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Review Article

### A STUDY ON “AMALAKAM- VAYAHSTHAPANANAM” (THE BEST REJUVENATOR)

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#### ABSTRACT

*Amlaki* is one of the prestigious and widely used herbs in ayurvedic medicines. *Charak*, *Sushrut* and *Vagbhata* widely mention the use of *amlaka* for curative purposes. *Amlaka* due to sheet virya potency is widely used in disorders caused by *pitta dosha*. Well renowned *Ayurvedic* preparations like *Chawanprash*, *Triphala* and *Amlaki rasayan* possess dominance of *Amlaka*. It prevents aging and promotes longevity of life. It has been found to be the most abundant source of Vitamin C in the plant kingdom containing as much as 20 times that of an orange. It is supposed to rejuvenate all the organ systems of the body, provide strength and wellness. It also helps us to keep away from all the diseases by boosting our immune system

**Keywords:** *Amlaka*, *vayahsthapana*, Ageing, Free radicals, Anti-oxidants, Immune modulator.

#### INTRODUCTION

*Ayurveda* is the science of life. The principles of *Ayurveda* focus on providing a disease free longer life. During whole life span, a person is able to give it's best in the young age and it is desirable to all that their youth should remain for a longer period. For this very purpose, in *Ayurveda*, *Dincharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Sadvritta*, *Ahar*, *Vihar*, use of *Rasayana* have been illustrated thoroughly. While describing the 152 *agrya dravyas*, for maintenance of health, acharya *Atreya Punarvasu* preached *Amalaka* as best *vayahthapaka* dravya and Quoted that-

आमलकं वयःस्थानानाम् । (च. सू. २५/४०)

In *Ayurveda* the concept of *vayahthapana* has been given in detail. *Acharya Charak* described *vayahthapana mahakashaya* i.e collection of 10 drugs to establish the youth.

#### Role of *vayahthapana* drugs:

*Acharya Chakrapani* commented beautifully on *vayahthapana* as-

वयस्तरुणं स्थापयतीति वयःस्थापनम् (आ.दी.) On (च. सू. ४/८).

Means a drug which stabilise the age in young hood is called *vayahthapana*. To understand concept of *Vayahthapana* on the scientific background, first we should understand the concept of ageing as it has importance in health issues and their solutions.

#### CONCEPT OF AGEING

**Ageing** is the accumulation of changes in a person over time. Ageing in humans refers to a multidimensional process of physical, psychological, and social change. Some dimensions of ageing grow and expand over time, while others decline. Reaction time, for example, may slow with age, while knowledge of world events and wisdom may expand.

#### FREE RADICAL THEORY OF AGEING

Denham Harman first proposed the free radical theory of aging in the 1950s, and in the 1970s extended the idea to implicate mitochondrial production of reactive oxygen species. A free radical is any atom or molecule that has a single unpaired electron in an outer shell. The **free radical theory of aging** (FRTA) states that ageing is because of accumulation of free radical damage to cell over time. While a few free radicals such as melanin are not chemically reactive, most biologically-relevant free radicals are highly reactive. For most biological structures, free radical damage is closely associated with oxidative damage. Antioxidants are reducing agents, and limit oxidative damage to biological structures by passivating them from free radicals. Strictly speaking, the free radical theory is only concerned with free radicals such as superoxide ( $O_2^-$ ), but it has since been expanded to encompass oxidative damage from other reactive oxygen species such as hydrogen peroxide ( $H_2O_2$ ), or peroxy nitrite (OONO). In some model organisms, such as yeast and

*Drosophila*, there is evidence that reducing oxidative damage can extend lifespan. In mice, interventions that enhance oxidative damage generally shorten lifespan. However, in roundworms (*Caenorhabditis elegans*), blocking the production of the naturally occurring antioxidant superoxide dismutase has recently been shown to *increase* lifespan. Whether reducing oxidative damage below normal levels is sufficient to extend lifespan remains an open and controversial question.

#### Role of Antioxidants:-

Antioxidants are compounds or systems that delay autoxidation by inhibiting formation of free radicals or by interrupting propagation of the free radical by one (or more) of several mechanisms: (1) scavenging species that initiate peroxidation, (2) chelating metal ions such that they are unable to generate reactive species or decompose lipid peroxides, (3) quenching  $\cdot\text{O}_2^-$  preventing formation of peroxides, (4) breaking the autoxidative chain reaction, and/or (5) reducing localized  $\text{O}_2$  concentrations (Nawar 1996).

#### Amlaka herb chemistry:

This herb has many substances, including

- Apigenin,
- Gallic acid,
- Ellagic acid,
- Chebulinic acid,
- Quercetin),
- Chebulagic acid,
- Corilagin, isostrictinin,
- Methyl gallate, and
- Uteolin.

Tannins (**Antioxidants**) in amla include:

- Phyllaemblicin B,
- Emblicanin A (37%),
- Emblicanin B (33%),
- Punigluconin (12%) and
- Pedunculagin.

#### ANTIOXIDANT PROPERTIES OF AMALAKA

Amalaki, the Indian Gooseberry, is considered a sacred tree in India since the fruit is a well-known potent antioxidant and is very nourishing. What is most important is that Amla's antioxidant Vitamin C, unlike synthetic Vitamin C, does not lose its value through processing due to the presence of **tannins** in Amla. Because of this, Amla is found to be one of the strongest rejuvenatives in Indian traditional medicine. It is referred to in ancient text as the best medicine to prevent aging. It's worth emphasizing again: Amla contains the richest Vitamin C that does not get oxidized because its tannins retard the oxidation.

- Many antioxidants intrinsically have a pro-oxidant action, especially in the presence of transition metals like iron and copper. Through a series of reactions with oxygen species known as Fenton reaction, iron causes generation of highly toxic hydroxyl radical with subsequent biomolecule damage. It means that the antioxidants which are meant to scavenge free radicals themselves create free radicals.
- While most antioxidants go directly from an active to an inactive role, Emblicanin utilizes a multilevel cascade of

antioxidant compounds resulting in a prolongation of its antioxidant capabilities.

- Emblicanin A (one of the key compounds in Emblicanin) aggressively seeks and attacks free radicals. After it neutralizes a free radical, emblicanin A is transformed into emblicanin B, another antioxidant. Emblicanin B in turn also attacks free radicals and is transformed into Emblicanin oligomers. This makes emblicanins one of the best free radical scavenging antioxidant.
- Administration in rats of emblicanins extracts reduces chronic stress induced changes in rat brain

#### THERAPEUTIC ATTRIBUTES OF AMALAKA-

##### 1) CURE SKIN DISORDERS

It is very useful in skin diseases as it has *sheet virya* in potency. It inhibits *pitta* and thus helps in getting relief from all the skin disorders caused by *pitta* dominance. Regular intake of *Amlaka* promotes glow on skin and delays wrinkles or loosening of skin.

##### 2) CONTROL HAIR LOSS

Its internal use as well as its local application on scalp helps to control hair loss. It stimulates hair follicles thus promoting hair growth and also improves texture of the hair. It also prevents premature greying of hairs and dandruff.

##### 3) IMPROVES EYESIGHT

It is very useful in improving eyesight. It also counters diseases like reddening, itching and watering of eyes. It has also shown some good results in cataracts.

##### 4) IMMUNITY BOOSTER

One reason for *Amlaka's* reputation as a general energy-promoting, disease-preventing tonic may be its effect on the immune system. Multiple studies have shown significant increases in white blood cell counts and other measures of strengthened immunity in rodents given *Amlaka*. It is supposed to rejuvenate all the organ systems of the body, provide strength and wellness. It keeps us away from all the diseases by boosting our immune system.

##### 5) Respiratory Disorders:

Indian gooseberry is beneficial in the treatment of respiratory disorders. It is especially valuable in tuberculosis of the lungs, asthma and bronchitis.

##### 6) Cough Remedy with Amlaka:-

- Add a tsp of *Amlaka* juice or powder to a glass of warm milk and drink this thrice a day. This will clear an unpleasant throat, adding some ghee to this decoction will clear a cough.
- Mix *Amlaka* powder with honey and suck this mixture twice a day to cure a chronic dry cough.
- *Amlaka* is invaluable in the treatment of tuberculosis, asthma and bronchitis.

##### 7) Diabetes:-

- Indian gooseberry, with its high vitamin C content, is considered valuable in diabetes.
- A tablespoonful of its juice, mixed with a cup of fresh bitter gourd juice, taken daily for two months will stimulate the Islets of Langerhans.  
i.e. -the isolated group of cells that the secrete hormone insulin.

- It thus reduces the blood sugar in diabetes. Diet restrictions should be strictly observed while taking this medicine.
- It will also prevent eye complications in diabetes. Equal quantity of *amlaka* powder, *jamun* powder and bitter gourd powder also make a very useful food remedy for diabetics.
- A teaspoonful of this mixture once or twice a day would be effective in checking the progress of the disease.

#### 8) Prevents Ageing:-

- Indian gooseberry has revitalizing effects. It contains an element which is very valuable in ageing and in maintaining strength in old age.
- It improves body resistance and protects against infection. It strengthens the heart, hair and Different glands in the body.
- It is said that the great ancient sage Muni *Chyawan* rejuvenated himself in his late 70s and regained his virility by the use of *amlaka*.

#### 9) Amla prevents graying of hair:-

- Indian gooseberry is an accepted hair tonic in traditional recipes for enriching hair growth and pigmentation.
- The fruit, cut into pieces is dried preferably in the shade. These pieces are boiled in coconut oil till the solid matter becomes charred. This darkish oil is excellent in preventing greying. The water in which dried *Amalaka* pieces are soaked overnight is also nourishing to hair and can be used for the last rinse while washing the hair.

#### 10) Scurvy:-

- As an extremely rich source of vitamin C.
- Indian gooseberry is one of the best remedies for scurvy. Powder of dry gooseberry mixed with equal quantity of sugar should be taken in doses of one teaspoonful three times daily with milk.

#### 11) As Natural Cholesterol Remedy:-

- In laboratory studies, *Amlaka* has been proven to effective for high cholesterol and prevention of atherosclerosis.
- It strengthens the heart muscles and causes a significant decrease in total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, VLDL cholesterol and triglycerides. A 500 mg capsule of dried *Amlaka* powder can be added to daily routine after consulting with doctor.

#### 12) Rheumatism:-

- The Indian gooseberry is useful in the treatment of rheumatism. One teaspoonful of powder of the dry fruit mixed with two teaspoon full of jaggery should be taken twice daily for a month in this disease.

#### 13) Natural Cure for Anaemia:-

- *Amlaka* is rich in Vitamin C or ascorbic acid, an essential ingredient that helps in the absorption of Iron.
- Supplements of *Amlaka* can be very beneficial to patients suffering from Iron deficiency Anaemia

#### 14) To stop nausea and vomiting:-

- A powder of the *amalaka* seed and red sandalwood is given with honey to stop nausea and vomiting.

#### 15) For bleeding of the nose:-

- Seed fried in ghee and ground in *kanjee* is applied as Lep to the forehead to stop bleeding from the nose.

## DISCUSSION

For being *vayahsthapaka*, a drug must possess two qualities:

- 1) It should have antioxidant property.
- 2) It should be used in the prevention and treatment of many diseases. The reason being, the disease discontinues the smooth progression of life. Thus a disease creates hindrance in the life & disturbs the *vaya*. So if a drug prevents and treats many diseases it will alleviate the breach in the smooth progression of *vaya* and will establish it. Thus that drug will be a *Vayahsthapaka*.

*Amlaka* is potent anti-oxidant drug. It contains many antioxidants that have been discussed above. Further it has also been discussed that *Amlaka* is useful in the treatment of no. of diseases. So it is best among the *vayahsthapaka* drug.

## CONCLUSION

*Amalaka* works as a wonderful antioxidant and a natural Source of Vitamin C. *Amlaka* is one of the richest natural sources of vitamin C, its fresh juice containing nearly twenty times as much vitamin C as orange juice. It helps scavenge free radicals. It is powerful food for the brain. It also helps maintain the functioning of the liver, increases haemoglobin, red blood cell count. It is useful for Cough, Bronchitis, and Asthma. The daily use of *Amlaka* results in an enhanced cell survival decreased free radical production and maintains higher antioxidant level. It helps to improve intelligence and memory power. Thus it can be concluded that *Amlaka* has these pharmacological actions: it is a proven antioxidant, anti-fungal, anti-bacterial, anti-viral, anti-mutagenic, yeast inhibiting, nematicidal, anabolic, anti-hepatotoxic, anti-hyperhidrosis, anti-inflammatory, anti-histaminic, anti-spasmodic, hypolipidemic, and hypertension relieving properties. According to *Ayurveda*, *Amlaka* has the ability to make our live more than 100 years like a youth.

Thus it is justified on both *Ayurvedic* and modern background that *Amlaka* is the best drug to maintain youthness and prolongs longevity of life i.e. *Amalakam-Vayahstapananam*.

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