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Review Article

DECODING THE CLINICAL SECRETS OF GRAIN AGEING: AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Grains occupy a central place in Ayurveda as essential and therapeutic components of the diet. Classical texts distinguish between freshly harvested grains and aged grains, referred to as *Navanna* and *Jirna/Puran dhanya* respectively, on the basis of digestibility, seasonal suitability, and clinical utility. This article explores the Ayurvedic concept of grain aging with special reference to its effects on digestive strength, metabolic balance, and disease management. Classical references from Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and *Yogaratnakara* were explained to understand the properties, indications, and contraindications of old and new grains. The review shows that aged grains are generally lighter to digest, beneficial in *Mandagni, Kapha* disorders, obesity, diabetes, arthritis, and other conditions associated with impaired metabolism, whereas freshly harvested grains are preferred when digestive fire is strong and the body requires nourishing, unctuous, and strengthening foods. The paper also highlights the importance of traditional storage methods in preserving the quality and therapeutic value of grains. In addition, Ayurvedic processing techniques and seasonal dietary guidance are discussed as practical tools for optimizing grain use. Overall, the study emphasizes that grain age is not merely a storage characteristic but a clinically relevant factor in Ayurveda. Understanding the distinction between *Navanna* and *Prana Dhanya* can support individualized dietary planning, improve digestive health, and strengthen the integration of classical wisdom with modern nutritional science.

INTRODUCTION

Aahar is the basic need of every individual on Earth. In Ayurveda Acharyas Kashyap introduced the term "*Mahabhaiṣajya*" for *Aahar* meaning the biggest medicine in the Universe. *Aahar* is the main Building block of the body. It keeps the person disease free, if consumed according to the codes of conduct and practices mentioned in Ayurved. [1]

Carbohydrates and Proteins are the main source of diet. Likewise, in Ayurveda diet has *Pañcabhautik* importance also. WHO has also given importance on providing better quality of food?

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The annual theme of WHO on World Health Day 2015, was "From Farm to Plate, Make Food Safe", one can understand the message behind it i.e. importance of safe food. As per theme emphasis was given on non-veg food and meat hygiene. In India, we have strong culture and traditional values. 70% people opt for veg diet in daily meals. Grains and grams are major staple food in all parts of the country. *Dhanya*, wheat, *dal*, *jowar* means cereals and pulses form the major component of food. Their shelf life, physical and chemical properties are the dependent components of nutrients. [2]

Dhanya: Grains in Ayurveda-wheat, rice etc grains are included under the category *Dhanya Varga*. Under the heading of *Dhanya Varga* different grains are described such as *Shuka Dhanya, Shami Dhanya.*

The term *Dhanya* is used for cereals, pulses, grains. In Ayurveda group of same type of grains are collectively included under *Dhanya Vargas*.[3] like

Godhum- Wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), *Shali* -Rice (*Oryza sativa*), *Adhaki - Pigeonpea* (*Cajanus cajan*).

The food items which are mentioned in *Samhitas* are described under the heading of *Aahar Vargas*. Theses *Aahar Vargas* are *Shukdhanya* (group of cereals), *Shamidhanya* (group of pulses), *Shakvarga* (group of vegetables), *Mansvarga* (group of meat), *Jalvarga* (type of water), *Falavarga* (group of fruits) etc. organoleptic and physical properties their *Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka* and therapeutic indications are explained in theses *Vargas*.[4]

Grains that are one year old are called *Puran Dhanya*. They are easy to digest and the newly harvested are heavy to digest. In addition, the rice (*Shashtik Shali*) that grows in 60 days is considered as *Laghu* in nature which also known as *Pathyakar* food. It is wholesome food for all. Hence, they are recommended universally to consume them after one year.[5]

The term *Navin* refers to distinct between old and new, specifically in the context of grains and cereals in their dry form "old" refers to grains that are one year old while "new" refers to freshly harvested grains. This concept is applied to foods like wheat, rice, grams. As per Ayurveda texts various example illustrate the benefits and characteristics of older grains. After collection of grains storage is most important. [6]

METHODOLOGY

The text has been taken from various *Samhitas* i.e., *Charak Samhita* in *Sutrasthan*. *Acharya Charak* has described 12 types of *Aahar* in *Annapanvidhiadhyay,* among them *Shukdhanya* is the first one.

Chakrapani has differentiated *Śuka Dhanya* into 3 classes' viz. *Śhali*, *Shashtika* and *Vrihi*. As its name suggests, *Śuka Dhanya* are corns with spikes. Achariya Sushrut has not mentioned *Śuka Dhanya Varga* by name, but *Dravya* of *Śuka Dhanya Vargas* has been described in *Mudgadi*, *Śhali* and *Kudhanya Varga*. In modern literature, *Śuka Dhanya* has been compared to in monocotyledons and energy giving foods. Energy giving food mainly includes wheat, rice. Ancient *Acharyas* has mentioned some *Śuka Dhanya Dravya* with their *Guans* (qualities) like *Shashtika, Vrihi* (variety of rice), *Yava*, and wheat which play an important role in prevention of diseases. Those *dravya* sustain qualities like *Sheeta* (cold in potency), *Swadu* (sweet in taste) and in *Swadu Vipaka* (sweet in digestion). These are used as *Vatavardhaka, Alpavarchasa, Brimhana, Sukrala* and *Mutrala*. A grain which grows in *Hemanta*, *Gresham* and *Sarad Ritu* are termed as *Shali, Shashtik* and *Vrihi* respectively.

In Charaka Samhita among *Dhanyavarga Rakta Shali* is of best quality rather than other varieties, as it possesses *Madhura* in *Rasa, Laghu,* and *Sheeta Virya* and pacifies all three *Doshas*. *Chakrapani* and *Acharya Charaka* has included *Godhuma* in *Śuka Dhanya Varga* while *Sushrut* in *Mudgadi Varga* explaining qualities like *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Guru* (not easily digestible), *Sheeta Virya* (cold in potency), and *Madhura* (sweet in taste) and specify *Vata* and *Pitta Dosha*. *Godhuma* can be used with *Ghrita* and goat milk in *Vatarakta* (osteoarthritis) etc. Also, *Yogratnakar* has explained *Dhanyavarga* in *Pathya apathya* category.

DISCUSSION

The compiled evidence on *Dhanya*-related concepts from Ayurvedic classics and Vedic literature was critically analyzed. The discussion is organized under the following headings for clarity and ease of understanding.

S.No	Discussion Heading	Points to be Discussed
1.	Storage methods	Indian traditional practices to store grains.
2.	Definitions	Definitions of *Dhanya*, *Navina Dhanya* (new grains), *Purana Dhanya* (aged grains), and grain ageing as described in Ayurvedic classics and Vedic literature.
3.	Importance of Grain ageing according to *Ṛtucharya*	Significance of consuming aged and newly harvested grains according to seasonal regimen (*Ṛtucharya*) and their effect on health and digestion.
4.	Importance of *Aṣṭahara Vidhi Viśeṣayatana* with respect to *Navina* and *Purana* Dhanya	Critical analysis of grain ageing in relation to the eight determinants of diet, including *Prakṛti*, *Karana*, *Samyoga*, *Raśi*, *Deśa*, *Kala*, *Upayoga Samstha*, and *Upayokta*.
5.	Cooking procedures mentioned in *Samhitas* according to grain ageing	Comparison of cooking methods and dietary preparations recommended for *Navina* and *Purana Dhanya*, including their role in *Samsarjana Krama*.
6.	Therapeutic indications of *Navina* and *Purana Dhanya*	Comparative therapeutic uses, indications, contraindications, and effects on *Doṣa*, *Agni*, and *Dhatu*.

7.	Therapeutic indications of *Godhuma* (wheat)	Classical therapeutic applications of wheat based on its age, properties, and disease-specific indications.
8.	Therapeutic indications of *Aḍhaki Pigeon pea*	Ayurvedic properties, pharmacological actions, and therapeutic indications of *Aḍhaki* described in classical literature.
9.	Therapeutic indications of rice *(Śali, Śaṣṭika, Vrihi,* etc*.)*	Comparative analysis of different rice varieties, their ageing, Ayurvedic properties, and clinical applications.
10.	Classical recipes of *Dhanya Varga*	Compilation and analysis of recipes prepared from cereals described in Ayurvedic texts, with emphasis on the influence of grain ageing on their therapeutic utility.

Indian traditional storage methods

Consumption of aged grain purely depend on their storage practices, Ayurveda has explored Household storage method. Here is the standing operating procedure of storage which are explained.

This is also followed in the case of Indian traditional storage methods such as for dried grains, spices etc.

Containers: The container and its closure must not interact physically or chemically with the material within in any way that would alter its quality. The following descriptive terms are used to indicate general requirements for the permeability of containers:

- A well-closed container must protect the contents from extraneous matter or from loss of the material under normal conditions of handling, shipment, or storage.
- A tightly closed container must protect the contents from extraneous matter, from loss of the material, and from efflorescence, deliquescence, or evaporation under normal conditions of handling, shipment, or storage. If the container is intended to be opened on several occasions, it must be designed to be airtight after enclosure.

Protection from light

Grains requiring protection from light should be kept in a light-resistant container that either by reason of the inherent properties of the material from which it is made or because a special coating has been applied to it shields the contents from the effects of light. Alternatively, the container may be placed inside a suitable light-resistant (opaque) covering and/or stored in a dark place.

Humidity

Low humidity may be maintained, if necessary, by the use of a desiccant in the container provided that direct contact with it is avoided. When the container is opened in damp or humid conditions care must be taken if they are not store properly nutritional qualities of grains will be affected. It will be infected by worms and can be harmful to the body. Therefore, storage of grain is described after collection of the newly harvested grains; they are properly dried and then stored. The entrance of the rooms should be towards east or north. *Dhoopan*, *Gandha* and *Balikarmas* should be done frequently in the room. There should be no disturbance of animals, rodents or caterpillars. The rooms should be kept clean. The grains after proper drying should be kept in a big container. It should be preserved properly, without being spoiled by smoke, rain, moisture through all the seasons.

The container should be clean, fumigated. These should be closed properly and labelled. All the measures of cleanliness and aseptic precautions should be taken.

Definitions

The term "*Puran Dhanya*" means old grain. [7]

Purakale ch dhanyanam yani varsam atitya sthitani i.e. grain stored for more than one year.

Tani puranani aksepany: They are considering complete suitable to use.

Arochak anila shelshma jara madapaha manani: They alleviate anorexia *Vatakapha* disorder, reduces ageing and intoxication effect.

The concept of *Puran* and *Navin* is meaning old and new. The term *Navin* refers to distinct between old and new, specifically in the context of grains and cereals in their dry form. "Old" refers to grains that are one year old while "new" refers to freshly harvested grains. This concept is applied to foods like wheat, rice, grams. As per Ayurveda texts various example illustrates the benefits and characteristics of older grains.

Importance of ageing of grains according to *Rutucharya*

Vasant Ritu is *Kaphaprapok Ritu.* Acharyas prescribed one year old wheat in *Vasant Ritu*.[8] In rainy season; *Varsha Ritu, Agni*- digestive fire is weak, so it has been prescribed to consume 1 year old wheat, rice in *Varsha Ritu.* Same as in *Pravrut Ritu* consuming *Puran Dhanya* protects *Agni* and enhances metabolism.[9]

In case of *Hemant* and *Shishir Ritu, Madhur Snigdha Guru Ushna Aahar* is prescribed. According to *Apavada* concept of Chakrapani commentary-*Puran Dhanyas* are recommended in all *Ritus* except *Hemanta Ritu* (winter

season).[10] *Navanna* is recommended in *Hemant Ritu*, strength of *Agni* is good in *Hemant Ritu*. As *Godhum* is a Rabi crop it is harvested in summer, so in *Hemant ritu* fresh *Godhum* is not available. So, to compensate this, recipes of wheat flour with milk, ghee, and sugar are recommended in winter season.

Importance of *Ashtaharvidhi-visheshayatan* with respect to *Puran* and *Navin Dhanya*

Crop harvesting of grains *Dhanya* depends upon seasons. So, one cannot have fresh or 1 yr. old grains throughout the year. Then by applying the concept of *Ashta Aahar vidhi visheshytana- Karan*; various recipes are prescribed in text books. One can change the nature of recipe to make it easy or heavy to digest; this can be possible by adding different ingredient in various ratios.[11]

This can also be applied for converting recipes of *Puran Dhanya* (which are *Laghu* in nature) to make them heavy to digest. Preparation of *Puran Dhanya* with combination of dry fruits, sesame paste, honey, milk, ghee, *Yamak,* sugar make the food heavy to digest. Ex., Payasa, Laddu, porridge.[12]

Cooking Procedure mentioned in *Samhitas* as per ageing of grains

Wheat flour is heavy to digest but one can make it easy to digest by processing. Various cooking methods like roasting, frying, puffs are mentioned in *Samhitas* to make it digestive. Even if anyone wants to make it heavier to digest it can be cooked with milk, jaggery and sesame.[13]

Sansarjan Krama

Sansarjan Krama is post-operative care of patients who have undergone *Panchakarma*.

During *Sansarjan Krama* therapeutic diet is advised for first 7 days. The diet is in the form of *Manḍa*, *Peya, Vilepi, Yuṣa, Yavagu, Anna* made from old rice.[14]

Therapeutic indication of *Navin* and *Puran Dhanya*

Santarpana Janya Vyadhi i.e., *Kushtha* (skin diseases), *Prameha* (poly urea/diabetes mellitus), *Panḍu* (anemia), *Athisthul* (obesity), *Shotha* (generalized edema). These *Vyadhi* are caused by excessive intake of foods, having *Santarpana* properties or which are responsible for sluggish metabolism. The list of foods comprises sweets, foods which are heavy to digest, new cereals and pulses, fresh wine, meat of aquatic animals, milk and milk products, fresh Jaggery and flour preparations. [15] This indicates that new cereals are responsible for *Santarpanjanya Vyadhis.* In the same way these enlisted foods are remedies for *Apatarpan janit Vyadhis- Shosh* (emaciation), *Hridrog* (heart disease), *Parshwashul* (backache), *Vibandha* (constipation).

Nanatmaj Shelshma Vikar: New rice is cautiously advised in patients of 20 types of *Kaphaj* ailments due its *Abhishyandi* property. Hence old grains are best suited for them.[16]

***Urustambha*:** *Puran Shali* is indicated in *Urustambha* (stiffness in thighs) *Vatarakta*: *Puran Shali, Godhum,* wine, and honey. Everything which is prescribed as *Puran* is indicated in *Vatarakta* (gout) [17]

Various therapeutic indication of *Godhum* (Wheat)

a. *Godhum* is used as *Raktasthapana* in wound healing and bleeding disorder.[18]
b. *Godhum* is *Kaphprakopak* in nature.[19]
c. *Godhum* is used as poultice in case of surgical emergency.[20]
d. Freshly harvested *Godhum* increases *Kapha* while old *Godhum* is suitable for consumption even in spring and doesn't increase *Kapha*.[21] *Godhuma* is best in *Vatavyadhi.[22]*
e. In case of gestational insomnia *Godhum* paste is advised.[23]
f. *Godhum* is also *Stanyajanana* (galactagogue) in nature.[24]
g. *Godhum* is *Pathyakar* in *Kuṣṭharoga[25]*
h. In *Vatodara* (ascites) *Shali* and *Godhum* is advised for daily consumption.[26]
i. *Yavagodhumsattu* is recommended in *Updansha* and *Shlipadrog.[27]*
j. *Shali* and *Godhum* is *Vajikarak* when taken with milk, ghee and sugar. [28]
k. After *Panchakarma* procedure *Yava*, *Godhum, Shali* is recommended as *Tarpaniya.[29]*
l. In *Kaphaj kasa Godhum* is advised to have with honey in *Pittaj kasa* with milk and in *Kshayaj kasa* with ghee.[30]
m. *Godhum* is considering as beneficial for health as it is nourishing *(Sthira)* stimulate digestion *(Saraka)* healing properties *(Sandhankari)* and sweet in nature *(Madhur).*[31]
n. *Godhum* when soaked in milk is *Hrudya* and *Shukrbalvardhak* in nature. (Yo.Ra)
o. It is also *Balkarak* and *Vatapittashamak* in nature.[32]

Various therapeutic indication of *Adhaki (Pigeon pea)*

Aadhaki is *Kaphapittaghni* and does not aggravate *Vata*. It is *Sheeta*, *Madhura, Kashaya* and *Virukshniya* in nature.[33] *Shali* is harvested in *Hemant ritu* and *Vrihi* is harvested in *Varsha ritu*.[34] *Adhaki is Kashaya rasa, Vibhandhakari, Grahi, Katuvipak, Sheetavirya, Laghu* in nature. It is beneficial in *Medaj, Kaphaj, Raktaj, Pittaj* disorder. Also used as *Lepa* and *Seka*.[35] *Tur dal* when mixed with ghee is

Tridoshnashak. *Adhaki* is *Pathya* in *Madhyam jwar* along with *Atisara* and also *Pathyakar* in *Grahanirog*.

Various therapeutic indication of Rice

- *Shali* rice is indicated in *Pittaavrut Vata*.[36]
- Various preparations from rice are indicated in *Urustambha*.[37]
- Sprinkling of rice water is advised.[38]

Rice increases *Kapha* in the body, heavy to digest, roasted rice alleviates *Kapha* and light to digest.[39] After *Panchakarma* procedure like *Vamana* and *Virechana sansarjan kram* is followed in which *Shashtik* and *Shali* is advised in diet for breastfeeding mother.

Various recipes of *Dhanyavarga* prescribed in literature

S.No.	Sanskrit Name	Current Hindi Name	Comments	Reference
1.	*Gaudika*[40]	*Gulgula*	Sweet made from wheat flour with crude sugar stuffed within.	*Susruta Sutra* 46.394.
2.	*Ghratpura*[41]	*Ghewar*	A kind of porous sweet prepared with fine wheat flour mixed with milk and fried in clarified butter and finally coated with sugar.	*Susruta Sutra* 46.353.
3.	*Khajjaka*[42]	Khaja	A preparation of wheat flour fried in clarified butter. Sweet *Khajjaka* is also mentioned.	*Susruta Sutra* 46.399 *Upasak Dashang1*-34
4.	*Phenaka*[43]	*Pheni*	Soft cake of fine wheat flour coated with sugar.	*Susruta Sutra* 46.399; *Aṅgavijja* p. 182.
5.	*Puplika*[44]	*Malpua*	Small soft cake of rice or wheat flour fried in clarified butter so that the latter was absorbed within a coated with crude sugar and saffron.	*Charak Samhita* 27. 266.
6.	*Samita*[45]		A preparation of powdered wheat meal stuffed with boiled and then grounded Phaseolus Mungo.	*Susruta Sutra* 46. 398-99.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion which is drawn from this paper is in case of *Mandagni* and various kind of diseases as a therapeutic indication *Puran Dhanya* is advised. In case of *Niram Avastha* when digestive fire is appropriate one can use *Navin Dhanya* in their meals. In all pathological conditions for ex. *Aamvat* and gout. Most of the time *Puran Dhanya* is indicated.

But exceptionally in case of *Bhasmak rog* due to *tikshna Agni Navin Dhanya* or porridge meet from *Puran Dhanya* is advised for wellbeing of a patient.

By observing *Saam* and *Niram Avastha* of *Mal* whether *Puran* or *Navin* should be consumed is indicated in *Samhitas*. In case of sluggish metabolism patient is advised to have in *Puran Dhanya* and Navin grains are strictly prohibited, even in *Tantrayukti* it is mentioned that whenever there is no indication of consumption of meal always *Puran Dhanya* is recommended. Further *Langhan* properties of *Navin* and Puran Dhanya need to be evaluated for future studies. This article will help Nutritionist, Dietecian, Ayurveda practioners to understand the concept of ageing grains in therapeutic indications mentioned in Ayurveda.

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