**Transient Trends of Collective Memory**

**For contemporary times, the more things change, the more they are getting worse.**

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In the annals of history, certain events etch themselves into collective consciousness, becoming enduring symbols of human suffering. The Great Depression, the Holocaust, the Black Death, or 2011 Sindh floods- all serve as stark reminders of our fragility in the face of nature’s wrath and societal upheaval. Yet, in contemporary times, it seems that the temporal span of remembrance is waning, particularly within Pakistani society. Once a hot topic bursts across headlines, it is as though a clock has been set to countdown its relevance, with its memory dissipating at an alarming pace. The more vigorously it is spearheaded by social media campaigns, the swifter and sooner it vanishes into the archives of yesterday.

With mobility of technology and development, we may have learned to sprint faster in the globe, but we have ceased to endure longer in the marathon of highlighting global issues. Take a recent example of Palestine, one would have hardly strolled in the streets without encountering protests and pamphlets in support of Palestine. Palestinian flags were adorned as profile pictures on social media, while the roads in cities like Lahore were marked with Israeli flags painted with imprints of boot soles in a display of disdain for the atrocities committed. However, these displays subsided sooner than they emerged. This is not only reminiscent of how the memory of Kashmir has ended up being celebrated as a day of remembrance, but it also spots a light upon the grim reality of this emerging amnesia, we as a nation are suffering from. Within some years, just as the Kashmir Resolution is restricted to Kashmir Day of February 5th, a similar fate may wait for Palestine, while the people continue to suffer.

[Lesco collects over Rs3.81m from 92 defaulters in 24 hours](https://www.nation.com.pk/13-May-2024/lesco-collects-over-rs3-81m-from-92-defaulters-in-24-hours)

In a related vein, just two years ago, Pakistan was reeling from floods. During the height of this disaster, social media platforms were inundated with pleas for aid and calls for accountability. However, as the floods receded, so did the public concern, let alone scrutiny of the government’s response. With over seventeen hundred people killed and around 3.3 trillion dollars of economic loss – multiple times more than the 2011 Sindh floods- thousands of families were left displaced, their homes and livelihoods destroyed, yet questions about post-flood resettlement efforts disappeared as soon as the focus shifted to another social media trend, leaving behind a trail of forgotten promises and forsaken allegiances.

James Rachels, an American Philosopher, in his work, “Elements of Moral Philosophy” mentions a story involving Abraham Lincoln. Once, Lincoln was asserting that we are all ultimately self-interested when he suddenly stopped to save a group of young pigs from drowning. One of the listeners attempted to point out that Lincoln himself is a living counter-example to his own argument. But Lincoln reportedly replied: “I should have had no peace of mind all day had I gone on and left that suffering old sow worrying over those pigs. I did it to get peace of mind, don’t you see?”. This is the way people, more than ever before, do things for personal satisfaction and it is called psychological egoism- doing things for personal pleasure or benefit. Although the theory is debatable yet modern times suggest its implication more than ever before. Not only the actions such as supporting a social cause like Palestine, are ultimately driven by a desire for personal satisfaction or pleasure but individuals also derive a sense of moral righteousness and social approval from publicly expressing support on social media. When the allure of this pleasure and social approval fades, so does their commitment to advocacy. This selective inclination manifests in our tendency to champion a cause one moment, only to abandon it when the spotlight shifts elsewhere. And this is precisely what has been happening not only in Pakistan but around the globe- the marathon of remembrance converting into a sprint of global trends.

[Four involved in murder of cops killed in encounter](https://www.nation.com.pk/13-May-2024/four-involved-in-murder-of-cops-killed-in-encounter)

In a common maxim, the more things change, the more they remain the same. But for contemporary times, the more things change, the more they are getting worse. Not long ago the conflict in Ukraine captured global attention and dominated social media headlines for a significant period. Military clashes between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatists further exacerbated tensions and resulted in tens of thousands of causalities. Initially, it sparked condemnation from the international community. Yet, ironically, the displacement of more than 8.2 million people- the largest after WWII- was forgotten in a matter of just a single year. Now, only a more egregious development from Russian atrocities grabs the headlines.

Let us examine another instance in which the globe at large was grappling with the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic-3rd most deadly pandemic of all time. As cases surged, the global healthcare systems were strained under the weight of this virus. Social media platforms once again became battlegrounds for information, misinformation, and pleas for assistance. Yet, as vaccination efforts gained momentum and infection rates declined, so too did public scrutiny. Despite the lingering effects of the virus on communities and economies, the fervor for COVID-19-related discussions has waned, overshadowed by newer topics and concerns. The marathon of combating the pandemic, with its long-term implications for public health and societal resilience, was yet again overshadowed by the sprint towards the next trending issue.

[CPWB chairperson pays tribute to mothers](https://www.nation.com.pk/13-May-2024/cpwb-chairperson-pays-tribute-to-mothers)

In a society where catastrophes become trends, it’s imperative that we pause to reflect on the implications of our memory. For in forgetting global suffering too easily, we betray not only our empathy but also our humanity. As George Santayana, a Spanish-American philosopher wisely noted, ‘Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.’ This is the time to strive transcending the ephemeral allure of transient causes and cultivate a culture of enduring remembrance and unwavering solidarity like we have done in the past. Only then can we hope to forge a future founded on the pillars of empathy, resilience, and collective consciousness. Therefore, as Winston Churchill aptly put it, ‘The longer you look back, the farther you can look forward.’

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