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**POPULAR ARTICLE**



## **Rice as Traditional Medicine**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In pre-independent India, rice was often used as medicine. The simplest use of rice was as gruel in cases of diarrhoea. Various other forms as flour, paste, laja (parched rice), boiled, flattened, fried rice, and dried, sprouted seedlings were also used for medicinal purposes to treat various diseases. Fried rice was considered light, suited to invalids and dyspeptics. Flattened rice with curd was often given in dysentery. Rice was used as an article of diet for the sick and convalescing, and was of less aperient quality than any other grain. For this reason, several Sanskrit medical authors (such as Udoy Chand Dutt, Hindu MateriaMedica), invariably prescribed rice, usually in the form of gruel, as the safest and the best food in all dysenteric complaints. Indian pharmacopoeia recommended rice-water as an excellent demulcent and refrigerant drink in febrile and inflammatory diseases and dysuria. It was rendered more palatable, acidulated with lime-juice and sweetened with sugar. This decoction was recommended as enema for bowel-related problems. In the Delhi region, rice have been used as an astringent drink in cholera and dysentery (Watt 1891). In addition to being the preferred diet for the sick, rice being wholesome and light is considered as the best food in some diseases. For example, in diarrhoea, when the Ayurvedic preparation Dugdhavati is prescribed, boiled rice and milk is the pathya (wholesome food recommended for the patient).

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### **RICE-WATER**

Various items are used as anupan (a drink or solid taken with or after a medicine), the most common ones being honey, betel leaf, and rice-water. Rice-water is used as anupan for many medicines.

### **Skin diseases**

Before the advent of modern creams and talcum powders, rice powder and poultice were used for external application in the case of smallpox, measles, prickly heat, and other inflammatory infections of the skin, including burns and scalds, as it had a cooling and soothing effect.

### **Tonic**

Pakheru, Saraiphool, Karia Gora, Dani Gora, and Punai Gora varieties of eastern India are traditionally used as tonic (Das and Oudhia 2000). Boiled rice along with its starchy water and a pinch of salt is given to weak persons (Rahman *et al.* 2006).

### **Foodstuff for lactating mothers**

Rice varieties have been specially used in increasing milk secretion in lactating mothers. The Maharaji and Bhejri varieties from Chhattisgarh, Jonga in Bihar, Neelam Samba in Tamil Nadu, and Henati in Sri Lanka are used for this purpose (Das and Oudhia 2000).

### **Post-delivery care**

Rice also plays a role in post-delivery diets. Rice is cooked in excess water, and the starch is collected separately. One glass of this with jaggery is taken for five days. Rice has strengthening, hemostatic, and expectorant properties. It can even help in stopping bleeding (Nagnur *et al.* 2006).

### **Skin care**

The Layacha variety is used to treat boils on the scalp of a new-born child. The mother eats cooked rice of this variety, and the cure acts through the mother's milk ingested by the infant.

### **Sexual vigour**

Two of the ten formulations listed in the Brihat Samhita for treating sexual disorders use Sashtika rice as one of the ingredients. The first formulation describes an evening meal consisting of boiled Sashtika rice taken with clarified butter and black gram soup, and milk to be taken thereafter.

**Table 1. Medicinal uses of traditional rice varieties in the various states of India.**

State	Rice variety	Medicinal use
Madhya Pradesh	<i>Aalcha</i>	Pimples, small boils in infant
	<i>Baissor</i>	Chronic headache, epilepsy
	<i>Gathuwanor</i>	Rheumatism
	<i>Karhani</i>	Paralysis

	<i>Kalimoonch</i>	Skin diseases
	<i>Maharaji</i>	Post-natal tonic for women
	<i>Bhajari</i>	Renewal of placenta in cows
	<i>Dhanwar</i>	Renewal of placenta in cows
Orissa	<i>Mehar</i>	Post-natal tonic for women
	<i>Saraiphol</i>	Post-natal tonic for women
Karnataka	<i>Kari Bhatta</i>	Skin infections, increases milk in women
	<i>Karikagga</i>	Cooling effect
	<i>Atikaya</i>	Health tonic
	<i>Mullarya</i>	Cooling effect
Kerala	<i>Nivara</i>	Cure of tridoshas
	<i>Erumakkari</i>	Cough
Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh	<i>Katheri</i>	Post-delivery restoration of size of reproductive organs
	<i>Kaflaya</i>	Leucorrhoea
	<i>Matali, LalDhan</i>	High blood pressure, fever
Tamil Nadu	<i>Neelam Samba</i>	To increase milk in women
	<i>Kala Namak</i>	Cures diabetes, BP and problems related to kidney, skin, blood, cancer and brain.
	<i>Kullakkar</i>	Revitalizes and energizes the body, helps to bring down bad cholesterol levels and controls blood sugar levels.
	<i>KarungKuruvai</i>	Helps treat people suffering from Elephantiasis.
	<i>Kattuyam</i>	Helps control diabetes, prevents heart problems.
	<i>Maapillai Samba</i>	It prevents Ulcer, acts as Neurotonic, improves sexual vigour, it strengthens immune system, increase brain strength and fights against cancer

## CONCLUSION

A traditional villager in India does not have access to a good physician, well-equipped hospital, good diagnostic centers, and proper educational back up in management of chronic diseases. Nutraceuticals, a global idea, are food substances or ingredients that confer medical or health benefits. Tomorrow's consumer will seek to include health-promoting ingredients in their diets, antioxidants and vitamins, fibres and mucilage, minerals like calcium, zinc, chromium, selenium and iron, flavonoids and phytochemicals, fish oil or its equivalents, vegetable proteins of good quality, herbal products such as spices etc. protecting their all important right to eat and enjoy.

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