



It is the social media personality who states an opinion with enough conviction that it gets mistaken for a fact. We are forgetting that fact-checking is one search away — and increasingly, we can't be bothered to take that one step, even as the tools to take it have never been more accessible.

What makes this more troubling is the next generation growing up entirely inside this environment. AI is not a phase of their childhood the way it was a late addition to ours — it is the default. And if the adults around them are themselves losing the habit of distinguishing a credible source from an unreliable one, who is left to teach that distinction at all? A skill that isn't modelled rarely gets learned.

This drags us back to the opening question: what separated us from the apes we share almost all our DNA with? If the answer really is spatial awareness and critical thinking, then that capacity isn't a fixed trait we get to keep no matter what: it's a muscle only as strong as we train it to be and the harsh reality is that are, quite possibly, devolving in the one capacity that made us different from every other species we share this planet with — and doing it so comfortably, so conveniently, that almost no one is going to notice until it's too late; disappearing the way muscle disappears from a limb kept still for too long gradually, painlessly, and almost invisibly, until the day it's needed and simply isn't there.

The good news is that the fix doesn't require rejecting AI or retreating to books alone. It requires something much smaller and much harder: pausing before we accept an answer, asking one more question, checking the source we were about to trust blindly. It requires treating critical thinking the way we'd treat any other muscle, as something that only stays strong if we actually use it.

The quiet part of struggling with a problem, getting it wrong, and correcting, leading to understanding, is actually built, and the boost of “I actually did it “

Within the past century, there has been a slow and mostly unnoticed migration. From books that demanded patience, where you had to find the right one, read it, reconcile it against another to learn; birth of the internet and Wikipedia: faster, broader, still requiring you to read, click through citations, and occasionally doubt what you were reading, only to be replaced by AI, which asks for almost nothing at all.

In each step in this progression, we traded a little more effort for a little more speed, and each trade felt reasonable in isolation. But stacked together, the trend line is clear: we have been steadily lowering the amount of independent verification required to “know” something, until now, the machine does not just supply the information but also the phrasing, and sometimes the confidence, too.

How many times in the past month have you asked Gemini, ChatGPT, or Claude a question and taken the answer as settled fact — or worse, copy-pasted it without reading it all the way through? That moment, right there, is the absence of critical thinking. It is the failure to reflectively question a claim before accepting it, simply because the source sounded authoritative and the process was fast.

This same absence shows up everywhere else in our information diet. It is the forwarded WhatsApp chain message that nobody bothers to check. It is the exaggerated headline shared because it confirms what we already believed.



Ms. Sofia Shazad
7th Sem
School of Leather Lifestyle &
Product Design
FDDI Noida

**40 YEARS OF
EXCELLENCE
IN EDUCATION**