

## ***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 lusture, 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 exper-

tise 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 *Rasayanas* 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 tissue or *Dhatu*s 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 *prashastadhatuutapatti*, *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 *Centella asiatica* of the *Apiaceae* family. It is also known as Indian pennywort, *brahmamanduki*, *Mandukaparni*, *Mnduki*. It is found throughout India on moist

soil, especially along bunds and canals. The plant of *Mandukaparni* has a slender herbaceous 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, nervine tonic. *Centella asiatica* has large amounts of pentacyclic triterpenoids including asiaticoside brahmoside, asiatic acid. Other constituents include centellose, centelloside, and madecassoside. The significance of *Centella 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 *Glycyrrhiza glabra* of the *Umbelliferae* family. It is also known as *Yas-*

*timadhuk, Klitaka, Jetimad, Mulhathi, Madhukah*. English name is Liquorice. This plant is described in *Jivaniya, Sandhaniya, Varna, Sonitasthapana, Kandughna, Chardinigrahana, Snehopaga, Vamanopaga, Muthravirajaniya Mahakasaya* of *Charak samhita* and *kakolyadi, sarivadi, anjanadi, brhatyadi, utpaladigana* 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, seeds 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, glycyrrhetic acid, six phenolic compounds. Multi-dimensional activities of *yastimadhu* may 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, trichogenous, 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 Menispermaceae 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 papery bark, leaves simple, alternate, cordate, glabrous, 7-9 nerved, flowers yellow in clus-

ters, 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 *vayasasthapana, dahaprashamana, trishnanigraha, stanyasodha triptighna, mahakasaya* of *charak samhita* and *guducyadi, patoladi, raghvadadi, kakolyadi, vallipanchamula* of *shusruta samhita*. *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, anti-leprotic and anti malarial activities.

It is a rich source of trace elements (zinc and copper) which act as antioxidants and protect cells from the damaging effects of oxygen radicals generated during immune activation. *Guduchi* have alkaloids, diterpenoid lactones, glycosides, sesquiterpenoid, phenolics polysaccharides, and aliphatic compounds. *Tinosporacordifolia* 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. SHANKHAPUSHIPI

The botanical name is *convolvulus pleuricaulis*. It is a perennial prostrate or sub erect spreading hairy herb. Found throughout India. The synonyms are *ksheerpush-*

*pi, mangalyakusuma. Dosha karma isvata-pitta shamak.* Fine pasta of whole plant is highly used as *medhya* (intellect promoter). Its chemical constitution has microphylllic acid, shankhapushpin, kaempferol-3-glucoside, 3,4-dihydroxycinnamic 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 shankhapushpi significantly reversed the social isolation in pentobarbitone induced sleep, increased total motor activity and stress induced antinociception in experimental mode. Ayushman-8 (Containing *shankhapushpi, brahmi & vacha*) reported to be effective on mental retardation. *Shankhapushpi* compound containing *shankhapushpi, sarpagandha* and *gokshura* in equal quantities is seems to be very effective in *chittodvega* (anxiety). Herbalists believe that *shankhapushpi* calms the nerves by regulating the body's production of the stress hormones, adrenaline and cortisol. *Shankhapushpi* 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 *Medhya Rasayana* 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 *Nadisansthan*. *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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