

## Massive Increase of Totkas on Indian Social Media

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### 1. Introduction

Currently, the world is experiencing revolutionary changes. It is becoming more magical and unreal due to great expansion and revolutionary inventions of internet and technology. Currently, people like brief and effective messages in the fast and furious world. Reading bulky books has become a difficult task for them as they are pacing with time in their tightly-packed and roughly-planned life which is full of accidental events. Their busy schedule is reflected on their faces. Their communication, verbal or non-verbal is influenced largely by their stress and tension in current times. People like messages of social media in multiple forms. Social media literature is now available easily at a click of mouse or with the use of any finger of hand and scrolling any platform like YouTube, Twitter, Facebook etc. People like such literature because they can pass time reading or watching it anytime at any place including toilet or a place of worship.

If these kinds of audio-visual and textual material can be considered literature in broad sense of the term, it is present in many versions and forms. "The social network, blog blogging, gaming, video and picture sharing, iPods, iPhones, iPads, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, so on and so forth have become parts of today's common words. The new words such as cyber-terrorism, cyber-feminism, cyber-bhakti, cyber-bullying, cyber-violence, cyber-nationalism, cyber-crime etc are the outcomes of new internet technologies [1]. Since social media literature has tremendous impacts on the life of human-beings, this research article deals with Totkas and how they are massively pervaded on social media in India. It demonstrates their massive production and consumption in India. It analyses their disadvantages and effects on Indians.

The key word mentioned in the title of this article, totka is hindi. It has multiple interpretations in English. It can be described as a superstitious remedy. It is connected to a specific religion or religious beliefs of society. It can be explained as a magical or esoteric cure for a disease. It can be remedy to health problems which is believed by someone and therefore it is shared to people. It can be shared as a belief which can be claimed scientific or religious. It is also connected to rituals and superstitions of a society. A totka is a kind of ritualistic performance for socio-economic, religious or domestic problems. The purpose of this research article is to demonstrate how they are continuously

and consistently spread in India which has created a kind of Totka Industry on social media platforms which is harmful to the psychological well-being of persons. Since, India has the largest number of people and most of them are also consumers of social media, this Totka creation, uploading, marketing, distribution and expansion has become a capitalist activity which provides the creators financial advantages. Since a totka which is uploaded on any social platform or site has power to shape the thinking of people, it is necessary to point out the dark side of social media. It is interesting to examine how these totkas are spread and how they influence human minds in India. Their relevance lies in their mesmerizingly fast-appearing viral presence in the world of social media in India. This needs to be debated widely as it is harmful to the intellectual life of the nation because "Large numbers of people have been building digital communities and communicating online for over four decades. Staying connected with via social media has become an unavoidable part of everyday life for much of the world's population as it facilitates social and occupational activities [2]."

The world including India is leading towards the world of artificial intelligence. Many experts including Yuval Noah Harare have predicted that the world is leading towards an alien world in which humans might lose their power of controlling many aspects of their lives. "Today we are at a time when live in digitalism. In this period where everything is digitized, people's lives are changing and changing lives change cultures. Thus, in addition to some concepts like distance, difficulty, speed, etc., personal and regional identities, people's sense of individuality, human relations have changed drastically, the boundaries of many concepts have become unclear, and old sharpness has disappeared." In the current world, it has become need for global scholars to examine some pertinent issues such as misuse and overuse of internet and the mental, psychological, pathological disadvantages of 'online' life [3].

The social media has impacted people's thought processes. "The new generation has an extraordinary desire to connect and communicate, and the social media, devices and sites satisfy that urge of Gen-X to be seen and heard." There is drastic change in their behavior and nature [4]. They are constantly intruded by digital contents which shape their present and future. It has created a world where multi-way communication is possible. On

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the contrary, web-based attack of contents on the mindsets of people has made them eager, hurried, stressed, tense, negative and sometimes they act without thinking. This has led them to be irrational and dumb. Consequently, they are mobilized or led to commit blunders. Sometimes, they are incited to commit crimes. In the context of developing nation like India with its highest population, the social media has become a giant industry where almost everything has consumers and subscribers. This has consequently created a digital space where make-beliefs, superstitions, strange traditions are widely spread without providing accurate and acute evidences. In his Gitanjali, the Nobel-winner, Rabindranath Tagore had once thought about free India. He wrote when India was under colonial rule. He wrote that his India of dreams would be a free nation,

Where the clear stream of reason  
has not lost its way into the  
dreary desert sand of dead habit;  
Where the mind is led forward  
by thee into ever widening  
thought and action-  
into that heaven of freedom,  
my father,  
let my country awake [5].

Published in 2017, Caroline Mutuku's Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Social Networks in Business is an enlightening book. In it, the writer has described how social networks widen business, its marketing, sales and how they increase business opportunities in the world. They help to market and sell products using technology through unconventional methods and untraditional ways. Social media platforms help the producers not only to increase his consumers but also to communicate with them using various technological tools. They can massively help the producers to engage actively with their consumers and develop their businesses. Technology also helps them to collect data and analyse it with a purpose to enlarge their sale. The writer describes that the reputation of any business is at risk in current times because negative feedbacks can ruin their business. There are privacy concerns. The security issues in the technologically-advancing world are more complex and increasing day by day. Therefore all the producers are living in the cut-throat competitive world where they have to make their virtual presence constantly and continuously because they are in an unending quest for online consumers. This leads them to depend on complex algorithms and sometimes on the persons who can influence their business virtually.

Handbook of Research on Children's Consumption of Digital Media is a well-researched book published by Gulsah Sari of Abant Izzet Baysal University, Turkey in 2019. It examines some key issues of the children of current digital world including the impacts of social media on them. The book deals with some interesting facts emerged after surveying specific areas of Turkey. One of the illuminating issues is how the children are entrapped in the digital world and they consume media. A worrying aspect discussed in the book is victimization of children virtually when they develop relationships online. Edited by Shabbir Syed Abdul, Elia Gabarron and Annie Y.S. Lau, Participatory Health

Through Social Media is a helpful book which discusses how patients can be empowered through social media. In this 2016 book, the writers have elaborated some important developments in the medical world which gets immense help from technology. It also examines the risks of using social media in health-related communications and how the advanced technology has brought drastic changes in the health sector by empowering communication through social media [9].

The authors of 2019 book titled The Dark Side of Social Media are associated with teaching and coaching. Pavica Sheldon, Philipp A. Rauschnabel and James A. Honeycut discuss the effects of using social media which include stress, tension and suicide syndromes. They also examine how the users of social media are affected with narcissism. Some key disadvantages of using social media such as cyber-stalking, stress and tension are elaborated in the book. Tuncay Dilci and Anil Kadir Eranil point out adverse impacts of social media in a chapter entitled "The Impact of Social Media on Children" [1]. They describe the pros and cons of social media. It can be helpful and useful in study but on the contrary, it can create health problems in children like obesity. The children are thought as consumers of social media and therefore they also think the world as a place or market to be powerful materially, financially, digitally and influentially. This will lead them to ignore some important human values. They are isolated. The world is understood as a screenshot. They start valuing advertisements and exhibitions more than real actions. Their thinking skill is curtailed or controlled by use of digital help. This leads them to be less courageous in real situations.

If technology is responsible for providing latest comforts and divine pleasures of the world, it is also responsible to spread misinformation and wrong beliefs. If it is responsible for making humans peace-loving and spiritual, it is also responsible for making them violent, possessive, obsessive, superstitious, suspicious, passive, crazy and lunatic. Digital space is now a new merging market. Social media is a part of it. It has power to bring emotional, psychological, socio-cultural, economic and academic changes in the world. It can transform not only socio-economic values of a culture but it can bring visible changes in human behavior and actions. Though people are getting innovative ideas on social media platforms, the possibility of their return to the ancient times of witch-hunters, magi, sorcerers, shamans and other heretics has become reality. Therefore, there are large number of people globally who are engaged in online work of prophesying, fortune-telling, hallucinating and suggesting Totkas online. These fake contents are dangerous for progressive societies as they have wrong impacts socio-culturally as they create a situation where facts and fictions are blurred intentionally. The digital pollution must be analysed in the context of India where there is large number of consumers of social media.

The simple strategy of these totka influencers is to survey and find out problems in the country. They work on economic problems such as poverty, unemployment and lack of basic human needs. They concentrate also on the human greed of getting more physical and material facilities as well as becoming

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richer and prosperous day by day, sometimes using shortcuts. Though there are many innovative ideas in social media, the massive appearance of totka masters cannot be ignored. In the same way, these totka influencers analyze the demand of peace in humans and therefore they start uploading videos which fulfill the need of people. These influencers also try to cater the public demands of health and hygiene by providing totkas which can help them becoming fit, slim, handsome, beautiful, attractive and seductively appealing.

The massive use of internet has caused an obvious decrease in the number of readers of books physically. In addition, there are totkas available for educational achievements. Some influencers in social media platforms are busy in uploading, marketing and selling their totkas which help the students to achieve good marks or pass examination. These guarantee the students that they will not only pass in their school examinations but also achieve graduate or post-graduate degrees. The students are assured online to clear or pass competitive examination by performing some totka. If black pepper can solve the answers of questions in examination, the grocers of India would have become government officers. Further, there are online totkas for career, from getting good and white-collar job to promotion. There are totkas for migration to developing countries like USA. There are totkas for getting rid of toxic bosses. These all totkas are destructive for students in India as they do not inspire them to work hard, study sincerely and perform for the national development. Rather, these totka creators are enemies of a nation which is known for its great treasure of knowledge and wisdom from the time immemorial.

Indian social media is over-crowded by many types of totka. Since totka is not only to provide some tactics, techniques, mantras or shlokas for any aim or objective of life (and, sometimes, life after death). There are totkas which require actions and performance. Some of them guide the audience when to wake up and when to sleep for peace and prosperity including the place and directions of these performances. Some provide tip of black magic and inspire the audience to perform or act if they wish anything and desire to fulfill them. Some Totka-expert's instructor suggest changing the furniture of home partly or completely. Interestingly, some convinces their consumers to change the direction of bed room or kitchen for desired specific gains. Here, it is interesting to note that some of them are not expert in Indian Vastu Shastra and yet they claim to bring peace, prosperity and happiness in the life of the online customer just by following their instructions and suggestions. The number of experts in Indian Vastu Shastra is amazingly increasing day by day.

On social media, there are some Totka experts who suggest eating something for the better health and hygiene of the consumer. Since these online influencers are getting money after sizeable subscriptions and liking from the virtual audience, there is too much rush in uploading and marketing such audio-visual material on social media. Shakespeare's well-known "To be or not to be, that's question" is shockingly and amazingly converted into "To

eat or not to eat that's question" [6]. Astonishingly, there are some influencers who advise their online followers and audience when to eat, what to eat and how to eat. Mockingly, some instruct about the time and place where one prevent eating anything. Some instructions are so bombastic when the influencer claims that eating habits are not appropriate and the audience needs to change their diet with a purpose to be fit and fine mentally as well as physically. Some of them behave like globally renowned dieticians and some as well-known scientists. To believe them or not is stressful. Therefore, it is not exaggeration to state that the social media in India has not only created seriousness and sensitivity regarding health and hygiene but it has created hypersensation and stress among the Indians. If it has spread health literacy among Indians, it is also responsible to spread infinite totkas related to health, fitness and food. It is mentioned in the Preface of Obesity, Eating Disorders and the Media that "Media stories about obesity and eating disorders often create images that bear little resemblance to the scientific, clinical, and even lived realities of these conditions. The result is confusion and contradiction: what is the public to believe about obesity and eating disorders? And who should public believe? For some critics, a frequent suspicion is that the blame lies solely with the messenger- that is- the media themselves-in misrepresenting and reducing complex conditions [7].

Since this art of advocating Totkas is global, their types are varied, interesting, amazing and innumerable. Thematically, their objectives or aims are varied and interesting. Some of them are mentioned here as examples. Socially, marriage and divorce are key themes of these video or video clips of influencers on social media. They range from getting a loving wife to getting divorce from toxic wife. There are videos which show methods, strategies and ideas of convincing a woman or man to marry the performer of specific Totkas. On the other hand, there are also Totkas for getting freedom from toxic and possessive lover or husband. One of the interesting aspects of such viral Totkas is that some of them directly or indirectly connect Indian courts and claim that the performer will get help from the court or judge or lawyer. This is a technique used of some influencers to prove their claims rational while they are virtually selling irrationality unreasonably and these trades are done with the help of internet and technology.

Gone are the days when peace was considered to be highly personal issue. Now, it is a product of capital market which is booming day by day with the help of internet and technology. The concept of "Peace Marketing" was in vogue initially in 2015 and then it gained popularity globally. It emerged as a new industry which is now strongly accelerated by developments in internet and technologies. Its mobilization, expansion, marketing and consumption globally is rising because peace is essential, eternal and most-desired human goal in life. Its need is fuelled by the seven deadly sins including desires, lust, greed and anger which have made the market of "peace-selling" online as well as offline rosy and highly profitable. There are infinite and eternal opportunities and multiple possibilities of its expansions and innovations.

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The development in internet and technology have facilitated the Pundits, Gurus and Motivators of the world to establish their virtual platforms and make their 'auspicious' presence virtual and viral. This has helped people as they can get the wisdom through the preaching and sermons online at any time and place. These online religious programmes helped the disabled and senior citizens. This resulted in emergence of Totka Gurus who started advising their followers how to gain peace in life. Therefore it has emerged as one of the interesting and most-demanded aims of the audience who are attracted to watch these videos online on social media. One of the strategies of the online influencers selling Totkas is to discuss about emotional aspects of life such as love, frailty and peace.

They provide some irrational, unscientific and illogical totkas to gain peace in life. They suggest some tricks which are not accepted by rational human beings who are clever enough to comprehend their futility and inaccuracy. Ironically, these online sellers and influencers are increasing day by day on social media of India and youth pass time watching them. This is the issue of serious concern because it is influencing the youth of India and some of them are led to perform some totkas without scrutinizing them scientifically, logically and intellectually. The objective of online "peace-marketing" is to make the people understand their verbal and non-verbal actions, change their behavior and prioritize their interests for their welfare and the welfare of humanity.

The dark face of India social media is that the influencers can teach how to convince a senior woman to love and a senior man to trap a young girl in love with a sole purpose to gain money and publicity. The totkas which results into acquiring miraculous, supernatural, divine or metaphysical energy in the body after performance in prescribed ways in another theme of these influencers. Through totkas, the influencers suggest people how to bring positive energy and how to reduce negative energy specifically in their homes, offices etc and generally in their lives. The fake influencers teach their editions of energy science in very alluring manner and provide garbage of misinformation to the online audience and subscribers.

In addition to this, there are multiple ideas and Totkas which tell the audience how to get money easily and in short time. The social media is crowded with innumerable short clips and videos which explore various totkas of getting richer and expanding prosperity. Some influencers of social media use religion or spirituality as basis for their totkas. Some claim that science is the basis of their totkas. There are influencers who claim that the basis of their ideas is ancient wisdom, beliefs and traditions. One of the most important claims most of the influencers make is that their task of gaining something will be fulfilled if they follow them loyally and faithfully. Commitment, faith and trust are mandatory for the consumer or performer of totka with a purpose to gain good results.

An important aspect during the online sharing of information regarding totka is communication. The influencer displays his

or her powerful skill of communication. His video is facilitated with certain technological features which make it attractive as well as alluring. He/she communicates and convinces the online audience in very interesting and appealing ways. Therefore, these totka influencers are successful in attracting Indian audience. Some of them try to mesmerize the audience by claiming their totkas scientific though they are unscientific in nature. One of the secrets of the success of these influencers is their power of marketing and convincing the audience by claiming the illogical, logical, unscientific, scientific and unwise, wise. Some influencers claim that it is the old science of India. Some claim it ancient practices prevailed in India. In India, the people who like and subscribe the totka influencers on social media are mainly from the illiterate or semi-literate poor class from rural India. Some greedy, ambitious and desirous people also follow these influencers.

If there are many advantages of internet and technology, it must be thought a new kind of re-colonization. The statement 'Smoking Is Injurious To Health' is written on every packet of cigarettes. On the contrary no electronic instrument (e.g. Tablet) shows such warning that overuse of it would harm your mental health. This is a new threat of this technological world where most of the Indians are busy in their virtual worlds facilitated by latest telecommunication devices such as mobile phones, tablets, laptops and computers. They are losing their mind simultaneously. They are losing the right tracks and they are lost in the world which is metaphysical, unreal, imaginary, illusive, deceptive, literary and dreamy. Are they led to the world of craziness is a vital question? This might be thought as a new kind of intrusion, attack or explosion where citizens are defeated or enslaved mentally. In the context of Althusser's concept of ideology, the consumers are happily exploited. Terry Eagleton notes: "the most efficient oppressor is the one who persuades his underlings to love, desire and identify with his power, and any practice of political emancipation thus involves that most difficult of all forms of liberation, freeing ourselves from ourselves [8]."

To sum up, it is relevant to point out some important recommendations and suggestions for this emerging threat. The wrong effects of social media should be researched by the Indian academicians, sociologists, reformers and scholars. Secondly, a serious attention and caution is required for the guardians of the children who think that all is well in the world of social media. They are ignorant of the fact that their children are educated about some irrational and unscientific Totkas and they are instigated to experiment them with a view to get some physical, financial, psychological and mental advantages or reliefs. The tender and untrained minds of small kids are instilled with information which is not rational, scientific and logical. Their innocent minds are filled with some information which is not religious and spiritual in true sense. They are incited to commit or perform Totkas.

The persons who are producing such fake literature on social media should re-think about their tasks. One cannot neglect the important duty of a person who is either the producer of contents

or the consumer of social media. S/he should be responsible to check the validity and empirical and scientific evidences before uploading contents which contain remedies or beliefs. Those who produce such contents must educate the audience regarding their scientific roots. The persons who forward such messages to others must verify and assure their scientific evidences. The consumers to scroll such messages must search about its validity and scientific evidences before experimenting them with their lives. They are also expected to verify their logical and rational aspects before performing them. One of the expected responsibilities of an intellectual user is to make others aware that doing experiments keeping in mind such totkas in life can be harmful or dangerous.

A close and rational examination and intellectual observation of contents on social media and its control is necessary for any government. The censorship of irrational, illogical and unscientific content on social media is a welcome step from the government. The content without appropriate scientific evidences, academic basis and researched outputs is harmful for the welfare of people. The Indian government should take necessary steps on the persons who are spreading some unscientific information. The possibility of large consumption of the digital media by children should not be neglected. There are heaps of small shorts, clips and videos on social media platforms which incite the Indians to perform some illogical and unscientific acts. In addition, they are spread massively in superfast speed on internet. Some information in the form of totkas which are now part of powerful digital media with miraculously great communicative strength must be curtailed, censored, stopped or controlled with a purpose to save large number of population leading towards insanity and craziness. One of the tragic aspects observed on social media is that some online totka influencers violate government policies (Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, 2015) by spreading wrong information to instruct their audience and they provide tricks to produce son (boy). Such totkas indirectly encourage the desires of having son with a view to maintain lineage of family.

There are many advantages of social media as it brings awareness, education and enlightenment in society. Though there are positive aspects of social media, one cannot wipe out the possibility of it emerging as a tool for re-colonizing some

#### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>The word 'literature', in the age of gigantically massive and unfathomable digitization, cannot be easily defined due to its recent ambiguous interpretations. It is an age where literature is thought and analyzed as information and information is believed to be literature. One of the most amazing realities of current age of internet and technology is that one can virtually claim any information as literature of significance.

developing countries like India. As a neo-capitalist weapon, it can be an emerging threat for the nations which were once colonized by the Europeans. Since the unscientific details and misinformation, especially in regional languages, is neglected and allowed to share by the social media platforms such as Twitter (x), YouTube, Instagram online, there is possibility of instilling and installing superstitions, wrong beliefs and cruel rituals in human minds. Therefore, the owners of social media platforms must appoint translators and interpreters with a view to examine the information before they are viral. They must provide jobs to the local regional interpreters, translators and scientists with a view to prevent their platforms converting into garbage of misinformation and deep valley of unscientific data. They must assure the people that no information will be viral without proper scrutiny and sincere scientific examination. The information without empirical evidences must be prevented to become viral. Since these platforms are responsible for spreading information to the world, they must be responsible to examine the evidences before making any totka or remedy viral in large scale.

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