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# Critical analysis of *Goghrita* (cow ghee) and its action on *Rasa Dhatu*

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## ABSTRACT

*Ahara* (food) plays an important role in our daily life. Food provides various health benefits. Ghee is one such *Snigdha Ahara Dravya* which is considered to be an integral part of the human diet in India since ages. Amount of consumption of ghee varies according to region, and individuals. The nutritious and therapeutic value in ghee is good. Every food item we consume encounters with *Agni* and results in the formation of *Ahara Rasa* and thus *Rasa Dhatu*. Even the ghee consumed will be making an entry in to the *Rasa Dhatu* thus circulating all over the body. *Rasa* which is considered as the *Aadya Dhatu* continuously circulates and forms the *Aadhara* for nourishment of consecutive *Shad Dhatus*.

**Key words:** *Ahara, Agni, Ahara Rasa, Goghrita, Rasa Dhatu, Sneha.*

## INTRODUCTION

Every man aspires to live healthy and as long as possible. Ayurveda the science of life too has the same aim. *Ahara* (food), *Nidra* (sleep) and *Bramhacharya* (celibacy) are the three pivotal pillars to maintain a healthy life. Ayurveda explains that *Ahara* (food) plays an important role in our daily life. Among the *Ahara* (food) *Sneha* (unctuous substance) is considered as *Rasāyana* (rejuvenating) which means the intake of *Sneha* (unctuous substance) like *Ghrita* (cow ghee) rejuvenates the body and promotes longevity.

### Nirukti

The word *Ghrita* (cow ghee) is derived from “*Ghriti*

*Ghriyate Ghri Seke Anjighrisibhyah Ktah*”<sup>[1]</sup>

*Ghrita Nishpatti* - *Ghrita* (cow ghee) is used in the meaning of ‘extracted from milk.’

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The article is based on the literary evidences of *Sneha* (unctuous substance), *Ghrita* (cow ghee), *Sneha Paka* (digestion of unctuous substance) and its effect on the *Dhatus* (major structural components of the body) as explained in the classical texts of Ayurveda.

## METHODOLOGY

A detailed systematized analysis of the *Ahara Paka*, the effect of different kinds of *Agni* on the *Ahara* (food), the fate of *Sneha Dravya* (unctuous substance used for therapeutic purpose or health benefits) specifically - *Ghrita* (cow ghee) after its digestion reaching the *Rasa Dhatu* was done.

## RESULTS

- With the increase in *Agni*, (*Deeptaagni*) (digestive fire), *Paka Prakriya* (process of digestion) happens properly this may stimulate the production of HDL molecules in other than primary site, (liver) such as epithelial cells of intestine.

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- With the increase in HDL molecules it may increase the transport of cholesterol from tissues to the liver for metabolism which is a beneficial effect.

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Ghrita (cow ghee) is said to be the best among all the Jangama Snehās because it is having a special property of adaptability, i.e., ‘Samskārasyānuvartanam’.

#### Qualities of Goghrita (cow ghee)<sup>[2]</sup>

- Rasa : Madhura (sweet)
- Veerya : Sheeta (cold)
- Vipāka : Madhura (sweet)
- Guna : Snigdha (unctuousness), Sheeta (cold), Guru (heavy), Mridu (soft), Sowmya (soft by nature), Sūkshma (minute), Anabhishtyandi (which does not cause obstruction of channels), Alpābhishtyandi (which mildly may cause obstruction of channels)
- Doshaghnata : Vāta Pitta Shāmaka (decreases Vata and Pitta), Kaphakara (increases Kapha)
- Bhoutika Sanghatana : Dominated by Prithvi (earth element) and Ap (water element).
- Chemical composition: 100% animal fat.

Among all types of Ghrita (ghee), Goghrita (cow ghee) is said to be the best. Goghrita (cow ghee) acts as Rasa Vardhaka (increases Rasa) and also increases other components of the body such as, Shukra (semen), Ojas (essence of all Dhatus) etc.

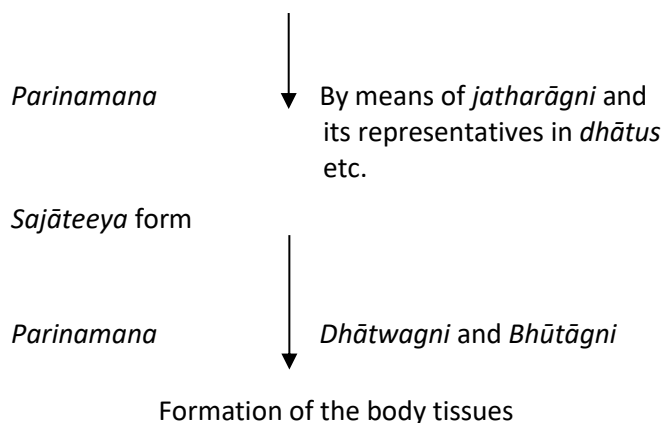
#### Sneha Paripāka – According to Ayurveda

The knowledge of digestion and assimilation of Sneha Dravyas (unctuous substance used for therapeutic purpose or health benefits) is very important. But in Ayurveda, the Pāka Krama of Sneha (digestion of unctuous substance) is not vividly explained by Āchāryas. Hence, no clear references are available about the digestion of Sneha Dravyas (unctuous substance used for therapeutic purpose or health benefits). However, the process of Sneha (unctuous substance) digestion can be studied on the basis of Sneha Jeeryamāna (features seen during the digestion

of ghee) and Jeerna Lakshanās (features seen after the digestion of ghee).

To understand the digestion process of Snehās (unctuous substance) reference has to be taken from the process as described by Charaka.<sup>[3]</sup> Any food item cannot be assimilated without proper elementary level digestion. This process is to be performed by three types of Agnis, viz Jatharāgni (digestive fire at the level of stomach), Dhātwaḥni (digestive fire at the level of tissues) and Bhūtāgni (digestive fire at the level of 5 basic elements).

In nut shell – The food, i.e., Vijāteeya form



Agni digests the four types of Ahara<sup>[4]</sup> (food) and provides energy for sustaining life. It protects body from wear and tear. Hence Agni performs both the functions of digestion and metabolism.

#### Role of Jatharāgni on Sneha Paripāka

Jatharāgni is the leader of all factors concerned with digestion and metabolism in the body. The activities of all the normal and abnormal factors are dependent upon an increase or decrease of it.<sup>[5]</sup>

According to Charaka, the food which has reached the Āmāshaya (stomach and small intestine as Urdhwa and Adho Amashaya) after undergoing digestion is absorbed and distributed to all Āshayās in the body through Dhamanies.<sup>[6]</sup>

Here the term Dhamani literally means the channels of internal transport. Absorbed food is transported through small Srotases of intestine which proceeds to Yakrit, from where it is transported to the Hridaya and

it is distributed to all parts of the body through circulation.

#### Role of *Bhūtāgni* on *Sneha Paripaka*

According to Ayurveda, *Bhūtāgnipāka* follows *Jatharāgni Pāka*. Digestion of food by *Jatharāgni* leads to the *Sanghāta Bheda* or breakdown of the former into five distinct physiochemical groups viz *Pārthiva*, *Āpya*, *Tejasa*, *Vāyaviya*, *Nābhasa*. The *Agni Amsha* present in the substances belonging to each group is then said to digest the substance of that group leading to a radical change in their qualities- *Vailakshanya Guna*.<sup>[7]</sup> Thus, food substances are rendered fit for being assimilated into the corresponding *Bhoutika Shareera Dravya*.

According to Sushruta, the food which consists of five *Mahābhūtas* is digested in its turn by the *Bhūtāgni* and each of its principles proceeds to augment its own analogue in the human organism.<sup>[8]</sup> According to some the reactions comparable to *Bhūtāgni Pāka* takes place in *Yakrit* (liver) and not in *Āmāshaya* (stomach) which drives the support to the post digestive functions and metabolic events in liver as per modern physiology and biochemistry.

Proceeding on the basis of Ayurvedic principle that the general (similar) or *Sāmānya* classifies and the particular (dissimilar) or *Visheshā* differentiates,<sup>[9]</sup> a *Pārthiva* substance can alone contribute to an increase of *Pārthiva* constituent of the body. *Sneha* (unctuous substance) is said to be *Āpya* substance. So, it increases the *Āpya* constituent in the body. According to *Vāgbhata*, *Sāra - Kitta Vibhajana* takes place after the completion of *Bhūtāgni Pāka*.

#### Role of *Dhātagnis* on *Sneha Paripaka*

The specific *Agni* corresponding to each *Dhātu* is called as *Dhātagnis*. *Dhātagnipāka* is stated to metabolize the products of *Bhūtāgni Pāka*. *Rasāgni* is stated to aid in the structural synthesis of several constituents of *Rasa Dhātu*. Likewise the formation of the constituents of *Rakta Dhātu* is catalysed by *Raktāgni* and similarly in cases of *Māmsa* (muscle tissue), *Meda* etc. The nutrients that support the body are subjected to *Pāka* again, acted upon by the seven *Dhātagnis*,

leading to the formation of *Dhātus* through their respective *Srotases*.<sup>[10]</sup>

The substances produced in these reactions are known as *Asthāyi* or *Poshaka Dhātus*.<sup>[11]</sup> *Dhātagnipāka* is said to have two aspects;

- Prasāda Pāka* and
- Kitta*

The end products of *Prasāda Pāka* are utilized for the nourishment of *Dhātus*, whereas, those of *Kitta* provide the materials for the formation of various kinds of excretions such as *Sweda* (sweat), *Mūtra* (urine), *Pureesha* (feces), *Vāta*, *Kapha*, *Karna-Nāsa-Āsya-Romakūpa Malas* (waste products in different orifices like ear, eyes) etc.<sup>[12]</sup>

The *Prasāda* (nutrient) fraction is transported by *Rasa* → *Rakta* (blood) – and so on to the next *Dhātus* (major structural components of the body).

The final synthesis of *Asthāyi Dhātus* (tissue elements not fully formed and attained compactness) into *Sthāyi Dhātus* (tissue elements that have fully formed and attained compactness) takes place in *Dhātu* themselves by the help of *Dhātagnis*.

In Ayurveda, mode of digestion has also been agreed for where sequential digestion process may not take place. Many drugs may directly reach to the deeper *Dhātus*. Such drugs include *Vrishya Yogas* (drugs used for aphrodisiac purpose).

#### Applied study of *Agni* on *Sneha*

It can be said that while *Sneha* (unctuous substance) is taken internally, it changes in each stage of digestion. The *Sneha* (unctuous substance) after *Pāchana* (digestion) goes through the same chain which is explained as *Dhātagnis* and *Bhūtāgni Vyāpāra*. The *Sneha Pāchana* (digestion of unctuous substance) requires the assimilation in the *Dhātus* – where the *Sneha* (unctuous substance) has to perform the functions according to its characteristics.

*Ghrita* (cow ghee) is one of the *Ahara Dravya* (food substance). So according to “*Rasapradhānam Āhāradravyam, Veerya Pradhānam Oushadham*” (food substances are predominantly having tastes and

therapeutic medicines are having potency in predominance), it will follow the same path of assimilation and will go from *Dhātu* to *Dhātu*<sup>[13]</sup> but exception exists in following two cases;

- 1) If it is imposed with some other medicinal properties, i.e., *Siddha* or *Samskārita Sneha Kalpana* (processed or treated with drugs), it will be diverted to the destination accomplished to the specific *Veerya - Kārmukata* (action based on potency) of the drugs.
- 2) If *Sneha Poshakāmsa* (substances which are similar in nature to unctuous substances) are more than the threshold in *Rasa Dhātu*, this extra quantity will directly reach to the deeper *Dhātus* like *Meda, Majja* etc.<sup>[14]</sup>

In case of *Brimhana Sneha* (unctuous substance administered for the purpose of enhancement of body tissues), *Khale Kapota Nyāya* (theory of selective absorption) is more suitable because here the *Dhātus* pick up only its *Poshaka Bhāga*. *Dhātus* are *Poshya* (nourish able) and *Poshaka* (nourished) is the site of action rendered to *Sneha* (unctuous substance). The *Poshaka Dhātu* in *Srotas* (channels) when acted upon by respective *Dhātagni* and *Bhūtāgni* will play supportive or nutritive role for *Poshya Dhātu*.

#### Necessity of Sneha digestion

*Sneha Dravyas* (unctuous substance used for therapeutic purpose or health benefits) are not present in the nature of body elements, i.e., it is *Vijāteeya*. These are to be converted into the structure of the body and made suitable for assimilation, i.e., *Sajāteeya*. By the digestion of *Sneha* (unctuous substance) it becomes *Sajāteeya* by the action of *Agni*, which is later absorbed into the body structures which modify the *Sneha* according to their necessity for their build up and function.

*Anupāna* (after drink) also influences the digestion of *Sneha* (unctuous substance), warm water is used in case of *Ghrita* (cow ghee) which is *Sheeta Veerya* to make it quickly dispersible. Thus, *Anupāna* plays an important role by its virtues.<sup>[15]</sup>

The ingested *Sneha* after internally getting absorbed in the body will increase *Snigdha Guna* (unctuousness) Seven *Dhātus*, in which *Snigdha Guna* (unctuousness) is a co-existent factor, it will become strong and grow rapidly due to the additional *Sneha Guna* (unctuous property) of the *Sneha Dravya* (unctuous substance used for therapeutic purpose or health benefits) used. However, it should be noted that there is a threshold of assimilation of *Sneha* in the body.

The mode of consuming *Sneha* (unctuous substance) has an important role in rendering *Snehana*. Thus, *Prakshepa* (admixture), *Anupāna* (after drink), *Sevana Karma* (process of consumption), etc. also play an important role in influencing the action of *Sneha Dravya* (unctuous substance used for therapeutic purpose or health benefits).

Any *Dravya* (substance) possess *Guna* (properties) which can be understood as physical/chemical property and an effect which can be either a general action or therapeutic action. *Goghrita* (cow ghee) having the *Guna* such as *Snigdha* (unctuousness), *Sara* (fluid), *Mridu* (soft), *Drava* (liquid), *Shlakshana* (smooth), *Sheeta* (cold) and *Agneyatwa* (capacity to increase digestive fire) on interaction with the *Doshas* (body humours) and *Dhatus* (major structural components of the body) results in therapeutic actions like *Vata Pitta Hara* (decreases *Vata* and *Pitta*), *Brimhana* (nourishing for body elements), *Pushti* (nutrition), *Balya* (strengthening), *Rasavardhaka* (increases *Rasa*), *Shukravardhaka* (increases semen), *Agnivardhana* (increases digestive fire), *Hladana* (refreshing), *Ropana* (healing property), *Varnya* (which increases colour and complexion) etc. However, it is significant to note that the above therapeutic effects are predominantly favourable in nourishing the *Rasa Dhatu* as all the above therapeutic effects are conducive to *Rasa Dhatu*.

#### Further scope of study

An interventional study can be done by administering *Goghrita* (cow ghee) to one group of people and not administering to another group and comparison in the lipid profile parameters can be done to evaluate the actual effect of *Goghrita* (cow ghee).

**CONCLUSION**

Formation of *Dhatu* is the resultant of sustenance and nourishment of body from only *Sara Bhaga* of *Ahararasa*. Food has to undergo digestion by *Pachakagni*, then *Dhatwagni* (along with *Bhutagni*). Once after completion of *Paka Prakriya* the *Sarabhaga* of *Ahara* will be utilized for *Dhatu* formation after the action of *Dhatwagni*. *Dhatu*s (major structural components of the body) become the medium through which all the functions of living body take place. So, considering the *Guna* (property), *Karma* (function) and *Panchabhoutikatwa* of *Ghrita* (5 basic elemental properties of cow ghee) the critical analysis done on the concept of the effect of *Goghrita* (cow ghee) on *Rasa Dhatu* & in turn on *Medamsha* (lipid component) is found beneficial.

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