REVIEW ON CONCEPT OF MEDHYA (BRAIN TONICS) IN AYURVEDA

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Abstract
Concept of Medhya is one of the unique concepts grounded in the Ayurvedic literature. The word Medhya refers to specific pharmacological activity of a herb, which is used to improve the efficiency of mental faculties, like grasping, memory, expression etc. Even though these dravyas (herbs) are told to be consumed as regular basis to keep the activities of the brain at fullest effectiveness still, some herbs can be used in diseases, where mental faculties are affected. Hence this article is an attempt to throw some light on the concept of Medhya with its application.

Keywords: Brain, Grasping, Medhya, Pharmacological activity.

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INTRODUCTION

The word medha is derived from the Sanskrit root, which means to meet or to come together or harmonize. Medha means, the knowledge Buddhi, Dhee which has power of retaining knowledge for very long period. To have proper correlation and understanding about the knowledge of the existing objects. Without medha, knowledge cannot be understood. Acharyas opines that means ability of discrimination of objects, further without medha, knowledge cannot be understood and it is defined as that which groups or retains knowledge. According to Dalhan. It is a powder, which retains the knowledge of text and also said that medha is very deep knowledge gained for the long period. According to Arunadatta Medha is equated to Buddhi, which means it is a faculty of Buddhi (Knowledge) [1]. Chakrapani opines that Medha is equated to Dhee, which means it is a type of Dhee having the power of retention of knowledge [2]. It is clear from Shabdakalpadruma that, medha is equivalent to Buddhi and Pragna, because Pragna and Medha are the two synonyms of Buddhi among other names like Mati, Chit, Dharana etc. [3]

CONCEPT OF MEDHA

When we look at the definition of ‘swastha’, Sushruta has stressed on three characteristics, which are relevant in the present context, they are prasannatma, prasannamana and prasanna indriya. According to Chakrapani, prasannatma indicates the vikararahita and absence of dukhas; these dukhas may be caused by vaisamya [10]. This explanation on one hand hints out to be interring relationship between the Shareera and other components of life. Whereas on the other hand it explains that components other than Shareera are also liable to be influenced by different abnormalities and as such it is absolutely necessary that apart from the body other three constituents should also be free from any imbalance or derangement.

Specific Measures

In Ayurveda various remedies have been described by the Acharyas to improve the mental ability. Acharya Charaka has mentioned four Medhya Rasayanas which are Mandukaparni, Yashtimadhu, Guduchi and Shankhapushpi. Although rasayana drugs acts both for physical and mental problem, Medhya rasayana is emphatically described for its high efficacy on mental disorders. In Kashyapa Samhita Achrya kashyapa also mentioned some ‘Lehas’ such as Kalyanaka Ghrita, Brahmi Ghrita, Panchagavya Ghrita and samvardhana lehya etc. Among these, Samvardhanalehya has been indicated for a Pangu, Muka and Jada child.
Acharya Sushruta has advocated four yogas to promote the Medha, Smruti, and general vigor of a child. They are as under,

1. Fine powder of Swarna with Ghrita, Vacha and Kushta.
2. Matsyakshi (Brahmi), Swarna, Vacha, Ghrita with Madhu
3. Sankapushpi, Ghrita, Swarna and Vacha with Madhu

Besides these, Acharya Sushruta opines that continuous practice for learning, following sayings of Acharyas also improves the Medha and Buddhi [12]. Besides the drug therapy, there are certain other methods to improve the Buddhi and Smruti have been described. One of them is Abhyasa which refers to a continuous practice. In the context of Smruti, the continuous process of learning helps in increasing the level of memory. Similarly the Samadhi and Yogasanas are very helpful in sharpening the memory and elevate the level of Buddhi. This is a very good method to improve the Buddhi and Smruti. Certain diets homogeneous to the medicine are also very helpful in the context of Mandabuddhi or Jadata.

**Relation between Tridoshas and Medha:**

**Vata:** Prana vayu is responsible for controlling the functions of Buddhi and Mana ‘buddhi citta indriya dhrik’, while udana vayu helps in recalling the past experiences [4].

**Pitta:** Function of Pitta is to promote medha, [5] but sadhaka pitta is mainly responsible for good medha, Buddhi and abhimana [6].

**Kapha:** Tarpaka and avalambaka kapha in their normal state confer the knowledge and intelligence. Kapha is also responsible for the best qualities of dhruti [7].

So that it is clear that Buddhi, Medha, and Pragna are the words used interchangeable.

**Relation between Medha and Food:** In Ayurvedic classics certain code of dietetics has been mentioned. How a person should eat, has been nicely explained in Ayurveda. The food should to be taken at specific time and time intervals, it must possess certain qualities and while taking the food certain methodology has to be followed. If one takes ahara in this described manner, the food undergoes proper digestion and in turn maintains the healthy state of mana, buddhi and medha.

**Sleep in relation with Medha:** Sleep not only plays an important role in repairing the breakdown of tissues but also helps in proper function of Jnanendriyas and medha or any other manasabhavas. In Charaka Samhita while describing the benefits of nidra, it is described that
sukha, dukha, pusti, karsya bala, abala, vrista, klibata, jnana and ajnana are dependent upon sleep.

[8]

**Role of Medha in health and diseases:** Since medha is related with manas and manas being an important constituent of the living being, medha also attains an important position. While narrating the “linga of purusha”, Charaka has pointed out that iccha, dvesa, sukha, dukha, prayatna, chesta, dhrti, buddhi, smruti and ahamkara are the indicators of purusa and they can be witnessed only in a living human being. [9]

**Line of treatment of Manorogas with special references to loss of memory:**
The treatment for mental diseases (Manasa roga) may be classified as follows.

1. **General line of treatment**
2. **Classical Panchakarma (Purifactory measures)**
3. **Shamana (Palliative treatments)**
4. **Swastha rakshana (Preventive measures)**
5. **Pathya (Wholesome regimen)**
6. **Apathya (Unwholesome regimen)**
7. **Rasayana Therapy**

1. **General line of management:** Vagbhatacharya mentions in Sutra sthana that Dhee (Intellect), Dhairya (Will power) and Atmadi vijnana (Self orientation) are all said to be the measures to have healthy mind [13].

2. **Classical Panchakarma:** In the manifestation of mental diseases the srotases are obstructed either partially or completely. To cure the diseases these channels should be cleaned. Further in order to achieve the maximum effect of shamana oushadha it is always preferred to do shodhan chikitsa before administration of shamana oushadha. In mental disorders Emesis (Vamana), Purgation (Virechana) and Nasal medication are employed in their sharp and strong form (Teekshna).Charaka Samhita advises intense internal oleation (snehana) in maximum dose of Purana ghrita (ghrita of 10 years old) and Prapurana ghrita (100 years old) [14]. They are a good brain tonics, causes purgation and wards of all types of evil spirit. It is mentioned that even the slight touch or smell of clarified butter aged up to a hundred years will relieve mental disease [15].

3. **Palliative Therapy:** After the classical Panchakarma therapy if the disease is not relieved completely, the following initiative techniques may be employed [16].
i) Behavioral treatment:
Tadana (Beating)
Tamogruha pravesha (Isolation in dark room)
Tarjana (Scalding)
Daana (Giving the patient according to the need)
Santvana (Consoling words)
Harshana (Cheering up)
Tershana (Shocking)
Bhaya (Frightening)
Vismaya (Astonishing)
Pradeha (Appling irritant to the body)
Abyanga (Oil Massage)
Vinasha kathana (Conveying bad news)

ii) Therapeutically Measures:
Nasya: (Inhalation)
Seka: (Irrigation)
Dhoopana: (Fumigation)
Anjana: (Collyrium)
Dhumapana: (Inhalation of smoke)

iii) Food and habits which increase intelligence (Medhya ahara vihara)

iv) Consoling words (Aashvasana)

4. Preventive measures:
Once relieved of mental diseases, the person should not be informed of his activities during illness. He should be permitted to rejoice with the objects of his own choice to facilitate the normalcy of his mind [17]. Sadvrutta paalana by every individual of the community, it contributes in prevention of mental illness. Apart from therapeutic measures following measures will help in increasing Buddhi and Medha.

Satata Adhyayana - Constant study.
Vaada - Interaction
Paratantra Avalokana - Referring to other allied subjects.
Tadvidya Sambhasha - Debate and seminars.
Acharya seva - Obedience to the teachers.

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The preventive measures can be subdivided into the following heads;

Before Conception

During Pregnancy

During Labour

During the Neonatal Period

**Before Conception:** The consanguineous marriage has been prohibited in Ayurveda, by both Charaka and Sushruta to prevent congenital anomalies which is also described by in modern sexology and biology. Acharya Bhela has clearly mentioned that to prevent the disease related to medha, the consanguineous marriage should be avoided. Before going for conception the acharyas have prescribed an extensive list of restrictions and rules for a woman may affect the child psychology. To have a healthy and intelligent progeny these restrictions should be followed strictly [18,19].

**During Pregnancy:** In the context of Garbhapoghatakab Bhavas, Acharya Charaka has advised to avoid various dietic regimens, habits and trauma. Otherwise these can lead to abortion or birth of a child with various psychological disorders. For example excessive consumption of alcohol by a pregnant woman may deliver an idiot whit poor memory or mentally impaired child. In the fourth month of the pregnancy, the foetal heart which is the seat of consciousness becomes prominent hence it expresses its desires through the mother. In this stage, mother is called as Dauhridi, whose wishes and desires if not honored may lead to various congenital abnormalities such as Kubja, Khanja and mental disorders like Jada. So, importance should be given to fulfill the desire of Dauhridi.

**During Labour:** During the second stage of labour, Sushruta has pointed out that if Asanna Prasava will not follow the instruction while bearing down the pain, it may lead to psychological abnormalities due to trauma over head.

**During the Neonatal Period:** Prevention of Mandabuddhi during the neonatal period is described in Ayurveda. In this respect two terms have been described i.e., Jatakarma and Jatamatra. The Jatakarma is a Samskara which should be performed after establishment of respirations in neonate. During this samskara, madhu, ghrita, swarna in unequal proportion with chanting vedic mantras are fed for promoting the medha and bala [20]. Sushruta and Vagbhata have advocated it before the bath, advising to provide it till the establishment of the breast feeding i.e., up to fourth day. So, the basic aim of this karma is to stimulate the intellectual ability of the child from the very neonatal period [21,22].
The other term, Jatamatra refers to the stage of just born infant and for protection of child from infection cleansing methods are adopted to establish the normal life. At the same time, Pranapratyagamana (resuscitation) in the form of physical stimuli, Mukha slesma shodhana etc. have been advocated. The aim of these methods is to provide Pranavayu in sufficient quantity to prevent the asphyxia, which is a common cause for mental sub-normality or death of the infant. Further the Acharyas have also described various other necessary methods to prevent the physical and mental disorders. They are Raksha karma, Dhupana karma etc [23,24]. Various dharana drugs have been mentioned to improve the Ayu, Medha and Smruti [25].

5. **Wholesome Regimen (Pathya):** Rice, wheat, green gram, milk & leafy vegetables [26].

6. **Unwholesome Regimen (Apathya):** Food substances that are incompatible contaminated, unhealthy and unaccustomed are prohibited. Excessive consumption of food is also unwholesome [27].

7. **Rasayana Therapy:** Literary the term Rasayana refers to the means of obtaining the optimum nourishment to the Rasadi Dhatus. Thus, the Rasayana is a specialized type of treatment which influencing on the Dhatus, Agni and Strotas of the body, leading to an overall improvement in the formation and maintenance of the living tissue also it helps in the prevention of aging, improving of resistance against diseases, bodily strength and process of improving mental faculties.

**CONCLUSION**

As the concept of Medhya is very complex and not much information is available in Ayurvedic literature about mode of action of these dravyas. This concept has to be understood with the help of modern research tools and use of Medhya dravyas has to be established, which can be good development in the science of Ayurveda.

**REFERENCES**


