

Mushrooming 'experts' and fake advices



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Next to air omnipresent is advice. To advise is an important socio-psychological activity of mankind. Other creatures pass mainly through genome to the next generation all changes. It is man alone, who, through narrations of his own experiences, tries to refine his fellow humans. So, to dish out pieces of advice has been going on since time immemorial. But the problem is that the credibility of what the advisor says is called into question.

Fake experts

In the beginning, advices were given based on empirical knowledge and gradually evolved into a science. And finally, it has become a sort of profession in all spheres of knowledge to give out advices. At one point of time, several people started

coming up with advices and consultations, evolving from an experienced man into an expert. Then the credibility of the consultations increased, assuming scientific tone in sync with practical rules. In this there are two vital things: One is expertise and another professional approach.

Both expertise and professional approach should be balanced. After giving counselling and consultations has become a profession, there are umpteen people in several sectors, who earn by pretending to be experts or hiding their lack of expertise. Yes. Fake experts have been roaming around in all sectors in all ages.

After the advent of Internet, the number of experts has multiplied and so has the number of shams. In the past, we used to go all the way to meet an expert and consult him/her in person. So, the expert was able to deceive only a limited number of people in a small network. But in this age of Internet, we can afford to be taken for a ride by anyone from anywhere in the world from the comfort of our couch at home.

‘Ancestors no fools’

Post-pandemic all things are available at Internet; similarly, all classes conducted online. People who started giving advices and narrating their own personal experiences online over the time graduated to be experts in a sphere of knowledge. Likewise, in the beginning several people uploaded videos of their own experiences, most of which were pontifactory statements pertaining to food, medicine, life philosophy and psychology and which had the tone of the rhetorical question: “Are our ancestors fools?”

Seeing a good reception from viewers to such videos, they started doing the business professionally, asking the viewers to subscribe to their channels. The more the viewers, the more the income. Now this has become a profession of a cut-throat competition.

How users are affected

As happens in all good things, here too transgressions of limits are going on frequently. There are several people giving tips online about weight reduction and diet. Though there are genuine consultants, most consultations given online are unscientific and will likely affect the health of the viewers who blindly follow them.

Next are experts who pass off as psychological consultants. Personality development classes, enticing science programs like 'Speak in 30 days like Martin Luther King' 'The next Einstein is your kid', dating and romantic consultation classes.... Galore are alluring websites and videos.

There are classes even for keeping your garments well folded. Some programs get more attractive with the certificates issued to participants at the end of the courses. A woman, who has been conducting classes on child rearing, recently said that she had watched pornos along with her daughter in order to impart sexual education to her. Statements such as this given freely online have the potential of causing social harm.

Influencers

There is a difference between an ordinary advice and a genuinely professional advice.

If our neighbouring grandma advises consumption of sugar-mixed curd for writing an exam well, we believe it, only to some extent. But when the same advice is given out by an expert, we blindly believe it and make a mad scramble for sugar and curd before entering into the exam hall. It is such experts who decide on what we do. They are called 'influencers' in English.

Times were when it was regretted that people believed whatever they read in books or periodicals or newspapers. But nowadays we believe whatever Internet says or videos show.

At this juncture a vital point has to be stressed. Knowledge and expertise are hardly the exclusive domain of a few privileged people. To say that we are experts and so whatever we say are credible and trustworthy is a kind of imperialism.

The major boon of the multiplying websites is that they have made knowledge accessible to all. Besides, Internet easily helps us check the veracity of an expert's words. The eclectic and liberal spirit of Internet is certainly a welcome feature.

Those who have real expertise and yet are unable to market it, floating a company have found in Internet avenues to money, marketing their expertise.

But on the flip side, the phenomenal growth of Internet has spawned the mushrooming fakes and false experts. So, people must have an awareness of such pseudo experts and check their credentials. Before investing in some projects touted online and before drinking eight litres of water in an empty stomach as per some fake medical instructions given online, take trouble to check the genuineness and veracity of the online instructions.

Even Internet helps us tease out truth from a pile of data and information mounting online. Nobody can deliver consultations common to all in fields such as medicine, economics and so on. Only the consultations given after analyses by experts in any field are credible. So, just pause and think before rushing into, say, an online pilot training course.

Translated by V. Mariappan.