



Water: The elixir of life in Ayurveda

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Abstract

Water is also very important for healthy life. It helps in maintaining health and decides the manner how water has to be consumed in body. Although now a day's people are very much concerned with food they eat, calories consumed, amount of vitamins and minerals they consume and little emphasis is placed in water. Indeed amount of water of right quality is as important as the amount of food that is consumed.

Keywords: Water, Elixir, drinking, Ayurveda

Introduction

“A drop of water is worth more than a sack of gold to a thirsty man”

Really the most precious element in this world is water. Without water life is impossible. There is no alternate of water in the world. Jeevanam is a synonym for water which means life. Life could not exist on this planet without water. According to Ayurveda water is not only an essential nutrient but is one, among the five basic elements essential for the creation of this universe. It is Jalamahabhooti.e water element. When we save water it saves us back. To secure the future of our generation it is necessary to save water and to stop polluting water. Ayurveda is the science of life which teaches us how to attain the long and healthy life. Ayurveda depends upon Tridosh theory. These tridosh are vata, Pitta and kapha. Normalcy of these doshas are to be understood in respect of their quantity, quality, and functions. Both increase and decrease in any of these three aspects is abnormality. When doshas are normal the individual are healthy but if these doshas are abnormal, they produce disease. Severity of disease depends upon the degree of abnormality of doshas.

Is drinking water is necessary in appropriate quantity?

Yes, it should be taken in right quantity. It may differ from person to person. Water does not

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become a remedy or good for use, merely by being either cooked / uncooked or only being hot/ cold used judiciously in appropriate quantity it acts like a nectar or act as a poison when used otherwise.

Symptoms due to drinking large quantity of water

Drinking large quantity of water leads to increase in doshas. In fever it leads to thirst. It may causes excessive sleep, stupor, flatuance, feeling of heaviness of body, cough, poor digestive capacity, nausea, and salivation, difficulty in breathing and nasal catarrh.

Symptoms due to avoidance of water

Water is the sustainer of life for all living beings. Absolute avoidance of water is impossible. Avoidance of water may cause -

- Dryness of mouth and throat
- Weakness of the body
- Deafness
- fatigue
- depression
- cardiac pain
- death

Qualities of drinking water according to ayurveda

The best water is rain water collected in clean vessel, best time to collect water is a little time after the commencement of rain (Charak, 2006). It can



be stored only for a day and used for drinking purpose. It has following qualities

- Enliven
- Satiating
- Pleasing to mind
- Refreshing
- Stimulating the mind
- Light
- Indistinct taste
- Sweet by nature
- Cool and clear
- Nectar like property
- Easily digestible

It pacifies fatigue, exhaustion, thirst, narcosis, fainting, drowsiness, sleep, burning sensation and is absolutely the most wholesome.

Types of water

It is of 2 types

- Aantriksha (water from sky)
- Ground water (water from earth)

Aantriksha water from sky in any form is known as Aantrikaha. Rain water is the best and pure in olden days, but now a days with the increasing industrialization, the atmosphere has become contaminated with dust, smoke & poisonous gases etc. the running water from the clouds gets polluted to a great extent and form salty rain, acid rain, crimson rain etc. it is harmful to make use of such rain water for drinking without boiling it (Ashtang sangrah, 2002).

Once rain water has fallen on the ground it acquires the properties of land and becomes healthy or unhealthy depending on the nature of land.

It is further divided into four types which are as follows-

1. Rain (dhar)
2. Hail (kaar)
3. Dew (taushar)
4. snow (hem)

Ground water when water collected from earth by burrowing or from pits in rocks etc is known as ground or terrestrial water. According to origin it is further divided into 8 kinds of water these are as follows –

1. deep well (kupa)
2. natural lake (saras)
3. artificial lake (pond)

4. water collected in pits of rock (chaunda)
5. water flowing down from mountain (prasravana)
6. water from natural spring (audbhid)
7. well with flight of steps all around (vapi)
8. river (nadi)

Water of deep well is alkaline while water from natural lake, natural spring, & well with flight of steps all around is sweet and easily digestible in nature. Water of river is pungent. Water obtained from rocks and mountains is difficult to digest. In ancient times the digestibility was the criteria to decide the potability of water in contrast to the present day criteria of hardness or softness. Soft water is easily digestible while hard water is difficult to digest (Sushruta, 1998).

Effect of water according to origin

Rivers flows into western sea are swift and have clean water, which is good for health. Water from river arising himalya and Malaya mountains [western ghat of Karnataka and kerala] will also be good for health but the same water stagnated for long is not good and will produce parasitic disease, filariasis, disease of heart, throat and head. Water of rivers of mahendra mountain produce disease like piles, enlargement of abdomen and filiarisis, water of rivers arising from sahya and vindhya mountains produce leprosy, skin disease, anemia, disease of head. Rivers arises from pariyatra mountain improves strength. Water from the sea is harmful for the body. Water of marshy land has many defects and is slimy and, on the contrary that of other zone is free from these defects and harmless. water from moderate land is non burning during digestion, thirst removing, pleasing appetizer, agreeable, cold and light taste in water occur due to intercombination of prithvi, water, vayu, aakash and agni [Panchmahabhut].

Prithvi predominance land – sour and salty water
jala predominance land – sweet

Tejas predominance land – pungent and bitter

Vayu predominance land – astringent

Akash predominance land – unmanifest taste

In different season water for drinking should be used according to following

In rainy season – water of rain or spring should be used

In autumn - all type may be used



In early winter- water from lake or tank may be taken

In spring - from well or waterfall

In summer - from well or waterfall

In early rain –from well or shallow well

Qualities of water according to nature of soil

Nature of soil

The earth having white soil

The earth having black soil

The earth having light yellowish

The earth having blue soil

The earth having alkaline soil

The earth having brown soil

The earth having mixed soil

The earth is made up of **Panchmahabhut** in different proportion varies from region to the other. Due to the different proportion there is a variation in the colors and qualities of soil, the nature of climate, flora and fauna, constitution and temperament of people etc. Hence the suitability of water of different region of earth differs for different people. People living for long period in a particular region will have become accustomed to kind of water of that region and the water of other region will not be suitable for them. Water of any region well exposed to sunlight to health than the one which is not so exposed.

Different forms of water

Cold water - it is recommended in fainting, hot seasons, burning sensation, poison, disorder of blood, alcoholism, giddiness, exhaustion, feeling of darkness, vomiting and upwards intrinsic hemorrhage. It is contraindicated in chest pain, coryza, disorder of vata, obstruction in throat, flatulence, stiffened bowels, immediately after evacuation, acute fever, and hiccough and after intake of unctuous substance.

Hot water – it means water reduced to one half by boiling. Water which does not move free from froth, clean, light and reduced to one fourth is regarded as of good quality hot water. Hot water removes kapha, medas, vata and aama, stimulated digestive capacity, cleanses urinary bladder, alleviates dyspnoea, cough and fever and as such is always wholesome water cooled after boiling, is useful in burning sensation, diarrhoea, pittarakta,

Collection of water

All type of ground water should be collected in early morning when purity, coldness, & the best qualities maximum.

Nature of water

Astringent in taste

Sweet in taste

Bitter in taste

Astringent –sweet in taste

Salty in taste

Alkaline in taste

Mixed in taste

fainting, alcoholism, poisoning, thirst, vomiting and giddiness.

Stale water - It should never be given by the wise people. As it is acidified aggravates kapha and is not wholesome for the thirsty.

Coconut water- It is unctuous, sweet, cold, agreeable, appetizer, diuretics, aphrodisiac, healthy and pacifies pitta and thirst.

Contaminated water

Water which is covered by mud, sapid, jalkumbhi, grasses, lotus leaves etc, not exposed to the sun, the moon and air associated with abnormal smell, colors and taste should be known as deranged. It develops six defects related to touch, sight, taste, smell, potency and final transformation of these roughness, hotness, and coldness are detects on touch.

- Color of mud, sand algae and other various type is **defect on sight**.
- Presence of manifested taste is **defect of taste**.
- Disagreeable smell is **defect of smell**.
- After ingestion which causes thirst, heaviness, colic and excessive secretion of mucus indicates **defect of potency**.
- When digested in a long period or with flatulence formation indicates **defects of final transformation**.
- These defects are absent in rain-water.



Water which has been contaminated with the dirt, excreta and decomposed dead body of insects and snakes, which is having a network of weeds[grass] and rubbish, thick with presence of silt, plants, growing in silt, algae, rootless plants, leaves, covering the entire surface, sunlight and air not reaching the water at all, water full of insects, worms etc. water which is fresh but not fallen from the sky, water which is discolored, dirty, with big

- Thirst
- Distension
- Enlargement of abdomen
- Fever
- Cough
- Weak digestive capacity
- Itching and boils on the skin
- Indigestion
- Dyspnoea
- Polyp
- Other disorder

Putrification of water

Polluted or contaminated water should be purified by following methods:-

- Boiling on fire
- Exposure to sunlight
- Dipping heat iron ball
- Sand
- Filtering through thick clothes
- By flowers of katheky, mallika etc.

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bubbles coming out of it, of bad taste and foul smell, that which causes chills in the teeth being very cold, rain water which is unseasonal, fresh rain water even of proper season, water that is polluted with urine, excreta and poisonous matter from spiders and other insects all these kind of water are unfit for bathing or drinking.

The deranged water will produce following abnormalities:-

- By seeds of katheki [clearing nut], cinnamon stone, pearl and precious stone.

Method of cooling

- Keeping in open air
- Addition of cold water
- Stirring with a stick
- Straining through clothes
- Keeping on sand
- Suspend in air.

In last we can say that water is very important for every person. Its sources, purification, time to take water in reference to meal are also play an important role for health and disease in an individual. Water taken before meal dilute all the digestive juices making for poor digestion which in turn lead to inadequate nourishment and consequent wasting of body. Water taken after meal produces laziness, excessive sleep and consequent accumulation of more fat in the body. Hence it is advised to avoid drinking of water at these two times and drink moderate quantity of water during meal itself which is ideal for maintenance of health.

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