



A TWIST IN THE FATE – A REVIEW ON KARMA SIDDHANTA IN AYURVEDA

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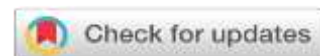
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**ABSTRACT**

The karmic wheel of life is a doctrine accepted by almost all Indian sciences. *Karma* is an action and every action - good or bad has a result (*karm phala*). It is also to be noted that *karmaphala* is beyond our control. But *karma*/action is responsive and always a conscious one and *karmaphala* completely depends on this. When one believes in karma it naturally pulls forth the theory of *punarjanma* (rebirth) and *moksha* (liberation). To understand the concept of *karma* and *punarjanma* it is important to know the *aatma*/self. This article is an attempt to explore the concepts related to *karma* seen exclusively in *Charaka samhitha*, thereby focusing on the spiritual sphere of health and life.

Keywords: *Karma, Karmaphala, Moksha, Punarjanma*

INTRODUCTION

Karma means action, work, or deed. In the context of *Ayurveda*, the term *karma* is also used in a different context as one among *shad padartha*¹, *karmaja vyadhi*, *Dashavidha papa karma*, *pancha karma*, etc. But no matter what the context, *karma* is definitely signifying action. This action could be at physical, mental,

or spiritual plane, though they are all interconnected. Right from birth the influence of *karma* is inevitable, and it follows even after death. *Karma siddhanta* is a cycle of cause and effect. It is operating according to an autonomous causal law, much like a seed, which sprouts into new realities in the distant future depend-

ing on what kind of seeds were sown. Unlike Newton's theory of "every action has an equal and opposite reaction"– The karmic theory states that every action has a likely reaction. Good begets good and bad begets bad. The results of *karma* are not bound to a specific lifetime. It follows a vicious cycle until the soul is unclenched from the claws of *karma*.

Ayurveda being a health science emphasizes physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. This spiritual health definitely encompasses karmic theory. The concepts of spiritual inclination are more appreciated in *Charaka samhitha* when compared to other *Brihatrayees* and *Lagutrayees*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The primary source of literary data has been collected exclusively from *Charaka samhitha*.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Mechanism of Karma

The *manas*, *buddhi*, *Buddhindriya*, and *karmendriyas* are the instruments. *Karma* is possible only when the *aatma* is in conjugation with these instruments. The *purusha* alone neither does any action nor enjoys the fruit of the action.²

The *atma* is free to act as he pleases, it is however obliged to enjoy the fruits of its own action. It is also free to control the mind and thereby get rid of the results of good and bad acts on its own³.

The *atma* along with subtle *four Mahabhootas* (earth-air-fire-water) enters the suitable womb, in order to consume the *karmaphala* of its previous deeds, both good and bad⁴.

From the above references, it can be stated that *Karma* is not under the domain of anything at all, rather the whole life is under the command of *Karma*.

Karma influencing conception

The very definition of *garbha* includes a conglomeration of *shukra*, *shonitha*, and *jeeva*⁵. *Jeeva* here refers to the *aatma*/soul. The entry of the *aatma* and its conjugation with the physical structures like sperm and ovum is inevitable for the conception to occur.

Life manifests when the *shukra* and *shonitha* coalesce together in a delicate act of balance by the *aatma* that is driven by *karma*. But what if none of the *aatma* finds a womb suitable to expend its *kar-*

ma? This explains why inspite of having all normal laboratory findings including physical fitness, couples fail to conceive. Again; twin birth, the congenital birth defects, are all *karma* driven.

However, *Ayurveda* gives elaborate guidelines on conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and neonatal care. It even provides details to genetically modify the sex of the child (*Pumsavana karma*).⁶ This means, that though *karma* has an inescapable outcome on the individual, the *purushakara* (human effort- present deeds) can nullify the impact of *daiva* (fruits of past deeds). Thus, the regimen for pregnancy, neonatal care etc is aimed at the overall development of the newborn laying the base for spiritual evolution at a very early stage of life.

Karma influencing Moksha and Punarjanma

It is important to understand that we are not merely the physical body, but something that evolved out of a highly spiritual experience and plays different roles in the journey of life. With this knowledge comes the irrefutable truth of *punarjanma* and *karma siddhanta* in which *Ayurveda* stands firm. *Ayurveda* believes in *paralokha eshana*⁷, the ultimate end of miseries. To attain this, one should have reached a state wherein there is the absence of the negative attribute – *rajas* and *tamas* and when the *karma* of the soul gets completely consumed. By this the soul gets liberated and this is known as *moksha*.⁸

If a soul has not achieved the above requisites and in turn is driven by desires, it ends up seeking a new birth. Ultimately the *aatma* because of its *vasana* (desire) driven by *karma* chooses the *yonis* (origin of birth) in which it can indulge the fruits of the deeds-good or bad. This cycle continues until the *aatma* achieves the ultimatum needed for *moksha*. Hence *Ayurveda* also focuses on the means to attain *moksha*.

Karma influencing Ayu and Vyadhi

The lifespan of individuals depends upon the strength and weakness of both *daiva* and *purushakara*⁹. *Daiva* refers to the *purva daihika karma*¹⁰ (deeds of the past life) of which the efforts are pre- determined. *Daiva* is considered strong only when the effects of the *purvajanma* are good. *Purushakara* refers to the human efforts done in the present life. A weak *daiva* gets

subdued by a strong *purushakara* similarly a strong *daiva* subdues a weak *purushakara*. Association of both *daiva* and *purusha* belonging to strong category results in a long and happy life. This is the influence of *karma* on *Ayu* (lifespan). Meanwhile, it also has an irrevocable effect on diseases.

The disease manifests or shows itself depending on *karma* and of course time (*kala*). Diseases that have a karmic origin are mentioned in the classics. Here are a few examples that illustrate the same. *Paapakarma samarambha* and *Purvakruta karma parinamakala* precipitates *Agantuja unmada*¹¹. In *udara, atisanchita doshas*¹² are due to *paapa karma* while *purvakrita karma* and *paapakarma* are also mentioned as a *hetu* in *kilasa*¹³. *Sahaja arshas* are said to occur due to the defect in the *beejabhaga* which is responsible for the formation of *guda* in the course of time. *Apachara* by the parents and *Purvakruta karma*¹⁴ are mentioned as the two main *karana* for the *bejabhaga dosha*. Unless and until the *karma* which is responsible for the disease is spent the disease will not be cured. *Ayurveda*, though explains in detail the karmic influences on health and illnesses also has given remedies for curing them. *Daiva vyapashraya chikitsa* is the treatment protocol mentioned in such conditions. *Bali, homa, upavasa*, etc. negates the effect of *karmaphala* to a certain extent. This is where *Jyotisha shastra* comes to the rescue.

CONCLUSION

Every individual has a unique physical, mental and spiritual constitution. The holistic approach of *Ayurveda* respects the spiritual dimension of the individual. “*Aatmanamevamanyeta Kartanam sukhadukhahyo-ho.*”- *Ayurveda* says a person himself is responsible

for happiness and miseries in his life and therefore alerts to choose the most righteous path. The so-called fate is created by us based on the choices we make, or we made, and their results await us whether we like it or not. Thus, proving we are the creators of our own destiny. Eventually, every soul is in search of liberation from the cycle of *karma*, and *Ayurveda* is itself a means to attain this liberation.

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