

"GULKAND: AYURVEDA'S HEALING AND CULINARY WONDER"

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ABSTRACT:

Ayurveda, often termed as the science of life, is rooted in principles that emphasize both preventive health and curative treatments. Central to its dietary philosophy is Ayurveda Ahara, encompassing foods prepared according to traditional recipes aimed at nurturing holistic well-being. Among these, Gulkand shines as a noteworthy example—a preparation of rose petals and sugar renowned for its cooling properties, particularly cherished during the scorching summers of North and Northwest India. Gulkand plays a crucial role in balancing Pitta dosha, effectively alleviating symptoms such as excessive thirst, burning sensations, and digestive disturbances exacerbated by the heat. Its historical references span across ancient Ayurvedic texts as well as Greek, Persian, and Unani traditions, underscoring its enduring therapeutic value. Beyond its physiological benefits, Gulkand also contributes to skin health by purifying the blood (Rakta prasada), enhancing its cosmetic appeal. However, caution is advised for individuals with diabetes or predisposition to Kapha disorders due to its sugar content. Despite this consideration, Gulkand's palatability and therapeutic efficacy highlight its role as a healthier alternative to modern snacks and sweets, aligning with a growing global interest in traditional foods for their inherent health benefits. Its integration into contemporary diets reflects a resurgence of ancient wisdom, promising a sustainable approach to nutrition that supports overall well-being and fosters a deeper connection to culinary heritage and health practices.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Ayurveda Ahara, Gulkand, Rose petals.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, is centered around two main principles: *Aaturopakramana*, which focuses on the treatment of diseases, and *Swasthavrtha*, which emphasizes the maintenance of health. This holistic approach underscores the importance of both curing illnesses and preserving overall wellness. Unlike many medical systems that prioritize treatment over prevention, Ayurveda uniquely values the health of both the sick and the healthy, recognizing the necessity of a balanced lifestyle to maintain well-being. Classical Ayurvedic texts are not only rich with medicinal formulations but also provide numerous recipes that can be easily prepared at home. These recipes are effective in managing and preventing various health conditions, blending the line between food and medicine. This dual approach reflects the fundamental Ayurvedic belief that food plays a crucial role in health and healing.

Ayurveda Ahara, as defined by authoritative Ayurvedic texts and recognized by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) as “a food prepared in accordance with the recipes or ingredients or processes as per method described in the authoritative books of Ayurveda” (FSSAI).¹ refers to food prepared in accordance with specific recipes, ingredients, and processes. This category includes a variety of dishes such as Jalebi, milkshakes, and porridges that stimulate the digestive fire (agni). In Ayurvedic texts, food is described as *Rasa pradhana*, meaning it is

predominant in taste, which is essential for both its therapeutic and nourishing qualities. Ayurveda distinguishes between *Ahara* (food) and *Oushadha* (medicine) based on their ingredients, methods of intake, and dosages. Typically, medicines (Oushadhas) are more potent and taken in smaller doses (1 *pala*), aimed at providing quicker relief from ailments. In contrast, foods (*Aharas*) are milder and consumed in larger quantities (4 *palas*), intended for long-term nourishment and gradual health improvement. This differentiation highlights the Ayurvedic principle that food builds up the body slowly and consistently, while medicines act more rapidly and temporarily to eradicate sickness.

An emerging food class in India, Ayurveda Ahara helps people rediscover indigenous flavors while staying healthy. One notable example of Ayurveda Ahara is Gulkand, a traditional preparation made from rose petals and sugar. Gulkand is especially popular in the hot regions of North and Northwest India for its cooling properties, making it an essential remedy during sweltering summers. The name Gulkand is derived from '**Gul**' (rose) and '**Kand**' (sugar or sweetness), reflecting its simple yet potent ingredients. The preparation of Gulkand involves layering rose petals and sugar in a glass jar, which is then exposed to sunlight for a period ranging from one month to a year. This sun-cooking process enhances the sweetness and preserves the mixture, resulting in a caramelized, jam-like product. Historically, Gulkand has been referenced in Ayurvedic, Greek, Persian, and Unani texts,

highlighting its long-standing use as a therapeutic food. It was traditionally prescribed to alleviate summer-related ailments such as dehydration, heat exhaustion, and excessive perspiration. From an Ayurvedic perspective, Gulkand is particularly effective in balancing *Pitta dosha*. *Pitta*, characterized by heat and intensity, can lead to symptoms like excessive thirst, burning sensations, and digestive disturbances when aggravated. The cooling properties of rose petals and sugar in Gulkand help mitigate these symptoms, restoring balance among the doshas (*Pitta*, *Vata*, and *Kapha*). Regular consumption of Gulkand also contributes to *Rakta prasada* (purity of blood), which has positive implications for skin health, offering both therapeutic and cosmetic benefits.

However, due to its high sugar content, Gulkand should be consumed with caution by individuals with diabetes or those prone to *Kapha* disorders like obesity. These individuals should complement Gulkand intake with a balanced diet and regular exercise to mitigate potential adverse effects. Despite these precautions, Gulkand's pleasant taste and ease of preparation make it an appealing alternative to unhealthy snacks and sweets, exemplifying how traditional foods can offer both health benefits and palatability. In conclusion, the rise of Ayurveda Ahara as a distinct food category represents a return to ancient wisdom, promising a healthier future through the rediscovery of time-tested dietary practices. The example of Gulkand highlights how traditional foods can be both

delicious and beneficial, providing a natural and holistic approach to health that aligns with modern wellness trends.

ETIMOLOGY

The term "**Gulkand**" or "**Gulkhand**" originates from two distinct words: 'Gul,' meaning rose, and 'Khand,' signifying sugar candy. Additionally, 'Kand' denotes sweetness in Arabic. True to its name, Gulkand/Gulkhand comprises solely of these two ingredients. Rose petals are combined with varying proportions of sugar or sugar candy, then left in direct sunlight until they undergo desirable changes and become suitable for consumption. Gulkand is a distinctive preparation where taste equates to goodness, reflecting the profound wisdom of our Acharyas (teachers). It benefits both the palate and the digestive system, thus blessing the entire body. In a world where nutritious diets often lack enjoyable flavors for children, Gulkand stands as a remarkable exception deserving of recognition.

HISTORY

Gulkands references are available in Ayurvedic texts along with Greek, Persian and Unani (Arabic) texts. It is believed that the preserve has been around since 900 BC. It is to be believed that the physicians there profusely prescribed Gulkand to mitigate the wide-ranging summer ailments like dehydration, heat, perspiration, thirst and such.²

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Table No. 1: Ingredients of Gulkand

Sr. No.	Ingredients	Botanical Name	Part used	Qty.
1.	Gulab (Rose)	<i>Rosa Indica</i>	Dala (Petals)	1Part
2.	Sita	<i>Saccharum Officinarum</i>	Whole Part	1Part

According to references, the amount of sugar can be twice or thrice the amount of rose petals in weight. In practice, sugar equivalent in weight to rose petals is also taken.

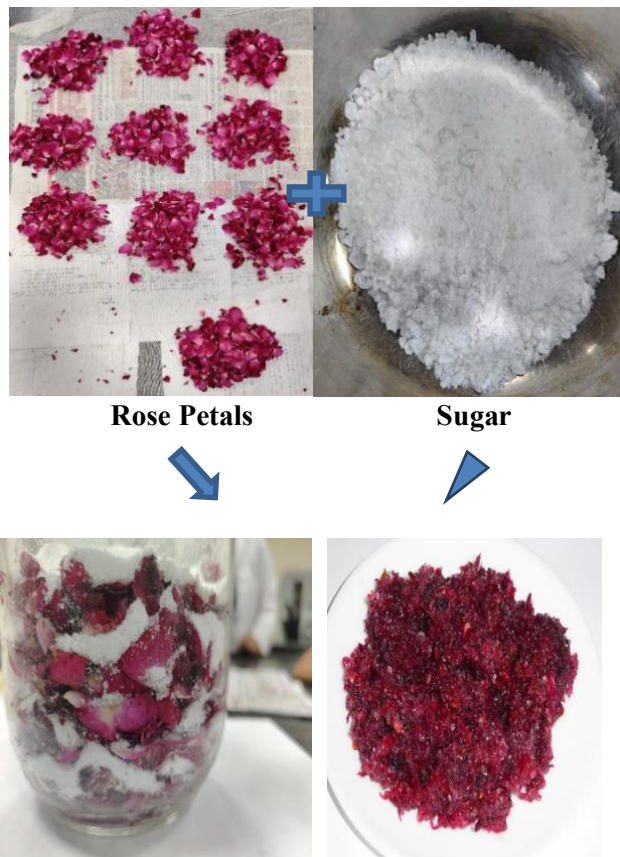


Figure 1: Gulkand preparation

As per Siddha bshajya Manimala, rose petals and sugar is laid down in a glass jar in alternate layers. First, a layer of rose petals is laid down. Next, equal

amount, 2 times or three times of sugar is taken and layered above the rose petal bed. The layering is continued until the sugar and the petals are finished. As per the reference, the setup is kept in direct sunlight for a fixed period of 1 year. In practice, even 1 month is used as a period for the mixture to get sun-cooked. The sugar prevents any fungal developments, and the purity and sweetness of the mixture is preserved for a long time. Once the optimal transformation is reached, the end product is a sweet caramelised jam like article which is equally tasty and benevolent.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS (AYURVEDIC VIEWPOINT)

The key ingredients being rose petals and sugar, it is directly indicated for aggravated Pitta dosha in the body. The increased ushna guna of Pitta causes the blood to get vitiated.³ Blood being vitiated, leads to ailments including skin disorders. Ushnatva in the body causes symptoms such as Pipasa, daaha, davathu etc., leading to loss of water from the body through perspiration and such. These symptoms, if unchecked, turn into the symptoms of kshaya and deals damage in a greater magnitude. Also, the increased dravatva of pitta causes the agni to weaken and tampers with the digestive power of the body. As far as Greeshma ritu is considered, Kapha kshaya occurs naturally, along with the sanchaya of Vata. The ushna guna of the nature or environment causes the ushnatva in the body to rise and the sanchita vata carries the vitiated pitta all through the body. Thus, the symptoms of increased Pitta are shown all over

the body instead of just Pitta sthana. This is naturally why Greeshma is considered the season where a man is at his weakest in terms of physical strength. In order to rectify the doshas arising from Greeshma rtu, we need to adopt treatments and routines that dissipate Pitta dosha. As per Ashtanga Sangraha, Vaata Pitta dosha treatment involves Greeshma rtu charya only. Hence generally, Vaata Pitta hara ahara and vihara is essentially what constitutes the treatment of Greeshma janya vyadhis. This is where Gulkand comes to the fore. Goodness of rose petals and sugar candy instills Sheetha bhaava into the body, acting as a coolant to counter the sweltering heat. Sugar is a well-known antagonist of Pitta and it helps in building up the debilitated Kapha dosha. The Vaata also gets balanced, and the ultimate balance among the three doshas culminate in a healthy body. This balance which is brought so simply into the body, also aids in the upcoming season which is Varsha, where all three doshas undergo Prakopa.

ADDED BENEFITS

Balanced Pitta results in Rakta prasada. Rakta dushti or rakta prasada is easily reflected on the skin. Hence improving the quality of Rakta dhatu is going to have its own cosmetic benefits. So intake of Gulkand regularly imparts a therapeutically as well as cosmetic effect, which can only be considered a major bonus in an increasingly beauty conscious world.

PRECAUTION

Since the ingredients are sweet in nature, it is

understandable that diabetes patients are to be cautious while taking Gulkand. The kapha vrddhi caused from the excess of sugar and Gulab can increase the load on Vasti, and Prameha will get worsened. The ingredients' nature also makes it directly improper for obese and overweight people to consume. Hence those who fall into the above category, should they take Gulkand, must make sure that they indulge in diabetes friendly regimens such as adequate exercising and healthy, right choice of food.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, places equal importance on maintaining health and treating illness. Ayurveda Ahara, defined as food prepared according to Ayurvedic recipes and processes, plays a significant role in this holistic approach. This category includes a variety of nourishing foods, from sweets like Jalebi to porridge preparations, all designed to stimulate digestive fire and support overall well-being. Among these traditional recipes, Gulkand—a combination of rose petals and sugar—is particularly valued for its cooling properties, especially during the sweltering summers of North and Northwest India. Gulkand helps balance Pitta dosha, which, when aggravated, can lead to symptoms like excessive thirst, burning sensations, and digestive disturbances. The cooling properties of rose petals and sugar help mitigate these symptoms, restoring balance among the body's doshas and contributing to overall health.

Gulkand's historical references in Ayurvedic, Greek,

Persian, and Unani texts highlight its long-standing use as a therapeutic food. It also has cosmetic benefits, improving skin quality by promoting blood purity (Rakta prasada). However, due to its high sugar content, it should be consumed cautiously by individuals with diabetes or those prone to Kapha disorders like obesity. Despite this, Gulkand's pleasant taste and ease of preparation make it an appealing alternative to unhealthy snacks and sweets, exemplifying how traditional foods can offer both health benefits and palatability. The rise of Ayurveda Ahara as a distinct food category represents a return to ancient wisdom, promising a healthier future through the rediscovery of time-tested dietary practices.

CONCLUSION

At an age where especially the younger generation considers good food and good medicine revolting because of their potentially bad taste and difficulty in ingestion, Gulkand is an ideal alternative. It can be practiced as a routine and it doesn't cause revulsion because of its excellent taste and palatability. It simply presents itself as a simple, easy and a far better alternative to oil fried snacks and other trendy fast foods and sweets. Gulkand is also an example that stands true to the saying "Old is gold". The treasure trove that is India, and Ayurveda, has supplied the world with many such gems and the fact that the modern world has welcomed and incorporated this wonderful science is indeed a comforting thought. The emerging category in food, Ayurveda ahara, is a branch that

needs more research and exploration because like Gulkand, it has many more contributions and healthy food creates a healthy nation and contribute well to creating a promising human resource all over the globe.

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NIL.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.

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