

Chyawanprash –Ageless Wonder

**“Let food be thy medicine and medicine thy food”
(Hippocrates 400 B.C.)**

Man has always been keen to keep himself free from all miseries. It has been a constant endeavor to discover better ways to prevent and cure human dis-ease. Human history is full of examples of foods developed for one or the other health benefit. Greeks used garlic in the first Olympic Games as they considered it as a performance-enhancing drug. Egyptians used honey to heal wounds.

In India, the use of various herbs in daily diet for prevention and treatment is well known for ages. Cultural beliefs, experiences and availability of various herbs in India has made herbal preparations a part of Indian daily food supplements. The use of functional foods and nutraceuticals can be traced back to ancient Indian system of medicine – Ayurveda, a 5000 year old medical science. The classic texts of Ayurveda are full of references of the effects of food in various health conditions. Ayurveda clearly defines the use of food products for improving quality of life and general rejuvenation.

Chyawanprash

Long before there were vitamins, minerals and antioxidant supplements, there was Chyawanprash (Cha-van-prash). One of the most respected anti-aging tonic used in Ayurveda. For centuries, it has been used to promote youth, vigor and vitality. Chyawanprash is a complex mixture of more than 40 ingredients, it is considered as a single entity in Ayurveda. It helps maintain youthfulness by renewing tissues and counterattacking degeneration. Chyawanprash is considered as an excellent geriatric tonic. It has been used in India with the same enthusiasm for the past 4000 years.

There are numerous stories and legends about the discovery and first use of Chyawanprash in India. But the one which is widely accepted states that Chyawanprash was first made and used by sage Chyawan. He practiced austerities to gain enlightenment, which made him old and weak. He used Chyawanprash to regain his youth and rejuvenated his body. The first documented evidence of this formula is even found in the principal Ayurvedic text--- Charak Samhita. According to Charak Samhita, Chyawanprash is the foremost of all herbal rejuvenative tonics.

The Taste and Use

Chyawanprash has a jam like texture. The taste is interesting – a bit sweet and sour – like fruit butter. Most people are surprised as to how good it tastes. Chyawanprash is said to be good for every one. According to Ayurveda, you need 1-2 teaspoon of Chyawanprash every day, preferably with milk. It can also be used as a spread on cracker or toast with your favorite nut butter for a tasty treat.

The nourishing sweet taste of honey, sugar cane concentrate and ghee (clarified butter) play the important role as “carriers” that allows the herbs to penetrate deep into the tissues. It is very common to add honey and sugar in many Ayurvedic formulas to promote quick assimilation of herbs in the tissues. (Ayurveda strongly promotes lacto-vegan diet which includes milk and milk derivatives).

Ingredients

Chyawanprash is a mix of more than 40 Ayurvedic herbs and spices with ‘Amla berry’, also known as amlaki, *Embllica officinalis* or Indian gooseberry that forms the base. The other ingredients in this traditional recipe include honey, sugar cane concentrate, ghee, ashwagandha, shatavari, bala, black pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, saffron, etc. All these ingredients make Chyawanprash a rich source of phyto-nutrients and antioxidants.

The dominant ingredient ‘Amla berry’, highly rich in tannins and phenolics, is an intensely sour citrus berry which grows on a long living tree in Indian subcontinent. The fruit is harvested in fall and winter season. Each Amla berry is about the size of a golf ball and is one of the richest sources of antioxidants. It is one of the most rejuvenative herbs in Ayurveda and is used in many Ayurvedic preparations. Fresh Amla berries are the key ingredient in Chyawanprash. Amla berry has been studied for its anti-oxidant benefits (Ghosal et al., 1996, Khopde et al., 2001); Immunomodulatory and anti-cancer activity (Sairam et al., 2002); hypolipidemic activity (Mathur et al., 1996), Hepatoprotective benefits (Gulati et al., 1995, Roy et al., 1991).

All the ingredients in Chyawanprash have been scientifically studied for their enormous health benefits. Common spices like ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, bay leaf, saffron and black pepper are found in every household. Use and benefits of honey are well known. Its antibacterial activity makes it an ideal ingredient to preserve this herbal jam for a long duration. The combination of all the nutrient rich ingredients used in Chyawanprash in a specific quantity and manner create a powerful synergy for optimum health enhancing benefits of the tonic as proven by various findings.

Original recipe of Chyawanprash, as stated in Charak Samhita, requires the use of fresh Amla berries and whole herbs. Komal Herbals, Inc. is offering this tonic made with original recipe under their brand "Praas".

Wonderful benefits of Chyawanprash

Many Ayurvedic scholars call Chyawanprash as "Ageless Wonder". The recipe of Chyawanprash has stood the test of time and is still beneficial to alleviate modern day health concerns. Many Ayurvedic scholars have described the benefits of Chyawanprash in their books. They are unanimous that Chyawanprash is an excellent tonic for general rejuvenation. It improves vigor and vitality. Daily intake of Chyawanprash protects the body from internal and external stressors thereby improving quality of life.

As per Ayurveda good digestion and proper absorption and assimilation of food is important for overall health. Good digestion is also necessary for regeneration of worn out tissues. Chyawanprash helps to strengthen digestion, absorption and assimilation of food which is necessary for tissue regeneration and good health. Herbs like ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, Amla, cloves and long pepper are used to improve digestion. It also improves the elimination of waste from the body by easing constipation.

As discussed earlier Amla berry is a rich source of antioxidants and phyto-nutrients and so are the many other herbs and spices in Chyawanprash. Scientific studies on Chyawanprash prove it to be good source of antioxidant thereby providing the much needed protection to our body from damaging free radicals. The antioxidant property of this tonic slows the aging process and helps maintain youthfulness.

Chyawanprash is revered by many Ayurvedic scholars for its benefits on respiratory system. Licorice, cardamom, long pepper, bay leaf is commonly used to alleviate cough and asthmatic breathing. The rich complex formula improves the immunity of the body thereby also helping to prevent common colds and coughs.

Chyawanprash helps in relieving stress and has calming effect on the nervous system due to herbs like ashwagandha, bacopa and asparagus. The formula also improves concentration and memory.

The spices and herbs of Chyawanprash help improve the circulation in the body, thus removing the toxins from various tissues and internal organs. It creates a harmonious synergy in the body leading to better metabolism.

Chyawanprash has passed the scrutiny of the scientific studies. A few of the studies proved that Chyawanprash exhibited anti-oxidant property (Jose et al., 1995); hepato-protective effect in studies (Jose and Kuttan, 2000); reduced postprandial glycemia and blood cholesterol levels (Manjunatha et al., 2001); Genoprotective effect (Yadu et al., 2003).

All the ingredients in Chyawanprash have been studied individually by scientific and medical community for their benefits. It is not always possible to find the active phyto-constituent and the rationality of a particular herb in terms of modern scientific methods. But all that is beyond the reach of scientific proof is not irrational and non-existing, as rightly depicted by Charak, one of the earliest Ayurvedic scholars – "What is visible to human being is only a small fraction of this universe and what we cannot perceive is much more than that, which doesn't make that non-existent."

Chyawanprash has been in use for centuries and has survived due to the benefits that it offers. No wonder it is called the "AGELESS WONDER"

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