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**INDIA'S PATH TO PROSPERITY**

**INDIA NEEDS URGENT REFORMS NOW TO BECOME A DEVELOPED NATION BY 2047, OR IT RISKS SQUANDERING ITS BEST CHANCE TO ESCAPE THE LOWER-MIDDLE-INCOME TRAP**

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*Dr. Manjula Pooja Shroff, the MD and CEO of Kalorex group, with over 30 years of experience in the educational domain, has been leading several K-12 institutions and working with children across various age groups and societal segments. Over time, and especially since the rise of social media, she has observed the increasing impact of these platforms on students' mental, physical, and social well-being—a growing concern that now universally threatens their safety.*

*In the past year, Dr. Shroff had the privilege of traveling to numerous countries and attending global summits, including COP28 in Dubai, the United Nations ACUNS in Tokyo, ECOSOC in New York, the B-20 Summit in Brazil, DIE Australia, and the World Economic Forum in Davos. A common concern expressed by educationists from across the globe was regarding the safety of children in today's social media-driven world.*

*She authored "Baby Steps to Big Dreams" and Safe Teen Steps" which offer parenting solutions and guidance towards ensuring any child of developing age remains safe emotionally, physically as well as from the dangers of the internet world. The overwhelming response received towards these books made it evident that it is an urgent need to be addressed for all parents and students. Giving children time and positive distractions is a duty that all parents must realise and fulfill, to ensure their children do not fall prey to the virtual world constantly playing on their screens and minds.*

**■ Dr. Manjula Pooja Shroff**  
MD and CEO, Kalorex group

## Digital Zombies: Restricting Screen Time is the Solution

In today's world, technology is everywhere. From smartphones to tablets, laptops to smart TVs, screens are now an inseparable part of our daily lives. While technology has brought convenience, it has also created a new challenge—digital addiction. Many children and adults spend hours staring at screens, often unaware of the negative effects. These excessive screen users are often called 'Digital Zombies' because they become so absorbed in their devices that they lose awareness of the world around them.

### The Problem of Digital Zombies

Imagine walking into a room full of people, but instead of talking to each other, everyone is glued to their screens. This is a common sight today. Children prefer playing video games instead of going outside, and adults spend hours scrolling through social media. This digital dependency affects mental and physical health, social skills, and productivity.

**Health Issues Caused by Excessive Screen Time**  
Too much screen time can cause various health problems.

**Eye Strain and Headaches:** Staring at a screen for long periods leads to dry eyes, blurry vision, and frequent headaches.

**Sleep Disturbances:** The blue light from screens affects melatonin production, making it difficult to sleep.

**Obesity and Weak Muscles:** Sitting for long hours reduces physical activity, leading to weight gain and weak muscles.

**Mental Health Problems:** Social media addiction and excessive gaming can lead to anxiety, stress, and depression.

**Reduced Attention Span:** Constant exposure to digital content reduces focus and concentration, especially in children.

### How Screens Affect Relationships

Spending too much time on devices affects relationships as well. Families often sit together but remain busy with their phones. Children seek attention from parents who are busy scrolling through their social media. Friends prefer chatting online instead of meeting in person. This lack of real communication weakens emotional connections, leading to loneliness and isolation.

### Restricting Screen Time: The Best Solution

One of the best ways to fight digital addiction is by limiting screen time. Here are some simple yet effective ways to reduce screen usage:

**Set Daily Limits:** Fix a time limit for using screens. For example, one hour for entertainment and one hour for studies.

**Encourage Outdoor Activities:** Motivate children and adults to engage in outdoor games, exercise, or hobbies like painting and reading.

**No Screens Before Bedtime:** Avoid using phones or laptops at least one hour before sleeping to

improve sleep quality.

**Family Time Without Screens:** Have meals together without phones or TVs and engage in real conversations.

**Use Screen Time Apps:** Many apps help track and limit screen usage, making it easier to control.

**Lead by Example:** Parents and elders should reduce their own screen time to set a good example for children.

**Engage in Creative Activities:** Encourage activities like music, dance, storytelling, or board games that do not involve screens.

### The Benefits of Less Screen Time

Reducing screen time comes with many benefits. It improves physical health, enhances sleep, and boosts mental well-being. People become more active, enjoy real conversations, and build stronger relationships. Children develop better focus and creativity, while adults find more time for personal growth.

### Conclusion

Technology is a wonderful tool, but when misused, it turns people into digital zombies. The key is to use screens wisely and in moderation. By setting limits, encouraging real-life interactions, and engaging in physical activities, we can break free from digital addiction. A balanced life, where technology supports rather than controls us, is the best way forward.