

CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF MEMORY (*SMRITI*) IN AYURVEDA**¹*Dr. Anurag Narware and ²Dr. Saurabh Mehta**

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ABSTRACT

A characteristic of animals and particularly of humans is their ability to alter their behaviour, actions, and perception on the basis of experience. Learning is acquisition of the facts and information. Memory or *Smriti* on the other hand is the retention and storage of that information. Memory has two variables viz. Physiological and Psychological. *Smriti* is derived from both *atma* and *sattva* which starts manifesting itself in the 5th month of intra-uterine life. The article attempts to explain the *Smriti* in its various aspects.

KEYWORDS: *Smriti, Atma, Sattva, Memory.***INTRODUCTION**

The ability of the brain to keep track of many bits of information (facts, figures, stastics, person, behaviour, etc.) simultaneously and to cause recall of this information instantaneously as it is needed for subsequent thoughts is called the memory (*smriti*) or working memory. By combining all these bits of memory we have the abilities to.

- (1) Prognosticate
- (2) Plan for the future
- (3) Solve complicating problems
- (4) Correlating all avenues of information
- (5) Control our activities in accord with moral laws and many more aspects.^[1]

Smriti is a *sanskrit* word from the root *Smara*, which means “remembrance, thinking of or upon”, or simply memory. The word is mentioned in ancient *vedic* literature such as in section 7.13 of the *Chandogya Upanishad*.^[2]

Definition

- *Smr3itiah atitarth vishayagyanam*

The comprehension of previously experienced events and objects is *Smriti*.^[3]

- *Anubhavjanya gyanam smritiah*

Recalling of previously experienced events is *Smarana*

- *Swamyashritkriyajanyagyanam*

Anubhav sanskarjanya gyanam

Smritiah anubhut vishaya gyanam

Information and knowledge gained by the experience of an object, event or incidence is *Smriti*. Any action which leaves to an impression and that can be recalled is *Smriti*.

- *Dhrishtashrutanubhutana smaranat smritiruchayate*

Smriti is nothing but remembrance of an object or event which is experienced cognizantly.^[4]

- *Anubhutartha sampramosha smritiah*

Iti yogasutramapi atranusandhayenam

Anubhutam priyadinamathana chintanam smritiah

Itiyujajvalinilmaniah

Recalling about the previously experienced event is *Smriti* which leads to state of emotions.^[5]

Effects of doshas on Smriti

Vatta, *Piita*, and *Kapha* are the three bodily *doshas* that affects our physiological, as well as psychological aspects. *Vata* is primarily the main *dosha* that is responsible for our minds aspects; it controls, guides, and maintains our *Manah or mind*.

- *Urah sthanmudanasya nasanabhighlashcharet*

Vakkpravitti prayatnorja balavarnasmritikriyah

The *vayu* residing in *urah*, *nasika*, *nabih*, and *kantha* is *udanah*. It stimulates the sound production, joy, strength, colour of skin, and *Smriti*.^[6]

Udana vayu (one of the subdivision of *Vata*) is plays a key role in our memory or *Smriti*. The process of attaining memory is accomplished by *Udana Vayu*.

- *Niyanta praneta cha manasah*

Pranah Vayu controls or maintains all the the acitivity of *manah* (*niyanta* of *manah kriyas*).^[7]

- *Buddhimedhaubhimanadyerabhipretarhasadhanat*

Sadhankam hridayagatam pittam

The *Sadhak pitta* resides in the *hridayam* which is responsible for proper functioning of the *Buddhi*, *Medha*, and *Manah*. All the other emotions like anger, frustration, joy, elation, sadness, etc. are controlled by *Sadhak Pitta*.^[8]

- *Shirahstham snehtarpanadhikritattavadiindriyanamatmaviryeanaugraham karoti*

The *Tarpak Kapha* resides in the head provides nourishment to the centres of brain primarily involved in sensory inputs.^[9]

The stronger the recollection of the past experienced object, the stronger is the memory. *Smriti* and *Grathi* are together responsible for the *Buddhi*.

Memory and it's relationship with personality, age, and nature of the individual

The *Twaka Sara Purusha* – Highesh aspects of intellect are shown^[10]

The *Sattva Sara Purusha* – Best memory^[11]

According to body *Prakritis*

Vatta Prakriti Pradhan Purusha - *Alpa smriti* and *Sruta grahi* with *Chala Smriti*^[12]

Pittah Prakriti Pradhan Purusha – *Medhavi* and highly intellectual^[13]

Kapha Prakriti Pradhan Purusha – *Chiragrahi*^[14]

Medha and *Buddhi* shows deterioration as the age increases. As the age progresses it is seen that their *Grahanam*, *Dharanam*, and *Smaran* decreases with progressive signs of diminishing intellect, intelliigence, and memory.

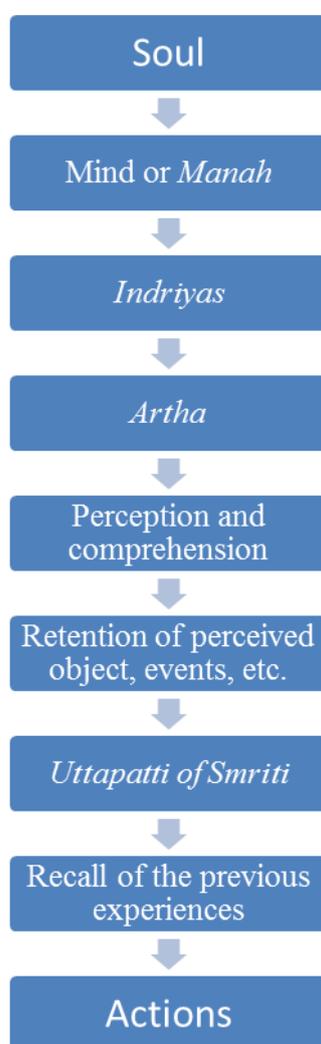
According to *Mansik Doshas*

Rajas and *Tamas* are the two *Manasik Doshas* that are primarily responsible for most of the psychological disorders. The two *doshas* are intricately related with the *Bodily doshas*. *Smriti* is involved in disorders like *Unmada* (*perverted Smriti*)^[15] and *Apasmara* (*Smritinasha*).^[16]

Physiology of *Smriti*

The action of recalling is significant for gaining knowledge since the acquired requires the reproduction of the gained at the right time, place, and event. Acquiring knowledge requires a complex series of mechanisms. The soul intricate with the *Manah*, the *Manah* with the *Indriyas*, and *Indriyas* with the objects. According to *Chakrapani* knowledge can attained via three means viz. *Dhi*, *Dhriti*, and *Smriti*.

The soul is beyond any sensory perceptions and migrates from one body to another with the help of *Manah*.^[17] The actions of the past, health of the parents, most dominant desire of the foetus in the past life, are determinant factors responsible for mental nature.



DISCUSSION

Smriti means remembrance of any events experienced earlier. Our vision and hearing are most important for knowledge perception. One cannot acquire knowledge wholly without

either of these. Three occipitotemporal areas in the central area of vision pathway have a transient response to stimuli, indicating a major role in perceptual processing. The *Acharyas* have hence stressed upon these two senses specifically, and modern science concurs.

Smriti can also be treated as mental faculty. *Chakrapani*, while explaining the proof for the existence of *Atma*, states that *chetana*, *dhriti*, *Smriti*, and *ahamkara* are the types of *buddhi*. For the *Atma* to get the perception after entering the body, it should have the association of *buddhi*. This highlights the importance of *Smriti* to bring about the attachment. He also states, in another context, that *uhapohavichara* and *Smriti* can be termed as *buddhi*. Hence without *Smriti*, *buddhi* cannot function. *Uhapoha* and *vichara* are also critical for *buddhi*, and they arise out of *Smriti* i.e. past experiences.

Acharyas have also explained the methodology to attain knowledge. Contemporary science defines memory as the process by which information is encoded, stored, and retrieved. Encoding allows for the outside information to reach or senses via chemical and physical stimuli. In the first stage, information must be changed for the encoding. Storage, the next stage, involves maintaining information over a period of time. Retrieval is the final stage in which we locate and return the information to our consciousness. This whole process is related to the attainment of knowledge or *jnana*.

Buddhi is an instrument for the *Atma* for attachment. Modern science has evidence of foetal memory existing within the first and second trimester of pregnancy, as early as 30 weeks after conception. Foetal memory is important for parental recognition and bonding between the infant and the parents, and is thus critical for survival, both as a foetus and an infant. This is termed as the attachment.

We must also consider the interrelationship of *Mana*, *Buddhi*, *Dhi*, *Dhriti*, and *Smriti*. *Mana* associates with *Atma* for proper cognition. *Buddhi* dictates out *Hita* and *Ahita*. *Dhi* is the power of retention. *Dhriti* controls the attitude orientation. Finally, *Smriti* helps the mind in recollecting the entire percept or experimented objects in the basis of concepts formed by past experiences. If anyone of these is hampered, the ultimate goal of *jnana-prapti* cannot be attained.

Acharyas have also commented on the relation of *Smriti* with the foetus; the *Mana* is formed in the fifth month during formation of *Garbha*. In contemporary terms, the Central Nervous

System (CNS) and memory in the foetus develop from the ectoderm (outer layer of the embryo) via neurulation. This happens towards the end of the third week of gestation and is followed by the development of the neural tube, crucial to the development of the CNS. Evidence also suggests that memory is responsible for the development of the CNS during neurulation.

The relation between *Dosa* and *Smriti* is also of interest. *Udana Vata* is mainly responsible for *Smriti* along with all other *Doshas*. In contemporary terms, the main centre in the brain is the hippocampus, as it processes new memories for long-term storage. Areas of the brain involved in the neuroanatomy of memory such as the hippocampus, the amygdala, the striatum, and the mammillary bodies are thought to be involved in specific types of memory. The *Dharana* and *Smarana* are both functions of basal ganglia cells of the hippocampus, and researches support the role of acetylcholine in memory-related functions. The term *Vachana* may not refer simply to articulated speech, but rather the capacity for the power of expression of mental concepts. It also seems to relate to memory.

CONCLUSION

Smriti is ability to keep track of many bits of information simultaneously and to cause recalls this information as needed or the imprintation of previous events which is recalled when required. At the psychological background it can be understood on basis of *Atma*, *Mana*, and *Indriyas*. At the physical background it can be understood on the basis of Bodily *Doshas*, *Prakriti*, progressive degeneration of memory with age, *Manah Doshas*, and *Diseases*. The physical background can be related with physiological aspects and the diagnosis of a disease / betterment of memory can be related with *Samprapti* (pathology).

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