



Ramadhanyacharithe (ರಾಮಧಾನ್ಯಚರಿತೆ) : Millets in Dasa Sahitya (Kannada Dasa Literature)

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From the perspective of home science, the sustenance that fuels humanity worldwide can be distilled into one universal category: food. It's in this realm that we dive deep into the intricate web of nutrients - understanding their roles at different stages of life, recognizing their significance in various health conditions, pinpointing foods to avoid during therapeutic treatments, and uncovering the culinary techniques that elevate the nutritional value of our meals. In this narrative, millet and rice hold distinct positions in our culinary landscape. A poignant dialogue between Paddy (Rice) and Sri Rama, found at the conclusion of the "Ramadhanya Charite" story, encapsulates this sentiment beautifully. Amidst the fervent praise for ragi (Finger Millet) as a nutritional powerhouse, rice finds itself in a state of sorrow and lament. Yet, Ramachandra, with compassion in his voice, beckons to it and reassures, "Marule (Dear Mad) Nelle (Paddy) Ba (Come), Why worry in your mind? Ragi, in its benevolence, stood guard during times of famine, but it doesn't diminish your significance. Paddy is cherished by the divine, and millet is a boon for humanity. Let both of you thrive harmoniously on this earth." Indeed, the wisdom of ages has maintained that every grain holds a vital place in sustaining human health. Home Science research, in line with this ancient wisdom, has consistently echoed the importance of a balanced diet, one that encompasses all the essential nutrients. In this journey towards wellness, let us not be consumed by the superficial aspects such as the colour of our food. Instead, let us focus on the invaluable knowledge of what our bodies truly need - an array of nutrients to flourish at every stage of life. It's through this holistic approach that we can savor the richness of life and savor each meal as a celebration of nourishment, one that brings us closer to a healthier and happier existence.

Key words: Millets, Finger millet (Ragi), Paddy (Rice), Nutrition, Dasa Literature

There is a saying in southern part of Karnataka in kannada that "Hot itself is a taste, and White itself is a beauty". This saying immediately comes to mind while reading Kanakadasa's Ramdhanya Charite (Dhanya means Cereal and Charite means story). The above statement feels so true, when we compare rice and finger millet. The discrimination shown by humans in matter of colour, caste and class can be seen here through the fight between grains. When we look at this from the perspective of home science, even though millets like ragi (Finger millet) are nutritious, still home scientists and nutrition experts are struggling to explain their importance, it cannot be denied that we are crazy about the white colour and soft fluffy texture of rice (paddy).

When it comes to Ramdhanya Kriti (Writing), people who have not studied Kannada literature to the extent of reading Bhamini Shatpadi are indebted to all the Kannada writers who made it possible to read its simple Kannada form and taste its flavour, Such as

- 1) "Sri Kanakadasa's Ramadhanya Charitre" by Su.Rudramurthy Shastri,
- 2) First year Kannada MA Paper-2. Text book "Medieval Kannada Literature" of Karnataka State Open University, Mysore,

3) Kanaka Sahitya Darshan Volume 1, "Kanakavalokana, Articles on the Life and Works of Kanakadasa" edited by Dr. De. Javaregowda, published by the Department of Kannada and Culture Government of Karnataka,

these have helped a lot to read and understand Dasa literature and enjoy the writings of Kanakadasa. It would be a mistake if I do not mention internet and its advantages. Kanakadasa is a very big name in medieval Kannada literature. History tells us that Kirtan literature was predominant during this period. Many Dasa Shresthas gave a great contribution to Kannada by composing these kirtan lyrics. Besides writing kirtan lyrics, Kanakadasa also became famous for writing kavya, epic poem and mandige. That is why we all know that Kanakadasa has a special place. Thus, Kanakadasa who has achieved a lot in the fields of literature, music, society, religion and spirituality is considered to be very important.

Among his works, "Ramdhanya Charitre", a small work, caught my attention as a home scientist, probably because of the grains mentioned in it. There are many Ramayana's written in India. But this Ramayana of Kanakadasa is the story of Ragi - Rama rather than the story of Sri Rama. Ramdhanya Kriti is composed in Bhamini Shatpadi (a form of Kannada Literature). In this work, the social situation of Kanakadasa's time, environment, people's life, wars can be seen and many critics have said that Kanakadasa has shown the discrimination he experienced in written form by keeping millet as a symbol of the oppressed class who found their existence against the oppression of the upper class.

Even when we look at the nine grains mentioned in this work like paddy, wheat, ragi/naredalega (Finger Millet), Haraka (Kodo millet), Baragu (Proso millet), Jola (Sorghum), Kambu, Saame (Little millet), Navane (Foxtail millet) in the form of grains only, the fight between the cereal grain rice and the Finger millet, naturally shows that we cannot give that much importance to the millets like we give to the major cereal grain. Lord Rama's family, Anjaneya and Vanaras, who tasted the food made from these nine grains, each said that each one dish was tasty, then Gautama Muniji said that ragi was the best, and the rice quarreled over it, and thus the quarrel escalated and it came to Lord Rama for justice. Then Sri Rama says let both grains be imprisoned for six months and then judge. Here the lifetime of the grain is measured.

After six months Devendra says that the finger millet is healthy and the rice is inert, Narada also supports Devendra's statement. Narada goes on to say that the lustre of the finger millet has not diminished, but the rice has shrunk and faded away in the prison. The Gods and sages who were there also express the same opinion. Kanakadasa writes that Sri Ramachandra then called the ragi and gave it his own name, i.e. the name "Ramdhanya" for the ragi (Finger millet). It is also said that devas and asuras gave many boons to Finger millet. It is said that ragi received boons from all and gained great fame due to its qualities. From the perspective of Home Science as well as food science and nutrition, Finger millet is also known to have all nutritious points. It is very gratifying to see that even in Dasa's time, the knowledge was very good that millets can be stored for many days with their nutrients.

While the argument is going on, Rice says to finger millet that, I am needed for all the pious works, you will not be credited there. In return the finger millet said rice that rice is needed for the death anniversaries and after all rituals it will be given to the crows, but I feed human and cattle when there is famine and drought.

Perhaps we can get a better understanding by comparing the nutrients in some grains. The following information is from Nutritive Value book by National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad can be seen.

Cereals /Millets	Energy (Calorie)	Carbohydrate (gm)	Protein (gm)	Fat (gm)	Minerals (gm)	Fiber (gm)	Calcium (mg)	Iron (mg)
Paddy/Rice	345	78.2	6.8	0.5	0.6	0.2	10	0.7
Finger Millet	328	72	7.3	1.3	2.7	3.6	344	3.9
Proso millet	309	65.9	8.3	1.4	2.6	9.0	27	0.5
Little millet	341	67	7.7	4.7	1.5	7.6	17	9.3
Sorghum	349	72.6	10.4	1.9	1.6	1.6	25	4.1
Wheat	346	71.2	11.8	1.5	1.5	1.2	41	5.3

Looking at the above list, it can be noticed that there are 344 mg of calcium and 3.9 mg of iron in millet and these nutrients are very less in rice and mainly they are more or less equal in terms of energy required by the human body. Little millet contains 9.3 mg of iron, iron is an important nutrient in the production of haemoglobin in the blood, which can prevent anaemia. Anaemia among women and children is a major problem in our country. Anaemia is a condition where there is a lack of healthy red blood cells needed to carry enough oxygen to our body tissues. People with anaemia, also known as low haemoglobin, may feel tired very quickly and feel weak. The main symptoms of anaemia are - fatigue, weakness, pale or yellow skin, irregular heartbeats, shortness of breath, dizziness, chest pain, cold hands and feet and headache. At first, anaemia is so mild that we don't notice it. But as the anaemia worsens, the symptoms worsen. The use of cereals can be a partial solution to this.

From the point of view of home science, all the substances consumed by humans around the world is food. The nutrients present in food, what nutrients are required at what age, which nutrients are very important in which disease conditions, which food should not be consumed in certain therapeutic conditions, which is the best method of cooking food, which method of cooking minimizes the loss of nutrients, which are the methods of proper preservation and processing of food, will become important than the colour of the food. From that point of view, millet has its own place and rice has its own place in our meal.

Nutrition is the process by which an organism takes food into the body and utilizes the nutrients from the food. If it is correct then health problems will be naturally less. That's why our wise forefathers said long ago, "He who knows how to eat has no disease, and he who knows how to speak has no quarrel", the saying in Kannada "Ragi (Finger Millet) Undava (Eating) Nirogi (Absence of disease)" also indicates this. If the total amount of carbohydrate, protein, fat, fiber, water, minerals, vitamins, A, D, E, K, B-group, and vitamin C are all in the required amount for the respective age group, then that is balanced diet. It means that all the food items are important, there is no problem if they are consumed in the right order according to the respective age group, season and body condition.

This is what Kanakadasa says in the dialogue between Paddy/Rice and Sri Rama at the end of the story "Ramadhanya". When everyone said that ragi (Finger Millet) was the best, the rice was in great pain and lamenting, Ramachandra called it lovingly and said, "Marule (Dear Mad) Nelle (Paddy) Ba (Come), Why worry in your mind. Ragi had to be excused for protecting the world even when there was a famine in the land, it doesn't mean that you were rejected. Don't worry. "Paddy is dear to God; millet is blessing to mankind. Let both of you be comfortable on the earth." It was said that all grains are needed for human health. The researches of Home Science also corroborate this. Let us also live a healthy life by eating a balanced diet containing all the nutrients.

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