



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Ayurveda

CRITICAL REVIEW OF AGNI PARIKSHA MENTIONED IN AYURVEDA FOR IDENTIFICATION OF POISONOUS FOOD (SAVISHA ANNA PARIKSHANA)

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Dr Shruti Dinesh Bhokare

HOD and Professor Dept of Agadtantra at LRP Ayu Medical College, Research Center and PG Institute, Islampur ,Sangli, Maharashtra.

Dr Sandip K Jadhav *

PG Scholar, Agadtantra Dept, LRP Ayu Medical College and PG Institute Islampur. *Corresponding Author

Dr Jayashree Patil

HOD and Professor Dept of Swasthvrutha at LRP Ayu Medical College, Research Center and PG Institute, Islampur ,Sangli, Maharashtra

ABSTRACT

Identification of poisonous food is challenge from ancient time to till date. Even though there are many laboratory tests to identify it, they are seldomly effective to curb accidental poisoning as access to these test limited to rural areas and food is consumed soon after preparation which leave very limited time to get it tested. Ayurvedic texts have numerous methods for identification of poisonous food (Savishaanna, parikshana padhati). Out of which Agni pariksha appears to be promising as results are instant, no special equipment is required, result are easy to interpret and observe.

INTRODUCTION:

Identification of poisonous food is challenge from ancient time and there any many methods mentioned for the same. There are various routes by which poison get entry in body which are mentioned in ayurved.¹ Even in modern era where practice of eating packed food is gaining popularity due to advances in food technology as well as dynamic life style, it poses even greater challenge in field of identification of food contaminated with poisonous substances. Today many techniques are developed to identify contaminated food and to avoid possible dangerous outcome arising out of such incident. In our country there are lot of incidence of preparing food for masses and frequent incidence of food poisoning is common as food is freshly prepared and consumed within short period of time.

There are lot of laboratory tests available to avoid such conditions now a days. Also there are some easy techniques available to find adulterated food which are performed using easily available materials³. However access to laboratory services are minimal in many rural area and large number of population facing basic educational facilities which inturn unable them to use simple techniques to identify the potential poisonous food. Food in india generally cooked and consumed within short period of time which makes laboratory testing scrutiny difficult.

In ancient times, prevention to food poisoning was challenge especially where food was served to king or to very important persons. Maharshi Sushrut has stated in Anna panraksha vidhiadhyaya of kalpasthana that human life is sustained due to food he eats, hence good Vaidya should always needs to be very vigilant about it.³ It was customary that food needs to be inspected thoroughly by senior vaidya before serving it.^{4,5}

Ayurvedic literature has numerous methods which were used to identify *savishaanna* (Poisonous food). These tests includes methods such as Showing these food items to animal and birds and see their altered behavioral pattern., Wherever possible by feeding them, inspecting foods altered *Rupa*, *Ras* and *Gandha* and other physical characteristics, rapid deterioration of food, burning part of suspicious food in *Agni* (Fire)^{6,7,8,9,10}

Method of performing *Agnipariksha* is described in various samhitas like *SushrutSanhita*¹¹, *AshtangHriday*¹² and *AshtangSangraha*¹³

Below are the observations to be noted while performing *Agnipariksha*

- Sound- poisonous specimen upon burning in fire produces sound
- Colour of flame- changes to various colours
- Odour- during agnipariksha poisonous specimen produces distinct odour
- Spontaneous combustion- specimen produces rapid flame for short period of time

CONCLUSION:

Out of above mentioned test *Agnipariksha* is found to be more practical due to following reasons

- It required no special equipment
- It does not involve harming any animal/bird
- Results are instant
- Easy to interpret results
- Person to person variation of interpretation is minimal
- Finding mentioned in *Agnipariksha* are easy to observe and record

Hence *agnipariksha* appears to be more helpful to evaluate poisonous food over other tests. This review is attempt to provide collective knowledge on various tests mentioned in ayurved to identify poisonous food. This would motivate researcher to further explore observations noted in *agni pariksha* with different poisons to verify consistency of findings and establish reliability of this simple test which may prove as effective tool for identification of poisonous food

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