

# THE MEANING OF PRAJÑĀ-APARĀDHA AND KARMA IN AYURVEDA

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## ABSTRACT

Ayurvedic texts use the term *prajñā-aparādha*. It has been interpreted literally as meaning, intellectual error, defect in mental faculty, culpable insight, violation of good sense. These meanings do not make much sense and also do not fit in the context. A careful analysis of the texts establishes the true significance of *prajñā aparādha*.

Ayurveda classifies diseases as due to the causative factors being within and without: (a) endogenous (i) selfborn or internally generated such as imbalance of the three bodily humours. (ii) Karmas of previous birth, *Karmaja*. (b) Exogenous: those diseases which arise from external factors, physical & psychological. Karmas are actions of moral nature which generally bear fruit in subsequent lives and cause diseases of unknown origin and which are not amenable to treatment. They are inescapable retributive consequences of unremembered past actions.

*Prajñā aparādhas*, on the other hand, are irrational but wilful conduct of an amoral nature, ethically neutral such as excessive indulgence of the senses, over eating, consumption of intoxicants etc and actions done under psychological aberrations like anger, fear, greed etc. The etiology of diseases born of *prajñā aparādha* is known and the diseases are amenable to prevention and treatment. This requires renunciation of wilful abuse of the body and mind through control of the senses and by observing a wholesome regimen.

The term *prajñā aparādha* used in Ayurvedic texts has been a matter of debatable interpretation. It has been interpreted<sup>1</sup> as meaning intellectual error, defect in mental faculty, culpable insight, violation of good sense. But it is felt that this interpretation does inadequate justice, infact, is misleading.

Caraka I. 7, 50-51 classifies diseases into two broad categories :

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1. Priyavrat Sharma (ed & tr) *Caraka Saṃhitā*, Varanasi 1981. R. K. Sharma & Bhagawan Dash (ed & tr) *Caraka Saṃhitā* Varanasi, 1976.

(a) nijānām rogāḥ - innate diseases or diseases which are self born-  
i. e. endogenous. These arise due to imbalance of the three bodily  
humours-doṣas in the human system perhaps due to change of seasons  
(I. 7-46) and previous Karmas. These diseases caused by imbalance or  
disequilibrium of doṣas can be cured by medicine and evacuation of  
accumulated doṣas viz. through emetics, purgatives, enema, rasāyanas  
(chemicals) etc. (Caraka I. 7.47-49).

(b) āgantavo rogāḥ-diseases caused by external factors; exogenous  
such as (i) physical : demons, organisms, poison, wind etc (ii) psycho-  
logical : envy, grief, anger, vanity, aversion etc. These are called by  
prajñā aparādha (Caraka I. 7. 51-52).

We consider that the term prajñā-aparādha has been devised in  
the medical texts to distinguish exogenous diseases from endogenous  
diseases caused by karmas done in previous births.

Human actions are of two types, moral and amoral or non-moral.  
Amoral actions such as speaking falsehood, committing theft or doing  
bodily injury to another etc. are karmas which do not bear fruit imme-  
diately ; their consequences are generally experienced in subsequent  
lives. In the case of karmas generally only the consequences are  
experienced and from those consequences it is inferred that these must be  
due to actions done in previous existences; but the precise karmas  
(actions) giving rise to those consequences are not capable of identi-  
fication, notwithstanding the elaboration of karmas and their conseq-  
uences - karmavipāka in the dharmasāstra and the Purāṇas. In short  
there is, truly speaking, no knowledge of the causative karma. In other  
words karmas are in the nature of retributive effects or consequences  
experienced by an individual of unknown or unremembered actions  
done by him.

Prajñā aparādha, on the other hand, is in the nature of a fault or  
improper conduct which does not involve moral question of right and  
wrong in relation to fellow beings. Caraka (I. 28.39) observes :  
prajñāparādhādhy hitānarathān pañca niṣevate : prajñā aparādha  
is unwholesome or excessive indulgence of the five senses. Caraka  
(II. 7.21-22) observes again : prajñāparādhāt sambhūte vyādhau  
karmaja ātmanah : the diseases arising from prajñā aparādha are the

result of one's own actions; and should not be attributed to gods, forefathers or demons. Caraka (IV. 1.102) elaborates that aśubha karma performed on account of irrational (vibhraṣṭa) intellect (dhī), resolution or will (dhr̥ti) and recollection (smṛti) is prajñā aparādha and is the cause of all doṣas : Caraka (IV. 1.109) is more specific.

Buddhyā viṣamavijñānam viṣamam ca pravartanam  
Prajñāparādham jānīyanmanaso gocaram hi tat.

Perverse action through irrational thinking should be known as prajñā aparādha done through the mind.

Caraka (IV. 1.102-109) illustrates various prajñā aparādhas :  
(a) Physical : stimulation or suppression of urges, indulgence in sex, consumption of unwholesome things knowingly or wilfully or which cause derangement of the mind (such as intoxicants and drugs); in short, disregarding the reaction of one's senses and valid experience (indriyo-pakrama sadvṛttasya ca varjanam).

(b) Psychological : Deha karmas or bodily actions arising from envy, conceit, fear, anger, greed, excessive attachment etc.

It will be evident that the diseases caused by prajñā aparādha can be avoided by preventive measures as also by medication. They are called prajñā aparādha because the causative factor of disease and suffering can be pin pointed unlike as in the case of diseases caused by kārmic retribution.

Cakrapāṇidatta in his commentary on Caraka (I. 7 51-52) explains prajñā aparādha thus :

Prajñā buddhistada parādho jñāna durjñāne ;  
etanmūlāścaite bhūtābhiṣāṅgādaya īrṣyādayaṣca.

Wilful misconduct, ignorant and evil action, actions in a disturbed state of mind and jealousy are the roots of prajñā aparādha.

Cakrapāṇidatta significantly adds :

Prādhānyāt prajñāparadhajanita bāhyavātādi rūkṣa  
bhojanādi janyatvena tathāntarā vātādi janyatvena  
pṛthaktveno cyante.

Chiefly the diseases born of prajñā aparādha are outside a wind, dry or unwholesome food, but are not said to be different from the diseases born of the doṣas or humours like vāta etc. Though the causative factors are different the symptoms are similar in the case of diseases caused by prajñā aparādha and disturbance of the three bodily humours (doṣaja).

This explains, why Caraka (I. 7. 53-54) says that exogenous diseases can be prevented : tyāgaḥ prajñāparādhānām-renouncing wilful abuse of one's body and mind through control of senses, acquiring sound knowledge of place and time and self and by observing good conduct sadvṛttasānuvartanam.

In short prajñā aparādha<sup>2</sup> is in the nature of apacāra, apathyā, wrong conduct and wrong living which may not have any moral connotation.

The above interpretation finds confirmation in Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya of Vāgbhaṭa.

The Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya (I. 12. 57-59) classifies diseases into three categories :

- (a) dṛṣṭāpacārajāḥ-born of or caused by known transgressions ;
- (b) pūrva aparādhajāḥ — born of or caused by misconduct or faults in previous lives and

(c) saṅkarodbhava : caused by a combination of both the above factors. Vāgbhaṭa explains that the arising of these doṣas (diseases) which occur without cause (hetu vinā) are born of karmas (Karmaja). Vāgbhaṭa further says that diseases caused by karmas disappear on the exhaustion of Karmas (Karmasaṅkṣayāt), whereas diseases arising from disturbance of doṣas are treated by counter-measures-vipakṣa śīla, such as medicine, proper food and healthy living and traces them (III. 7) to anupaśaya-improper regimen causing aggravation.

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2. The Kāśyapa Saṁhitā or Vṛddhajīvakīyam tantra survives as a fragmentary manuscript. This Saṁhitā I. 27. 3 & 8 also classifies diseases as endogenous (ni ja) and exogenous (agantu). The exogenous diseases are said to be caused by external factors like fire, rain, curses (śāpa) and spells (abhicāra). Prajñā aparādha is not enumerated as such.

Thus *prajñā aparādha* means *apacāra*, *kupatha* or *apathya* which fructify immediately and whose cause can be established definitely in a person's conduct contrary to his own physical and mental interests.

It is to be distinguished from *vidhi aparādha*-ritualistic error- and *pūrva-aparādha* or *dharma aparādha* or *dharmāpeta* or *adharma-*moral lapses or misconduct which, usually manifest themselves in subsequent lives.

The suggestion of a Western scholar<sup>3</sup> that the formulation of *prajñā aparādha* concept is unique in Ayurveda and led to Ātreya's emphasis on clinical empiricism over dogmatism and subordination of supernatural etiology rooted in the doctrine of Karma and that the use of the term without the prefix *prajñā* in *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya* stripped the concept of its technical usage and transformed it into the violation of a more traditional moral imperative appears to be a result of a misunderstanding of the term *prajñā aparādha*.

## सारांश

### आयुर्वेद में प्रज्ञापराध और कर्म का अर्थ

वाई. क्रिशन

आयुर्वेद संहिताओं में प्रज्ञापराध शब्द का प्रयोग किया गया है। साहित्यिक अर्थों में इस की व्याख्या इस प्रकार की गई है - प्रतिभासम्पन्न दोष, मानसिक शक्ति दोष, संदोष सूक्ष्म दृष्टि, समुचित संवेदन का तिरस्कार। इन अर्थों की कोई अधिक अनुभूति नहीं है और इस सन्दर्भ में ठीक से नहीं बैठते। संहिता सामग्री का सावधानी से विश्लेषण प्रज्ञापराध के वास्तविक महत्त्व को प्रमाणित करता है।

3. Mitchell G. Weiss: "Caraka Saṃhitā on the Doctrine of Karma" in W.D.O. Flaherty (ed) Karma and Rebirth in classical Indian Tradition, California, 1980, pp.112 & 115.

आयुर्वेद बीमारियों के कारणात्मक घटकों के भीतर होने और न होने को वर्गीकृत करता है : (क) अन्तर्जात : १. स्वयंजन्में या आभ्यन्तर रूप से उत्पन्न जैसे कि तीन शारीरिक दोषों का असंतुलन २. कर्मज- पूर्व जन्म के कर्म (ख) बहिर्जात : वे बीमारियाँ जो बाहरी कारणों, भौतिक और मनोविकारों से पैदा होती हैं। कर्म नैतिक प्रकृति के क्रियाकलाप होते हैं जो अनुवर्ती जीवन में फलित होते हैं और अज्ञात मूल बीमारियों के कारण बनते हैं तथा उपचार के लिए साध्य नहीं होते। विगत क्रियाओं के वे अविस्मरणीय बिना छुटकारा पाने वाले प्रतिकारणत्मक परिणाम हैं।

प्रज्ञापराध, दसरी ओर, आयुक्तक लेकिन नैतिक प्रकृति का जानबूझकर संचालन है। नीतिशास्त्र के अनुसार तटस्थ जैसे विषयों की अत्यधिक आसक्ति, सीमा से अधिक खाना, मादक द्रव्यों का सेवन आदि तथा मानसिक विकारों के अन्तर्गत की गई क्रियाएँ जैसे : क्रोध, भय लालसा आदि प्रज्ञापराध से उत्पन्न बीमारियों के हेतुविज्ञान की जानकारी है और बीमारियों को सहज रूप से रोका तथा उपचार किया जा सकता है। जानबूझकर शरीर तथा मस्तिष्क का संवेदनों के नियंत्रण से किया गया दुरुपयोग और पथ्यापथ्य के पूर्ण अनुपालन के द्वारा इनका परित्याग अपेक्षित है।