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A review on the components of *Prajna*

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ABSTRACT

The word *Prajna* generally refers to know, the wisdom, the intelligence, the sense of discrimination and the judgment. It can be compared with the whole process of discrimination, retention and recalling capacity of an individual. *Dhee*, *dhruti* and *smriti* are considered to be types of *prajna*. These are also termed as *Prajnopastambha* and are nothing but the different stages of *Prajna*. The *buddhi* which sees the objects as they are (*samata darshana*) is *dhee*. The *buddhi* which restrains (*niyamana*) is *dhruti*. And the *buddhi* which is capable of remembering is *smriti*. The ability of discrimination of the object perceived is attributed to the function of *dhee*, while the decision making at that situation is guided and regulated by *dhruti*. And the retrieval of past experiences in order to perform further action depends on *Smriti*. *Buddhi* also have the same synonyms as that of *Prajna* viz. *Dhee*, *Prajna*, *Mati* etc. Thus we can assume that the *Buddhi* and *Prajna* refer to the same. While the term '*Medha*' refers to the higher intellect and synonymous to *Prajna*. Modern science describes the acquisition of knowledge has following cognitive domains such as encoding, storage, and retrieval which refer to the components of *prajna*. The article deals with conceptual study of *Prajna*, its components, its comparative terms in contemporary sciences, discussion and conclusion.

Key words: *Prajna*, *Medha*, *Buddhi*, *Medhya Rasayana*.

INTRODUCTION

'Infinite Horizons Are Human Aspirations'

In this era of competition and professional excellence every individual strives to achieve greater success and maintenance of good personal relations. A good memory power and superior intelligence will help to achieve these goals. The continuous changing nature of the world, environment, life style and social situations of an individual have brought about the

changes in physical as well as psychological pattern in him. There is a need to understand the components of *Prajna* and its effective application in order to improve the psyche of an individual.

OBJECTIVES

1. To review the literature on *Prajna* and its components and their correlative terms in Ayurvedic literature.
2. To define and differentiate each components of *Prajna* based on theoretical and conceptual understanding.

METHODOLOGY

Literary source of data for this article was taken from classical textbooks of Ayurveda, Sanskrit dictionaries, books pertaining to Modern Science, various articles published in reputed journals and studies conducted on related works from various universities and the internet etc.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Generally the word *Prajna* refers to know, to be acquainted with, to discover, to perceive, the wisdom,

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the intelligence, the knowledge, the sense of discrimination and the judgment.

Prajna

That which generates the knowledge in advance is termed as *Prajna* and is also equated to *Buddhi*. The knowledge about the present, past and future is termed as *Prajna*.^[1]

In *Yoga Sutra*, *Patanjali* writes that *Prajna* is a state of perfection that a master yogi can reach after moving into *Samadhi* (a state of meditative consciousness), which is the eighth and final limb of yoga.^[2]

According to *Ayurveda*, *Dhee*, *Dhriti* and *Smriti* have been mentioned as components of *Prajnā*. The term *Prajnā* indicates over all capacity of a person in respect to perception, memory and decision making and sticking to decision.^[3]

Definition

Prajna is termed as *buddhi* and *Prajna Aparadha* leads to *Ajnana* and *Durjnana* of *Bahya* and *Adhyatmic Bhava*.^[4]

Synonyms of Prajna

Samjnana, *Vijnana*, *Medha*, *Drushti*, *Dhriti*, *Mati*, *Maneesha*, *Shruti*, *Smriti*, *Sankalpa*, *Kartru* etc. are the synonymous words for *Prajna*.^[5]

Prajna Bheda^{[6],[7]}

There are seven planes of *Prajna* according to Maharshi *Patanjali* namely *Shubeccha*, *Vicharana*, *Tanumanasa*, *Sattvapatti*, *Asamsakti*, *Padarthabhavini* and *Turyaga*.

The first plane marks the end of all *Jijnasa*, desire for knowing; the second of *Jihasa*, desire for giving up; the third of *Prepsa*, wish to obtain; and the fourth of *Chikirsha*, wish to do. These four forms of *Prajna* constitute liberation from action. They involve active practice.

The next three planes are characterized by the successive elimination of *Dukha*, *Bhaya* and *Vikalpa*, sorrow, fear and finally all mental modifications. These three planes involve dissolution of the *Chitta*, mind stuff and together constitute *Chitta-Vimukti*.

Dhee, *Dhriti* and *Smriti* are considered to be types of *Prajna*.^[8] These are also termed as *Prajnopastambha*. These are nothing but the different stages of *Prajna*.^[9] The *Buddhi* which sees the objects as they are (*Samata Darshana*) is *Dhee*. The *Buddhi* which restrains (*Niyamana*) is *Dhriti*. And the *Buddhi* which is capable of remembering is *Smriti*.^[10]

The Components of Prajna

1. Dhee: धीः बुद्धिः, वस्तुग्रहणशक्तिः । अरुण, अ. ह. सू. ५/३७

Dhee is the component of *Buddhi* meant for the perception of real knowledge.^[11] *Chakrapani* opines that *Yathartha Anubhava*, the real or actual knowledge of an object is *dhee*.^[12] It is also the ability of the *Buddhi* to arrive at correct judgement or which discriminates the good and bad things.^[13]

By *Anumana Pareeksha* (inferential knowledge) *Medha* is assessed. It is also assessed by examining the *Grahana Samarthya* (grasping capacity) of an individual.^[14]

2. Dhriti: धृतिर्हि नियमात्मिका । च.शा. १/१००

Dhriti is the component of *Prajna* having controlling and regulating power, prevents the *Manas* from involving in harmful and non-beneficial objects.^[15] *Swanigraha*, the function of *Manas* described in the context of *Manokriya* is helped by the close association of *Dhriti* with *Manas*. *Dalhana* has mentioned that control over the mind is possible only on the basis of retained experiences during the assessment of 'whether that object is useful or not'.^[16] *Dharana* is holding the mind on to some particular object. *Dharana* is when the mind holds on to some object, either in the body, or outside the body, and keeps itself in that state.^[17] *Dhriti* is an instrument of mind by means of which mind controls itself.^[18] Acharya Charaka says that the function 'Svasyanigraha' of mind which is responsible for the self control is performed by the *Dhriti*.^[19]

There are three types of *Dhriti* such as *Sattvik Dhriti*, *Rajasik Dhriti* and *Tamasik Dhriti*.^{[20],[21]}

- **Sattvik Dhriti** upholds the mind, sustains the *Prana* (life-force) and all the activities of the

senses. This kind of *Dhriti* can be enhanced by *Dhyana*, *Yoga* and concentration etc.

- **Rajasik Dhriti** is when your mind, enthusiasm, behaviour and actions are done for some reward and the person does the *Dharana* of *Purushartha* such as *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* etc.
- **Tamasik Dhriti** is when the person is not able to get away with *Nidra*, *Bhaya*, *Shoka*, *Vishada*, *Mada* etc.

3. **Smruti:** दृष्टानुभूतानाम् स्मरणात् स्मृतिरुच्यते । च.शा. २/१४९

Recollection of the experiences which were seen, heard or experienced earlier is termed as *Smruti*.^[22]

The knowledge brought about by processing the information stored imprints from the mind.^[23] The buddhi or power which is capable of remembering is *Smriti*.^[24] Memory is when the (*Vrttis* of) perceived subjects do not slip away (and through impressions come back to consciousness). *Smriti* is the component of *Buddhi* and is the ability of an individual to recall things or recalling the past experiences or regaining of past knowledge. Preservation of acquired knowledge due to cognition is *Smruthi*.^[25] Memory is a power to retain and store whatever is experienced of an object in the past (*Artha Dhāraṇa Shakti*) and recalling it whenever it is warranted. *Smriti* is the faculty of psyche containing everything which is memorizing-able form. It memorizes its objects as such and also recalls it as such when it is normal status. In all these processes of recalling of past experience stored by the mind.^[26]

Acharya Charaka has mentioned *Dharanam* (retention), *Dhrti* (resolution), *Buddhi* (intellect) and *Smriti* (memory) as *Atmaja Bhavas* (factors associated with soul). *Medha* (power of retention of knowledge) is the *Bhava* (factor) of *Atma* (soul) manifests during gestation. *Chakrapani* describes that *Uhapoha Vichara Shakti* and *Smruti* together are called as *Buddhi*. Manifestation of *Smruti* occurs due to *Uha*, *Vichara* etc. and it will give rise to *Buddhi*.^[27]

Physiology of Smruti

Acharya Charaka says that there two stimuli mainly responsible and are helping in the manifestation of

Smriti, they are *Abhyantara Karana* (Internal stimulus or self generating stimulus) and *Bahya Karana* (external stimulus)^[28]

- a. **Abhyantara Karana** - The co-ordination and union of *Atma*, *Indriya*, *Manas* and *Indriyārtha* simultaneously results in *Smriti* such as recollection of tradition, culture and rituals.
- b. **Bahya Karana** - Acharya Charaka has explained eight factors (stimuli) which are responsible for the recollection of the past experience or knowledge.

Smruti Karanani (Bahya Karana)^{[29],[30]}

1. **Nimitta:** For *Smruti*, the knowledge of cause and effect is very useful. One remembers *Karya* by noticing *Karana*.
2. **Roopa Grahanat:** Knowledge of some form will also helps in occurrence of *Smruti*. Example: by seeing a cow in the forest, one remembers the other cow present in the cowshed in a village. It occurs due to recollection of commonness of their appearance.
3. **Sadrushyat:** Knowledge of similarity can initiate the recalling or *Smruti*. After seeing a particular person; one remembers that his father has similar features or appearance.
4. **Saviparyayat:** After seeing an ugly fellow, remembering a beautiful fellow. The contrast or *Viparyaya* will be the cause for *smruti* to occur.
5. **Satvanubandhat:** By paying an attention or concentrating, the mind for remembering anything, it comes to memory at once.
6. **Abhyasaat:** By the repetition or reads a particular subject many times, it becomes memorized and one can remember it even for a longer period.
7. **Jnanayogat:** Attainment of metaphysical knowledge also known as *Tatva Jnana Yoga* is attributed to be one of the causes for *Smruti*.
8. **Punaha Shrutat:** Repeated hearing helps in memorizing.

Assessment of Smruti

Smruti of an individual is assessed by the *Smarana Shakti* (remembering capacity). *Smriti* is also assessed by *Anumana Pramana* (speculation).^[31]

Classical measures to Improve Prajna/Medha

There are methods to improve and manipulate *Prajna*. Among these some helps in maintaining the equilibrium of body and mind (physical and psychological functions). And some methods are directly acts on the psychological entities to improve *Prajna*. Right from the period before conception till *Jara Avastha* (old age) many methods and formulations are described in our Ayurvedic classics.

Specific Measures

The *Rasayana Yogas*, specifically *Medhya Rasayanas* are known for enhancing the *Medha*. *Acharya Charaka* has described four *Medhya Rasayanas* namely *Mandukaparni*, *Yashtimadhu*, *Guduchi* and *Shankhapushpi*.^[32] While *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned many *Medhya* and *Ayurvedhaka Rasayana Yogas* in '*Medhayushkameeya Rasayana Adhyaya*' in *Chikitsa Sthana*.^[33]

Similarly, *Acharya Kashyapa* has mentioned many formulations like *Kalyanaka Ghrita*, *Brahmi Ghrita*, *Panchagavya Ghrita* and *Samvardhana Lehya* etc.^[34]

DISCUSSION

Prajna: *Prajna* refers to the entity which generates the knowledge and it is synonymous with *Buddhi*. It is also equated with the *Medha*, which refers to the higher intelligence but considering *Prajna* as the wisdom would be more appropriate.

Components of Prajna: There are three planes or stages of *Prajna* which leads to acquisition of real or actual knowledge. Any form of information or knowledge which is properly discriminated, then regulated and retained, and well restored in the form of fast experiences together attributes the *Prajna* and its components. Hence each one of these represents the functional domains of *Prajna* with their individual differentiating identity and significance.

Dhee: The perception of real knowledge or the cognition of objects as they are can be coined as a term *Dhee*. It is the faculty of *Prajna* or *Buddhi* having the power of arriving at correct judgement by discriminating between the real and unreal, good and bad etc. This ability of discrimination is attributed to the function of *dhee* while the decision making at that situation is guided and regulated by *Dhruti*.

When the object appears to be *Hita* and *Nitya* then further required action is executed; otherwise it is restored in the form of experience in the memory.

Dhruti: The power of restrain (*Niyamana*), control (*Indriyabhigraha*) and regulation is *Dhruti*. It prevents the mind from involving in any harmful and non-beneficial adventures. The term *Dhruti* also refers to holding on to the object. As *Dhruti* helps in self-control, the action '*Svasya-Nigraha*' of *Manas* can be attributed to *Dhruti*. When the *Dhruti* is *Prakruta* we can observe these actions, hence *Sattva Guna* attributes to restraining, controlling and regulating power of the *Dhruti*.

Smruti: The retrieval of fast experiences in order to perform further action depends on *Smruti*. And it is always dependent on *Dhee* and *Dhruti*. The knowledge which is gained through *Smriti* doesn't require the external sensory organs (*Bahya Jnanendriya*). The retrieval of fast experiences mainly classified into two types.

- Retrieval of knowledge which contains the larger amount of data.
- Retrieval of knowledge for longer period or after a longer period of time.

Medha: *Medha* is the *Buddhi* which acquires the complete, uninterrupted and deeper knowledge. When cognition of an object takes place, that object is understood with the help of reasoning or contemplation, thus the knowledge is acquired. For acquiring the knowledge the capacity of grasping and retention plays a pivotal role. When the knowledge or the information is warranted in future, it can successfully be recollected or retrieved by memory.

Buddhi: *Buddhi* is the factor which is responsible for arriving at affirmative, decisive and conclusive knowledge. It is the decisive capacity which is achieved by logical reasoning and is the by-product of thinking. It is facilitated by two faculties of *Buddhi* or *Prajna* i.e. *Dhee* and *Dhruti*. *Buddhi* is that which arrives at the final conclusion after proper logical reasoning. Primary analysis of the object perceived is done at the level of *Manas*. And then these perceptions will undergo critical analysis at the level of *Buddhi*.

Buddhi also have the same synonyms as that of *Prajna* viz. *Dhee*, *Prajna*, *Mati*, *Maneesha*, *Jnapti*, *Dhishana*, *Shemushi*, *Preksha*, *Upalabdhi*, *Chitta*, *Samvit*, *Pratipat* and *Chetana* etc. Thus we can assume that the *Buddhi* and *Prajna* refer to the same.

Correlation between Memory (M.Sc.) and components of Prajna: Modern science describes memory as the collective and comprehensive process which involves learning, retention, recall and recognition. The acquisition of knowledge has following cognitive domains such as encoding, storage, and retrieval which refer to the components of *Prajna*.

Obtaining a new knowledge through the experiences is learning and it refers to '*Dhee*'. The process of recognition where an awareness of experience is achieved also refers to *Dhee*. The process of proper and systematic preservation of a new knowledge which is obtained through the experience is retention and it refers to '*Dhruti*'. The process of retrieval of memorized knowledge whenever required is recall and it refers to '*Smruti*'.

CONCLUSION

Dhee, *Dhruti* and *Smruti* represent the functional or physiological domains of *Prajna* with their individual differentiating identity and significance. *Dhee* is responsible for the '*Grahana Shakti*' and it is a specific psychic ability for encoding and discriminating the knowledge. *Dhruti* is responsible for the '*Dharana Shakti*' and it helps in retaining a huge amount of knowledge in an organised manner. While *Smruti* is

responsible for the retrieval or remembering the past experiences.

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