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AN AYURVEDIC ANALYSIS OF CURD: PHARMACOLOGICAL PROPERTIES, SEASONAL RESTRICTIONS, AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Curd, known as *Dadhi* in Ayurveda, is a commonly consumed fermented dairy product with important nutritional and therapeutic properties. Although curd is considered beneficial when consumed appropriately, classical Ayurvedic texts describe specific restrictions regarding its quantity, time of consumption, season, and dietary combinations. The present conceptual article analyzes the Ayurvedic properties, pharmacological attributes, seasonal restrictions, contraindications, and appropriate methods of curd consumption. According to Ayurvedic principles, *Dadhi* possesses *Amla Rasa*, *Guru* and *Snigdha Guna*, *Ushna Virya*, and *Amla Vipaka*. It is considered *Rochana*, *Deepana*, *Pachana*, *Vrishya*, *Balya*, and capable of increasing *Kapha* and *Pitta* when used improperly. Classical texts particularly discourage the consumption of curd at night and during certain seasons, especially when its use is likely to aggravate *Kapha* and *Pitta*. Appropriate combinations such as curd with *Mudga*, *Madhu*, *Ghrita*, *Sarkara*, or *Amalaki* may help modify its effects. The article also discusses the importance of heating and fermentation-related changes in curd from a contemporary perspective. Thus, the health effects of curd depend not only on its nutritional composition but also on the quantity, timing, season, individual constitution, and dietary combination.

Keywords: *Dadhi*, curd, Ayurveda, *Rasa Panchaka*, *Kapha*, *Pitta*, seasonal restriction, fermented food.

1. Introduction

Food occupies a central position in Ayurveda because appropriate *Ahara* is considered essential for the maintenance of health and proper functioning of the body. Among dairy products, *Dadhi* (curd) has been described extensively because of its distinctive taste, digestive effects, nutritional value, and influence on *Dosha*.

Curd is prepared by fermentation of milk and is commonly consumed in Indian dietary practices. Modern nutritional science recognizes curd as a source of protein, calcium and other nutrients, while fermentation may produce beneficial microbial metabolites. However, Ayurveda does not evaluate food solely on its nutritional content. Its effects are

understood through *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, *Vipaka*, *Karma*, quantity, time of consumption, processing, and suitability to the individual.

Classical Ayurvedic literature therefore describes both the benefits and restrictions associated with *Dadhi*. Improper consumption may contribute to *Kapha* aggravation and other digestive disturbances, whereas appropriate use may support digestion, strength and nourishment. The present article attempts to integrate the classical Ayurvedic understanding of curd with its possible contemporary interpretation.

2. Aim

To review the Ayurvedic properties, pharmacological actions, contraindications, seasonal restrictions, and appropriate methods of consumption of *Dadhi* (curd).

3. Objectives

1. To describe the *Rasa Panchaka* and pharmacological properties of *Dadhi*.
2. To analyze the Ayurvedic benefits and possible adverse effects of improper curd consumption.
3. To review classical restrictions regarding time and season of consumption.
4. To describe suitable combinations and methods of consuming curd.
5. To provide a contemporary interpretation of the classical concepts.

4. Materials and Methods

The present work is a conceptual review based on classical Ayurvedic literature, particularly the *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*. Relevant Ayurvedic descriptions concerning *Dadhi*, its properties, actions, indications, contraindications, and dietary restrictions were reviewed and interpreted.

The classical concepts were subsequently correlated with general contemporary understanding of fermented dairy products, digestion, microbial fermentation, and nutritional properties. The article does not claim that classical Ayurvedic mechanisms are identical to modern biochemical mechanisms; rather, the comparison is intended to provide an interpretative framework.

5. Ayurvedic Properties of Curd

The pharmacological profile of *Dadhi* can be summarized as follows:

Parameter	**Ayurvedic description**
Rasa	*Amla*
Guna	*Guru, Snigdha*
Virya	*Ushna*
Vipaka	*Amla*

Dosha effect -Mainly increases *Kapha* and *Pitta* when improperly used

Karma- *Rochana, Deepana, Pachana, Balya, Vrishya*

The combination of *Amla Rasa*, *Guru-Snigdha Guna*, and *Ushna Virya* provides a distinctive physiological profile. Its *Amla* nature may promote appetite and salivation, while its nourishing and unctuous qualities may contribute to strength and tissue nourishment.

However, the same properties can become undesirable when curd is consumed excessively, at an inappropriate time, or by individuals with *Kapha-Pitta* predominance.

6. Pharmacological and Therapeutic Properties

6.1 *Rochana* and *Deepana*

Curd is described as *Rochana* and *Deepana*, indicating its potential to improve appetite and support digestive activity when appropriately used.

6.2 *Pachana*

The fermented nature and sour taste of curd are traditionally associated with digestive activity. However, its *Guru* quality indicates that excessive consumption may be difficult to digest in individuals with weak digestive capacity.

6.3 *Balya*

Because curd contains substantial nutritional components, its use in suitable individuals may contribute to nourishment and strength.

6.4 *Vrishya*

Classical descriptions also attribute reproductive and strengthening properties to properly used curd.

6.5 Effect on *Kapha* and *Pitta*

Although curd can provide nourishment, its excessive use may increase *Kapha*, particularly because of its *Guru* and *Snigdha* qualities. Its sour taste and heating nature may also aggravate *Pitta* in susceptible individuals.Thus, the Ayurvedic approach emphasizes appropriate use rather than absolute classification of curd as beneficial or harmful.

7. Why Heating and Fermentation Are Important

Curd is produced through fermentation of milk. During fermentation, microbial activity changes the physical and chemical characteristics of milk, including its acidity, texture and microbial composition.

From a contemporary perspective, fermented dairy products may contain microorganisms and metabolites generated during fermentation. These changes may influence digestion and gastrointestinal microbial interactions.

The poster proposes a sequence involving heating, fermentation and alteration of proteins. However, the modern scientific interpretation should be presented cautiously. Heating milk before fermentation is a traditional preparation step, whereas the claim that ordinary curd consumption directly causes “denaturation and coagulation leading to death of lactobacilli” should not be stated as an established clinical mechanism without experimental evidence.

Therefore, the classical concept of *Dadhi* should remain the primary framework, while modern mechanisms should be described only where supported by evidence.

8. Contraindications and Restrictions of Curd

Ayurveda does not recommend unrestricted consumption of curd. Particular attention is given to time, season, quantity, individual suitability, and combination with other foods.

8.1 Curd at Night

Consumption of curd at night is traditionally discouraged. Night-time consumption may be particularly unsuitable for individuals with a tendency toward *Kapha* accumulation.

8.2 Excessive Consumption

Excessive intake can lead to heaviness and may disturb digestion, particularly in individuals with *Mandagni*.

8.3 Improper Combination

Curd should not be indiscriminately combined with incompatible foods. The classical concept of *Viruddha Ahara* emphasizes that certain combinations may produce undesirable effects despite the individual ingredients being wholesome.

8.4 Individual Constitution

Persons with *Kapha* or *Pitta* predominance, recurrent congestion, excessive heaviness, or digestive intolerance may require greater caution.

9. Seasonal Restrictions

Ayurveda emphasizes seasonal adaptation of diet through the concept of *Ritucharya*. The effects of food are therefore interpreted in relation to environmental conditions and seasonal *Dosha* variation.

Curd may be particularly unsuitable during periods in which *Kapha* or *Pitta* aggravation is expected. The poster highlights summer and spring as important seasons in which inappropriate curd consumption may be avoided.

This principle demonstrates that Ayurveda does not prescribe identical dietary practices throughout the year. The same food may be beneficial in one circumstance but inappropriate under another.

10. Appropriate Methods of Curd Consumption

Classical dietary practice recommends combining curd with suitable substances according to the individual's condition. Examples shown in the present review include:

- *Ghrita* (ghee)
- *Madhu* (honey)
- *Sarkara* (sugar)
- *Mudga* (green gram)
- *Amalaki*

These combinations are traditionally used to modify the qualities or effects of curd.

However, the quantity and suitability of these combinations should also be individualized. For example, combining curd with multiple sweetening substances may not be appropriate for every individual.

11. Discussion

The Ayurvedic description of curd demonstrates a sophisticated food-classification system based on its intrinsic properties and the conditions under which it is consumed. Unlike a purely nutritional model, Ayurveda considers the interaction between food, digestive capacity, constitution, season, timing and combinations.

The *Amla Rasa* of curd explains its characteristic sour taste and its traditional association with appetite stimulation. Its *Guru* and *Snigdha Guna* indicate nourishing and heavy qualities, while *Ushna Virya* suggests a heating influence. These characteristics collectively explain why curd may be beneficial in selected conditions but unsuitable when consumed excessively or improperly.

The classical restriction against night-time consumption is particularly important. From an Ayurvedic perspective, nighttime is associated with increased *Kapha* influence and reduced digestive activity compared with the active daytime period. Therefore, heavy and unctuous foods may be less suitable at night.

Similarly, seasonal restrictions can be understood through *Ritucharya*. During seasons associated with *Kapha* or *Pitta* aggravation, excessive consumption of foods capable of increasing these *Dosha* may potentially disturb physiological equilibrium.

The concept of appropriate combinations is another important feature of Ayurvedic dietary science. Curd is not considered an isolated food; its effects can vary depending upon what it is consumed with. This reflects the broader Ayurvedic principle that dietary effects depend on processing, combination and individual suitability.

From the modern perspective, curd is a nutrient-rich fermented dairy product containing protein, calcium and fermentation-associated microorganisms. Nevertheless, modern nutritional value alone cannot completely explain the

individualized recommendations described in Ayurveda. Similarly, Ayurvedic concepts such as *Guru*, *Snigdha*, *Ushna* and *Dosha* should not be directly equated with individual biochemical parameters without appropriate scientific validation.

Therefore, future research should investigate the effects of curd consumption according to time of intake, season, quantity, fermentation duration, preparation method, individual digestive status and dietary combinations. Such studies could provide a meaningful bridge between classical Ayurvedic dietary principles and contemporary nutritional science.

12. Health Implications

Appropriate curd consumption may provide nutritional and digestive benefits, particularly when consumed according to individual suitability. On the other hand, habitual excessive consumption or consumption at inappropriate times may be associated with digestive discomfort or intolerance in susceptible individuals.

The Ayurvedic approach therefore supports the principle of "appropriate food rather than universally good or bad food."

The following factors should be considered:

Quantity → Time → Season → Combination → Digestive capacity → Individual suitability

This approach may be particularly useful in developing personalized dietary recommendations.

13. Conclusion

Dadhi is an important fermented food described extensively in Ayurveda. It possesses *Amla Rasa*, *Guru-Snigdha Guna*, *Ushna Virya*, and *Amla Vipaka* and is traditionally associated with *Rochana*, *Deepana*, *Pachana*, *Balya*, and *Vrishya* actions.

At the same time, Ayurveda clearly emphasizes restrictions regarding its excessive or inappropriate consumption. Night-time use, unsuitable seasonal intake, excessive quantity, and inappropriate combinations may adversely affect *Dosha* balance and digestion in susceptible individuals.

The Ayurvedic understanding of curd therefore represents a context-dependent dietary model, in which the health effect of a food depends upon the interaction between food properties, preparation, timing, season, quantity and individual physiology. Further clinical and experimental research is required to validate and explain these classical observations using contemporary scientific methodology.

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