

## My Furious Fingers

### == Addiction to BBM, FaceBook and Twitter ==

By

*Maulana Khalid Dhorat (Masjid Hamzah, Erasmia)*

It was the most depressing two days in October last year. People suddenly became irritable and moody, children became withdrawn and glum, whilst adults started behaving as if they were trapped in a cage. No, a tsunami didn't hit South Africa and nor did the price of fuel reach R50-a litre. The problem was simple: everyone's idle fingers suddenly became furious because the red light on their BlackBerries stopped flashing. The main BlackBerry server had crashed somewhere in Canada, and thank God Usamah bin Laden wasn't blamed this time for leaving behind some "time-delay" virus long after his death!!

In those two days, many people came to find out who controlled who: did the BlackBerry control them, or did they control the BlackBerry? Many people realised that they could actually survive the day without checking their phone every minute and took the opportunity to admire the sunset, whilst others – now officially known as "CrackerBerries" - became upset and couldn't wait to be reconnected. These are the people who need help as they may be addicted, not to drinks and drugs, but to drama and data.

## Sophistication

The early cellphone was basically used for oral communication, but everyone was so scared that radiation would burn a hole in their brain, many only used it for emergencies. Today, a cellphone is much more than a phone as it now has seven basic functions: 1. Oral communication, 2. Texting or SMSing, 3. Social media like YouTube and WhatsApp, 4. Surfing the internet, 5. Receiving and creating e-mails, 6. Shooting photos or viewing videos, and 7.

Gaming. Communication costs have drastically dropped, screens have become friendlier and there is very little fear of radiation as the phone is often nearer to the finger than the brain. These features have made the cellphone a handy mobile office, a convenient news desk and a *punchaat* club. Very soon, it will also become a pocket bank, a pocket stock exchange and a wristwatch too!!

Studies show that for every 225 messages sent, only one phone call is made!

As oral communication has dropped, social media has taken the world by storm. In June 2010, Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of FaceBook, threw a massive party – the occasion? 500 million people were now officially subscribed to the largest social media portal in the world. According to data, there are approximately 160 million proud Blackberry owners worldwide, six million of whom are part of the “rainbow” nation. Of these, about 5.6 million use FaceBook via their BlackBerry alone. Most of these users are females between the ages of 25 – 34, followed by youngsters, males and females, in the 12 – 24 category. Indeed, there is hardly a youngster in the modern world who does not have a FaceBook or a Twitter account.

### Another World

A few years ago, there were only two worlds: the physical world and the spiritual world. People walked in physical malls holding hard cash, and religious people actually went to the Masjid holding a 100-bead rosary (*tasbeeh*) in their hand. But today we have another world: the virtual world. In this world, people buy from virtual malls using e-bucks, study religion from Mufti Google on the internet, play virtual soccer on their Ipods and the 100-bead *tasbeeh*

has now been replaced by the digital clicker which the Chinese use to count their containers at the harbour!! Their friends and pets are also virtual, so previously if one had ten physical friends, they now have 20 000 virtual friends.

This virtual world has become a new reality and many are dead against it, especially social media due to the amount of evil prevalent on them. However, I'm personally fascinated by the power of mass communication as it presents immense opportunity. If you have good in your heart, you will spread good, and if you have evil in your heart, you will spread evil – both on a grand scale. Don't blame the internet for the filth it contains, it's merely a reflection of what's in the heart and soul of our society. The filthy will be attracted to filth on the internet, whilst the

pure will be attracted to the purity on it - just like in the real world: the pious will spread blessings, whilst the mean will spread blaspheme.

Social media is popular as it satisfies the basic human urge for friendship and company, but people have become so obsessed with this virtual social life that everyone must know everything of their lives – to the last second. There is a curious need to be famous like all the actors and soccer stars around us, so we all desire as much “followers” on FaceBook as possible. When we are happy, we put up a smiley face, when sad a crying face and when we want to thank anyone for a lovely lunch or a weekend, the whole world must know. If someone had a fight with the neighbour, the whole virtual community will know of it. In short, people have been hooked on the futility called “virtually-created personalised sitcoms”.

To gain cheap publicity, people will change their status every ten minutes, put up fake pictures of themselves, and spread rumours and lies about others (called “CyberBullying”). FaceBook and Twitter has become the new courtroom where everyone is the lawyer, judge, jury and executioner. Anybody can post unverified and emotionally charged news just to settle old scores (the favourite one is saying that a certain restaurant serves pork when the waiter was just too busy to serve you quickly), and by doctoring pictures by imposing Rashid’s face on Rashida’s body just to humiliate him. On big days, Muslims suddenly become Super-Muslims by spreading far-fetched *ahadeeth* (Prophetic sayings) about what prayers to read, whereas most of them don’t even know in which month does ‘Ashura or Me’raj occur!

All this time-wasting is besides people’s insatiable appetite for knowing what’s happening in the world. People will browse 50 websites a day, listen to numerous podcasts, and at the end of the day, be none the wiser. It’s important to know your surroundings, but to be addicted to information that does nothing to improve the quality of life and make you a better person is just a waste of time. It’s indicative of our wrong priorities in life.

### **Addiction**

A psychologist made the following comment: “BBM forces the brain to switch on and off constantly. It drains you mentally and results in reduced attention span and hyperactivity. People panic if they don’t receive at least 5 messages a minute, and if they forget their phone somewhere, they become restless.”

In today's times, the BBM has become the no. 1 cause for breakdown in marriages and drop in performance of students. You can't have a decent conversation with a person without Ping Ping interrupting you, and due to the many misunderstandings arising from text messages which could've easily been avoided in a friendly face-to-face conversation, most of your time is wasted in explaining yourself. In addition, the addict is afflicted with the following ailments:

1. One becomes a social outcast. He forgets how to meet people, maintain eye-contact and have a meaningful conversation due to lack of social interaction. This harms his relationships.

2. It takes you away from the reality around you. Things can be happening around you which may affect you, but you are not mentally in tune with your surroundings. You can not respond to them.

3. Information becomes "disposable" and holds no value anymore. It's just a matter of "open and delete" You lose your thinking capacity so much so that you believe any nonsense sent to you like "if you don't forward this, you will die in three days"

### Conclusion

If you feel you are addicted to your smartphone, here is some useful advice for you:

1. Don't take the phone in the bathroom with you. It will not stop your diarrhoea.
2. Don't take it to the Masjid. It won't establish a better contact for you with the Almighty.
3. Don't sleep with it under your pillow. It won't allow you to see your dreams in 3D.
4. Don't respond to it if you are conversing with someone. It will not guide you to say the right words.
5. Don't have it on your side whilst having supper. It's not a bottle of tomato sauce.

Lastly, as mankind strives to make the internet faster by progressing from GSM to EDGE, and then to 3G, likewise we should strive to make our connection with our Creator faster. Let us realise that whatever we type on that keypad is stored in the main server in the skies for ever: if it was good, it will come back to you as perfume, and if it was evil or useless, it will come back as pressure in the hereafter. So think before you ink !!