

A CRITICAL REVIEW ON AYURVEDIC CUISINE: BRIDGING ANCIENT CULINARY SCIENCE WITH MODERN NUTRITION, THERAPEUTICS AND BIOECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

Ayurvedic cuisine is a holistic dietary system that integrates nutrition, culinary practices, and therapeutics to promote health, prevent disease, and maintain physiological balance. Classical Ayurvedic texts regard *Ahara* (diet) as one of the *Trayopastambha* (three sub pillars of life) and describe food as *Mahabhaisajya* (the greatest medicine). Unlike conventional nutrition, Ayurvedic cuisine emphasizes on individual constitution (*Prakriti*), digestive capacity (*Agni*), seasonal adaptation, and appropriate food processing. This review critically examines the principles of Ayurvedic cuisine with special reference to classical culinary preparations mentioned in Samhitas along with *Soopa Shastra*, and explores their relevance in the context of modern nutrition, therapeutics and the emerging bioeconomy. Integrating these traditional principles into healthcare and food industries may support

preventive healthcare, nutritional security, and sustainable economic development.

KEYWORDS: Ayurvedic Cuisine, Soopashastra, Ahara, Nutrition; Therapeutics, Bioeconomy.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, considers Ahara (food) to be one of the fundamental determinants of health and longevity. The *Trayopastambha* (three sub-pillars of life) of Ayurveda is—*Ahara* (food), *Nidra* (sleep), and *Brahmacharya* (regulated conduct).^[1] *Ahara* is also regarded as the foremost sustainer of life.^[2] Classical Ayurvedic texts describe food as *Mahabhaisajya* (the greatest medicine) and emphasize that appropriate dietary practices are essential for maintaining health, preserving the equilibrium of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala*, and preventing disease. According to Acharya Charaka, the primary objective of Ayurveda is *Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam* (preservation of health in the healthy) and *Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam* (alleviation of disease in the diseased), in which diet plays a pivotal role.^[3]

The practical application of these dietary principles is reflected in Ayurvedic cuisine, a scientific system of selecting, processing, preparing, combining, and consuming food according to Ayurvedic principles. Unlike conventional nutrition, which primarily emphasizes nutrient composition whereas Ayurvedic cuisine considers *Rasa Panchaka* (*Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, *Vipaka*, and *Prabhava*), together with *Ahara Vidhi Vishesh Ayatanani*, *Ahara Vidhi Vidhan*, and *Viruddha Ahara* etc. to provide a personalized approach to nutrition and dietary rules to maximize both nutritional and therapeutical benefits.

The ancient culinary preparations are extensively described in classical Ayurvedic literature, particularly under *Kritanna Varga* by Charaka, *Annapana Varga*, and *Bhakshya Varga* by *Sushruta*, where preparations made from cereals, pulses, milk, vegetables, fruits, meat, and other natural food resources are systematically classified according to their methods of preparation, nutritional attributes and therapeutic applications. Among the specialized culinary treatises, *Soopashastra* (*Pakashashtra*) by Mangarasa III (1508 CE) is one of the earliest comprehensive works devoted exclusively to culinary science, documenting recipes, cooking techniques, utensils, and processing methods that demonstrate the remarkable advancement of food science in ancient India.

In recent years, the increasing prevalence of lifestyle disorders and growing interest in preventive healthcare have renewed scientific attention toward traditional dietary systems. Several principles of Ayurvedic cuisine closely correspond with the concepts of modern nutrition, including personalized nutrition, functional foods, nutraceuticals, gut microbiome modulation, and sustainable dietary practices. Beyond its nutritional value, Ayurvedic cuisine

also possesses significant therapeutic potential that support digestion, metabolism, recovery, and disease management.

Furthermore, Ayurvedic cuisine has considerable relevance to the emerging bioeconomy, which promotes the sustainable utilization of renewable biological resources for the production of food, healthcare products, and other value-added commodities. The use of indigenous crops, medicinal plants, traditional food-processing techniques, and biodiversity-based food systems described in Ayurveda provides opportunities for developing sustainable functional foods, nutraceuticals, and Ayurveda-based wellness products while supporting environmental sustainability and rural livelihoods.

Therefore, this review critically examines Ayurvedic cuisine as a bridge between ancient culinary science, modern nutrition, therapeutics, and the bioeconomy, with special reference to *Kritanna Varga* and *Soopashastra*, and highlights its relevance to contemporary healthcare and sustainable food systems.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This narrative review was based on classical Ayurvedic texts, including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Bhavaprakasha, and Soopashastra (Pakashastra) by Mangarasa III.

Relevant scientific literature was also retrieved from PubMed, Google Scholar, and Scopus using keywords such as Ayurvedic cuisine, Soopashastra, Ahara, Kritanna Kalpana, functional foods, nutraceuticals, and bioeconomy.

The collected literature was critically reviewed and synthesized to evaluate the nutritional, therapeutic, and bioeconomic relevance of Ayurvedic cuisine in the context of contemporary healthcare and sustainable food systems.

RESULTS

Table 1: Nutritional and Therapeutic Significance of Selected Ayurvedic Preparations.

Cuisine Name	Clinical Values (Ayurvedic)	Nutritional Value (Modern View) Ingredients based
Odana (Rice) ^[4,5,6,7] Ingredients- rice, 5 part water Preparation- after washing & cooking the rice, manda is separated. This cooked Rice, is called Odana.	Dīpana (digestive stimulant), Pathya (wholesome; conducive to health), Tarpana (nourishing; satiating), Rocana (appetite-enhancing) Indications- Mandagni, Convalescence, Weak digestion, General nourishment	Macronutrients- Rich in complex carbohydrates, Moderate protein, Very low fat Micronutrients- B-complex vitamins, Iron, Magnesium, Potassium
Supa (Pulse Soup/Dal) ^[8] Ingredients- 1 part Dal, 16 part water, Ginger, Asafoetida, Saindhav lavan Preparation- wash the Split pulse and cook with sufficient water, until soft. Add saindhav lavan, Ginger and asafoetida.	Pathya (wholesome), Laghu (light to digest), Dīpana (digestive stimulant), Pācana (digestive). Beneficial in Vrana, Kantharoga, and Akṣiroga. Specific varieties Mudga Supa: Pathya, Laghu. Kulattha Supa: Vātānulomana, Lekhana.	Macronutrients Rich in protein, Complex carbohydrates, Dietary fibre Micronutrients Iron, Calcium, Folate, Potassium, B-complex vitamins, Bioactive compounds Ginger: Gingerols (digestive, antioxidant), Asafoetida: Carminative phytochemicals, Rock salt: Trace minerals
Krishara (Khichadi) ^[9,10] Ingredients: Rice, pulses, ghee, ginger, asafoetida, rock salt. Preparation: Rice and pulses cooked together until soft.	Bālya (strength-promoting), Br̥mhaṇa (nourishing), Śukrakara (reproductive tonic), Buddhivardhaka (cognition-enhancing) Caution- Guru and Cirapāki, Suitable for individuals with good digestive strength. Excess intake may aggravate Kapha and Pitta.	Macronutrients Complex carbohydrates High-quality plant protein Healthy fats (ghee) Micronutrients Iron, Folate Zinc, Lysine, B-complex vitamins, Bioactive compounds Ginger: Anti-inflammatory and digestive properties, Asafoetida: Carminative effect
Shulya Pala (Kebab) ^[11] Ingredients- Meat of liver and other edible organs, Ghee, Salt Preparation- Pound the liver and other edible organ meats. Mix with the required quantity of ghee and salt. Secure the mixture onto an iron skewer. Roast slowly over a smokeless fire until completely cooked and tender. Serve as Sulya Pala.	Sudhātulya (nectar-like; highly wholesome), Rucya (palatable; appetite-promoting), Agnidīpaka (digestive stimulant), Laghu (light to digest), Kapha-Vātahara (alleviates Kapha and Vāta), Bālya (strength-promoting), Kiñcit Pittakara (slightly Pitta-aggravating).	Macronutrients High-quality protein, Moderate fat, Low carbohydrates Micronutrients Vitamin A, Vitamin B12, Riboflavin, FolateIron, Zinc, Selenium, Phosphorus

Vesavara^[12,13,14,15] Ingredients: Boneless meat, ghee, rock salt, turmeric, asafoetida (Hingu), water. Preparation: Turmeric and asafoetida are sautéed in ghee. Boneless meat is washed, drained, cut into small pieces, and slowly roasted until the moisture evaporates. The roasted meat is then pounded into a paste, mixed with water, and cooked again to prepare Vesavara (Mamsa Soup).	Guru (heavy to digest), Snigdha (unctuous), Bālya (strength-promoting), Vātahara (alleviates Vāta).	Macronutrients- High-quality protein, Moderate fat, Low carbohydrates Micronutrients- Iron, Zinc, Phosphorus, Vitamin B12, Selenium
Sevika (Semai / Vermicelli Preparation)^[16] Ingredients Maida (Refined wheat flour), Milk, Ghee, Sugar Preparation Prepare thin vermicelli-like strands from maida and dry thoroughly. Cook the dried strands in milk until soft. Add ghee and sugar and cook until smooth and well blended. Serve warm as Sevika.	Tarpaṇī (nourishing; satiating), Bālya (strength-promoting), Guru (heavy to digest), Grāhī (absorbent; improves stool consistency), Sandhikṛt (promotes tissue union; supports healing), Rucya (palatable; appetite-promoting), Pitta–Anilāpaha (alleviates Pitta and Vāta).	Macronutrients High carbohydrates, Moderate protein, Moderate fat Micronutrients Calcium, Phosphorus, Vitamin B12, Riboflavin, B-complex vitamins
Sharbat^[17] Ingredients: Sugar, water, cardamom, clove, camphor, and black pepper (Maricha). Preparation: Sugar is dissolved in water, followed by the addition of powdered cardamom, clove, camphor, and black pepper. The mixture is stirred thoroughly and served as Shorbaati.	Vṛṣya (aphrodisiac; fertility-promoting), Bālya (strength-promoting).	Macronutrients- High carbohydrates (simple sugars) Negligible protein, Negligible fat Micronutrients- Small amounts of potassium and trace minerals (ingredient dependent) Bioactive Compounds Cardamom: Essential oils with digestive and antioxidant properties. Clove: Eugenol with antioxidant and antimicrobial activity. Black pepper: Piperine, which enhances digestion and nutrient bioavailability. Camphor: Aromatic volatile compounds

Rotika (Roti)^[18] Ingredients- Godhuma (Wheat flour), Water Preparation Knead wheat flour with water to form a smooth dough. Dust with dry flour and knead well. Roll into a slightly thick circular roti. Roast on a hot tava and finish cooking over direct flame or burning embers until fully cooked. The finished preparation is called Rotikā	Balakṛt (strength-promoting), Rucya (palatable; appetite-promoting), Bṛmhāṇa (nourishing; anabolic), Dhātuvardhinī (promotes tissue nourishment), Vātaghna (alleviates Vāta), Kaphakṛt (increases Kapha), Guru (heavy to digest)	Macronutrients Complex carbohydrates, Moderate plant protein, Dietary fibre Micronutrients Iron, Magnesium, Phosphorus, Zinc, Potassium, Manganese, B-complex vitamins.
Parpata (Papad)^[19] Ingredients Dhūmasī flour, Asafoetida, Haridrā, Saindhava Lavana, Jiraka, Sajjīkṣāra, Water Preparation- Knead Dhūmasī flour with water to form a smooth dough. Add asafoetida, turmeric, rock salt, cumin, and sajjīkṣāra. Divide into small balls and roll into thin circular discs. Roast over fire or charcoal before serving. The finished product is known as Parpaṭa (Papad).	Balakṛt (strength-promoting), Rucya (palatable; appetite-promoting), Bṛmhāṇa (nourishing; anabolic), Dhātuvardhinī (promotes tissue nourishment), Vātaghna (alleviates Vāta), Kaphakṛt (increases Kapha), Guru (heavy to digest).	Macronutrients Plant protein Complex carbohydrates Dietary fibre Micronutrients Iron, Folate, B-complex vitamins Bioactive Compounds Curcumin, Cuminaldehyde, Asafoetida phytochemicals contains less fat than fried preparation
Purika (Oil-Fried Kachori)^[20] Ingredients- Urad dal paste (Masa Piṣṭika), Samita (Maida/Refined wheat flour), Saindhava Lavana (Rock salt), Adraka (Ginger), Hingu (Asafoetida), Ghee or oil (for frying) Preparation- Prepare a stuffing using urad dal paste mixed with rock salt, ginger, and asafoetida. Prepare a smooth dough from maida. Fill the dough with the stuffing and roll into a flat disc. Deep-fry in ghee or oil until golden brown. Serve as	Rucya (palatable; appetite-promoting), Svādu (pleasant-tasting), Guru (heavy to digest), Snigdha (unctuous), Bālya (strength-promoting), Vātahara (alleviates Vāta), Uṣṇa Vipāka (hot post-digestive effect)	Macronutrients High carbohydrates, Moderate plant protein, High fat Micronutrients Iron, Calcium, Folate, Potassium, B-complex vitamins Bioactive Compounds Gingerols, Asafoetida phytochemicals

Purika.		
Kvathita (Kadhi) ^[21] Ingredients: besan, Takra, ghee or oil, asafoetida, Haridra, Saindhava Lavana, and Maricha Preparation: Ghee or oil is heated in a pan, and asafoetida and turmeric are sautéed. The gram flour suspension and buttermilk (Takra) are then added and cooked over a low flame. Finally, black pepper and rock salt are added, and the preparation is simmered until it reaches the desired consistency.	Dīpana (digestive stimulant), Pācana (digestive; promotes metabolism of undigested matter), Rucya (palatable; appetite-promoting), Laghu (light to digest), Vātānulomana (normalizes the downward movement of Vāta; carminative).	Macronutrients Moderate protein (gram flour and buttermilk), Low-to-moderate carbohydrates, Moderate fat (depending on ghee/oil) Micronutrients Calcium, Phosphorus, Potassium B-complex vitamins Bioactive Compounds Curcumin (turmeric), Piperine (black pepper), Asafoetida phytochemicals, Probiotics (from buttermilk)
Kshirika / Payasa / Paramanna (Kheer) ^[22] Ingredients Pure boiled milk, Rice, Ghee, Sugar or jaggery) Preparation Boil and partially reduce the milk. Lightly fry rice in ghee until aromatic. Add the fried rice to the milk and cook on a low flame until soft and thick. Add sugar (or jaggery) and a little ghee. Cook until a smooth, thick consistency is obtained and serve warm.	Bṛmhaṇa (nourishing; anabolic), Bālya (strength-promoting), Vṛṣya (aphrodisiac; fertility-promoting), Tarpaṇa (nourishing; satiating), Rucya (palatable; appetite-promoting), Madhura Rasa (sweet taste), Madhura Vipāka (sweet post-digestive effect), Vāta–Pittahara (alleviates Vāta and Pitta).	Macronutrients Complex carbohydrates, High-quality protein, Healthy fats Micronutrients Calcium, Phosphorus, Vitamin B12, Riboflavin
Takra (Buttermilk) ^[23,24] Ingredients: Sour buffalo curd, water, asafoetida, cumin, Saindhava Lavana, and mustard powder. Preparation: Thick sour buffalo curd is churned with one-fourth part water and filtered into a clean earthen pot. Roasted asafoetida, cumin, rock salt, and mustard powder are added and mixed thoroughly to prepare Takra.	Dīpana (digestive stimulant), Pācana (digestive; promotes metabolism of undigested matter), Laghu (light to digest), Grāhī (absorbent; improves stool consistency), Tridoṣa Śāmaka (balances all three Doṣas; predominantly Kapha–Vātahara).	Macronutrients Moderate protein, Low fat, Low carbohydrates Micronutrients Calcium, Phosphorus, Potassium, Vitamin B12, Riboflavin (Vitamin B2) Bioactive Compounds Probiotic lactic acid bacteria, Cumin essential oils, Mustard phytochemicals

Table 2: Ayurvedic Cuisine in the Context of Modern Nutrition.

Aspect	Ayurvedic Perspective	Modern Nutrition Perspective
Macronutrients	Balanced use of cereals, pulses, dairy, ghee, nuts, and seeds; Krishara and Mudga improve protein quality.	Provides carbohydrates, proteins, and healthy fats for energy, growth, and tissue repair.
Micronutrients	Seasonal fruits, vegetables, herbs, spices, and dairy supply essential nutrients.	Rich sources of vitamins (A, B ₁₂ , C), minerals (iron, calcium, zinc), and trace elements that support immunity and metabolism.
Phytochemicals & Antioxidants	Turmeric, ginger, black pepper, cinnamon, and Amalaki possess therapeutic properties.	Curcumin, gingerols, piperine, and polyphenols exhibit antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activities.
Functional Foods & Nutraceuticals	Manda, Peya, Yusha, Takra, Saktu, and Yavagu are used therapeutically according to disease condition and digestive strength.	Considered functional foods that promote gut health, immunity, recovery, and disease prevention.
Digestibility & Bioavailability	Soaking, roasting, fermentation, sprouting, boiling, and digestive spices improve Agni and nutrient assimilation.	Food processing enhances digestibility, reduces antinutritional factors, and improves nutrient bioavailability.
Gut Health	Fermented preparations such as Takra and Kanji support healthy digestion.	Fermented foods provide probiotics that improve gut microbiota, immunity, and metabolic health.
Personalized Nutrition	Diet is individualized according to Prakriti, Agni, Ritucharya, Desha, and disease status.	Personalized nutrition is based on genetic, metabolic, physiological, and lifestyle factors.
Sustainability	Emphasizes seasonal, local, minimally processed, and biodiverse foods.	Supports sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, and environmentally responsible diets.

Table 3: Growth of the Bioeconomy and Ayurveda Market.^[25]

Sector	Current Status	Future Outlook	Significance
Indian Bioeconomy	USD 165.7 billion (2024)	USD 300 billion by 2030	Reflects the rapid expansion of the bio-based economy in India.
Global Ayurveda Market	USD 20.4 billion (2025)	USD 85.8 billion by 2033 (CAGR 19.7%)	Indicates increasing global demand for Ayurveda-based healthcare and wellness products.
Indian Ayurvedic Products Market	₹1.02 lakh crore (2025)	₹3.73 lakh crore by 2034 (CAGR 15.52%)	Demonstrates strong growth of the domestic Ayurvedic industry.
Ayurvedic Food Market	USD 797.7 billion (2025)	Expected to grow steadily	Highlights opportunities for functional foods, nutraceuticals, and wellness-oriented food services.

Table 4: Bioeconomic Potential of Ayurvedic Cuisine.

Ayurvedic Resource	Value-Added Products	Bioeconomic Benefits
Turmeric, Ginger, Amla	Functional foods, nutraceuticals, supplements, herbal	Enhances market value and export potential
Barley, Millets, Horse Gram	Ready-to-cook mixes, healthy meal products	Promotes climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable food systems
Medicinal Herbs	Herbal beverages, dietary supplements	Supports the herbal, pharmaceutical, and wellness industries
Traditional Ayurvedic Preparations	Therapeutic soups, hospital diets, wellness café menus	Encourages entrepreneurship, employment generation, and value addition
Seasonal & Local Food Resources	Sustainable dietary products	Conserves biodiversity and strengthens local food systems

Table 5: Adaptation of Classical Ayurvedic Preparations into Present-Day Menus and its Bioeconomic Potential.

Menu Category	Ayurvedic Preparations	Present-Day Adaptation	Bioeconomy Relevance
Appetizers	Laja, Prithuka, Papata, sulyapala, Talita mamsa,	Roasted snacks, Poha bowls, Papad platters	Promotes local cereals, value addition, low-cost processing, millet-based food industry
Beverages	Sarkarodaka, nimbuPanaka, Mridvika panaka, Amraphala prapanaka, Amlika phala panaka, Takra, Kanji, Sattu drink, Dadim Panaka, Dhanayak panaka	Functional drinks, probiotic beverages, wellness cafés	Supports fermented foods, reduces carbon footprint, creates market for indigenous crops
Soups	Vesavara, Mudga Yusha, dadima yusha, moolaka yusha, Kulattha Yusha, Mamsa Rasa	Protein-rich soups, healthy meal starters	Encourages pulse cultivation, plant-based nutrition, sustainable protein sources
Condiments	Amla Chutney, Ama Chutney, Pistaka	Herbal chutneys and dips	Value addition to medicinal plants and fruits, minimizes post-harvest losses
Main Course	Bhakta, supa, Krishara, Rotika, purika, Kulattha Supa, Manda, polika, angar karkati, yava roti, Mantha, Balabhadrika, Chanaka roti, Bedhamika	Khichdi bowls, barley roti, millet meals	Encourages cultivation of climate-resilient grains and supports sustainable agriculture
Desserts	Modaka, Madhusirsaka, Payasa,	Traditional	Promotes natural

	Narikera Kshiri, semai, lapsi, Fenika, gujiya, kundalini, mamsa sringataka, vesan modak, mugda modak, kusmanda vatika, Saskuli, dugdhakoopika, shree khand, Karpura nalika	healthy desserts	sweeteners and local ingredients, enhances rural food entrepreneurship
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DISCUSSION

Kritanna Kalpana represents the Ayurvedic concept of processed and cooked food preparations, emphasizing food as both nourishment and therapy. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe a wide variety of such preparations, including 64 in Caraka Samhita, 73 in Sushruta Samhita (including Kritanna and Bhakshya preparations), 32 in Ashtanga Hridaya, and 84 in Bhavaprakasha. These formulations demonstrate the extensive scope of Ayurvedic dietetics and its emphasis on individualized dietary management according to Agni, Dosha, and disease condition.

Among the numerous formulations described in the classical texts, only selected preparations were included in the present review to illustrate their nutritional composition and therapeutic relevance. The selected preparations provide essential macronutrients, including carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, along with important micronutrients such as vitamins, minerals, and dietary fibre based on their ingredients. Their therapeutic indications described in Ayurveda further support the concept of food as a primary measure for health promotion, disease prevention, and dietary management during different physiological and pathological conditions. These observations demonstrate a close correlation between traditional Ayurvedic dietary principles and contemporary nutritional science.

The growing bioeconomy further strengthens the relevance of Ayurvedic cuisine in the present era. Increasing demand for functional foods, nutraceuticals, and preventive healthcare has created significant opportunities for value addition of Ayurvedic ingredients and traditional food preparations. Simple processing of locally available resources such as millets, pulses, medicinal herbs, turmeric, ginger, and amla into functional food products can substantially enhance their economic value while supporting sustainable agriculture and rural livelihoods. Furthermore, the adaptation of classical Ayurvedic preparations into contemporary menus for restaurants, hospitals, wellness centres, and therapeutic dietary services demonstrates their practical applicability and commercial potential. Thus, Ayurvedic cuisine not only contributes to nutritional and therapeutic health but also represents a

sustainable model for food innovation and bioeconomic development.

CONCLUSION

Ayurvedic cuisine represents a comprehensive dietary system in which food serves as both nourishment and therapy. The diverse Kritanna Kalpana described in classical Ayurvedic texts reflects a scientifically organized approach to food processing, individualized nutrition, and disease management. The selected preparations reviewed in this study demonstrate that many traditional Ayurvedic foods provide essential macronutrients, micronutrients, and therapeutic benefits, supporting their relevance in the context of modern nutritional science. Furthermore, the adaptation of these preparations into contemporary dietary practices and the growing demand for functional foods and nutraceuticals highlight their significant bioeconomic potential. Integrating Ayurvedic culinary principles with modern nutrition and sustainable food systems can promote preventive healthcare, encourage value addition to traditional food resources, and contribute to the development of a sustainable bioeconomy. Future research should focus on scientific validation, nutritional profiling, and clinical evaluation of classical Ayurvedic food preparations to strengthen their evidence-based application.

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