

Ayurvedic wisdom in selection of plant for its therapeutic activity.

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Introduction

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, has been revered for centuries for its holistic approach to health and well-being. Central to ayurveda is the use of medicinal plants, which are carefully selected based on their therapeutic activity and the principles of Ayurvedic wisdom. This ancient knowledge offers valuable insights into the selection and utilization of plants for their healing properties. Let us delve into the world of ayurvedic wisdom and explore how plants are chosen for their therapeutic activity. Ayurveda views health as a harmonious balance between the body, mind, and spirit. When this balance is disrupted, illness arises. To restore health, Ayurveda employs various therapeutic interventions, including herbal remedies. The selection of plants in Ayurvedic medicine is based on a deep understanding of the characteristics and properties of different plants and their effects on the human body [1].

According to Ayurveda, each individual is unique, with a specific constitution or dosha. There are three primary doshas: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. These doshas represent different combinations of the five elements: space, air, fire, water, and earth and govern various physiological and psychological functions in the body. The choice of plants in Ayurveda is determined by their ability to pacify or balance specific doshas. For example, if a person has an excess of the Pitta dosha, which represents fire and is associated with heat and inflammation, cooling herbs are selected to restore balance. Ayurveda recommends plants like Aloe Vera, Coriander, and Shatavari, known for their cooling and soothing properties, to alleviate Pitta-related imbalances. Similarly, if Vata, which represents air and is associated with dryness and instability, is imbalanced, warming and grounding herbs like Ashwagandha, Ginger, and Cinnamon are chosen to bring about stability and nourishment [2].

Ayurveda also considers the taste, energy, and post-digestive effect of plants in their selection for therapeutic activity. The taste of a plant determines its influence on the doshas. There are six tastes in Ayurveda: sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter, and astringent. Each taste has a specific effect on the body and mind. For example, the bitter taste is known to have a cooling effect and is often used to balance excess heat in the body, while the pungent taste has a warming effect and can help stimulate digestion and circulation. The energy or potency of a plant, referred to as its virya, also plays a crucial role

in its therapeutic activity. Virya can be hot, cold, or neutral. Hot plants, like Black Pepper and Mustard seeds, have a warming effect on the body, while cold plants, such as Mint and Cilantro, have a cooling effect. The selection of plants with the appropriate virya is essential to maintain or restore the body's optimal temperature and energy balance [3].

Additionally, Ayurveda considers the post-digestive effect or vipaka of plants. Vipaka refers to the taste that remains after digestion. It determines the long-term effect of a plant on the body. Ayurveda recognizes three post-digestive effects: sweet, sour, and pungent. For example, plants with a sweet vipaka, such as fennel and cardamom, have a nourishing effect on the body even after digestion. They provide long-term support and rejuvenation. Apart from these principles, Ayurveda also takes into account the overall properties of plants, including their actions, therapeutic uses, and synergistic effects when combined with other herbs. Ayurvedic texts extensively document the properties of plants, their preparations, and the specific conditions they are most effective in treating. This rich repository of knowledge serves as a guide for ayurvedic practitioners in selecting the most appropriate plants for each individual's unique needs [4].

The selection of plants for therapeutic activity in ayurveda is a fine art that combines ancient wisdom with a deep understanding of human physiology and the natural world. It is a testament to the holistic nature of ayurvedic medicine and its emphasis on restoring balance and harmony. As we continue to explore the potential of traditional systems like ayurveda, we gain a profound appreciation for the wisdom of our ancestors and the healing power of nature.

Moreover, Ayurvedic wisdom in plant selection extends beyond the individual properties of plants to consider their sustainability and ecological impact. Ayurveda recognizes the interconnectedness between human health and the health of the environment. Therefore, the responsible harvesting and cultivation of medicinal plants are essential aspects of ayurvedic practice. Ayurveda encourages the use of locally available plants and emphasizes the need for conservation and sustainable practices. Traditional ayurvedic texts provide guidelines for the ethical collection of medicinal plants, emphasizing the importance of respecting nature and maintaining the delicate balance of ecosystems. This ecological consciousness ensures the preservation of plant species and the long-term availability of therapeutic resources [5].

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Conclusion

Ayurvedic wisdom in the selection of plants for their therapeutic activity is a testament to the depth and breadth of ancient knowledge. It combines principles of individual constitution, taste, energy, post-digestive effect, ecological impact, and prana to create a holistic approach to healing. As we rediscover and appreciate the wisdom of ayurveda, we can harness the power of nature and unlock its potential for promoting health and well-being.

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