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From Digital Abstinence to Intentional Digital Regulation: A Cross-Cultural Behavioral Framework for the RESET Model of Sustainable Digital Self-Regulation

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Abstract: Digital overuse is a defining psychological challenge of contemporary life. Abstinence-based digital detox approaches dominate current intervention practice. Systematic evidence confirms they produce limited long-term behavioral change. Their core failure is structural: they remove the external stimulus without addressing the internal compulsion. This paper introduces the RESET Model — a five-phase, cross-culturally grounded behavioral framework for sustainable digital self-regulation. It is the second article in a two-part theoretical series. Author's Article I established the diagnostic foundation. This paper proposes the prescriptive corrective. Five Western behavioral and cognitive theories — Self-Determination Theory, Habit Formation Theory, Behavioral Economics (Choice Architecture), Attention Restoration Theory, and Cognitive Load Theory — are synthesized with Indian philosophical constructs drawn from the Triguna framework and Patanjali's Yoga Sutra. The five-phase model is built through a systematic model-development procedure and validated against established criteria for conceptual contributions in behavioral science. The RESET Model operationalizes Pratyahara, Guna-shifting, and Sakshi Bhav within a testable, sequenced behavioral structure. A proposed multidimensional outcome measure — the Digital Detox Effectiveness Index (DDEI) — is introduced alongside three formal propositions directing the future empirical validation agenda.

Keywords: Digital self-regulation, RESET Model, Triguna, Pratyahara, Attention Restoration Theory, Habit formation, Chitta-Vritti, Cross-cultural psychology

1. Introduction

This section establishes the theoretical problem driving the paper. It traces the structural failure of abstinence-based digital detox, maps the five research gaps the RESET Model addresses, and positions this paper as the prescriptive companion to a prior diagnostic framework (Mallick, 2026a).

1.1 Digital Overuse and Its Cognitive Costs

Digital technology pervades every domain of adult life. Interfaces are engineered to sustain continuous cognitive engagement (Simon, 1971), generating a cumulative toll on executive function, sleep quality, and emotional regulation (Elhai et al., 2017). Researchers distinguish digital burnout from occupational burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016): the former arises not from identifiable workplace stressors

but from the medium itself — the cognitive cost of managing always-on connectivity (Sharma et al., 2025). The user feels depleted without visible cause.

The mechanism is specific. Digital platforms deploy variable reward schedules to trigger the mesolimbic dopamine pathway (Lembke, 2021; Volkow et al., 2017). Within the Indian philosophical framework adopted in this paper (elaborated in Section 2.2 and treated as a set of proposed, expert-reviewable correspondences in Section 8.2), each trigger is theorized to deplete *Prana* — the vital energy the mind requires for sustained attention and empathic engagement. Mallick (2026a) mapped this theorized depletion as a three-phase trajectory: Rajasic hyper-arousal, cognitive depletion, and terminal Tamasic inertia.

1.2 The Failure of Abstinence-Based Detox

The dominant response to digital burnout is temporary abstinence. This approach is intuitive but insufficient. A comprehensive scoping review confirmed that abstinence-based detox produces limited long-term behavioral change (Radtke et al., 2025), a finding corroborated by a separate systematic analysis (Tariq, 2025).

The failure is structural, not motivational. Abstinence removes the external device without dissolving the Chitta-Vrittis — the mental ripples of anticipation — that the habit loop has generated (Mallick, 2026a). Context-switching expectations, dopamine-loop anticipation, and habituated checking behavior all persist. When abstinence ends, the abstinence violation effect compounds the problem: users frequently binge-consume content after a restriction window closes, deepening the condition the detox was designed to remedy (Mallick, 2026a).

1.3 Research Gap

Five gaps characterize the current literature. *First*, screen-time reduction is treated as the primary outcome; behavioral maintenance beyond the intervention is rarely tracked (Radtke et al., 2025). *Second*, longitudinal maintenance frameworks are largely absent. *Third*, replacement behaviors and intentional re-engagement remain underexamined —

most studies track what users stop doing, not what they begin doing instead. *Fourth*, psychological, behavioral, and environmental mechanisms are rarely integrated; existing models tend to isolate a single theoretical tradition. *Fifth* — the gap this paper specifically addresses — existing diagnostic models, including cross-cultural ones, identify the mechanism of attention collapse but do not operationalize a staged intervention to reverse it.

1.4 Series Positioning and Relationship to Prior Work

This paper is the second article in a planned two-part theoretical series. Article I (Mallick, 2026a) established the diagnostic foundation: a three-phase collapse model (Rajasic hyper-arousal → cognitive depletion → Tamasic inertia) synthesizing Kaplan's (1995) Attention Restoration Theory with the Indian *Triguna* and *Chitta-Vritti* frameworks. It argued that abstinence-based detox fails because it does not resolve the persistent *Vrittis* driving compulsive digital behavior.

This paper is the prescriptive companion. Where Article I diagnosed the collapse, this paper proposes the corrective architecture. The RESET Model operationalizes Article I's recommended correctives — *Pratyahara*, *Dhyana*, and *Sattva*-restoration — into a sequenced, time-bound, testable behavioral structure.

1.5 Present Contribution

Where Article I (Mallick, 2026a) established functional equivalence between Western and Indian constructs at a general, process-level of description, this paper's specific contribution is to extend that mapping to the level of individual, phase-specific intervention mechanisms — the distinction operationalized below as RO5.

1.6 Research Objectives

This paper pursues five objectives. *RO1*: develop a theory-informed Digital Detox Action Framework grounded in both Western and Indian psychological traditions. *RO2*: articulate how each RESET phase produces behavioral change through a specified mechanism. *RO3*: examine how replacement activities mediate sustained change beyond the intervention

window. *RO4*: introduce the DDEI as a proposed measurement instrument. *RO5*: integrate Indian philosophical constructs with Western behavioral theory at the level of individual intervention phases, not only as background framing. These objectives map directly onto the gaps identified in Section 1.3: RO1 responds to Gaps 1 and 2 (outcome scope and absent maintenance frameworks); RO2 and RO3 respond to Gap 3 (underexamined replacement behaviours); RO4 responds to the measurement limitation underlying Gap 1; and RO5 responds to Gap 5 (the absence of a staged, operationalized intervention).

1.7 Paper Roadmap

Section 2 presents the dual theoretical foundations. Section 3 documents the conceptual methodology. Section 4 presents the RESET Model. Section 5 traces the mechanism pathway and states three formal propositions. Section 6 describes the proposed validation framework and introduces the DDEI. Sections 7, 8, and 9 address discussion, limitations, and conclusions.

2. Theoretical Foundations

This section builds the dual theoretical base of the RESET Model. The Western foundations supply the behavioral change mechanisms. The Indian philosophical foundations supply the experiential and consciousness-based logic explaining how those mechanisms operate at the level of the mind itself. A comparative synthesis closes the section.

2.1 Western Behavioral and Cognitive Foundations

2.1.1 Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposes that sustained behavioral change requires three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT distinguishes controlled motivation — externally driven, ending when pressure lifts — from autonomous motivation, which is self-endorsed and self-sustained (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Digital detox regimes that mandate abstinence are inherently controlled: users comply but do not internalize regulation. SDT predicts that self-directed, autonomously structured digital governance

produces more durable behavioral maintenance — the prediction grounding the Transition phase of RESET.

2.1.2 Habit Formation Theory

Habits are behaviors that occur automatically in stable contexts (Wood & Rünger, 2016). The habit loop connects a cue, a routine, and a reward. Digital checking fits this structure precisely: notification alerts are the cue, the checking action is the routine, and social validation or novelty is the reward. Abstinence interrupts the routine without disrupting the loop; the cue and reward expectation persist. Durable habit change requires substituting a new routine that satisfies the same reward function (Verplanken & Orbell, 2022). This principle grounds the Substitute phase.

2.1.3 Behavioral Economics and Choice Architecture

Choice architecture refers to the deliberate design of environments that shape decisions without mandating them (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). Digital platforms minimize friction around continued use: app placement, infinite scroll, default notification settings, and personalized feeds eliminate every decision barrier. The RESET Model's Eliminate Friction phase reverses this logic, redesigning the user's environment to raise the effort cost of compulsive checking. This does not rely on willpower; it shifts the default.

2.1.4 Attention Restoration Theory

Attention Restoration Theory (ART) distinguishes directed attention — voluntary, effortful, and finite — from involuntary attention, which is effortless and stimulus-driven (Kaplan, 1995). Sustained directed-attention use produces Directed Attention Fatigue (DAF). Natural or low-stimulation environments engage involuntary attention softly, allowing directed attention to rest and recover (Berto, 2014). Digital environments corrupt this restorative cycle: notifications and auto-playing feeds capture involuntary attention but immediately force directed attention back into filtering mode (Monsell, 2003; Ohly et al., 2024). Switch costs accumulate without recovery. ART grounds the Experiment phase: bounded offline periods provide genuine restorative conditions for depleted directed attention.

2.1.5 Cognitive Load Theory

Cognitive Load Theory holds that working memory has finite processing capacity (Sweller, 1988). Extraneous load — produced by irrelevant stimuli — consumes capacity that would otherwise support meaningful processing (Sweller et al., 2019). Digital environments impose high extraneous load; every notification competes for bandwidth, and cumulative load degrades self-regulatory capacity over time (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). The Record phase addresses this by building metacognitive awareness of load-generating behaviors before any intervention begins. Change requires accurate awareness of what is being changed.

2.2 Indian Philosophical Foundations

2.2.1 The Triguna Framework

Triguna theory describes three fundamental qualities of nature and mind: *Rajas* (dynamism, activity, agitation), *Tamas* (inertia, heaviness, obscuration), and *Sattva* (clarity, balance, luminosity) (Gusain, 2024; Chandra et al., 2024). These qualities coexist in dynamic proportion, and imbalance among them has been linked to psychological distress in applied clinical contexts (Chandra et al., 2024). Digital environments systematically amplify *Rajas*: variable reward schedules produce continuous *Rajasic* activation (Mallick, 2026a). Sustained *Rajas* depletes *Tejas* — the mind's subtle capacity for processing and clarity — and precipitates collapse into *Tamas* (Frawley, 2010). Recovery requires a deliberate, structured shift toward *Sattva* — an intentional quality-change in activity and engagement that constitutes the overarching aim of RESET.

2.2.2 Chitta and the Vritti Problem

Patanjali's Yoga Sutra describes the mind as *Chitta*: the field of consciousness storing all impressions, habits, and memories (Patanjali, 2012; Upadhyay-Dhungel & Dahal, 2014). Every sensory input modifies *Chitta* through fluctuations called *Vrittis* — mental ripples, a cognitive-apparatus model that has been proposed as a complement to modern concepts of mind and cognition (Upadhyay-Dhungel & Dahal, 2014). In the digital environment, every notification and feed

update generates a *Vritti*. Continuous *Vritti* production scatters *Chitta* into *Vikshepa* — the antithesis of *Ekagrata* (one-pointed focus). A mind in *Vikshepa* cannot sustain attention, make deliberate choices, or process experience with depth. The RESET Model treats *Vritti* management as its central therapeutic target; each phase reduces *Vritti* frequency or intensity through a distinct mechanism.

2.2.3 Pratyahara as Active Sensory Gating

Pratyahara is the fifth limb of Patanjali's eightfold path — traditionally rendered as withdrawal of the senses, more precisely understood as active Sensory Gating (Patanjali, 2012). Recent scholarship similarly reframes *Pratyahara* away from passive renunciation and toward a psychological framework of selective attention and self-regulation (McKibben, 2025). It is the exercise of *Viveka* (discriminative intelligence) to consciously regulate which stimuli enter the attentional field, distinguishing informative inputs from sensory noise. *Pratyahara* is not passive avoidance. In the digital context, it transforms the user from a passive recipient of algorithmic feeds into an active gatekeeper of cognitive bandwidth — the specific goal of the Experiment phase of RESET.

2.2.4 Tejas, Prana, and Dhyana

Tejas is the subtle mental fire responsible for information digestion, cognitive clarity, and discriminative perception; *Prana* is the vital life force sustaining all mental and physical activity (Frawley, 2010). When *Vikshepa* is severe and *Tejas* exhausted, *Prana* itself becomes depleted — producing the *Tamasic* state described in Mallick (2026a): heavy, disconnected, incapable of empathy or ethical engagement. *Dhyana* — meditative absorption — is the primary restorative mechanism in Patanjali's system (Patanjali, 2012), and has been directly identified in the psychiatric literature as a historical precursor to contemporary mindfulness-based therapies (Singh, 2023). It is an active internal realignment that replenishes what passive rest cannot: the quality of inner attention itself. Its restorative effect is significantly enhanced when combined with nature exposure (Owens et al., 2024).

2.2.5 Sakshi Bhav: The Witness Stance

Sakshi Bhav is the stance of the witness: observing mental events — including digital compulsions, notification urges, and FOMO responses — without reactively acting on them (Patanjali, 2012; Singh, 2023), a construct that has been directly traced in the psychiatric literature as the philosophical origin of the "decentring" mechanism used in mindfulness-based therapies (Singh, 2023). Unlike suppression, which requires continuous effort and eventually fails, *Sakshi Bhav* is clear-eyed, non-reactive observation that requires no effort once cultivated. This faculty is most relevant to the Record and Transition phases: recording digital behavior without defensiveness requires the witness stance, as does returning to digital engagement

after structured detox without relapsing into Rajasic compulsion.

2.3 Comparative Synthesis

Table 1 presents the cross-traditional synthesis for the RESET Model. It extends the comparative taxonomy developed in Mallick (2026a) — which established functional equivalence between Western cognitive mechanisms and Indian philosophical constructs at a general process level — into a phase-specific operational mapping. Each RESET phase is anchored in one Western theory and one Indian construct. The two anchors are complementary lenses explaining both the behavioral mechanism and the experiential quality of each phase.

Table 1. Dual Theoretical Grounding of Each RESET Phase

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Western Anchor</i>	<i>Indian Philosophical Anchor</i>	<i>Mechanism Claimed</i>
R — Record	CLT; self-monitoring	Sakshi Bhav (witness consciousness)	Non-judgmental observation of Chitta-Vrittis builds baseline awareness without reactive distortion
E ₁ — Eliminate Friction	BEcon (choice architecture)	Reduction of Vikshepa-inducing stimuli	Environmental redesign raises the effort cost of Rajasic automatic checking
S — Substitute	HFT (habit loop)	Guna-shifting: Rajas → Sattva	Cue-routine-reward loop is redirected to Sattvic activity rather than suppressed
E ₂ — Experiment	ART (DAF recovery)	Active Pratyahara practice	Bounded offline periods build Viveka and allow Tejas restoration
T — Transition	SDT (autonomous motivation)	Stabilized Sattva; Sakshi Bhav	Autonomously governed re-engagement sustains change independent of external control

Note. SDT = Self-Determination Theory; ART = Attention Restoration Theory; CLT = Cognitive Load Theory; BEcon = Behavioral Economics; HFT = Habit Formation Theory. Indian constructs are drawn from Patanjali (2012), Frawley (2010), and Gusain (2024).

3. Methodology

This section documents how the RESET Model was constructed: the selection criteria for theoretical constructs, the model-building procedure, and the scope within which claims are made. Transparency about conceptual methodology allows readers to

evaluate the model's internal logic before its empirical predictions are tested.

3.1 Conceptual Article Methodology

This paper follows established guidelines for conceptual article development (Jaakkola, 2020; MacInnis, 2011). Following Jaakkola's (2020)

typology, it employs two complementary approaches: model building, which integrates theoretical knowledge into a novel framework, and conceptual synthesis, which extends an existing comparative taxonomy into a new application domain. Both approaches are applied simultaneously.

MacInnis (2011) specifies three criteria for a rigorous conceptual contribution: novelty, theoretical grounding, and generation of testable predictions. This paper satisfies all three. The RESET Model is novel in its cross-cultural structure and phase-specific theoretical mapping, draws on ten verified theoretical traditions, and produces three formal propositions specifying the direction and mechanism of expected empirical outcomes.

3.2 Theory and Construct Selection Criteria

Western theories were selected on three criteria: established empirical support in digital-behavior, attention, or behavioral-change research; non-overlapping mechanisms (the five selected theories are complementary, not redundant); and relevance to both initial change and long-term maintenance. Theories addressing only behavioral onset were excluded.

Indian philosophical constructs were selected for direct functional correspondence with Article I's comparative taxonomy (Mallick, 2026a). This ensures cross-paper coherence by extending an already-established comparison rather than assembling an independent construct set — a decision that strengthens the cumulative theoretical contribution of the series.

3.3 Model-Building Procedure

The model was built in four steps: (1) mechanism-level claims were extracted from each Western theory, specifying what produces change and why; (2) these mechanisms were mapped against Article I's comparative taxonomy (Mallick, 2026a) to identify Indian philosophical counterparts; (3) phases were sequenced so that each operationalizes one mechanism-

pair and creates preconditions for the next; and (4) an internal consistency check examined adjacent phases for contradictory mechanisms. None were found.

3.4 Scope and Boundary Conditions

The RESET Model is scoped to adults aged 18–45 in general hyperconnected digital-use contexts. It is not designed as a clinical intervention for diagnosed behavioral addiction. The theoretical mappings between Indian philosophical constructs and Western cognitive mechanisms are proposed functional correspondences, not definitional identities. Expert panel review — described in Section 6.1 — is a structurally required precondition before these mappings can be treated as confirmed.

4. The RESET Model

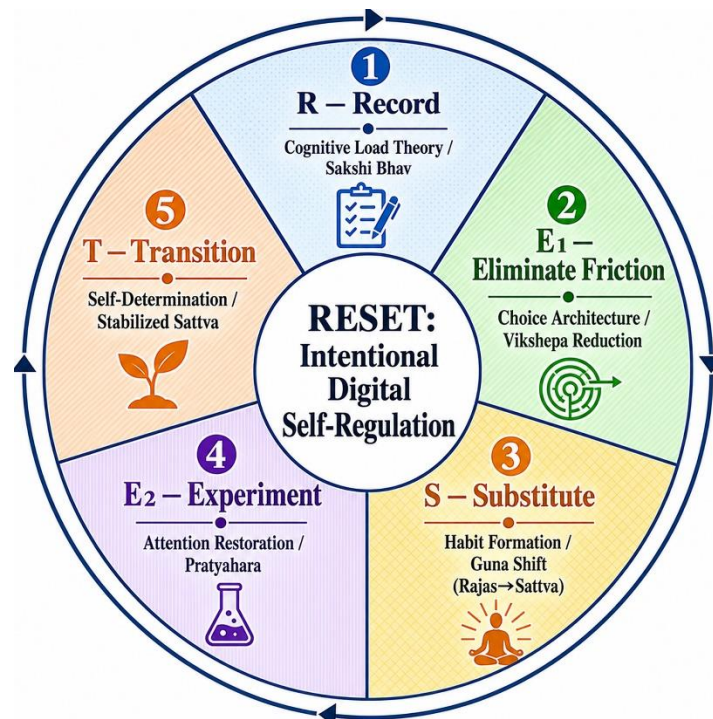
This section presents the RESET Model in full. Each phase is described in terms of its behavioral activities, operational definition, theoretical mechanism, and dual cultural grounding. Figure 1 accompanies the narrative; Table 1 provides formal construct definitions.

4.1 Model Overview

The RESET Model is a five-phase behavioral framework for sustainable digital self-regulation: Record (R), Eliminate Friction (E₁), Substitute (S), Experiment (E₂), and Transition (T). The phases are sequential — each creates the preconditions for the next — but not rigid. A user may cycle through the model when their digital environment changes significantly. The model is scalable across individual, workplace wellbeing, and university student support contexts.

RESET is not an abstinence program. *Its terminal goal is Transition: intentional, self-governed reintegration with technology.* Abstinence appears only in bounded, experimental form during Phase E₂ — as an instrument for building attentional tolerance, not as a goal in itself.

Figure 1. RESET Conceptual Model



Note. Figure 1 illustrates the five-phase RESET framework. Each phase integrates one Western behavioral/cognitive theory with one Indian philosophical construct. Clockwise arrows indicate sequential progression, which may be recycled as needed. Abbreviations: R = Record; E₁ = Eliminate Friction; S = Substitute; E₂ = Experiment; T = Transition. Source: Author's conceptualization based on Mallick (2026a), Patanjali (2012), Deci and Ryan (2000), Wood and R nger (2016), Kaplan (1995), Thaler and Sunstein (2008), and Sweller (1988).

4.2 Phase R: Record

The Record phase builds accurate, non-reactive self-awareness of current digital behavior. Users track three data streams: objective screen-time totals, daily device pickup counts, and emotional states associated with compulsive device use. This tracking spans three days and produces a behavioral profile, not an intervention.

Cognitive Load Theory grounds this phase: awareness of load-generating contexts is the logical precondition for reducing that load (Sweller et al., 2019). Without an accurate baseline, any subsequent intervention is arbitrary. Users who estimate their phone use as occasional are frequently surprised by actual pickup frequency — a surprise that disrupts the automaticity making the behavior invisible.

The Indian anchor is *Sakshi Bhav*. Recording digital behavior without judgment, shame, or defensiveness requires the witness stance (Patanjali,

2012). *Sakshi Bhav* separates observation from self-criticism — a separation that is epistemically necessary, not merely therapeutic. Distorted self-report produces a distorted baseline; the witness stance protects data quality.

4.3 Phase E₁: Eliminate Friction

The Eliminate Friction phase redesigns the user's digital environment to increase the effort required for compulsive checking. Concrete activities include notification batching to fixed daily windows, moving high-risk applications off the home screen, enabling grayscale display, and repositioning device chargers outside the bedroom. Each operationalizes a choice-architecture principle (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). The environment changes; the user's resolve is not the operative variable.

The Indian anchor is reduction of *Vikshepa*-inducing stimuli. Every notification generates a *Vritti* — a ripple disturbing the surface of *Chitta* that

demands attentional processing (Mallick, 2026a). Notification batching limits *Vritti* production directly. App relocation reduces cue salience before the habit loop fires. Both actions target the *Rajasic* trigger environment before willpower becomes relevant. This phase runs three days; its outcome is environmental, not yet behavioral.

4.4 Phase S: Substitute

The Substitute phase targets the habit loop directly. Users identify three personally meaningful non-digital activities to replace their highest-risk checking windows. The selection is not arbitrary: a substitute activity must approximate the reward function of the behavior it replaces (Verplanken & Orbell, 2022). The two most common digital reward functions are novelty and social connection. Effective substitutes — physical activity, creative practice, in-person conversation, reading — should satisfy at least one. A substitute duller than the behavior it replaces will not hold; the habit loop will revert.

The Indian anchor is *Guna-shifting*: a deliberate quality-change from *Rajasic* to *Sattvic* activity. *Rajasic* digital checking is driven by restless anticipation and reward urgency (Gusain, 2024). A *Sattvic* substitute is characterized by genuine engagement, intrinsic reward, and absence of compulsive urgency. The shift redirects *Prana* toward activities that replenish *Tejas* rather than deplete it. This phase runs three days.

4.5 Phase E₂: Experiment

The Experiment phase introduces structured, time-bound disconnection. Users practice a two-hour daily offline window during their highest-risk checking period and one complete device-free period within the three-day phase. These periods are framed as experiments — the user's task is to observe what happens cognitively and emotionally during disconnection. This observational framing builds tolerance for non-connection and reveals, through

direct experience, which digital behaviors are functional and which are compulsive.

Attention Restoration Theory grounds this phase: bounded offline periods, particularly in low-stimulation environments, provide genuine restorative conditions for depleted directed attention (Kaplan, 1995; Koivisto & Grassini, 2025). The Indian anchor is active *Pratyahara* practice (Patanjali, 2012). The user is not simply abstaining — they are strengthening *Viveka* through repeated voluntary non-engagement. Each successful non-response to a digital urge is a micro-training of the sensory-gating faculty, progressively transforming the user from passive receptor to active gatekeeper.

4.6 Phase T: Transition

The Transition phase governs long-term reintegration. Users construct a personalized digital use contract specifying device-use time windows, notification permissions, screen-free zones, and weekly self-monitoring procedures. The contract is self-authored and self-monitored; no external enforcement mechanism exists. This is precisely the design intention. Self Determination Theory is unambiguous: behavioral rules autonomously chosen and personally endorsed produce significantly more durable maintenance than externally imposed restrictions (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). The phase runs through Day 14 of the active intervention and continues through a 30-day follow-up.

The Indian anchor is stabilized *Sattva* sustained through the *Sakshi Bhav* stance. A *Sattvic* digital user engages with technology from a position of clarity and purpose — neither driven by *Rajasic* compulsion nor paralyzed by *Tamasic* avoidance (Frawley, 2010). They observe digital stimuli without being captured by them. When the witness stance is stable, intentional digital engagement becomes the default mode rather than an act of ongoing willpower.

Table 2. RESET Phase Construct Definitions

Phase	Operational Definition
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R — Record	Systematic, non-judgmental self-monitoring of digital behavior using objective screen-time logs and pickup counts at baseline
E ₁ — Eliminate Friction	Environmental redesign that reduces automatic engagement cues by increasing the effort cost of habitual digital checking
S — Substitute	Deliberate replacement of compulsive digital checking with personally meaningful Sattvic activities during identified high-risk time windows
E ₂ — Experiment	Time-bound structured offline periods used to build attentional tolerance and identify functional versus compulsive use patterns through direct observation
T — Transition	Autonomous, rules-based reintegration of technology governed by a self-authored digital use contract rather than external abstinence mandates

Note. All definitions are operational and theory-grounded, designed to support future instrument development and expert panel review.

5. Mechanism Pathway and Theoretical Propositions

This section traces the theorized causal chain through which RESET produces its outcomes. Figure 2 illustrates the pathway. Three formal propositions then translate the theoretical logic into testable predictions for the future empirical validation agenda.

5.1 Mechanism Pathway

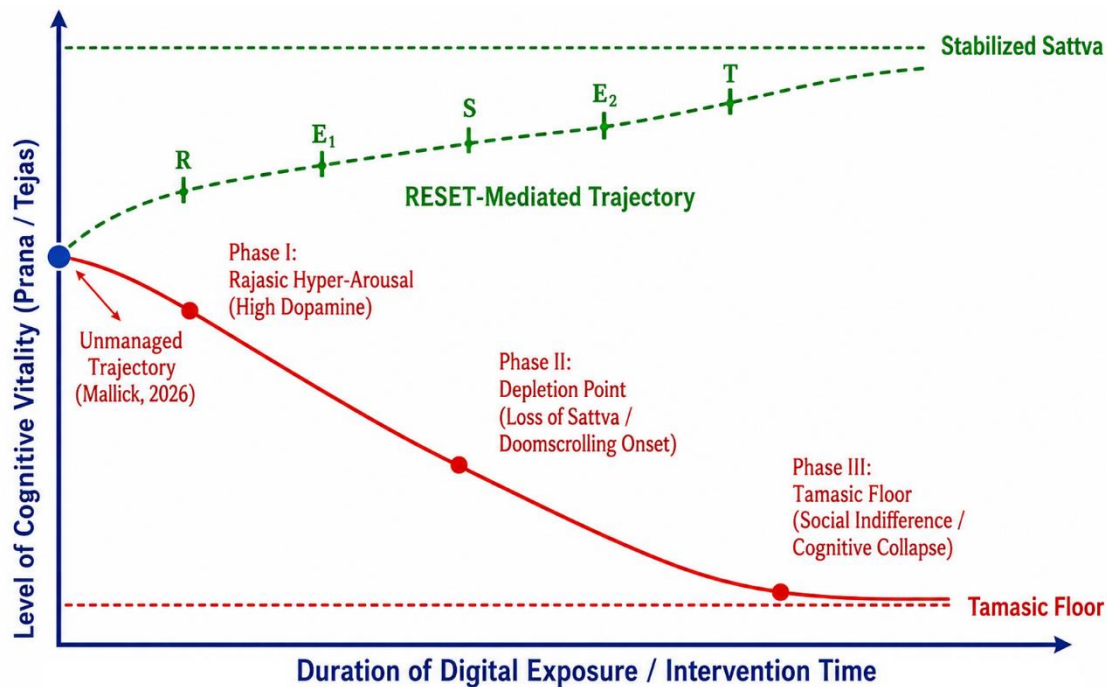
The RESET Model operates through a sequential, cumulative mechanism chain in which each phase produces a proximal change that accumulates into distal outcomes.

Record builds metacognitive awareness of Chitta-Vritti patterns — the logical precondition for deliberate change. Eliminate Friction reduces Rajasic trigger density; fewer triggers produce fewer automatic checking episodes, fewer Vrittis, and slower Tejas depletion. Substitute redirects the habit loop toward

Sattvic activities; habit strength gradually transfers to the new routine. Experiment provides bounded recovery periods for directed attention: Tejas begins to restore, and Pratyahara strengthens through repeated exercise of the top-down inhibitory faculty. Transition stabilizes the entire chain; the Sakshi Bhav stance sustains autonomous regulation without external scaffolding.

The distal outcomes — improved attention control, enhanced sleep quality, reduced perceived stress, higher subjective wellbeing — constitute what the Indian framework calls stabilized Sattva: cognitive vitality, emotional regulation, and intentional agency coexisting. Figure 2 illustrates this pathway as a companion to Article I's collapse trajectory. Where Mallick (2026a) plotted the unmanaged descent from Rajas through depletion into Tamas, Figure 2 plots the RESET-mediated interruption and restoration toward stabilized Sattva.

Figure 2. RESET-Mediated Restoration of Prana/Tejas



Note. Figure 2 illustrates the theorized contrast between the unmanaged digital burnout trajectory (Curve 1; adapted from Mallick, 2026a) and the RESET-mediated restoration trajectory (Curve 2). The RESET intervention intercepts the Rajasic-to-Tamasic descent and reverses it through sequential phase engagement. Neither curve represents empirical data; both represent theoretical predictions pending future empirical validation.

5.2 Theoretical Propositions

Proposition 1 (P1). Sequential engagement with the RESET phases is theoretically expected to reduce automatic checking behavior and restore directed attention (*Tejas*) more effectively than unstructured abstinence. Building on Mallick (2026a), which established that abstinence fails because it does not address Chitta-Vrittis, RESET addresses them sequentially and phase-specifically. SDT predicts greater durability for the autonomous regulation cultivated in Phase T than for controlled compliance under abstinence mandates (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Proposition 2 (P2). The Substitute and Experiment phases are the primary behavioral drivers of Vritti reduction and Sattva restoration within the RESET sequence. Record and Eliminate Friction create conditions for change; Substitute and Experiment execute it; Transition consolidates it. The mechanistic weight of the model is concentrated in these two central phases, which directly target habit-loop disruption (Wood & R nger, 2016) and attentional recovery

(Kaplan, 1995). Testing this proposition requires within-person repeated measurement of compulsive-checking frequency at each three-day phase transition (Figure 3); the paired t-test analysis proposed in Table 3 should specify this repeated-measurement design explicitly in the future empirical protocol.

Proposition 3 (P3). Transition-phase engagement from a Sakshi Bhav stance is theoretically expected to outperform indefinite abstinence in preventing relapse into Tamasic disengagement at 30-day follow-up. Mallick (2026a) identified the abstinence violation effect as the primary failure mode of current detox approaches. SDT explains the underlying mechanism: externally controlled restriction requires continuous cognitive effort and is abandoned when pressure lifts (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Internally motivated, autonomously structured reintegration from a witness stance requires substantially less ongoing effort and is therefore more sustainable.

6. Proposed Validation Framework

This section proposes two sequential validation procedures for the RESET Model and introduces the DDEI as a proposed outcome instrument. All procedures are framed as future work; no data have been collected at this stage. *The proposed instruments and interview protocol supporting all three procedures are deposited as supplementary online materials (Mallick, 2026b).*

6.1 Proposed Model Validation Protocol

The first validation step is a structured expert panel review. A panel of 8–12 subject-matter experts would evaluate each RESET phase for conceptual clarity, theoretical relevance, and domain comprehensiveness. Panel composition must deliberately span three domains: clinical and behavioral psychology (behavioral operationalization), human-computer interaction (digital-environment components), and Indian Knowledge Systems, Yoga philosophy, or Indian psychology (conceptual fidelity of the Triguna and Pratyahara mappings). Restricting review to

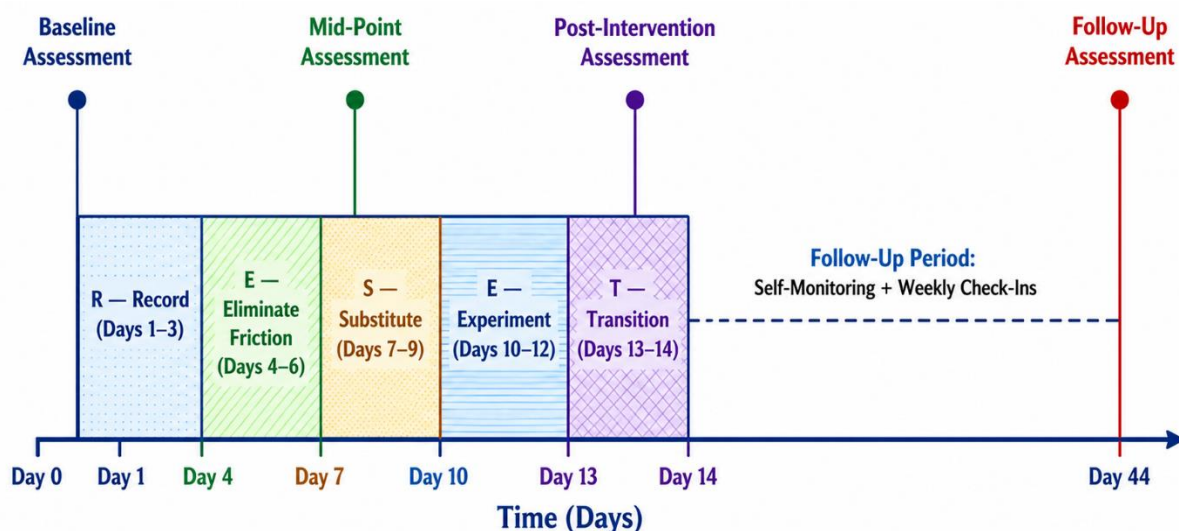
behavioral scientists alone would leave the Indian philosophical layer unscrutinized by domain experts.

Two validated approaches are appropriate. Lawshe's (1975) Content Validity Ratio (CVR) provides a quantitative consensus index per phase. A two-round Delphi method enables iterative panel feedback and structured convergence. Either approach yields a content-validated model as the basis for empirical testing. *The proposed expert-panel rating form, organized across two domain-specific tracks — Track 1 for behavioral operationalization and Track 2 for Indian philosophical fidelity — is provided in the supplementary online materials (Mallick, 2026b, Appendix B).*

6.2 Proposed Empirical Testing Protocol

The second validation step is a two-group pilot study. Adults aged 18–45 ($N = 120$) would be recruited through purposive and stratified sampling (strata: age band, baseline screen-time tier) and randomized to RESET ($n = 60$) or normal device use control ($n = 60$). The active intervention spans 14 days with follow-up at Day 44. Figure 3 presents the proposed timeline.

Figure 3. Proposed RESET Intervention Timeline



Note. Figure 3 presents the proposed timeline for the future empirical pilot study. The five RESET phases constitute the 14-day active intervention period. The follow-up period extends to Day 44 to test maintenance under naturalistic conditions. This figure describes a proposed design; no study has been conducted.

Quantitative measures would include objective screen-time logs, daily device pickup counts, the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (Buysse et al., 1989), the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003), a digital wellbeing inventory, and the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983). Qualitative data would be collected through daily reflective journals and semi-structured interviews with a subsample of 20 participants (10 per group); *the proposed semi-structured interview guide, organized across four thematic sections, is provided in the supplementary online materials (Mallick, 2026b, Appendix C)*. Analysis would employ paired t-tests, ANCOVA with baseline as covariate, mediation analysis to test whether replacement behaviors mediate maintained change (RO3), and Cohen's *d* for effect sizes.

6.3 Proposed Digital Detox Effectiveness Index

The DDEI is a proposed multidimensional measure designed specifically for digital detox research. Existing instruments assess digital addiction (e.g., the Smartphone Addiction Scale–Short Version; Kwon et al., 2013) or the perceived *need* for digital detox (e.g., the Digital Detoxification Scale; Imran et al., 2023; the Ali-Yousuf Digital Detox Need Scale; Haider et al., 2025), but none are designed to capture detox

effectiveness itself as a multidimensional outcome spanning intentionality, attention recovery, and sustained engagement. The DDEI is proposed to address this gap with five theoretically grounded dimensions (Table 3), pending the systematic instrument review recommended as part of expert panel validation (Section 6.1). *The draft item pool — 25 items organized across the five dimensions, each with its Western theoretical anchor and Indian conceptual origin — is provided in the supplementary online materials (Mallick, 2026b, Appendix A)*.

Intentionality captures conscious versus automatic technology engagement. *Attention Recovery* captures improvement in sustained and selective focus. *Emotional Regulation* captures the capacity to manage digital triggers — FOMO, notification urgency, social comparison — without reactive checking. *Sleep Restoration* captures improvement in sleep quality from reduced pre-sleep device use. *Sustainable Engagement* — the most diagnostically critical dimension — captures whether regulated patterns persist beyond the active intervention window, thereby distinguishing RESET's target outcome (durable self-regulation) from the short-term reduction measured by most existing detox studies.

Table 3. DDEI Dimensions with Dual Conceptual Grounding

Dimension	Operational Definition	Western Theoretical Anchor	Indian Conceptual Origin
Intentionality	Degree of conscious, goal-directed versus automatic digital engagement	SDT: autonomous motivation	Viveka (discrimination) / Sakshi Bhav
Attention Recovery	Improvement in sustained and selective attention (self-report and performance-based)	ART: DAF recovery	Tejas restoration
Emotional Regulation	Capacity to manage affective responses to digital triggers without compulsive checking	Self-regulation theory	Sattva stability
Sleep Restoration	Improvement in subjective sleep quality and reduction in pre-sleep device use	CLT: extraneous load reduction	Prana conservation

Sustainable Engagement	Maintenance of regulated digital-use patterns beyond the active intervention window	HFT: durable habit routine	Stabilized Guna balance (sustained Sattva)
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Note. DDEI = Digital Detox Effectiveness Index. SDT = Self-Determination Theory. ART = Attention Restoration Theory. DAF = Directed Attention Fatigue. CLT = Cognitive Load Theory. All dimensions are proposed constructs requiring psychometric validation in a future empirical study.

7. Discussion

This section situates the RESET Model within the broader digital wellbeing literature. It addresses three contributions: theoretical, comparative, and practical. The discussion closes by examining the cultural resonance of the dual-tradition grounding in Indian educational and clinical contexts.

7.1 Theoretical Contribution

The RESET Model makes two distinct theoretical contributions. First, it completes a diagnostic-prescriptive pair with Article I (Mallick, 2026a). Together, the two papers constitute an integrated cross-cultural theory of digital burnout and its phased resolution. Article I mapped the attentional collapse mechanism. This paper proposes the corrective architecture. To the author's knowledge, based on the literature reviewed for this series, no other published framework presents both a diagnostic and a prescriptive model within a single, coordinated theoretical series; this claim is bounded by the scope of that review rather than a claim of exhaustive prior-art search.

Second, the model is the first to operationalize *Pratyahara* and *Sattva*-restoration as phases within a sequenced, testable behavioral framework. Prior applications of Indian philosophical constructs to digital wellbeing have remained descriptive — recommending sensory withdrawal and meditation as general prescriptions (Frawley, 2010). The RESET Model converts these recommendations into five concrete, phase-specific, time-bound activities with specified mechanisms. This operationalization is the essential step between philosophical insight and empirical testability.

The integration of five Western theories into one staged progression is itself a contribution. SDT has

been applied to technology adoption motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000); ART to digital fatigue and restoration (Koivisto & Grassini, 2025); habit formation to smartphone use patterns (Verplanken & Orbell, 2022); choice architecture to digital wellbeing environments (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008); and cognitive load to technology-mediated learning (Sweller et al., 2019). RESET is the first to sequence these five frameworks into a single, internally consistent behavioral progression.

7.2 Comparison with Existing Approaches

Existing digital detox approaches fall into two categories. Abstinence-based approaches mandate temporary disconnection; digital minimalism approaches prescribe permanent platform reduction. Both treat technology as the primary variable: user engagement is reduced or eliminated rather than the user's internal regulation capacity being changed.

The RESET Model treats the regulatory faculty as the primary variable. Technology use is a constant in contemporary adult life; what can change is the quality and intentionality of engagement. This reorientation aligns RESET with self-regulation research (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996) rather than popular digital wellness discourse. The solution to self-regulation failure is not removing the object of temptation but strengthening the regulatory faculty itself — which each RESET phase does before the next makes greater demands.

7.3 Cultural and Practical Relevance

The dual cultural grounding of RESET has a specific practical implication for Indian contexts. The *Triguna* framework and *Yoga Sutra* concepts are part of the intellectual heritage of many Indian users. Presenting a self-regulation framework in vocabulary

resonant with users' existing conceptual world reduces psychological distance. SDT identifies autonomy and relatedness as basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000); an intervention speaking the user's conceptual language serves both — honoring cognitive autonomy and connecting experience to a familiar tradition.

Internationally, the Western theoretical foundations ensure mainstream academic credibility while the Indian philosophical layer adds explanatory depth without replacing the behavioral framework. This coexistence produces a model simultaneously credible and locally resonant — suited for deployment in Indian universities, wellness programs, digital health clinics, and corporate wellbeing initiatives without requiring users to navigate unfamiliar conceptual territory.

8. Limitations and Research Agenda

This section states the limitations of the current conceptual paper and outlines the research agenda that follows from the model. Table 4 formalizes the empirical predictions for future testing.

8.1 Conceptual Scope

This paper is a conceptual contribution. The RESET Model and DDEI have not been empirically tested; the propositions in Section 5.2 are theorized predictions, not confirmed findings. This is a necessary condition of model-development work (MacInnis, 2011; Jaakkola, 2020). The value of this paper lies in providing a theoretically coherent, internally consistent, and empirically testable framework. Empirical evaluation is the necessary next step, not a flaw in the present contribution.

8.2 Cross-Cultural Construct Mapping

The proposed functional correspondences — between *Tejas* and directed attention, between *Sattva* and psychological wellbeing, between *Pratyahara* and inhibitory control — are not definitional identities. Ancient philosophical categories were not designed to

map onto modern cognitive psychology. The conceptual overlap is real; the risk of overstatement is equally real. This paper treats these correspondences as proposed, expert-reviewable hypotheses. The dual-domain expert panel (Section 6.1) is structurally required before empirical testing begins and must include scholars capable of evaluating whether the mappings are conceptually defensible or distort the original philosophical constructs.

8.3 Population Scope

The model is scoped to adults aged 18–45 in non-clinical, hyperconnected digital-use contexts. Applicability to adolescents, older adults, or clinically diagnosed populations requires independent investigation. Habit loop disruption, choice architecture, and voluntary self-monitoring operate differently across developmental stages, clinical comorbidities, and distinct technology-use patterns.

8.4 Cultural Generalizability

The Indian philosophical grounding enhances accessibility in South Asian contexts. Generalizability to East Asian, Middle Eastern, or Western secular populations requires separate cultural assessment, as familiarity with Yoga Sutra concepts and the Triguna framework varies significantly. Culturally adaptive translation may be required before deployment in non-Indian settings.

8.5 Research Agenda

Three research steps follow logically. The dual-domain expert validation study (Section 6.1) is the immediate priority and must precede any intervention research. The two-group pilot RCT (Section 6.2) then tests P1–P3 empirically. A larger multi-site trial would enable DDEI psychometric validation and cross-cultural generalizability testing. Table 4 formalizes the predictions each future study should address.

Table 4. Predictions for Future Empirical Testing

Proposition	Predicted Direction	Proposed Analysis
P1 — RESET sequence vs. unstructured abstinence	RESET group predicted to show significantly greater attention recovery and subjective wellbeing gains than control at post-intervention and 30-day follow-up	ANCOVA (baseline as covariate); Cohen's d
P2 — Phase-specific contribution	Substitute and Experiment phases predicted to show the largest within-person reduction in compulsive checking frequency relative to Record and Eliminate Friction phases	Paired t-tests by phase; effect-size comparison
P3 — Transition reintegration vs. abstinence duration	Transition-phase autonomous self-regulation predicted to outperform raw abstinence duration in predicting 30-day maintenance of behavioral gains	Mediation analysis; replacement-behavior frequency as mediator

Note. P = Proposition. ANCOVA = Analysis of Covariance. Cohen's d = standardized mean difference effect size. All predictions are derived from theoretical propositions in Section 5.2 and have not been empirically tested in this paper.

9. Conclusion

This paper presented the RESET Model — a five-phase, cross-culturally grounded behavioral framework for sustainable digital self-regulation. It is the prescriptive complement to the diagnostic framework of Mallick (2026a): where Article I mapped the trajectory of attentional collapse from *Rajasic* arousal to *Tamasic* inertia, this paper proposed the corrective architecture. Together, the two papers constitute a theoretically integrated, cross-cultural response to the challenge of digital burnout.

RESET does not ask users to avoid technology; it asks them to govern it. Abstinence-based approaches fail structurally by removing the external stimulus without resolving the internal compulsion (Radtke et al., 2025; Mallick, 2026a). RESET addresses both:

environmental redesign reduces the external trigger density, while habit substitution, *Pratyahara* practice, and autonomous reintegration progressively restore the internal regulatory faculty.

The Indian philosophical constructs — *Triguna* theory, *Chitta-Vritti*, *Pratyahara*, *Sakshi Bhav* — contribute substantively to the explanatory logic of each phase and extend the model's practical reach into cultural contexts where Western behavioral vocabulary alone is insufficient. Sustainable digital wellbeing demands frameworks that are simultaneously theoretically rigorous and culturally resonant. The diagnostic framework is in place. The prescriptive architecture is now in place. The empirical work can begin.

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