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Criminal behavior – Ayurvedic perspective

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ABSTRACT:

Crime is an intentional commission of an act usually deemed socially harmful or dangerous and specifically defined, prohibited, and punishable under criminal law. It is unquestionably one of the prevailing and worrying aspect in most of the societies. Criminal behaviour is often a difficult topic to discuss, as there are different variables that must be taken into account in order to truly define and obtain a thorough understanding of the concept. It is often a matter of debate whether the criminals are born bad or made bad. The born traits alone do not inevitably lead to crime and the circumstances do not make criminals of everyone; but together they create a population responsible for a large fraction of crimes. The intentions and attitude of indulging into criminal behaviour is dominated by the personality, attitude, physiology, learning, motivation, thinking and other cognitive factors. In Ayurveda the criminality can be explained under the concept of *Prajnaparadha*. In *Prajnaparadha* we do things without discriminating as to whether an action is favourable or harmful. Ayurveda have directly and indirectly discussed the concepts of criminal behaviour in various contexts like Anna Raksha Adhyaya, Dashavidha Papa karma etc. Hints about the evolutionary aspects of deviant behaviors are discussed in the context where *Charaka* discusses 3 types of *Satvas* – *Deva*, *Manusha* and *Pashu*. The born behavioral patterns are further explained in the context where *Saatvikadi prakrithi* is explained. *Chandogyopanishad* and *Bhagavath Geetha* also provides references regarding the role of *Ahara* and the behavioral patterns. *Ayurveda* also explains the psychopathological causation of crime under the context of *Unmada*. *Ayurveda* offers a number of practical and powerfully effective tools for balancing common disturbances of the mental and emotional realm. This paper makes a humble effort to discuss the different aspects of criminal behavior, the primary, secondary and tertiary preventive strategies and rehabilitation along with the parallel concepts in *Ayurveda*.

Keywords: Crime, born traits, *Satva*, *Prakrithi*, *Ahara*, prevention, rehabilitation

INTRODUCTION

Crime is defined as an offence which goes beyond the personal and into the public sphere breaking prohibitory

rules/ laws to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached and which requires the intervention of a public authority¹. It is an act which causes any maladjustment to



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a particular culture and a social concern and hampers the law-and-order situation². The intentions and attitude of indulging into criminal behaviour is dominated by the personality, attitude, physiology, learning, motivation, thinking and other cognitive factors². National crime records Bureau in the year 2019, registered a total of 51.5 lakh cognizable crimes comprising 32.2 lakh IPC crimes and 19.4 lakh Special and Local Law crimes nationwide³. Delhi was reported to have the highest crime rate of 1586.1 which was 4.1 times higher than the national average. Kerala was in the second place with a crime rate of 1287.7. Uttar Pradesh reported the highest incidence of violent crimes with a percentage of 15.2 of the total violent crimes in India³.

Crime Causation

Historically, Crime and criminal minds began to be studied a long way ago. It was in 1890 s that great interest as well as controversy was generated by the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso⁴. According to Lombroso criminals were simply born bad with certain physical characteristics or abnormalities “Atavistic characteristics”. He hypothesized that offenders were the products of an earlier stage of human evolution, a stage where more primitive humans and animals existed⁴. In 1949 William Sheldon put forward constitutional theory which tried to explain the personality with respect to the body type of the individual. He classified the body types into Ectomorphs, Mesomorphs and endomorphs⁵. In this, the Mesomorphs had a muscular body, and they were bold, adventurous and courageous and were said to be most commonly involved in criminal activities⁵.

Genetics and criminality shall also be explained on the basis of extra Y chromosome theory. Also known as Supermales, a high percentage of XYY individuals were found among antisocial or criminal types as compared to the normal individuals⁶. Further roots of genetics and criminality was explained with the help of MAOA gene located in the X chromosome. This gene is also known as warrior gene because of its link to aggression⁷. Studies shows that lowering of serotonin levels in the brain can trigger aggressive behavior⁸. Extremely low levels of stress hormone- cortisol were also found to be linked with aggressive behavior. Conversely, increased levels of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and norepinephrine also potentiate violent behavior⁸. Cultural studies also associate the incidences of criminal behavior with men and this difference is linked to increased levels of hormone testosterone which is abundant in males than in females⁸.

Criminal behavior is associated with structural and functional impairments of Prefrontal cortex which is responsible for in decision-making, attention, emotion regulation, impulse control, and moral reasoning⁸. The increased activity of the socioemotional system which is mainly controlled by amygdala also influences the criminal behavior⁸.

The psychological causation of criminal behavior can be explained on the basis of the three psychodynamic principles of Freud i.e., Id, ego and superego. We have many instinctual drives called the “id” which forces us to gratify all our needs and desires immediately. But, the ‘ego’ acknowledges and deal with reality ensuring that the demands of id are expressed only in socially acceptable ways⁹. The super ego is the moral part of the personality which forbids unacceptable behaviors and makes us feel guilty when we do something wrong. When the ego and superego fail to control the id, this can end up in behaviors which turn out to be both disruptive as well as socially unacceptable⁹. Criminality can further be explained on the basis of Albert Bandura’s theory of behavior modelling¹⁰ which states that we form our behaviors by observance of others. Individuals are not born with an innate ability to act violently. Violence and aggression are learned and modeled after three primary sources: (1) family interaction, (2) environmental experiences, and (3) the mass media¹⁰. Operant conditioning states that all behaviors are motivated and maintained by the types of reinforcements and punishments we receive in response to a particular behavior. A criminal act occurs in an environment in which in the past the actor was reinforced positively or otherwise, the punishments attached to such behaviors was not capable of controlling or preventing similar behavior in the future¹¹. Researches also shows that there is a modest to strong relationship between low intelligence and crime. People with low intelligence are prone to increased impulsivity, struggles at school, lack of social bonding, and lack of foresight, which are all linked to criminality¹². Society also plays a major role in the criminal behaviors. The various social factors that influence the criminal behavior are isolated lower classes in the society, lack of conventional social opportunities, racial and ethnic discrimination, lack of social norms and laws in a community, development of gangs and groups in a society, the peer group influences and the unequal distribution of wealth and power¹³.

Neurotic offenders are mostly driven by some unresolved and unconscious conflicts in their minds, which render their crimes a seemingly “senseless” character.

Kleptomania, fire setting, or various types of deviant sexual fantasies comes under neurotic offending. Psychotic offenders may be prone to the violence due to actively experiencing delusions or auditory hallucinations or long-standing paranoia¹⁵. Such offending is very common in disorders such as Schizophrenia, Mood disorders etc. Further deviant behaviors are also manifested in psychiatric conditions including Conduct disorders, oppositional defiant disorder, Intermittent explosive disorders etc¹⁶. Personality disorders have direct influences on the manifestation of Criminal tendencies. Criminal behaviors are seen in many of the personality disorders like Antisocial personality disorder, Paranoid personality disorder, narcissistic personality disorder and borderline personality disorder¹⁶.

Criminal Psychology – Ayurvedic Perspective

Ayurveda have directly and indirectly discussed the concepts of criminal behavior in different contexts. Direct references of criminal behavior are available in the chapter of *Anna Raksha Adhyaya* of Ashtanga Hridaya Sutrasthana which portrays even the minute behavioral changes exhibited by the person have poisoned such as *Shyava Suska Asyatha* (dry and discoloured face), *Vilaksho veekshate disha* (eccentric looks in all directions), *Sveda vepathuman* (sweating and tremors), *Trasata* (Tiredness), *Bheeta* (Frightened), *Skhalati* (Slips while walking), *Jrumbathe* (yawns frequently)¹⁷.

*Dasha vidha papas*¹⁸ are explained by Vagbhata which describes 10 criminal acts which are to be avoided by Kaya, Vak and Mana for a better life. The sins are *Himsa*, *Stheya*, *Anyathakama*, *Paishunya*, *Parushavachana*, *Anrutvachana*, *Sambhinna Aalapa*, *Vyapada*, *Abhidya*, and *Drukviparyaya*. *Himsa* is any act that inflicts any type of injury and torture leading to crimes like murder, domestic violence etc. *Stheya* refers to the acts of stealing, robbing, white collar and other economic offences¹⁸. *Anyathakama* is the unlawful sexual activities which lead to crimes like rape, unnatural sex, child abuse etc¹⁸. *Paishunya* is the act of highlighting other's fault which forms a nuisance to the society¹⁸. *Parusha vachana* is abusive or harsh speech which is intended to torture others¹⁸. *Anrutvachana* is any type of untruthful speech which is a characteristic behaviour of most of the criminals¹⁸. *Sambhinna Alapa* is any disputable speeches or quarrels with an intension of harming which may affect the personal or social relationships and result in offensive violence which poses threat to others¹⁸. *Abhidya* means jealousy due to which

one cannot tolerate good of others which leads to the disequilibrium in mind which ultimately result in violent crimes¹⁸.

In, Ayurveda the criminality can be explained under the concept of *Prajnaparadha*¹⁹. In *Prajnaparadha* we do things without discriminating as to whether an action is favourable or harmful to the body or mind. These actions may be *Kaayika*, *Vaachika* or *Maanasika*. The actions generated by *Prajnaparadha* aggravate the *Tridosha* and also stimulate the *Rajas* and *Tamo gunas*¹⁹.

The roots of criminal behaviours can further be explained on the basis of the famous Sloka in Bhagavath Geetha “*Dhyaayathe vishayaan pumsa Sangasthesu Upajaayathe....*”²⁰. This Sloka explains that excessive thoughts about anything will create Sanga in our manas which will increase our Kama or desire. If we are not able to full fill this desire, we feel anger or Krodha which will further lead to Sammoha or confusion. This makes us forget all the moral and ethical codes we have acquired from our past life and our intellect will get impaired in such a way that we act in socially unacceptable ways.

Ayurveda have also given hints about the evolutionary aspects of deviant behaviors. Charaka discusses 3 types of *Satvas* – *Deva*, *Manusha* and *Pashu*²¹. *Manusha satva* is predominantly *Rajasika* characterized by the *Roshamsha* or aggressive nature and *Pashu Satva* is dominated by *Tamasamsha* which is characterized by *Moha* or ignorance. Chakrapani elaborated that *the Roshamsha* along with the *mohamsha* is responsible for all the *Adharmas*²². The involvement of *Pashu sattva* gives us an idea about the chances of animal instincts in the genesis of criminality as is explained by Caesre Lombroso while explaining the Atavistic characteristics.

The born behavioral patterns are further explained in the context of *Saatvikadi prakrithi*²³. The context explains the persons with *Rajasika* constitution as characterized by features like reduced self-control, increased self-esteem, telling lies, increased desires etc. and those with *Taamasa prakrithi* as characterized by disbelief in vedas, practicing *adharmas*, *nirodha* of buddhi, ignorance etc²³.

Charaka again throws light into some patterns of criminal behaviours passed on through some characteristic behaviours of mother during pregnancy²⁴. He says that a woman who always thinks ill of others is supposed to give birth to a delinquent or an anti-social progeny and a woman who is habituated to stealing is supposed to give birth to a lazy child who is wicked and inept. A woman who consumes *Madya* regularly give birth to a child who is

ever-thirsty and fickle minded²⁴.

Dietary factors also play a major role when the behavioural patterns are concerned. Chandhyogyopanishad provides references which relate the *Ahara sudhi and Satva shuddhi*. He explains that the good dietary habits are always linked to a Soumya mana or calm mind. Bhagavath Geetha gives an idea about *Raajasika and Taamasika ahara*, the excessive indulgence of which can lead to aggression and ignorance²⁵.

The concepts of neurotic, psychotic offenders, offending related with other mental disorders, personality disorders etc. can be discussed under the context of Unmada²⁶. Charaka describes eight essential psychological domains which are negatively affected in various ways in all psychiatric disorders²⁶. Criminal behaviours can also be the end results of these psychopathological conditions. Such conditions should be identified at an early stage and managed accordingly.

PREVENTIVE ASPECTS

Preventive strategies of criminal behaviour involve mainly three stages – Primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary prevention deals with prevention of the factors like biological issues that may lead to a future criminal behaviour. The secondary prevention is aimed at detecting the individuals at risk of offending behaviour and mitigating the motivational factors by various methods. Tertiary prevention primarily focusses on intervention in the lives of known offenders and attempt to prevent them from reoffending²⁷.

Primary prevention

The primary prevention strategies should begin long way before the delivery of a child. Due care should be taken about the physical and mental health of mother during the prenatal period. In Ayurveda, measures for a better progeny should start from the preconception stage. Specific dietetic, behavioral and psychological regimen are advised to be followed by both the male and female partners which will support conception. In Ashtanga Hrdaya it is said that “ *Bali purushakaaro hi daivamapyativartate* “ which means that the powerful acts by the Purusha will outnumber even the *Daiva hitha*²⁸. The strategies done in the preconception stage are powerful enough that it can even change the inborn traits of deviant behaviour. Further it is told that a woman desirous of a child with excellent qualities should abstain from all forms of addictions as well as unhealthy dietary and lifestyle activities²⁹.

Secondary prevention

The secondary prevention strategies are mainly done at three domains – individual, family and environment. The children with low intelligence can be trained with various skill development programs that would foster the child’s critical and creative thinking, decision-making and sense of responsibility towards personal as well as society at large. Other individual problems like conduct disorders can be managed with various behavioral therapies like CBT along with psychiatric interventions if needed. The antisocial parents can be dealt with the correctional programs and in case of parental conflicts and poor parental supervision, parental counselling can be provided. Educational interventions focused on improving school performance and academically oriented behavior shall be implemented.

Ayurvedic strategies like Ashtanga Yoga, adaptation of lifestyle described in the form of *Sadvritta* etc. can also be wisely incorporated into the secondary prevention strategies. The persons at potential risk of criminal behavior can be suggested to stick on to more of a *Satvika* dietary style and should abstain from the *Prajnaparadhas*. *Manonigraha* is a state of mind which controls the sense from doing unlawful acts. It can be attained by controlling *Dharaneeya Vegas* of mind which includes greed, envy, hatred, jealousy, love, etc³⁰.

***Sadvritta*³¹ and *Achara Rasayana*³²**

Sadvritta refers to the codes of conduct to be included in our daily regimen. By following these, one can achieve *Indriya Vijaya* or control over the sense organs which is a very essential in the preventing the deviant behaviours. The individuals with criminal tendencies should be advised to strictly follow the entire codes of good conduct. These codes of conducts needs to be incorporated into the living situations of the persons prone to criminal behaviour in order to attain *Indriya Vijaya*. Hints about leading a truthful life and being friendly and compassionate to all the living beings are included in *Sadvritta*. It further put forwards the rules regarding the social conducts like how to start a conversation pleasantly, how to remain hospitable etc. Codes regarding the lawful sexual contact is also included in the *Sadvritta*. *Sadvritta* also advocates to keep the mind and *Indriyas* in control and it also gives clues regarding the decision making and problem-solving measures. The children can be trained to follow the good codes of conducts so that they become responsible and socially acceptable citizens.

*Achara rasayana*³² is another unique concept which can

be used in the prevention of criminal behaviors which includes moral, ethical and benevolent conduct, truth, nonviolence, personal and public cleanliness, mental and personal hygiene, devotion, compassion and a yogic lifestyle.

Tertiary prevention

This mainly involves the rehabilitation measures aimed at prevention of reoffending. In case of prisoners, a vast majority are found to re-offend within a relatively short time of being released from prisons³³. Punishment is an essential component in managing crime, but, by itself it does little to change offending behavior. In view of this, most of the prisons provides opportunities for the education of the prisoners along with facilities of library. They also provide psychological assistance including various behavioral therapies like CBT for the correction of their criminal tendencies. Modern day prisons also provide facility for relaxation procedures like yoga and meditation. Nowadays training of prisoners in various vocational skills in the Prison Institutions has received a lot of importance and the prisoners who are engaged in labor are paid a nominal wage based on their skills sets. They are also provided with recreational, cultural and spiritual activities for a better mental health³³.

Ayurvedic approaches of *Yukthivyapasraya*³⁴ (drug therapies and therapeutic procedures and diet modifications) and *Satvavajaya*³⁵ which warrants a physician's interference in the domains of *Cintya* (regulating the thought process), *Vicharya* (replacing the ideas) *Uhya* (channeling the presumptions), *Dheya* (by polishing the objective) and *Samkalpa* (proper guidance and advice for taking, right decisions) can also be incorporated. Yoga and meditation therapies can also be made use of in this regard. An expert team consisting of a specialist doctor, yoga instructor, pharmacist and a therapist may be employed in the prisons in order to address the psychological needs and to improve the quality of life of the prisoners. Facilities of medicines and mind relaxation techniques can be provided based on the condition.

CONCLUSION

Crime is one of the most prevailing and worrying aspects in any society. The biological traits channeled by psychological and social factors contribute to crime. Ayurveda put forwards various measures for development of socially acceptable behaviors. Corrections and rehabilitations contribute to changes in deviant behaviors in which Ayurvedic strategies can also be incorporated.

The topic is an area yet to be explored as far as Ayurveda is concerned.

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