

Traditional medicinal formulation, *Chyawanprash*—A review

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Chyawanprash is a household remedy in northern India, popular for its nutritional value. In Ayurveda, Chyawanprash is classified under the category of Rasayana, which aims at maintaining physique, vigour and vitality, while delaying the ageing process. It is believed that Chyawanprash helps not only in maintaining homeostasis but also increases resistance of the body. Chyawanprash is prepared by incorporating around 50 herbs including Amla, the richest source of vitamin C. Herbs used in the preparation of formulation are boiled in water, then dried extract is combined with honey followed by addition of aromatic (like cardamom, cinnamon, and clove) herb powders. The finished product, which has consistency of a fruit jam, is sour and spicy in taste. Chyawanprash deserves a scientific exploration so as to document its therapeutic utility.

Keywords: *Chyawanprash*, Ethnobotany, Ethnomedicine, Medicinal plants, *Santal* tribe, Traditional medicine, Tripura

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Chyawanprash, a household remedy in northern India is popular for its nutritional value. In Ayurveda, Chyawanprash is classified under the category of Rasayana, which aims at maintaining physique, vigour and vitality, while delaying the ageing process¹⁻³. In recent times, it has gained immense popularity all over the world. It is a comprehensive herbal tonic, which serves as a nutrient for healthy individuals includes around 50 herbs. Chyawanprash can be consumed in all seasons, as it contains ingredients, which are weather friendly nullifying the unpleasant effects due to extreme environmental and climatic conditions⁴⁻⁵. Chyawanprash is made in amalaki (Indian gooseberry) base, which is the most useful rasayana for maintaining homeostasis⁵. Amla fruit paste, the major ingredient of Chyawanprash is the richest source of vitamin C⁶. Vitamin C present in amla does not get deteriorated on heat exposure during preparation of Chyawanprash⁷. Chyawanprash is an admixture of at least five tastes such as sweet, sour, bitter, pungent and astringent, due to amla⁸. In Chyawanprash, honey which works as 'a carrier of herbs', called as Yogavahi, helps in absorption of various

herbs deep into the tissues^{9,10}. Sugar and honey provide sweet taste, which is rejuvenating. Chyawanprash is named after sage Chyawan, who first prepared the formulation to impart youth, charm, vigour & longevity¹¹⁻¹⁴.

People around the world now use Chyawanprash, for its anti-stress and anti-ageing properties. It has been found to be effective as an immunity booster, vitalizer and a comprehensive general tonic. It is extremely effective in preventing gastric problems, common cold and cough. Chyawanprash improves all aspects of health (Table 1), when taken regularly¹⁵⁻¹⁸.

Preparation of *Chyawanprash*

In absence of standard operating procedure (SOP) in ancient times, the method of preparation of *Chyawanprash* varies from manufacturer to manufacturer and place to place. Standard method of preparation of *Chyawanprash* is described as follows: 50 gm each of the following plants, viz. *Bel*, *arni*, *gambhari*, *arlu*, *patla*, *gokhru*, *shalparni*, *brihati*, *kantakari*, *kakdashingi*, *munnaka*, *harde*, *giloy*, *bala*, *bhumiamla*, *adusa*, *jivanti*, *kachur*, *pushkarmool*, *nagarmotha*, *magdarni*, *mashparni*, *shalparni*, *prishparni*, *pippali*, *kaknasa*, *varahikand*, *vidarikand*, *punarnawa*

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Table 1—Ingredients of *Chyawanprash*

Plant name	Common names	Uses
<i>Adhatoda vasica</i> Nees	<i>Adusa, Vasaka</i>	Cardiotonic, expectorant, diuretic, cardiac & respiratory disorders.
<i>Aegle marmelos</i> Correa	<i>Bilva, Bel</i>	Useful in chronic dysentery, diarrhoea & dyspepsia.
<i>Aquilaria agallocha</i> Roxb.	<i>Agar, Agarkashta</i>	Aromatic, neurotrophic, carminative & aphrodisiac
<i>Bambusa arundinacea</i> Willd.	<i>Vanshlochan</i>	Stimulant, astringent and aphrodisiac.
<i>Boerhaavia diffusa</i> Linn.	<i>Punarnawa, Punarnava, Gadhapuran</i>	Cardiotonic, hematinic, diuretic & helps in anemia
<i>Cinnamomum tamala</i> Nees & Ebrm.	<i>Tamalpatra, Tejpatra, Patra</i>	Helps in general debility, anorexia & indigestion, uterine stimulant.
<i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i> Breyn.	<i>Dalchini</i>	Anemia, general debility, abdominal distension & anorexia.
<i>Curcuma zedoaria</i> Rosc.	<i>Kachur, Sathi kehora</i>	Stimulant, tonic, depurative, vertigo & during pregnancy.
<i>Cyperus rotundus</i> Linn.	<i>Nagarmotha, Mustak, Motha</i>	Neurotrophic, carminative, helps in constipation, hepatoprotective.
<i>Desmodium bulbifera</i> Desv.	<i>Shalparni, Sarivan</i>	General debility, nervine tonic, cardiac, blood & respiratory disorders.
<i>Elettaria cardamomum</i> Maton	<i>Elaichi, Cardamum</i>	General tonic, useful in anorexia and flatulence.
<i>Emblica officinalis</i> Gaertn.	<i>Amalaki, Amla, Awala, Indian Gooseberry</i>	Rejuvenative, neurotrophic, hepatoprotective, antioxidant, cardiotonic, rich source of vitamin C.
<i>Gmelina arborea</i> Roxb.	<i>Gambhari, Khambhari, Kashmarya</i>	Promotes lactation & helps in indigestion.
<i>Inula racemosa</i> Hook.	<i>Pushkarmool, Pohkarmool</i>	Cardiotonic, carminative, antiseptic, diuretic, dyspepsia, indigestion, chronic cough and general debility.
<i>Leptadenia reticulata</i> Wight & Arn.	<i>Jivanti</i>	Cooling, eye tonic, nutrient and aphrodisiac.
<i>Martynia diandra</i> Glox.	<i>Kaknasa, Kakakshi, Kauathodi</i>	Hepatotonic, cholagogue, laxative, anorexia, indigestion & constipation.
<i>Mesua ferrea</i> Linn.	<i>Nagkesar</i>	Nutrient, cardiotonic, brain tonic, carminative and appetizer.
<i>Nelumbium speciosum</i> Willd.	<i>Kanwal, Neelkamal</i>	Neurotrophic, cardiotonic & helps in general debility.
<i>Oroxylum indicum</i> Vent.	<i>Arlu, Sona patha, Shyonak</i>	General debility, diarrhoea & dysentery.
<i>Phaseolus trilobus-sensu</i> Ait.	<i>Mudgparni, Van-mug, Mataki</i>	Aphrodisiac, mild sedating, fatigue, general debility, malnutrition.
<i>Phyllanthus niruri</i> Linn.	<i>Bhumyaamalaki, Bhumi-amlam, Bhueawala</i>	Appetizer, cholagogue, laxative, hepatoprotective & antiviral.
<i>Piper longum</i> Linn.	<i>Pippali</i>	General debility, dyspepsia, flatulence, respiratory tract infection.
<i>Pistacia integerrima</i> Stewart-ex Brandis	<i>Kakdashingi, Karkatshingi, Shringi</i>	Expectorant, carminative, anorexia, cholagogue, cough & asthma.
<i>Premna integrifolia</i> Linn.	<i>Arni, Agnimantha</i>	Laxative, helps in indigestion & cough.
<i>Pterocarpus santalinus</i> Linn.f.	<i>Lal Chandan</i>	Skin, blood & eye disorders, used as disinfectant to mucus membranes of genito-urinary & bronchial tracts.
<i>Sesamum indicum</i> Linn.	<i>Til oil, Sesame oil</i>	Cooking oil, tonic, nutrient, aphrodisiac, diuretic, cures dry cough, asthma, lung diseases, inflammation, ulcers, urinary diseases, migraine & vertigo.
<i>Sida cordifolia</i> Linn.	<i>Bala, Bariyara</i>	Cardiotonic, stomachic, aphrodisiac & general tonic.

(Contd)

Table 1—Ingredients of *Chyawanprash*—Contd

Plant name	Common names	Uses
<i>Solanum indicum</i> Linn.	<i>Brihati, Bari kateri, Vanbhantha</i>	Cardiac tonic, astringent, carminative & helps in flatulence
<i>Solanum xanthocarpum</i> Schrad. & Wendl.	<i>Kantakari, Chhoti kateri, Kashtakari</i>	Mucolytic, expectorant, allergic bronchitis, bronchial asthma, and common cold.
<i>Stereospermum suaveolens</i> De Prodr.	<i>Parul, Patla, Patha, Padhal</i>	General debility, dyspepsia, blood disorders, cough & acidity.
<i>Teramnus labialis</i> Spreng.	<i>Mashparni, Van-udadh, Mashvan</i>	Aphrodisiac, mild sedative, general debility, malnutrition & fatigue.
<i>Terminalia chebula</i> Retz.	<i>Harde, Haritaki, Harad, Abhaya</i>	Neurotrophic, carminative, infertility, cardiac and liver disorders.
<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> Miers ex Hook f. & Thoms.	<i>Guduchi, Giloy, Amrta</i>	General tonic, immunomodulator, helps in degenerative disorders.
<i>Tribulus terrestris</i> Linn.	<i>Gokhru, Gokshura</i>	Aphrodisiac, diuretic & cardi tonic.
<i>Urtica picta</i> Desv.	<i>Prishniparni, Pithwan, Devala</i>	General debility, nervine tonic, cardiac & blood disorders, antidote for snake venom.
<i>Vitis vinifera</i> Linn.	<i>Draksha, Munnaka</i>	Nutrient, stomachic, demulcent, laxative, anorexia, hepatoprotective, dyspepsia & constipation.
Animal fat	<i>Ghee</i>	Nutrient
Honey	Obtained from honey bees	Mild laxative, bactericidal, sedative, antiseptic, useful for cold, cough, fever, sore eyes, throat, tongue, duodenal ulcers & liver diseases.
Sucrose	Sugar	Sweetening agent.
Substituents for <i>Ashtvarga</i> (<i>Ridhi, Vridhi, Medha, Mahamedha, Jeevak, Rishabh, Kakoli & Ksheerkakoli</i>)		
<i>Asparagus racemosus</i> Willd	<i>Shatavari, Shatavar, Substituent for Medha, Mahamedha</i>	Aphrodisiac, nutrient, potent galactagogue, good tonic for lactating mothers.
<i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i> Linn.	<i>Varahikand, Varahi, Substituent for Ridhi, Vridhi</i>	Aphrodisiac, useful in acidity & ulcers.
<i>Ipomoea digitata</i> Linn.	<i>Vidarikand, Substituent for Jeevak, Rishabh</i>	Aphrodisiac, tonic, helps in nervous debility, skin problems, hepatic disorders & constipation.
<i>Withania somnifera</i> Dunal	<i>Ashwagandha, Asgandh, Substituent for Kakoli, Ksheerkakoli</i>	Aphrodisiac, antioxidant, loss of memory, loss of muscular energy.
Special Additives		
Ayurvedic Preparation	<i>Abhrak Bhasam</i>	General debility, useful in asthma & cough.
Ayurvedic preparation	<i>Shukti Bhasam</i>	As calcium supplement, neurotrophic, useful in cardiac and bone disorders.
Ayurvedic preparation	<i>Shring Bhasam</i>	Useful in pneumonia, rheumatic pain & cough.
Ayurvedic preparation	<i>Makardhawaj</i>	Aphrodisiac, nervine tonic and helps in rheumatic pain.
<i>Eugenia caryophyllus</i> Linn.	<i>Lavang, Clove</i>	Antiseptic, aromatic, carminative, stimulant & flavoring agent.
—	<i>Chandi, Silver foil</i>	General debility and improves overall physical fitness.

kanwal, agar, chandan, shatavari and *ashwagandha*, are suspended in around 16 l water. 500 Indian gooseberry fruits (each weighing around 15-20 gm, total weight approximately 6.5 kg) are wrapped in a clean cloth and are dipped into the above admixture of plants. Mixture is heated until the volume is reduced

to one quarter. After removing the cloth, seeds are discarded from *amla*; rubbing the peels of *amla* on a mesh, fibers are discarded and finally, *amla pithi* is prepared. Decoction is filtered and marc is discarded. *Amla pithi* is mixed with 500 gm ghee and 500 gm *til* oil in an iron pan and heated until red. Decoction of

plants and sugar syrup poured in the pan is heated until ghee starts separating. After removing the pan from fire, powder of 150 gm *vanshlochan*, 100 gm *pippali* and 10 gm each of *nagkesar*, *elaichi*, *tamalpatra* and *dalchini* is mixed. After cooling, 250 gm old honey is added and finally the finished product, which is dark shining brown in colour with fruit jam like consistency is prepared. Some Ayurvedic additives, *shukti bhasam* 100 gm, *abharak bhasam* 100 gm, *shring bhasam* 100 gm, *makardhawaj* 25 gm, *lavang* (clove) 25 gm and *chandi* (silver foil) 75 in number, for special health benefits are added^{1-5, 7, 15-17, 29}. *Chyawanprash* is to be consumed in a quantity that does not influence the hunger and appetite for food^{1-5, 7, 15-17, 29, 30}. *Chyawanprash* (12-28 gm) is taken with 100-250 ml milk^{30,31}. It is advised to avoid milk and curd intake for individuals suffering from asthma/respiratory disorders³¹.

Uses

Chyawanprash is helpful in clearing the accumulated excreta by promoting digestion and excretion. It relieves nausea & vomiting and corrects hyperacidity, dyspepsia & flatulence. *Chyawanprash* is helpful in gastritis, peptic ulcer and intestinal cramping¹⁶. It is a hepatoprotective, strengthens liver, streamlines the metabolism of fats and proteins^{19,20}. The ingredients of *Chyawanprash* such as *nagkesar*, *tamalpatra*, *elaichi*, *dalchini*, *patla*, *arni*, *gambhari*, *bel*, *arlu*, *shalparni*, *draksha*, *harde*, honey, *bhumyaamalaki*, *kachur*, *pushkarmool*, *nagarmotha*, *kaknasa*, *vidarikand* and *agar* help in correcting digestive system related complaints^{21,22}.

The smooth functioning of the tracheobronchial tree of the respiratory system is ensured by regular intake of *Chyawanprash*. Adequate hydration is maintained in the respiratory system. It alleviates cough, asthma and bronchospasm of seasonal or non-seasonal origin, thereby strengthening the respiratory system. It is also useful in respiratory infections, common cold and tuberculosis²³. *Pippali*, *kantakari*, *kakdashingi*, *bhumyaamalaki*, *vasaka*, *pushkarmool*, *prishniparni*, *arni*, *shalparni*, *til* oil and *amalaki* help in nourishing the respiratory system^{21,22,24}.

Chyawanprash nourishes the cells of brain, promotes coordination among various body parts, improves memory, and increases learning ability, storage, recall & intellect. It has a calming effect on Central Nervous System (CNS), thereby reducing anxiety & stress-induced psychiatric problems and imparts

sound sleep. *Nagkesar*, *guduchi*, *nagarmotha*, *vidarikand*, *kanwal*, *agar*, *ashwagandha*, *shalparni*, *prishniparni* and *amalaki* help to sharpen the CNS. Several of these ingredients possess antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties^{21,22}.

Chyawanprash is a powerful cardiogenic and strengthens heart, improves force and rate of contraction of heart by improving the blood supply to cardiac muscles. It helps in purification of blood and elimination of toxins. *Chyawanprash* also lowers cholesterol levels by improving blood lipid profile^{25,26}. *Amalaki*, *kanwal*, *punarnawa*, *pushkarmool*, *kachur*, *vasaka*, *bala*, *shalparni*, *prishniparni*, *brihati* and *gokhru* help in streamlining the Central vascular system (CVS)^{21,22}.

Regular intake of *Chyawanprash* makes sexual life pleasurable. It is effective and enhances libido and fertility in both the sexes. It thickens semen in males and streamlines menstrual cycle in females^{2,3}. *Gokhru*, *varahikand*, *til* oil, *shatavari*, *vidarikand*, *bala*, *jivanti*, *mudgparni*, *mashparni*, *ashwagandha* and *vanshlochan*, have been found to act as aphrodisiacs^{21,22}.

Chyawanprash strengthens immunity and facilitates healing process. It comprises ingredients possessing antioxidant, anticarcinogenic and antimutagenic activities^{27,28}. It lowers blood glucose levels and promotes hair growth. It strengthens bones and teeth by increasing absorption of calcium and improves muscle tone by increasing protein synthesis. It stimulates growth in children, helps to increase weight in lean and thin individuals. It fights dermal infections and improves skin complexion. It improves overall personality by imparting splendor, loveliness, youthfulness, wisdom, vigour and glow^{21,22}.

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