown in letters no. 1, 7,9,12 and 13, all these letters present phrases which can be considered as arguments consisting request/appeal and hope.

Move 6, like step 1 of move 1 is obligatory; it gives the personal details of the writer which include his name and address. It is observed that all the sampled letters have this move. This move identifies and authenticates who has written the letter and where from it has been sent.

Conclusion

We have presented the analysis of the genre and move structure in a corpus of letters written to editors in three leading English dailies of Pakistan. The current study was based on Swales (1990) CARS model that was initially used for the realm of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) with its particular focus on academic writing. It has been observed that the analysis of the study offers writing strategies to the novice writers and students of discourse studies. The findings reveal that the letters to the editors are not as uniform as they appear but there are many similarities found among the majority of the sampled corpus, which are termed as their moves. The steps and sub-steps found in the letters have some variations too, which shows the variety

of the content and ideas presented by writers. It should be noted that our study is of the letters written to editors of only three English newspapers therefore we cannot make generalization concerning the editorial letter genre as a whole. Nevertheless we believe that our study may go some way towards demystifying the writing process of editorial letter written for newspapers and contribute towards the nature and function of the genre in question. At least we now have a baseline against which further research can be carried out in the same genre and the same context.

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Appendices

Hate, fear and hope

April 18, 2008 The Nation

This is in response to Mowahid Hussain Syed's article, "Hate, Fear and Hope" in The Nation on April 7, 2008. One can argue against certain well known premises which were initiated publicly and drawn by the Zionist/Western international financiers/media managers to such dizzying heights for today's make-believe world, that modern world/enlightened and moderate, and misguided members of humanity at large is completely duped. Thus perpetuating "Hate, fear and no hope" on the down trodden wretched children's of the lesser gods of this world. Zionist/Western policy-makers can strive to destroy/dominate to the last Sinew at their command but I am certain that the Almighty Allah who miraculously pronounced by creating "Pakistan" on the 27th of Ramadan/ 15th of August 1947" that the tide has turned for good and in perpetuity for prosperity till the day of judgment. Inshallah.-

MIAN AZIZ-UI-HAQ QURESHI, Chief Coordinator, Nazaria-i-Pakistan Foundation, Lahore, April 17.

Decline of cinema

16 October 2010 The Nation

The confession by Minister of Culture that his efforts to promote Pakistani movies have failed highlights the need to focus on technology in the film industry and also the menace of piracy. In reality, our film industry is totally devoid of modern technology. The producers and directors try their level best to raise the standards but fail owing to this factor. Once they have the right kind of technology and facilities, then the time is not far when Pakistan's cinemas would be gathering huge crowds.

Safia Saghar, Karachi

The enemy within

September 29, 2010 Dawn

APROPOS of your editorial 'Aafia Siddiqui' (Sept 26), may I commend for

highlighting the duplicitous, subversive and potentially fatal role being played by the country's relentless and bloodthirsty enemy from within. Especially, the people of Pakistan must read and re-read and take heed from your stark warning stated in the last sentence of the editorial that after the story of Aafia eventually fades, "... Pakistan will be faced with an internal enemy it has not even begun to comprehend". Ominous words indeed, though I might add that we are facing such an enemy even now as we speak. As indicated in the editorial, the twin factors of denialism on our part, our incredible refusal to acknowledge the daylight reality that it's the Jihadists/Taliban who are indeed murdering and blowing up our men, women, children, soldiers, policemen and others, and our stupefying sympathy for the perpetrators of these atrocities on our people and country, a self-destructive sympathy induced by our deep religious beliefs and cultivated by the Taliban/Jihadists and their supporters, are mainly responsible for increasing this threat to dangerous, existential levels. We hope that not only the government, the army but all our citizens all across the land listen, learn and take concrete steps to counter this egregious threat from within.

DR TAUSIF KAMAL

Dallas

Culture of ad hocism in KU

October 26, 2010 Dawn

This is apropos of Faiza Ilyas's report 'Many Karachi University teachers working without remuneration' (Oct 18).

While, according to a notification issued, the staff was required to be kept minimum at the university level due to budgetary cuts, there seems to be a tradition in Karachi University that once a professor retires, he is appointed as adjunct professor.

He then serves for years and continues to draw high salaries and does not make room for junior permanent faculty members.

These retired professors have become a financial burden on the already limited resources of the university and are an obstacle in the path for young and enthusiastic teachers willing to start their careers.

Many young confirmed faculty members do not get an office or laboratory

space to conduct their research.

If this situation is not addressed in due course, there will be no fresh blood injected in the form of fresh professors.

How can one then expect a change to take place if the youth is discouraged?

I request the chancellor to take notice of this alarming situation and with one notification release all the retired adjunct professors and employ younger people to serve.

IMRAN AHMED, Karachi

Who bothers to admit?

October 19, 2010 The Nation

Sindh Home Minister Dr Zulfiqar Ali Mirza was quoted in a national newspaper as saying on Wednesday 6th October that visual monitoring must resume immediately because it helps instill fear in criminals and brings down the rate of crime in the city.

However, after the twin shrine attacks took place at the shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi, he altered his statement and claimed that the CCTV cameras that were recently installed near the crime scene “have nothing to do with this” incident.

One day before, he is insisting that the cameras be repaired, because it brings down the rate of crime in the city and the next, when the unfortunate incident occurs, he refuses to acknowledge that the absence of cameras had any part in it. How is that possible? Wouldn't surveillance and investigation of the criminals or the actual crime scene have been easier than it is now if the cameras had been there? But who bothers to admit any of this? Why we are so comfortable with passing the buck. It's just a long chain of people who want to save themselves, so they pass their guilt on to the next person without a full stop. Eventually, it has nothing to do with guilt anymore.

The interesting part is that no conclusion has ever been drawn and will never be if it remains the same and all we can do is complain. I'm only trying to draw the attention of the nation to our indifferent attitudes as a whole by referring to the above statement as only one example amongst many that we seem to ignore everyday, as we ourselves are engaged in it.

Accept it or not we are in a state of denial and I may sound harsh but too

much denial needs psychiatric consultation and the best therapy we can give ourselves is to take our own advice wrapped in our day-to-day complaining about how terrible things are here. Our own self-assessment, our acceptance of the harm we commit against humanity, animals and most importantly to our own country.

We need to get up and clean the mess we have been making for years instead of hiding. Admit it, accept it and then fix it. Some valuable words we need to add to our vocabulary.

ASMA HANIF, Karachi

English language complex

October 27, 2010 Dawn

THIS is apropos of Fazal Muhammad Khan's letter 'Language realities' (Oct 25). I agree with him when he says that students lose their identities and confidence when they are forced to read and write in the language that is not their mother tongue.

We all are well aware of the fact that learning the English language has become the dire need of today because it is internationally understood and spoken.

But we should not ignore one reality: the English language has also become more of a complex rather than a need.

Half of the lives of students are wasted in learning English while the other half is spent in trying to understand texts in course books which is in English.

One should take pride in speaking one's mother tongue.

AILYA MASROOR, Karachi

Garbage, garbage everywhere

September 29, 2010 Dawn

WHILE passing through the main road of Clifton, whenever I reach old Clifton Bridge I am horrified by the heap of garbage, which include construction debris, on an open plot, just adjacent to the site of luxury Datari Villas.

The sense of pity and sadness which must have been felt by every commuter crossing this important thoroughfare for the people living in Bath Island and Clifton — once considered to be posh localities of the metropolis.

This open plot of more than 4,000 square yards was once used by children for playing cricket in the evening. Interestingly this road is used by the governor, the chief minister and the chief secretary of the province and others.

What saddens me more is that the people living in the surrounding — who come from rich or upper middle class strata — have chosen to keep quiet.

This is the very spot where in 2004 the terrorists attacked the motorcade of Commander V Corps (Karachi), killing at least six people and injuring 10. A bomb was also planted in the debris of the plot but fortunately could not be detonated as it was defused on time.

I hope the authorities will take immediate action and cleanse the plot of garbage and also ensure action against those who have turned this site into a garbage dump. In case the plot is a government property, it should be converted into a beautiful park and a play ground for children, who are now playing cricket on the roads putting their life at risk.

LIAQAT ALLY AGHA, Karachi

Encroachment by buses and hawkers

October 24, 2010 Dawn

I RESIDE near the Cantonment Station in Civil Lines where private transport buses (travelling from Karachi to other parts of the country) and some fruit carts have occupied at least 50 per cent of the road outside the station (from the Federal Public School to the Clifton Lilly Bridge), as a result of which traffic jams are often caused.

All this causes a host of problems for pedestrians, drivers and people waiting for mini-buses.

Besides, ambulances, which are headed for the nearby Jinnah Post-graduate Medical College, also get stuck in traffic jams, putting patients life at risk.

Therefore, I appeal to the authorities concerned to remove all illegal encroachments made by private bus owners and fruit-cart owners as soon as possible.

S. AMAR, Karachi

Neutral expert subverts the IWT

6 March 2007 Daily Times

Sir: I refer to the letter dated 02/03/07 by Mr Sircar on my article on the Baglihar verdict. He is right in contending that annexure D, section 8, para (d) and (e) of the Indus Waters Treaty does not forbid the construction of a gated spillway provided it is consistent with a “sound and economical design and satisfactory construction and operation of the works”. However, he conveniently forgets to mention that while undertaking such an exercise India is under obligation to see to it that the “bottom level of the gates in normal closed position [is] located at the highest level”. Incidentally, the treaty permits the construction of a gated spillway as an exception rather than a rule, as borne out by the proviso that it is to be constructed if “necessary”.

Now what India has done is that instead of following the provisions of the IWT by constructing the spillway gates at the highest level it has, under the garb of controlling flood and silt, constructed spillway with submerged gates. This is contrary to the provisions of the IWT as it gives India the handle to interrupt the flow of the water at critical junctures, which can spell disaster for Pakistan’s agriculture. The plea of most modern globally accepted technological practices as a justification of the kind of spillway that India has constructed can only be accepted in international law if it is compatible with the object and purpose of the IWT.

Mr Sircar contends that the object and purpose of the IWT is to allow the equitable distribution of water resources between Pakistan and India. It is true that the IWT deals with equitable distribution but makes it subservient to the imperative of protecting Pakistan from India by making it obligatory on the latter to “let flow all the waters” and not to “permit any interference with these waters”. The foregoing object and purpose is also borne out when we look at the circumstances that led to the conclusion of the IWT.

India as upper riparian never had any problem with the use of waters of the rivers that flow through its territory as it could do what it liked with them. As opposed to it, Pakistan as lower riparian was terribly apprehensive of the Indian intentions as India was bent upon appropriating these waters as demonstrated in 1948 when it stopped their flow towards Pakistan. It was in this background that the IWT was drawn up that awarded the Eastern

Rivers to India and unrestricted use of the Western Rivers to Pakistan. India was allowed limited use over the waters of the Western Rivers but was put under the obligation not to interfere with their flow and a complex dispute settlement procedure for this purpose was put in place. This shows the overriding consideration that the IWT attaches to object and purpose of protecting the lower riparian.

Mr. Sircar justifies the neutral expert's upholding of the principle of *ex aequo et bono* in reaching the verdict on the dispute. He is also wrong there because the neutral expert under international law is not entitled to found his decision on the foregoing principle unless expressly mandated by the parties in dispute. This is so because if a judge were to ignore the sanctity of the text of a treaty and decide according to his own good judgment that would make the adjudicative process uncertain which in turn will scare the parties away from it. In any case, since neither India nor Pakistan authorised the neutral expert to decide according to this principle, he had no business to do so.

IJAZ HUSSAIN, Islamabad

Clean Siachen, Green Siachen

6 March 2007 Daily Times

Sir: This letter is with reference to a recent news item in which it was mentioned that the Indian Army is waging war on a different enemy i.e. tonnes of rubbish scattered over the ice. The Indian Army has launched a 'Clean Siachen, Green Siachen' campaign to clean the glacier. The news item has also caught the attention of the international media which is of the view that the glacier, currently troubled by global warming, would be a great asset to the world. It was the Indians who first moved their forces into the glacier in the 80s without explaining why and how the encroachment of the glacier started and why they felt the need to clean their own mess. The Pakistan Army moved in to defend an area which belongs to Pakistan. It would be appreciated if the Indians clean up this glacier before their vacation ends.

KHURRAM KHAN, Rawalpindi

A swing to the Right

10 March 2010 Daily Times

Sir: Your editorial “Imran Khan and the Liberals” (March 9) was a bit unfair to Mr Khan. Granted that he was a liberal in his early life, and even during his middle years, what did this liberalism give him in return? A failed political career, loss of steam as a social worker and a celebrity, and even his first love — cricket — does not need him anymore. Is it any wonder, then, that he has swung to the Right with a vengeance, which is unsettling his old liberal friends? Imran Khan is a man with a heart of gold, but unfortunately, as a politician, he has reached his level of incompetence, as enunciated by the famous ‘Peter Principle’.

HAMZA KHAN, Lahore

Swat is just a symptom

9 March 2009 Daily Times

Sir: This is in response to Nasir Abbas Mirza’s article “How we lost Swat”. (Daily Times, March 9) I agree fully with the writer that the surrender of Swat to ‘god’s warriors’ is merely another symptom of the slow disintegration of the Pakistan state as it buckles under the weight of its own hypocrisy and self-delusion.

The Pakistan we know today is not even remotely akin to the Pakistan that our forefathers aimed to create. However, as a nation, we refuse to accept this fact. Our nation was not supposed to stand for the preferential treatment of a particular religious group. Yet it does. Our nation was never supposed to relegate women to second-class citizen status. That too it does. Our nation was supposed to abandon the caste system. Yet that very system is alive and well in Pakistan; the only difference is that the Christians and Hindus are the Shudars while the mullahs are the Brahmins. And yet we are ceding vast tracts of territory and countless citizens to the kangaroo courts and medieval ‘governance’ of a band of vigilantes whose qualifications for this position of power are the number of their guns and the lengths of their beards.

Thus the reality of Pakistan is not even remotely close to the founders’ dream. Unfortunately for us, the ideals of equality, tolerance and justice espoused by Jinnah do not match well with the goals of our rulers. A confused, intolerant and hateful population serves their purpose much better.

HASSAN KILDE BAJWA, Lahore

Women in Pakistan

10 March 2009 Daily Times

Sir: The organisations and groups that celebrated the World Women's Day on March 8 in Pakistan deserve appreciation. They did well to highlight, through various rallies and conferences, the plight of women in Pakistan and how much more needs to be done to bring them to an equal status in this country. While the rest of the world is far, far ahead of us in terms of gender equality, we are not even dealing with this as a serious issue. Much more needs to be done than just conferences and rallies on March 8 every year if we are to rescue the Pakistani woman from her plight and enable her to become a productive citizen of Pakistan.

SEHAR NAVEED

Lahore