

# Sin Analysed

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Let us try to understand what exactly is meant by sin - termed as *paap* in Sanskrit. The opposite of *paap* is called *punya*.

Let us appreciate the principle behind these two concepts. In Sanskrit the word *punya* is defined as *punati-iti punyam* - **that which purifies our mind is called *punya***. And therefore, the opposite, *paapam* would be that which pollutes the mind.

While reading, I came across a very interesting etymology of the word - *pa* means to protect. *Paap* is something which protects. What does *paap* protect? It protects or shelters our foolishness, our ignorance, our wrong notions and our negative tendencies. That is known as *paapam*. And the result of *paap* is nothing but sorrow.

Today, there is so much talk of atmospheric pollution, water pollution, air pollution, noise pollution. But very rarely do we speak of mind pollution. External pollution is nothing but the result of a polluted mind.

**So *paapam* is to be understood as that which 'pollutes' the mind and results in suffering.** Using this yardstick, we can observe which of our thoughts, feelings, speech, actions or reactions fall into the category of *paap*.

For example, suppose a person is allergic to nuts. The first thing that person does when any food is put in front of him is to enquire what are the ingredients. He is worried about its reaction on his body.

Similarly, you must start questioning: "What will be the effect on my mind if I entertain a particular thought?" If I feel hatred, dislike and negative emotions, I must ask myself about its impact on my mind? In the same way, we must examine the effect of our words, actions and reactions on the mind.

So *paapam* is not just a particular kind of action; it is **any thought, feeling, word, action or reaction that creates this kind of pollution in the mind and fosters ignorance and wrong notions.**

**Compromising our ideals is also a form of *paapam*.** We have a mental picture of an ideal life; but are we ready to make the necessary sacrifices to actualise it? Let us take the simple example of deciding to get up early in the morning. However, when the alarm rings, I say 'Not today; let me sleep a little more. From tomorrow I will definitely get up early!' If for the next seven days, I am not able to get up, on the eighth day, I tell myself, 'What is the need of getting up early anyway? What does it matter?' This compromise appears to be small but tends to become bigger and bigger until our whole life is filled with compromises. All the big payoffs, which we hear of, are nothing but compromises.

## **Sacrifice vs. Compromise**

There are two kinds of actions –sacrifice and compromise. In both, a person has to renounce something. In sacrifice, a man sacrifices the lower for the sake of a higher cause or ideal. On the other hand, in compromise, the higher is given up for something lower. Whenever we compromise, we become weaker and weaker. Our willpower and moral strength are undermined. That is called *paap*.

## **Many Shades of Meaning**

**Any act that is below human dignity can also be called *paapam*.** Stealing the property of another, injuring or killing another are acts considered below the dignity of a human being.

Human beings are highly evolved. Hence, the highly evolved must take care of the lesser evolved. Is that not so? In your own home when the elder child fights with the younger one over a toy, do you not say “You are a big brother, you must give that to the younger one.” So, as the more evolved, it is our responsibility to take care of those who are weaker than us - including birds, animals, trees, and plants. If we destroy them it is considered as *paap*. When we start viewing things in this light, we will realise the amount of *paap* that we commit every day!

**People think that results of *paap* and *punya* come in the future.** This is not correct. The moment you entertain a noble thought, a good thought, you immediately feel happy; you feel good about yourself. And the moment you entertain a wrong thought, you start feeling guilty. **This outcome at the mental level is immediate. The grosser, tangible result may come later on.**

So the concept of *paap* has many shades of meaning - anything which pollutes the mind, any situation in which compromises are made, and wherever we act below our dignity as human beings. All these fall into the category of *paap*.