A REVIEW ARTICLE ON MEDHYA RASAYANA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda has two main goals: to maintain the health of a healthy person and to treat someone who is sick. To achieve the first goal, Rasayana Chikitsa plays an important role. Rasayana Chikitsa is also a part of Ashtanga Ayurveda, which shows its significance.

Rasayana refers to drugs, medicines, or food that, when used in the right amount and at the right time, help in rejuvenating and restoring the body. It helps in the formation of new tissues and slows down aging, boosting the body's energy and immunity. Rasayana benefits not only the body but also the mind.

Medhya Rasayana are special medicinal plants in Ayurveda that are particularly helpful in improving memory, learning, and intelligence. Acharya Charak has detailed four important Medhya Rasayana:

1. **Shankhapushpi Kalka**
2. **Swarasa of Mandukparni**
3. **Yashtimadhu with milk**
4. **Guduchi Kwatha**

This article aims to highlight the current knowledge about Medhya Rasayana.

 KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Medhya Rasayana

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda has two main goals: to maintain health and to cure disease. The Rasayana branch, or rejuvenation therapy, is one of the eight specialized areas of Ayurveda focused on maintaining health. Medhya Rasayanas are a group of medicinal plants known for enhancing memory and intelligence through their special properties (Prabhava).

Recently, there has been growing global interest in using these plants to improve cognitive function because they have fewer side effects compared to other treatments. Ayurveda lists several herbs with nootropic (brain-boosting) effects that can be used in various health conditions. Researchers have reviewed classical Ayurvedic texts and modern studies to better understand the pharmacological properties, chemical composition, and therapeutic actions of some Medhya Rasayana herbs. They are also looking at how these herbs work from both Ayurvedic and modern scientific perspectives.

Rasayana treatments in Ayurveda help improve the body's biological efficiency through three main mechanisms:

1. Directly enhancing nutrition.

2. Improving digestion and metabolism.

3. Purifying channels in the body, which improves circulation and nutrient delivery to tissues.

 These three actions—improving nutrition, digestion, and circulation—either individually or together, lead to better nutrition in the body. This, in turn, helps form healthy cells and tissues, allowing the body to handle aging and stress more effectively. Rasayana treatments can be age-specific, providing the right nutrition for the different stages of life.

While all Rasayanas promote overall nutrition, some target specific organs and tissues. For example, Medhya Rasayana is for the brain, Hridya Rasayana is for the heart, and Chaksusya Rasayana is for the eyes. Medhya Rasayana, which is specific to brain health, is believed to improve cognitive functions, support the regeneration of brain cells, reduce stress, boost memory, and slow down brain aging.

Since childhood is a time when all body tissues (called "Dhatus") are still developing, giving Medhya Rasayana at this stage can be very effective in improving children's intelligence and supporting their growth and development.

Rasayana

Rasayana drugs are those that slow down aging and prevent diseases. Rasayana refers to the process of delivering nutrition throughout the body, helping to nourish and improve tissue health. It involves the circulation and movement of nutrients to maintain good health.

The term Rasayana also means the process that leads to the formation of the best quality body tissues (Rasadi Dhatus). According to the Ayurvedic scholar Chakrapani, Rasayana not only helps in producing high-quality tissues but also enhances memory. Another scholar, Dalhana, explains that Rasayana helps maintain youthfulness and prolongs life through its effects on taste (Rasa), digestion (Vipaka), strength (Virya), and unique properties (Prabhava).

Concept of Medha

Medha is a faculty of Buddhi, which means unobstructed, uninterrupted perception, retention and very deep knowledge gained by all the senses.

Buddhi

Buddhi is a phenomenon which motivates a person to work in a particular fashion. It gives an initiative to work, to come to final conclusions after proper analysis.

Smriti

The term "Smriti" refers to a wide range of higher mental abilities, including memory, thinking, recalling past experiences, and mastery in advanced knowledge, making it relevant even in metaphysical discussions. Chakrapani explains that Smriti is a function of Buddhi (intellect), helping guide actions based on past experiences.

Smriti is seen as a key aspect of cognition, and it is understood through the act of remembering. When we look closely at Buddhi (intellect), Medha (intelligence), and Smriti (memory), we find that they are all part of the same process. None of them can work properly without the others. Recollection only happens when Buddhi, Medha, and Smriti come together, so they are essentially interconnected.
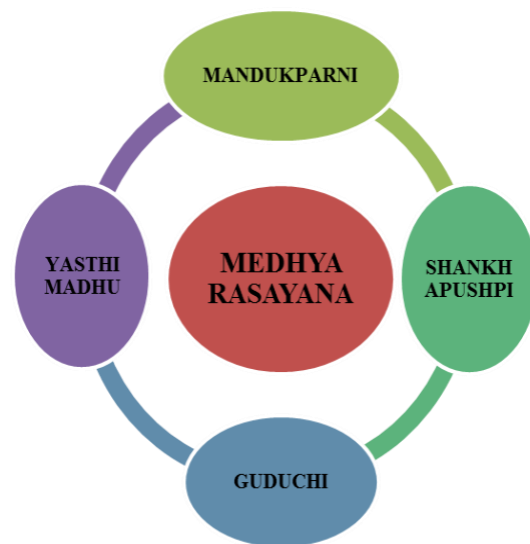
Medhya Rasayana

The term Medhya is defined as, which is beneficial for medha. Medhya Rasayanas are group of medicinal plants described in Ayurveda with multi-fold benefits, specifically to improve memory and intellect by Prabhava

(specific action). Medha means intellect and/or retention and Rasayana means therapeutic procedure or preparation that on regular practice will boost nourishment, health, memory, intellect, immunity and hence longevity. Description of the Medhya Rasayana found in Samhitas indicates Special utility of these types of rasayanas apart from rasayana in general. In Charak Samhita there is no direct mentioning of medhya rasayana as an independent type. But there is mentioning of four drugs, they are Mandukaparni (Centella asiatica Linn.), Yastimadhu (Glycirrhiza glabra Linn.), Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia (Wild) Miers) and Shankhapushpi (Convolvulus pleuricaulis Chois), specially mentioned with wide range of applications on different systems. Among these Shankhapushpi (Convolvulus pleuricaulis Chois) is considered as medhya vishesh. In Sushruta Samhita more information about medhya drugs are available such as different formulations with their mode of use etc. The chapter named 'Medhayushkamiya adhyaya' is meant for description of same.

Dravya which boosts brilliance or intellect are called as medhya dravya. Intellect is related to nervous system is place of mind, so all medhya dravya acts primarily on nervous system. Acharya Charak has explained four dravyas under Medhya Rasayana – 1. Mandukparni (Centella asiatica Linn)
2. Yasthimadhu (Glycyrrhiza glabra Linn)
3. Shankhapushpi (Convolvulus pluricaulis Linn)
4. Guduchi (Tinospora codifolia Willd Miers)

Acharya Susruta has explained medhya dravya under Medha Ayushkamiya Rasayana Adhayay. Medhya Rasayana explained by Acharya Susruta other than that explained by Acharya Charak are following - 1. Swate avalguja
2. Chitraka mola
3. Manduk parni
4. Bramhi

5. Vacha

Acharya P. V. Sharma has also explained other medhya dravya. These are following
1. Endri
2. Jyotishmati
3. Kushmanda
4. Vacha
5. Jatamanshi

In current time, all the above described are designated and used as a Rasayana dravya. Brief explanation of Medhya Rasayana

Mandukparni
Acharya Charak classified this herb under the Tikta (bitter) group, as well as in the categories of Prajasthapana (fertility promoting) and Vayashapana (anti-aging). Acharya Susruta placed it in the Tikta group as well. The herb has several synonyms, such as Manduki, Divya, Twastri, and Mahausadhi.
The leaves of Mandukparni (Gotu Kola) contain important compounds like the glycoside Asiaticoside and the alkaloid Hydrocortyline. These chemicals are responsible for the herb's neuroprotective and antioxidant properties.

Shankhpushpi
Synonyms of Shankhpushpi are Mangalya kusma, Ksheerpushpi, Shankhpushpi. It possesses alkaloids like Kaempferol, arecoline, convolvine and Shankhpushpin The constituent convolvine is responsible for blocking M2 and M4 cholinergic muscuranic receptors. It boosts effect of arecoline, a muscarinic memory enhancer that ameliorates cognitive defects in Alzheimer's dieseae.

Guduchi
Guduchi has been mentioned in various groups in Charak Samhita, including Vayahsthapana (anti-aging), Dahaprashamana (cooling or relieving burning sensations), Trishnanigrahan (thirst control), Stanya sodhana (purifying breast milk), and Triptighna (relieving excessive satisfaction). In Susruta Samhita, it is listed in groups like Guduchyadi, Araghvdadi, Kakolyadi, Patoladi, and Valli Panchamula.
Guduchi has several names, including Madhuparni, Chinnamula, Amritavalli, Amrita, and Vayastha. Its key chemical compound is berberine, which helps reduce A beta levels (associated with Alzheimer's disease) by influencing amyloid precursor protein (APP) processing in brain cells without causing harm.

Yashtimadhu
Yashtimadhu has been described under Kanthya, Sandhaniya, Varnya, Kandughna, Vamanopaga, Jivniya, Asthapanopaga, Mutravirajaniya Mahakasaya of Charak Samhita and Kakolyadi, Sarivadi, Brhatyadi, Ambasthadi, Anjanadi, Utpaladi Gana of Susruta Samhita. Major constituent found in Yashtimadhu is glabridin which is useful in improving brain function. Chemically it is a flavonoid polyphenol which is proven to attenuate cerebral injuries in stroke as it is neuroprotective.

Other Medhya Dravya Jyotishmati
Celeastrus panniculata Wild Family – Celastraceae Jyotishmati is described under Shirovirechnopaga Mahakashaya in Charak Samhita and Shirovirechan, Adhobhagagara in Susruta Samhita. Synonyms are Kakandaki, Malkangani, Kaguni, Parvatpadi. Properties of Jyotishmati are Katu, Tikta in Rasa, Tikshna in Guna, Ushna in Virya and Katu in Vipaka. Dosh Karma is Kapha-Vata Samak.

Vacha
Acorus calamus Linn, Family - Araceae Vacha is described in Lekhniya, Arshoghna, Virechan, Triptighna, Asthapnopaga, Sangyasthapana, Tikta Skandh and Sirovirechnana Mahakasaya in Charak Samhita and Pipalyadi, Mustadi and Vachadi and Adhobhaghara in Susruta Samhita. Properties of Vacha are Katu, Tikta in Rasa, Laghu Tikshna in Guna, Ushna in Virya and Katu Vipaka. Dosha Karma of Vacha is Kapha-vata Shamak.

Jatamansi
Nordostachys jatamansi, from the Valerianaceae family, is mentioned in the Sangyasthapana Mahakashaya group of Charak Samhita. It has several synonyms, including Bhutjata, Jatila, Tapasvini, Nalda, and Mansi.
Jatamansi has a bitter (Tikta), astringent (Kasaya), and sweet (Madhur) taste. It is light (Laghu) and oily (Snigdha) in nature, cool in potency (Sita in Virya), and its post-digestive effect is pungent (Katu in Vipaka). It balances all three doshas (Tridosh Samak).

Endri
Bacopa monniera Linn. Family – Scropulariaceae Endri is described in Balya and Prajaisthapana Mahakashaya in Charak Samhita. Properties of Endri of Tikta in Rasa, Laghu in Guna, Usna in Virya, Katu in vipaka. Dosh karma is Kapha-Vata shamak.

Kushmanda
Benincasa hispida Thunb. Family – Cucurbitaceae Kushmanda is described in Shaka varga of Bhav prakash Nighantu. Synonyms are Puspaphala, Pitapushpa, Brihatphala. Dosh karma of Kushmanda is Pitta samak.

DISCUSSION
Medhya Rasayana refers to all medicines that boost brain power and intelligence. Most of the Medhya drugs discussed earlier have sweet post-digestive effects (Madhur Vipaka) and cool potency (Shita Virya), except for Guduchi. Medhya action is mainly considered special (Prabhava) because some Medhya herbs are cooling and

sweet, like Yasthimadhu, while others, like Guduchi, are bitter and hot.

Even though these herbs may share common properties, their ability to enhance intellect (Medhya Karma) is stronger due to their special effects (Prabhava). Medhya can be categorized into three types:

(a) Grahan Shakti – Power of learning or acquiring knowledge.

(b) Dharana Shakti – Power of retention or holding onto information.

(c) Smaran Shakti – Power of recollection or remembering.

All medhya dravya exhibits combination of above three properties. Due to Ashukari and Tikshna pre-dominant gunas, pitta stimulate satva (Mana) and is help for perception of knowledge and as it stimulate post experiences it is helpful in memory intellect, as is also one of the natural function of pitta dosha. Vata dosha is also helpful in process of memory by performing association of ideas. Kapha dosha as has stable properties helps in retention of knowledge and memories. Due to above fact it is clear that both kaphaja and pittaja dravya are Medhya. Ushna virya dravya are mainly boost intellect whereas shita virya dravya mainly boosts memory.

CONCLUSION

1. Medhya dravya like Mandukparni, Yastimadhu, Guduchi and Shankhpushpi can be used as single drug or in combinations to effectively boost memory and recall power, brilliance and intellect.
2. Medhya karma is predominantly prabhava janya because some medhya dravya are shita virya, madhura rasa but some are tikta rasa, ushna virya and moreover medhya dravya exhibits effects rather than their chemical composition.
3. Medhya karma is shown mainly by kaphaja and pittaja dravya.
4. Ushna virya dravya are mainly boost intellect whereas shita virya dravya mainly boosts memory. In other word we can say that ushna virya dravya boosts grahan and smaran shakti, whereas shita virya dravya boosts dharana shakti.

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