

The Relationship Of Karma To The Disease Process

by Madhavi Rathod

Ayurveda defines health as a balanced state of the three *doshas* or bodily humors (*vata*, *pita*, and *kapha*) the seven *dhatu*s or bodily tissues, the three *malas* or waste products, of *prana*, *tejas*, and *ojas* (the pure essences, respectively, of *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*) and a balance on the different influences of *karma*. The body contains seven different types of tissues: *rasa* (plasma), *rakta* (blood), *mamsa* (muscle), *meda* (adipose or fat), *asthi* (bone), *majja* (nerve or connective tissue), and *shukra / artava* (the male and female reproductive tissues). The body produces three waste products: urine, feces, and sweat. Our entire body is the product of *karma*. Its manifestation, existence and decay, depend upon *karmic* effects. The law of *karma* is inevitable and our entire life is the flow of *karma*. When all these factors are in balance, a person experiences good health. However, due to wrong diet, lifestyle, environment, or emotions, the person may experience an imbalance, which in turn, may lead to disease.

Ayurveda identifies various stages in the disease process, known as pathogenesis or *samprapti*. The disease process can be illustrated by using the analogy of a leaky faucet. The disease process starts with a "leak", which may be incompatible food combining, improper lifestyle, confused relationships, or unresolved emotions. These factors start to accumulate and build in the sight of the corresponding *dosha*. This stage of *samprapti* is called *sanchaya*, or accumulation. *Vata* accumulates in the colon, *pitta* in the intestines, and *kapha* in the stomach. This accumulation is like a leaky faucet filling a bucket. If the leak continues, then the water will fill the bucket. This stage is called *prakopa*, where the *dosha* is aggravated and rises in its own site. *Prakopa* means raising the level of accumulated *doshic* aggravation or provocation. If the aggravation continues, the bucket overflows. This stage is known as *prasara* or diffusion, where the *dosha* leaves its site, enters the general circulation, and spreads into the body. As the *dosha* enters the body, it lodges in a defective space (*khavaigunya*); this may be a weak tissue, organ, or system. This fourth stage of *samprapti* is known as *sthana sanshraya*, the infiltration of *doshas* into the site of the lesion. The dormant seeds of disease are already present in the *khavaigunya*. The fifth stage of *samprapti* is *vyakti*, or manifestation. Once the *dosha* lodges in an area, its "seeds" sprout and manifest the signs and symptoms of a disease. The sixth and final stage is *bheda*. The imbalanced *dosha* has completely expressed itself as an illness and can be diagnosed. The "seeds" have created a tree that bears fruit. An Ayurvedic physician can use pulse diagnosis to determine the stage of *samprapti* in a person. The earlier the stage of the imbalance at the time of diagnosis, the easier it will be to treat.

Emotions also play an important role. A person who has fear, insecurity, anxiety, and nervousness will have increased *vata*. On the other hand, a person who is ambitious, perfectionistic, critical, angry, or judgmental, will tend to have high *pitta*. Similarly, a person who experiences greed, attachment and possessiveness will have elevated *kapha*.

The Ayurvedic physician can perceive a person's *prakruti* or inborn constitution. *Prakruti* is the code of intelligence of *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*. It is a person's *karmic* code. The physician can also tell a person's *vikruti*, or current state of *doshic* imbalance. *Vikruti*

is due to the person's *karmic* actions. The physician then helps the patient through proper diet, lifestyle, etc. If there is a genetic predisposition to a disease, then the physician may give a *rasayana* (rejuvenative tonic) to heal the genes. The physician may also recommend that the person seek the advice of a *gyotishi*, or Vedic astrologer, to find out about *karma* and *dharma*. The *gyotishi* may suggest certain *mantras*, gemstones, colors, or *upayas* (astrological remedies) to assist healing.

There are four broad categories of karma: *sanchita*, *prarabdha*, *kriyamana*, and *agama*. *Sanchita*, which means memory, is accumulated *karma*. *Prarabdha* means "packed up the front". It is that portion of *sanchita* that we are experiencing now. *Kriyamana karma* is our present life; it is whatever actions we are performing now. A *kriya* is a spontaneous action. Then, there is *agama karma*, which literally means "yet to come".

If a present *doshic* disorder is due to *sanchita karma*, because of wrong diet and lifestyle, then we can correct that. This accumulated *karma* may be the precipitating factor that causes *sanchaya* (accumulation of the disease). The *prasara* stage (spreading) is due to *kriyamana karma* (our present actions). Our present lifestyle, job stress or confused relationships may all be contributing factors. *Sanchita karmas* are accumulated into our astral body. They push certain *karmas* for us to experience now as *prarabdha*, accumulated deep in the matrix of our connective tissue as seeds of the disease. This creates a *khavaigunya*, or defective space, accumulating from our past lives. Between *sanchita* and *kriyamana* is what we well experience as *prarabdha*.

When we have exhausted all of our *kriyamana* and *prarabdha karmas*, then *sanchita* dies away, leading to *moksha* or liberation. In this state, awareness fills our every moment and action. The flame of *kriyamana* burns *sanchita*. It roasts *prarabdha karma*, and roasted seeds don't sprout. But, our *kriyamana* is usually so incomplete that we leave fingerprints of incomplete action, which becomes a part of our *sanchita karma*. True *karma yoga* is performing action with no sense of doership.

If we don't finish our *sanchita karma*, then we take another birth. Every human being is suffering due to *sanchita karma*. The difference between an enlightened being and an unenlightened being is that the enlightened being doesn't postpone suffering of *sanchita karma*. An example is taking a loan from a bank. If you pay the money you owe, then you can get rid of the loan. We must go through the effect and pay the payments, i.e., experience the *karma*, and then the bank loan is exhausted. You don't have to pay interest anymore. So, we should not postpone paying off the loan; otherwise, we will still have unpaid debt in our *karmic* bank account.

Panchakarma is a detoxification program that helps to remove accumulated and deposited *doshas* from the deep connective tissue. When the *doshas*, *ama* (toxins), and impurities are eliminated, one can also eliminate accumulated *prarabdha karma*. Once the seeds of *prarabdha* are eliminated, the tissues can relax. This gives one a sense of happiness, well-being and good health. Positive thinking, positive affirmation, right attention, right intention, and meditation are all also vital in the healing process.

The *Bhagavad Gita* provides us with a form of *karma* therapy. It tells us that whatever *kriyamana* we are doing, do it, but don't have the feeling of doership. Thinking not about the doer, but rather that it is being done. You can change your future now by bringing more awareness to your present actions. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna instructs his disciple, Arjuna: "Come to me. I will take care of your karma. Whatever *prarabdha*, whatever *sanchita*, whatever *kriyamana* you are doing, do it. This is *karma yoga*." In *karma yoga*, if you perform your duty as a service to God, then it becomes a *karma yajna* (an action sacrifice). We must offer all our actions to the fire of attention, to the fire of awareness. When the seeds of past life karmas get roasted, then roasted seeds cannot sprout. We are tied together by the threads of *sanchita karma*. We must use the opportunity of this life to eradicate both *prarabdha and sanchita* completely with the help of right and total action of *kriyamana*. A man of *kriyamana* is a man of action. We must perform every *kriyamana karma* with total awareness. We must listen and let it go, rather than carry it around. It is like the action of the flight of the eagle that doesn't put a scar in the sky of consciousness. It remains crystal clear without casting a single shadow.

When *kriyamana* goes into *sanchita*, it becomes *agama* (yet to come). We can enjoy life with spiritual awareness through *kriyamana*. Then life becomes a *lila*, or divine play. Even at the moment the death, if you die with total awareness and peace, you drop everything and become liberated.

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