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.

**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 thereby facilitating to acquire appropriate knowledge.⁴⁵

*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.⁶

*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.⁷

**Dietary factors as *Prajnaparadha* in causing Mental Disorders**

Food, sleep, and celibacy are considered as three pillars of life in Ayurveda.⁸ 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 Prajnapphire in Ayurveda 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’ Chandogyaopanishad 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 Prajnapphire. 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 Smiti is retained and mental health is restored.

**Life Style Factors as Prajnapphire in causing Mental Disorders**

Life style in terms of Sadwritta (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 Raja 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 Smiti. This purposeful involvement is also a form of Prajnphanumeric. 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 endocrine 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.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dietary factors as Prajnaparada</th>
<th>Life style factors as Prajnaparada</th>
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| 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 Indriyartha  
Samyoga  
(excessive, impaired and non utilization of sense organs) |
| Neglecting prescribed diet (Asta Ahara Vidhi Viseshayatona) | Disrespect for elders, 
Uncontrolled Dharaneeya Vegas |

**DISCUSSION**

‘Shareeramapi Satwamanuvidheeyade 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 vice versa. 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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