The Power of Pomegranate –

from Sutra to Science

With Vaidya Mishra and Dr Teitelbaum

… from Sutra

with Vaidya Mishra

There is a very famous saying in India: "ek anar saw bimar!" which translates into: "1 pomegranate for a100 diseases." In indian culture, the pomegranate fruit has been prized as a balancing tridoshic healthy fruit since times immemorial. Bhav Prakash says:

कषायानुरसं ग्राहि स्निग्धं मेधाबलावहम्॥१०३॥

भावप्रकाश निघण्टुः

kaṣāyānurasaṁ grāhi snigdhaṁ medhābalāvaham||103||

bhāvaprakāśa nighaṇṭuḥ

"Pomegranate tastes astringent, is mild to drink and increases intellect and strength."
The sweet, not sour, variety is particularly in high demand – the sour variety can cause minor pitta dosha aggravation, even though it

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can still be beneficial as the sutra below indicates:

स्वाद्वम्लं दीपनं रुच्यं किञ्चित्पित्तकरं लघु।
अम्लन्तु पित्तजनकमामं वातकफापहम्॥१०४॥

भावप्रकाश निघण्टुः

svādvamlaṁ dīpanaṁ rucyaṁ kiñcitpittakaraṁ laghu|
amlantu pittajanakamāmaṁ vātakaphāpaham||104||
bhāvaprakāśa nighaṇṭuḥ

This verse says: "some pomegranates taste a bit sour, hence they increase appetite and taste, causing some pitta dosha aggravation. However, even then, they are beneficial for rheumatic and cough affected persons."

In general, the pomegranate fruit is known to have a very unique combination of various healing and balancing properties that rarely occur together, as the sutra also indicates:

तत्तु स्वादु त्रिदोषघ्नं तृड्दाहज्वरनाशनम्।
हृत्कण्ठमुखगन्धघ्नं तर्पणं शुक्रलं लघु॥१०२॥

भावप्रकाश निघण्टुः

tattu svādu tridooṣaghnaṁ tṛḍdāhajvaranāśanam|
hṛtkaṇṭhamukhagandhaghnaṁ tarpaṇaṁ śukralaṁ laghu||102||
bhāvaprakāśa nighaṇṭuḥ

"Pomegranate tastes sweet in the beginning, leaving a slight astringent taste at the end. It is *tridoshic* (balances all three humors of body-vata, pitta and kapha); quenches thirst; helps reduce "fire" in the abdomen; and eliminates fever. It also gives strength to the

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heart and helps cure ailments of the throat; it removes bad breath; it cools and hydrates; nurtures the reproductive tissue; and gives the body a general sense of lightness [because it enhances circulation]."
These are just a few of the pomegranate's many healing properties; however, it is probably most prized in the SVA lineage for its "grahi prabhava." Remember that "prabhava" means the ultimate, most subtle, vibrational effect any food item has on the physiology, and "grahi" means absorption. A "dravya" or food item with a "grahi prabhava" means it will help you absorb and get the most out of any food you are consuming. In general, "grahi" or absorbing fruits or herbs tend to carry warm or hot properties - because you need more "agni" or metabolic fire to absorb more. So, in general, a food that has a higher index of "grahi prabhava" will be more "agneya" or "fiery," in general, by definition. When a food item is more "agneya," it means it can increase "pachak agni" (digestive fire), the "bhutagni" (5 metabolic/digestive fires of the liver), or even the "bhrajak agni" (metabolic principle of the skin). But unlike what we would expect, pomegranate is "grahi" yet cooling at the same time. In this sense, it is a great fruit to be consumed by "high pitta low agni" individuals – that is individuals who have high stomach acidity but low digestive enzymes and metabolism.

As a rule, the pomegranate fruit pacifies and balances "pachak pitta" (stomach metabolism), "ranjak pitta" (the heat in the blood), "alochak pitta" (the fire in the eyes), "bhrajak pitta" (the metabolic functions in the skin), and last but not least, "sadhak pitta" or the pitta that manages the emotional heart. All in all, it is a great balancing remedy for all 5 pittas, and high pitta individuals.

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If we delve a little further, we see that Ayurveda discusses the benefits of pomegranates beyond their physical, nutritional, and dietary content details. This is what goes on in your body, ayurvedically speaking, after you consume pomegranates.

Due to its non-heating "grahi prabhava" or after-effect, particularly in the colon, pomegranate prevents a person from making "ama" (toxins) in the "rasa dhatu" or the clear part of plasma – the first tissue that gets formed after you eat food. Ama in the rasa dhatu

clogs the lymphatic system. Many individuals' problems lie right here, in that they make toxins of their food, no matter how healthy the food they are consuming, because they just don't have enough "rasa dhatu agni." And we know by now that "rasa dhatu" is the raw material for all ensuing "dhatu"-s or tissues in the body. So, in this sense, if "rasa dhatu" produces zero or no "ama" or toxic build-up, then we will not have toxins or "ama" or "amavisha" build-up in "rakta dhatu" (blood tissue) either. "Rakta" or the blood carries a lot of active "pranic" energy, so when it is free from toxins, then organs such as the lungs and kidneys also receive ama-free or amavisha-free healthy blood. In this sense, if an individual is experiencing some issues in their lungs for example, pomegranate is of great help as it supports the flow of clean healthy blood to the lungs by keeping "rasa dhatu" free from toxins.

But there's more: when you consume pomegranate and it helps burn down the ama from your rasa dhatu, and helps produce better cleaner blood for rakta dhatu, then the heart, as well as the entire cardiovascular system, also receive fully pranic fresh blood and get

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nourished. Then, ama or toxin-free micro-circulatory channels (srota-s) enhance coordination between heart and mind. Pomegranate, overall, enhances oxygenation to the brain and the body, enhancing circulation of nutrients, energy, heat, and more. Scientific research also confirms what ayurvedic knowledge claims, as it acknowledges that pomegranates are good for heart health and the mind.

SVA practitioners know to use pomegranate in many forms and ways (chutney, juice, cooked in the meal) to help support "apana agni" or the digestive metabolic fire in the colon area, to enhance absorption of nutrients. Pomegranates come back into season at the end of summer beginning of Fall, when pitta may still be high in your physiology from the summer heat, causing some Vata disturbances that naturally occur due to the cooler temperatures. Pomegranate will help keep Vata in balance, by cooling off the excess heat in your body, and in any of your pitta sub-doshas. Make sure to consume some pomegranate in your daily diet seasonally, as Mother Nature makes this superfood available to us just at the right time!

Contraindication:

If you tend to have slower bowel movement, or tend to be constipated, you may want to limit your consumption of pomegranate, or replace it with amla berry – SVA Wild Amla, or Amalaki Rasayana, or Nectar drops, or Tamarind and Amla preserve, etc. As pomegranate enhances absorption, it may constipate an individual who already has that tendency.

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Pomegranate Chutney … from Vaidya's upcoming cookbook…

Now that we know a little about pomegranate, you can guess that this is not just a tasty sweet and sour chutney with zing in it, but is excellent for helping with problems of digestion, elimination, gas, stomach acid and/or overheating. It is also very nourishing, especially for the physical and emotional heart.

Ingredients:

2 tbsp cumin seeds, ground
Seeds separated from 7-10 large black cardamom pods, ground (if you can't find black cardamom, then use green pods, take out the seeds and grind into powder)
2 tbsp Soma Salt

¼ tbsp black peppercorns (or just use ground black pepper)
8 tbsp fresh pomegranate seeds in season or dried seeds if seasonally unavailable
1/8 to ¼ tsp lime juice
2-5 tsp raw sugar

Steps:

Grind the cumin seeds in a spice grinder and set aside
Grind the black peppercorns and mix in with the soma salt and set aside

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Grind the cardamom seeds and set aside
Grind the pomegranate seeds in a food processor and set aside
If you are using fresh seeds and if desired, use the strainer and a spoon to separate pits from the pomegranate juice then return the juice to the processor
Add salt and ground pepper to the processor containing juice and process until well mixed
Add ground cumin and process until well mixed
Add ground cardamom and process until well mixed
Add lime juice and mix
Add 3 tbsp sugar and mix
Adjust sugar to taste and mix again and you are done!
For serving use 1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon per person. If you made the chutney from dry seeds, add enough water to make a thick paste.

to science…

with Dr Teitelbaum

In the Fall, pomegranates should be part of your dietary intake as cold/flu prevention. They are only in season from October through February, so take advantage of this Superfood while you can.

Here are 18 health benefits pomegranates have:

1. Pomegranates, like red grapes, are high in resveratrol and rich in anthocyanins, like blueberries and acai. Anthocyanins **protect against inflammation**, which triggers cancer, heart disease and aging of the brain. Pomegranates also **support**

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healthy lipid levels and resistance to infection through suppressing bacterial and fungal growth.

2. **Anti-aging effects**: pomegranates contain plentiful amounts of antioxidants. They rate high on the US Dept. of Agriculture's ORAC scale (Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity) – a measure of how well free radicals are absorbed.
3. **Kidney protection**: New research just published in the journal Renal Failure showed that pomegranates prevent kidney damage and protects the kidneys against harmful toxins.
4. **Liver protection and regeneration**: More new research published in the Journal Toxicology and Industrial Health showed that pomegranate juice not only protects the liver, it helps it to regenerate after it has been damaged.
5. **Immune-boosting**: Pomegranates and pomegranate juice are packed with immune-boosting Vitamin C – an essential and quickly depleted nutrient at this time of the year.
6. **Anti-allergic**: pomegranates are high in substances called polyphenols which have been shown to reduce the biochemical processes that are linked with allergies.
7. **Protects against heart disease**: New research published in the journal Atherosclerosis shows that pomegranate improves the body's ability to synthesize cholesterol and destroy free radicals in the vascular system.
8. **Prostate cancer protection**: Research conducted at the University of California, Riverside and published in the journal Translational oncology indicates that pomegranate juice caused cancer cell death.

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9. **Breast Cancer protection**: Scientists at the University of California, Riverside, also studied the effects of pomegranate juice and its nutritional components: luteolin, ellagic acid, and punicic acid against breast cancer. They published their results in the journal Breast Cancer Research and Treatment and concluded that pomegranate juice is "potentially a very effective treatment to prevent cancer progression…"
10. **Skin Cancer protection**: Consumption of pomegranate juice was associated with a decrease in both main types of skin cancer – basal cell and squamous cell carcinoma, according to new research in the British Journal of Dermatology.
11. **DNA protection**: New research shows that ellagic acid, a phyto (plant) chemical found in pomegranates, binds to the DNA and prevents its breakdown from environmental free radicals. Ellagic acid also supports the body in fighting viral, fungal, yeast and bacterial infections. Ellagic acid prevents the replication of viruses and bacteria in our cells. It can also cause cancer cell death (it stimulates a process known as apoptosis that causes abnormal cells (such as cancer cells) to self-destruct. It also inhibits development of estrogen responsive breast cancer.
12. **Blood pressure normalizing**: Early research published in the journal Plant Foods for Human Nutrition found that pomegranate juice may help prevent high blood pressure by preventing stiffness in the arteries, which occurs with free radical damage over time. The more stiff the arteries get, the higher the blood pressure gets.
13. **Metabolic syndrome regulating**: Research published in the journal Food and Function shows that pomegranate helps

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regulate blood sugar, improves the body's sensitivity to insulin, decreases inflammation, and improves numerous other factors involved in metabolic syndrome – frequently implicated in obesity and often a precursor to diabetes.

14. **Anti-infectious**: New research published in the journal Food and Chemical Toxicology found that pomegranates increased the effectiveness of a drug used against gram-negative bacteria. Many gram-negative bacteria are known for drug-resistance.
15. **Blood pressure lowering**: Researchers at Queen Margaret University in Edinburg, Scotland found that drinking pomegranate juice lowered blood pressure "significantly" in 90 percent of the group studied.
16. **Boosts sexual desire**: Researchers from Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh tested 58 volunteers between the ages of 21 and 64. Men and women drank a daily glass of pomegranate juice for two weeks and experienced a surge in the hormone testosterone, which increases sexual desire in both genders. It also boosted female adrenal gland and ovarian function, raising a woman's sex drive and strengthening bones and muscles. It also raised mood and memory.
17. Pomegranate juice is high in 3 different types of polyphenols, a potent form of **antioxidants**. The three types – tannins, anthocyanins, and ellagic acid – are present in many fruits, but fresh pomegranate juice contains particularly high amounts of all three. They are also high in potassium, vitamin C and low in calories.
18. Researchers from the Probelte Bio Laboratory in Spain have found that pomegranate juice **slows down the natural**

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oxidation (wear and tear) of DNA. The destruction of the ageing DNA was unknown to scientists until this study was conducted and researchers say they are, "excited about this study." We get old because we fall apart, cell by cell. "One way to look at ageing is to think of it as rusting or oxidizing, a damaging process. The free radicals that oxidize our body's molecules include fats, heavy metals and numerous other chemical compounds we breathe, eat and drink. If these free radicals reach the DNA of our cells, the damage is cumulative and significant. Being able to guard against this process would be a significant breakthrough," Dr. Streitenberger (one of the authors of this study) noted.

As you can see, pomegranates are one of the healthiest foods you can eat!

The best news of all is this: you can juice your own pomegranates, which insures no heat or electricity was used, which can damage the delicate nutrients. Also, it will be freshly pressed – as the juice sits on the shelves it loses its pranic energy and nutritional value each day.

You can find several pomegranate presses online. Go to Amazon.com and search for "pomegranate presses". Look for the one, about $125.00, that is stainless steel and presses manually by hand. (It is one of the first juicers that comes up when you do a search). You'll notice a definite difference in taste and will feel great after only a couple of days of juicing.

Stay healthy this winter by enjoying your pomegranates while they are in season!

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