

A REVIEW ON DIETARY PRACTICES OF MILLETS (SHRIDHANYAM) WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PRAKRITI AND RITU

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: As the recent years have paved the way for many new diseases, mankind has started moving towards being fit and healthy. Among various measures adopted for this purpose, dietary changes play a vital role. These altered dietary practices have incorporated the use of millets in our diet by highlighting their nutritional richness and health benefits. There are many varieties of millets available and are being used in different conditions. But whether these millets happen to be the right choice of diet for everyone is the subject to be analysed. Ayurveda tells, Ahar must be taken as per the Agni of the individual. Agni of individuals varies with the Prakriti and seasons i.e., Ritu. This study will help to inculcate good dietary practices of millets. **Methods:** All literature reviewed and compiled from Ayurvedic classic texts (Samhitas, Nighantus), textbooks, magazines, journals, research papers, data available on internet for this review article. **Result:**

Ayurveda never recommends Millets in Nitya Sevaniya Ahara (Foods to be consumed regularly). Assessing Agni (Digestive capacity) of an individual and Ritu (Season) before advising Millets is very much necessary. **Conclusion:** Proper knowledge of food item according to one's Prakriti, need, time of consumption and Ritu are crucial rather than just following the trendy food.

KEYWORDS: Agni, Dietary Practices, Millets, Prakriti, Ritu.

INTRODUCTION

As the recent years have paved the way for many new diseases, mankind has started moving towards being fit and healthy. Among various measures adopted for this purpose, dietary changes play a vital role. These altered dietary practices have incorporated the use of millets in our diet by highlighting their nutritional richness and health benefits.^[1]

The Latin term "Miliun" that gave rise to the English word "Millet" denotes a tiny seed (Robert, 2000).^[2] According to Macdonell and Keith (1958), millets are a particular class of plants in the Poaceae family that have smaller seeds than main cereals.^[3]

There are many varieties of millets available and are being used in different conditions. But whether these millets happen to be the right choice of diet for everyone is the subject to be analysed.

Ayurveda explains millets in detail under Dhanya Varga. Millets have been given many synonyms like, Kudhanya (Inferior among cereals)^[4], Kshudra Dhanya (small sized cereals)^[5], and Trina Dhanya (grass derived cereals).^[6]

METHODS AND MATERIAL

All literature reviewed and compiled from Ayurvedic classic texts (Samhitas, nighantus), text books, magazines, journals, research papers, data available on internet for this review article

Millets

- Trina dhanya known as Kudhanya or Kshudra dhanya have been mentioned in Ayurvedic classics.^[7]
 - Kangu –Foxtail millet
 - Shyamak – Barnyard millet
 - Cheenak –Proso millet
 - Kodrav- Kodo millet
 - Nartaki- Finger millet
 - Yavanala - White millet
 - Bajra-Pearl millet.
- The **General properties** of Trina dhanya as mentioned in text are **Ushna veerya, Kashay and Madhura rasatmaka, Katu vipaki, Laghu** (light), **Ruksha** (dry), **Kledashoshak**

(absorbs moistness), **Lekhaniya** (scrapping), **Vatakar** (increases Vata), **Baddha vitak** (binds stools), **Pitta-rakta and Kapha shamak** (balances Pitta-rakta and Kapha).^[8]

- Beyond these general properties of the Trina dhanya, specific properties have also been mentioned. These properties when taken in consideration will be beneficial for the use of Trina dhanya from person to person for prevention and management of diseases accordingly.
1. Kangu i.e., Priyangu^[9,10] - Foxtail millet, Latin name- *Setaria italic beauv* Characteristics: Guru– Heavy, Ruksha- dry, Bhagnasandhan krut- helps in healing of fractured bone, Brumhani- nourishing the Rasa rakatadi dhatus, Shleshmahar- reduces vitiated Kapha. Considering the properties Kangu can be used in fractures for healing of bones and also for gaining weight.
 2. Shyamak^[11,12] - Barnyard millet, Latin Name – *Echinochloa frumentacea* Characteristics: Vatal- increases Vata, Shoshak - absorbing, Kaphapitta hrut- reducing Kapha and Pitta, Sangrahi - absorbs excess body fluids and Vishadoshnrut - anti-poisonous, Ruksha - dry, Madhur and Kashay - sweet and astringent in taste, Snigdha- unctuous, Sheetal- cold in potency and Laghu- light for digestion. Thus, it can be used for weight loss, oozing wounds and after intoxication.
 3. Cheenak^[13,14] - Proso millet, Latin Name - *Panicum miliaceum*. Characteristics same as Kangu. Being similar in properties Cheenak can be used for bone healing in fractures.
 4. Kodrav^[15,16] - Kodo millet, Latin Name - *Paspalum scrobiculatum*. Characteristics - Grahi - promoting absorption, Sheetal - cold in potency, Madura tikta – sweet and pungent in taste, Guru- heavy to digest, Vayukarak – increases Vata, Pitta-kaphapaha- reduces Pitta and Kapha, Vraninam pathyakarak – beneficial for wounded. Kodrav hence will be beneficial for wound healing.
 5. Nartak^[17,18] Finger millet, Latin Name- *Eleusine coracana Gaertn.* Characteristics- Sheeta - cold potency, TiktaMadhur-Kashay rasatmak- bitter, sweet and astringent in taste, Pittaasra nashan - destroys Raktapitta, Balad- strengthening. Thus, Nartak has weight gaining property.
 6. Yavanala^[19,20] - White millet, Latin Name - *Sorghum vulgare (Linn)* Pers Characteristics- Kashay and Madhur rasatmak - bitter and sweet in taste, Ruksha – dry in nature, Laghu- light to digest, Sheeta- cold in potency, Rakta pittakaphapaha- pacifies Kapha, Rakta and Pitta, Kledaghna- removes excess moist. Looking at the characteristics of Yavanala it is used for weight reduction.

7. Vajranna^[21]- Pearl millet, Latin Name- Pennisetum typhoides Burm. Characteristics- Ruksha - dry in nature, Madhurasweet in taste, Ushna - hot in potency, Vatapittakar-increases Vata and Pitta, Agnipradipanam- helps to increase digestive power. So it can be helpful for increasing the digestion.
 8. Nivar^[22]- Wild Rice, Latin Name - Hygroryza aristata Nees Characteristics- Ruksha- dry, Sheeta-cold potency, Vata vardhak - increasing Vata, Kapha-pitta Shamak- Kapha pitta balancing. Hence it is beneficial for Kapha and Pitta disorders.
 9. Gavedhuka^[23] - Adlay/ Job's Tear, Latin name - Coix lacryma-jobi Characteristics-similar to Shyamak
- As per the Prakriti of **Kodrav, Shyamak, Nivar, Gavedhuka, Kangu, Cheenak, Yavanala**, they should be **cautiously used in Vata prakriti, Varsha ritu**.
 - **Kangu** and **Cheenak** can be **used in Kapha prakriti** and **Vasant ritu**.
 - Due to its Kapha pitta balancing action, **Kodrav, Shyamak, Gavedhuka, Yavanala** can be **used in Kapha pitta prakriti**.
 - **Nartak(Ragi)** being Tridosha shamak and especially Pitta shamak can be **used in all Prakritis and mainly in Pitta**. So can be used in **Sharad ritu**.
 - **Vajranna** due to its Kapha vata shamak action can be **used in Kapha and Vata prakriti**.

Sr.No.	Name	Rasa	Guna	Karma	Prakriti	Ritu
1	Kangu	Madhur, Kashay	Guru, Ruksha	Bhagnasandhan krut, Brumhani	-can be used in Kapha prakriti - should be cautiously used in Vata prakriti	- Vasant ritu -should be cautiously used in Varsha ritu
2	Shyamak	Madhur, Kashay	Ruksha, Snigdha, Laghu	Kaphapitta hrut, Vishadoshnrut, Sangrahi, Shosha	-used in Kapha pitta prakriti -should be cautiously used in Vata prakriti	-should be cautiously used in Varsha ritu
3	Cheenak	Madhur, Kashay	Guru, Ruksha	Bhagnasandhan krut Brumhani, Shleshmahar	-can be used in Kapha prakriti -should be cautiously used in Vata prakriti	- can be used in Vasant ritu -should be cautiously used in Varsha ritu
4	Kodrav	Madura, Tikta	Guru, Sheetal	Grahi, Pitta-kaphapaha, Vraninam pathyakarak	- Kapha pitta prakriti -should be cautiously used in Vata prakriti	-should be cautiously used in Varsha ritu
5	Nartak	Tikta-Madhur Kashay	Laghu, Sheeta	Pittaasra nashan, Balad, Tridosha shamak	-Can be used in all Prakriti but mainly pitta prakriti	- can be used in Sharad Ritu
6	Yavanala	Kashay, Madhur	Laghu, Sheeta	Kledaghna, Raktapittakaphapaha	- should use in Kapha pitta prakriti	-should be cautiously used

					-should be cautiously used in Vata prakriti	in Varsha ritu.
7	Vajranna	Madhura	Ruksha, Ushna	Vatapittakar, Agni pradipanam	-can be used in Kapha and Vata prakriti.	-should be cautiously used in Varsha ritu.
8	Nivar	Madhur, Kashay	Ruksha, Sheeta	Vata vardhak, Kapha pitta shamak	-should be cautiously used in Vata prakriti	-should be cautiously used in Varsha ritu
9	Gavedhuka	Katu	Ruksha	Karsha krit, Kapha nashak	- Kapha pitta prakriti -should be cautiously used in Vata prakriti.	- should be cautiously used in Varsha ritu

DISCUSSION

Analysing the general qualities and effects of millets gives an obvious idea that millets are best advised in Kaphaja Roga (diseases due to Kapha), Pittaja Roga (diseases due to Pitta) and Raktadushti (vitiation of blood). It is always necessary to avoid the use of millets in Vataja Roga (diseases due to Vata) as it aggravates the condition.

Advising millets as per individual's Agni Bala (Digestive capacity) is also very important as they are guru (Heavy) and Ruksha (dry) which makes them difficult (Durjara) for easy digestion due to more amount of dietary fibre, protein and less quantity of carbohydrates compared to other cereals.^[21,22]

Millets have gained a lot of attention as they can be used as a preventive and therapeutic diet for diseases due to over nourishment.^[23] Considering the Aahara vidhi visheshayatna with special reference to Prakriti i.e., nature/characteristic of food and Kala that is divided in 2 parts a) Nityaga which is according to Ritucharya and Dinacharya and b) Awastikha which is considered as Vyadhi awastha, the use of Trinadhanya is discussed.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda never recommends Millets in Nitya Sevaniya Ahara (Foods to be consumed regularly). Assessing Agni (Digestive capacity) of an individual and Ritu (Season) before advising Millets is very much necessary. As the diet forms important factor of life, there should be the appropriate use of food items. This can be achieved with the proper knowledge of food item according to one's Prakriti, need and time of consumption rather than just following the trendy food.

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