



Review Article

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WATER: THE ELIXIR OF LIFE

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ABSTRACT

Pure drinking water is essential to humans and to other life forms. To function properly, the body requires about one to five liters of water per day, the precise amount depends on the level of activity, temperature, humidity and other factors. Our health is truly dependent on the quantity and quality of water we drink. If sufficient quantity of water is not provided to the body, it will make way to many diseases. Though cold drinks, beverages and other types of fluids have their base as water, their regular and excessive intake will not provide a satisfactory smoothening effect to the body as plain water does. In spite of giving satisfied feeling to the consumer, plain water contributes in preventing and curing the diseases also. If such marvelous liquid is medicated, then its effect will be doubled and it helps the body to be healthy and be devoid of doshic imbalances. This article reviews the importance of water and the effect of medicated water in improving the diseased condition. Water in conjunction with the herbal medicine can definitely fulfill all the wholesome effects of water over the body along with helping the body to recover from many ailments.

Keywords: water, elixir, solvent, medicated water (paneeya).

INTRODUCTION

Water is essential to live the life, without which neither healthy nor the diseased persons can survive.¹

“Panceeyam praaninam Prana Vishwa eva Tanmayam,
Nahi Toyadvina vrutti swasthasya vyadhi tasya cha”

It is by far the most important nutrient for the human body. Next to oxygen, the human body needs water in order to survive. It is a known fact that body is made up of panchamahabhutas, out of which jala mahabhuta tatwa plays a major role in the formulation of all the parts/organs of the body. This includes dosha, dhatus, upadhatus, malas and indriyas. A considerable fraction of our body (45-70%) is composed of water. About 2/3rd of total body water is within the 73 trillion cells that contribute our body and is called “Intracellular Fluid” (ICF). This includes about 2 liters of fluid within RBC’s. The remaining 1/3rd of total body water is extra cellular fluid (ECF) this includes cerebrospinal fluid, aqueous humor, synovial fluid, GI secretions and fluid in urinary tract. About 1/5th of ECF is plasma.

Water is vital as a solvent in which many of the body solutes (electrolytes and non electrolytes) dissolve. Water is fundamental to respiration (cellular) and is central to acid base neutrality and enzyme functions⁶. In human body the two limbs in maintaining the fluid balance are fluid intake (intake) and fluid loss (output) respectively. The major input is in the form of drinking water and other liquids food also contains a small quantity of water. Oxidation of food in the body to produce energy also generates 200 ml of water per day. The major output is in the form of urine and sweat, some water is also lost from the airways during breathing and via intestines in the fecal matter.⁴

Loss of body water is usually associated with an increase in osmotic pressure of body fluids. Body responds to the

disturbances in water balances, whether change in osmolarity or change in fluid volume by controlling either water intake or renal water loss. These both are controlled well through hypothalamus and by its hormone anti diuretic hormone (ADH).

Pure water is essential for all the normal physiological functions to occur in the body like digestion and absorption of food, regulating blood circulation and body temperature, carrying nutrients, oxygen, hormones, antibodies to other cells of the body through the lymphatic system and blood stream. It helps to remove toxins. It also helps in the movement of joints, protects tissues and organs in the body, metabolizes stored fat, maintains muscle tone and prevents dehydration⁶. Many people have the habit of drinking less water, they’ll be usually suffering from several unhealthy conditions like dryness of mouth, skin, hair, bad breath, constipation, headache, dizziness, skin allergy etc; Absence of water may lead to heartburn, thirst, constipation, dehydration, muscle cramps, disturbed metabolism, headache and feeling of disorientation and confusion.⁶

Assessing the quality of Water

Ayurvedic texts considers rain water as pure and fit to consume and calls it as “Divya Jala”, given by lord Indra. This water has the qualities of tridosha shamaka, balavardhaka, rasayana and medhavardhaka.³ “Antariksham Udakaanam shrestaha”²

The qualities of rain water will transform after touching the ground, depending upon the qualities of that particular ground / mud. Based on this, water can be ‘Hita’ or ‘Ahita’. For ex : If the rain water falls on the land area owing white coloured mud , the water tastes ‘kashaya’, on brown coloured mud it tastes ‘kshara’, on sand, it tastes ‘lavana’, on black coloured mud it tastes ‘madhura

and on the hills or mountains it tastes 'katu'. In this manner water possess six tastes.² But the water in the form of hima (ice), karam (hailstones), and dhara (continuous flow of rain water are of 'avyakta rasa'. After the rain water occupies different grounds and comes in contact with the sunrays, moonrays and the rays of stars especially 'Agastya star' and also with the surrounding pure air, it becomes pure. Such water is called 'Hamsodaka'. This water in 'Sharadritu' will be still pure, clear and filled with sanity and so can be used for drinking, bathing etc. So in olden days such water was collected and administered to the kings (rajaha), excellencies (sarvagunadhanadaya) and delicate persons (sukumaras).²

According to the effect of different seasons, the qualities of water changes i.e. in varsha ritu the water will be guru, madhura and kaphakara, in Sharad ritu, the water will be tanu, laghu and anabhishyandi, in hemantha ritu the water will be snigdha, guru, balavardhaka and shukravardhaka, in vasantha ritu the water will be rooksha, kashaya and madhura and in greeshma ritu the water will be anabhishyandi. If there is rituvaipareetya then the water will be doshayukta and will become disease causing factor.² The river water which is fast flowing and having clear water and the water falling from mountains like Himalaya and malayachal is 'Pathya'. They will be doshanashaka, bala and utsaha vardhaka.

Importance of Water

In normal routine life usually the body needs water and when the body is exhausted after strenuous work, its demand for the water will be more. In such conditions, the consumed water will act as 'tarpana' (smoothing), harshana (contentment), ahladakara (satisfied and happy) and hridya (which pleases the heart and mind). It is also 'Buddhi prabhodhaka' and 'Ashwasajanaka'.

It is by only water that the body and mind will be pleased and feel comfortable, and no other liquid or beverages or food or medicine will soothe the mind as effective as water. It refreshes the mind and relieves the stress or exhaustion of both mind and body.

So only water is considered as 'prana' which gives life, it is 'pathya' which is conducive and acceptable by all the living beings.¹⁻³

It is 'Amrita' (elixir) if consumed in right quantity and in right time regularly. This will help the body to remove toxins effectively. The sufficient quantity of water in the body, helps to maintain the moisture even at the skin level. Thus making the skin soft and supple, this will delay the ageing process also.

"Amrutaha Jaraadiharam"¹

"Water is a healthy beverage, it is cure, it is medicine"

Water and electrolytes need no digestion and are absorbed as such; there is no active mechanism of absorption of water. Its transport is linked to the transport of solutes.⁴ So when the water is medicated, all the qualities of water will be retained, added to it the qualities of medicines used will be conglomerated in it owing full healthy and comfortable characteristics. Such water helps in

normalizing the vitiated doshas and brings back the harmony of humors. This can be attached to the new technique of treatment i.e., hydrotherapy or water cure, which involves water for treating pain and illness.⁶

Medicated water (Paneeeya)

5-10 g of dry coarse powders of the drugs advised in the particular disease is boiled in about 1/2ltr of water for about 10-15mins. Through boiling the satva (qualities) of these drugs will be merged in water and makes it medicated. It should be strained and cooled before using. These type of water are usually considered as paneeya, the one which can be consumed in the place of plain water or as juice.

The mode of action of medicated water over the body can be understood on the basis of water being a major factor affecting drug absorption.

Water as a factor affecting drug absorption

The physical property of water is liquid and liquids are better absorbed than solids. The drugs in aqueous solution dissolve easily and absorbs readily at the absorption site. Here the drugs in liquid form will be exposed to larger surface area and hence more absorption takes place.

Water soluble molecules will distribute in total body water compartment and extracellular space. Most biological membranes are relatively permeable to water. In the epithelial membranes where the cells are joined by tight junctions, water passes through the cells rather than between them. This bulk transport of water carries with it, water soluble substances of small molecular weights. Less the size, more the absorption and so bio-transformation of drug will be fast. Water soluble drugs produce good drug tolerance and they are eliminated easily from the body.⁵

Based on these explanations it can be understood that the medicated water advised for most of the diseases in Ayurvedic classics, has its definite role in healing the deformed condition. But to cure the disease, of course, other medications are required. This medicated water also enhances the healing efficacy of the other medicines/drugs used in that particular disease.

Indications of different kinds of water

Other than paneeya only pure cold water is indicated in some conditions like trishna, daha, moorcha, brama, klama, madatyaya, raktadosha, vishasevana, and in conditions which are swabhavataha pittadosha janita rogas.

In sannipataja rogas shritasheeta jala is advised and ushna jala is indicated in nava jwara, hikka, shwasa, peenasa, parshwa roga, galaroga, and swabhavataha kapha dosha janya rogas.

Limited administration of water (Alpapramanataha jala) is advised in pandu, udara, peenasa, prameha, gulma, mandagni, atisara, and pleeha. If the persons suffering from these diseases are weak and have excessive thirst, then they are advised to consume 'dhanyambupana'.²

Indication of medicated water in different diseases

Few examples of medicated water advised in particular disease are enlisted below ²

Disease	Jala [Panceeya]
Jwara	Shadangapanceeya Ingredients: musta, parpata, ushira, chandana, udeechya, nagara.
Raktapitta	Hareeberadi panceeya Ingredients: hareebera, chandana, usheera, musta, parpata.
Gulma, Vataja & Pittaja gulma	Dhanyaka jala, Vidarigandhadi panceeya Ingredients: bala, vidari, bhrihati, kantakari, gokshura, shalaparni, prishnaparni.
Prameha	Surodaka (vijayasaradi dravyas), Kushodaka, Triphala rasa
Kushta	Vidangadi jala, Khadira jala, Chakramarda beeja, vidanga and aragwadha moola sidda jala.
Rajayakshma	Dhanyaka,shunti jala, Laghu panchamoola / sthiradi panchamoola sidda jala
Pandu	Sthiradi panchamoola sidda jala
Kamala	Amalaki sidda jala
Hikka, Shwasa	Devadaru and dashamoola sidda jala
Vataja Kasa	Yavanyadi panceeya Ingredients: yavani, pippali, bilva, nagara, chitraka, rasna, jeeraka, prishnaparni, palasha, shati, pushkara mula sidda jala.
Pittaja Kasa	Sharkarambu
Kaphaja Kasa	Ushna jala
Atisara	Amapachaka jala Ingredients: vacha and ativisha or musta and parpati or hreebera and nagara sidda jala.
Pittaja atisara	Mustadi panceeya Ingredients: musta, parpata, ushira, chandana, sareeva, kirata, udeechya
Chardi	Mritbrihshta loshta prabhava jala
Visarpa	Madhu and sharkara mishrita mantha
Trishna	Madhu mishrita aindra jala, Trinapanchamula sadhita jala
Pittaja trishna	Draksha , chandana, kharjura, usheera sadhita jala, Raktashali tandulodaka with madhu.
Hridroga	Teekshana dravya sidda jala Ingredients: shati, shunti, vacha, rasna, pushkaramoola.
Urusthambha	Madhudaka
Mutrakrichra	Karpasamooladi panceeya Ingredients: karpasamula, guduchi, shweta and Krishna punarnava, pashanabeda, bala, sthiradi laghu panchamula, indrayava, shatavari, aparajita.
Amavata	Panchakola sidda panceeya

CONCLUSION

Water consumption is crucial to lead a happy healthy life style. It regulates all Physiological functions of the body. Normal physiological functions like digestion, assimilation and excretion can be normal only if sufficient amount of water is present in the body.

Water plays a key role in the prevention of the diseases. If only plain water can become a cure for many simple and chronic health problems, then the medicated water will be a definite remedy in treating many diseases. The medicinal effect of a single drug or a group of drugs will get easily blended in water and in turn blends with the body fluids and so their action is materialized.

Also water will be a major vehicle for any food products or medicines to enter the body. Whole body and mind can become free from stress, strain and exhaustion of any kind, only by the judicial intake of water and not by any other drinks and beverages.

Loss of water leads to many diseases or even death, and so its essentiality is proved. Therefore it is an **“Elixir of life”**.

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