

Prevention and Management of Social Media Addiction: An Ayurvedic Approach

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Abstract: *In the present scenario social media has become an integral part of people's lives. Social media platforms have more than 2 billion willing users and the impact on users has been the subject of much concern, debate & confusion. Addiction to social media is a kind of psychological condition and potential threat for user's relationship, their jobs, ability to communicate and possibly even safety. Ayurveda "the ancient science of life" considers Pragyaparadha as one of the main causative factor for the unhealthy mind and body. This concept is directly related to the addiction as a disease of isolation and shame with grandiosity making oneself appear bigger or stronger than one is and really a step is needed to prevent this addiction. Being holistic science with equal focus on mind, body and soul Ayurveda adopts a comprehensive psychosomatic spiritual approach to preservation of health and cure of disease. As a part of prevention of illness and maintenance of optimum health it incorporates Sadvritta, Achara rasayana, Yoga etc. which plays an important role in disengaging people with social media. Yoga helps in maintenance of balance in health and establishment of balance in ill. The control of Vayu through Pranayam leads to stability of mind. Following Ashtanga yoga results in increase of satva quality and Achara rasayana, Sadvritta are based on similar principle which helps to control mind and prevents psychological disturbance. Ayurvedic approach is not only preventive step but also an effective remedial measure for the de-addiction of social media.*

Keywords: Pragyaparadha, Social media, Addiction, Sadvritta, Achara rasayana, Yoga

1. Introduction

Although we are living in a society we have become increasingly disconnected from our true self and rapidly moving away from essence which is mother nature. Our senses are heavily influenced by constant stimulation from computers, cell phones, video games, electronic devices. In last few decades online social networking sites (SNS) have gained increasingly popularity with individuals engaging in social networking sites to connect with others who share similar interests. The perceived need to be online has resulted in compulsive use of social media. Facebook addiction, FoMo (Fear of missing out, nomophobia, online games addiction may be considered as part of SNS addiction. Social media addiction is a kind of psychological condition and potential threat for user's relationship, their jobs, ability to communicate and possibly even safety. Ayurveda considers *Pragyaparadha* as one of the main causative factor for the unhealthy mind and body. This concept is directly related to the addiction as a disease of isolation and shame with grandiosity making oneself appear bigger or stronger than one is.

2. Definition

The definition of social media addiction can be drawn from the definition of internet addiction as both of them falls under the cyber-relationship addiction. Internet addiction has been defined as- the excessive internet use which disrupts a person's sleep pattern, work productivity, daily routine and social life. SNS such as twitter, facebook, instagram, what's app are gaining a lot of attention especially among students who use it for various reasons including; to share their interest, relationship with friends and family and to deal with stress. However this soon becomes an addiction which only few manage to escape.

Statistics show that social media consumes a big amount of daily attention. As estimated 350 million social media users suffer from facebook addiction syndrome. This has become more prominent in users between the age of 16-25 years. An estimated 68% of addicts confess checking their social media feeds 10 times a day. 5 million images are uploaded daily on instagram. The average visitor spends 15 minutes a day on YouTube. 18% of social media users can't go a few hours without checking facebook and 28% of i-phone users check their Twitter feed before getting up in the morning. 3 hours a day on average is spent on social media by the users between the age of 15- 25 years.

According to *Ayurveda*, disease begins when we forget our true nature as spirit. Among the three primordial causes, *Pragyaparadha* is considered to be one of the root cause of disease. It is wilfully ignoring one's inner knowing and going against intuitions and common sense. That means deliberate wilful indulgence in unhealthy practices leading to unbalanced body functions and disease is termed as *Pragyaparadha*. Also *Asatmyaindriya artha sanyog* is also responsible for disease causation and its one such instance is being engaged excessively in smartphones, internet or SNS. Neuroscience can be used to explain some of addiction created by social media sites. Connecting with others online activates neurotransmitter dopamine which controls the pleasure and reward centre of brain.

The technology itself makes the site particularly addictive because only a minimal effort is needed to post, comment or like to help maintain relationship to others. The platform also allows the users to share content and updates with a vast network simultaneously. Users have also access to a wealth of information including new stories, videos and photos that are curated by a network of similar people as well as opportunity to be a voyeur in the lives of others, commonly referred to as facebook stalking. SNS also help users fulfil

their universal need for human connection and to remind people that they are not alone.

Some users have been driven to social media sites because they suffer from FoMo (Fear of missing out) which is defined as anxiety that an exciting or interesting event may currently be happening elsewhere often aroused by posts seen on social media website. Another definition states that it is a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent, the desire to stay continuously connected to what others do.

Signs of Social Media Addiction

- 1) First thing to check in the morning is smart phone and checking social media sites whenever possible.
- 2) Getting upset if not getting the response from the posts one was hoping for.
- 3) Spending more than one hour daily at social media sites.
- 4) Over sharing of personal informations, photos, status etc. to gain acknowledgement or approval from peers.
- 5) Interference with work, school performance or offline social life.
- 6) Withdrawal symptoms if one try to cut down on time one spends on social media.
- 7) Losing sleep to go on social media sites.
- 8) Thinking that world is over when there is no internet access or Twitter, facebook or other social media is down.
- 9) Feeling proud when any post or uploaded picture get a hundred likes on facebook or other social media addiction.
- 10) Social media has become part of your daily ritual; like sleeping and eating.

3. Material and Methods

A literature search was conducted through classical texts, online research journals via PUBMED, GOOGLE SCHOLARS and references of retrieved articles.

Management

Ayurveda adopts a comprehensive psychosomatic spiritual approach to preservation of health and cure of disease. It incorporates *Sadvritta*, *Achara rasayana*, *Yoga* etc for the prevention of illness and maintenance of optimum health. It is known that *Yoga* does wonders to mind and body. *Yoga* is the union of mind, body and soul. It works on all levels of recovery i.e. psychological, physical, emotional, spiritual level etc. It involves very deep and mindful breathing which stimulates relaxation response, reducing anxiety levels and creating calming sensations. The deep and focused breathing also helps one let go of the mind chatter that often is associated with stress and delivers more oxygen to brain thus creating endorphins which are body's natural feel good chemicals, thus resulting in better mood and improved concentration. Neurotransmitters serve as brain's chemical messenger relaying information between nerve cells. Low level of a neurotransmitter called GABA is linked to depression and anxiety. Recent studies show association between regular *Asana* practice and increased GABA levels. Regular meditation of 30 minutes a day for 8 weeks had a reduction of gray matter in amygdala which is linked to fear and anxiety.

Achara rasayana and *Sadvritta* which is a unique concept in *Ayurveda* implies moral, ethical and benevolent conduct; truth, non-violence personal and public cleanliness, mental and personal hygiene, devotion, compassion and a yogic lifestyle. These behaviours bring about rejuvenation in the body and mind system. One who adopts such conducts gains all benefits of *Rasayana* therapy without physically consuming any material *Rasayana* remedy.

4. Discussion

Despite scientific breakthroughs in medicine and technology, the modern world is still plagued by disease and people are increasingly dependent upon medications to relieve pain and sufferings of daily life. Modern medicine primarily focus on treating the disease while *Ayurveda* goes to the heart of the problem treating the cause in order to remove or prevent the disease. *Ayurveda* strongly emphasizes prevention, promotion, cure and rehabilitation. For this, it advocates the principles of *Achara rasayana*, *Sadvritta*, *Yoga* and others. Hence work is required to be done in this issue keeping in view the holistic approach of *Ayurveda* for psychosomatic illness.

5. Conclusion

As spiritual being we can't survive completely without human connection, love, compassion and understanding. When this need is not met, when there is a lack or hole or an emptiness we strive to fill that hole at the great cost of our own lives and lives of others. Social media provides a platform for users to fill this emptiness with ease. It makes users feel connected with whole world and gradually it becomes an integral part of people's lives. While social media addiction is currently not classified as a psychological condition but the impact it leaves on their users is not less than it. Thus in this emerging era of internet and social media use, we must learn to differentiate excessive use from addiction and be vigilant about psychopathology.

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