

## Living in the Planet of the Apps

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- Title is a parody of the popular movie title *Planet of the Apes*.
- Taken from the book *Tongue in Cheek: The Funny Side of Life*.
- First appeared in her column 'Inside View' in *The Hindu Metropolis*.
- Humorous and satirical article.
- Discusses people's obsession with gadgets and apps.
- Thought provoking essay.
- Humorously analyses human addiction to computers and smart phones.

Essay begins by talking about New Year resolutions. People make New Year resolutions every year just to break them. But these New Year resolutions reappear every year. But now a days we use "apps" or applications to monitor our actions. The essay's beginning reminds us about our dependency over such apps and technology in the modern digital world.

As the writer proceeds she refers to the words of her friend who deliberately called earth as the "Planet of the **Apps**" for he realized that **app** is the most apt word to define present human life on earth. Because every little thing that people do is observed, analysed, controlled and decided by these apps. In 2010 the word **app** is thus selected by The American Dialect Society as the Word of the Year.

Now a days you just need a tablet/smartphone or an iPad to meet any need of your life. By using your gadget and a suitable app you can avail any requirement from news, banking, and education to shopping and even babysitting. Thus the author says "you name it, there's an app ready."

Author tells that apps haven't taken over her life just for the reason that she doesn't have a smart phone. For her a phone is just a reliable devise which she can use to make calls and send messages. She grows uncomfortable at the super sensitive touch screen and the strange antics of a smart phone. In the beginning these smart phones were a thing of magical quality and she even shares an experience with her friend who showed off his new smart phone like magical equipment with a spell on it. Once it is opened with a wand like stylus, it opened like the cave in some supernatural story exposing "spectacular high-tech riches". But she adds that the phone occasionally acted over smart with its owner causing him to swear and get disturbed.

The author proceeds to share with the reader some experiences from her own life about these smart phones.

1. Once she got a call from Ajay, her son's friend at 3 in the morning. They were disturbed out of sleep as the time is quite alarming for a call. They got nervous and returned the call but no one responded adding to their anxiety. Later on Ajay contacted them in the morning asking why they have called him at a weird time and asked whether anything was wrong. They were groggy and protested at him saying that they got his call at a wrong hour. It is then that Ajay acknowledged about his new smart phone's weird nature of making random calls at strange hours without even registering the same in call log.
2. Experience of her husband  
He is a reluctant user of smart phone. The author says that his phone has got a mischievous mind as it hangs whenever it feels like. At times text messages are sent, may be multiple times, before they are composed completely. At times messages and photos get disappeared without any trace. Sometimes calls get cut off in the middle. And one strange thing was that one fine day her husband lost the names of all her contacts which even affected his friendships.
3. Experience of her friends/ phantom cat experience  
She remembers talking with her friend over phone when in moments her sound frequency changes just because she shifted her phone from one ear to the other. Another of her friend had a strange experience wherein she hears strange meowing of a phantom cat. She along with her dog tried hunting down the phantom cat but failed. And in the end she realized that it was her phone's ring tone changed to a cat's meow by her son.  
After sharing experiences of people around her she proceeds to talk about her experiences of being a computer junkie.  
She calls herself a computer addict and the same has begun to affect her health as she developed a nagging pain in her arms. Even though she was familiar with common problems like back pain, shoulder pain eye strain etc. and despite her husband's constant reminder about such health issues she continued with her careless way of using computers. Now, because of a wrong posture while working on her PC her arms began to ache continuously. Alarmed at that she began her exercises but was in vain. And at last she went to consult a specialist to deal with the pain and he revealed after close examination that she has got **rotator cuff tear or rotator cuff tendinitis**. While wondering about the fancy appeal of the names of the diseases, her doctor explained to her that she has got issues with her muscles. It adds to her surprise that she got disease that are believed to be contracted only by athletes and sports figures.

Doctor, along with exercises gave her a few suggestions:

1. Do not lift weight- she could delegate her husband for the same.
2. Do not reach up for things- as she is short and the cupboards are at a height it will be difficult
3. Work on your computer sensibly- almost impossible for she has internalized too much of bad habits.

Immediately after reaching home she slouched in front of her PC to browse on rotator cuff tear. During that intense Google search she was accompanied by her husband also. In between humorous references are made to the modern trend among people to resort to Google to diagnose their diseases. She quotes a doctor friend who is very bitter about Google and internet and calls it a bane to doctors. He says that patients do their medical consultations online in the internet and diagnose their disease for themselves. They no more need a doctor but only to get a medical prescription.

Google research helped her realize that rotator cuff tear is a computer related problem like other **MSD (Musculoskeletal disorders) and RSI (repetitive stress injury)**. Like rotator cuff tear there are many other computer related problems like **carpal tunnel syndrome, cervical and lumbar spondylosis, tennis elbow, vision problems, head ache and obesity**.

The research also told her that such diseases are caused mainly because of an “improper use and lack of knowledge about safe computing techniques”. The article gave tips to use computer in a healthy way. They are

1. Sit straight
2. Screen should be at your eye level or lower.
3. Keep your legs perpendicular to the floor.
4. Rest your feet flat on the floor.
5. Use an ergonomic mouse to lessen strain on your hands.
6. Keep your elbows at a rest position- flat on the table.
7. Take breaks in between the work to avoid continuous strain to eyes and body.

She also started her exercises.

1. Drew circles in air like a low IQ wizard.
2. Bent sideways and she felt like a wrongly positioned wall clock.
3. Moved her fingers up and down the wall like a zombie spider.

One day a friend of her visited home and was surprised to see her elaborate seating arrangements. On learning that all those adjustments were for the use of a desk top her surprised turned into astonishment. She wondered on why one use a PC when we have something as easy and handy as a smart phone. Despite the author’s protest and

attempts to convince problems related to smart phone (network glitches, charging issues, radiation, nomophobia etc.) the other one was not listening. In the near future with the introduction of **IoT or Internet of Things** everything and everyone will be connected making our life similar to science fiction stories.

**(Nomophobia is the fear of being out of the mobile phone contact.)**

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