



SOCIAL MEDIA ANXIETY AS *DUSHI VISHA*: A TOXICOLOGICAL REINTERPRETATION OF DIGITAL STRESS THROUGH THE LENS OF AYURVEDIC TOXICOLOGY

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20523534>



How to cite this Article: Dr. Bhupesh Kumar Parihar*, M.D., Ph.D., M.B.A. (2026). Social Media Anxiety As Dushi Visha: A
Toxicological Reinterpretation of Digital Stress Through The Lens of Ayurvedic Toxicology. European Journal of Biomedical
and Pharmaceutical Sciences, 13(6), 283–285.

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Article Received on 05/05/2026

Article Revised on 25/05/2026

Article Published on 01/06/2026

ABSTRACT

Excessive use of social media is now linked to a new type of mental problem called social media anxiety. Symptoms include fear of missing out (FOMO), constant need for online validation, irritability when offline, and poor concentration. Modern medicine calls this problematic social media use or anxiety disorder. However, the Ayurvedic branch of *Agadatantra* (toxicology) offers a better explanation. This communication explains how chronic social media use acts like *Dushi Vishaa* slow, cumulative, low-potency poison described in classical texts. It primarily blocks *ManovahaSrotas* (mind channels) and depletes *Ojas* (mental resilience). Understanding this helps in simple, practical management: first remove the cause (digital detox), then use *Agada Kalpas*, *Medhya Rasayana* (memory-enhancing herbs). *Ojas* building, *Sattvavajaya* (mind training)

KEYWORDS: Social media, Anxiety, *Dushi Visha*, *Agadatantra*, *ManovahaSrotas*, *Ojas*.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp have become part of daily life.^[1] While they offer benefits like connectivity and information, overuse is causing a new mental health problem. Young adults and even teenagers report feeling anxious when they cannot check their phones, comparing their lives with others online, and feeling restless without notifications.^[2] This condition is now called **social media anxiety** (SMA).^[3] Modern psychiatry does not have a separate diagnosis for SMA. It is often labeled under "other specified anxiety disorder" or "behavioral addiction." But these labels do not explain why SMA develops slowly over months or years and why it feels like a "toxin" slowly damaging the mind. Here, *Agadatantra* the Ayurvedic science of poisons provides a very suitable model. *Agadatantra* describes a special type of poison called *Dushi Visha*, which is not acutely fatal but causes gradual harm after repeated low-dose exposure.^[4, 5, 6]

2. *Dushi Visha* (Classical View)

Dushi Visha (Accumulated / Chronic Poison)^[4, 5, 6]

- **Definition:** When a poison is repeatedly taken in small, sub-lethal doses, it accumulates in the body over months or years, becoming *Dushi Visha* – a chronic, low-grade toxin.

Key features of *Dushi Visha*

- Does not kill immediately
- Requires repeated small exposures
- Takes months or years to show symptoms
- Slowly damages body channels (*Srotas*)
- Affects both body and mind
- Difficult to diagnose early.

Experts say *Dushi Visha* can arise from

- Eating partially cooked or old food repeatedly
- Exposure to mild chemical toxins
- Suppressing natural urges repeatedly
- Repeated exposure to any harmful stimulus in small doses

3. Social Media as Cyber *Dushi Visha*

This comparison maps six features of chronic low-dose toxicity onto measurable harms caused by habitual social media engagement.

Table 1: Applying the *Dushi Visha* Framework to Digital Overuse Syndromes.

S.No.	<i>Dushi Visha</i> Feature	How Social Media Matches
1	Low-dose, repeated exposure	Scrolling 10-20 minutes, many times a day
2	Slow, insidious onset	Anxiety develops over 6-12 months, not overnight
3	No immediate danger	No death, but slow mental damage
4	Affects <i>Manovaha Srotas</i>	Poor focus, racing thoughts, mind always "online"
5	Depletes <i>Ojas</i>	Low energy, easy frustration, emotional emptiness
6	Requires <i>Pragyaaparadha</i>	Knowing it is harmful but still using it

Definition that's fit

Social media induced *Dushi Visha* is a chronic, low-grade mental toxicity caused by repeated, voluntary overexposure to digital reward cycles, leading to *Manovaha Srotas* obstruction and *Ojas* depletion.

4. Pathogenesis (*Samprapti*) – Simple Steps

This framework adapts the classical *Dushi Visha* progression to explain how habitual social media use systematically damages mental health. These stages show how low-dose digital exposure slowly accumulates into severe psychological toxicity over time.

Table 2: Six Stages of Social Media Induced Mental Toxicity (*Dushi Visha Samprapti*).

Stage	Sanskrit Term	Meaning	Social Media Equivalent
Stage 1	<i>Sanchaya</i>	Accumulation	Daily scrolling, liking, sharing in small doses of dopamine and stress hormones accumulate in the mind-body system
Stage 2	<i>Prakopa</i>	Aggravation	Algorithm-driven content triggers <i>Rajas</i> (excitement, restlessness, craving) and <i>Tamas</i> (dullness, confusion, doom-scrolling)
Stage 3	<i>Prasara</i>	Spread	Mental disturbance spreads from digital space to real life leads to sleep disturbed, appetite reduced, relationships neglected
Stage 4	<i>SthanaSamshraya</i>	Localization	The toxic effect settles in <i>ManovahaSrotas</i> (mind channels) and <i>Prana Vata</i> site (brain, sense organs, mind)
Stage 5	<i>Vyakti</i>	Manifestation	Clear clinical symptoms appear: FOMO, compulsive checking, panic when offline, poor memory, inability to focus
Stage 6	<i>Bheda</i>	Complication	Chronic stage: Clinical depression, social withdrawal, suicidal ideation, cognitive decline (memory loss, poor decision making)

5. Clinical Features – How to Identify

These five observable behavioral markers assist practitioners in recognizing digital media dependency during routine adolescent health assessments.

Table 3: Behavioral Markers of Digital Media Dependency.

S.No.	Sign	Description
1	Compulsive checking	Picks up phone >50 times/day without real need
2	FOMO	Fear of missing out on posts, messages, trends
3	Withdrawal distress	Irritable, restless, anxious when phone is taken away
4	Comparison dysphoria	Feels inferior after seeing others' posts
5	Real-world neglect	Avoids family, studies, meals to stay online

Ayurvedic correlation

- *Atipravritti* of *Indriya* (excessive sensory indulgence)
- *Manasika Dosha* – *Raja* and *Tama* predominance
- *Vata* vitiation (especially *Prana* and *Vyana*)
- *Ojas Kshaya* (reduced immunity and resilience)

6. Simple Management Protocol

Based on *Agadatantra* principles, a **three-step approach** can be taken.

Step 1: *Nidana Parivarjana* (Remove the Cause) – Most Important

- Digital detox: No social media for 1 hour after waking and 2 hours before sleep
- Use app timers (max 30-40 minutes/day)

- Keep phone outside bedroom
- One "no-phone day" per week (Sunday)

Step 2: Shodhana (Purification – if severe)

- *Nasya* (nasal drops): *Anu Taila*⁷ or *Vacha Taila*^[8]
- *Shirodhara* with warm oil – calms *Prana Vata*
- *Snehapana* (internal oleation) only under guidance.

Step 3: Shamana as AgadaKalpa + Rasayana (Pacifying + Rejuvenative)

- **Agada Kalpa Prayoga**
 - *Dushivishari Agada*^[9]
 - *Vishaghna Mahakashya*^[10]
 - *Eka sara gana*^[11]
- **Medhya Rasayana**
 - *Brahmi* (Bacopa)
 - *Shankhapushpi*
 - *Jatamansi*
- **Ojas-building**
 - *Ashwagandha*
 - *Punarnava, Guduchi*
- **Sattvavajaya Chikitsa** (mind training):
 - Daily 10 minutes of *Pranayama* (*Nadi Shuddhi*)
 - *Dhyana* (mindfulness on breath)
 - *Jnana* – read about social media harms once a week

DISCUSSION

The present reinterpretation establishes that social media anxiety shares all key features of *Dushi Visha* that is slow onset, cumulative effect, *Pragya aparadha*, and *Ojas* depletion. Unlike modern behavioral models that focus on individual self-control, the *Agadatantra* framework identifies social media itself as a low-potency, repeated toxin. This shift is clinically valuable: it prioritizes *Nidana Parivarjana* (digital detox) over symptom suppression. The six-stage *Samprapti* explains why early intervention succeeds while chronic exposure leads to depression and cognitive decline. However, direct validation through clinical studies measuring *ManovahaSrotas dushti* is needed. Overall, this toxicological lens offers a simple, stigma-free, and actionable model for Ayurvedic practitioners.

CONCLUSION

Social media, in its current algorithmic form, acts as a **cyber-era *Dushi Visha*** a slow, cumulative, mental toxin. The ancient science of *Agadatantra* provides not only a diagnostic lens but also a principled path to detoxification, resilience, and recovery. So here concludes.

"Just as *Agadatantra* once guided us away from contaminated water and semi-cooked poisons, it now guides us away from infinite scrolls and dopamine

traps. The poison has changed its vehicle, but the principles remain eternal." Future research should validate this model through clinical trials of digital detox, *Medhya Rasayana* and develop a *Dushi Visha* Scale for social media toxicity.

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