

With great power, put great responsibility first

ROSHNI SHAMIM

As a child, I was always taught the merits of helping others in need. It is not uncommon to see that this ideology has been taught and upheld in endless households around us.

In teaching children to have good values and morals, one of the first things that are always emphasised to us has to do with the power of kindness. In most cases, this is an extremely valuable trait to have. For those who end up having an inbred notion of spreading kindness from an early age, it usually manifests as a positive trait even in adulthood. However, sometimes, this can bring its own ringing bells for the said individual.

The identifier problem in this scenario pertains to the idea of “happiness” that individuals form in their minds. It is an endless debate on what kind of goals eventually make us feel “happy” yet kindness remains as a stark denominator in most of these scenarios. After all, helping another person in need helps us feel accomplished; it’s like doing a good deed that nobody asked us to do. The end result therefore, makes us feel warm inside, thinking, “Hey, I helped someone out today for no other reason than to simply help them in their time of need.” All of it sounds great, of course. Most would even agree that regular acts of kindness are totally harmless and to a certain degree even philanthropic.

The issue arises when our boundaries begin to blur with the idea of “helping” others in need. A simple way to put it is in the example of how individuals feel when they are validated through their social media content, whether it be through likes, comments, reactions or shares. Every little click releases a little bit more of that serotonin in our systems to make us feel giddy and delighted. Along the same wavelength of thought, helping others can often become our own dose of induced serotonin. Our fixation with helping others becomes so encompassing that we begin to shelve our own pressing issues and problems, and that is where the real trouble starts.

This projection of burying our own issues by choosing to help others is not unheard of nor is it an uncommon practice. We all deal with our own worries in our own unique ways and for many that means to first, stay in denial of our personal issues and second, to then goad on that denial by fixating our concerns on other entities entirely. We have all grown up watching movies that romanticise characters who always put other people’s needs first. Subconsciously, we often attempt to follow similar pathways in our real lives. However, this can be an unsettling habit to practice especially if it means that the individual in question begins to make this lifestyle habit their primary source of happiness. This can lead to a sense of feeling lost in general with their own lives as well as not being able to find a solid direction of where they want to be in their future.

Therefore, it is important to remember that kindness is not a bad thing to practice regularly. It is the foundation of building humanity in societies and should always be taught as well as encouraged in children and adults alike. That does not however, and should not, diminish the acknowledgement of the more concerning manifestation here that individuals do just to find the escape from their own problems.

Roshni believes a steaming cup of tea can be the solution to most problems in life, save for math. Send Roshni your best math hacks and tips at roshni.shamim@gmail.com

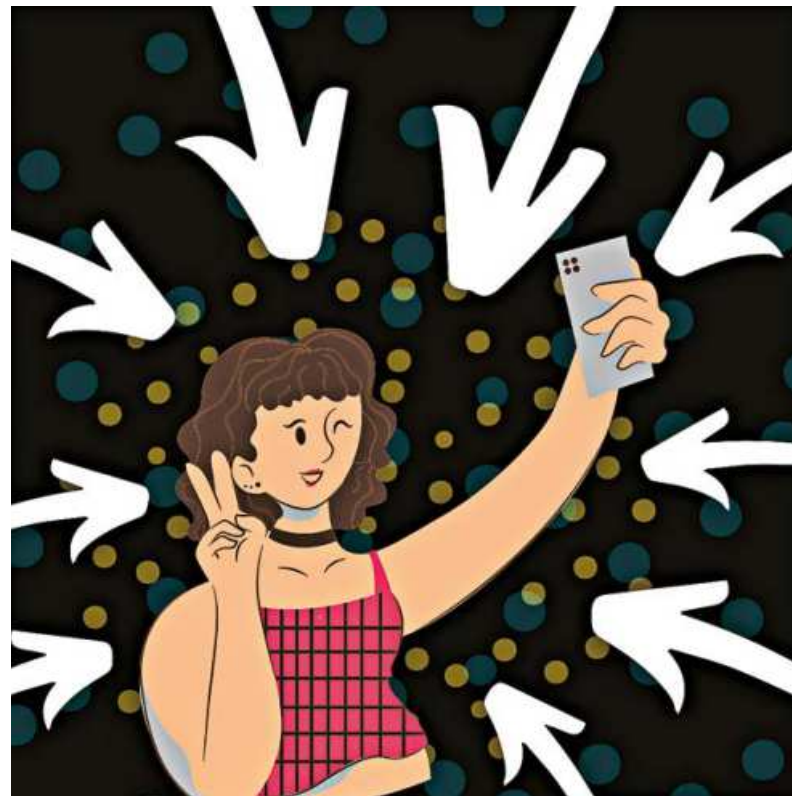


ILLUSTRATION: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

WE NEED TO TREAT OUR FEMALE CELEBRITIES BETTER

MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

There seems to exist a subsection of pages and people on social media whose work it is to ridicule and scrutinise the personal lives of any person who can be called a public figure under the loosest definitions of the term. That would’ve been fine, except, some things are really none of our business.

Scrolling through my feed, I hold my breath anytime a female public figure announces her marriage, a bold new career move, or even states her opinion on a particular matter. Why? Because like the larger framework of the patriarchal society it is a product of, our social media too, has been disproportionately unkind to women.

When our entertainment intake consists of both movies and the lives of those who make it, lines start to blur on what we can critique and pass a judgement on and what we cannot. As young and smart consumers of media, it is up to us to think every time we come across something posted by a troll page.

How do we spot problematic content?

If a post tries to shame or embarrass a person for the decisions they have taken in their personal life, it is problematic content. Pointing out the number of marriages or relationships a person has had, what clothes a person chooses to wear, or how one chooses to organise their family life are the best examples of things we should not pass a judgement on.

Is the post digging up dirt on something this person did years ago to make fun of it now? Do any of the photos being circulated seem like they were taken without the intention of them circulating on social media? Then we have to refrain from liking or sharing such posts and tell our friends that this isn’t funny.

Why? Remember, these aren’t just unfunny memes or jokes. These are products of our patriarchy. These posts are working to shame and pressurise women into confirmative behaviour all masquerading under the pretence of it being a funny Facebook post. Every time we support such a post, we are enabling people to control women and their actions.

So can we never talk about celebrities? Of course we can. As critical media consumers, we must know how to talk about a person respectfully and the fine line between critiquing someone’s work and bashing them for their choices.

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