Confessions of an addict

Save your souls. A contagion is spreading rapidly around the world. Please listen to me. If you don’t, you will end up like me - an addict. You will lose the ability to think rationally. You will become comfortably numb to all the happenings around you. You will enter a stage where everything would seem surreal. All the efforts to revive you by your loved ones will be futile.

Toastmaster of the day, president, fellow toastmasters and guests, today, I will confide with you my experiences of being an addict. I was like a greedy honeybee attracted towards the nectar of a beautiful flower; only to find its petals closing, once it is inside. But I am not any other addict, I am a facebook addict. I eat, sleep and drink facebook.

There is a clear dichotomy in views when one talks about facebook. There are people who consider it as just another mode to pass one’s time and there are other who simply can’t live without it. But there are levels to this addiction. All users fall in one of the 5 phases. No prizes for guessing that I am in the terminal phase of this addiction.

The first phase is called ‘reluctant entrant’. In this phase, people don’t know what to expect. They are logged on to facebook because their friends said it is cool. They immediately feel an inferiority complex as everybody else has around 500+ friends. They don’t understand what ‘writing on the wall’ really means. Once realizing what it is, you write your first post. Hello facebook! One doesn’t know that thousands of miles away, Mark Zuckerberg, the creator of facebook, will be having an evil smile and he will say to himself – One more victim!

The second phase is called ‘nostalgic overdose’. Facebook’s intelligent algorithms quickly suggest you zillions of friends. You see some of your childhood-buddies, which roughly translate to really close friends from childhood. You also see many long lost friends and you send invitations to all of them sadly to realize later that some are not interested in confirming you as a friend. You chat to some of them, learn how to post an old picture of yours and tag it with others. Facebook also hides your imperfections. In my case, I don’t necessarily remember birthdays of my friends. Facebook reminds you of such special occasions and you never miss any of them ever again.

The third phase is called ‘emotional paralysis’. Facebook’s relationship status feature will guide you on which girl’s wall it is most productive to spend your time writing comments on. But after navigating through the facebook forest you discover something disturbing. You realize that your friend’s friend’s friend is already into her. After first round of chats, photos and video uploads and confirming some people as friends whose names you have never heard before you enter a state of confusion. You feel do you need so many friends; will they be really interested to know about what you are up to these days.

The penultimate phase is called the ‘state of denial’. This is when things start getting really serious. When someone says that he or she is addicted to facebook, you give them a frown. You feel that they are absolute losers and have nothing else to do. You don’t realize that you are already spending 2 hours on facebook every day. When you realize this for few days your temper will be as volatile as the stock
price of a company listed in the Bombay stock exchange. But this is a brief phase. You just stop thinking and move on.

The final phase of this addiction is ‘hard core obsession’. You become one of the members of the facebook tribe. You stop watching news and look for news feeds in Facebook. For you facebook cannot be wrong as it is God’s message to this troubled world. Everything important such as calling your girlfriend, helping family with some grocery purchases and getting an important office work done can wait as you have to comment on your friend’s new status message.

I predict that there will be a time when psychiatrists will earn more than 50% of their income by curing patients suffering from Facebook addiction. Some of my close ones are annoyed with my addiction. But as the tagline of the movie the social network goes you cannot get to 500 million friends without making a few enemies.