

Samskaras In Relation To The Disease Process

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In the last issue of *Ayurveda Today* (Fall, 1997), the relationship of *karma* (our actions) to the disease process was discussed. *Karmic* patterns that recur in our lives are due primarily to our *samskaras*. *Samskara* is a Sanskrit term that denotes an individual's past tendencies and impressions, from this life and past lives, which can influence present behavior. They are scars or impressions on the mind in tissues, some of which are deeply rooted and recorded in the connective tissue. We carry *samskaras* within the matrix of the *majja dhatu* (nervous tissue and bone marrow) and the innermost mind. They become our tendencies in this lifetime.

One's life is a river of eternity beyond beginning and ending. It is a constant, continuous flow of consciousness with thoughts, feelings, emotions, and an accumulated series of experiences. *Samskaras* are a complex structure of tendencies and behavior created by past thoughts, feelings, emotions, and experiences. Some *samskaras* arise from genetic factors, while others are connected to past lives. Every thought and action creates fingerprints on the mind, and the accumulation of these fingerprints produce scars on the deeper layers of the mind. The total number of scars we carry are known as our *samskaras*.

Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas

Ayurveda classifies *samskaras* under three categories – *sattvic*, *rajasic*, and *tamasic*. *Sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* are the *gunas* (qualities) of a person's psychological constitution, known as *manas prakruti*. *Sattvic* qualities imply reality, consciousness, purity, and clarity of perception, all of which are responsible for goodness and happiness. *Sattvic samskaras* create rejuvenation of the mind and consciousness, and strengthen immunity. However, certain overpowering *sattvic samskaras* may bring righteous indignation, discrimination, comparison and competitive compulsive behavior.

All movement and activities are due to *rajas*. It leads to a life of sensual enjoyment, pleasure and pain, effort, and restlessness. *Rajasic samskaras* can create hyperacidity, agitation, temptation, and tend to provoke *vata dosha*. *Tamas* is darkness, inertia, heaviness, and materialistic attitudes. *Tamasic samskaras* can be responsible for lack of communication, dullness, heaviness, or depression.

There is a constant interplay of the three *gunas* in the individual consciousness, but the relative predominance of either *sattva*, *rajas*, or *tamas* is responsible for the psychological constitution. By taking a person second-level pulse, one can determine *manas prakruti*. *Vata*, as detected in the second level of the pulse, is primarily composed of *rajas*, and secondarily of *sattva*. *Pitta* is composed mainly of *sattva*, with some *rajas*. *Kapha* is mostly *tamas*, with a small component of *sattva*. A balanced state of *manas vikruti* would be equal parts of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*.

Samprapti and Khavaigunya

Disease can be caused by wrong lifestyle, diet, environmental factors, or emotions. There are four stages of imbalance before disease manifests with readily identifiable symptoms. This model of pathogenesis is called *samprapti*. Overdoing of a certain type of activity will cause the bodily humor, or *dosha*, to undergo *sanchaya* (accumulation). Repeat overdoing will lead to *prakopa*, or aggravation of the accumulated *dosha*. Continued wrongdoing will cause the third stage of *samprapti*, which is known as *prasara*, or spread. Improper action, or even underdoing of a required activity, will cause *sthana samsraya*, or the deposition of the *dosha* into a weakened or defective area of the body. Once the "seeds" of *samskaras* are planted (*sthana samsraya*), then they can sprout. Which of these seeds will sprout in this lifetime is determined by individual *karma*.

Samskaras form *khavaigunya* - a defective space that becomes the site of a lesion once the aggravated *dosha* enters it. Existing *khavaigunyas* may be due to deep subconscious *samskaric* patterns, but current (more recent) *samskaras* can trigger *doshic* imbalance causing the *dosha* to undergo *sanchaya*, *prakopa* and *prasara*. This *dosha* may deposit into the defective space created by old *samskaras*. At this point, the etiology would progress to the final two stages of *samprapti*: *vyakti*, the manifestation of signs and symptoms, and *bheda*, the destruction of tissues with complications.

The detoxification program called *panchakarma* removes not only *doshic* impurities, but can also eliminate physical as well as psychological pathogenesis. The performance of spiritual practices frees us of our *samskaras*. The seeds of accumulated *samskaras* are burned in the fire of meditation. Once we roast the seeds of *samskaras*, they will not sprout.

Psychological Factors

The disease process may begin in the consciousness as negative emotions, thoughts, reactions, stress, or repressed emotions that later manifest on the *doshic* level. Changing one's *samskaric* patterns can change one's *doshic* patterns. If one can change the thought pattern and emotional response, then one can change the behavior, thereby changing one's *samskaras*. Most of the old *samskaras* become habits and addictions. Every individual is seeking joy, comfort, success, and happiness. For this, a person needs identity. Identity requires self-esteem and self-recognition. If these factors are lacking in life, then the *samskaras* become distorted and can lead to complex psychiatric problems and addictions.

Psychological traumas are scars on the mind. Depending on the age of the trauma, a corresponding tissue will be affected. Childhood trauma, sexual abuse, and stressful relationships can alter existing *samskaras* and create a *khavaigunya* where the *dosha* can lodge. For example, sexual trauma may lead to fear of sex, endometriosis, or sterility.

A cause of *khavaigunya* may be unresolved, deep-seated, self-conscious emotions, such as fear, anger, grief, or sadness. In our daily life and relationships, any emotion that is not resolved completely becomes crystallized and these crystals of unresolved emotions accumulate in the deep connective tissue, creating *khavaigunya*. Cellular *ama*

can also cause a defective space. When the cell membrane is covered by *ama* or toxins, there is no communication between two cells, so the cells become isolated. An isolated cell is a lonely cell and a lonely cell loses its self-esteem. When a person loses self-esteem, it means the cells are clogged with *ama*.

Genetics

There are genetic factors in *samskaras* as well. We carry the cellular memory of our parents' and grandparents' illnesses. These unwanted memories can create a defective space within the organs of the body, causing genetic predispositions for certain diseases. For example, a *samskara* of disease may be created out of a family's fear of disease. Though the person is well, they may develop in illness from this fear. One can eradicate negative thoughts of disease through positive thinking, affirmation, and suggestion.

Karma

Another cause of *khavaigunya* is the *karma* (action) and *dharma* (duty) one performs in this life. Good actions bear the fruit of happiness, while bad actions create bad fruits, or unhappiness. Everyone is here to pay their debts of *karma*. That is why earth is called *karma bhumi*, or the land of *karma*. One's present life is due to *karma*, and *karma* is the divine play of the *samskaras*. *Kriyamana karma* are the actions that a person performs in this lifetime. Incomplete *samskaras of kriyamana* become *sanchita karma*, those which are accumulated in the astral body and cause one to take rebirth. If a person exhausts their *sanchita karma*, and creates no new *samskaras*, then the chain is broken. The person no longer accumulates, and this leads to *moksha*, or liberation.

Incomplete thoughts and actions that are not understood create *samskaras*. Each person carries invisible *samskaras* in the astral body in the form of unfulfilled desires at the time of death. Life before birth is comprised of these hidden, invisible *samskaras*.

Awareness & Meditation

Every experience, every *samskara*, creates fragmentation. There are so many fragments in our lives, because we are fragmented human beings. A person may behave one way at work and another way at home. In front of the boss, they become frantic and hurried, and then become irritable and angry at home. The result is fragmentation. A fragmented mind is a limited mind. *Khavaigunya* can result from giving emphasis to one fragment. It is important to look at all fragments as one and this demands a great deal of awareness. Lack of awareness in one part of the body also creates a *khavaigunya*.

Meditation means mindfulness. When you are here, be here completely. Don't go elsewhere mentally. When one completely pays attention to this very moment, this very moment is a moment of God. This very moment is a moment of enlightenment. Enlightenment, God, and Truth are not fixed, but are living and dynamic. Moment to moment enlightenment eradicates *khavaigunya*.

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