

GENERAL INTRODUCTION OF GHRITA ACCORDING TO BRIHAT TRAYEES: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ghrita, a clarified form of butter, is considered the supreme oleaginous substance in *Ayurveda*. Revered since the Vedic era, it is widely used in Indian diet and medicine due to its nourishing, rejuvenating, and healing properties. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe *Ghrita* as *Deepana*, *Pachana*, *Rasayana*, *Medhya*, and *Balya*, with the special attribute of *Sanskaranuvartan*—retaining its inherent nature while acquiring properties of co-processed substances. These qualities make it an ideal base in herbal formulations and essential in therapies like *Snehapana* and *Panchakarma*. The *Brihat Trayees* elaborates on *Ashta Ghrita*, eight types of ghee obtained from different animals such as cow, buffalo, goat, and camel, each with distinct therapeutic roles. Modern research supports *Ghrita* efficacy by confirming its lipophilic character, antioxidant content, and neuroprotective actions. This article presents a general introduction to *Ghrita* based on classical

texts and modern findings, highlighting its enduring role in integrative and preventive healthcare.

KEYWORDS: *Ghrita*, *Ashta Ghrita*, *Rasayana*, *Sneha Kalpana*, *Sanskaranuvartan*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, emphasizes maintaining the harmony of body, mind, and spirit through the use of natural substances. Among various oleaginous (fatty) substances used therapeutically, *Ghrita* (clarified butter) holds a distinguished place. Revered as the most sattvic and nourishing fat, *Ghrita* is widely used in both preventive and curative aspects of Ayurvedic healthcare. It is classified as *Rasayana*, known to promote longevity, intelligence, immunity, and strength.^[1]

The classical Ayurvedic texts, collectively known as the *Brihat Trayees*—*Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*—provide a comprehensive description of *Ghrita* properties, uses, and pharmacological actions. *Ghrita* is described as sweet in taste and post-digestive effect, cooling in potency, and effective in pacifying *Vata* and *Pitta doshas*.^[2] It is used in numerous conditions such as *Unmada* (insanity), *Apasmara* (epilepsy), *Jwara* (fever), *Shosha* (emaciation), and *Grahani* (malabsorption syndrome).^[3]

One of *Ghrita* unique features described in *Charaka Samhita* is its *Sanskaranuvartan* property—the ability to retain its original properties while acquiring the attributes of the substances processed with it.^[4] This makes it an excellent medium (*Anupana*) for delivering herbal drugs deep into the tissues and enhancing their efficacy.

The concept of *Ashta Ghrita* (eight types of ghee) is specifically elaborated in *Sushruta Samhita*, including sources like cow, buffalo, goat, sheep, camel, elephant, horse, and human milk. Each type is assigned specific therapeutic roles depending on its inherent characteristics and targeted diseases.^[5]

This article aims to present a general introduction to *Ghrita* based on the *Brihat Trayees* texts, correlating classical Ayurvedic insights with current scientific understanding.

REVIEW OF AYUERVEDIC LITERATURE OF GHRITA

Ghrita holds a central position in Ayurvedic therapeutics, being classified as the most superior among all *Sneha Dravyas*. Its wide range of applications in both internal and external treatments has been elaborately described in the classical ayurvedic texts.

ACCORDING TO CHARAKA SAMHITA

Sneha (unctuous substances) are classified into four primary types — *Ghrita* (clarified butter), *Taila* (oil), *Vasa* (animal fat), and *Majja* (bone marrow). These are collectively termed

as *Chaturvidha Sneha* and are used for key therapeutic procedures such as oral administration (*Pana*), external massage (*Abhyanga*), medicated enema (*Basti*), and nasal therapy (*Nasya*).

Sneha: it nourishes body enhances life (*Jeevana*) and strength (*Balya*), improves complexion (*Varnya*), and acts as a *tridosha* pacifier — alleviating *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*. Among these, *Ghrita* is considered highly superior for its penetrative power, rejuvenative nature, and its capacity to carry the therapeutic essence of the herbs into the deep tissues.^[6]

Among the four principal oleaginous substances—*Ghrita* (clarified butter), *Taila* (oil), *Vasa* (animal fat), and *Majja* (bone marrow)—*Ghrita* is considered the best. This superiority is attributed to its unique property known as *Sanskaranuvartan*.

This term implies that *Ghrita*, when processed with various herbs, retains its own inherent qualities while simultaneously absorbing the properties of the substances with which it is processed. This makes *Ghrita* an ideal *Sanskaranuvarti Dravya* (a carrier of therapeutic qualities), rendering it exceptionally effective in transporting herbal properties deep into body tissues, enhancing bioavailability and therapeutic potency.^[7]

Ghrita pacifies disorders caused by *Pitta* and *Vata*. It is beneficial for *Rasa*, *Shukra*, and *Ojas*. It alleviates burning sensations, softens the body, and enhances voice and complexion.^[8]

Ghrita enhances memory, intelligence, digestive fire (*Agni*), vitality (*Virya*), immunity (*Ojas*), *Kapha*, and *Meda*. It alleviates disorders caused by *Vata*, *Pitta*, and toxins, including *Unmada*, tuberculosis (*Rajayakshma*), and fever (*Jwara*). Among all unctuous substances (*Sneha*), it is the best. It is cooling in potency (*Shita Virya*), sweet in taste (*Rasa*), and also sweet in post-digestive effect (*Vipaka*).^[9]

ACCORDING TO SUSHRUTA SAMHITA

Ghrita is sweet in taste, *saumya* in nature, soft (*mṛdu*), has cold potency (*Shita Virya*), *alpabhisyandi* and is unctuous or oily (*snigdha*).

It pacifies severe *vata* disorders, insanity (*unmada*), epilepsy (*apasmara*), pain (*shoola*), fever (*jwara*), constipation/bloating (*anaha*), and other *vata-pitta* conditions.

It kindles digestive fire (*Agni*), improves memory (*smrti*), intellect (*mati*), intelligence (*medha*), complexion (*kanti*), strength (*bala*), nourishment (*vrddhi*), vital essence (*ojas*), and brilliance (*tejas*).

It is beneficial for the eyes (*chaksushya*), life-prolonging (*ayushya*), useful for children (*kumariya*), effective in indigestion (*ajirna*), debility (*balashaya*), people with exertion (*sahasika*), and the elderly (*vrddha*).

It destroys toxins (*vishaghna*), removes impurities and is protective from external harmful agents (*raksoghna*).^[10]

Acharya Sushruta also describe 8 types of *Ghrita*

1 *Gau Ghrita* has sweet post-digestive taste (*Madhur vipaka*), cold in potency (*Shita Virya*), and pacifies *Vata*, *Pitta*, and poison/toxins.

It is strength-promoting (*balya*), beneficial for the eyes (*chakshushya*), and considered the best among all types of ghee.^[11]

2 *Aja Ghrita* is digestive (*deepaniya*), beneficial for eyes, and increases strength.

It is usefull in *swasa*, *kash* and tuberculosis (*kshaya*).

It is easily digestible and *pathya*.^[12]

3 *Mahisha Ghrita* is sweet, *raktpittanashak*, heavy to digest, and *kaphavardhak*.

It also pacifies *Vata and Pitta*, and is very cooling (*susheetam*).^[13]

4 *Ustra Ghrita* has *katu vipak*, useful for breaking down of *shofa*, parasites (*krimi*) and *visha*.

It stimulates *agni*, pacifies *Kapha and Vata*, and helps treat skin diseases (*kushtha*) and *gulma*.^[14]

5 *Avika Ghrita* is light in digestion, and pacifies *Pitta* and usefull in *yonidosh*, *sosha*, *kamp*, *kapha and vaat vikar*.^[15]

6 *Ashva Ghrita* is light to digest, *ushna virya* and, *Kashaya* in taste, destroys *Kapha*. It stimulates *agni* and *badhmutram*.^[16]

7 *Hastini Ghrita* has *Kashaya Rasa*, and increases feces and urine (*vistha and mutra*). It is bitter in taste (*tikta*), enhances the digestive fire (*Pachakagni Vardhak*), is light to digest, and

helps in destroying disorders related to *Kapha*, skin diseases (*Kushtha*), poison (*Visha*), and parasites/worms (*Krimi Roga*).^[17]

8 *Stri Ghrita* is highly beneficial for eye disorders and possesses qualities comparable to *Amrit*. It enhances bodily strength and digestive fire (*Pachak Agni*). It is light to digest and acts as a detoxifier (*vish Nashak*).^[18]

ACCORDING TO ASTANGA HRDAYAM

Ghrita is highly beneficial for intelligence (*buddhi*), memory (*smriti*), mental acuity (*medha*), digestive fire (*jatharagni*), physical strength (*sharirik bala*), longevity (*dirgha ayu*), *shukra*, and vision (*drishti*). It is considered excellent for children as well as the elderly. It is ideal for those desiring *santan* (child), radiant complexion (*kanti*), softness of the body (*sukumarta*), and a melodious or vibrant voice.^[19]

It is beneficial for those suffering from wounds, ulcers, surgical injuries, and burns caused by fire. It alleviates diseases caused by *Vata*, *Pitta*, poisoning (*visha*), *unmad*, *shosha*, misfortune (*alakshmi*), and fever (*jwara*).^[20]

Among all unctuous (fatty) substances, this is considered the best. It is cool in potency (*Shita Virya*) and is also supreme among substances that help maintain youthfulness.^[21]

It cures disorders arising from alcohol consumption (*madatyaya*) such as epilepsy (*apasmara*), fainting (*moorchha*), and diseases of the head, ears, and *yonir roga*.

It also helps in the cleansing (*shodhana*) and healing (*ropana*) of wounds.^[22]

Among *Ghrita* (clarified butter), *Majja* (bone marrow), *Vasa* (muscle fat), and *Taila* (oil), *Ghrita* is considered the best. This is because it follows the property of *Sanskara Anuvartan* (retaining the qualities of substances processed with it), and due to its sweet taste, non-acidic nature (*Avidahi*), and the fact that it has been used since birth — all these qualities make *Ghrita* superior to the others.^[23]

Ghrita is excellent for those who wish to enhance and preserve intelligence (*buddhi*), memory (*smriti*), and intellect (*medha*).^[24]

REVIEW OF MODERN LITERATURE OF GHRITA

Modern scientific studies have increasingly validated the classical Ayurvedic claims regarding the therapeutic efficacy of *Ghrita* (clarified butter). Its pharmacological, nutritional, and therapeutic roles have been explored across multiple domains of healthcare.

Several experimental studies have established *Ghrita* as a potent neuroprotective agent. For instance, *Ashtanga Ghrita* demonstrated significant improvement in cognitive function in scopolamine-induced memory deficit models, supporting its traditional use as a *Medhya Rasayana*.^[25] Similarly, *Vachadi Ghrita* has been shown to possess anxiolytic and antioxidant activities due to the synergistic action of its herbal constituents like *Vacha* and *Shankhapushpi*.^[26]

In the domain of epilepsy, comparative studies on various marketed preparations of *Brahmi Ghrita* revealed notable anticonvulsant activity, particularly in pentylenetetrazole-induced seizure models, supporting its application in neurological disorders such as *Apasmara* (epilepsy).^[27]

Recent research on wound healing has confirmed the efficacy of *Madhu Ghrita* and *Bhallatakadi Ghrita*, which significantly enhanced wound contraction, collagen formation, and tissue regeneration in animal models. These findings align with classical references describing *Ghrita* as *Vrana Ropaka* (wound healer).^[28]

From a cosmetic and dermatological perspective, *Shatadhouta Ghrita* (100 times washed ghee) has been recognized for its cooling, moisturizing, and anti-inflammatory properties. It is currently used in herbal creams and ointments for treating burns, dry skin, and rashes.^[29]

In terms of nutritional and biochemical properties, *Ghrita* is rich in omega-3 fatty acids (especially DHA), butyric acid, and fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K). Modern reviews suggest that *Ghrita* supports cognitive health, immunity, and metabolism without causing long-term lipid imbalance, contrary to prior assumptions.^[30]

DISCUSSION

Ghrita, as described extensively in the *Bṛihat Trayees* is not just a dietary fat but a versatile therapeutic agent with multifaceted benefits. Its prominence in Ayurveda arises from its unique pharmacodynamic properties—primarily *Sanskaranuvartan*, which allows it to retain its base properties while acquiring the therapeutic virtues of the substances it is processed

with. This quality renders it an ideal vehicle (*Anupana* or *Yogavahi*) for various herbal formulations used in internal medicine, rejuvenation (*Rasayana*), and *Panchakarma* therapies.

The classical texts—*Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*—uniformly recognize *Ghrita* as the superior *Sneha Dravya* due to its nourishing, intellect-promoting (*Medhya*), and immunity-enhancing (*Ojovardhaka*) actions. Each *Samhita* contributes unique insights into its indications. For instance, *Acharya Charaka* emphasizes its systemic action on *Vata* and *Pitta* disorders and its role in memory and cognition, while *Acharya Sushruta* provides a detailed classification of *Ashta Ghrita*—ghee from eight sources with distinct therapeutic roles. *Ashtanga Hridaya* reiterates its supremacy among oleaginous substances, emphasizing its compatibility with all age groups and its wide spectrum of healing actions.

Modern pharmacological studies have validated many of these traditional claims. *Ghrita*-based formulations like *Ashtanga Ghrita*, *Brahmi Ghrita*, and *Shatadhouta Ghrita* have shown promising results in areas such as neuroprotection, wound healing, dermatology, and stress management. The presence of essential fatty acids, antioxidants, and fat-soluble vitamins supports its biochemical utility and confirms its non-inflammatory, neurotropic, and regenerative effects.

Despite its high-fat content, recent literature suggests *Ghrita* does not contribute to lipid disorders when used judiciously. Instead, it can aid in balancing metabolism and supporting overall vitality. This aligns with Ayurvedic principles that advocate for individualized and *doshic*-appropriate use.

CONCLUSION

Ghrita occupies a central role in Ayurvedic therapeutics and continues to be relevant in the modern era due to its extensive pharmacological and therapeutic profile. The classical Ayurvedic treatises of the *Bṛihat Trayees* offer a robust foundation, detailing its attributes as a nourishing, detoxifying, rejuvenating, and intellect-enhancing substance. The concept of *Ashta Ghrita* demonstrates the systematized approach of Ayurveda in matching specific types of *Ghrita* to pathological conditions.

Modern scientific validation of *Ghrita*'s actions in neurology, dermatology, wound healing, and metabolic health further supports its integrative application in contemporary healthcare.

Its compatibility with herbal drugs, high bioavailability, and adaptogenic properties make *Ghrita* a unique and irreplaceable agent in *Ayurvedic medicine*.

Therefore, *Ghrita* is not only a potent symbol of Ayurvedic wisdom but also a promising adjunct in modern preventive and therapeutic regimes, justifying its revered status as the best among all *Sneha Dravyas*.

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