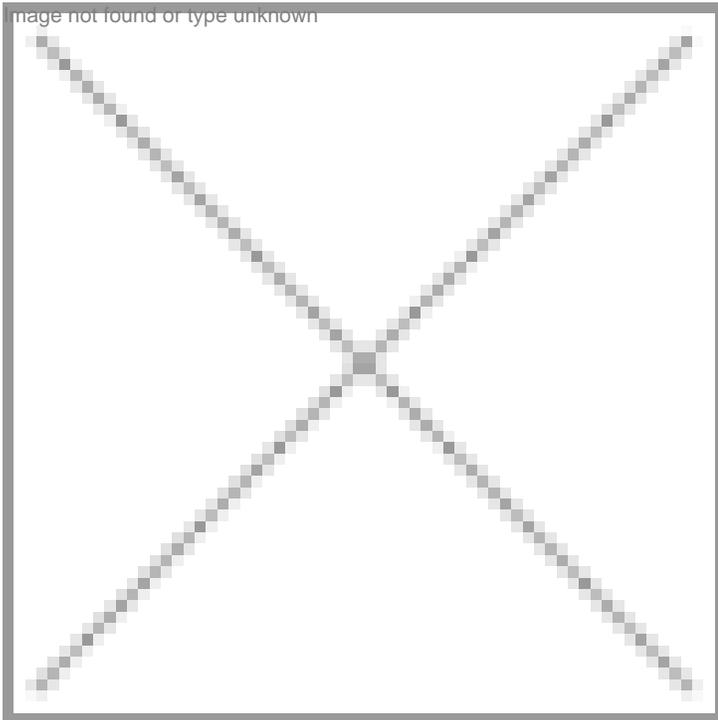


Consult 19th & 20th Century books for ayurceuticals

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Ayurveda is a live art-science. Hence it is desirable that besides pondering over the classical texts, we should also consult the more recent observations and experience documented by leaders of Ayurveda. Such a study may provide us several hits, leads and candidates for ayurceutical products. Abundant books, magazines and articles exist in several Indian languages as a potential source for industrial/nutraceutical/academic R&D. There is no current organised database of this vast literature. A plea is made for a collective endeavour and enterprise to organise and consult such literature of 19th and 20th Century.

As an example, I have selected the book, "Siddha Bheshaja Manimala" written by Rajvaidya Sri Krishnaram Bhatt and published in 1967. The book has been eulogised by Pandit Haridutta Shastri, ex-director of Ayurveda, Maharashtra, as "Siddha-Bheshaja – Manimala, in Sanskrit literature and specifically in ayurvedic literature, is one unique, non-comparable, not available elsewhere and an invaluable volume. This is a fructification of Guru-Shisya tradition and a record of process and experienced remedies." The author's ancestry can be traced to Harit Rishi. The lineage was recognised as Rajvaidya of Jaipur for centuries. The author of this book was a great Sanskrit scholar, a writer and a poet. It is indeed a pleasure to read the book in Sanskrit and Hindi. The second chapter is dedicated to the properties of aushadhis (drugs) and ahara-dravyas (dietary articles). For the present article, I have focussed on this chapter and what potential the properties hold for ayurceuticals.

The chapter starts with classification of dravyas based on effects on the three doshas. Table 1 lists some of aushadhis/ahara-dravyas, which offer opportunities to evolve Prakruti-specific food supplements.

Table 1: Dosha-specific Properties of Plants

Doshas	Plant/ Food Item	Potential Formulation
Vataghna	Ricinus communis	Erandpak:Chocolate
Pittaghna	Musa pudica	Banana + milk powder
Kaphaghna	Ginger + Honey	Lozenges
Vatapittaghna	Asparagus racemous	Granules / milk
Vataslehmaghna	Commiphora wightii	Pellets in capsules
Pittaslehmaghna	Ficus racemosa	Udumbar jam
Tridoshanghna	Phyllanthus amarus	Tables / Capsules / syrup
Doshatrayodas	Curds with honey	Probiotic

The author's next attention is on Triphala - Terminalia chebula (Haritaki), Terminalia bellerica (Bhikhitaki) and Emblica officinalis (Amalaki).

Amongst these three Amla has got much more attention due to chyavanprash. But Haritaki deserved a special attention. The common misgiving about T. chebula is that it is only a purgative. The author makes it clear that the purgative dose is double that of Rasayana dose. It is the latter activity which needs significant R&D attention as anti-ageing and immunity-enhancing product. Even for all the three fruits, the author has clearly stated the proportions: one fruit of T. chebula, two fruits of T. bellerica and four fruits of E. officinale. This is different than the equal proportions commonly used. The current formulations of Triphala available in the market are based on this. There is hardly any innovation in formulation R&D on Triphala. With the current technology of taste-masking new palatable forms can be evolved as Rasayanas of the elderly for healthy ageing.

The next item is Zingiber officinale. The author has described a preparation: fresh ginger should be chopped into fine thin wafers. These should be wetted with curds supernatant. And then the wafers should be mixed with Hingu and salt. Later these are dried in sunlight. The dried wafers have to be fried in ghee. The process can be refined as ginger-wafers. These wafers could be very palatable anti-sore throat digestive and anti-nausea.

Trikatu (Piper longum, Piper nigrum and Zingiber officinale) is described as pacifying kapha and vata and enhance appetite and digestion. The author calls the root of P.longum as the 'root of health'. One great contribution of Ayurveda is called 'Vardhamana Pippali Prayoga'. The latter is a course of increasing the number of P.longum fruits for a fortnight from 1 to 15 and then decreasing to one in the next fifteen days. The fruit is boiled in milk. There are innumerable examples of patients whose recurrent, common cold ceased after therapy. An eminent vaidya reported a complete regression of his malarial spleen enlargement after therapy. These findings have gone relatively unnoticed. Only work carried out is the enhancement of anti-tuberculosis drug rifampicin absorption by piperine and that of curcumin. A question whether dietary substrates are also better absorbed with piperine is worth asking. This could have a vast potential for many nutraceuticals. The author also mentions that the cold infusion of the root of P.longum, given after delivery accelerated the release of retained placenta.

Curcuma longa and curcumin has not got much world attention as an anticancer agent. But the author describes a novel use of turmeric that is commendable. For conjunctivitis the turmeric water extract is filtered and a clean cloth piece soaked with it, which is put on the eyes. Now there is a colourless derivative of curcumin-tetrahydrocurcumin. The latter can be used as drops in conjunctivitis and also as a hygienic eye-wash. Similarly, turmeric powder is mixed with butter and used as rub up on skin. The skin becomes supple and glowing. Vicco turmeric cream is quite popular but the yellow status detracts people from its wider use tetrahydrocurcumin skin cream can be a very novel and user-friendly product. The immune enhancing and anti-inflammatory properties would be evident by such a use.

Bilva (Aegle marmelos) is famous because its trifoliate leaves are used in Shiva worship. The author of Siddha Bhashaja Manimala has described several uses of its unripe fruit - Belphala. One interesting and uncommon use is the tranquillising and sedative effect of A. Marmelos roots. A medicated wine, prepared from the roots, can be a much needed mild sedative for insomnia. Sleep disturbance is very common due to urban stress.

The second section of the chapter is on 'Paushtic Varga' (nourishing material). The main plants listed are: Asparagus racemosus (Shatavari), Withania somnifera (Ashwagandha), Mucuna pruriens (Atmagupta), Argyreia speciosa (Vridhdadaruk), Musli Talimkhana Sugarcane, Vansalochana Salam misri, Kaselika etc. Some of these, like Musli, have already led to major marketed products. However, from the nutraceutical angle there is immense scope to focus on selected plants like Mucuna pruriens for neurodegenerative disorders and Withania somnifera for immune deficiency.

The author has paid special attention to the medicinal/nutritional use of flowers. The use of lotus has been dwelt with at great length. There are hardly any preparations from lotus available in the market. The seeds are used in form of a drink for nausea, hiccups and vomiting. When bleeding occurs in pregnant women the cold infusion of the flowers is beneficial. Japa kusum (Hibiscus rosa-sinensis) flower buds (10-12) are made into paste in milk and given in menorrhagia. My aunt Smt. Sumatiben Vaidya was head mistress at a girls' residential school and used the flowers of Japa to treat puberty menorrhagia. In Japan, a drink prepared from the flowers of Japa is used for fatigue and weakness. Gulkands can be prepared from the petals of several types of flowers besides those of roses.

The section on fruits describes their diverse health/nutritional uses. Pomegranate, now very popular in the West, is described to be specially useful in physical and mental fatigue. Citrus medica (Matulunga) (a popular product is Bijorin) can be a global product for non-ulcer dyspepsia flatulence and anorexia, if a novel formulation is evolved. (In a subsequent article, we will cover the cereals, pulses, vegetables, dairy products etc. as described in Siddha Bhashaja Manimala).

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