



Asatmendriyārtha Samyoga In the Era of Digital Toxicity: A Preventive Ayurvedic Perspective Through Sattvavajaya Chikitsa.

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Abstract: Digital technology has become an unavoidable component of contemporary life; however, its excessive and unregulated use has resulted in growing mental health disturbances such as stress, distraction, cognitive fatigue, and behavioral dependence. From an Ayurvedic perspective, this condition can be understood as *Asatmendriyārtha samyoga*, an unwholesome interaction between the senses and their objects, leading to impairment of intellect and judgment. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe improper sensory contact, intellectual error (*Prajnaparadha*), and imbalance of time and action as fundamental causes of psychological disorders. Continuous exposure to high-intensity digital stimuli represents a modern manifestation of sensory excess, disturbing the coordinated functioning of mind and intellect. Ayurveda proposes *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*, a psych regulatory approach focused on restraint of the mind, cultivation of discrimination (*Buddhi*), self-control (*Dhairya*), and mindful awareness (*Smriti*), as an effective preventive strategy. This conceptual review analyzes digital mental stress through classical Ayurvedic principles and correlates them with contemporary behavioral patterns. It further highlights the relevance of *Sattvavajaya* as a non-pharmacological, preventive framework for maintaining mental balance in the digital era. By integrating ancient psychological insights with modern digital challenges, this study emphasizes the applicability of Ayurveda in promoting sustainable mental well-being in a technology-driven society.

Index Terms - Asatmendriyārtha samyoga; Digital mental health; Digital toxicity; Digital Wellbeing; Prajnaparadha; Sattvavajaya chikitsa.

1. INTRODUCTION:

In the modern world, digital technology has become an inseparable part of daily life. Using digital devices is no longer a choice but a necessity for work and social life. While smartphones and the internet offer great convenience, their excessive use has created a new health challenge known as Digital Toxicity. This condition causes mental stress, lack of focus, and a loss of balance in daily life. In Ayurveda, this phenomenon can be identified as a form of *Asatmendriyārtha-samyoga*—the unwholesome or unhealthy connection between the senses and their objects.

According to Ayurvedic principles, there are three primary causes for any disease. The *Charaka Samhita* categorizes them as follows:

इत्यसात्मेन्द्रियार्थसंयोगः, प्रज्ञापराधः, परिणामश्चेति त्रयस्त्रिविधविकल्पा हेतवो विकाराणां; समयोगयुक्तास्तु प्रकृतिहेतवो भवन्ति॥

(Ity asātmyendriyārtha-samyogaḥ, prajñāparādhah, pariṇāmaś ceti trayah trividha-vikalpā hetavo vikārāṇām; samayoga-yuktās tu prakṛti-hetavo bhavanti.) [1]

This verse explains that *Asatmendriyārtha-samyoga* (unwholesome sensory contact), *Prajnaparadha* (intellectual errors), and *Parinama* (seasonal or time-related changes) are the three roots of all disorders. When these factors are present in proper measure, they become causes for the maintenance of health. In the context of digital toxicity, the persistent bombardment of high-frequency visual

and auditory stimuli constitutes a sensory *Atiyoga*. This overwhelming input bypasses the mind's filters, eventually damages human mental clarity.

According to Ayurveda, health depends on how senses (*Indriya*) interact with the world around us (*Artha*). When this interaction is improper, it leads to disease. The *Charaka Samhita* further describes how this sensory overload leads to the impairment of the intellect:

तदार्थातियोगायोगमिथ्यायोगात् समनस्कमिन्द्रियं विकृतिमापद्यमानं यथास्वं बुद्ध्युपघाताय सम्पद्यते, सामर्थ्ययोगात् पुनः प्रकृतिमापद्यमानं यथास्वं बुद्धिमाप्याययति॥
(Tad-artha-atiyoga-ayoga-mithyāyogāt samanaskam indriyaṃ vikṛtim āpadyamānaṃ yathāsvaṃ buddhy-upaghātāya sampadyate; sāmārthya-yogāt punaḥ prakṛtim āpadyamānaṃ yathāsvaṃ buddhim āpyāyayati.)
(Charaka Samhita, Sutra Sthana 8/15) [2]

This verse explains that when the senses, in coordination with the mind (*Samanaskam-indriyam*), undergo excessive (*Atiyoga*), deficient (*Ayoga*), or perverted (*Mithyayoga*) contact with their objects, it leads to the impairment of the intellect (*Buddhyupaghata*). When this engagement occurs in a proper and balanced manner, it restores normal functioning and promotes the nourishment of the intellect. In digital toxicity, the mind becomes so distracted by digital "objects" that it loses its power to focus and make healthy decisions. To manage this modern crisis, Ayurveda provides a specialized psychological approach called *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*. By using the qualities of *Dhi* (proper judgment), *Dhairya* (courage/patience), and *Smriti* (memory), This therapy aims at *Mano-nigraha* (restraining the mind) from harmful influences. This study explores how *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* can be used as a conceptual digital firewall to help individuals regain control over their senses and restore mental equilibrium.

1.1. Aim:

To conceptually evaluate digital toxicity through Ayurvedic principles and explore the preventive role of *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* in promoting digital mental well-being.

1.2. Objectives:

1. To analyze digital toxicity in the context of *Asatmendriyārtha samyoga* and *Prajnaparadha*.
2. To interpret classical Ayurvedic concepts related to mind and sensory regulation in digital living.
3. To explore *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* as a preventive strategy for maintaining mental balance in the digital era.

2. Materials and Methods:

2.1. Materials:

- Classical Ayurvedic texts including *Charaka Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya* were reviewed for concepts related to mind, sensory interaction, *Prajnaparadha*, and *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*.
- Contemporary scientific literature related to digital stress, digital toxicity, behavioral psychology, and artificial intelligence in mental health was consulted through indexed journals and standard academic books.

2.2. Methods:

- A conceptual and narrative review approach was adopted.
- Relevant Ayurvedic verses were analyzed and interpreted using standard commentaries.
- Conceptual correlation was made between classical Ayurvedic principles and modern digital behavioral patterns.
- Preventive strategies were formulated based on *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* principles.
- No experimental, clinical, or survey-based methods were employed.

2.3. Ethical Consideration:

- As this study was based merely on literature review, no ethical clearance was required.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

3.1. Concept of Manas and Sensory Cognition:

Ayurveda considers *Manas* (mind) as a fundamental entity responsible for regulating sensory perception and cognitive activity. It acts as an internal coordinator that connects the sense organs with their respective objects and facilitates conscious experience.

अतीन्द्रियं पुनर्मनः सत्त्वसञ्ज्ञकं, 'चेतः' इत्याहुरेके, तदार्थात्मसम्पदायत्तचेष्टं चेष्टाप्रत्ययभूतमिन्द्रियाणाम्॥

(Atīndriyaṃ punar manaḥ sattva-saṃjñakaṃ, "cetaḥ" ity āhur eke, tad-artha-ātma-sampad-āyatta-ceṣṭaṃ ceṣṭā-pratyaya-bhūtam indriyāṇām.) (Charaka Saṃhita, Sutra Sthana 8/4) [2]

The mind is beyond the sensory organs and is known as *Sattva*; some refer to it as *Cetas*. The activities of the senses depend upon the mind and the self, and the mind serves as the initiating factor for all sensory perceptions and actions. This description establishes *Manas* as *Atindriya* and highlights its role in directing sensory functions. In the context of modern digital living, *Manas* becomes continuously engaged with virtual sensory inputs such as visual screens, auditory notifications, and cognitive stimuli.

The specific object of the mind is described as *Chintya*, and the quality of mental engagement determines mental health or disturbance.

मनसस्तु चिन्त्यमर्थः। तत्र मनसो मनोबुद्धेश्च त एव समानातिहीनमिथ्यायोगाः प्रकृतिविकृतिहेतवो भवन्ति॥

(Manasastu cintyam arthaḥ; tatra manaso mano-buddheś ca te eva samāna-ati-hīna-mithyāyogāḥ prakṛti-vikṛti-hetavo bhavanti.) (Charaka Saṃhita, Sutra Sthana 8/16) [2]

This verse clarifies that proper, deficient, or distorted engagement of the mind with its objects influences psychological equilibrium. Persistent exposure to inappropriate or excessive digital content may therefore disturb mental balance.

3.2. Cognitive Hierarchy in Perception:

Ayurveda explains cognition as a regulated hierarchical process in which the mind plays a central coordinating role. Charaka emphasizes that sensory perception does not occur independently, but only when guided by the mind:

मनःपुरःसराणीन्द्रियार्थग्रहणसमर्थानि भवन्ति॥

(Manaḥ-puraḥsarāṇīndriyāṇy artha-grahaṇa-samarthāni bhavanti.) (Charaka Saṃhita, Sutra Sthana 8/7) [2]

This principle indicates that healthy perception depends on mindful regulation of sensory engagement. When the mind fails to guide the senses, improper sensory contact (*Asatmyendriyārtha-samyoga*) arises, leading to cognitive imbalance.

The internal hierarchy of human consciousness must be understood to manage this sensory overflow. This hierarchical organization is further supported by the Bhagavad Gita:

इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहुरिन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः। मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्यो बुद्धेः परतस्तु सः॥

(Indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ; manasas tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ.) [3]

This means that the senses are powerful, but the mind (*Manas*) is higher than the senses. The intellect (*Buddhi*) is higher than the mind, emphasizing the importance of intellectual control in regulating sensory impulses. Digital toxicity happens when senses take control, making the mind follow digital distractions blindly and bypassing the intellect. Disruption of this hierarchy leads to loss of discrimination and behavioral imbalance.

3.3. Asatmendriyārtha-Samyoga and Digital Exposure:

Improper contact between the senses and their objects is termed *Asatmendriyārtha-samyoga*. This improper engagement may occur in three forms: excessive (*Atiyoga*), deficient (*Ayoga*), or distorted (*Mithyayoga*).

कालोऽर्थकर्मणां योगो हीनमिथ्यातिमात्रकः। सम्यग्योगश्च विज्ञेयो रोगारोग्यैककारणम्॥

(Kālo 'rtha-karmaṇām yogo hīna-mithyā-atimātrakaḥ; samyag-yogaś ca vijñeyo roga-arogyaika-kāraṇam.)

[4]

Trividha Asatmendriyārtha-Samyoga and Digital Pathology-

The pathological outcomes of improper sensory engagement can be understood through the framework of *Trividha Asatmendriyārtha-samyoga*:

- **Atiyoga (Excessive Use):** Prolonged screen exposure, repetitive scrolling, and constant digital multitasking.
- **Ayoga (Deficient Use):** Reduced engagement with natural environments, physical activity, and direct interpersonal interaction.

- **Mithyāyoga (Distorted Use):** Exposure to misleading information, emotionally toxic or harmful content, and inappropriate night-time screen use.

In the digital environment, prolonged screen exposure, reduced engagement with natural sensory experiences, and distorted information consumption can be understood as modern expressions of these classical concepts. Such sensory imbalance primarily affects the initial stages of cognition, placing excessive demand on *Manas* and weakening the regulatory function of *Buddhi*. These patterns disturb the balance of mental qualities (*Guṇa*), particularly increasing *Rajas* and *Tamas*, and contribute to anxiety, cognitive fatigue, sleep disturbances, and impaired emotional regulation. Thus, digital toxicity can be interpreted as a modern expression of classical sensory pathology rather than an entirely new disease entity.

3.4. Prajnaparadha and Behavioral Dysregulation:

When intellectual discrimination fails, an individual continues harmful behavior despite awareness of its adverse effects. Ayurveda describes this phenomenon as *Prajnaparadha*.

धीधृतिस्मृतिविभ्रष्टः कर्म यत्कुरुतेऽशुभम् प्रज्ञापराधं तं विद्यात् सर्वदोषप्रकोपणम्॥

(Dhī-dhṛti-smṛti-vibhraṣṭaḥ karma yat kurute 'śubham; prajñāparādham taṁ vidyāt sarva-doṣa-prakopanam.) [5]

This verse explains that impairment of *Dhi* (judgment), *Dhṛti* (self-control), and *Smṛti* (memory) leads to actions that aggravate pathological processes. Such actions arise from a *Prajnaparadha* (intellectual error). According to *Charaka Saṃhita*, this intellectual error is a fundamental cause for the aggravation of all the *Doṣhas* (bodily humors), leading to imbalance and disease. In the context of digital behavior, this intellectual error manifests as compulsive usage, diminished self-regulation, and difficulty disengaging from excessive digital engagement.

3.5. Sattvavajaya Chikitsa as an Ayurvedic Psychological Intervention:

After establishing the role of improper sensory engagement and intellectual imbalance in the development of mental disturbances, Ayurveda proposes *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* as a distinct psychological approach for mental regulation. It is regarded as the principal non-pharmacological modality for managing and preventing disorders originating at the level of the mind.

सत्त्वावजयः पुनरहितेभ्योऽर्थेभ्यो मनोनिग्रहः॥

(Sattvāvajayaḥ punar ahitebhyo 'rthebhyo mano-nigrahaḥ.) [6]

Sattvavajaya Chikitsa is defined as the conscious restraint of the mind from unwholesome objects (*Ahita Artha*). This definition directly addresses the pathological mechanism of *Asatmendriyārtha-samyoga*, wherein repeated exposure to inappropriate sensory stimuli leads to mental imbalance. Rather than suppressing sensory activity, *Sattvavajaya* emphasizes conscious regulation and selective engagement of the mind. Here, the verse highlights that when the mind is unchecked and overpowered by desires or attachments, it leads to mental disturbances. *Sattvavajaya* is applied to regain mental control, prevent overindulgence, and maintain emotional and physical health.

3.5.1. Role of Buddhi and Smṛiti in Mental Regulation:

Charaka emphasizes that the maintenance of mental health depends on appropriate intellectual evaluation and sustained awareness during sensory engagement. To prevent affliction of the senses and mind (*Anupatapaya*), wholesome sensory engagement (*Satmya-indriyārtha-samyoga*) is advocated. This principle becomes especially relevant in the context of *Asatmendriyārtha-samyoga*, where improper sensory engagement necessitates intellectual regulation and sustained mindfulness.

तत्रेन्द्रियाणां समनस्कानामनुपतप्तानामनुपतापाय प्रकृतिभावे प्रयतितव्यमेभिर्हेतुभिः; तद्यथा—सात्म्येन्द्रियार्थसंयोगेन बुद्ध्या सम्यगवेक्ष्यावेक्ष्य कर्मणां सम्यक् प्रतिपादनेन... तस्मादात्महितं चिकीर्षता सर्वेण सर्वं सर्वदा स्मृतिमास्थाय सद्वृत्तमनुष्ठेयम्॥

(Tatra indriyāṇāṁ samanaskānām anupataptānām anupatāpāya prakṛti-bhāve prayatitavyam ebhir hetubhiḥ; tad yathā—sātmya-indriyārtha-samyogena buddhyā samyag avekṣyāvekṣya karmaṇāṁ samyak pratipādanena; tasmād ātma-hitam cikīrṣatā sarveṇa sarvaṁ sarvadā smṛtim āsthāya.) (Charaka Saṃhita, Sutra Sthana 8/17) [2]

This passage highlights that actions should be undertaken only after proper assessment by the intellect (*Buddhya samyag avekṣya*), ensuring that sensory interaction remains appropriate and non-harmful. It further indicates the role of continuous mindfulness (*Smṛiti*) along with adherence to righteous conduct in maintaining regulated sensory engagement. Through this intellect-guided and mindful approach, indiscriminate sensory indulgence is prevented, and mental equilibrium is preserved without necessitating complete withdrawal from sensory experience.

3.5.2. Cognitive Framework of Sattvavajaya Chikitsa:

Ayurveda explains that mental regulation is achieved through the strengthening of higher psychological faculties, as stated in the Charaka Samhita:

मानसो ज्ञानविज्ञानधैर्यस्मृतिसमाधिभिः॥

(Mānaso jñāna-vijñāna-dhairya-smṛti-samādhīḥ.) [7]

This verse highlights five core faculties that together constitute the basis of *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*. Their preventive relevance in digital living can be understood as follows:

1. *Jnana* (Right knowledge):
Provides awareness regarding the effects of excessive digital exposure on mental health and helps individuals understand the need for regulated digital use.
2. *Vijnana* (Applied or experiential knowledge):
Enables practical decision-making during real-time digital engagement, supporting conscious selection and duration of digital activities.
3. *Dhairya* (Mental steadiness):
Strengthens self-control and resilience, allowing resistance against compulsive behaviors such as frequent notifications and prolonged screen exposure.
4. *Smṛti* (Memory and mindfulness):
Maintains awareness of time, purpose, and personal values, preventing unintentional overuse, cognitive fatigue, and loss of focus.
5. *Samadhi* (Focused mental integration):
Supports sustained attention and mental clarity, counteracting distraction and fragmentation caused by continuous digital multitasking.

Through the systematic strengthening of these faculties, *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* functions as a preventive psychological framework that promotes mindful sensory engagement and cognitive balance in the digital era, without necessitating withdrawal from technology.

4. DISCUSSION:

The present study interprets contemporary digital toxicity through the Ayurvedic framework of *Asatmendriyārtha-samyoga*, wherein excessive or distorted sensory engagement disrupts the normal regulation of mental faculties. Continuous exposure to intense digital stimuli overwhelms the sensory–mental interface, disturbing the sequential processing from *Indriya* to *Manas* and eventually impairing *Buddhi*. This intellectual dysfunction manifests as *Prajnaparadha*, characterized by the continuation of unwholesome behavior despite awareness of its adverse consequences.

Ayurveda recognizes that stabilization of the mind depends upon the integrity of higher cognitive faculties. Charaka emphasizes that mental balance is maintained through the coordinated functioning of knowledge, discriminative understanding, fortitude, memory, and mental steadiness:

मानसो ज्ञानविज्ञानधैर्यस्मृतिसमाधिभिः॥

(Mānaso jñāna-vijñāna-dhairya-smṛti-samādhīḥ.) [7]

This classical assertion explains that disturbances of the mind arise when these faculties are weakened, leading to loss of restraint and impaired judgment. In the context of digital overexposure, such impairment results in compulsive engagement and attentional instability.

Vagbhata further consolidates this therapeutic perspective by identifying intellect, fortitude, and self-knowledge as the principal remedies for mental disorders:

धीधैर्यात्मादिविज्ञानं मनोदोषौषधं परम्॥

(Dhī-dhairya-ātmādi-vijñānaṃ mano-doṣauśadhaṃ param.) [8]

These principles collectively establish *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* as the most appropriate corrective and preventive approach for mental disturbances arising from sensory excess. Rather than advocating sensory deprivation, *Sattvavajaya* promotes conscious regulation of engagement through intellectual evaluation, sustained mindfulness, and ethical restraint.

From a preventive perspective, this approach aligns with *Swasthavṛitta* principles by restoring *Samyag-yoga* of sensory contact and preventing recurrence of *Prajnaparadha*. Thus, *Sattvavajaya* may be understood as a classical mental hygiene framework capable of addressing modern digital challenges without deviation from foundational Ayurvedic principle.

5. CONCLUSION:

This conceptual review concludes that although digital engagement has become an essential component of contemporary life, the associated mental disturbances are not inevitable and can be effectively prevented. Ayurveda explains such disturbances through the framework of *Asatmendriyarthasamyoga* and *Prajnaparadha*, where improper sensory engagement and impaired intellectual regulation disturb mental balance.

Sattvavajaya Chikitsa offers a structured psychological approach that emphasizes intellectual discernment, sustained awareness, and controlled sensory interaction rather than complete avoidance of digital exposure. By strengthening higher cognitive faculties, individuals can shift from passive and excessive consumption of digital stimuli to conscious and regulated engagement.

The application of *Sattvavajaya* principles demonstrates that mental well-being in a digitally intensive environment depends on internal cognitive regulation rather than external technological restriction. Re-establishing this classical Ayurvedic psychological framework provides a rational and preventive strategy for maintaining mental clarity, balance, and resilience in the digital era, reinforcing that while technology is a necessity of modern living, mental health remains a fundamental priority.

6. REFERENCES:

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