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IMPORTANCE OF GHRITA AS A SNEHA IN AAHAR W.S.R. TO SNIGDHAM ASHNIYAT

Vd. Satyam Mahale[1]*, Vd. Manoj Jagtap[2]

[1]PG Scholar, Department of Rachana Shareer, YMT Ayurvedic Medical College.

[2]Professor & HOD, Department of Rachana Shareer, YMT Ayurvedic Medical College.

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***Corresponding Author**

Vd. Satyam Mahale

PG Scholar, Department of Rachana Shareer, YMT Ayurvedic Medical College.

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ABSTRACT

Aahar (diet) plays a central role in the sustenance and health of an individual, and Ayurveda emphasizes this through the concept of Trayopasthambha[1], the three pillars of life—Aahar, Nidra (sleep), and Brahmacharya (regulated lifestyle). Among the key principles in Aahar Vidhi Vidhan (dietary code), Snigdhatva or unctuousness holds a special position[1;3] in promoting proper digestion, nourishment, and Dosha balance. Ghrita (clarified butter) is identified as the most superior among the four Sneha Dravyas[1;2] (unctuous substances), namely Ghrita, Taila, Vasa, and Majja. This paper attempts to explore the classical Ayurvedic importance of Ghrita, particularly in relation to Snigdh Aahar, and draws parallels with modern nutrition and biomedical science to reinforce its holistic benefits. The objective is to present Ghrita not merely as a dietary fat but as a multifaceted health-promoting substance with Rasayana (rejuvenating) potential.

KEYWORDS: Ghrita, Sneha, Aahar, Snigdhata, Trayopasthambha, Rasayana.

INTRODUCTION

The foundation of health and longevity in Ayurveda rests significantly on the concept of Aahar Sausthava the quality and appropriateness of diet. Charaka Samhita establishes Aahar as the foremost of the three sustaining pillars of life[1;11], emphasizing that all bodily processes, from tissue formation to Ojas (vital essence), depend upon it.

Within the guidelines of Aahar Vidhi Vidhan, properties such as Ushna (warm), Snigdha (unctuous), and Matravat (measured quantity) are repeatedly emphasized.[1;3;9] The term Snigdh Aahar refers to food that is moistened with Sneha (fat/oil), which promotes easy digestion, tissue lubrication, and vitality.

Among the four traditional Sneha substances—Ghrita, Taila, Vasa, and Majja.[2] Ghrita is regarded as the most potent[8;10] and auspicious, especially for internal consumption. It is said to pacify Pitta Dosha, strengthen the Dhatus (tissues), and serve as a carrier for other therapeutic substances due to its Yogavahi (catalytic) nature.

The classical verse from Charaka Sutrasthana (13/14) illustrates this.

"Ghritam Pittaanilharam Rasashukraojasam Hitam |
Nirvapanam Mrudukaram Swarvarnaprasadanam ||"[1]

This statement underscores Ghrita's ability to pacify Pitta, nourish vital tissues, and enhance physical and sensory attributes. The aim of this study is to evaluate these classical claims with supportive modern evidence and highlight Ghrita's importance in daily Aahar, especially in terms of Snigdhata.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Classical Literature Review

Comprehensive study of Ayurvedic Samhitas[8;9;10;11]: Charaka, Sushruta, Ashtanga Hridaya, and their commentaries to extract references to Ghrita, Sneha Kalpana, and Snigdh Aahar.[1;2;3]

Review of Ayurvedic compendiums for pharmacodynamic and Rasayana properties of Ghrita.

Contemporary Scientific Review.

Data collection from published articles and journals focusing on Ghrita's nutritional components[4;5;7], such as fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K), antioxidants, and essential fatty acids.

Study of experimental research on Ghrita's therapeutic actions: anti-inflammatory, neuroprotective, cardioprotective, and anti-aging effects.

Analytical Approach

Comparative analysis between classical Ayurvedic descriptions and modern pharmacological actions.

Observations drawn regarding bioavailability, metabolism, and systemic effects of Ghrita.

RESULTS

Classical Ayurvedic Perspective: Ghrita is Sheetala, Snigdha, Rasayana, and Medhya in properties.[1;2;3;8;14] Enhances Agni (digestive fire), promotes Dhatu Pushti (tissue development), and strengthens Smriti and Buddhi (memory and intellect).[14] It is recommended during therapeutic procedures like Snehapana, Basti, and Nasya due to its ability to penetrate deep tissues.

Modern Scientific Observations

Ghrita contains

Vitamin A & E[7;13]– support vision, skin health, and immune function.

Vitamin K2 – regulates calcium metabolism and supports cardiovascular health.

Omega-3 & Omega-6 fatty acids – essential for brain development and anti-inflammatory actions.[6;7;15]

Squalene – a powerful antioxidant contributing to its anti-aging and skin rejuvenating effects.

Studies demonstrate its.

Neuroprotective effect[5]– potential in cognitive disorders and epilepsy.

Anti-inflammatory[5] and hepatoprotective properties.

Carrier function – enhances bioavailability of lipid-soluble compounds.

DISCUSSION

The Ayurvedic concept of Snigdh Aahar is not merely about consuming fats[1;3] but implies the integration of unctuousness for internal lubrication, improved digestion, and mental well-being. Ghrita, with its unique properties, fulfills this requirement in the most balanced manner.

The Pitta-pacifying and Rasayana effects mentioned in classical texts are validated by the presence of biologically active components in Ghrita. Its ability to promote Ojas, the subtle essence of immunity and vitality, is evident in its antioxidant and tissue-nourishing properties.

Moreover, Ghrita's unique quality of Yogavahi[1;2;14] ensures that it carries and potentiates the efficacy of other herbs when used in medicated forms (e.g., Brahmi Ghrita, Ashwagandha Ghrita).

In the context of modern dietetics, where ghee is often questioned for its saturated fat content[6;7;12], it becomes crucial to differentiate commercial ghee from traditionally prepared Ghrita, which maintains its purity, therapeutic potency, and digestibility. When used in the right quantity, as per Matravat Aahar, Ghrita becomes a health-promoting agent rather than a risk factor.

CONCLUSION

Ghrita, as described in classical Ayurveda, is far beyond a culinary fat.[1;4;5] It is a therapeutic Sneha Dravya, an elixir that nurtures the body, mind, and spirit when used appropriately.[8;11;14] Its multifaceted action supports digestion, brain function, skin health, and longevity. By integrating Ghrita into daily Aahar as part of Snigdhata, we honor both tradition and evidence-based nutrition. This calls for a renewed understanding and acceptance of Ghrita, especially in preventive and promotive health strategies.

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