



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Spiritualism And Food Culture: A Study Of Panchamrit Elements

Ambika Sankar Mishra,
Associate Professor,
Journalism and Mass Communication
Rama Devi Women's University,
Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Abstract:

Healthy food nourishes body mind and soul. Like pure water, sunlight, clean air, good sleep and exercise, nutritious food is another important requirement for healthy life. Ayurveda considers proper food as the best medicine for body, mind, and soul. Healthy food promotes healthy life and unhealthy food promotes illness and affects metabolism. Hinduism in India through Sanatan way of life, promotes various foods which are essential for a healthy life. The Sanatan practices through religious rituals promotes such foods according to occasions and seasons. In many such rituals Panchamrit is used as a prominent mixture of different food elements for bathing of idols. It is developed by mixing of five elements which are milk, curd, Ghee, Honey and raw sugar or jaggery. These five elements are called as five amrit or five great elements to promote healthy life. This paper here is an attempt to understand the nutritional and medicinal values of five elements used in Panchamrit through case study method.

Key words: Food, Ritual, Nutrition, Health, Element

Introduction

India is one among the oldest civilizations of the world. It is a society, which has witnessed the acculturation process from the era of Aryan Invasion to the era of multimedia convergence. At each stage it has taken cultural elements from others to make its culture more and more rich. Indian culture, which is composite by nature had never ignored other cultures rather to keep different cultural elements together, it has made itself diverse by nature. Witnessing different ages of cultural diffusion, it has seen the Aryan era of Indo-Gangetic plains, the caste ridden Brahminic culture, the Buddhist, Bhakti, Mughal, and British era. It has captured certain elements from different phases of history and at the same time has also gone through many reform movements. In the post-colonial era it has tried to adopt changes through the process of Sanskritization, westernization and Modernization due to industrialization, and Urbanization. It is diverse and pluralistic in its food, medicine and health practices (Mathpati MM, 2020) . This country, which is highly culture rich, has tried itself to reflect the essence of its culture in its each and every aspect of lives of its people. People here consider the nature as their mother and consider the different elements of nature as the sole creator and destroyer of the complete universe. The Indian Ayurveda which emphasizes on the theory of five great elements (Pancha Mahabhoota) also talks that the "Pancha Mahabhoota (five great elements) " in different ways contribute to the life and health of

Individuals of a society. Similarly in India food is not only an element to fill the empty stomach rather it is the most important element to influence our life system as food and living body both are directly connected to these five elements. The great Indian philosophy believes in the concept that the living body is created from, maintained through and again goes back to these great five elements.

If we refer to Ayurveda we will know that the Ayurveda considers food as the sole reason for the survival and existence of the living being on this earth. According to Ayurved, food or ahara is one among the important pillars for healthy life (Sukesh Suni, 2021) The Ayurveda talks that the food has purifying and rejuvenating effect on the human body and finally talking about the functions of food, the Ayurveda considers food as the medicine for human body and it emphasizes on the proper selection of food for a healthy life. The modern science also accepts the fact that a healthy diet is essential for the betterment of humans. It emphasizes on different types of food elements and talks about their proper preparation methods. It advises regarding the dos and don'ts associated with food culture. This involves selecting the right food and selecting them in the right way (Banerjee S, 2014). The Ayurvedic nutrition science associated with the traditional food selection method at the same time has emphasized on the amount of food to be taken by individuals. Traditional knowledge regarding preparation and preservation of food is an age-old knowledge in India. Similarly, knowledge regarding therapeutical use of food is an established knowledge in India (Sarkar Preetam, 2015). The Ayurveda which has relations with traditional Indian nutrition science has emphasized on the healthy way of life and the nutrition experts of those days had a proper understanding of complex biochemistry associated with process of nutrition. They have tried to use the same knowledge in a very tricky manner using religion as the most useful tool to preserve and disseminate knowledge as religion is a social institution. In case of a crucial area like health and nutrition they have not made the common man to worry with the complexities of biochemistry rather they have institutionalized the use of different food and medicine through religious ceremonies and ritual practices. Thus, while discussing on the above idea, we can understand that the great Indian philosophers had a very prolific knowledge on different food items both of plant and animal origin and because of that, in different hymns of Veda they have talked about different superfoods to ensure the society a healthy life as health is wealth. They have identified superfoods and understood their values and have recommended them individually, as mixtures and even on seasonal basis. The knowledge was so deep that, at various cases they have recommended about, quantity, time and seasons on which different foods should be consumed. However, many times it has been found that they have talked about mixtures of food elements for different other purposes than eating. The “*Panchamrit*” which is a product of the mixture of the five Amritas or five superfoods is considered as a very sacred item in different religious practices. It also falls under a category of food element mixture not recommended as food. The five elements are Milk, Curd, Ghee, Honey and Sugar. In the Hindu mythological belief “*Amrit*” is considered as an auspicious thing and it has the power to keep human being healthy having power of making one alive beyond the limits of time. Thus speaking in a nutshell, it can be said that the five elements of “*Panchamrit*” are the individual amrits and individually as food they are miraculous by nature. The five elements Milk, Butter, Ghee, Honey, and Sugar have got a crucial position in the Hindu belief system associated with “*Panchamrit*.” But by the passage of time with the change in life style and due to the impact of industrialization, urbanization, and corporate way of living, our food habits and food choices have changed. Adopting the fast food and preserved food consumption culture we have gone affected by many diseases and the propaganda-based advertising world is also influencing our life style and the food business of the corporate companies have affected us a lot Thus, in a world when we are restricted for many foods, at that time, it is better to cherish ayurveda with its spirit by preferring different foods. Thus, the elements of panchamrit can be considered as important food elements to provide proper nutrition to the body for providing a proper health and growth to the body of individuals in a society. Thus they need to be understood properly and there is a need to revisit into the knowledge system established by great Indian philosophers

The Study

The study here aims to understand the importance of panchamrit elements, considering their nutritional and health benefits. It also emphasizes to analyze the benefits of each of the panchamrit elements through case study method referring to available literature. Case study method is taken into consideration because it offers an in-depth and multifaceted analysis (Crowe S, 2011). Thus in this case it can provide a better understanding to the problem. Here for the purpose of the study all the five elements of panchamrit that is Milk, Curd, Ghee, Honey and Sugar are taken into consideration and each one of them will be analyzed separately according to available literature.

Panchamrit element “Milk” and its health and nutritional benefits

Milk is considered as one among the important elements of panchamrit. It is a prominent food for kids and infants as it helps for the growth of their skeleton and body structure (Kourkouta, 2020). Milk and milk products are rich with great food values and are highly affordable. They provide most of the essential nutrients plentifully in comparison to any single food. For health and well-being, in context of weight gain or weight loss milk always plays crucial role (Chen, 2012). Since ages almost all civilizations have included milk as a prominent food in their menu. It is a nutrient rich food prominently filled with fats, protein, calcium, and many other minerals. Milk as a prominent food is filled with antibodies and it is extremely helpful in boosting our immune system. It is also a major source for nourishing the body with good fats. Milk is also a prominent supplier of Vitamin B12 which fights against many diseases. (Górska-Warsewicz, 2019). The prominent benefits of milk are bone health, muscle function, hydration, and providing energy.

Panchamrit element “Curd” and its health and nutritional benefits

Curd is considered as a prominent milk product which contains Calcium, Vitamin B2, Vitamin B12, Protein, Fat, Probiotics. The presence of calcium supports the growth and maintenance of bones and similarly as a fermented food due to presence of probiotics, it promotes digestive health (Hadjimbei, 2022). Curd fulfills the fat requirement of body but fat in curd is mostly low in content. The overall benefits of curd are digestive health, bone health. It supports energy metabolism. Similarly, according to some studies, it helps in Controlling Blood Pressure, skin health, heart health and helps in managing stress and anxiety (Priya, 2024). Similarly, according to ayurveda, it decreases the “Kapha” and “Vata” dosa out of three prominent dosas or problems associated with human body. Though it is prohibited in ayurveda that curd should not be used in spring and autumn but at the same time the health benefits of curd are not ignored in the same. According to ayurveda curd has elements for better health, that is why curd is listed as an auspicious food in Indian traditions and people are advised to take curd and sugar together while going out for an important work (Inchekar, 2023).

Panchamrit element “ghee” and its health and nutritional benefits

Ghee is considered as one among the important milk products and beneficial for health. It is considered as a superfood in context of both ayurveda and modern science. The various beneficial nature of ghee since ages have attracted people to such an extent that in India nearly 35 % of milk is converted to ghee. The use of ghee for cooking and medicinal uses have grown in India over centuries. In Sanskrit language ghee is called as a “Rasayana.” And according to ayurveda Ghee as a “Rasayana” can manage nutrient distribution system of body and helps the body to receive nutrients from food. Similarly, it is not only rich in flavor and taste but also many studies have shown that ghee is good in context of cardio vascular health. Again, due to anti-inflammatory properties ghee is highly useful to fight against multiple diseases.

As a food it is a highly useful source for the enhancement of human memory, brilliance, and intellect. This food also works nicely to fight against diseases. Even in management of diseases like epilepsy and insanity ghee is considered to be beneficial. The ayurvedic literature emphasizes on the gastrointestinal benefits of ghee. Studies have shown that ghee is beneficial and anti-cancerous due to its anti-tumor properties. Similarly, ghee

as a super food is useful due to its skin healing properties and helps in wound healing and damage repair in the body (Hazra Tanmay, 2015) . Ghee is identified as a medicine in Ayurveda and it is used in case of various external and internal disorders. it is also used as a medium to prepare various traditional medicines in India (Kataria, 2024). It is also a good source of energy due to its molecular composition (Kumar, 2018).

Panchamrit element “honey” and its health and nutritional benefits

Honey as a food is rich in nutrition. There are sufficient evidences which prove the fact that honey is getting used as a medicine to treat several diseases. Even stone age paintings also depict this fact (Samarghandian, 2017). Honey, one of nature's most remarkable gifts, has been an essential part of human life for millennia, valued not only for its sweetness but also for its profound medicinal, cultural, and nutritional role (Wang, 2025). This is rich with antioxidant and has anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial properties. Different studies have proved that honey as a superfood is beneficial for a better cardiovascular health and is against cancer. It is antidiabetic, antimicrobial by nature helps to fight against obesity. It is a rich antioxidant thus helps to boost the immune system. Having medicinal properties, honey proves itself in treating various diseases. Cough is a very common disease in case of young and adults. However, honey in cough treatment proves itself very useful and since centuries honey is getting used as a medicine in cough treatment. Similarly due to antibacterial nature , honey has proved itself as an effective element in wound healing. Due to low glycemic index, honey has proved itself as an effective and nutritious alternative for people with diabetics. Honey is rich in vitamins and minerals. Thus, historically many civilizations have considered it as a food which increases fertility among people (Zaid, 2021)

Panchamrit element “Sugar” and its health and nutritional benefits

Sugar is considered as an element in preparing panchamrit. However the sugar which is used to prepare panchamrit, is not the white sugar which we use in present times. The sugar which is used to prepare panchamrit, is jaggery. Thus while discussing about panchamrit elements it is wiser to discuss about jaggery than sugar. Sugar came to world after the invasion of Alexander the great (Gulati, 2014). Talking about Jaggery, it can be said that jaggery has a low glycemic index in comparison to sugar and rich with fiber , it is highly useful for health. Similarly, it has properties like supporting in digestion, cleansing liver and it has also anti oxidant properties. Thus, it is highly beneficial for human health (Dubey, 2023).

Panchamrit is not a food: the contradictory combination of Ghee and Honey

Panchamrit consists of five prominent food elements like Milk, Curd, Ghee, Honey, and Sugar. As discussed above, individually each of them are superfoods but the combination of honey with ghee turns it to a deadly combination because the association of ghee with honey converts it to a slow poison (Aditi, 2020). Thus due to such unwanted results the ancient Indians have not recommended panchamrit as a food item rather they have recommended it as an item which can be used to wash the lords.

Conclusion

The study finds that panchamrit is an unique combination of five superfoods such as Milk, Curd, Ghee, Honey, and Sugar and the ancient Indian experts being aware about the medicinal and nutritional qualities of such items have placed importance on these items to make the society aware about the good qualities of individual items , they have preserved knowledge relating to them through the mixture called panchamrit but at the same time they have not recommended it as a food as ghee and honey combination is not a good combination as food. Thus, it can be understood that through panchamrit the ancient Indian philosophers have tried to remind us about the great qualities involved in our easily available superfoods.

References

1. Aditi, P. S. (2020). Toxicity profile of honey and ghee, when taken together in equal ratio. *Toxicology reports*, 624–636.
2. Banerjee S, D. P. (2014). Ayurnutrigenomics: Ayurveda-inspired personalized nutrition from inception to evidence. *Journal of Traditional and Complementary Medicine*, 228-233.
3. Chen, M. P. (2012). Effects of dairy intake on body weight and fat: a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *The American journal of clinical nutrition*, 735–747.
4. Crowe S, C. K. (2011). The case study approach. *BMC medical research methodology*, 10.1186/1471-2288-11-100.
5. Dubey, K. M. (2023). Incorporation of jaggery in beetroot jam enhances its antioxidant properties with acceptable sensory and physicochemical profile. *Food and Humanity*, 985-995.
6. Górska-Warsewicz, H. R. (2019). Milk and Dairy Products and Their Nutritional Contribution to the Average Polish Diet. *Nutrients*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu11081771>.
7. Gulati, S. &. (2014). Sugar intake, obesity, and diabetes in India. *Nutrients*, 5955-5974.
8. Hadjimbei, E. B. (2022). Beneficial Effects of Yoghurts and Probiotic Fermented Milks and Their Functional Food Potential. *Foods*, <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods11172691>.
9. Hazra Tanmay, S. P. (2015). Ghee- As Medicine. *Indian Farmer*, 16-20.
10. Inchekar, A. a. (2023). Therapeutic use of Curd in Digestive Disorders in Ayurveda. *AYUSHDHARA*, 230-233.
11. Kataria, D. S. (2024). Health benefits of ghee: Review of Ayurveda and modern science perspectives . *Journal of Ayurveda and integrative medicine*, doi.org/10.1016/j.jaim.2023.100819.
12. Kourkouta, L. a. (2020). Milk Nutritional Composition and Its Role in Human Health. *Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology*, 8-13.
13. Kumar, A. a. (2018). Ghee : Its Properties, Importance and Health Benefits. *Ghee : Its Properties, Importance and Health Benefits LIPID UNIVERSE*, 6-14.
14. Mathpati MM, A. S. (2020). Ayurveda and medicalisation today: The loss of important knowledge and practice in health? *Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine*, 89-94.
15. Priya, K. (2024, September 5). *healthshy*. Retrieved from <https://healthsy.app/>: <https://healthsy.app/all-category-blog/7-surprising-benefits-of-curd-and-its-side-effects>
16. Samarghandian, S. F. (2017). Honey and Health: A Review of Recent Clinical Research. *Pharmacognosy research*, 121-127.
17. Sarkar Preetam, D. L. (2015). Traditional and ayurvedic foods of Indian origin. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 97-109.
18. Sukesh Suni, S. a. (2021). An Ayurvedic View on Food (Ahara)—A Review. *Biology and Life Sciences Forum*, 10.3390/Foods2021-11006.

19. Wang, M. G.-D. (2025). Health benefits of honey: A critical review on the homology of medicine and food in traditional and modern contexts. *Journal of Traditional Chinese Medical Sciences*, doi.org/10.1016/j.jtcms.2025.03.015.
20. Zaid, S. S. (2021). Protective Roles of Honey in Reproductive Health: A Review. *Molecules*, doi.org/10.3390/molecules26113322.

