

## Concept and Significance of Use of Spices as per Ayurveda

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction-** Ayurveda is one of the oldest systems of medicine. The first and foremost aim of this sacred science is preservation of health. The most important factor for attainment of health is nutritious and balanced diet. The components of diet, rules of dietetics, role of particular diet in different diseases, seasonal diet regimen is widely described in classical texts of ayurveda. It emphasises not only on the material quality of food but also on the selection of food, its processing and cooking etc. There are eight factors which determine the utility of various types of food and *karana* or *samskara* (method of processing) is one of them. One of the important aspects of dietetics is adding proper spices or condiment to food while cooking. *Pippali* (Pepper), *shunthi* (DryGinger) *hing* (*Asafoetida*), *jiraka* (Cumin) are some examples of commonly used adjuvants.

**Aim and Objective** -To explore and analyse the concept of use of spices in Ayurveda.

**Materials and Method**-Review of classical texts of *ayurveda* regarding the concerned matter was done followed by scientific analysis.

**Result and Conclusion** -Spices enhance the taste and flavour of the food and aids in digestive secretions. In addition to this, they are rich in nutrients, have medicinal qualities and possess antioxidant properties. Thus, they help in maintenance of health and have disease curing properties also.

**Keywords** – Ayurveda, cooking, food, spices.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Food, sleep and observance of *brahmacharya* (control of senses and spiritual bliss conducive to the knowledge of *brahman*) are recognized as three essential things for the smooth running of life. [1] Among the three *upastambas* (sub-pillars), *ahara* (food) is considered as the best sustainers of life. Food has been praised as God in ancient Indian texts. One of the important aspects of food is method of cooking which has been mentioned as *sanskara* or method of processing. Method of processing includes a variety of processes

like purification, polishing, preservation etc. All these processing make transformation in original qualities.

The process of cooking is very important. It makes the food palatable, easily chewable digestible and absorbable. Cooking of food in India include oils, condiment (substances used to give a special flavour to food), spices (pungent and aromatic substances) and salt. In addition to qualities of herbs and spices enhancing the taste & flavour of the food and aiding digestive secretions, they have medicinal properties as well. Adjuvants enhance the

appetite, taste and digestion of food.

**2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES-** To explore and analyse the concept of use of spices in Ayurveda.

**3. MATERIALS AND METHOD**  
Review of classical texts of *ayurveda* regarding the concerned matter was done followed by scientific analysis.

**4. REVIEW OF CLASSICS**  
*Acharya Charaka* has classified the food articles according to the taste, potency,

outcome of digestion (*vipaka*) and specific action (*prabhava*) of the various articles of diet and on the basis of their origin. Adjuvant of food e.g. various oils, condiments, spices and salt are mentioned in *aharopyogivarga*. Adjuvants are unlimited in number. [2] *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned the adjuvants in *shakavarga* (group of vegetables). They are pungent, hot, relishing, alleviate *vata* and *kapha* and are used in various ways in processing the food. Some of the important and commonly used adjuvants nowadays are listed below.

**Table No .1 List of commonly used cooking adjuvants as per ayurveda**

S. N.	Adjuvant	Botanical Name & Family	Guna & Rasa	Virya & Vipaka	Dosha Karma	Main Function	Effect on Disease
1.	<i>Rasona</i> [3] (Garlic)	<i>Alliumsativam</i> (Liliaceae)	<i>Sngidha, tikshana, pichhala, guru, sara guna; &amp; katu, tikta, kshaya rasa</i>	<i>Ushana&amp;katu vipaka</i>	Pacifies <i>Vata- kapha</i>	<i>Rasayana()</i> <i>pa chana Balya, vrishya, medhya,</i>	<i>Jirrajwara, gulma, hridayaroga</i> [4]
2.	<i>Sarso</i> [5] (Mustard)	<i>Brassicacampestris</i> (Cruciferae)	<i>Tikshna, Snigdha (oil &amp; seed); &amp; katu, tikta rasa</i>	<i>Ushna&amp;katu vipaka</i>	<i>Vata kapha shamaka&amp;pitta vardhaka</i>	<i>Agni vardhakakrimighana,</i>	<i>kustharoga</i>
3.	<i>Haridra</i> [6] (Turmeric)	<i>Curcuma longa</i> (Zingiberaceae)	<i>Ruksha&amp;laghu, Katu,tikta rasa.</i>	<i>Ushana.&amp;katu vipaka</i>	<i>Kaphha-pitta shamaka</i>	<i>Improves dehavarna, anulomaka, pachaka,</i>	<i>Kushatha(skin disorders)</i> [7], <i>prameha, pinasa,</i>
4.	<i>Lavanga</i> [8] (Cloves)	<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i> (Myrtaceae)	<i>Laghu,, Snigdha&amp; Tikta, katu rasa</i>	<i>Sheeta,&amp;katu vipaka</i>	<i>Kapha-pittashamaka</i>	<i>Dipana, pachana, ruchya</i>	<i>Trishna, char di, hikka, swasa, kasa</i>
5.	<i>Dalchini</i> [9] (Cinnamon)	<i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i> (Lauraceae)	<i>Laghu, Ruksha, tikshana, &amp;katu, tikta amadhura</i>	<i>Ushana&amp;katu vipaka</i>	<i>Vata- kapha shamaka</i>	<i>Dipana, Pachana, vataanulomana</i>	<i>Mutrakrichha, udarshool, grahani</i>
6.	<i>Pippali</i> [10] (Pepper)	<i>Piper longum</i> (Piperaceae)	<i>Laghu, snigdha, tikshana, &amp;katu rasa</i>	<i>Anuushanaheeta &amp;madhura vipaka</i>	<i>Kapha – vata Shamaka</i>	<i>Vrishya, rasayana dipana, vataanulomana, pachana</i> [11]	<i>Swasa, kasa, hikka, gulma, pandu, jeernajwara etc.</i>
7.	<i>Dhanayaka</i> [12] (Coriander)	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i> (Umbelliferae)	<i>Laghu, snigdha, &amp;kashaya, tikta, madhur, katurasa</i>	<i>Ushana&amp;madhura vipaka</i>	<i>Triidoshahara Shamaka</i>	<i>Dipana, pachana, rochaka, krimighna</i>	<i>Antardaaha, ajirnaatisara etc.</i>
8.	<i>Shunthi</i> [13] (Dry Ginger)	<i>Zingiber officinale</i> (Zingiberaceae)	<i>Laghu, snigdha&amp; katu rasa</i>	<i>Ushna &amp;madhur Vipaka</i>	<i>Vata kapha shamaka</i>	<i>Vrishya rochana, dipana, pachana</i>	<i>Swasa,</i> [14] <i>kasa, atishula, anaha etc.</i>
9.	<i>Hing</i> [15] (Asafoetida)	<i>Ferulana rthex</i> (Umbelliferae)	<i>Laghu, snigdha, [16] tikshan, &amp;katu rasa</i>	<i>Ushana&amp;katu vipaka</i>	<i>Kapha-vata shamaka</i>	<i>Balya pachana, ruchya</i>	<i>Shula, murchha, gulma, anaha,</i>
10.	<i>Jiraka</i> [17] (Cumin)	<i>Cuminum cyminum</i> (Umbelliferae)	<i>Laghu, ruksha &amp;Katu rasa</i>	<i>Ushna&amp;katu vipaka</i>	<i>Kapha – vata shamaka</i>	<i>Balya, rochaka, Dipana, pachana, krimighana, chakshushiya</i>	<i>Atisaara, gulma, Adhyamana</i>
11.	<i>Mishreya</i> [18] (Fennel)	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> (Umbelliferae)	<i>Laghu snigdha, &amp; Madhura, katu tikta rasa</i>	<i>Sheeta &amp; madhur vipaka</i>	<i>Vata- pitta shamaka</i>	<i>Vrishya dipana pachana, anulomana</i>	<i>Kshatshirma, swasa, kasa ajeerna, adhyamaan, udarshool.</i>

Table 1 to be continued...

12.	<i>Jatiphala</i> <sup>[19]</sup> (Nutmeg)	<i>Myristicafragrans</i> (Myristicaceae)	<i>Laghu tikshna, &amp; tikta, katu rasa</i>	<i>Ushana &amp; katu vipaka</i>	<i>Kapha-vata Shamaka</i>	<i>Dipana, pachana, krimighana, vaatanulomaka,</i>	<i>Jiranasara, pinasa, swasa, kasa, ajirna.</i>
13.	<i>Yavani</i> <sup>[20]</sup> (Ajowan)	<i>Trachyspermumammi</i> (Umbelliferae)	<i>Laghu, rukshan, tikshana, &amp; katu, tikta rasa</i>	<i>Ushana, katu vipaka</i>	<i>Kaphavatas hamaka</i>	<i>Rochana dipana, pachana</i>	<i>Gulma, pliharoga</i>
14.	<i>Methika</i> <sup>[22]</sup> (Fenugreek seeds)	<i>Trigonellafoenum</i> (Papilionatae)	<i>Laghu, snigdha &amp; katu rasa</i>	<i>Ushana &amp; katu vipaka</i>	<i>Vata Shamaka</i>	<i>Rochana, dipana, pachana, anulomana</i>	<i>Jwara, agnimandhya</i> <sup>[23]</sup>
15.	<i>Ela</i> <sup>[24]</sup> (Cardamom)	<i>Elettariacardamomum</i> (Zingiberaceae)	<i>Laghu &amp; ruksha &amp; katu rasa</i>	<i>Sheeta &amp; madhur vipaka</i> <sup>[25]</sup>	<i>Tridosha Shamaka</i>	<i>Balya rochana, dipana, pachana, anulomana</i>	<i>Mutrakracha, swasa, kasa, kshaya.</i> <sup>[25]</sup>
16.	<i>Lavana</i> (Salt) <sup>[26]</sup>	Common salt	<i>Snigdha &amp; tikshana &amp; Lavana rasa</i>	<i>Ushana &amp; madhur vipaka</i>	<i>Vatashamaka</i>	<i>Dipana rochana, sransana (laxative)</i>	<i>Ajirna anahagulama shula, udara roga</i>

## 5. DISCUSSION

These adjuvants work by the virtues of *rasa* (taste) *guna* (properties), *virya* (potency), *vipaka* (final outcome of digestion) and *prabhava* (specific action). Some actions are performed by *rasa*, some by *guna*, some by *virya* and *vipaka*. The substances perform the action either locally or systematically. Apart from these actions *dravyas* (substances) have got some specific action also.

The *rasa* adds to the taste of food and have effects on the body also. *Rasa* mainly makes the food palatable thus works on appetite. Most of the adjuvants are having *katu* and *tiktarasas*. *Katurasa* performs the action of gustatory (taste buds on tongue) stimulation and also helps in salivary secretion.<sup>[27]</sup> These salivary secretions help in taste perception, moistening of food and digestion. *Dravya* having sour taste (*amla*) and pungent taste (*katurasa*) are particularly sialagogues which increase salivary secretion.<sup>[28]</sup> Though Bitter taste (*tiktarasas*) is not palatable but acts as an appetizer and helps in digestion also.<sup>[29]</sup>

Most of the adjuvants are light (*laghu*) and hot (*Ushna*) in properties (*guna*); *ushna* in *virya* and *katu* in *vipaka* thus they increase fire (*agni*)<sup>[30]</sup>

Most of the *dravyas* are *kapha vata* mitigation in action. Though *bodhakakapha* is responsible for perception of taste but when *kapha* is increased and takes the form of *mala*, the action of *bodhakakapha* is

hindered. *Amladravya* because of *parthvi* and *agniguna* stimulates the *bodhakakapha* but do not allow *avarana* of *kapha* because of *agnitatva*. Vitiating *kapha* or *kapha* in excess weakens the digestive strength. Hence most of the spices are *kapha* mitigated in action. Though *vayu* helps in stimulation of fire but it should not be excess in amount. Because of *anulomanaguna*, *vata shamaka dravyas* help in dispelling the *vayu* which is produced during the process of digestion. *Ushna* and *snigdhadravya* help in *anulomana*. Being *anuloamka* in nature they pacify *shool* also.

Most of the adjuvants are *dipana* (stimulant) (e.g. *maricha*, *hing*.) and *pachana* which stimulates the digestive secretion in stomach and help in digestion. *Dipana* and *pachana* are stages of one *karma* only. In *dipana* the *agni* is not much stimulated. It only helps in increasing appetite but it cannot digest the food. But in second stage the *agni* is stimulated enough to digest the food. *Dipana* drugs will stimulate and enhance the *agni*.<sup>[31]</sup> This *Agni* may be either *jatharagni* or *bhutagni* or *dhatwagni*. And all the adjuvants are *dipana* which enhance the digestion. *Pachana* drugs help in digestion of food. All adjuvants mentioned above possess *dipana* and *pachanakarma* thus increasing appetite, stimulating and maintaining *agni* leading to proper digestion of food.

Due to the volatile oil nature of *lavanga* and *ela* these adjuvants are very

good mouth fresheners. In addition to this they add flavour to food especially during cooking non vegetarian dishes where natural odour is not pleasant.

Besides, the above actions on gastrointestinal system, these spices have some specific actions like *Rasayana* (rejuvenation), *vrishya* (aphrodisiac action) and anti-allergic, etc. They act as medicines in many diseases. They are rich in vitamins and minerals and anti-oxidants [32] ulcers properties too. But they should not be used in excess, especially by the patients of *amla pitta*. So the limited use of these in diet helps the individual to gain health. They are used as medicines in many diseases especially having *angni mandya* as pathogenesis in particular.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The spices mentioned in *ayurveda* do not only add flavour, colour and taste to food, but also help in increasing appetite, stimulating and maintaining digestive strength. These spices are also beneficial for our health as they are rich in various nutrients, minerals and antioxidants. Thus the proper use of adjuvants in cooking food results in total nourishment of the body.

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