

A Systemic Review on *Ghrita* (Ghee): Myths V/S Facts

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda advised herbal remedies for treatment and prevention of diseases. In *Ayurveda* four type of *sneha* and their qualities are detailed described. *Ghrita* is one of them. But according to modern dietetic science *ghrita* (ghee) is considered as fat increasing substances and avoid to taken in some diseases like DM, obesity, cardiac disease etc. Many *Aacharya* described many types of medicated ghee to cure many diseases. On the other hand many researches of modern science shows that these fatty items increase many diseases risk like cardiac disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, stroke etc. So this article is an attempt to enclose that what is fact and what is myths about ghee.

Material and Method: For this article search over various search engine like PubMed, Google scholar was done. Relevant article and various books and *samhita* also searched.

KEYWORDS: *Ghee, Ayurveda, Myths, modern science*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is oldest life science and *Ayurveda* principle also uses as household remedies. In *Ayurveda* most of drugs given in the form of medicated *sneha* to enhance the absorption of drugs. Four types of *mahasneha* (*Ghrita, taila, vasa* and *majja*) and their combined qualities described by *Aacharya charak* in *sutra sthana*¹. These four *sneha* used in many diseases in many forms. Many *Aacharya* described many types of medicated ghee to cure many diseases. On the other hand many researches of modern science shows that these fatty items increase many diseases risk like cardiac disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, stroke etc. So this article is an attempt to enclose that what is fact and what is myths about ghee.

Ghrita (ghee) has been used for more than 5000 years in dietary items. Apart from this *Aacharya charak* described *ghrita* as *uttam sneha* and many health benefits of it². The *chaturvidha sneha* (*Ghrita, taila, vasa* and *majja*) are *jeevaniya* (imparts vitality), *varnya* (enhance complexion) and it increases *bala* (stamina/strength). They pacify *vata, pitta* and *kapha*³. These four *sneha* is used in four forms according to *Aacharya charak*⁴ as

1. *Pana*- oral intake
2. *Abhayanga*- external application
3. *Basti*- enemas
4. *Nasya*- nasal instillation

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According to *Aacharya sushruta*⁵ and *Aacharya vagbhatta*⁶ described above forms and some other form of uses *sneha* like-

- *mastika*-applied on head
- *uttar basti*- per urethra instillation of medicine
- *karnapoorana*- ear lubricants
- *bhojana*-along with meals
- *gandusha*-gargling
- *akshi tarpana*-medicated *sneha* in eyes

The usage of *sneha* are broadly in two category, they are-

1. Internal usage
2. External application

GHRITA (GHEE):

In *Rigveda* there are description of *ghrita* used as a method of providing nutrition along with a capacity of kindle the digestive power. In *Atharva Veda* there is immense literature on *ghrita*.

In *Ayurveda* classics *ghrita* is considered as *Jangama dravya*⁷ (obtained from animal kingdom-cow, buffalo, goat etc.). Among those *Ayurveda* consider *Gau ghrita* (cow's ghee) is best and choice for both food and medicinal purpose. *Ghrita* contains a specific *guna 'sanskarsaya anuvartana'* that means it carries the property of other drugs which are added during the *paka* of *sneha* without losing its own property.

Properties of Ghrita:

According to *Aacharya Charak*⁸ *ghrita* increases *smriti* (memory), *buddhi* (intellect), *Agni* (digestive capacity), *sukra* (vigour), *oja* (vitality), it increases *kapha* and *meda*. It pacifies *vata*, *pitta*, *visha* (poison), *unmada* (psychiatric disorder), *shosha* (depletion), *alakshmi* and *Jwara* (fever).

Rasa Panchak- *Rasa-Madhura* (sweet)
Guna-sheeta (cold)
Veerya-sheeta
Vipaka-Madhur

Aacharya charak used the word for *ghrita* is 'Sahastrakarmakrita' (doing hundred work)

According to *Aacharya Sushruta*⁹ *ghrita* is *saumya* (non-irritant), *mridu* (imparts softness), and *alpa abhishyandi* (does not block channels). It is used in treatment of *udavarta*, *unmada*, *apsmara*, *shoola* and abdominal pain.

According to *Aacharya Vagbhatta*¹⁰ *ghrita* enhances *Dhi*, *samriti*, *medha*, *agni*, *bala*, *ayu*, *sukra* and *chakshu* (vision). It enhances *praja* (offspring), *kanti* (lusture). It is beneficial for individual for individual suffering from injury, depletion, burn, fever.

According to *Kashyapa samhita*¹¹ *ghrita* pacifies *pitta*, *vata* disorder but does not vitiate *kapha* disorder, enhances *bala*, *Agni*, *medha*.

Indication of *Ghrita*^{12, 13, 14, 15}- *Ghrita* is *vata-pitta prakriti*, burns, trauma, poisoning, injury, weakness.

Ghrita administration according to *Dosha*^{16, 17}: *Ghrita* can be administered in all individual in all condition. Various *ghrita* combination are described for the three *doshas* they are –

1. *Pitta dosha*- only *ghrita*
2. *Vata dosha*- *ghrita*+ *sandhav lavan*
3. *Kapha dosha*- *ghrita*+*Vyosha* (*shunthi*+*maricha*+*pippalli*)

Composition of Ghrita¹⁸:

100gm of *Ghrita* contains 99.48 g total fat, 61.924 g of saturated fat, 256mg cholesterol,

3069 IU of Vitamin A, 4mg calcium and small quantity of other vitamins and minerals. It is a rapid source of energy compared to other oils because it contains short chain fatty acid which are readily absorbed and metabolized.

But many researches prove that the composition of *ghrita* varies to the method of preparations. And study shows that commercially produced *ghrita* contains more saturated fatty acid other than traditionally produced *ghrita*.

Ghrita as controversial Lipid:

Ghrita is comes under lipid, which is essential for living organism along with carbohydrate, proteins and nucleic acid.

Lipids are a type of carbon containing organic compound are classified into saturated fatty acids (SFAs) and unsaturated fatty acids (UFAs). UFAs is further classified as monosaturated UFAs and polysaturated UFAs¹⁹.

Plant based oils are rich in UFAs and animal products are rich in SFAs. So animal products contains SFAs like acetic acid, propionic acid, butyric acid²⁰. Many researches and article have shown that CVDs, Atherosclerosis like diseases at high risk due to consumption of SFAs. *Ghrita* contains butyric acid approx.2-5% has a role in improving insulin sensitivity, increase energy and shows anti-inflammatory action. A number of studies proved that *Ghrita* Prepared by traditional method contains higher amount of docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and omega-3 PFA (polysaturated fatty acid) and DHA contributes to reduce risk of diseases like heart attack, cancer and arthritis²¹

Discussion:

Ghrita is used in either in pure form or mixed with food items or medicated ghee. *Aacharya Charak* describe many type of medicated ghee in many *vata-pittaja* diseases like *kustha*, *kasa-shwasa* etc²². These properties of *ghrita* due to saturated fatty acids, cholesterol, omega-3 fatty acid and omega-6 fatty acid, different vitamins. In Ayurveda classics eight types of *ghrita* are described. In which ewe milk is unhealthy for heart so it should avoidable. Researches on medicated ghee also shows positive result in every condition.

Conclusion:

According to *Ayurveda* classics *ghrita* is an important content of food and *Chikitsa*. Previous researches and data support that moderate consumption do not show any side effect on population. Many researches shows many beneficial property of *ghrita*. So it shows that practice of moderate quantity of *ghrita* is beneficial for health maintenance.

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