



# NUTRITIONAL AND THERAPEUTIC DIMENSIONS OF *PAYASA* IN *AYURVEDA*: A REVIEW ON CLASSICAL *KRITANNA KALPANA*

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** *Payasa* (also referred to as *Paramanna* or *Kshaireyi*) is a premier milk-based preparation within *Kritanna Kalpana* (Ayurvedic dietetics). While commonly perceived as a traditional sweet, classical texts describe it as a potent therapeutic vehicle with diverse clinical applications ranging from nutritional support to the management of neurological and psychiatric disorders.

**Objective:** This study aims to systematically review and document the various preparation methods, pharmacological properties, therapeutic indications, and dietary guidelines of *Payasa* as described in the *Brihatrayi*, *Laghutrayi*, and various *Nighantus*.

**Methods:** A comprehensive literary search was conducted across classical Ayurvedic scriptures, including *Sushruta Samhita*, *Bhavaprakasha*, *Kshema Kutuhala*, *Yogaratanakara*, and *Nighantus* such as *Kaiyadeva*, *Shodala*, and *Madanapala*. Data regarding ingredients, processing techniques (*Samskara*), and clinical indications were extracted and categorized.

**Results:** The review identified that while the base of *Payasa* is inherently *Guru* (heavy) and *Brimhana* (nourishing), its properties are significantly altered by specific ingredients. Notable variations include *Eranda Phala Payasa* for *Gridhrasi* (sciatica), *Shatavari Payasa* for ocular health (*Timira*), and *Swethonmatta Payasa* for *Unmada* (insanity). The study also highlights critical safety protocols, including the mandatory use of *Sheeta Udaka* (cold water) as *Anupana* to prevent *Vidaha* (burning sensation) and the contraindication of *Payasa* in *Prameha* (diabetes) and *Vrana* (wounds).

**Conclusion:** *Payasa* represents a sophisticated integration of nutrition and therapeutics in Ayurveda. Understanding its specific formulations and contraindications is essential for *Swasthavritta* practitioners to utilize it effectively in lifestyle management and disease prevention. Further clinical research is warranted to validate the efficacy of specialized therapeutic *Payasa* preparations in contemporary medical practice.

**KEY WORDS:** *Payasa*, *Paramanna*, *Kshaireyi*, *Kritanna Kalpana*, *Brimhana*, *Ahara*, *Swasthavritta*

## INTRODUCTION

In the fundamental framework of *Ayurveda*, *Ahara* (diet) is recognized as the foremost pillar of *Trayopastambha* (the three supporting pillars of life), essential for the maintenance of *Dhatu Samya* (homeostasis). Within the specialized branch of *Swasthavritta*, the emphasis lies not only on the raw ingredients consumed but also on the methods of their processing, categorized under *Kritanna Kalpana* (study of prepared foods).

*Payasa* (also termed *Paramanna* or *Kshaireyi*) represents one of the most significant formulations in classical *Ayurvedic* dietetics. Traditionally defined as a milk-based cereal preparation, it is extensively described across the *Brihatrayi* and *Laghutrayi* for its profound *Brimhana* (nourishing) and *Balya* (strength-promoting) properties. While modern culinary perspectives often relegate *Payasa* to the status of a dessert, classical literature identifies it as a sophisticated therapeutic vehicle capable of addressing specific pathological states when processed with medicinal herbs (*Samskara*).

Despite its widespread traditional use, there is a lack of consolidated literary evidence regarding the diverse varieties and specific clinical indications of *Payasa* preparations. This article aims to systematically review the classical references of *Payasa*, exploring its preparation methodologies,

pharmacological attributes, and its dual role as both a daily nutritional supplement and a targeted therapeutic intervention.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

A literary search was conducted across classical texts, including *Sushruta Samhita*, *Bhavaprakasha*, *Kshema Kutuhala*, *Yogaratanakara*, and various *Nighantus* such as *Kaiyadeva*, *Shodala*, and *Madanapala Nighantu*.

### Observations

#### 1. General Method of Preparation of *Payasa*

The standard preparation involves cooking rice with milk. *Bhavaprakasha* suggests adding rice fried in ghee to half-boiled milk (*ardhapakva kshira*), followed by the addition of sugar and more ghee, heating until the rice is thoroughly cooked.<sup>1</sup> *Yogaratanakara* specifies using 1/8th part of rice to milk reduced to half through boiling (*ardhavshishta dugdha*), cooking it to a semi-solid consistency.<sup>2</sup>

#### 2. General Properties and Indications

According to various *Acharyas*, *Payasa* generally possesses the following attributes:

- ✓ *Guna* (Qualities): *Guru* (heavy to digest) and *Snigdha* (unctuous).



✓ *Karma* (Actions): *Brimhana* (nourishing), *Balya* (strength-promoting), *Vrshya* (aphrodisiac), and *Dhatupushtida* (strengthens tissues).

✓ *Dosha Karma* (Effect on Doshas): Generally alleviates *Vata* and *Pitta* but increases *Kapha*.

✓ *Specific Indication*: Frequently indicated for *Raktapitta* (bleeding disorders).

|                    | <i>KN</i> <sup>3</sup>                                                                                                           | <i>BP</i> <sup>1</sup>                                                                               | <i>HS</i> <sup>4</sup>                                                                                         | <i>Su</i> <sup>5</sup>                                                     | <i>Sho. nig</i> <sup>6</sup>                                               | <i>Bho. Ku</i> <sup>7</sup>                                                                                                | <i>Ksh. ku</i> <sup>8</sup>                                                        | <i>Y.R</i> <sup>2</sup>                                                                                       | <i>D.S</i> <sup>9</sup>       | <i>MN</i> <sup>10</sup>                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Syn</b>         | <i>Payasa</i> ,<br><i>paramanna</i> ,<br><i>Kshaireyi</i>                                                                        | <i>Payasm</i> ,<br><i>Paramannam</i>                                                                 |                                                                                                                |                                                                            |                                                                            |                                                                                                                            |                                                                                    | <i>Payasa</i><br><i>Paramannam</i>                                                                            |                               | <i>Paramannam</i><br><i>Kshaireyi</i>                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Guna</b>        | <i>Guru</i>                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                      | <i>Guru</i>                                                                                                    | <i>Guru</i>                                                                | <i>Guru</i>                                                                | <i>Guru</i>                                                                                                                |                                                                                    | <i>Guru</i>                                                                                                   | <i>Guru</i>                   | <i>Guru</i>                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Karma</b>       | <i>Rasayana</i><br><i>Vishtambhi</i><br><i>Ruchikarakam</i><br><i>medovardhanam</i><br><i>Sukrajanakam</i><br><i>Balakarakam</i> | <i>Durjara</i><br><i>brmhani</i><br><i>balavardhini</i><br><i>vishhtambhi</i><br><i>Reduces agni</i> | <i>vishtam</i><br><i>bhi</i><br><i>balya</i><br><i>Vrshya</i><br><i>Sreshta</i><br><i>rasayan</i><br><i>am</i> | <i>Vishta</i><br><i>mbhi</i><br><i>Balya</i><br><i>Medok</i><br><i>ara</i> | <i>Vishtambhi</i><br><i>Medovardhan</i><br><i>am</i><br><i>Balakarakam</i> | <i>Durjara</i><br><i>Balya</i><br><i>Dhatupushti</i><br><i>prada</i><br><i>Vishtambhi</i><br><i>Reduces</i><br><i>agni</i> | <i>Vishtam</i><br><i>bhi</i><br><i>Balya</i><br><i>Dhatupus</i><br><i>htiprada</i> | <i>Durjara</i><br><i>Balya</i><br><i>Dhatupushtida</i><br><i>Brimhanam</i><br><i>Saram</i><br><i>sukralam</i> | <i>Balya</i><br><i>Medura</i> | <i>Durjara</i><br><i>Balya</i><br><i>Dhatupus</i><br><i>htiprada</i><br><i>Vishtambhi</i><br><i>Trishnahar</i><br><i>a</i><br><i>Reduces</i><br><i>agni</i> |
| <b>Doshakarma</b>  | <i>Vhara</i><br><i>K karam</i>                                                                                                   | <i>PVhara</i>                                                                                        | <i>KV kara</i><br><i>P hara</i>                                                                                | <i>K kara</i>                                                              | <i>K kara</i>                                                              | <i>PVhara</i>                                                                                                              |                                                                                    | <i>P hara</i><br><i>(madhura</i><br><i>vipaka)</i>                                                            | <i>K kara</i>                 | <i>Vhara</i>                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Indications</b> | <i>Raktapitta</i>                                                                                                                | <i>Raktapitta</i>                                                                                    |                                                                                                                |                                                                            |                                                                            | <i>Raktapitta</i>                                                                                                          | <i>Raktapit</i><br><i>ta</i>                                                       |                                                                                                               |                               | <i>Raktapitta</i>                                                                                                                                           |

### 3. Specialized Classical *Payasa* Preparations

|                                                                                                                                                 | Key ingredients                                                                                                         | Properties                                                                                                                                     | Indications                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b><i>Nalikera kshirika</i></b> <sup>11</sup><br><i>BP-poorvakhanda-</i><br><i>misraprakarana</i> 12(kritanna<br><i>varga</i> )/15-16           | 1.Grated kernal of coconut<br>2. <i>Kshira</i><br>3. <i>Sarkara</i> (sugar)<br>4. <i>Ghrta</i>                          | <i>Rasa – madhura</i><br><i>Guna - snigdha, sita, guru,</i><br><i>Karma - ati pushtida, vrshya</i><br><i>Doshakarma - anilapaha</i>            | <i>Raktapitta</i>                                                  |
| <b><i>Sevika Payasa</i></b> <sup>12</sup><br><i>BP-poorvakhanda-</i><br><i>misraprakarana</i> .12(kritanna<br><i>varga</i> )/17-19 <sup>1</sup> | Ingredients<br>1. <i>Sevika</i><br>2. <i>Kshira</i><br>3. <i>Ghrta</i><br>4. <i>Sita</i> (sugar)                        | <i>Guna – Guru</i><br><i>Karma - Tarpani , Balya, Grahi,</i><br><i>Sandhikrt, Ruchya</i><br><i>Doshakarma – PVhara</i>                         |                                                                    |
| <b><i>Manaka payasam</i></b> <sup>13</sup><br><i>Chakradutta</i> 37(udara<br><i>adhikaram</i> )/57-58                                           | Ingredients<br>1. <i>Manakanda</i> (mature root)-<br>1P<br>2. <i>Tandula</i> - 2P<br>3. <i>Kshira</i><br>4. <i>Jala</i> |                                                                                                                                                | <i>Vatodara</i><br><i>Grahani</i><br><i>Pandu</i><br><i>Shotha</i> |
| <b><i>Masha Payasam</i></b> <sup>14</sup><br><i>Cha.Da</i> .67(vajikarana<br><i>adhikara</i> )/10                                               | 1. <i>Masha</i> (black gram)<br>2. <i>Kshira</i><br>3. <i>Ghrta</i>                                                     |                                                                                                                                                | <i>Vrshya</i> (Uttamam)                                            |
| <b><i>Godhuma payasa</i></b> <sup>15</sup><br><i>YR.siddhannadipakaguna</i><br><i>kadhanam</i>                                                  |                                                                                                                         | <i>Guna- Guru, Sitalam</i><br><i>Karma- Balyam</i><br><i>Medakaram</i><br><i>Sukravardhanam</i><br><i>Doshakarma- P hara</i><br><i>KV kara</i> |                                                                    |
| <b><i>Sasirekha</i></b> <sup>16</sup><br><i>Ksh. Ku., 12 th utsava,</i><br><i>shloka</i> 39                                                     | 1. <i>Bhakta</i> (rice)<br>2. <i>Dugdha</i> (milk)<br>3. <i>Sarkara</i> (sugar)                                         | <i>Guna- sitala, laghu</i><br><i>Virya- sita</i><br><i>Karma-balya</i><br><i>pushtiprada,</i>                                                  | <i>Mahadaha</i>                                                    |



|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                        |                                                                                               |                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                        | <i>ruchya</i><br><i>Doshakarma- VP hara</i>                                                   |                                             |
| <b>Rajapayasam</b> <sup>17</sup><br><i>Ksh.ku., 12 th utsava, shloka</i><br>3.      | 1. <i>Tandula</i><br>2. <i>Shyamaka</i> (barnyard millet)<br>3. <i>dugdha</i><br>4. <i>ghrita</i><br>5. <i>sarkara</i> |                                                                                               |                                             |
| <b>Naranga kshirini</b> <sup>18</sup><br><i>Ksh.ku. 12 th utsava, shloka</i><br>5-6 | 1. <i>Naranga</i><br>2. <i>Dugdha</i><br>3. <i>Khanda</i><br>4. <i>Ghritha</i><br>5. <i>Ela</i>                        | <i>Guna- guru</i><br><i>Karma- vishtambhi</i><br><i>pachaka</i><br><i>Doshakarma- VP hara</i> |                                             |
| <b>Eranda phala payasa</b> <sup>19</sup><br><i>Cha.Da. 22/ 49</i>                   | 1. <i>Eranda bija</i><br>2. <i>Sunthi</i><br>3. <i>Kshira</i>                                                          |                                                                                               | 1. <i>Gridhrasi</i><br>2. <i>Katishoola</i> |
| <b>Swethonmatta payasa</b> <sup>20</sup><br><i>(SY.5kshirapakayoga prakaranam)</i>  | 1. <i>Sveta dattura mula</i><br>2. <i>Kshira</i><br>3. <i>Guda</i><br>4. <i>Ghritha</i>                                |                                                                                               | All <i>Doshaja Unmada</i>                   |

The classics describe unique variations using different primary ingredients:

- **Nalikera (Coconut) Payasa:** Grated coconut boiled with milk, sugar, and ghee. It is highly nourishing and indicated for *Raktapitta*.
- **Sevika (Vermicelli) Payasa:** Prepared with wheat vermicelli, it acts as *Tarpani* (satiating) and *Grahi* (absorbent).
- **Manaka Payasa:** Mature roots of *Manakanda* are pounded, mixed with rice, and cooked with milk and water. It is used in managing *Vatodara*, *Grahani*, and *Pandu*.
- **Eranda Phala Payasa:** Prepared with castor seeds and Sunthi (dry ginger), this is a therapeutic preparation for *Gridhrasi* (sciatica) and *Katishoola* (lower back pain).
- **Swethonmatta Payasa:** Processed with *Sveta Dattura* root, indicated for all types of *Unmada* (insanity).

#### 4. Clinical Context and Therapeutic Utility of Payasa in Ayurveda

- ✓ **Vatavyadhi (Neurological Disorders):** For patients with *Gridhrasi* (sciatica) and *Katishoola* (lower back pain), specialized *Payasa* prepared with *Eranda bija* (castor seeds) and *Sunthi* (dry ginger) is highly effective.<sup>19,21</sup>
- ✓ **Atyagni (Hyper-metabolism):** In conditions of excessive hunger or *Atyagni*, *Payasa* is indicated to be eaten repeatedly (*Asakrt*) to mitigate *Pitta* due to its heavy and cooling nature.<sup>22,23</sup>
- ✓ **Vajikarana (Aphrodisiac Therapy):** A potent *Vrshya* preparation involves cooking *Masha* (black gram) and *Shashtika* rice in the juice of *Shvadamstra* and *Vidari* with milk.<sup>24</sup>
- ✓ **Netra Roga (Ophthalmology):** For *Timira* (vision loss), specific diets include *Shatavari Payasa* or *Amalaki Payasa* taken cold with honey and sugar in the morning.<sup>25</sup>

- ✓ **Psychological Health:** *Swethonmatta Payasa*, processed with the root of *Sveta Dattura*, is traditionally used in the management of various types of *Unmada* (insanity).
- ✓ **External Therapy:** It is not only internal; *Payasa* processed with *Vatahara* drugs can be used as a *Snigdha Upanaha* (warm poultice) for pain relief in *Vatarakta*.<sup>26</sup>

#### 5. Dietary Considerations and Contraindications

##### ➤ Payasa as Apathya (Contraindications)

- ◆ **Prameha (Diabetes):** *Payasa* is listed as a primary *Nidana* (causative factor) for *Prameha* and should be strictly avoided.<sup>27</sup>
- ◆ **Vrana (Wounds):** It is considered *Apathya* in wound management as it causes *Dosha-sanjananam* (aggravation of *Doshas*) and *Puya-varadhanam* (increased pus formation).<sup>28</sup>
- ◆ **Pradara:** It is also listed as a causative factor in *Yonivyapat* conditions like *Pradara*.<sup>29</sup>

##### ➤ Payasa In the context of Viruddhahara (Incompatible Combinations)

Combining *Payasa* with certain substances can lead to toxicity or skin diseases:

- ◆ It should never be consumed simultaneously with *Sura* (alcohol) or *Krishara* (rice and lentil mix). According to *Bhavaprakasha* and *Bhojana Kutuhalam*, the mixture of *Payasa* and *Krishara* is specifically mentioned as *Samyoga Viruddha*.<sup>30</sup>

##### ➤ Anupana (Post-Meal Adjuvant)

Because *Payasa* is considered *Guru* (heavy to digest), it can lead to *Vidaha* (burning indigestion or acid reflux) if not managed correctly. To counter these specific properties, the classical texts prescribe a mandatory *Anupana*.



- ◆ **Sheeta Udaka (Cold Water):** This is the specified *Anupana* specifically after consuming milk-based preparations like *Payasa*. *Acharya Dalhana*, in his commentary on the *Sushruta Samhita*, clarifies that *Sheeta Udaka* helps to mitigate the *Vidaha* caused by the heavy nature of the dish.<sup>31</sup> According to *Dravyaguna Sangraha*, the cold potency (*Sheeta Virya*) of the water balances the potential for heat and acidity (*Vidaha*) that arises during the digestion of concentrated milk and sugar, ensuring a smooth transformation of the food (*Aahara Parinama*).<sup>32</sup>

## DISCUSSION

The systematic review of classical *Ayurvedic* literature reveals that *Payasa* (also referred to as *Paramanna* or *Kshaireyi*) is far more than a conventional sweet dish; it is a sophisticated therapeutic vehicle within *Kritaanna Kalpana*. The diversity in preparation methods—ranging from the simple milk-rice combination to complex medicated formulations—underscores the *Ayurvedic* principle of *Sanskaro hi gunantaradhanam* (processing alters the inherent properties of substances).

A key finding of this review is the functional versatility of *Payasa*. While its primary nature is *Guru* (heavy), *Snigdha* (unctuous), and *Brimhana* (nourishing), the addition of specific ingredients pivots its clinical utility. For instance, the use of *Eranda Phala* transforms it into a treatment for *Vatavyadhi* (neurological pains), while *Manaka* root allows it to be used in metabolic conditions like *Udara* and *Pandu*. This demonstrates a targeted approach to dietetics where the base medium (milk and cereal) provides the necessary nutrition (*Balya*), while the active medicaments address the underlying pathology.

From a *Swasthavritta* perspective, the strict guidelines regarding *Anupana* and *Viruddhara* are crucial. In the context of *Payasa*, the mandatory prescription of *Sheeta Udaka* (cold water) serves as a functional measure to counteract the *Vidahi* (causing burning/acidity) and *Guru* (heavy) nature of dense milk solids and sugars. By adhering to the *Dalhana* commentary, we see that the adjuvant is not just a beverage but a therapeutic intervention designed to ensure that a highly nutritious (but heavy) food like *Payasa* is fully assimilated without causing internal distress.

Furthermore, the contraindication of *Payasa* in *Prameha* (Diabetes) and *Vrana* (Wounds) serves as a preventive strategy to avoid *Kleda* (moisture/sludge) accumulation in the body, which can exacerbate these conditions.

Modern nutritional science is beginning to validate these traditional insights. Recent research, such as the formulation of *Payasa* with germinated buckwheat milk, shows that traditional recipes can be successfully adapted to enhance antioxidant activity and sensory acceptability.<sup>33</sup> Such innovations bridge the gap between ancient wisdom and contemporary nutritional requirements, offering nutrient-dense options for managing malnutrition and age-related debility.

## CONCLUSION

This review highlights the profound importance of *Payasa* in both preventive and curative *Ayurveda*. It is established as a premier *Brimhana* (nutritive) preparation that, when used with proper *Anupana* and in the absence of *Viruddha* (incompatibility), serves as an excellent source of strength and vitality.

The clinical significance of specialized varieties like *Shatavari Payasa* for ocular health and *Swethonmatta Payasa* for psychiatric conditions warrants further exploration through clinical trials. It is evident that reviving these classical preparations can provide a natural, food-based approach to health promotion. Incorporating these traditional culinary pharmacology concepts into modern dietetics can lead to a more holistic management of lifestyle disorders and nutritional deficiencies.

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