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An *Ayurveda* Perspective on Low-Average Intellectual Functioning in Children: A Narrative Review

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ABSTRACT

Children with low average cognitive abilities form a significant concern but less explored group, for whom the progressively increasing cognitive and social expectations at each stage of development can create considerable difficulties in the future.Modern world unnotices the low average intellectual childrens, as they show improper cognitive abilities which masks their future cope ups thus proper reviewing at this cognitive impairment is very essential in the point of modern and *ayurveda* for better interventions.Classical *ayurveda* literature does not describe low-average intelligence as a separate diagnostic entity in contemporary terms; however, scattered references discuss mental functions, intellectual capacity, and factors that may influence development. This narrative review brings together concepts hidden in *ayurveda* literature as *jadata, buddhimandya, manasamandata* which is influenced by *manas, buddhi, medha and smriti* .It outlines the classical terminology, descriptions of psychic constitution, possible prenatal and postnatal influences, and a proposed *samprapti ghataka* as a framework. The discussion emphasizes that these concepts may provide a traditional interpretive framework but should not be equated directly with low average intelligence. Contemporary assessment of a child's cognitive, language, educational and adaptive functioning remains essential. The review aims to organize scattered textual descriptions into a cautious, clinically relevant framework for further study.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda, Low average IQ, Jadatva, Buddhi.*

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INTRODUCTION

Cognitive development plays an important role in a child's learning, reasoning, communication, problem-solving and participation in family, school and community life. Children whose cognitive performance falls in the low-average range may manage many everyday activities, but they can find things more challenging as academic and social expectations grow. Difficulties with understanding, attention, memory or the pace of learning may not always be noticed straight away. Recognizing each child's strengths and support needs can help families and teachers provide suitable learning opportunities[1].

Ayurveda classics do not describe "low-average intelligence" as a separate disease entity in the way contemporary psychological assessment classifies cognitive performance.Classical text coined some of words nearer to low avereage intelligence includes *jadatva,buddimandya and manasamandata*[2]. At the same time, they discuss *manas, buddhi, medha* and *smriti,* along with factors related to their development. This narrative review emphasises on understanding low average intelligence in ayurveda parlance .Thus,we need to put together the various physiological functions of the body humors, concepts of mind, *buddhi*, their pathological conditions, factors influencing them etc. These references are available in scattered form and most of the times are not directly related in the same context but are related in one or the other way. In this part of work, effort is made to bring them all together and explain with a nearer meaning.

1. Ayurveda and cognition-View through piaget's theory

Buddhi, medha, dhee, dhriti, smriti, are the factors which aid for cognition. As stated, each schema is unique and depends on an individual's experiences and cognitive processes, i.e,how a child perceives an object or situation is different from how an adult analysis it. Taking the balyavastha (childhood) into consideration, during this stage there will be *aparipakva avastha*(immature stage) of *dhatu* (builds the basic structure and carry various physiological functions),*indriya, bala* (strength–physically, mentally and in terms of immune power) with the predominance of *kapha dosha*[3]. This is a growing period during which a child will experience disequilibrium as they acquire new information. The state of disequilibrium motivates the child to accommodate new knowledge and achieve equilibrium. But the depth or understanding of knowledge will be limited to the demands of that particular period, and as the age advances it develops accordingly.Children depend largely on the sensory experiences to learn and acquire knowledge. For example, child has already learned how to perform **addition and subtraction** of whole numbers. When the teacher introduces **fractions**, the child initially tries to solve them using the same rules applied to whole numbers, such as adding 1 + 1 and 2 + 4. This is **assimilation**, where the child interprets new information using existing knowledge.as the teacher explains that fractions require a **common denominator** and different rules of operation, the child modifies the previous understanding and develops a new method for solving fraction problems. This adjustment of existing cognitive structures is called **accommodation**.with repeated practice and successful problem-solving, the child gains confidence and correctly applies the new concept whenever fractions are encountered. This balanced state of understanding is known as **equilibrium**, representing the integration of new knowledge into the child's cognitive framework.

Viewing this in *ayurveda* perspective,with the help of *buddhi* and *yatharthanubhava*[4], the child becomes aware that he has to adapt to a new situation since the problem has changed. So, next time when the child is given to solve is given, with the help of *smriti* and *smritikaaranas*[5], he recollects and recognizes the situation and handles the problem. This information then will be formed and stored in the form of the *medha* and used whenever necessary. In case of adults, they use more of their superior cognitive abilities like abstract thinking to comprehend and infer knowledge. This can be said true as the age advances, the complexity of the circumstances increases. With the already gained knowledge, memory and with the much developed physical and mental faculties they become expertise to the situation.

2. Terminologies related to low average intelligence in *ayurveda*

Ayurveda literature has discussed terms such as *buddhimandya, jadata and manasamandata* in connection with diminished, delayed or less responsive mental functioning. *Buddhimandya* combines *buddhi*, which broadly refers to intellectual discernment, with mandya, suggesting diminution or slowness[6]. *Manasamandata* refers to diminished or dull functioning of *manas.Acharya sharangadhara* places *mandabuddhitva* among *kapha nanatmaja* conditions. This attributes the role of *kaphadosha* in the *buddhi*.[7]

3. *Jadata:* A classical descriptor

In the literature reviewed, *jadata* is discussed as a term associated with reduced mental responsiveness or intellectual activity. The word *jadata* mentioned in *ayurveda* texts can be correlated with low average or subnormally intellectual capacity and related disabilities. Amarkosa has referred this word for idiocy or idiots and literally originates from the root ***"jadati ghani dhawanti"*[8].** A *jada* person is unable to differentiate between good and bad tings and feelings of happiness and sorrowness.

In mahabharata this *jada* has been used in the meaning of stupid and unintelligent. In the same way in *panchatantra, kavyadarsha, rajtarangini* it has also been mentioned to mean motionless apathetic or stiff.*Acharya hemachandra* in his book *dhatu parinama* has give the derivation of *jadata* as below *jalghatye, ghatyama jadatvam, ataiksyanyam iti arthah.* Word jada is derived from the root jala, means ghatayay which means jadatvam i.e sharpeners of brain. Etymologically the word jada has been formed by adding"ach"Suffix to the root *jalaghatane*. According to sir. M. Monnir williams (1970) in his dictionary, the word *jada* referred to cold or rigid and has been referred in the context of idiocy, stupid or unintelligent. Singh, r.h. In his book *ayurvediya manas vijana* has mentioned *amedhata* as the state of mental deficiency, the description of which stimulates *jadata*.

4. Aetiopathogenesis of jadata

Susruta while elaborating month wise development of foetus describes that women in the fourth month of pregnancy is called *dauhrdini.*[9] During this period due to the development of heart

in the foetus *cetana* i.e. Consciousness also becomes apparent (heart being the seat of cetana). At this stage the foetus starts desire for the objects of different *indriyas* like sound, touch, vision, taste smell etc, which are fulfilled through the mother, unfulfillment of these desires or inadequate nutrition produces the abnormalities like humpbacked, crooked arms, **mental subnormality**, dwarfism in the foetus.[10] *Acharya kasyapa* the authority on *kaumarabhritya* states that when a multigravida women with *vata* or *pitta* predominant endowment with salt (*lavana rasa pradhana*) breast milk, provides breast feeding to an infant the child becomes lame, dumb ad idiot or *jada*[11]. According to a*stanga sangraha,* pregnant women consuming *vata* aggravating substances uninterruptedly leads to vitiation of *vata* all over the body, ultimately *rajasic* or dynamic nature of *vata* is converted into static process in uterus which ultimately affects the growth of the fetus, as a result the delivered child becomes *jada,* deaf, dumb, hump, dwarf and develops similar other disorders[12].

Thus,*jadata and buddhimandya* are the condition where the mental development is found to be impaired, children either understands little or understanding is delayed, there is no sharpness in the intelligence.

5. Concept of psychic patterns in relation to low average intelligence

Ayurveda classifies various groups of psychic built analogous to the stages of maturity from the vegetable kingdom to the human race in the order of evolution. Charaka called this psychic element as satwa while sushruta named it as kaya. The grouping of mental deficits can be done in one of these varieties depending on the development one reaches at. The various kayas or satwas based on satva, rajasa and tamasa are 18 according to kashyapa and 16 types according to charaka and sushruta. Among these different types two types the tamasik kaya[13] have some of the features comparable with lowaverage intelligence and is discussed here. The various features of tamasika psychic pattern are given in the following table:-

Table no.1 Showing the features of Tamasika kaya

Vanaspatya	A lazy idiot endowed only with eating and devoid of any mental
Matsya	An unsteady, un comprehend able, timid fellow always moving And associated with sexual passion and anger.
Pasava	A disgusted brainless fellow never trim but always sleeps

6. Possible *nidana* and developmental influences on low average intelligence;

6.1. Sahaja factors

The review relates cognitive development to concepts associated *garbha* formation, including *atma*, *satmya* and *satva.* It also discusses *bija, bijabhaga* and *bijabhagavayava dushti* in relation to developmental abnormalitiesMany researches has proved intake of alcohol during the pregnancy causes **fetal alcoholic syndrome** were the child will end up in either mental or physical disabilities along with behavioral problems.[14]

6.2. Garbhaja factors

Under this heading all the factors affecting the fetus during its development in the womb are included. One of the important factors which directly influence the development of the fetus is the type of food which mother eats during pregnancy. ***Maturahara vihara:-*** it has been seen that children born to mothers who take alcohol during pregnancy, will have *alpa smruthi and anavasthitha chitta*.[15]Another concept described by our *acharyas* for mental deficiency in the offspring is unfulfilled longings of the pregnant woman. If the desires (for specific eatables etc.) expressed by a pregnant woman in *dauhrda* are not fulfilled the *vata* dosa gets vitiated and causes mental deficiency in the fetus[16.]*Charaka* says that if a pregnant woman sleeps in excess she produces a child who's lazy and mentally retarded[17].

6.3. Janmottara factors

These include the factors, which affect the child after his birth. Postnatal etiology of jada has been mentioned by *charaka* and *kasyapa* that feeding of *kapha* or *tridosa* vitiated milk causes *jadata* in a child. *Kasyapa* has mentioned this etiology while describing the *ksiraja phakka*, which indicates that *'jadata'* may be also a complication of various paediatric diseases[18].

Table No 2; Proposed samprapti ghataka framework.

Manasika dosha	Tamas
Shariirika dosha	Vata-prana,udana and vyana; pitta-alochaka; kapha-sadhaka and tarpaka
Dushya	Rasa and other dhatus.
Srotas	Manovaha srotas
Agni	Vishama and manda.
Udbhava sthana	Manas.
Adhisthana	Shira and hridaya.
Vyakti sthana	Manas, indriya and the body.
Sanchara sthana	Manovaha srotas.
Purvarupa	Alpa-vyakta lakshana.
Rupa	Impairment of mental activity-bhaya and krodha
Sadhyasadhyata	krichrasadhya to asadhya.

7. Discussion

Low-average intellectual functioning in children is an important yet often overlooked aspect of child development. Although they may not always show obvious developmental difficulties, their individual learning needs can become more apparent over time. From an *ayurveda* perspective, exploring this group requires an understanding of the different concepts related to mental functioning and intellectual development described in the classical texts.*ayurveda* explains cognitive functions through concepts such as *buddhi, medha, dhee, dhriti* and *smriti*[19]. Each contributes to a different aspect of mental activity, including understanding, retention, recollection and the appropriate application of knowledge. Together, these concepts provide a broader way of looking at how a child learns and responds to different situations. The references discussed in this review suggest that cognitive functioning is not understood through a single faculty alone, but through the combined functioning of several mental faculties.

Classical terms such as *jadata, buddhimandya* and *manasamandata* are relevant to this discussion because they describe different aspects of diminished or delayed mental functioning.in particular, *jadata* has been used in certain classical and historical descriptions to indicate forms of intellectual impairment[20]. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to consider these terms exact equivalents of low- average intellectual functioning as defined by contemporary psychological assessment. Instead, they provide a starting point for exploring how reduced intellectual responsiveness and delayed understanding have been described in traditional literature.

The concept of *balyavastha* also offers an important perspective on childhood cognition. *Ayurveda* describes childhood as a period in which the *dhatu, indriya* and *bala* are still developing. This highlights the need to understand a child's mental abilities in relation to their stage of growth and maturity. The relationship between *buddhi, yatharthanubhava, smriti* and *medha* may be interpreted as a process through which experiences are understood, retained and applied in future situations. Such an interpretation helps explain the relevance of learning experiences and repeated exposure in the development of cognitive abilities, although this proposed relationship requires further study.

The classical references discussed under *sahaja, garbhaja* and *janmottara* factors further indicate that the development of a child is considered in relation to constitutional, prenatal and postnatal influences. Concepts such as *beeja, beejabhaga* and *beejabhagavayava* provide a traditional framework for discussing inherited and developmental factors. Similarly, descriptions related to maternal diet, pregnancy-related practices and postnatal influences reflect the importance given to early developmental conditions. These references can be explored in relation to contemporary knowledge of child development, but they should not be interpreted as establishing specific causal relationships without supporting evidence.

The classification of *satva* and the descriptions of different psychic patterns add another dimension to the *ayurvedic* understanding of mental functioning. Certain features described under *tamasika kaya* taken as reduced mental responsiveness or diminished intellectual activity.Every child has a distinct developmental profile, and individual differences must be considered while interpreting these classical descriptions.One of the important observations from this review is that *ayurveda* concepts may help broaden the discussion of childhood cognition and draw certain conclusions which may help in planning the

interventions.Understanding a child's cognitive abilities requires attention to learning, language, memory, attention, adaptive functioning and educational performance.Bringing these references together may help establish a foundation for future research, provided that their original meanings are respected and their clinical relevance is examined systematically.

Conclusion

Ayurveda provides a traditional framework for exploring childhood cognition through *buddhi, medha, smriti* and related concepts, along with descriptions of *jadata, buddhimandya* and developmental influences. This review brings together these scattered references to develop a broader *ayurvedic* perspective on low-average intellectual functioning in children.Since low-average intellectual functioning is not described as a distinct diagnostic entity in the classical literature reviewed, these concepts should be interpreted cautiously rather than equated directly with modern classifications. Further research is needed to establish their clinical relevance. A thoughtful integration of *ayurvedic* perspectives with contemporary developmental assessment may offer a valuable direction for future research in *kaumarabhritya*.

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