



## An Exploratory View of Intellect in Ayurveda

### KEYWORDS

Intellect, Medha, Medhya karma, Medhya dravya

**Vd. Bhagyashri Dilip Madake**

P.G. Scholar (Rognidan & Vikritividnyan),  
Tilak Ayurved Mahavidyalay, Rasta Peth, Pune -411011

**Dr. Aishwarya M. Ranade**

Assistant Professor (Rognidan & Vikritividnyan),  
Tilak Ayurved Mahavidyalay, Rasta Peth, Pune -411011

### ABSTRACT

*Medha (Intellect) is an aspect of Buddhi (perception) that retains knowledge especially obtained by auditory senses. In Ayurveda, Medha Intellect is an attribute of Pitta, Vata dosha and Rakta dhatu. Promotion and nourishment of Intellect is to be obtained by various treatment regimens, dietary contents, by indulging in various intellectual activities. In ancient classical texts of Ayurveda, such treatment regimens are mentioned and numerous combinations of drugs are described. Intelligence promoting drugs can be prescribed from 6th month of gestation to get superior quality of intellect. Observations of Intellect promoting drugs from classical texts of Ayurveda are presented here regarding their major contents, efficacy, form, age and duration for consumption.*

### Introduction –

*Medha* is a characteristic of perception i.e. *Buddhi*. Here an effort is made to put a light on concept of intellect, intellectual activities, method to improve intellect according to *Ayurved*. The conceptual study is based upon selected references from *commonly referred classical texts*. Motive of the study is to know whole compass of intellect enhancing property of drugs and put it in 'easy to apply' format.

Now a day, considerable psychological instability is present at every level of society. If observed minutely, number of juvenile criminals is highly increased. Being a responsible member of society, a doctor should think to direct minds and intellectual strengths towards creativity. Especially in developing countries like India, affinity of talent is expected towards research, basic and applied science for further development. To fulfil these needs of nation, a *vaidya* is able to build a generation accordingly. Vd. Venimadhav Shastri Joshi states in his book '*Manavyasar-asratvapareekshan*' as a *vaidya* is able to build a generation as per requirements of nation with proper knowledge of excellence of fundamental of body (*Saara-saaratva*).

Advancement of intellectual capacity is a desire of each individual. An attempt is made here to understand scientific and practical approach of *Medhya karma* with respect to drugs acting on cognitive capacity, time to consume these drugs, age to start with, its best combinations, used routes etc. so that this unique concept of Ayurveda mentioned thousands of years back, will be used effectively for enhancing every aspect of life.

**Buddhi** – *Buddhi* is the power to differentiate correct and incorrect. <sup>(1)</sup> It helps in quick and long lasting decision making. It works with mind <sup>(2)</sup> with its three aspects-

### Medha(Cognitive Power, Intellect) –

*Medha* is subtle, continuous, uninterrupted deep knowledge perceived especially by auditory senses <sup>(3)</sup>

### Dhriti

It is regulator and controller of mind. It prevents mind from indulging into harmful things. <sup>(4)</sup>

### Smriti –

Synchronised union of soul, mind and experience based knowledge (*sanskar*) is termed as *Smriti* i.e. recollection of audio-visual and experienced objects <sup>(5)</sup>.

According to Aacharya Charak, *Buddhi*, *Dhriti*, *Smriti* are '*Aatmaj bhav* i.e. they enter to product of conception along with soul <sup>(6)</sup>. These '*Aatmaj Bhav*' carry effects of previous deeds. Is it possible to alter these *bhavas*?

*Buddhi*, *Medha*, *Dhriti* are '*Saatvik( bhav*' (endowed with quality of *Satva*) of soul (*Karmapurusha*) according to Aacharya Sushruta. <sup>(7)</sup>

As discussion is about '*Medha*', it is a '*Saatmyaj Bhav*' (Agreeable to nature) according to Aacharya Sushruta <sup>(8)</sup>. In course of some psychological disorders like *Unmad*, *Apsmar*, alteration of *Buddhi*, *Smriti* is mentioned. In etiopathogenesis of these disorders, unhygienic and improper diet is mentioned as one of the causative factors. If a pregnant lady consumes flesh of common Indian monitor, the foetus develops with strong recollection power <sup>(9)</sup>. By all these references, it can be stated that, *Medha* is the *bhav* which can be promoted or enhanced by specific diet or habits.

### Association of Intellect and fundamental elements of body –

*Medha* is a basic characteristic of '*Pitta*' dosha. <sup>(10)</sup> '*Medhavi*' (endowed with intellect) , '*Nipunmati*' (Sharp) are symptoms of *pitta* dominant constitution <sup>(11)</sup>. '*Shrutagrahinopalpasmrutayh*' (able to perceive knowledge by auditory senses but unable to retain for long duration) is a symptom of Vata dominant constitution <sup>(12)</sup>. '*Smritimaan*' (capacity to memorise for long duration) are symptoms of Kapha dominant constitution <sup>(11),(13)</sup>. '*Medhavi*' is the symptom of excellence of *Rakta dhatu* (*Raktasaarata*) <sup>(14)</sup>. '*Dhriti*' is the attribute of excellence of *Mansa* (*Mansasaarata*) <sup>(14)</sup> and '*Smriti* is of excellence of mind (*Satvasaarata*) <sup>(14)</sup>.

With above references, Intellect is in correspondence with *Pitta*, *Vata* dosha and *Rakta dhatu*. *Smriti*, *Dhriti* are in correspondence with *Kapha* dosha, *Mansa dhatu* and *Saatva*.

### Medhya Karma –

According to Aacharya Priyavat Sharma, *Medhya Karma*

i.e. improvement of intelligence cannot be explained by *rasa, virya, vipak* of any substance. Hot or cold potency of drug (*virya*) is not always in association with enhancement of intellect. Hence he mentioned *medhya karma* as '*Prabhavjanya*' effect. Advancement of Intellect is done by *Prabhav* i.e. incomprehensible influence of drug. Further he explained, generally drugs with hot potency improve power of grasping and recollection while drugs with cold potency nourish power of retention. <sup>(15)</sup>

Drugs with hot potency elevate properties of Pitta like swiftness (*Aashutva*) and sharpness (*Teekshnatva*) to improve *Medha*.

Drugs with cold potency nourish stability (*Sthirtva*) of *kaphadosha*. Knowledge obtained by audio-visual sense and experiences is retained by *Dhriti*. Thus, cold potency nourishes *Dhriti*. *Medhya Karma* includes quick grasping with minute details, conservation of the knowledge, proper recollection and presentation.



**Constitution regarding primary elements (Bhautik constitution) –**

Buddhi, *Medha* and other conscious manifestations are attributed to *satvagun*<sup>(7)</sup>. Primary elements with *satva gun* are *Aakash, Tej* and *Jala*. Regarding Intellect, *Aakash* represents capacity to store information, *Tej* (Fire) is to enhance sharpness and Swiftness while *Jala* (Water) roles to nourish stability.

**Tastes affecting Intellect (Rasapradhanya)-**

Bitterness (*Tikta rasa*) itself described with intellect advancing property (*Medhya*) <sup>(16)</sup>. By cleansing action of body channels (*srotovishodhan*) and stimulation of digestive power, it advances *Medha*. To achieve improvement of Intellect, one can work with following three routes –

- i) Diet (*Aahar*)
- ii) Code of conduct (*Vihar*)
- iii) Medication (*Aushadha*)

**Diet (Aahar) –**

Regular dietary contents affect fundamentals of body having association with facets of *buddhi*. Following table (Table 1) represents dietary contents with property to improve *Medha* –

Table 1

No.	Drug (Dra-vya)	Taste(Rasa)	Property after ripening (Vipak)	Potency (Virya)
1	Aantarik-shajala (Rain water)	Tasteless		Cold
2	Cow's Milk (Godugdha)	Sweet	Sweet	Cold
3	Butter (Navaneet)	Sweet	Sweet	Cold
4	Ghee (Ghrita)	Sweet	Sweet	Cold

5	Sesamum indicum (Tila)	Sweet, Astringent, Bitter	Sweet	Hot
6	Sesamum oil (Tiltaila)	Sweet, Astringent, Bitter	Sweet	Hot
7	Allium sativum (Rasona)	Pungent	Sweet	Hot
8	Allium cepa (Ksheerpalandu)	Pungent, Sweet	Sweet	Hot

**Code of conduct (Vihar) –**

Following habits also result as *Medhya* –

Healthy discussion with experts <sup>(17)</sup>.

Devotion of attention and time to acquire knowledge of a particular subject<sup>(17)</sup>.

Participation in symposiums, panel discussions <sup>(17)</sup>.

*Guruseva*– Ministrations of Guru<sup>(17)</sup>.

To keep *Acorus calamus (Vacha)* in close vicinity of child <sup>(18)</sup>.

To keep hygiene of feet, nose, eyes, ear, anal orifice, urethral orifice and skin pores <sup>(19)</sup>. It is difficult to explain exact efficacy of these habits. These activities may have incomprehensible influence towards intellect.

**Medication (Aushadha) –**

In Ayurvedic texts, many combinations of drugs are mentioned with intellect improvement result. Some combinations are mentioned under title of rejuvenating drugs (*Rasayanadhikar*) rest under treatment of diseases. Medicated combinations from treatment of diseases may have their action to prevent repeat episodes of diseases and improvement of Intellect, memory, complexion, voice.

**Age to start consumption-**

There is no reference to specify age to begin consumption of intellect promoting drugs. According to *Aacharya Sushrut*, development of *buddhi* takes place in 6<sup>th</sup> month of gestation <sup>(20)</sup>. Hence intelligence promoting drugs can be prescribed from the same time or from early stages of organogenesis. Of course drugs with hot potency like *Semecarpus anacardium (Bhallatak)* should not be prescribed in pregnant ladies also other hot potency drugs should be used judiciously.

Following combinations are mentioned with specific age –

**Just after birth –**

Powder of *Aaindri* (*Citrullus colocynthis*), *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*), *Vacha* (*Acorus calamus*), *Shankhapushpi* (*Convolvulus pluri*) along with ghee and honey to be given to newly born<sup>(21)</sup>.

**For 0-1 year (Ksheeraad Balak) –**

For this age group, ghee medicated with *Siddharthaka* (*Brassica juncea*), *Vacha* (*Acorus calamus*), *Jatamansi* (*Nordostachysjatamansi*), *Payasya*, *Apamarga* (*Achyranthesaspera*), *Shatavari* (*paragus racemosus*), *Sariva* (*Hemidesmusindicus*), *Brahmi* (*Bacopa moneri*), *Pippali* (*Piper longum*), *Haridra* (*Curcuma longa*), *Saindhav* (Rock salt), *Kushtha* (*Sassurea lappa*) should be advised <sup>(22)</sup>.

**For 1-2 years (Ksheerannad Balak) -**

For the age group, ghee medicated with Yashtimadhu Glycerriza glabra, Vacha (Acorus calamus), Pippali (Piper longum), Chitrak (Plumbago zeylanica), Triphala (mixture of Terminalia chebula, Embelica officinalis, Terminalia bellerica) should be prescribed<sup>(22)</sup>.

**For 2-16 years (Annad Balak) -**

For 2-16 years age group, ghee medicated with Dashamool, Tagar, Badradaru (Cedrus deodar), Marich (Piper nigrum), Yashtimadhu (Glycerriza glabra), Vidanga (Embelia ribes), Draksha (Vitis vinifera), Brahmi (Bacopa moneri) should be advice<sup>(22)</sup>.

**Intellect promoting drug -**

Generally *medhya kalpa* is a combination of drugs. The result is expected when the combination is consumed as whole. Still here is an effort to represent drugs mentioned frequently in *medhya kalpas*-

**Table 2**

No.	Drug (Dravya)	Taste(Rasa)	Property after ripening (Vipak)	Potency (Virya)
1	Terminalia chebula (Haritaki)	Mainly Astringent, Sweet, Sour, Pungent, Bitter	Sweet	Hot
2	Embelica officinalis (Amalaki)	Mainly Sour, Astringent, Sweet, Pungent, Bitter	Sweet	Cold
3	Acorus calamus (Vacha)	Bitter	Pungent	Hot
4	Withania somnifera (Ashwagandha)	Sweet, Bitter	Sweet	Hot
5	Bacopa monnieri (Brahmi)	Bitter, Astringent	Sweet	Cold
6	Asparagus racemosus (Shatavari)	Sweet, Bitter	Sweet	Cold
7	Convulvulus pluri (Shankhapushpi)	Astringent	Sweet	Cold
8	Glycerrhiza glabra (Yashtimadhu)	Sweet	Sweet	Cold
9	Adhatoda vasica (Vasa)	Bitter	Pungent	Cold
10	Semicarpus anacardium (Bhallataka)	Sweet	Sweet	Hot
11	Ricinus communis (Eranda)	Sweet	Sweet	Hot
12	Hemidesmus indicus (Sariva)	Sweet	Sweet	Cold
13	Piper longum (Pippali)	Pungent	Sweet	Neither hot nor cold
14	Curcuma longa (Haridra)	Bitter	Pungent	Hot
15	Berberis aristata (Daru-haridra)	Bitter	Pungent	Hot
16	Tinospora cordifolia (Guduchi)	Pungent, Bitter	Sweet	Hot
17	Centella asiatica (Mandukaparni)	Bitter, Astringent	Sweet	Cold
18	Nordostachys jatamansi (Jatamansi)	Bitter, Astringent	Sweet	Cold
19	Rock salt (Saindhava)	Salty	Sweet	Neither hot nor cold
20	Gold (Suvarna)	Sweet	Sweet	Hot

**Duration of consumption -**

Maximum *medhya* combinations are expected to get consumed regularly. E.g. *Chyavanprash*, *Kalyanakghrita*. Still some combinations are mentioned with specific duration of

consumption.

E.g. – 1) Powdered Acorus calamus (Vacha) with milk or oil or ghee – For 1 month<sup>(23)</sup>.

2) Powdered root of Plumbago zeylanica (Chitrak) with milk or honey or ghee for 1 month<sup>(24)</sup>.

3) *Vardhaman pippali rasayan*<sup>(25)</sup>.

**When to consume -**

As maximum intellect promoting combinations are mentioned under title of rejuvenating drugs, *medhya* drugs should be consumed with empty stomach at early morning (*Rasayankaal*).

**Form of Medicine -**

Maximum intellect promoting combinations are in the form of medicated ghee and sweetened semisolid form of concentrated decoction (*Avaleha*).

Ghee – It is one of the finest forms of milk products. Treating milk several times changes its form and quality. Hence, this transformation of milk to ghee gives the form with such a penetrating power that it nourishes each and every quality of body. Ghee itself is an intellect promoting drug.

Avaleha – It is a concentrated semisolid form of medicine prepared by heating decoction for specific time. The semisolid concentrated decoction is added with sugar, jaggery, honey and aromatic drugs. Aromatic drugs having capacity to carry drugs towards microelements and act upon micro level of manifestations of conscious. *Avaleha* can be compared with neutraceuticals. It contains proteins, carbohydrates, minerals, vitamins and fats along with pharmacologically active substances.<sup>(26)</sup>

**Vehicle (Anupan) -**

As described in ancient Ayurvedic texts (*Bruhat-trayi*), intellect promoting combinations should be consumed with easily available food products like milk, ghee, honey. They must elevate strength of given drug towards result. These co-drugs act as carriers, nutrients, catalysers.

**Conclusion -**

*Medha* is deep uninterrupted knowledge by auditory senses. It is associated with *Pitta*, *Vata dosha* and *Rakta dhatu*. Advancement of intellect is *Medhya Karma*. *Medhya* drugs could be advised from 6<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy. *Medhya* combinations could be consumed regularly. They should be consumed at early morning with empty stomach. In ancient classics, maximum *medhya* combinations are in form of medicated ghee and *avaleha*.

**Scope -**

Animal and clinical trial of effects of intellect improving drugs during gestation and after birth.

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