

Are you a Selfie?

When I typed the word, “selfie” in the title, I noticed a red line appear under it, reminding me that such a word was not in my Microsoft Office dictionary. The dictionary review suggested possible alternative words that might be correct. They included “sulfide,” “sulfite,” “sheltie,” “self,” “shellfire,” and “Elfie.”

Obviously, my dictionary does not include the latest word to be declared by the Oxford English Dictionary as the “word of 2013”, after its use shot up 17,000 per cent from last year. YouTube is flooded with advice on how to take the perfect “selfie” portrait. One such tutorial video on the subject advises self-portraitists to hold their necks out, duck-like, angle their heads and lift the camera above their heads for that ‘baby-face look’. Photograph: Thinkstock Point. Pout. Suck in. Plump hair. Part lips. Adjust chin. Widen eyes. Click.

My cell phone, purchased in the States, as an unlocked phone, does have a camera attached. I’m sure it has lots of bells and whistles as well but they lay dormant from lack of use. I have never used the camera to take a “selfie” or to snap any object that may be of interest or any snapshot I may need to use to update my profile on any social network.

I do have a Facebook presence and some folks who like me. I even have some “friends” on it but I haven’t bothered to check how many. I don’t do twitter and don’t have an account. I am not part of the LinkedIn family and have not accepted any invitation to join. I am not part of any Google groups or any other social networking sites. I don’t even do Instagram.

Recently, I found out that my 15 year old niece, is a “selfie.” When I see her raising her phone over her head in front of her, I know she is about to take a “selfie.” Usually, either alone or with friends, her “selfie” picture ends up as an updated profile on Facebook.

Even President Obama was caught in the act of being a “selfie” at the funeral of Nelson Mandela when he clicked with the Danish Prime Minister. Of course, the episode went viral.

Of course, the “like” button on Facebook is a subtle, genius plot to accumulate an ever growing numbers game, whether it be of friends or companies you like. Publically, we have never been more connected while, at the same time, so remote and disconnected personally with others.

Have you ever noticed a family gathered for a meal at a restaurant or even at home. Invariably, some are engaged in clicking, texting, browsing, checking emails and websites while they are still supposed to be a family enjoying a family meal together, some family banter and connecting as soul mates with each other.

It reminds me of Frank Sinatra’s song, “Strangers in the night exchanging glances Wond’ring in the night what were the chances We’d be sharing love before the night was through.” Instead of sharing love, they were sharing, loneliness, isolation, boredom and engendering narcissistic entitlements.

Even a cursory glance through the types of uploads on YouTube reinforces the narcissistic mentality where people court affirmation, portray grandeur, affirm acceptance and popularity.

How have we gotten to this point in our naval gazing, narcissistic, self-perpetuating a culture that promises countless connections but, instead, delivers isolation, loneliness and withdrawal.

Seeing that I do not qualify to be a “selfie” this year, I know that I will not have put the same word in quotes anymore

So, what might be a new word to add to the Oxford dictionary this year? I think we need to come up with a new word for writers like myself so that we can feel included. My new word is “writie” which will be defined as anyone who feels compelled to expound their special and unique talent to write about anyone and anything as long as it provides a platform for the writer, bringing him or her recognition, accolades, popularity, acceptance, friends and an ego that is bigger than all the words in the English or any language. Here’s to the “writies” to be!