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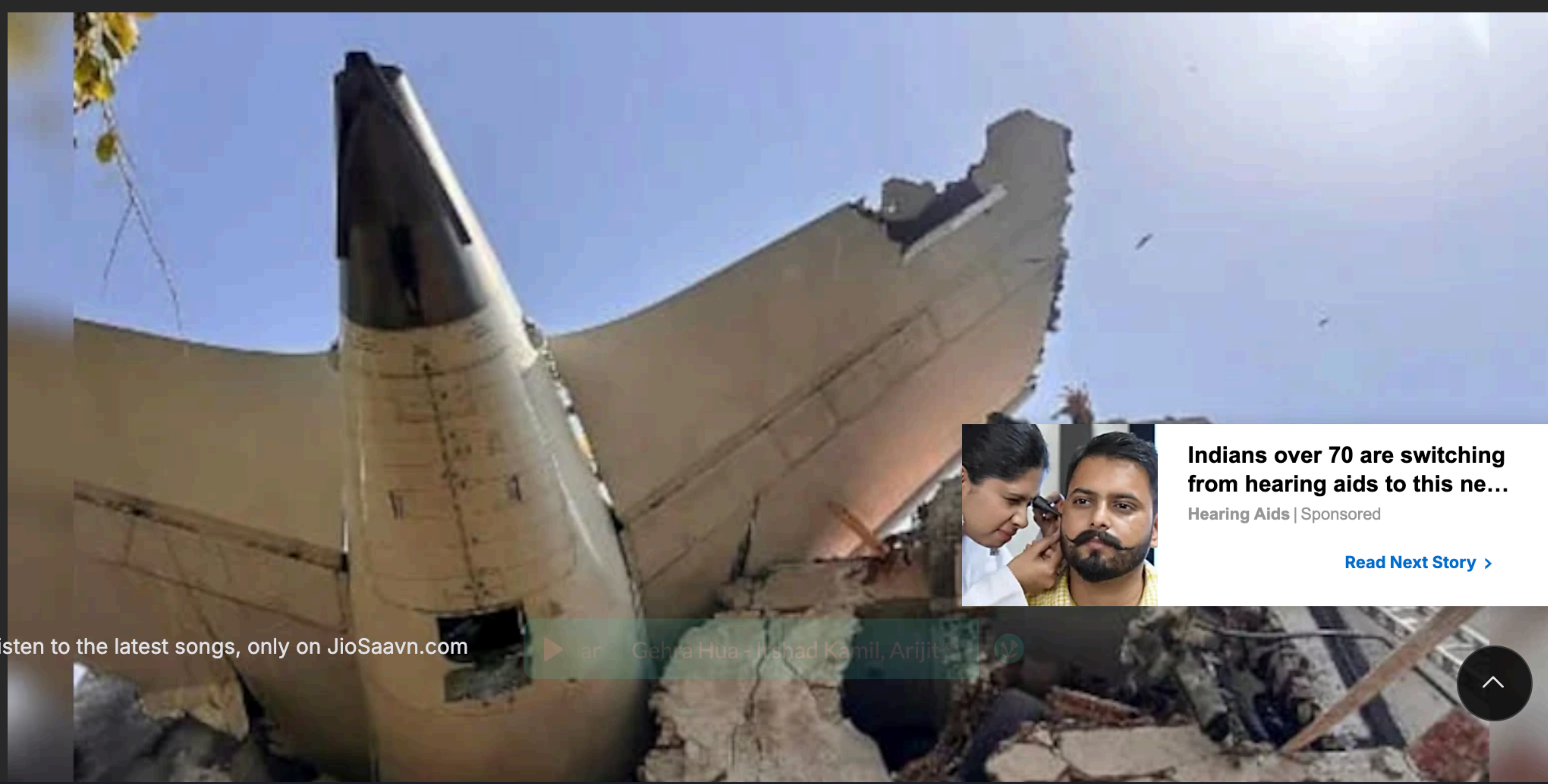
Opinion | The Crisis Within: When Clarity Is Replaced by Content



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Human beings have always functioned at pain and tired discomfort. The struggle is not new—what's new is how conveniently we can now avoid facing it. We live in a world built to distract—a world where discomfort is not confronted, but scrolled past.

A plane crashes. Lives are lost. And before the dust settles, it's already content. Not only have we moved on—we've moved on without even noticing that we didn't care. Videos circulate. Opinions fly. Footage is recycled from past accidents. Then, in no time, we move on, not because we've processed what happened, but because our attention has already moved elsewhere.

This isn't a new failure of our times. It's the same old pattern of avoidance, now multiplied by speed and scale. Technology has only made it easier to stay on the surface, harder to pause and look inward.

The Culture of Constant Reaction

There is always something breaking—some headline, some outrage, some meme. Most of us have become accustomed to reacting more than reflecting. Even when we believe we're acting out of concern, we often find ourselves swept up in the rhythm of the moment. This rhythm of instant emotional turnover has made even the most serious events feel like part of the same noise. We are surrounded by information, but understanding has become optional.



The algorithm merely reflects what the mind demands—excitement over depth, noise over truth. Loudness wins, accuracy loses. Our attention is constantly borrowed, never invested. In such a world, even grief becomes a kind of currency. What should be a moment of mourning turns into some kind of performance. A tragedy becomes a trend.

The Disappearance of Stillness

We have lost the ability to sit with discomfort. When something tragic happens, our first instinct is often not to reflect but to distract. We open another app. Watch something trivial. Escape. But this pattern doesn't free us from pain, it simply spreads it in disguised forms.

Without some measure of stillness, clarity becomes impossible. And without clarity, even our kindest instincts turn impulsive or performative. We donate because it's viral. We post condolences because others are. But internally, we feel nothing steady. There's no ground beneath the noise.

Attention Is Not Neutral

Attention is not passive—it is a declaration of what you value. And most of us, without realising it, value what distracts us. A distracted mind cannot care deeply. And a mind addicted to novelty will never recognize what's truly important, because importance takes time to reveal itself.

There is a difference between glancing and seeing. Between reacting and responding. Between noticing and understanding. We may have mastered the surface of things, but we often forget the depth. There remains an inner insensitivity.

This is not merely a cultural pattern—it's a mirror for each of us. The world reflects the fog or clarity we carry within. If insensitivity has become the norm, it's because the individual rarely pauses to examine his own mind.

We Mistake Information for Wisdom

With so much content at our fingertips, it's easy to believe we're more informed than ever. But wisdom has nothing to do with the volume of data we consume. If anything, excess information without depth only creates more confusion.

We accept what feels good. We reject what challenges us. That's not discernment—it's just comfort dressed up as conviction. We absorb emotionally charged half-truths and treat them as personal convictions. We wouldn't buy a product without checking its label, yet we forward harmful misinformation within seconds.

Discernment is becoming rare. But it is also becoming vital. Because the ability to separate fact from fiction, impulse from truth, is what keeps both inner sanity and society intact.

Why Tragedy Doesn't Transform Us

In moments of real disruption—whenever they occur—there lies a possibility: not just to ask policy questions, but to confront our way of living itself. We would ask: what does this expose in us? What have we been ignoring? How can this change us?

But today, even disaster has become routine. Our built-up numbness has turned tragedy into content. And once content is consumed, it is forgotten.

This is not about feeling hopeless, this is about seeing clearly. About recovering a sensitivity we've long suppressed: the capacity to be genuinely affected, not manipulated. To be disturbed in the right way. To not brush past pain, but to examine it carefully, and let it inform how we live.

Discovering the Capacity to Care

It begins with very small acts. Giving something your full attention. Not just posting, but reflecting about every feeling. Choosing attention over noise. Asking yourself what are the actual facts, rather than what's trending around you.

These are simple gestures, but they open space within. And in that space, there is room for real concern, not borrowed concern. For understanding, not reaction. For transformation, not distraction.

To be human is not just to be bodily alive. It is to be capable of being touched—by truth, by beauty, by the suffering of others and ourselves. When that capacity is eroded, life continues, but with less meaning.

Let This Not Pass Unnoticed

The recent crash was not just a test of aviation safety. It was a mirror to our culture. It asked, without speaking: are we still capable of responding like humans? Or have we become spectators even to sorrow? The real crash is inside us—our capacity to respond with presence is what failed first.

There will be other headlines. Other losses. Other chances to pause and see clearly. Whether we use those moments or not is up to us. If clarity returns to the individual, society won't need to be pushed into reform—it will begin to reform itself.

(Acharya Prashant, a Vedanta exegete and philosopher, is an author, columnist, and founder of the PrashantAdvait Foundation. He is a recipient of Most Influential Vegan Award by PETA, the OCND Award from the IIT Delhi Alumni Association, and the Most Impactful Environmentalist Award by the Green Society of India)