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## COMPRESSIVE REVIEW ON MEDHA (COGNITIVE ABILITIES) AND ITS RELATION WITH DOSAS AND DHATUS

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### ABSTRACT:

In Ayurveda, "Medha" encompasses intellect, linked to the doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) the Sapta dhatu, Agni, Prakriti, Ahara and disease. Maintaining dosha balance, particularly Vata, supports mental clarity. Nourishing Meda through a balanced diet and herbs like Brahmi enhances cognitive function. Pitta influences intellect, while practices like meditation and yoga aid Medha. Digestive fire (Agni) is vital for nutrient transformation, crucial for Medha. Overall, Ayurveda emphasizes lifestyle, dietary choices, and herbal interventions to optimize Medha, promoting a holistic approach to cognitive well-being. In modern terms, cognitive functions encompass processes like learning, memory, and decision-making. Practices such as meditation, yoga, and dietary interventions with cognitive-supportive nutrients align with holistic approaches to enhance cognitive well-being. Recognizing the mind-body connection remains a key aspect, integrating Ayurvedic insights with evidence-based strategies for comprehensive cognitive health.

**KEYWORDS:** Medha, Budhhi, Dhriti, Smriti, majja, Manas

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**INTRODUCTION:**

The word 'Medha' is derived from the Samskrita root "Medhar Sangame" applying "Anu" suffix to "Medh" Dhatu i.e. to meet or to come together or harmonize, means where all the faculties converged.

**Nirukti (Derivation):** According to *Amarkosha* having proper correlation and understanding about the knowledge of the existing objects. Without *Medha*, knowledge cannot be understood.

**PARIBHASHA (Definition)**

- According to *Shabdakalpadrumam* *Medha* means one type of *Buddhi* which has the power of retaining the knowledge for a long period. Due to *Medha* a person will be able to obtain the knowledge of existing objects and hence person becomes learned.
- Brihaspativachyam* has mentioned the *Medha* as the types of *Buddhi*, which grasps or retains the knowledge.
- According to *Shabdārtha Chintamani Kosha* *medha* indicates three types of knowledge without which the people will become idiot.
- Chakrapani* on commentary of *Charaka Samhita* mentioned *Medha*<sup>1</sup> means it is a type of *Dhi* having the power of retention of knowledge.
- Acharya Dalhana*<sup>2</sup> has commented as the meaning of perception and retention power of knowledge of the text.

1. <i>Buddhi</i>	2. <i>Manisha</i>	3. <i>Mati</i>
4. <i>Pragya</i>	5. <i>Upalabdhi</i>	6. <i>Pratipat</i>
7. <i>Chetana</i>	8. <i>Gnyapti</i>	9. <i>Shemushi</i>
10. <i>Dhishana</i>	11. <i>Samvitti</i>	12. <i>Chit</i>
13. <i>Preksha</i>	14. <i>Dhi</i>	15. <i>Vignyana</i>
16. <i>Pratibha</i>	17. <i>Drashti</i>	18. <i>Smriti</i>

All these words are having different composition of letters and meanings from one another. But still they are used as a synonym in broad sense. In Ayurveda, *Dhi*, *Smriti*, *Buddhi* are used commonly. So, it is

- Hemadri* too has commented on the term *Medha*,<sup>3</sup> it is an unobstructed and uninterrupted perception and retention of the knowledge in all the aspects of an object.
- Arundutta* has mentioned<sup>4</sup> *Medha* means it is a faculty of *Buddhi*.
- In Monnier William's dictionary the *Medha* is understood by the meaning mental vigour or power, intelligence or prudence, wisdom, retention of knowledge for long period residue of which cannot be further expressed in proper time.

Practically the word 'Medha' is used to denote high intellect. The word 'Medhavi' is used for the person who is the knower of various *Shastras* (literature) and having *Pratyutpanna Mati*. Sometimes 'Medha' is also used for extraordinary recollection power. But according to Ayurveda, it shows just one phase of the memorizing process.

**Paryayas (Synonyms) of Medha:** From the Vedic era the word *Medha* is being used. Other words which bear almost similar meaning to it have also postulated in various classics. In *Aitareya Upanishada* *Medha* has been depicted as synonym of *Paramatma*. Here *Medha* means the ability to retain the experiences.

necessary to know these faculties also before explaining or understanding *Medha* in totality.

**Manifestation Of Medha:** In *Sharirasthana Adhyaya* 3, while describing the list of *Atmaja*

*Bhavas*, *Acharya Charaka* has clearly mentioned *Dharanam*, *Dhrti*, *Buddhi*, *Smriti*<sup>5</sup>. *Maharsi Sushruta* has clearly included '*Gnyana-Vignyana*' in the '*Atmaja Bhava*' too. Here commentator *Gangadhara*, while explaining the word *Dharana*, says 'It is that which is retained for a long time by *Manas*'. As discussed earlier, this is the description of *Medha*, thus *Medha* is the *Bhava* of *Atma* which is manifested during gestation.<sup>6</sup> While describing the monthly development of the foetus. *Acharya Sushruta* says that in the fifth month of the pregnancy, the foetus is endowed with mind and wakes up from the sleep of its subconscious existence. In the sixth month cognition (*Buddhi*) comes in solving this view it can be understand like this. In the process of foetal development *Buddhi* doesn't evolve but its manifestation occurs.

**Function of Medha:** To give decision by looking at the *Karya - Karana bhava* or to decide acceptance or non-acceptance of a subject is the function of *Buddhi*. This function is also called as *Vyavasaya*. The fifth and final stage for production of *Buddhi* (knowledge) is accomplished by *Manas*(mind). Regarding this function *Chakrapani* comments that after the *Uha* and *Vicara*; '*Adhyavasaya*' takes place, which is either a stage of *Buddhi* or a function of *Buddhi*. Further, *Chakrapani* has clarified '*Adhyavasaya*' as a deciduous stage, where an individual indulges in accepting or condemning an idea decision or object. If it seems useful, the decision will be in favour of getting contracted with it while in case it appears useless, disfavour of the attachment shall occur.

**Site Of Medha**<sup>7</sup>: There is no direct evidence found regarding the site of *Medha* but indirect references helps to predict the site of it. *Sadhaka Pitta* is responsible for the manifestation of the *Medha* and it is situated in the *Hridaya* (heart) so it can be said that

heart is the seat of *Medha* also. *Acharya Bhela*<sup>8</sup> and *Charaka* have considered *Hridaya* (heart) as the seat of *Buddhi* and *Chitta* (Mind). *Medha* is the faculty of *Buddhi*, so seat of *Buddhi* should be considered as the seat of *Medha* too.

#### **Relation Of Medha to Dosas and Dhatus:**

According to *Ayurveda Tridosha* and *Pancamahabhuta* are the basic constituents of the body. The *Tridosas* namely *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are not merely groups of symptoms, but they represent definite biological process that take place inside the body hence may be described as ingoing organised protoplasmic nutrient material in the circulation. These three are called *Dosha* as they are susceptible to vitiation and they are known as *Dhatus* as they support the body in their state of equilibrium. In balanced state they are claimed to influence *Medha* alternatively in the following manner.

#### **Doshas:**

**1. Vata:** *Vata* is not directly concerned with *Medha* but in the whole process of perception up to recall it plays a major role. In general function of *Vata*, *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned that it coordinates all the sense faculties and helps in enjoyment of their objects. Thus, it helps in the process of perception. Among the five types of *Vata*, *Prana* is responsible for controlling the functions of *Buddhi* and *Manas*, while *Udana* helps in recalling the past experiences.<sup>9,10</sup>

**2. Pitta:** Promotion of *Medha* is the generalized function of normal *Pitta* but *Sadhaka Pitta* is mainly responsible for good *Medha*, *Buddhi* and *Abhimana*. *Adhamalla* on the commentary of *Sharangadhara Samhita* has opined that the *Pitta* which remains in *Hridaya* means *Sadhaka Pitta* is responsible for *Medha* and *Pragnya*. This is done because *Pitta* is *Agni Mahabhuta* dominant and *Agni Mahabhuta* is formed by *Sattva* and *Raja Mahagunas*. *Sattva* is responsible for cognition while *Rajas* is stimulator of any

activity. Due to opposite properties, it dispels the *Kapha* and *Tama* which are obstructing in nature of the *Hridaya* and thus enables the *Manasa* to perceive the things. While *Acharya Bhela* has classified *Alocaka Pitta* in *Chakshu vaishesika* and *Buddhi Vaisheshika*. *Buddhi Vaishesika* is situated between the two brows in a *Sringataka*. It grasps the knowledge after knowing the knowledge and the knowable. It retains what is grasped. It illustrates well and repeats by what is retained.<sup>11,12</sup>

**3. Kapha:** Proper function of *Buddhi* depends on the normal state of *Kapha*. *Kapha* due to its *Snigdha* and *Sthira Guna* helps to retain the grasped knowledge for a long period. Intellect which is steady and capable of doing everything is due to *Kapha*. *Tarpaka* and *Avalambaka Kapha* in their normal state confer the knowledge and intelligence. *Kapha* is also responsible for the best qualities of *Dhriti* which controls the unsteadiness of mind.<sup>13</sup>

**Dhatu:** *Acharya Charaka* has described examination of *Sara* in tenfold examination. Person should be examined with reference to *Sara* or the excellence of their *Dhatu*s. Among the seven *Dhatu*s the best qualities of *Rasa* (*Twak*), *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Majja* and *Oja Dhatu* improves the functions of *Medha*. *Rasa Dhatu* nourishes the *Buddhi* whereas the best quality of *Rakta* is responsible for the promotion of the *Medha* and *Mansvita*. So, it facilitates the proper perception. *Mamsa Sarata* indicates strong *Dhriti* and knowledge likewise the *Majja* of best quality stated to strengthen the learning and knowledge.<sup>14</sup> *Oja* is the essence of all *Dhatu*s. *Ojas* has direct relationship with all the faculties of *Buddhi*, as it is held responsible for their nourishment. It confers the External and Internal organs for their own actions to be performed. External organs mean *Karmendriyas* while Internal possessed *Mana*, *Buddhi* etc.<sup>15</sup> In a nutshell it can be said that the best qualities of *Prana* and *Udana Vayu*, *Sadhaka Pitta*, *Tarpaka* and

*Avalambaka Kapha*, *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Majja* and *Ojas* are responsible for the normal functioning and best qualities of *Medha*. A vitiation of any of these factors will reflect upon the faculties of *Medha*.

**Relation Between Sharira Prakriti and Medha:** In Ayurveda, the term '*Prakriti*' has been used in the sense of personality. The words *Saririka prakriti*, *Deha-prakriti*, *Kaya-prakriti* or *Doshaja prakriti* are used in the same sense and denote the physical typology based on the principle of *Tridosha* of Ayurveda. These are the *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. While *Mānasika prakriti* is known as *Trigunatmaka* typology as it is based on the fundamental postules of three constituents of *Manas*. These are *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. It is a reality that human organism behaves in a wholesome complex manner and cannot be isolated physical and psychological factors of *Prakriti* on different and independent substratum and so these two biases are just based on the predominance and specification of fields otherwise they are immediately related.

**Vata Prakriti** – In the characteristics of *Vata Prakriti* by its *Amshamsha Acharya Charaka* has mentioned that *Vata Prakriti* people due to the *Shighra Guna* of *Vata* seems quick in understanding (grasping) but weak in recalling things means they have good short-term memory but poor long-term memory. While *Acharya Sushruta* has said that they have lack of patience and less discriminative power. According to *Acharya Vagbhata* they are unsteady in respect of *Dhriti*, *Smriti*, *Buddhi* and movement.<sup>16,17,18</sup>

**Pitta Prakriti**– According to *Acharya Sushruta* *Pitta Prakriti* person is highly intelligent, clever and loves to monopolise the conversation. *Acharya Vagbhata* has mentioned the same thing.<sup>19,20</sup>

**Kapha Prakriti**– *Kapha Prakriti* person is endowed with self-control and having strong faith in *Shastras*. He is intelligent, taking more

time to grasp any subject but after that possessed with good memory.<sup>21,22</sup>

**Agni And Medha:** In living beings, the *Agni* is one among the twelve *Pranas*. It is the key factor for any kind of transformation occurs in the environment as well as in the body. *Agni* works on ingested *Ahara* and converts it into *Ahara rasa* which is the nutrient of whole body. *Ayu* (longevity), *Upachaya* (anabolic activities), *Varna* (complexion), *Bala* (strength), *Swasthya* (health), *Utsaha* (enthusiasm), *Tejas* (spirit), *Prabha* (splendour), *Ojas* (essence of *Dhatu*) all these factors are depended on *Agni*.<sup>23</sup> *Pachaka Pitta* is said to be the seat of *Agni*. It controls the rest of the *Pittas* to perform their action. *Sadhaka Pitta* also gets nourishment from it. Balanced state of *Dhatwagni* provides the proper nourishment to all *Dhatu*s. Healthy state of *Dhatu* ultimately represents good quality of *Medha* as seen before.<sup>24</sup>

**Relation Between Medha and Ahara<sup>25,26</sup>:** The role of food for healthy body and mind has been mentioned for the time immemorial. From the *Upanisada* era lots of references are available regarding the food and its impact on mind. In Ayurvedic *Samhitas* certain codes and conducts for dietetics has been described vividly. Food sustains the life of living beings. All living beings in the universe require food. All the factors for the maintenance of positive health, food taken in proper quantity occupies the most important position. For that purpose, *Acharya Charaka* has given a separate chapter of quantitative dietetics. Quantity and quality of food, digestion power, indicated foods, contra indicated foods, proper time of food all these necessitating special study are mentioned in classics. This wholesome diet regimen should be followed to remain healthy. *Medha* is also conditioned by *Ahara*.

### Relation Of Vaya (Age) With Medha:

Ayurvedists have divided the life span into three parts. 1. *Bala* 2. *Madhya* and 3. *Jirna*.<sup>27</sup>

*Bala Vaya* covers the age upto 30 and is subdivided into two parts. The initial one is from 1 to 16 years and later stage is from 16 to 30 years. *Madhyavastha* covers the age upto 60 years. *Sushruta* sub-divides it into 4 parts viz. *vridhhi* (twenty years), *Yauvana* (upto thirty years), *Sampurnata* (forty years) and *Hani* (after forty years). *Jirnavastha* starts after 60 upto 100 years. *Medha*, *Buddhi* and *Smriti* vary according to *Vaya*. *Acharya Charaka* says that in *Madhyavastha* *Medha* (retention), *Buddhi* (discrimination) etc. psychic faculties remains balanced, because it is a stage of predominance of *Pitta Dosa* which is mainly responsible for *Medha*. Due to well determined psychic disposition a person is having good discriminative power. So, it helps to understand the subject better and initiates retention for a long time. Above qualities begin to decline as the elements of the body disintegrate in *Jirnavastha*. Psyche becomes unstable due to predominant *Vata*. So it becomes difficult to discriminate the thing properly hence retention and recollection of new experiences decrease with increasing age. In *Balyavastha* there is good grasping power and retention also but due to undetermined psychic disposition there is lack of reasoning and logic at the level of *Buddha*

**Pariksha Of Medha;** In Ayurvedic *Samhitas* only *Charaka Samhita* has postulated the *Pariksha* of *Medha*.<sup>28</sup> In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Vimanasthana*, while describing *Anumanagamy Bhavas* (factors to be observed by inference) *Acharya Charaka* has mentioned *Medha* as a psychological faculty different from *Buddhi* and *Smriti*. Here *Charaka* has enumerated a separate examination for *Smriti*, *Dhriti*, *Sangnya*, *Vigyana*, and *Medha*. Specifically, *Maharsi* states that the *Smriti* should be observed by

the inference of *Smarana Shakti* and *Medha* by *Grahana Shakti*. Here, the whole process of *Smriti* should be inferred. Individual's capacity to hold new information is examined. Both the commentators of *Charaka Samhita*, *Chakrapani* and *Gangadhara* have accepted *Grahana* as *Dharana Shakti* (retention power). *Chakrapani* clearly defines it as the retention power of texts as stated by *Dalhana* also, while *Gangadhara* opines *Grahana Shakti* that is the retention ability of *Manas*. As per these expert commentators like *Dalhana*, *Chakrapani*, *Gangadhara Granthavadharana Shakti* is *Medha* hence it should be inferred by sentence – chapter- sthana of the classics. In short, all the main commentators consider it as *Avadharana Shakti*.

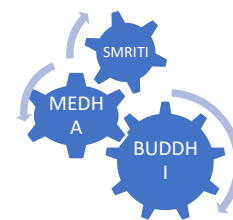
#### Role Of Medha in Health and Disease:

*Acharya Charaka* stated that a person whose *Dhi* (intellect), *Dhriti* (patience) and *Smriti* (memory) are impaired, subjects himself to intellectual blasphemy by virtue of his bad action. It is called *Pragyaparadha* which further aggravates all the *Doshas*. In *Charaka Samhita Sharirasthana*, it is mentioned that if something *Nitya* (eternal) is viewed as *Anitya* (ephemeral) and something *Ahita* (harmful) as *Hita* (useful) and vice versa, it is indicative of the impairment of intellect (*Buddhi*). *Yogindranath Sen* in his *Carakopskara* commentary opines *Visama Abhiniveśa* as misinterpretation; on the other hand, *Chakrapani* stated it as incorrect discrimination by giving the '*Buddhi*' prime consideration. *Manasa Vikaras* like *Irsa*, *Shoka*, *Bhaya*, *Krodha*, *Mana*, *Dvesha* etc. are said to be caused by *Pragnyaparadha*. Thus, *Pragnyaparadha* has been considered as the causative factor for both *Sharirika* and *Manasika Vikaras*. So, to prevent such conditions a good kind of *Medha*, *Smriti* is essential for everyone.<sup>29</sup> The wise are endowed with knowledge, intelligence, memory, skill, observance of wholesome

regimen, correctness of speech, tranquillity and patience. Ignorant individuals being shrouded with illusion and *Rajas* are deprived or those virtues and therefore, succumb to various types of psychosomatic diseases. When *Manasa* becomes dominate by *Sattva guna* a person's *Medha* or *Buddhi* will be very clear, he will be capable of thinking on proper lines. Certain psychological disorders like depression, self-abusive will be absent to the person having good *Medha* or *Buddhi*. So, all these references directly or indirectly establish a relationship between the health and *Medha*.

#### DISCUSSION:

#### Inter Relationship of Buddhi, Medha and Smriti



After critical examination of *Buddhi*, *Medha* and *Smriti* it could be pointed out that these are the steps of same process. One is incomplete without the rest. The process of recollection takes place properly only and only after the *Buddhi*, *Medha* and *Smriti* unites. This could be understood well by comparing the cognition process with computer. In this computerized world everybody is familiar with the utility and need of computer. The important data is first entered, stored and after some days, months or even after many years also it can be recollected just as it was stored. Human brain is also a one kind of computer. Only difference is that computer cannot think itself because it is *Achetana*, while human being is *Chetana* (conscious) with the presence of *Atma* (soul) and all the actions performed by the conjugation of *Manas*. In computers, data are first inputted externally then it interprets

this data and converts it into binary digits 0 and 1 (computer language) for storage. Then it stores this data on Hard disk, CDs, Pen drives etc. storage devices. Then by time, as per the need this stored data gets recollected again by converting it in to general language. Here computer is able to put forward only those facts which has been entered and safely stored. Almost similar process of Memory conducts by human brain. For the cognition sense objects conjoins with senses and senses with *Manas*. *Buddhi vyapara* (discrimination) follows just after it. *Buddhi* works on it by reasoning and logic and reacts accordingly. If there is no action to be taken then the gained knowledge gets stored for further use. Retention of cognition takes place under the area of *Medha* (storage device). When any stimulant comes against, those stored experience comes in mind. Recollection happens with the help of *Smriti*. Thus, in humans also if the knowledge or experiences are not encoded and retained properly then all the efforts of recalling would be in vain. So, *Smriti* needs systematic interpretation and retention. In this way *Smriti* produces when encoding, retention and recollection of the experiences unites. In which *Buddhi* helps in encoding, *Medha* in retention and *Smriti* facilitates recollection. In short encoding is must in *Smriti*, only those subjects could be recalled which has been encoded before. The same way if retained knowledge is not recollected it is of no use. After this description, it can be traced out that though *Buddhi*, *Medha* and *Smriti* are having different meanings and functions they cannot work independently. But they work together and seem similar most of the times.

Above discussion shows that *Medha* is a broad term which comprises of the mental faculties like *Buddhi* and *Smriti* also, which is again interrelated with each other and accordingly the *Medha* can be subdivided into the following faculties.

- 1) *Viveka Shakti* (power of discrimination)
- 2) *Grahana Shakti* (power of grasping)
- 3) *Dharana śakti* (power of retention)
- 4) *Smarana Shakti* (power of recollection)

Moreover, individual difference in the registration or encoding process also plays a major role in the retention power. So, it can be said that registration phase is more important than the retention power. Because only those subjects will retain which has been gone through the encoding process.

It is mere impossible to recall the knowledge which has not been retain. But it is not necessary that the knowledge which has not been recalled is not passed through the retention process. Because many times person seems unable to recall such things on time which he could recall at any time before. The same thing comes into mind effortlessly after the person gets tired by recalling it.

In spite of fundamental similarities in the mankind as a whole, differentiation find from individual to individual. The factors of this differentiation are multifarious and they together exert effects on the constitutional, temperamental, psychological and spiritual make up of each individual. It reflects the inner dynamical characteristic of an individual which is a portrait of his important dimensions of behaviour.

#### CONCLUSION:

*Medha* refers to cognitive abilities within an Ayurvedic framework, the balance of dosas and the nourishment of dhatus may play a role in supporting optimal cognitive function. For instance, an imbalance in dosas might lead to mental disturbances, and the health of dhatus, including the brain tissue (*Majja dhatu*), could be linked to cognitive well-being.

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