

Emerging toxicity in social media

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It was not too long ago that we all somewhat knew what the next day would be like. A little surprise here and there kept them from getting dull and mundane. Before we all could even grasp the situation, the pandemic took over and removed our autonomy, which has left most of us with very little, actual interaction.

To compensate for the hollowness that has uneventfully come about, we have resorted to much heavier usage of social media. Towards the beginning, the participation was healthier, everyone preached productivity. Of course, there were critiques of that, too. With that, emerged critiques of those whose “unproductivity” had led to the emergence of the former type of critiques. Soon enough, social media validation started to matter more than reality. The validation that we crave has led to this amassed entitlement, always evident but never as valid as now. Scopes to channel personal frustrations opened up. Meaningless verbal altercations and fear mongering for personal amusement took up the news-feeds. Generalised jokes became personal, vicious jabs that targeted demographics at once. As if active victim-shaming was not already pernicious, passive victim-shaming erupted. Social media is about presumptuous and confounding entitlement now, more than ever.

We have mainly three types of memories; short-term, long-term, and sensory. Short-term memory is what we are thinking about now and are extremely unlikely to remember in the long run, while long-term memory is the information we remember for an extensive amount of time. Now, for any tidbit of information to become a long-term memory, it has to pass through the working memory. The meaningless gossips that take up our working memory disrupt

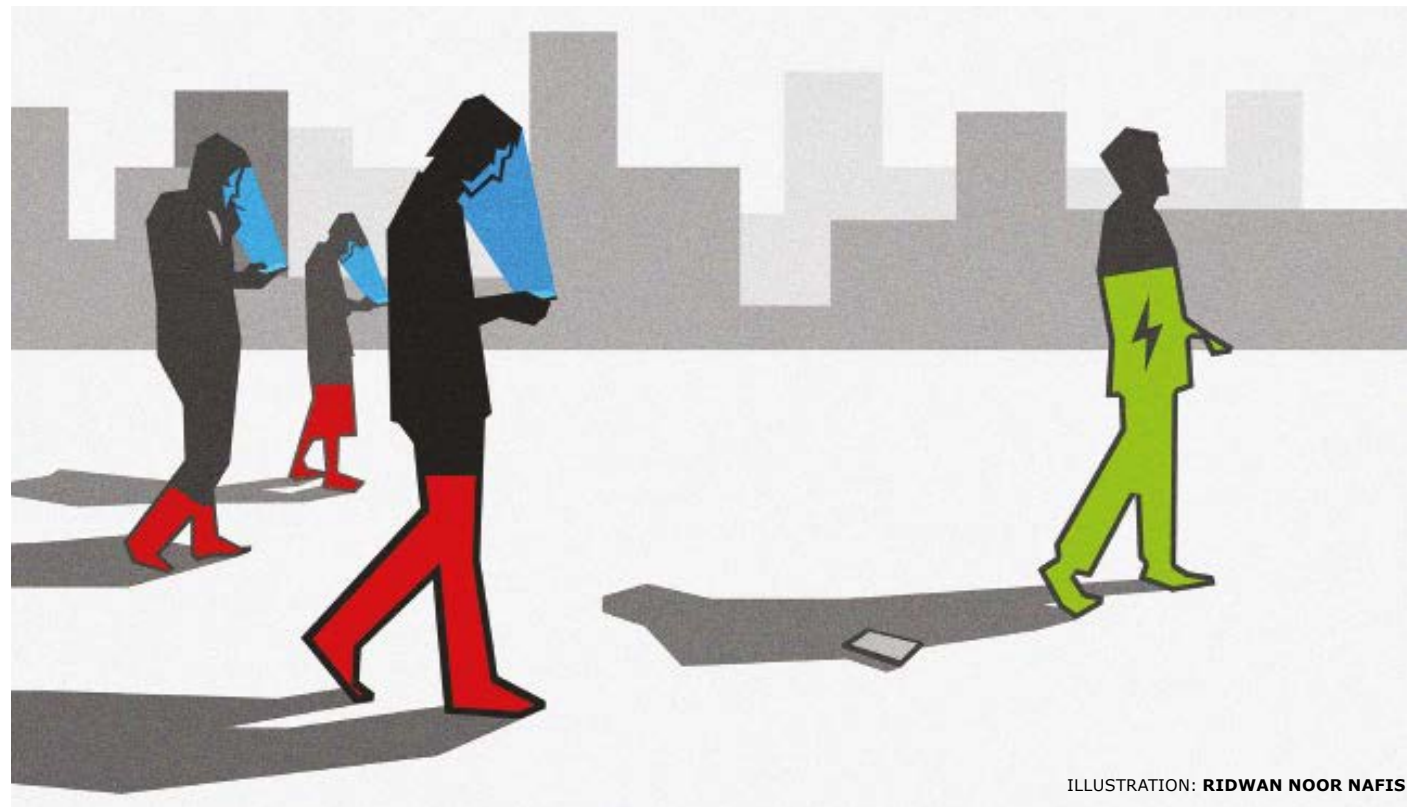


ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

the passageway, weakening comprehension. It effectively takes away from our understanding if the uncultured gossip we dignify as “tea” is even worth the consumption at all.

A more sophisticated version of “gossips”, in this context, is misinformation. “Misinformation on the coronavirus might be the most contagious thing about it,” Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says. However, the most harmful of all this misinformation is bad science; people with medical credentials causing unfounded terror among others. Social media is the easiest device for fear monger-

ing through misinformation. Panic diffuses among people with the aforementioned practice and causes dire psychological impacts (insomnia, mental fatigue, stress).

What we need now is social media detoxing. Voluntarily cancelling out the usage of social media cannot be that bad. In fact, the enduring relaxation due to detoxing will make us realise how much we needed this. Of course, no one is suggesting that we pull out of social media for good. However, giving ourselves a breather to focus on our life that certainly thrives without social-media-presence is also extremely important. It has become pertinent for many of us to take this into

consideration, for our own betterment.

References

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2. bbc.com (February 8, 2020). *WHO chief warns against ‘trolls and conspiracy theories’.*
3. scientificamerican.com (September 26, 2017). *How does short-term memory work in relation to long-term memory? Are short-term daily memories somehow transferred to long-term storage while we sleep?*

Aysha’s brain unclogs at the sight of a crown of raven curls. Don’t ask her what it is because she won’t tell at zaheenaysha10@gmail.com

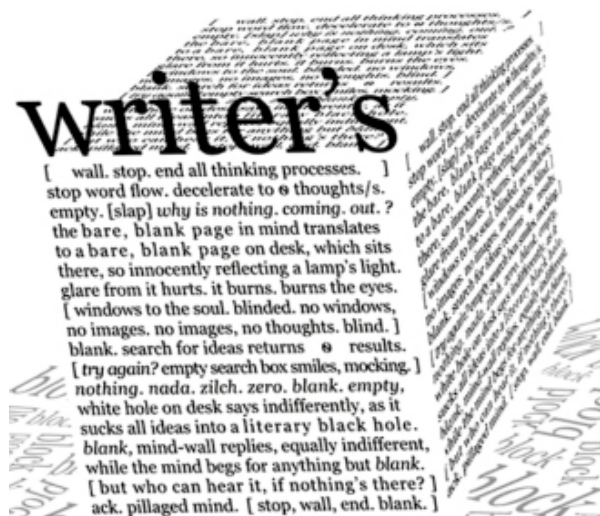
THE WRITER’S BLOCK-DOWN

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“Now that you have a lot of time in your hand, why don’t you write?” This is a question many writers and bloggers have faced, especially during this shutdown.

Writer’s block is something every writer goes through when they run out of inspiration. It’s a disdainful feeling of being stumped and dissatisfied. And this takes a whole new toll on writers now that they are stuck at home.

Home quarantine has given us a lot of time on our hands, but what people often tend to forget is that time is not the only thing a writer requires to write. You need inspiration, you need to *observe*. Brilliant write-ups stem from careful and active observation. There’s a difference between just researching and actively observing. When you are doing the latter, you try to understand and pinpoint what’s going on around you. You just don’t see and hear, you try to interpret the hows and whys and read between the lines. But when you are stuck inside four walls, it’s pretty difficult to observe new things. When you go to different places, you experience and observe so many things that help you generate innovative ideas. With the shutdown though, coming up with new ideas is really difficult.



Another thing that makes writer’s block more troublesome now is the present news consumption. If you refresh your news feed, then every time at least one new piece of information or news pops up. And the current,

depressing situation is an enemy on its own. Writers are humans too and they also need a sound mental health state to write anything. One might argue that the present circumstance is a good prompt itself, but often when writers are struggling with writing, they feel that whatever they think has been written or talked about already. This is almost always true but that’s where social interactions come in. The different ways of interacting with people is what sets apart two individuals facing the same situation. The amazing characters we read in books are all results of the writers using their interactions or/and experiences with people. It is how you perceive situations which gives you incentive to draft a work. So all in all, it’s a quite difficult phase right now.

However, as statistics go, writers are surfacing above these and publishing their work. Even if there aren’t always fresh out of the oven ideas, there are still topics to fill up the pages through a variety of lenses. So, next time you read something, know that the people behind it are trying their best despite the adversities to put out content that you would love.

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