



RE-INVENTING AYURVEDA FOR CONVALESCENCE – EXPLORING CONVALESCENT FOOD PRACTICES WITH PROPER DIETARY PRINCIPLES

Dr Harikrishnan G*

Assistant Professor, Department of Rasashastra & Bhaishajya Kalpana, SCPM Ayurvedic Medical College, Lucknow Road, Haripur, Gonda, Uttar Pradesh
*Corresponding Author

Dr Varshanath B

Ayurveda Physician, Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala outlet, Kureepuzha PO, Kollam, Kerala, India

ABSTRACT Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of Pathya (suitable diet) in patient recovery. Sri Lolimbaraja, in Vaidhyajivana, states that an appropriate diet alone can aid healing, reducing the need for medicine. This aligns with Hippocrates' saying, "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." Convalescent individuals, including those recovering from accidents, infections, or chronic illnesses, require easily digestible, nutrient-rich food. A literature review of Ayurvedic Samhitas and modern databases highlights the significance of rice-based preparations (Manda, Peya, Vilepi) and lentil-based preparations (Yusha, Krishara, Khada-Kambalika) for their nutritional benefits. These foods, rich in essential micronutrients, aid in Aptarpanotha Roga management. Ayurvedic convalescent food is characterized by Ushna, Snigdha, Matra, Jirna, and Viryaviruddha properties, promoting Tushti, Pushti, and Bala. Samsarjana Krama, a structured dietary regimen post-Shodhana, exemplifies the restoration of digestive and overall health, reinforcing Ayurveda's holistic healing approach.

KEYWORDS : Convalescent food, Pathya Kalpana, Dietary Principles, Samsarjana Krama

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda emphasizes Pathya (suitable diet) for recovery. Sri Lolimbaraja in Vaidyajiivana states that proper diet alone can aid healing. Convalescence after major illnesses, surgery, or chemotherapy often leads to reduced nutrient intake despite increased bodily requirements, causing muscle loss, delayed healing, and prolonged recovery. Pathya Kalpana provides nutrient-dense foods adhering to dietary principles like ushna, snigdha, matratvat, jeerna, and virya aviruddha. Nutritional deficiencies are inevitable in post-illness recovery. The widespread use of antibiotics has further contributed to sub-nutrition. Adequate nutrition plays a vital role in recovery, shortening the convalescent period. The type of food-liquid, soft, or solid depends on illness severity and recovery stage. Samsarjana Krama, a structured dietary regimen post Vamana and Virechana, highlights the importance of Pathya Kalpana in restoring health. As part of healthcare, Ayurveda must reanalyze the panchamahabhuta body with Rasayana for rejuvenation. Ajasrika Rasayana plays a crucial role in strengthening the body and mind during convalescence. Following Hippocrates' principle, "Let food be thy medicine," Ayurveda should focus on applying Pathya Kalpana effectively, ensuring better recovery outcomes and improved quality of life.

OBJECTIVES

- To review the convalescent food with special reference to pathya kalpana
- To review the nutritional assessment among the convalescents
- To review the relation between dietary principles and pathya kalpana in the convalescent phase

METHODS

Literature search was made from Ayurveda Samhitha, Springer, PubMed, google scholar Databases

RESULTS

Apart from biomedicine, dietary recommendations have a definite disease management strategy¹. The person who is sick is seeking recovery from his illness; the convalescent is seeking to regain his health; so here enlightens the significance of nutritional needs in convalescence. Despite of all major theoretical shifts in early modern nutritional theory, the form and structure of convalescent cookery played a crucial role in providing healing approach.

Convalescent Phase

The convalescent phase is the gradual recovery of health and strength after illness or injury. It refers to the later stage of an infectious disease or illness when the patient recovers and returns to previous health, but may continue to be in a state of illness even if feeling better². Nutritional impairment is the major reason for longer convalescent period because nutritional support of adequate amount of macro and micro elements has a significant impact on preserving gastrointestinal

integrity and barrier function and maintaining intestinal immunologic defenses, which may have a role in decreasing their convalescent period.

Nutritional Assessment and Pathya Kalpana in Convalescence

A thorough nutritional assessment is essential in convalescence, particularly for patients recovering from cancer, surgery, or major illnesses. It includes evaluating dietary balance (energy and protein intake), assessing weight changes and BMI, analyzing muscle strength, immune response, and cognitive function, and measuring inflammatory markers like cytokines and CRP.

Convalescent Foods and Pathya Kalpana

Convalescent foods aid healing by providing essential nutrients in easily absorbable forms. Pathya Kalpana ensures a structured diet for recovery. Ayurveda emphasizes Shadrasayuktha Ahara for nourishment (Tushti, Pushti, Dhriti, Buddhi, and Bala), along with dietary discipline (Upayoga Niyama).

1. Rice-Based Pathya Kalpana

Rice is a primary convalescent food. Acharya Charaka highlights Shali rice for its digestibility.

- Manda (Rice water, 1:14 ratio) is the lightest preparation, boosting digestion and energy. Ashtaguna Manda, a variant, is beneficial post-COVID for respiratory recovery.
- Peya (Soft rice gruel, 1:14 ratio) aids digestion, regulates peristalsis, and is ideal for post-surgical recovery. Variants with Pippali, Ajamoda, and Bilva help in respiratory ailments.
- Vilepi (Thicker gruel, 1:4 ratio) is nutrient-dense, supporting heart health and post-chemotherapy recovery.

Table 1 The Therapeutic Actions Which Is Incorporated With Rice Based Pathya Kalpana¹

Sl.No	Therapeutic actions	Components
1	Antispasmodic stage in pertussis	Pippali, pippali mula, chavya, chithraka, shunthi
2	Loose stool with mucus and burning sensation in post-chemotherapy	Shalparni, bala, bilva, prishna parni, dadima
3	Dysuria in Ca prostate	Gokshura, kantakari, phanitha
4	Antidote against overdose of antibiotics	bakuchi
5	Anabolic for myopathies	Pig meat
6	Catabolic for mental illness	Roasted gavedhuka
7	For irregular fever	Sesame cakes
8	For reproductive illness	Chicken meat
9	For throat infections	Cow meat, dadima, yamaka oil, barley
10	Prokinetic for CO	Harithaki, pippalimula, shunthi

Here, the method of cooking, soaking, and boiling is important because it can alter the structure of starches resulting in the significant effect of postprandial blood glucose level¹; reduces the anti-nutritional factors such as lectin and phytic acid from the rice and thereby increasing the bioavailability of micronutrients.

2. Lentil-Based (Shimbi Dhanya) Pathya Kalpana

Lentils play a vital role in reducing cancer and cardiovascular diseases due to their bioactive compounds. They support immune function, regulate lipid and hormone metabolism, and aid detoxification. As a rich protein source, lentils are essential for convalescents, promoting tissue repair and recovery.

- Yusha is a lentil-based preparation made from Mudga, Masha, Masura, or Kulatha with water or buttermilk. Krita Yusha includes ghee and spices, while Akrita Yusha is plain. Yusha acts as an appetizer, vitalizer, and digestive enhancer. Its micronutrient-rich composition aids nourishment and accelerates healing in convalescents.

Table 2 Benefits Of Yusha

Sl.No	Types of Yusha	Therapeutic action
1	Kulatha yusha	Swasa, pinasa
2	Chanaka yusha	Prathishyaya, kasa
3	Panchamushtika yusha	Kshayaja kasa, swasa
4	Kantakari yusha	All types of coughs
5	Atmaguptha yusha	Vataja kasa
6	Brihathyadi yusha	Pittaja kasa

- Krishara is made by combining rice (tandula) and lentils (shimbi dhanya) in a 1:4 ratio. This mixture provides benefits such as enhancing strength (shukrala), vitality (balya), and cognitive function (buddhiprada). Masha tandula krishara improves strength, while Mudga tandula supports nourishment and hydration, offering glycemic and lipemic control, suitable for debilitated conditions.
- Khada-Kambalika are specialized Yusha preparations using buttermilk (takra) and specific grains. Kambalika, made with dadhimasthu, uses fermentation to enhance mineral absorption and improve gut health. Takra aids in restoring gut flora and acts as a natural probiotic.

Dietary Principles

Acharya Charaka elaborated the dietary principles under the heading upayoga niyama. These dietary rules play a crucial role in the digestion process, maintenance of equilibrium of doshas and dhatus and to bestow the strength to mind and sense organs

Table 3 Action Of Each Term In Upayoga Niyama³

Sl. No	Upayoga niyama	Action
1	Ushna ahara	Provides taste, digest the food quickly
2	Snigdha ahara	Provide nurturing and strength to the body, provides contentment to the indriyas
3	Matravat ahara	Smoothness in digestion and excretion, maintains equilibrium of doshas
4	Jirna avastha	Maintains the equilibrium of dhatus
5	Virya avirudha	Provides srothoshudhi
6	Ishta desha	Attainment of mental wellness
7	Ishta upakaran	Normalcy in digestion and secretion of digestive enzymes
8	Na atidrutha	Proper assimilation of nutrients
9	Ajalpam	Proper secretion of salivary enzymes
10	Ahasan	Proper digestive facility
11	Na ativilambitham	Contentment to rasendriya
12	Tanmana bhunjita	Provides contentment to the body, mind, sense organs
13	Atmanam abhisamikshya	Cautious about the suitability of food

Samsarjana Krama as Pathya Kalpana

Peyadi samsarjana krama is the proper sequential diet regimen of peya, vilepi, yusha, etc. followed by the vamanadi karma to enhance the jatharagni (digestive power or capacity of the digestive system of the

body)⁴. Samsarjana krama is the need for every samshodhitha Purusha. It helps to regularize the jathara which is weakened due to the purificatory process and to overcome the doshakshaya and dhathukshaya.⁴ Benefits of samsarjana krama are; it normalizes the jatharagni and vayu, provides nutrition, and helps to normalize the body tissues, which are weakened due to samshodhana, by arranging such plans, the diet comprised of all the tastes can be served through meals and doshas becomes normal⁴

Ajasrik Rasayana In Convalescent Phase

In spite of advancement in medical science with the invention of sophisticated investigative tools and deep knowledge of human physiology and its structure, there had been no significant control over diseases, new health issues are emerging and thus developing a longer convalescent phase.⁵ Rasayana is one of the comprehensive disciplines of Ayurveda, which comprises specialized use of herbs, Herbo mineral formulations, food articles, lifestyle along with self-discipline with social etiquette to achieve the optimum state of tissues and systems of the body; so that there is the least effect of etiological factors on the body⁵.

Table 4 Examples For Aajasrik Rasayana

Therapeutic action	Aajasrik Rasayana forms
Grahani	Panchakola yusha with buttermilk and ghrita
Jirna jwara	Ksheera
Reproductive health	Phala ghritha
Cardio protection	Arjuna ksheera paaka
Physiological stress	Shathavari ghritha
Cardio protection	Rasona ksheerapaaka

DISCUSSION

Pathya Kalpana in Ayurveda refers to dietary modifications designed for the prolonged healing phase of convalescents. Small changes in food preparation significantly alter its therapeutic properties. Cooking rice as Manda, Peya, or Vilepi facilitates the leaching of dissolved amylose, while boiling induces gelatinization, breaking amylose-amylopectin bonds, making starches easily digestible ideal for a recovering digestive system¹. Lentil-based preparations like Yusha, Krishara, and Khada-Kambalika support essential and non-essential amino acid synthesis. Lentil proteins have a protein score of 46 and an Essential Amino Acid Index (EAAI) of 63, making them valuable during convalescence. Unlike modern dietetics, which classifies food based on carbohydrates, fats, and proteins, Ayurveda assesses food based on both its properties and the digestive capability of the patient¹.

Upayoga Niyama plays a crucial role in digestion, as diseases stem from Agni dysfunction. Proper dietary regulations balance the three Doshas, enhance digestion, and improve overall well-being. Micronutrient deficiencies impact tissue repair in convalescents, and Pathya Kalpana enhances micronutrient bioavailability through soaking, boiling, and fermentation, helping restore essential nutrients. This holistic approach ensures faster recovery by strengthening digestion and maintaining physiological balance.

CONCLUSION

The dominance of synthetic medicine and surgery has side-lined food centred health approaches. Ayurveda emphasizes "Virya Pradhana Oushadha and Rasa Pradhana Ahara", establishing a strong foundation for recovery. Unlike biomedicine, Pathya Kalpana and Ayurvedic dietary principles play a complementary role in disease management. By integrating Pathya Kalpana into conventional healthcare, convalescents can benefit from a more holistic and effective recovery process. Further rigorous investigation is needed to validate Ayurvedic dietary principles and incorporate them into modern food-centred healthcare, ensuring better healing outcomes while minimizing the risks associated with synthetic medications.

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