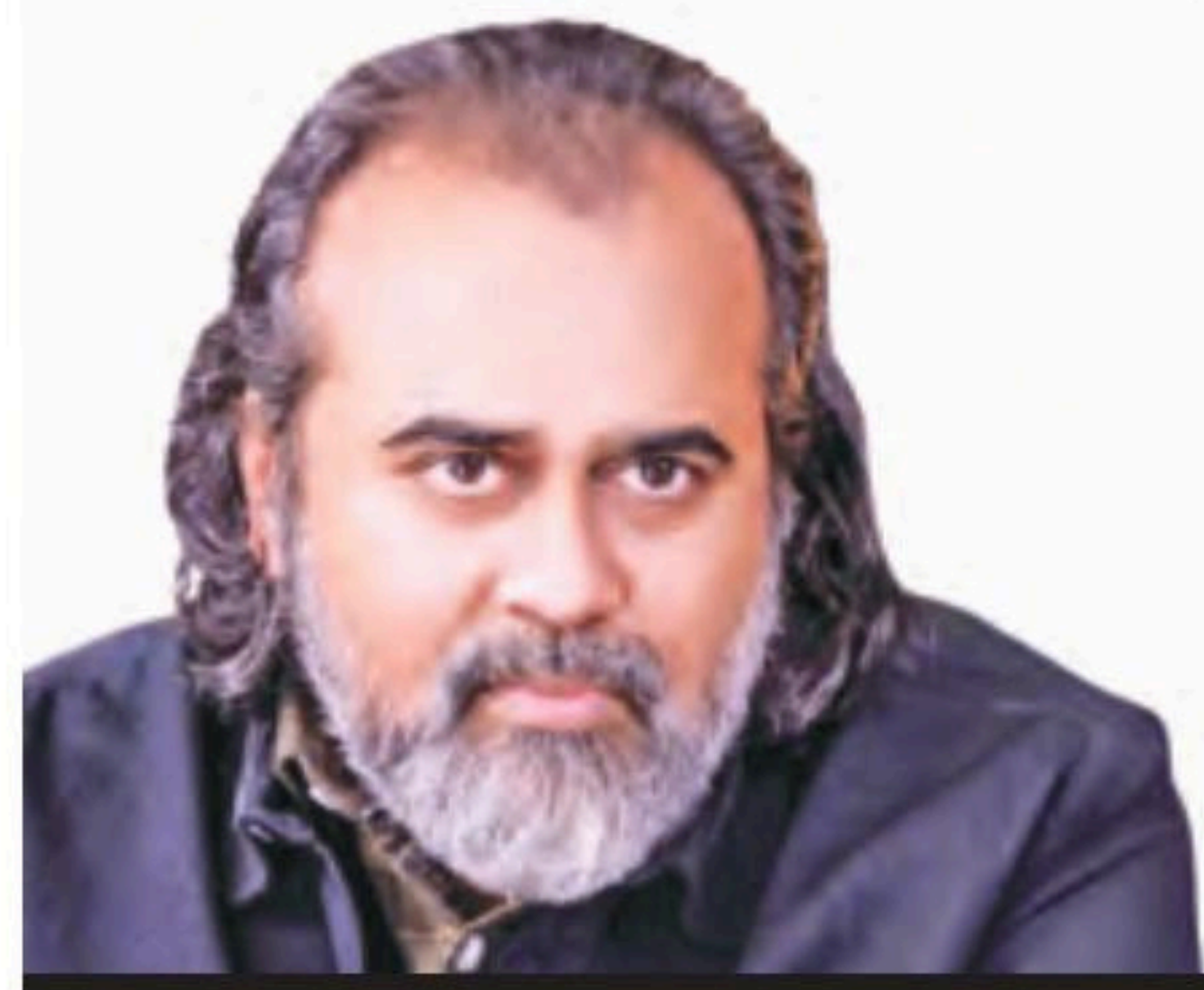




Misinformation has a patron: The ego that calls itself post-truth



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Serious institutions in the world now seem engaged in fighting misinformation. Governments are regulating, platforms are fact-checking, and journalists are building verification desks with a rigour they have not applied to anything in years. The question at the foundation of the entire enterprise, however, has not been asked.

The fundamental question to ask, before talking of misinformation, should be: what is information? Information, at its most basic, is that which informs, that which moves a person from not knowing towards knowing, towards a more accurate picture of what is. Which means that before we can speak about misinformation, we must speak about the instrument through which information is received and processed. That instrument is the mind. In its innocent biological state, it is a neutral instrument: memory and intellect, neither desiring nor fearing nor choosing. Those operations belong to the ego, the felt sense of "I am this," this identity, this tribe, this ideology, this wound, which commandeers the mind's machinery and directs it not towards what is true but towards what is safe. And what is safe for the ego is not accurate information. It is confirming information, information that strengthens the positions already held and reinforces the identities already inhabited.

This condition has a precise shape: not ignorance in the sense of knowing nothing, but fragmented knowing, the accumulation of vast information about the world while remaining structurally unaware of the one doing the knowing. The information sought is downstream of the identity being protected. We call this an information crisis.

Who decides what is false?

If the ego is always filtering information through what it has already decided to protect, then what does misinformation actually mean? Both misinformation and disinformation assume a stable, agreed-upon baseline of truth against which the falseness of a given claim can be measured; they assume, in other words, a shared epistemic ground.

This is the assumption that has not been examined. And it is precisely the assumption that the condition we are living through has already dissolved. The conflict now is not only over facts; it is over the authority to name them as facts.

The world that gave birth to the misinformation crisis is the same world that named itself post-

truth. Post-truth names a real condition: the condition in which facts no longer settle disputes, in which evidence no longer commands consensus across communities, in which two groups can look at the same event and inhabit incommensurable versions of what occurred, each version internally coherent, each supported by its own sources and experts, and neither capable of producing a fact that the other is compelled to accept as decisive. This is the problem at the heart of the enterprise. Misinformation, as a category, requires the existence of a shared truth baseline. If the shared ground has dissolved, then calling something misinformation is not a description of a fact about the content. It is an assertion of a contested position. In a post-truth world, the label "misinformation" is itself an act of power, not an act of description.

The closed circuit

The misinformation debate has treated producer and consumer separately, focusing almost entirely on the consumer: the person who receives, believes, and spreads false content. That separation does not survive scrutiny. The ego that manufactures misinformation and the ego that consumes it are in a closed circuit. The producer does not invent freely; it creates what the consumer structurally requires. The supply of false content is not independent of the demand for it; it is generated by the demand. To address the supply without addressing the demand is to cut a weed at its stem while leaving the root untouched. Lies do not spread. They are summoned.

The circuit is not new. What has changed is the voltage running through it. Modernity has systematically dismantled the structures, among them religion, caste, and nation, through which the ego previously borrowed its confirming identity passively and continuously. But as they thin, fragment, or lose their authority, the ego does not lose the hunger they fed. It becomes more desperate for its satisfaction. The old scaffolding weakened; the appetite did not. It simply entered the marketplace and began scrolling. The post-truth era is not a new phenomenon. The ego has always been post-truth. It simply has better tools now.

The only question that reaches the root

If the problem is external, a problem of content rather than of the instrument receiving it, then the solutions will be external: better algorithms, content authentication, digital literacy, platform governance. They are not useless; they address real symptoms of a real problem. But what they cannot address is the condition generating the demand for false content in the first place, because that condition is not a property of the content. It is a property of the one consuming it.

Even a correction leaves the structure that gen-

erated the false belief intact; only the surface belief changes. Improve the algorithm and the ego finds a new channel; authenticate the content and it learns to trust only sources not yet discredited. Meanwhile, when falsehood spreads, the primary agents are not bots but human beings choosing to share what confirmed their existing beliefs. Under the conditions in which the ego is most invested, correction can actively deepen what it was designed to dissolve.

The misinformation debate is conducted entirely in the register of content. It asks only about the content: is this claim accurate? It never asks about the one consuming the content: who is this person, what do they need this claim to be, what identity does it protect? Those deeper questions are the territory of honest self-examination, and no external apparatus has ever found its way into that territory.

The post-truth world will not be mended from outside. The shared ground does not return through better content moderation or more comprehensive fact-checking portals. It returns, if it returns, one person at a time, when the person asking how to identify misinformation becomes willing to ask instead: what is my own relationship to what is true?

The asking is not an intellectual exercise. It begins, in practice, at the level of sensation: when a claim arrives that disturbs a settled position, the first response is not reasoning but a tightening resistance. This is the ego identifying a threat: not to the person but to the story the person has become. The move is to turn towards the resistance, to stay with it long enough to ask what is being protected and why it requires this particular claim to be true. What identity would be disturbed if this claim were accurate? What would have to be relinquished? That inquiry, not more balanced information consumption, not a diversified media diet, not fact-checking habits, is what self-examination actually means. That inquiry does not resolve the information crisis. It does not restore consensus or silence a single deepfake. What it does is something quieter and more consequential: it changes the person making the next choice. The ego that has genuinely seen its own selection does not become wiser or more balanced; it becomes less desperate for the next confirmation. And in a crisis whose engine is not the lie but the ego that needed the lie, that change is the only one that has ever reached the root. The question the world is asking, how to identify misinformation, is the right question. It has simply been directed at the wrong person. The claim in front of us may or may not be false. The certainty receiving it is almost never innocent.



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