

Significance of *Pradnyaparadha* in *Swasthaya-Rakshana* with special reference to Ayurveda and *Upanishad*: A Critical Review

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Abstract:

Background: According to *Charaka Samhita*, three main etiological factors for diseases are *Pradnyaparadha*, *Parinama* and *Asatmyendriyarthasamyoga*. *Pradnyaparadha* is considered to be the main cause of many *Nija* and all *Agantu Vyadhi*. *Ratharupaka* analogy from *Upanishad* can be correlated with the concept of *Ayu* given in Ayurveda. In the same way, *Avidnyanavan* concept of *Kathopanishad* resembles with *Pradnyaparadha*.

Objective: The objective was to study the concept of *Pradnyaparadha* in comparison to *Ratharupaka* (Analogy of Chariot) & to show its significance in Ayurveda.

Methods: References regarding *Pradnyaparadha* and *Dnyanotpatti-Kriya* were compiled from *Charaka Samhita* and principal *Upanishads* especially *Kathopanishad*. Further, they were

analyzed and compared with contemporary references of *Pradnyaparadha* (intellectual error).

Results: Detailed descriptions of '*Pradnyaparadha*' in *Charaka Samhita* & concept of '*Avidnyanavan*' in the analogy of chariot from *Kathopanishad* are similar in nature & thus both these treatise guide human beings to avoid these errors to lead to healthy & happy life. This combined study of two treatise helps in understanding the concept in easier manner.

Conclusion: Detailed description of '*Pradnyaparadha*' in *Charaka Samhita* & concept of '*Avidnyanavan*' in the analogy of Chariot from *Kathopanishad* is similar in nature & thus both these treatise guide human beings to avoid these errors to lead to healthy & happy life.

Keywords: *Pradnyaparadha, Avidnyanavan, Kathopanishad*

Introduction:

Ayurveda, an ancient science of life, has evolved from and parallel to *Vedas*. *Dharma* (virtue), *Aartha* (wealth), *Kama* (desire) & *Moksha* (liberation), i. e. *Chaturvidha Purushartha* are said to be the four goals of life. It stresses that healthy long life is a vital pre-requisite for achieving these, *Purushartha*. The diseases create obstacles in maintenance of health & thus achieving these four goals of life.^[1] According to *Charaka Samhita*, the main aims of Ayurveda are to maintain health of a healthy individual and treatment of a disease in patients.^[2]

Ayurveda Samhita explain the preventive and curative aspects of a variety of physical & mental disorders. The main purpose of a *Vaidya* is to search for causative factors of a disease for proper treatment. The three principle etiological factors resulting in diseases, viz., *Pradnyaparadha* i. e. *Dhi-Dhriti-Smriti Vibhramsha* (intellectual error), *Parinama* (consequences relating to time & past deeds) and *Asatmyendriyarthasamyoga* (unwholesome contact with the objects of senses) are described by Acharya Charaka.^[3]

Out of these, the main cause of many *Nija* (innate) diseases & all *Agantu* (accidental) diseases is *Pradnyaparadha*, which is caused due to *Dhi-Dhriti-Smriti Vibhramsha*, i.e., detrimental status of intellect, patience & memory.^[4] It is also considered to be the chief reason of *Manasa* (mental) & *Janapadodhvasavyadhi* (epidemic diseases).^[5] The philosophy of Ayurveda revolved around

the health and longevity. Ayurveda & *Upanishads* have both evolved from *Veda* which shows much similarities in the concepts in both the treatises.

The *Upanishads* are a valued source of applied concepts of *Vedanta* philosophy. *Kathopanishad* is one of the principal *Upanishads*, in which the eternal truth – ‘Freedom from death & birth is obtained by knowledge only.’ – is given in the form of narrative. These *Upanishads* & also Ayurveda both give a brilliant narrative regarding causative factors for all miseries or diseases & the aids to get rid of all miseries to attain goal of life i. e. *Moksha* or Salvation.

“*Ratharupaka*” analogy from *Kathopanishad* can be correlated with “*Ayu*” concept as given in Ayurvedic texts. Also, the “*Avidnyanavan*” concept of *Kathopanishad* goes in analogous with “*Pradnyaparadha*” concept of *Charaka Samhita*. This pooled study of two treatises would help in understanding the concept in easier way. In contemporary era or in the era of environmental and ethical pollution, human beings are searching for preventive measures for diseases. In light of this, conceptual understanding of various dimensions of *Pradnyaparadha* (intellectual error) have become a pressing need. This critical review is an endeavor to study the concept of *Pradnyaparadha* in comparison to *Ratharupaka* (Analogy of Chariot) & to show its significance in Ayurveda.

Materials and Methods:

It was a literary study. References regarding *Pradnyaparadha* and *Dnyanotpatti-Kriya* were compiled from

Charaka Samhita and principal *Upanishads* especially *Kathopanishad*. Further, they were analyzed and compared with contemporary references of *Pradnyaparadha* (intellectual error).

Conceptual Study:

1. Concept of Ayu & Pradnyaparadha:

The term 'Ayurveda' consists of two words - 'Ayu' indicates life & 'Veda' denotes knowledge. Ayu or life is the combination of *Sharira* (the body), *Indriya* (the sense organs), *Satva* (the intellect) & *Atma* (the soul), as per *Charaka Samhita*.^[6] It also explains, *Hetu* (etiological factors for diseases), *Linga* (Signs & symptoms of diseases) and *Aushadha* (Treatment of diseases), known as the *Triskandha* (three mandatory entities), deemed essential to successfully carry out treatment of any disease.^[7] Refrainment from association with etiological factors is considered as the foremost treatment for any disease.^[8] So, it becomes necessary for physician to search for the etiological factors pertaining to a disease.

An imbalance of *Dosha – Dhatu – Mala* presents as a *Vikara* or disease which is also known as *Dukha* or Misery.^[9] All the miseries or diseases stem from the desires. Eradication of desires leads to the annihilation of all miseries. The salvation is complete elimination of miseries. The complete eradication of desires is the only way to achieve salvation.^[10] *Charaka Samhita* explains that the root causes of all miseries are *Pradnyaparadha*, *Parinama* and *Asatmyendriyārtha*

Samyoga.^[11] Of these, impairment of intellect, patience & memory, i.e., *Dhi – Dhriti – Smriti – Vibhramsha* is termed as *Pradnyaparadha*.^[12]

- a) *Dhi-Vibhramsha*: When eternal entities are perceived as momentary and useful ones deemed as harmful, it indicates an impairment of the mind. In normalcy, the entities are perceived as they are, without any such intellectual deviation.^[13]
- b) *Dhriti – Vibhramsha*: To keep away from detrimental objects of perception, the mind needs patience to secure itself. This patience is very crucial, as overindulgence in pleasures can lead to contact with such harmful entities.^[14]
- c) *Smriti – Vibhramsha*: Memory shows everything that is unforgettable. When mind is defeated by *Rajas & Tamas*, memory gets impaired.^[15]

Pradnyaparadha happens when a person with impaired intellect, memory & patience subjects oneself in indulging in injurious activities/pleasures. *Sharira* and *Manasa* Dosha get aggravated due to this. As the intellect directly originates from mind & the conduct originates from the former, *Pradnyaparadha* comes in ambit of the mind.^[16]

2. Concept of Ratharupaka & Avidnyanavan:

Kathopanishad, one of the principal *Upanishads*, describes the analogy of Chariot for a comprehensive perception of the concept 'Ayu' & its components. Here, the *Atman* (soul) is reflected as the lord of the Chariot, a person's

body considered as the chariot; the charioteer being intellect & the mind as the reins of this chariot.^[17] The *Jivatman* becomes the lord of the chariot and bounds to this world, owing to the *Karma* endured due to *Avidya* and ignorance.

Just as the chariot is drawn by the horses, so also this body-chariot is drawn by the horses of senses. Therefore, this body is compared to the chariot. Just as the chariot is carefully moved by the driver, so also this body-chariot is moved or guided by the driver intellect, which is endowed with power of discrimination. Body does everything under the directions of intellect. The horses move when the driver grasps the reins in his hands. So, also the senses perform their function when grasped by the mind.

The senses are considered as the horses & their objects are the roads; the Atman, the senses & the mind united, the wise call the *Bhokta* (enjoyer). The senses such as *Shrotra* (ears), *Tvak* (skin), *Chakshu* (eyes), *Rasana* (tongue) & *Ghrana* (nose) are the horses, because they draw this body-chariot. The roads on which the horses of senses tread, are made up of objects such as, *Shabda* (sound), *Sparsha* (touch), *Rupa* (sight), *Rasa* (taste) & *Gandha* (smell). The pure Atman cannot be the *Bhokta* (enjoyer). He appears as enjoyer or agent when he is united with the mind, senses & the body through *Avidya*, ignorance.^[18]

As it is explained further, but *Vidnyanavan* one who has

understanding & whose mind is always controlled, his senses are under control like docile horses of a driver.^[19] *Vidnyanavan* means who has right understanding, whose mind is firmly held or is stable. A competent charioteer controls the horses of a chariot by expertly handling the reins. Likewise, through self-awareness, acumen & determination, an able person drives its own chariot of body, holding and controlling all senses.

The concept of '*Pradnyaparadha*' can be correlated with the '*Avidnyanavan*' – the term given in *Kathopanishad*. It is mentioned that, when a person has no discrimination (*Avidnyanavan*) & their mind is unrestrained, their senses are uncontrollable just like untamed horses of a charioteer. [20, 21] *Avidnyanavan* – who has no right understanding, whose *Buddhi* i. e. intellect, as a charioteer is impaired & is thus devoid of discrimination.

3. Comparison between two Concepts:

According to Charakacharya, *Drishtanta* (the Example) should be clear so that it is understood both by the wise & ignorant alike.^[22] The most common illustration depicting the relation between the object & the means is called the 'Example'. The concept of *Ayu* & its components can be explained by means of '*Ratharupaka*' i. e. analogy of chariot.

Components of *Ayu* i. e. *Sharira* (body), *Indriya* (Senses), *Atma* (Soul) & *Satva* (Mind) are compared with the various components of Chariot in

the 'Ratharupaka' from *Kathopanishad*. The comparison of body is with chariot, the soul with the master of chariot, the rider with intellect (*Pradnya* i. e. combined effect of the *Dhi-Dhriti-Smriti*), with the reins of the mind, the horses with the senses and the five sensory objects with the roads.

Table No. 1 showing the similarity between concept of *Ayu* and *Ratharupaka*:

Sr. No.	According to Ayurveda, Components of Ayu	According to <i>Kathopanishad</i> – <i>Ratharupaka</i> Components of Chariot
1	<i>Sharira</i> (body)	The Chariot
2	<i>Atma</i> (Soul)	The Master of the Chariot
3	<i>Satva</i> (Mind)	The Reins
4	<i>Pradnya</i> (Intellect)	The Charioteer
5	<i>Indriya</i> (Senses)	The Horses
6	<i>Indriyarth</i> (Sense faculties)	The Roads

Vidnyanavan is one who has understanding with a controlled mind and also his senses are under control like docile horses of a driver. *Vidnyanavan* means a person with proper functioning

of *Pradnya* i. e. *Dhi – Dhriti – Smriti*. *Avidnyanavan* – one who has no right understanding, whose *Buddhi* i. e. intellect, as a charioteer is impaired & is thus devoid of discrimination. Improper functioning of the intellect is mentioned as *Avidnyanavan* in *Kathopanishad*. *Pradnyaparadha* comes under ambit of the mind, as it directly originates from it & the conduct originates from the former.

The *Sukhayu* (happy life), *Dukkhayu* (unhappy life), *Hitayu* (life) & *Ahitayu* (life), are the four dimensions of Ayu that broadly depict its 'Individual' & 'Social' dimensions.^[23] A person with proper understanding & controlled mind with his senses under control is called as *Vidnyanavan*. Abnormal functioning of *Pradnya* i. e. impairment of *Dhi – Dhriti – Smriti* can be called as *Avidnyanavan*. Thus, common concepts in both the treatises can be compared for easy understanding & for illustrations to others.

4. Significance of 'Pradnyaparadha' concept in Ayurveda:

Various ailments arise as a result of forced provocation and even suppression of naturally commenced urges, unjustified utilization of strength, sexual over-indulgence, negligence towards timely therapeutic actions, initiation of any activities in inappropriate time, immodest and immoral conduct, disrespectful behavior towards the revered persons and indulging in injurious entities & actions originating from intellectual errors.^[24]

All the *Agantuja Vyadhi* (exogenous diseases) derive from *Pradnyaparadha*, which is intellectual error, according to

Acharya Charaka. The *Pradnyaparadha* even causes various psychological disorders. This intellectual error (*Pradnyaparadha*), makes an ignorant person enjoy oneself in an untrue perception of senses, suppression of natural urges, unjustified exertions. The embracing of such of the regime as enjoyable, however is only for a brief duration.^[25]

Along with being cause of innate & exogenous diseases, intellectual error (*Pradnyaparadha*) is also stated as basis for mental disorders & epidemics. Acharya Charaka explains the reasons for water, air, land & time pollution, which leads to epidemics. It is mentioned that these factors vitiate as a result of immoralities of the present life or the wrongdoings of the past life. Both the types of sins are contributed towards intellectual error (*Pradnyaparadha*) itself.^[26]

Avoiding association causative factors is described as the first line of treatment of any disease.²⁹ Similarly, avoidance of intellectual error is mentioned as crucial preventive measures of all exogenous diseases in Charaka Samhita.^[27]

Contentment is the final aim of all activities, psychological and somatic, carried out by humans. Charaka Samhita further asserts that, in achieving this, a wise person follows a righteous way, but an ignorant one moves away in wrong direction.^[28]

Discussion:

Currently, inappropriate diet, reduced physical activities, suppression of natural urges and demanding lifestyle, have

resulted in prevalence of various lifestyle disorders. Moral values of society are downgrading day-by-day. Humanitarian relationships & human-nature bonding has got disturbed nowadays.

Intellectual error (*Pradnyaparadha*) of people is mostly responsible for this. This creates various ailments & people get distracted from attaining a wholesome wellbeing constituting of physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects. This resultant morbid environment further disrupts their path towards achieving four goals of life, viz., *Dharma* (righteousness), *Artha* (prosperity), *Kama* (aspirations) & *Moksha* (liberation).

Detailed description of 'Pradnyaparadha' in *Charaka Samhita* & concept of 'Avidnyanavan' in the likeness of Chariot from *Kathopanishad* is similar in nature & thus both these treatise guide human beings to avoid these errors to lead to healthy & happy life.

Conclusion:

One of the instrumental factors in causing diseases is *Pradnyaparadha*. *Kathopanishad*, one of the principal *Upanishad*, elucidates and compares the human body's physiological operations with the *Ratharupaka* (analogy of Chariot) & its components. It also gives the vivid description of 'Avidnyanavan' i. e. a human being with impaired intellect. This explanation resembles that of *Pradnyaparadha* given in *Charaka Samhita*. *Ayurveda & Upanishads* have common source of knowledge i. e. *Veda*. Therefore, this combined study of two treatises would be helpful in

understanding the concept in easier manner.

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