



THE CONCEPT OF SMRITI (MEMORY)- A CRITICAL REVIEW STUDY

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Abstract:

Ayurveda, the basic science, discussed a role and responsibility of mental health in healthy life style. Proper understanding and better appreciation of the knowledge of Ayurvedic philosophy gives social benefits of mental health. Mind has been accompanied with process of knowledge and knowledge is depending on existence (*Bhava*) or nonexistence (*Abhava*), and with the perception of sense organs and their objects. (*Indriyasannikarsha Gyana*) i.e. the person is unable to understand the things if there is no contact of mind, the sense organs and with their respective objects. *Smriti* is nothing but the remembrance of things by concentrated mind, directly perceived, heard or experienced earlier. If the person is not able to grasp or retain the present events or experiences, it is known as *smritivibhramsa* and Ayurvedic science deals with various herbomineral preparations mentioned for excellence of memory.

Keywords: Buddhi, Medha, Memory, Smriti.

INTRODUCTION

Memory refers to the process that are used to acquire, store, retain and later retrieve information. There are 3 major processes involved in memory: - encoding, storage and retravel.

Human memory involves the ability to both preserve and recover information which was learned and experience. The study of human memory has been a subject of science and philosophy for thousands of years and has become one of the major topics of interest within cognitive psychology.

Memory problems can range from minor like forgetting where the key of the car lefts to major disease like Alzheimer's and other kinds of dementia, that affect the quality of life and the ability to function.¹

Formation of memory

In order to form new memories, the informed knowledge must be changed into a usable form, which occurs through the process known as encoding. Once it has been successfully encoded, it must be stored in memory for later use. Most of time this memory lies outside of our awareness and mostly persons actually need to use it. The natural process allows us to bring stored memories into conscious awareness.²

Types of Memory³

Richard Atkinson and Richard Shiffrin in 1968 proposed their theory outlines into three separate stages of memory:

- a) Sensory Memory:- It is the earliest stage of memory. During this stage, sensory information from the environments stored for a very brief period of time, generally for no longer than a half second for visual information and 3 or 4 sec. for auditory information.
- b) Short Term memory: - It is also known as active memory. In Freudian psychology, it would be referred to as the conscious mind. Paying attention to sensory memories generate information in short term memory. While most of time the short-term memories are quickly forgotten, attending to this information allows it to continue to the next stage i.e. long-term memory. Most of the information stored in active memory will be kept for approx. 20-30 sec. It refers to the processes that are used to temporarily store, organize and manipulate information.
- c) Long term memory: It refers to the continuing stage of information. In Freudian psychology, long term memory would be called the preconscious and conscious. This information is largely outside of persons awareness but can be called into working memory to be used when needed. Some of this information is fairly easy to recall, while others memories are much more difficult to assess.

Many researchers have tried to understand what memory is, how it works and why it goes wrong. It is an important physiological aspect of life which makes an individual truly human. Memory is a simple, a set of encoded neural connections in the brain. It is the recreation or reconstruction of past experiences by the synchronous firing of neurons that were involved in the original experiences.

The concept of *Smriti* has been discussed in various classical texts in many different aspects. *Smriti* is discussed in one of the 8 *aishwaryas*. *Smriti* concept is more related with *Aatma*, *Man*, *Medha* and *Buddhi*. *Man* plays important role in the process of retention of knowledge and it also considered the external environment with the brain through the different sense organ. *Buddhi* is the power entity which retains the specific knowledge or the outcome of the texts gained by reading, listening or repeating it. Retention of Cognition takes place under the power of *Medha*. *Smriti* helps the mind to recollect the references of any objects on the basis of concept made in past experiences.⁴ The *Smriti* is the term used to denote a wide array of higher intellectual faculties including memory, cognition, past sense perception, mastery in higher sciences. It is explained by

Chakrapani that it is one of the functional components of *Buddhi*. It directs oneself by recollecting the past experiences and the ability to recognize the basic nature of all masters in *Smriti*.⁵

OBSERVATIONS

The contexts of *Smriti* and its related terms are found in various references in Samhitas and research papers which are explained underneath.

Derivation of Smriti

The *Smriti* word is derived from the Sanskrit root *Smri* and *Ktin* suffix.

Word meaning⁶

Smriti- Remembrance, Reminiscence, thinking of or upon, Calling to mind, Memory

Daughter of Daksha, Wife of Angira, daughter of *Dharma* and *Medha*

Definition of Smriti

1. The knowledge of previously experienced object is *Smriti*.⁷
2. Experience based knowledge is *Smriti*.
3. Vaisheshika philosophy states that *Smriti* is said to be the results from a particular conjugation between self, mind and latent impressions.⁸
4. Remembrance of previously experienced object is *Smarana*.
5. Chakrapani comments *Smriti* as the ability to recollect the past knowledge.⁹
6. Knowledge that is present in *Shastra* is *Smriti*.¹⁰
7. Vyasa commenting on above verse, explains memory as the retainable subject and retainable subject with knowledge and the experience of this initiation of impression. The experience of the subjects leads to arousal of memory in a subject of both the types. If there is predominance of knowledge then it is experience.¹¹
8. *Yogavasistha* describes previously experienced or perceived objects like pot is remembered after sometime by its special features is known as *Smriti* or memory.¹²
9. *Shabdakalpadruma* states thinking about already experienced desirable person, object etc. is *Smriti*. This leads to vibrations, state or trance, tears, sigh etc.¹³
10. Knowledge gained by the experience of an object is *Smriti*. The action which is similar and leaves an impression which can be recalled easily is *Smriti*.
11. Memory is nothing but remembrance of object i.e. directly perceived or heard or experienced.¹⁴
12. Acarya Charaka quotes remembrance of objects through hearing, direct perception or earlier experienced with concentrated mind is called as *Smriti*.¹⁵

Classification of Smriti:

- I. According to Bhasha Parsishada it is of two types: *Anubhuta* and *Ananubhuta Smriti*.
- II. According to Patanjali's Yogasutra it is of two types: *Bhavitasmartavya* and *Abhavitasmartavya*
- III. According to *Bhagwatgita Buddhi* is of two types: *Satwaika, Rajsika and Tamsika*
- IV. According to Chakrapani *Prajna bheda* is of 3 types: *Dhi, Dhriti and Smriti*.

Philosophical Aspect

The factors responsible for procreation as in the *Shad garbhakara bhava*; *Smriti* is a factor derived from both *Atma*¹⁶ and *Satva*.¹⁷ The statement that 'manifestation of *manasa* occurs during 5th month of pregnancy in the fetal body' indicates the coexistent nature of mind and body.¹⁸ *Smriti* is an attribute destined to *atma* or *smriti* is one among the 16 qualities that are told as the proof for the existence of *Atma*¹⁹. But the *atma* relevant to this context is known as the *Jivatma*.

Acharya Charaka states that remembering of *Tatwagyana* is called as *Smriti* and a person having *Smriti* will not only be free from *Rogavastha* but will also attain *Moksha* that is person do not come back to worldly traps.²⁰

Smriti is one of the causes of both *Pravritti* and *Nivrutti* that is nothing but *Dukha* and *Sukha* respectively.²¹

The four factors which responsible for the mental faculty of the progeny are the mental faculty of parents, the sounds repeatedly heard by the pregnant mother, actions performed by the embryo in his previous life and frequents desire for a particular type of mental faculty by the progeny in his previous life. These are described as the cause for the variability in the psychic temperaments among the individuals.²²

Physiology of Smriti

*Smriti Utapatti karana*²³

There are two factors responsible for the function of *Smriti*:

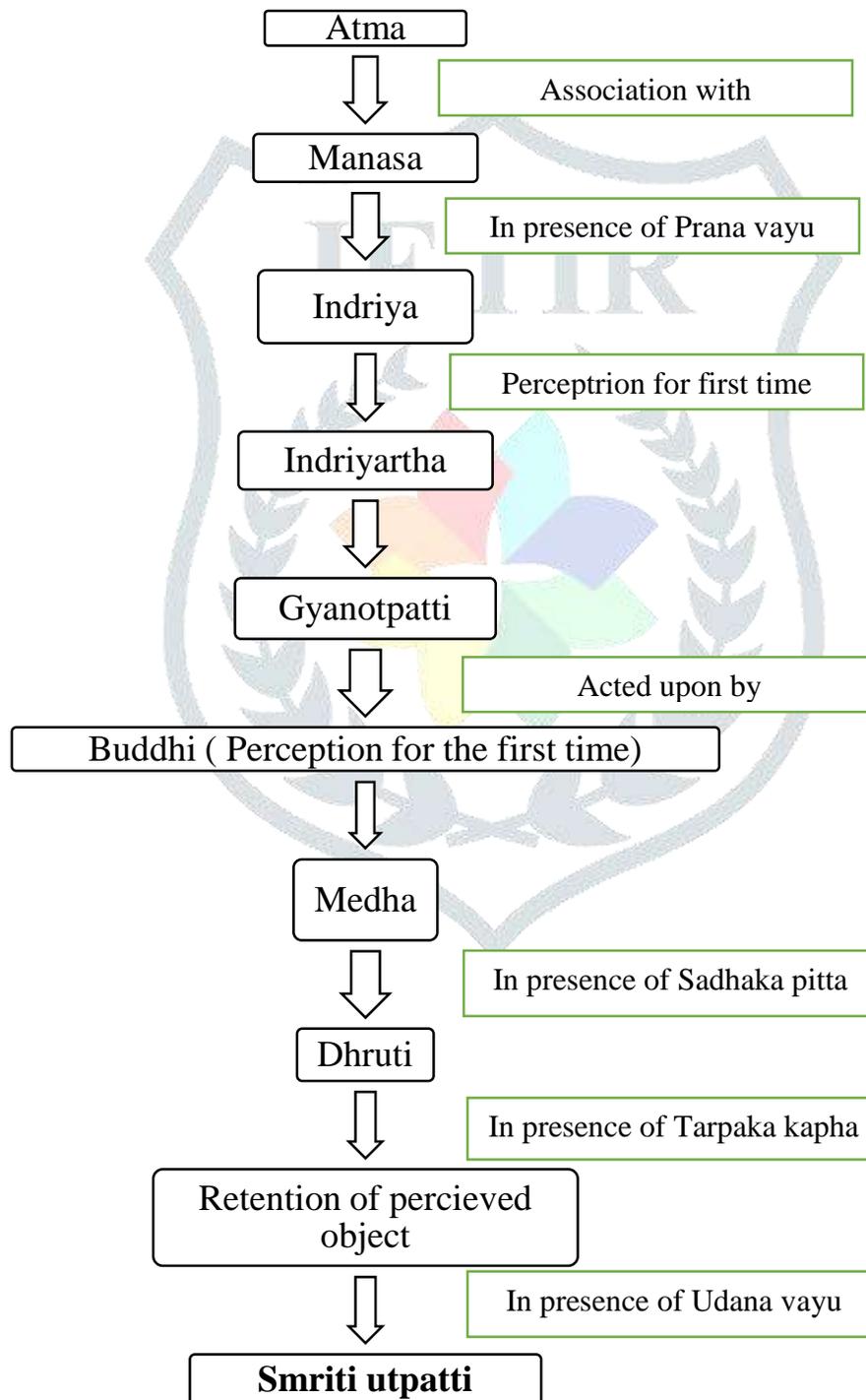
1. *Abhyantara Karana*: *Sannikarsha* of *Atma, Mana, Indriya and Indriyarth*a are responsible for *Smriti*.
2. *Bahya Karana*: Acharya Charaka has mentioned 8 factors whose repeated practice will improve *Smriti*.

They are as:

- a. *Nimitta Grahana* (Reaction to Caused effects)
- b. *Roopagrahana* (Perception of Similar shape and objects)
- c. *Sadrushya* (Similarity)
- d. *Saviparyayata* (Contract)
- e. *Satwanubandha* (Attention)
- f. *Abhyasa* (Repetition)

- g. *Gyanayoga* (divine knowledge)
- h. *Punaha shruta* (Repeated hearing)

Smriti Utapatti



Process of Smriti utpatti

Dosha involvement in Smriti

Doshas are the functional characteristics of body. Different *doshas* are involved in *Smriti utpatti*.

S.No.	Dosha	Action
1	<i>Prana Vayu</i> ²⁴	Control and Stimulation of <i>Mana</i> to analyze the entire perception and action projected to <i>Karmendriyas</i>
2	<i>Udana Vayu</i> ²⁵	Responsible for <i>Smriti</i>
3	<i>Vyana Vayu</i> ²⁶⁻²⁷	Stability and Concentration of <i>mana</i>
4	<i>Sadhaka pitta</i> ²⁸	Responsible for mental faculties like <i>Buddhi, Medha</i>
5	<i>Tarpaka Kapha</i> ²⁹	Nourishes the <i>Indriyas</i> and helps in perception.

Smriti in different Deha prakriti

S. No.	Prakriti	Smriti
1	<i>Vata prakriti</i>	<i>Alpa Smruta</i> ³⁰ (Low memory), <i>Chala smriti</i> ³¹ (unstable memory), <i>Sheeghra vishmaraka</i> ³² (Quick forgetting)
2	<i>Pitta prakriti</i>	<i>Medhavi</i> ³³⁻³⁴ (Intelligent)
3	<i>Kapha Prakriti</i>	<i>Chiragrahi</i> ³⁵ (Slow grasping), <i>Smrutimana</i> ³⁶ (Good memory)
4	<i>Satwika prakriti</i>	<i>Smritimana</i> ³⁷
5	<i>Yamya Kaya</i>	<i>Smritimanta</i> ³⁸⁻³⁹
6	<i>Brahma kaya</i>	<i>Smritimanta</i> ⁴⁰

Smriti and Sara

Among the eight *Sara* described, *Twaka sara purusha*⁴¹ is said to have high intellect and *Satwa sara Purusha*⁴² is endowed with good memory.

Smriti and Vaya:

In *Balyavastha*, the *Dhatu, Indriya, Bala* is in *aparipawawastha* and with the predominance of *Kapha Dosha*.

In *Madhyavastha Bala, Virya, Paurusha, Parakrama, Grahana, Dharana, and Smarana shakti* will be in *Pakwawatha* with the predominance of *Pitta Dosha*.

In *Jaravastha* there is a gradual depletion of *Dhatu, Indriya and Bala* with the predominance of *Vata Dosh*. There is diminution of *Grahana, Dahrana and Smarana* known as *Smritiharsa* (Diminished memory).⁴³⁻

⁴⁴ Memory problems are ubiquitous in our ageing population.⁴⁵

Smriti pariksha- Tests of memory

1. The *Smriti* can be measured by means of ability to recollect the previous experiences.⁴⁶
2. *Medha Grahanena. Grahnneti Granthadi Grahanena*⁴⁷: The intellect or *Medha* is measured on the basis of ability to retain various scripture.
3. *Sangyanaam grahnena*: Recognising the person by name.

Pathological aspect of Smriti

Smriti Bhramsa

When the mind of any person is covered by the *Rajasa* and *Moha* its activities are being taken to such an extent that one cannot be able to recollect the memory stored as it is related to *Tatwagyana* (real knowledge). This condition is termed as *Smritibramsa*.

1. Nidana:
 - a. *Diwaswapna*⁴⁸
 - b. *Gramya Aaharasevana*⁴⁹
 - c. *Madyapana by Garbhini*⁵⁰

2. Samprapti:

In various classics scattered knowledge of *Smritiharsa* can be concluded as:

Mana when getting hindered by *Vata pradhana Tridosha prakopa*, leads to *Rajo* and *tamo Guna Vriddhi* and causing *Avarana of Manovaha srotasa* (occlusion in channels of psychic activities) thereby finally leading to *Dhi, Dhriti and Smriti Vibhramsa*.

Management of *Smriti bhramsa*

1. *Dhi, Dhairyam and Atmadi Vigyana* are the best medicines for the disorders of mind.⁵¹
2. *Sattwika ahara* leads to attainment of excellent memory. (Bhagwat gita)
3. Practicing of yoga endows a person with *Astasiddhi* including *Smriti*.
4. Rhyming nature of *Shlokas* or hymes.
5. Discussion with experts *Tadvid Sambhasha*.⁵²
6. *Acharyasahavaas*⁵³
7. *Shastrapathana*
8. *Abhyasa* or Doing analysis
9. Proper *Nidra*

10. Regular intake of *ghrita*
11. Smriti is increased by consuming *Eranda Sneha*⁵⁴, *Haritaki*⁵⁵, and *Kurma mamsa*.⁵⁶
12. Intake of *Medhya Rasayana Madookaparni*, *Yastimadhu*, *Guduchi*, *Shankhapushpi*.⁵⁷
13. Intake of Various yogas like *Brahmi ghrita*, *Brham rasayana*⁵⁸, *Chyawan prasha*⁵⁹, *Endrarasayana*⁶⁰, *Triphala rasayana*⁶¹, *Shilajatu rasyana*⁶², *Indrokta rasayan*⁶³, *Sarswata choorna*, *Smriti sagar rasa*.
14. After *Shodhana karma Shweta bakuchi Choorna with Guda and Ghrita* for 6 month along with *Pathya* leads to *Smritiyukta* and *Nirogi Shatayu Jeevana*.⁶⁴
15. *Sharira Shuddhi* followed by 12 days intake of *Shweta Vacha and Amalaki* with *Dugdha* on empty stomach along with *Pathya as Ghrita, Dugdha and Shali* increases *Smriti*.⁶⁵
16. *Satwajaya chikitsa*

DISCUSSION

There are similarities, dissimilarities and specificity on concept of *Smriti* in various classics. Even though *Smriti* is directly related to memory, there are other words that aid in remembering things like, *Buddhi*, *Medha* and *Dhriti*. They are interconnected with each other. *Mana* is the entity that relates with *Atma* for the proper cognition. *Buddhi* decides and bifurcate it as the *Hita* and *Ahita*. *Dhi* is the capacity of power of Retention. *Dhriti* is the power that controls the orientation of attitude. *Smriti* helps the brain in recollecting the entire perspective or experienced objects on the basis of concept formed by past experiences. *Charakaacharaya* mentions some formulations quoted the terminologies like *Dhritivardhana*, *Medhakara*, *Smritikara* etc. separately shows that he accepted the separate functional existence in *Dhi*, *Dhriti*, and *Smriti* and this intricate interrelation. *Susruta* mentioned that *Smriti and Anubhava* i.e memory and experience are the two types of *Budhhi*.

On Contemporary review, memory is the process by which information is encoded, stored and retrieved. Encoding allows information that is from the outside world to reach our senses in the form of chemical and physical stimuli. Storage entails that we maintain information over period of time. Finally the third process is retravel of information that we have stored. We must locate it and return it to our consciousness. This whole process is attainment of knowledge is *Gyana*. Brain area involved in neuroanatomy of memory such as the hippocampus, the amygdala, the striatum, or the mammillary bodies are thought to be involved in specific type of memory. *Dharana* and *Smarana karamas* of memory are functions of basal ganglia cells and many researchers support the role of acetyl choline in memory function.

On summarizing perception, Understanding, Intelligence, Retention ability, experience, analysis together help in memory and remembrance. The excellence of memory can be achieved by the combined action of *Buddhi*, *Dhriti* and *Medha*

Different Acharyas described the different aspects, as the meaning of the term it has been elaborated, Smriti does not stand only for recollection but for the very much important factor to whole process involving in the formation of the faculty of memory. Smriti can be understood under the various concepts. The factors like *Dosha, Prakriti, vaya, Sara* etc. influence the memory. Philosophical and Physical concepts like *Dosha, Sara, Prukruti*, are useful for knowledge. At the psychological level, Psychological level concept is well understood through the concepts like *atma, mana and indriyas* attains knowledge and liberation. Pathological aspects are helpful for better understanding of *Smriti* and derangement of *Smriti*.

CONCLUSION:

Smriti is a knowledge of previous experiences of the individual which helps in recollecting and remembering the facts experienced. The factors like *Sharira and Manasa prakriti, Sara*, factors derived at the time of fetal period, Life style, Practice of Yoga, *Ahara, rasayana sevana* etc. influence the memory power of the person. In *Ayurveda, Adravyabhoota and Dravyabhoota chikitsa* are mentioned for excellence of memory. Hence this understanding will help in proper clinical practice.

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