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# A conceptual perspective of Natural Mineral Water in Ayurveda and Modern medical sciences

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## Abstract

**Background:** Among *Panchamahabhutas*, water is essential for survival. With the increasing population in the world, healthy drinking water has become a major concern. Among different sources of water described in Ayurveda and modern sciences, Natural mineral water is one of the purest and healthiest sources with additional health benefits due to its natural mineral contents. Our country Nepal also has lots of natural springs and glaciers creating huge potentials to quench the thirst of the world. So the present review work has been undertaken to uncover the possibilities of Natural mineral water both from Ayurveda and contemporary modern medical sciences.

**Materials & Methods:** The information related to the topic have been collected and referred from Classical texts of Ayurveda & various articles published in the Journals. Various authentic websites related to the topic were also visited.

**Results:** Extensive descriptions about types, properties etc. of drinking water have been found in Ayurveda Classics. Natural Mineral Water can be correlated with *Audbhida* source of water described in *Astanga*

*Sangraha*. US-FDA has defined NMW and distinguished it from other sources of water. Besides these mineral contents of NMW and their health benefits were found and highlighted. Plastic bottles, water pollution and Arsenic contents in water were some of the aspects to be taken care while opting for NMW as a drinking water.

**Conclusions:** Natural Mineral Water could be the future of healthy drinking water. Further Clinical studies are required to prove its Physiological and therapeutic roles in human body. Our country Nepal has huge potential for NMW.

**Keywords:** Natural Mineral Water, ppm, TDS, *Antariksh Jal, Audbhida*.

## INTRODUCTION

Among *Panchamahabhutas* water is the most essential element of human life next to air. All living organisms need water to survive. It supports essential physical functions as well as provides vital nutrients to the body. Water is mentioned in classical Ayurvedic writings. Water is regarded as life and Ayurveda addresses several forms of water, including their characteristics and actions. It has also explained the therapeutic properties of water.

According to modern research, water serves a variety of important activities such as enzyme activation, ion solvent, cell signaling, mineralization of organic molecules, and enzyme activation. Water serves several roles, including excretion, metabolism, temperature regulation, lubrication, digestion, toxin removal, and transportation.<sup>1</sup>

A number of inappropriate practices in modern life diminish the value of water. The principles of water consumption for health maintenance, illness prevention, and disease alleviation have been thoroughly explained by Ayurveda. A source of water is any body of water that supplies water to both private wells and public drinking water supplies, including rivers, streams, lakes, reservoirs, springs, and groundwater.<sup>2</sup> Among these, spring water or natural mineral water is one of the purest and most sought-after drinking options.

Mineral water is also referred to as spring water since it originates from natural springs, which are locations where moving subsurface water emerges from an aperture in the land surface. Mineral water can also be manufactured artificially.

The market for natural, organic, and pure products is expanding globally. This also holds true for drinking water. People are busy, but they care about drinking clean water and staying healthy. In the case of natural mineral water, the mineral contents will provide people with additional advantages beyond just pure drinking water. Mineral water is regarded as a lifestyle item in Japan. Nepal has untouched snow clad mountains in the north which give rises to various sources of natural, pure drinking water. So, Nepal has huge potential for natural mineral water from the Himalayas.

This study examined Ayurvedic Classics in terms of various water sources and their qualities. This article also looks at natural mineral water, its possible health benefits, and how it compares to other forms of water.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The contents of the present review study were referred and gathered from Ayurveda classics like *Brihat Trayees, Laghu Trayees, Rasashastra Granthas* & various Ayurveda articles published on the topic. Besides these,

the electronic databases like Research gate, Google Scholar, Pub Med were also searched for the relevant literature published on sources of water, mineral water and their properties.

**Review Results**

On reviewing of literature related to Ayurveda classics the following observations are made:

**Antariksha Jaal** refers to "atmospheric water" or water associated with the "heavenly" or "intermediate" realm (Antariksha), often linked to rainwater or water from ethereal sources in Ayurvedic texts.<sup>3</sup>

**Hamsodak (or Hansodaka)** is a specific type of water described in Ayurvedic texts, noted for its purity and therapeutic qualities. It is defined as water that has been heated by sunlight during the day and cooled by moonlight at night, often associated with water from natural sources that undergoes this natural purification process.<sup>4</sup>

**Peya Jala Guna (Qualities of Potable water)<sup>5</sup>**

Water with no strong taste or smell that satisfies our thirst and is clean, cold, light, and mentally pleasing is considered to have the best qualities. It is appropriate for consumption.

**Sources of water and their properties in Ayurveda**

Ayurveda describes the characteristics of water based on its source. When the rain water hits the ground, it is at its purest (*Antariksh Jal*). This water takes on characteristics like cold, hot, unctuous, dry, etc. when it comes into contact with the sun, moon, air, earth, and other elements. These characteristics are described in every text. According to source, there are eight types of water in Ayurveda.<sup>6</sup>

1. *Kaup Jala* (Well water): It is salty in taste and vitiates Pitta.

2. *Sarovar Jala* (Lake water): It is sweet and easily digestible. It gives strength and keeps hydrated.
3. *Tadag Jala* (Water of pond): it is heavy to digest and vitiates *Vata Dosha*. It is sweet and astringent in taste.
4. *Chauntya* (Water collected in pits of rocks): It vitiates *Pitta Dosha*. It is sweet, dry and enhances digestion.
5. *Prastravan* (Waterfall): It is light to digest, beneficial for heart and helps to balance *Kapha Dosha*.
6. *Audbhida* (Water from natural springs): It is sweet in taste and balances *Pitta Dosha in the body*.
7. *Vapya* (Water of step well): It is pungent, salty and vitiates *Pitta Dosha*.
8. *Nadi* (River water): It enhances digestive fire. It has scrapping property and vitiates *Kapha Dosha* due to sweet taste and heavy to digest.<sup>7</sup>

**Table1: Sources of water used in different seasons.<sup>8</sup>**

Ritu(Seasons)	Sources of Water
<i>Sharad</i>	<i>SarvaJala</i>
<i>Hemantha</i>	<i>Tadaga, Saras</i>
<i>Vasantha</i>	<i>Kaup, Prastravana</i>
<i>Greeshma</i>	<i>Kaup, Prastravana</i>
<i>Varsha</i>	<i>Antariksha, Audbhid</i>
<i>Praavrit</i>	<i>Choundya</i>

**Types of Bottled Water<sup>9</sup>**

Water that is sealed in bottles or other containers and meant for human consumption is referred to as bottled water by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It has no additional ingredients, with the possible exception of safe and appropriate antimicrobial agents.

Additionally, fluoride may be added up to the FDA-established limits. The agency classifies some bottled water by its origin. Here are some of those classifications:

- 1) Artesian well water.
- 2) Mineral water.
- 3) Spring water.
- 4) Well water.
- 5) Tap Water / Public drinking water

Bottled water that has undergone reverse osmosis, distillation, or another appropriate treatment may satisfy requirements to be marketed as "purified water."

### Natural Mineral Water

Water with a minimum of 250 parts per million (ppm) of total dissolved solids (TDS), sourced from protected underground reserves via boreholes or springs, can be classified as 'mineral water.' It is differentiated from other waters by its stable mineral and trace element composition at the source, accounting for natural variations. Importantly, no additional minerals can be introduced to this water.<sup>10</sup>

### Importance of TDS values in mineral water<sup>11</sup>

Water containing inorganic salts and trace amounts of organic matter is referred to as total dissolved solute. Ions of calcium, magnesium, sodium, potassium, chloride, sulfate, carbonates, and nitrate are the main components observed. Water that contains dissolved solutes may taste different.

According to the TDS level, panels of tasters have given the drinking water's palatability the following rating: Excellent. <300 mg/dl; Good: Between 300 and 600 mg/dl; Fair: Between 600 and 900 mg/dl; Poor: Between 900 and 1200 mg/dl; Unacceptable for intake: >1,200 mg/dl. Therefore, high TDS levels

indicate that the water is unfit for human consumption because prolonged exposure to high TDS levels can lead to immune system problems, cancer, liver disease, kidney failure, nervous system disorders, and birth defects in the fetus.

### Characteristics of natural mineral waters<sup>12</sup>

Natural mineral water means "microbiologically wholesome" water but it guarantees that the primary markers of contamination—parasites and pathogenic microorganisms, *Escherichia coli* and fecal streptococci, anaerobes, and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*—are absent both at the source and throughout the marketing process.

To verify the qualities of natural mineral water, multiple aspects must be evaluated:

*Geological & Hydrological* – This involves a thorough assessment of the water source, including terrain composition, hydro-geological layer stratigraphy, and details of the extraction process.

*Physical, Chemical & Physicochemical* – A comprehensive analysis is required to determine key properties such as spring flow rate, source temperature, dry residue at 180°C, pH levels, anion and cation concentrations, trace elements, and potential toxicity of specific components.

*Microbiological* – Testing must confirm the absence of key contamination indicators to ensure safety.

*Pharmacological, Physiological & Clinical Effects* – Any potential health benefits or effects should be examined and documented.

### Classification of Drinking Mineral Water

Drinking waters are divided into various types. Natural mineral waters are distinguished by their pristine source and

consistent mineral composition. Different standards are applied to categorize them, including physicochemical tests (e.g., temperature, density, pH, radioactivity), chemical evaluations (e.g., dry residues, ozone, sulfate levels, dissolved gases), and overall properties (e.g., color, taste, clarity). Mineral waters are classified based on the total salt content, measured in grams, after evaporating one liter of water at 180°C (dry residues). Based on ion composition, mineral waters can be classified as: bicarbonate

waters, sulphate waters, sodium chloride or salt water, sulphurous waters, etc.

**Table2: Classification of natural mineral waters based on fixed residue at 180°C.<sup>13</sup>**

Fixed residue at 180°C	Definition
<50mg/L	Very low mineral content water (or light mineral water)
50-500mg/L	Low mineral content water
500-1500mg/L	Medium mineral content water
>1500mg/L	Rich mineral content water

**Table 3: Characteristics of the main natural mineral water sand their respective general therapeutic indications.**

S.N.	Type of Natural mineralwater	Contentofthe main mineral (mg/L)	Applications
1.	Bicarbonate	>600mg/L	Promotes digestion as it neutralizes gastric acid.
2.	Sulphate	>200mg/L	Lightly laxative; useful in hepato biliary diseases.
3.	Chloride	>200mg/L	Balance of intestine, bile ducts and liver; laxative effect.
4.	Calcic	>150mg/L	Suggested for adolescents, pregnant women, subjects who don't consume dairy products, elderly men; prevents osteoporosis and hypertension.
5.	Magnesiatic	>50mg/L	Promotes digestion.
6.	Fluorurate	>1mg/L	Strengthens teeth structure and prevent dental decay; helps in osteoporosis.
7.	Ferrous	>1mg/L	Suggested for anemia and iron deficiency.
8.	Sodium-Rich	>200mg/L	Suggested for intense physical activity (to replenish the salts leaked through sweating).
9.	Low-Sodium	<20mg/L	Suggested in case of hypertension.

**Diuretic Activity of mineral water**

Many studies (animal & human) have found increased diuresis in the body after the intake of natural mineral water. 12 studies from the year 1962 to 2019 have found an increase in diuresis determined according to the consumption of natural mineral water, in some cases after just one administration of the tested water. However, the quality of the studies is not so high, especially for the

research conducted many years ago.<sup>14</sup>

**Minerals in water harmful for health**

Arsenic in drinking water is a global problem. Most of it comes from natural sources, but activities like mining, burning fossil fuels, and using certain chemicals in farming and animal feed can make it worse. Some untreated mineral waters have arsenic levels as high as 0.5 mg/L, which is much

higher than the legal limit of 0.01 mg/L. This shows why it's important to treat the water to make it safer. Two inorganic forms of arsenic are usually present in natural waters: As (III) and As (V). They display different physical and chemical behavior.<sup>15</sup>

#### Other Possible Risks:

Mineral water is generally safe to drink, but people on a low-sodium diet should avoid ones with high sodium. If the water is very fizzy, it might cause bloating or stomach discomfort. People with acid reflux (GERD) should try to avoid carbonated drinks. Also, if mineral water comes from unprotected springs, it might have parasites that can cause diarrhea, stomach pain, vomiting, and fever. Mineral water in plastic bottles might contain tiny plastic particles called microplastics. These can get into our bodies and the environment. Although the full health effects aren't clear yet, some experts think microplastics may cause cell-damaging oxidative stress, hormone disruption, and cancer.<sup>16</sup>

#### DISCUSSION

In this review Study, we found that Ayurveda has extensive explanation about drinking water, its types according to the sources & their properties. *Acharya Charaka* emphasizes the importance of water as a life-giving element and classifies it based on sources. While not explicitly using the term "*Antariksha Jaal*," the text refers to rainwater as a pure form of water, which aligns with the concept of atmospheric water. *Antariksha Jaal* (rainwater) is considered cooling, light, and pure, making it suitable for drinking and therapeutic applications when collected in clean conditions. *Raj Nighantu (Aanupadi varga, Chapter 1)* mentions substances (*Dravyas*) from the *Antariksha* realm, including water (*Nabhasadravya*), which are associated with the *Aakasa Mahabhuta* (Ether element)

and lack specific *Rasas* (tastes).

Similarly, *Hansodak* is described in *Atharvaveda, Charak Samhita, Susruta Samhita*, as a pure form of water, emphasizing its use in therapeutic practices due to its balanced properties, which are neither too hot nor too cold. These waters are also ideal for rituals and medicinal preparations. Although the purest source or type of water in Ayurveda is said to be *Antarikshya Jal, Hansodak* etc. they are not easily available and limited to certain seasons only.<sup>17</sup>

A study conducted in the Dallu Awas area of Kathmandu assessed the quality of rainwater by collecting 81 samples during the rainy season from three distinct zones: residential, school, and hospital. The analysis focused on various physicochemical and microbial parameters, including turbidity, electrical conductivity (EC), pH, biogenic compounds, heavy metals (Fe, Mn, Pb, and Zn), and total coliforms. The findings indicated that the concentrations of these parameters were within the acceptable limits set by the Nepal Drinking Water Quality Standards (NDWQS) and the World Health Organization (WHO).<sup>18</sup> The study has suggested that the rainwater in this area may be used for drinking purpose following proper disinfection process, preferably chlorination. The study also states that physico-chemical and microbiological quality of rainwater are deteriorated after contact with a roof surface. So harvesting rainwater for drinking purposes require following guidelines set by WHO and regional countries for systematic collection and processing process.

Among the eight types of sources of water mentioned in *Astanga Sangraha* we can compare Natural Mineral Water with *Audbhida* type. Its properties are mentioned as sweet in taste & it is said to pacify *Pitta Dosha* in our body. Other sources of water like *Sarovar*

*Jala* (Lake Water), *Prastravan Jala* (Waterfall) are also said to be good for health but due to water pollution the water from these sources may not be drinkable nowadays. In Charak Samhita, altered characteristics of water like *Vikrut gandhavarnarasaparsa* (Abnormal smell, colour, taste and touch), etc. have been described in *Janapadodwamsa* (epidemics).<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, Ayurveda has mentioned specific source of water for drinking for specific season, it may be due to relatively purity of that source of water in their natural condition. For example, water from all the sources are good for drinking during *Sarad Ritu*, as it is one of the moderate season with less pollution in the environment. Similarly, during raining season all the sources of water becomes polluted except Rain water and Spring water so those are indicated sources for drinking purpose in that particular season.

Among different types of bottled water available in the market, natural mineral water is high in demands due to its natural taste and properties of natural mineral contents in it. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, water is only considered mineral water if it contains at least 250 parts per million (ppm) Total Dissolved Solids (TDS)- which include naturally occurring minerals. Additional mineral cannot be added in it.

Although *Acharya Susruta* has mentioned water without prominent taste as the property of *Peya Jala*. It has been proven that the presence of dissolved solutes in water may change the taste. TDS is the term used to describe the inorganic salts and small amounts of organic matter present in water. The palatability of drinking water is excellent and good if the TDS values of water are <300 mg/dl and between (300-600) mg/dl respectively. Intake of water having high TDS values is also harmful and can cause chronic diseases.

Every Natural Mineral Water (NMW) has its own identity i.e. no two NMW from two different source are identical in terms of its taste, mineral contents and other properties. So, based on the total salt content in grams after evaporation of 1-litre mineral water dried at 180qC (dry residues), NMW can be classified as: Waters with a very low mineral content, Waters low in mineral content, Waters with a medium mineral content and Strongly mineralized waters.

Based on ion composition, NMW can also be classified as: Bicarbonate waters, Calcic water, Magnesiatic water, Sulphate waters, Sodium chloride or salt water, Sulphurous waters, etc. Different macro-minerals (Calcium, Magnesium, Sodium, Potassium, Phosphorus etc.) and micro-minerals (Copper, Selenium, Iron, Manganese etc.) are generally present in NMW which has physiological and therapeutic roles in our human body.

Some brands of market water infused with gold nano particles (AuNPs) or colloidal gold having anti-aging properties, improved cognitive functions, and sells at high price. Gold nanoparticles are studied in medicine for drug delivery, imaging, and cancer therapy due to their unique properties. However, oral consumption benefits are not well-established. Most research is preclinical (lab/animal studies), and human evidence is lacking.<sup>20</sup>

Classical texts of *Rasa shastra* & *Bheshaja Kalpana* have elaborate description of such metal and minerals, their classification, purification and processing techniques, their formulations and their therapeutic uses.<sup>21</sup> *Rasashastra* texts, such as *Rasaratna Samuchchaya* and *Rasa Tarangini*, describe various types of water based on their source (e.g., rainwater, river water, well water) and their therapeutic properties. For instance, rainwater (*Divyajala*) is often

considered the purest and most suitable for medicinal preparations. *Rasashastra* and *Ayurveda* describe *Arka* (distillates) and *Kwatha* (decoctions), where water is infused with herbal or mineral essences through processes like distillation or boiling. These preparations might resemble mineral water in their enhanced therapeutic properties. For example, *Shankha Dravaka* (a preparation involving conch shell) or other mineral-based liquids could be seen as specialized forms of water with added mineral content.

Besides, the positive results of mineral contents in NMW some minerals like Arsenic if present in it more than the acceptable limit ( $\leq 0.01\text{mg/l}$ ) can be toxic to our body. Different body types have different requirements in body. So, the mineral water may not be suitable for some people (E.g. Hypertensive).

Also, the purity of NMW depends upon its natural, pure sources. By any means if the source becomes contaminated, the water can have bad effects. Mostly NMW are packed in plastic bottles unlike few brands which packs it in glass bottles, the risks of microplastic intake is equally present in drinking NMW.

Our country Nepal has highest mountainous regions on earth and it bears pure, untouched perennial sources of natural drinking water. Nepal has more than 3 thousand glaciers.<sup>22</sup> So, we have huge potential of developing NMW plants across our country.

## CONCLUSION

Water is considered as life of every living being. The major findings of the present review study are that Ayurveda has elaborate description of types, properties and therapeutic roles of different types of water. Among different sources of water we focused our study on Natural Mineral Water due to its purity, additional health benefits,

growing global market demands and potential for development in our country Nepal. From both classical and modern review we can conclude that NMW is the future of drinking water for the humankind. Although there are few experimental evidences further clinical researches should be conducted in order to certificate the physiological effects and benefits of Natural Mineral Water on human health.

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