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Contemplating the relevance of *Prajnaparadha* as a root cause of Mental Disorder

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ABSTRACT

Prajnaparada (Intellectual Blasphemy) is willfully ignoring one's inner knowing and going against norms, intuition and common sense. It is the root cause for all diseases. Involving in verbal, mental or physical activities which are unfavourable to self, harms both body and mind. Actions generated by *Prajnaparada* aggravate *Tridosha* (bodily humors) and stimulate *Rajas* and *Tamo Gunas* (psychological attributes) allowing disease to be established.

Key words: *Prajnaparada, Tridosha, Manodosha, Aharaja, Viharaja.*

INTRODUCTION

The word *Prajna* literally means understanding, sagacity or cognitive acuity.^[1] It is the wisdom that is able to extinguish afflictions and bring about enlightenment. The word *Aparadha* means offence, fault or miss-use.^[2] Thus the words *Prajna* and *Aparadha* together constitute the term *Prajnaparada*, which means faulty conception. *Dhi* (intellect), *Dhriti* (retention) and *Smriti* (memory) are the three components which constitute *Prajna*. A person whose intellect, retention and memory are impaired, subjects himself to *Prajnaparada* by virtue of his act.^[3] This aggravates all three *Shareerika Doshas* (bodily humors) and *Manasika Doshas* (morbid humors of mind) resulting in various disorders.

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Concept of *Dhi, Dhriti and Smriti*

Dhi refers to the acquisition of new information. The function of *Dhi* is governed by *Vata Dosha* (humor which governs all activities of mind and body) mainly *Prana Vata* (sub type of *Vata Dosha*), which in its normal state keeps the mind focused there by facilitating to acquire appropriate knowledge.^[4]

Dhriti refers to regulation and processing of the new information within the brain. The function of *Dhriti* is governed by *Pitta Dosha* (humor which governs all types of metabolism) mainly *Sadhaka Pitta* (sub type of *Pitta Dosha*) which in its normal state helps in regulating and processing of acquired information.^[5]

Smriti is responsible for stabilizing the memory in the brain circuits, and ensuring that it can be recalled at will. The function of *Smriti* is maintained by *Kapha Dosha* (humor which sustains and lubricates the mind), mainly *Tarpaka Kapha* (subtype of *Kapha Dosha*) which is responsible for lubrication and nourishment of the brain tissue, thus helps in stabilizing the memory.^[6]

Dietary factors as *Prajnaparadha* in causing Mental Disorders

Food, sleep, and celibacy are considered as three pillars of life in Ayurveda.^[7] Among these food plays a very important role in managing our mental health.

Neglecting rules of dietetics^[8] and consuming unclean, rotten food act as *Prajnaparadha* and considered as prime etiology for psychiatric diseases in Ayurveda.

'*Ahara Shuddho Satwa Suddhi*' It means that a balanced mood and feeling of mental wellbeing depends upon the quality of food consumed.^[9] '*Annamayam Hi Soumyamanaha*' Chandogyopanishad establishes the relationship between food and mind and says fine and tenuous fraction of food constitutes mind. Even *Vedas* consider food as *Brahma*, the originator and mind is said to be born out of *Brahma*. Further more Bhagavadgeeta has also classified food into three types based on the predominance of *Satwika*, *Rajasika* and *Tamasika* nature, the basic attributes of mind.

Different foods affect the mind differently. *Satwika* diet keeps mind happy by restoring memory and balance of mind and also helps in the treatment of mental disorders. *Satwika* diet constitutes food which is rich in *Prana* (vital force), green leafy vegetables, fresh fruits, milk and its products which are properly cooked by following strict dietary regimen prescribed in *Ayurveda*.^[10] *Rajasika* types of foods are those which are excessively spicy, salty and sour like chilly, wine, meat etc. *Rajasika* diet when consumed in *Rajasika* circumstances such as disturbed or agitated states, it disturbs the senses and cause emotional fluctuation which promote aggressive and perhaps violent actions.^[11] *Tamasika* diet contains food with predominantly bitter and astringent taste, heavy to digest and stale, incompatible foods.^[12] Artificial and canned foods tend to be *Tamasika* in nature. *Tamasika* diet when consumed in *Tamasika* circumstances such as dull or depressed states, senses become inactive causing emotions heavy and resistant.

When a person being over ruled by *Rajas* (rage) and *Tamas* (confusion), indulges in taking *Rajasika* and *Tamasika* nature of food, neglecting prescribed dietary norms acts as *Prajnaparadha*. Due to this, morbid *Doshas* enter the heart and cause obstruction to channels of mind making an individual susceptible to various mental disorders.^[13] Since mental diseases

reflect dietary habits, by following dietary norms a healthy state of *Dhi*, *Dhriti* and *Smriti* is retained and mental health is restored.

Life Style Factors as *Prajnaparadha* in causing Mental Disorders

Life style in terms of *Sadvritta* (Moral Conduct)^[14] and *Achara Rasayana* (regimens followed for attaining rejuvenation)^[15] plays a significant role in managing mental health. In the present scenario, with the advent of newer technologies there are considerable changes in the life style. Extreme indulgence in activities like abusing sleep norms, excessive exposure to media, alcohol and nicotine abuse, disrespect towards elders cause behavioral abnormalities. These life style factors not only change the behavioral pattern but also make the person emotionally susceptible.

Dharaneeya Vega (psychological expressions to be controlled) is a significant contribution of Ayurveda which helps in maintaining a healthy state of mind.^[16] Emotions are to be controlled on becoming excessive and inappropriate to the situation. Being influenced by *Rajas* and *Tamas*, when a person indulges in the life style factors mentioned earlier, fail to have control over *Dharaneeya Vega*. Frequent exposure to excessive and inappropriate psychological expressions further lead to loss of control over senses causing impairment in *Dhi*, *Dhriti* and *Smriti*. This purposeful involvement is also a form of *Prajnaparadha*. Even modern science acknowledges this idea stating, excessive and frequent exposure to uncontrolled psychological expressions as chronic stressor. Hypothalamus - Pituitary - Adrenal axis (HPA axis) which gets activated on exposure to stressor leads to release of Cortisol which suppresses immune system, impairs endocrinal functioning and deranges neurotransmitters leading to various mental illnesses.

By following life style regimens mentioned in Ayurveda, one can have control over emotions. This results in healthy state of *Dhi*, *Dhriti* and *Smiti* there by making a person immune to various mental disorders.

Table 1: Showing dietary and life style factors which acts as Prajnaparada.

Dietary factors as Prajnaparada	Life style factors as Prajnaparada
Virudha Bhojana (incompatible foods)	Forcible stimulation of Adharaneeya Vegas (natural urges), not following Sadvruta (good conduct)
Dusta Bhojana (polluted food)	Ati Vyavaya (over indulgence in sexual act)
Asuchi Bhojana (impure food)	Asatma Indriyatha Samyoga (excessive, impaired and non utilization of sense organs)
Neglecting prescribed dietary regimen (Asta Ahara Vidhi Viseshayatana)	Disrespect for elders , Uncontrolled Dharaneeya Vegas

DISCUSSION

'Shareeramapi Satwamanuidheeyade Satwam Cha Sareeram'.^[17] - The body and mind share an inseparable relation with each other. Based on this concept all the misdeeds of lifestyle and dietary factors affect not only physical health but also mental health. Faulty diet and life style negatively influence the mind resulting in the impairment of *Dhi*, *Dhriti* and *Smriti* leading to various mental disorders like *Unmada* (group of psychiatric disorders) *Apasmara* (seizure disorders), *Atattwabhinivesha* (obsessive compulsive disorder) etc.

Degraded *Dhi* interprets knowledge incorrectly and judges the beneficial as non-beneficial and viceversa. Similarly it regards the immortal as mortal and vice versa. Psychological complications due to *Dhi Vibhrama* are delusions, obsessions, hallucinations and other disorders pertaining to thought and perception. *Dhriti* in its normal state prevents the mind and sense organs from engaging in harmful activities. Degraded *Dhriti* loses the capacity to control mind and sense organs due to which person behaves inappropriately and gets attracted towards

harmful objects. Psycho active substance use, behavioral disorders, psychosexual disorders occur as a result of *Dhriti-Vibhrama*. *Smriti* in an unaffected state helps in remembrance of things perceived by *Dhi* and retained by *Dhriti*. Derangement of memory impairs *Dhi* and hampers decision making thus ending in repetitive mistakes. Psychological complication caused due to *Smriti Vibhrama* includes dementia, delirium and other memory disturbances.

In ancient texts of Ayurveda, *Prajnaparada* is mentioned as one among the three primary causes of all mental disorders. *Prajnaparadha* in terms of dietary and life style factors can be predisposing, precipitating or perpetuating causes of mental illness. Modern science also supports this fact by mentioning social and environmental factors as etiology for most of the psychiatric diseases.

CONCLUSION

The etiological factors of all mental disorders in Ayurveda can be explained under the umbrella term *Prajnaparadha*. Actions generated due to *Prajnaparada* aggravate *Tridosha* and stimulate *Rajas* and *Tamas* thereby creating a favorable environment for various mental disorders. Verbal, mental and physical misconducts impair mental wellbeing. *Satwik* diet, healthy lifestyle and control over emotions contribute to retaining mental health. Avoiding *Prajnaparadha* attains clarity of mind and sense-organs which prevents majority of psychiatric diseases caused due to chronic stressors and thus helps improving the interpersonal relationships and social skills.

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