AN OVERVIEW ON MEDHYA RASAYANA MENTIONED IN CHARAK SAMHITA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is derived from the Sanskrit language meaning “The science of life”. It is the goal of Ayurveda to understand the unique nature of patient and disease. It is also considered as a science of stress reduction. One fact of living a harmonious life of low stress is using the senses properly and leading a healthy lifestyle. Rasayanas, mentioned in Ayurveda helps in attaining longevity, memory, intelligence, health, youthfulness, excellence of luster, complexion and voice, optimum development of physique and sense organs. A particular class of rasayana that is described in ayurveda known as medhya rasayana has beneficial effect on body as well as on mind. This class of rasayana has memory and intellect enhancing properties. They improve the dhi (intellect), dhriti (Retention power) and smriti (memory) of the mind. Although all the Rasayana drugs are having these properties but special four drugs have been mentioned in improving the higher mental functions. They are Mandukaparni, Yasthimadu, Guduchi, Shankpushpi.

Keywords: Medhya Rasayana, Ayurveda, Mental Health, Medha.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda represents an ancient system of traditional Medicine prevalent in India about 5000 years ago, it is considered as the upaveda of atharvaveda, being the oldest recorded wisdom on earth. Ayurveda on one hand emphasizes on maintenance of health whereas on the other hand have very specific and sound fundamental principles for curing the ailments. Keeping in view the different areas of expertise required to manage different aspects of health and disease. Ayurveda has eight specialized branches. Among the eight specialties of Ayurveda, Rasayana is a branch exclusively devoted to nutrition, immunology, rejuvenation and geriatrics. According, to acharyacharak, equilibrium of agni, dhatu and srotas are essential, factors for maintaining normal strength, colour and longevity of the body and
Rasayanas helps to achieve that. The aim of rasayanachikitsa is to nourish body, lymph, flesh, adipose tissue and semen. This prevents the individual from chronic degenerative diseases. Rasayanas could be age specific as they promote nutrition relevant to the natural bio losses occurring at different phases of life span. All Rasayanas are nutrition promoters in general but there are certain organs and tissue specific Rasavanos viz. Medhya Rasayana for brain, Hridya Rasayana for heart, Cakusya Rasayana for eyes and so on. Those specific to brain tissues called Medhya Rasayana, are claimed to promote cognitive functions of the brain and helps in regeneration of neural tissues besides producing anti-stress and memory enhancing effect and retard brain ageing. Childhood is the period in which all body tissues or Dhatus are immature and are in the process of maturation i.e. growth & development, so giving Medhya Rasayana in this age is very effective to increase I.Q. of children.

RASAYANA:-
Rasayanachikitsa boost the ojus (vital force of life) and immune system. It helps a person to maintain good health, to establish impaired physical or mental health. It is a nutritional transportation in the body. In this fast moving world our lifestyle has become very hectic, stress is an inescapable part of our personal as well as professional life. Due to this physical and mental pressure one gets indulge into bad habits like alcohol, smoking and drugs dietary habits have become faulty as many people are into the habit of fast food. Timings of eating have become irregular due to change in the duties and priorities. All these factors are responsible for vitiation of doshas and agni thus causing improper nutrition to the tissues, low immunity, fatigue, debility, inability to adapt to stress and premature aging, and all these problems can be cured by using rasayana therapy, rasayana foods, herbs and regimes helps to re-establish the balance. Apart from prashastadhautuutapatti, rasayana is also responsible for smriti especially the class of rasayana known as medhyarasayana. It has memory and intellect enhancing property.

MEDHA AND MEDHYA RASAYANA:-
Medhyarasayana is derived from the Sanskrit words “Medhya” meaning intellect or cognition and “Rasayana” meaning rejuvenation. Cognitive defects that present with many of neuropsychiatric conditions and/or alone as developmental defects demand the use of nootropics to boost cognitive abilities. Recently there is a tremendous urge to explore medicinal plants globally for improving cognitive function owing to their less adverse effects. “Medha” means intellect or retention. It means to have proper co-relation and understanding about the knowledge of the existing objects and the medhyarasayanas used in ayurveda helps in proper working of the medha, so that one can leads a healthy life.

“Medhya Rasayanas” are the group a medicinal plants described in Ayurveda with multi benefits especially to improve memory and intellect by its prabhava (specific action). These plants are used both in herbal and conventional medicine and offer benefits that pharmaceutical drugs lack. Neurological and psychiatric disorders are generally associated with loss of memory, cognitive defects, impaired mental function etc. Description of
medhyarasayana found in samhitas indicates special utility of these types of rasayanas. Apart from rasayans in general, “MedhyaRasayana” drugs play an essential role in the treatment of psychiatric and psychosomatic disorders. The mode of this therapy involves the individual to attain sedation, calmness, tranquility or a stimulation of activities of brain. Medhya rasayana drugs are used for prevention and treatment of mental disorder of all age groups. These drugs promote the intellects (Dhi), retention power (Dhriti), memory (smriti). In fact they produce neuronutrient effect by improving cerebral metabolism. “MedhyaRasayana” drugs are known to have specific effect on mental performance by promoting the functions of “Buddhi” and “Manas” by correcting the disturbances of “Rajas” and disturbed “Tamas”. This helps the mentally disturbed patients to get relieve from stress, anxiety and depression. There are number of drugs in ayurveda that are known for their effects on brain but Acharya charak has mentioned a group of 4 drugs under the category of medhyarasayana, there drugs can be used individually or in combinations for the improvement of mental functions. These drugs are:-

1. Mandukaparni
2. Yasthimadhu
3. Guduchi
4. Shankhpushpi

1. MANDUKAPARNI:-
The Botanical name is centellaasiatica of the apiaceae family. It is also known as Indian pennywort, brahmannaduki, Mandukaparni, Mnduki. It is found throughout India on moist soil, especially along bunds and canals. The plant of Mandukaparni has a slender heraceous creeping perennial with rooted nodes and long internodes leaves have elongated petioles and sheathing leaf bases, broadly cordate, reniform, crenate or sinuate, toothed, flowers, are pink, almost sessile, 3-4 in fascicled umbels, fruits laterally compressed with two mericarps having 7-9 sub similar ridges. Mandukaparni is described in Tikta Skandh, prajastapana and vayasthapana mahakashaya of charak samhita and tikta varga of shusruta samhita. Dosha karma is kapha pitta shamak. Fresh whole plant juice is used for therapeutic purposes as medhya (cognitive enhancer). The plant is bitter, acrid, sweet, cooling, soporific, cardio tonic, nerve tonic. Centella asiatica has large amounts of pentacyclic triterpenoids including asiaticoside brahmoside, asiatic acid. Other constituents include centellose, centelloside, and madecassoside. The significance of cetella asiatica as a neuroprotective agent have already been used traditionally since decades in ayurvedic medicine. Various evidences have reported its neuroprotective potential by different modes of action such as inhibition, prevention of amyloid plaque formation, alzheimers disease, dopamind neurotoxicity in alzheimers disease, Dopamine neurotoxicity in parkinsons diseases and decreasing oxidative stress. It has a neuroprotectives brain growth promoters inhibits the memory impairment induced by scopolamine through the inhibition of Ach E.

2. YASTIMADHU
The botanical name is glycirhiza glabra of the umbellifera family. It is also known as Yas-
timadhuk, Klitaka, Jetimad, Mulvathi, Madhukah. English name is Liquorice. This plant is described in Jivaniya, Sandhaniya, Varna, Sonitasthapana, Kandughna, Chardinigrahana, Snehopaga, Vamanopaga, Muthvirajaniya Mahakasaya of Charak samhita and Kakolyadi, sarivadi, anjanadi, brhatyadi, utpaladigan of Shusruta samhita. It is a tall perennial under-shrub about 1m high, leaves compound, leaflets 4-7 pairs; flowers violet in racemes, pods, oblong to linear, flattened, deers reniform, fine powder of dried root is used internally with milk for therapeutic purpose as Medhya. Glycyrrhiza glabra is an efficient brain tonic; it increases the circulation the CNS system and balances the sugar levels in the blood. Active ingredients are glycyrrhizine, flavonones, isoflavones, glycyrrhetenic acid, six phenolic compounds. Multidimensional activities of yastimadhumay be attributed to glycyrrhizine and flavonones. Liquorice has significant action on memory enhancing activity in dementia. The roots are sweet, refrigerant, emetic, tonic, diuretic, demulcent, mild laxative, aphrodisiac, trichogenus, expectorant; they are useful in hyperdipsia, cough, bronchitis, urelcosis, and vitiated condition of vata.

3. GUDUCHI
The botanical name of guduchi is Tinospora cordifolia of Menispermaeae family. It is also known as gulancha tinospora in English, Guduchi, Amrita in Sanskrit. This plant has a large extensively spreading glabrous, perennial deciduous twiner with succulent stems and paperly bark, leaves simple, alternate, cordate, glabrous, 7-9 nerved, flowers yellow in clusters, female flowers usually solitary, fruits drups, red when ripe. The surface of the stem appears to be closely studded with warty tubercles and the surface skin is longitudinally fissured. On removal of the surface skin the dark greenish mucilaginous stem is seen. This plant is described in vayasaasthapana, dahaprashama, trishnanigraha, stanyasdha triptighna, mahakasaya of charak samhita and guducyadi, patoladi, raghvadadi, kakolyadi, vallipanchamula of Shusrutas amhita. Dosha karma is tri-doshashamak. Juice of whole plant is used therapeutically as “Medhya Rasayana” it is also used in the form of decoction, powder and satwa (Starch extract of stem). Its root is known for its anti stress, antileprotic and anti malarial activities. It is a rich source of trace elements (zinc and copper) which act as antioxidants and protects cells from the damaging effects of oxygen radicals generated during immune activation. Guduchi have alkaloids, diterpenoid lactones, glycosides, sesquiterpenoid, phenolics polysaccharides, and aliphatic compounds. Tinosporacordifolias has been claimed to possess learning and memory enhancing and anti-stress activity. It enhances the cognition in normal and cognition defects. Mechanism of cognitive enhancement is by immunostimulation and increasing the synthesis of acetylcholine, this supplementation of choline enhance the cognition.

4. SHANKHAPUSHPI
The botanical name is convolvulus pleuricaulis. It is a perennial prostrate or sub erect spreading hairy herb. Found throughout India. The synonyms are ksheerpush-
Dosha karma is vata-pitta shamak. Fine pasta of whole plant is highly used as medhya (intellect promoter). Its chemical constitution has microphylic acid, shankhapushpin, kaempferol-3-glucoside, 3,4dihydroxycinnamic acid, sitosterols. It has a neuroprotective and intellect promoting activity implicated to free radical scavenging and antioxidant property. BR-16A (Mentat), a poly herbal combination containing shankhpushpi significantly reversed the social isolation in pentobarbitone induced sleep, increased total motor activity and stress induced antinociception in experimental mode. Ayushman-8 (Containing shankhpushpi, brahmi & vacha) reported to be effective on mental retardation. Shankhpushpi compound containing shankhpushpi, sarpagandha and gokshura in equal quantities is seems to be very effective in chittodvega (anxiety). Herbalists believe that shankhpushpi calms the nerves by regulating the body’s production of the stress hormones, adrenaline and cortisol. Shankhpushpi enhances memory function due to its antioxidant and acetylcholinesterase inhibitory properties. It is found to be effective in anxiety, neurosis and used in cerebral abnormalities, insomnia & serve as wonderful nervine tonic and memory enhancer. This drug is also known for its action on boosting memory and improving intellect and beneficial for brain disorders like epilepsy.

**CONCLUSION**

In spite of advancements in modern medicine today, it is very unfortunate that the success is very limited in context with neurological and psychiatric disorders. So, the need to explore medicinal plants globally for improving cognitive functions owing to their less adverse effects is must today so as to overcome the cognitive diseases. Medhya rasayana drugs plays and essential role in the treatment of psychiatric and psychosomatic diseases. Majority of MedhyaRasayana drugs possess varied properties. Medhya function is related with Mana, and due to Nadi-sansthan is the Visistha Adisthana of presence of Mana, this Medhya karma is related with Nadisansathan. Nadisansthan are connected with brain that’s why the Medhya dravya are also known as brain tonic. The medhya karma is considered as Prabhava jayna because some medhya dravya are sita vilya, madhura rasa and madhur vipaka e.g. Yastimadhu; and some are tikta rasa and usna virya). These medhya dravya have more medya karma present rather than a samanya djavya, so medhya karma is prabhava janya. Grahan shakti (power of acquisition), Dharan shakti (power of retention) and Smriti (power of recollection) all three are included in Medha. Pitta is ashu and tikshna so it is helpful in vishaya graham and Smriti, that’s why Medha is included in prakrit karma of Pitta. Vata is also necessary for association of ideas in the process of smriti. Kapha provides Dhriti (Dharan) and stability that’s why Sthirita and Dhriti are included in prakrit karma of Kapha. Due to all these reasons the usna virya and sita virya dravya should be medhya. But usna virya dravya mainly for vishaya graham and Smriti rather than sita virya for dharan shakti. Mostly the above said herbs act on the basis of antioxidant, adaptogenic or essential trace elements present in them. Their activity on
modulation of biological axis and neurotransmitters requires further investigation.

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