



## A REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY COOKWARES

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### ABSTRACT

In today's 24 x 7 world, all the aspects of life are changed & because of change in lifestyle. All life-style disorders like hypertension, obesity, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease are also very common in this era. *Ahara, nidra & Brahmcharya* are three pillars of life. Along with *Ashtoatiaravidhivisheshayatan*, the effects of different types of containers on the foods are also mentioned in Ayurveda. Different cultures have different techniques of cooking food. In modern civilization stainless steel & non-stick cookware are very popular. But fumes coming from the coating of non-stick cookware are very hazardous to health. It may cause infertility in women, pituitary disorder & many developmental & reproductive problems. As clay is a natural element, cooking in a clay pot is very easy, cheaper, fuel saving method of cooking. Clay pot also retains natural flavor & nutrition of food.

**Keywords:** Alzheimer's disease, non-stick cookware, infertility, life style disorders, *Ahara*.

**INTRODUCTION:** In Ayurveda, human *sharir* is considered as a replica of the universe. Whatever is available in the universe, are also represented in the *sharir*, may be in a modified organic form.<sup>(1)</sup> Every human is a unique manifestation of mother nature. Since we all are created from nature, exist in nature & return to nature, our life-style should also have proper co-ordination with nature, then only we can flourish. The art of healing also comes from nature. Therefore good physician must start from nature with an open mind.

In today's 24 x 7 world, all the aspects of life are changed. Because of change in lifestyle and ill-relationship of people with nature, many life-style disorders like hypertension, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease are common in developing country like India. Ayurveda described *Ahara, nidra* and *bramhacharya* as tripod of life.<sup>(2)</sup> These three factors are called as pillars of life as health and longevity of life depends on it. Among three pillar, *Ahara* is the most important

pillar. It is said to be *Prana* of living being as it nourishes *sharir* as well as provides nourishment to the *Man. Anna* or *Ahara* is said as "*Poornabrahma*." All the rules for dieting are mentioned as '*Ashtoaharavidhivisheshayatanani*' in Ayurveda which emphasizes the concept 'Let food thy be medicine, and medicine thy be food.'<sup>(3)</sup> Not only the properties of food but also the properties of different types of food containers are also described in Ayurveda.

**MATERIAL & METHODS:** Different cultures have different techniques of cooking food. Now a day's stainless steel and non-stick cookware are in fashion. Most of the people preferred cooking in non-stick cookware as it is easy to clean, requires less fuel, non-sticky property & good look. A wide range of non-stick cookware is available in market. One chemical ingredient most common to all non-stick cookware is perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA).<sup>(4)</sup> Non-stick cookware when heated it becomes a source of perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA).

Perfluorooctanoic acid is a synthetic chemical that creates a soap like slipperiness and non-stick finish. This coating begins to break down and release toxins into the air at 464<sup>0</sup> F. When the pot or pan reaches 680<sup>0</sup> F, it starts releasing six toxic gases including two carcinogens (PFOA & TFE) and monofluoroacetic acid (MFA), a chemical warfare agent that is deadly to humans even at low doses. It has carcinogenic effect on the body & may cause serious damage to the vital organs like brain, prostate, liver, thymus, kidney. It may causes infertility in women, organ damage, pituitary disorders and many developmental and reproductive problems. In middle class family, aluminum cookwares are widely in use in kitchen. As aluminum is a reactive soft metal, it easily reacts with the different food and release the metal into the food. Chronic aluminum exposure leads to hepatic failure, renal failure & dementia. Aluminum toxicity may leads to Alzheimer's disease, convulsions, oesophagitis, gastroenteritis, psychosis, shortness of breath & weakness. It can even cause birth defects in newborns.<sup>(5)</sup>Stainless steel cookware are also very popular in society. Stainless steel is made up of combinations of various metals like iron, nickel, chromium, molybdenum, carbon etc. Stainless steel is generally considered to be biologically inert, but some sensitive individuals develop a skin irritation due to a nickel allergy caused by certain alloys. A very small amount of all these metals can also cause kidney dysfunction, low blood pressure, muscle tremors, oral cancer & skin problems. From ancient times, cast iron cookwares are also in use. In nature, iron occurs in ferric and ferrous form. Cast iron cookware contains iron in its ferric form & it cannot be assimilated by our

body. This ferric form of iron when combined with the oxygen in the body, it can release oxygen free radicals which are unstable molecules. But iron vessels are useful in anaemia, edema, jaundice and *kapha-pitta* diseases.<sup>(6)</sup>

Cherishing food in gold vessel removes all defects of food. It is good for eyes, relieves the defects of all *three doshas*. It alleviates burning sensation, improves memory and body glow. As silver and gold are precious metal, it is not affordable to all the people of community.<sup>(7)</sup>

From thousands of years, people all over the world have used clay pots for cooking. If we are purchasing nutritious organic food for maintaining health then one should also cook it in a way to keep its nutritional value as it is. Clay is a natural element; it does not contain any hazardous chemical. Clay vessels are eco-friendly therefore cooked food retain its natural flavors & nutritional value. Clay is alkaline in nature & it interacts with acidity in the food thereby neutralizing the pH balance. Seasoning is an essential part of cooking in clay pots. Seasoning is done by making a broth with flour & vegetable cooking oil. These ingredients are mixed with the water in the pot and brought to boil. Fully seasoned pot is very versatile & durable. Earthen pots are porous in nature so allows both moisture & heat to circulate through the food. Food cooked in clay pot many times is lower in fat compared with food prepared in other utensils. Clay pot also seals all the nutrients inside the pot by locking steam. Cleansing of clay pot is also very easy. If it ever cracks or breaks, it can be crushed up & used in garden. Additional benefit with clay is once the food has been cooked, the pot can retain heat for much longer as it is a natural insulator. For long time, the clay pot keeps

the food warm & ready for all family members who like to eat at different times.

**DISCUSSION:** Natural healing force within each of us is the greatest force in getting well. In today's era of various life style disorders, it is very necessary to understand and implement the dietary principals of Ayurveda so as to maintain health. In our daily regimens also we should be with hand to hand co-ordination with nature. Properties of different cook wares are described in all samhitas as per Bhavprakash gold & silver vessels are good for health, while stone & earthen vessels should be avoided as they cause poverty. Eating in a banana leaf is tasty and also as appetizer. According to the book, Diet & nutrition a holistic approach by Rudolph Ballentine clay pots has been used since ancient time. Various metal vessels and non-stick cookware are used for cooking. Clay vessels are non-reactive, made from natural elements, fuel saving, cheap & also retain natural flavors of food. Reactive cooking vessels are injurious to the health as it reacts with food and causes damage to the vital organs. A 19<sup>th</sup> century German physician & scientist used clay as a wound disinfectant & cure for bacterial infections like cholera. He found that clay is inhospitable to the growth of certain kinds of bacteria. In kerala, fish curry cooked in earthen vessel is very famous and can preserve for longer duration as compared to other. In comparison with all other cooking vessels clay pots are beneficial & healthy too. To maintain bio-rhythm of life, we should respect nature and its various elements.

**CONCLUSION:** As Per Bhavprakasa food served & cooked in gold & silver utensils are good for health & also restores all the nutritious value of food. In today's era, common people cannot afford it. So

the earthen cookware's are non-reactive, cheap, preserves nutrients in foods & enhances the taste of food.

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