

The Nutritional and Therapeutic Significance of Daily Dietary Substances in Ayurveda: A Focus on *Ghrita*

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Abstract

Ayurveda, one of the oldest medical systems, strongly emphasizes the role of diet in maintaining health and preventing disease. The concept of *Nitya Sheelaniya Ahara Dravya* refers to food substances recommended for daily consumption to support overall well-being. Among these, *Ghrita* (clarified butter) is regarded as a vital dietary component due to its profound nutritional and medicinal properties.

Ayurvedic texts describe eight different types of *Ghrita*, with *Goghrita* (cow's ghee) being considered the most beneficial due to its rejuvenating (*Rasayana*), cognitive-enhancing (*Medhya*), and disease-preventing properties. Its unique ability to penetrate deep tissues and act as a *Yogavahi* (potentiator of other substances) makes it highly significant in Ayurvedic therapeutics.

This review explores the Ayurvedic classification, pharmacological properties, therapeutic applications, and modern scientific validations of *Ghrita*, highlighting its importance in neuroprotection, digestive health, immune modulation, and longevity.

Understanding its integration into daily nutrition can provide insights into how traditional dietary wisdom aligns with contemporary health research.

Keywords: Ayurveda, *Nitya Sheelaniya Ahara*, *Ghrita*, *Goghrita*, *Rasayana*, Neuroprotection, Immunomodulation

Introduction

Ayurveda classifies food substances into two categories:

1. *Nitya Sheelaniya Ahara Dravya* – Foods suitable for daily consumption to promote health and longevity.
2. *Nitya Asheelaniya Ahara Dravya* – Foods that should be consumed occasionally or avoided to prevent diseases.

Among the *Nitya Sheelaniya Ahara Dravya*, Ayurveda emphasizes certain food items like *Ghrita* (clarified butter), *Mudga* (green gram), *Saindhava Lavana* (rock salt), *Amalaki* (Indian gooseberry), *Yava* (barley), and *Madhu* (honey) for their unique health-promoting benefits. These foods enhance bodily functions, strengthen immunity, and support mental well-being.

Among them, *Ghrita* holds a special place due to its wide-ranging applications in both dietary and therapeutic contexts. It has been extensively used in Ayurveda for promoting digestion, nourishing the nervous system, enhancing longevity, and acting as a base for herbal preparations (*Ghrita Kalpana*).

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive review of *Ghrita*, including its Ayurvedic classification, properties, pharmacological actions, therapeutic applications, and its relevance in modern healthcare.

***Ghrita* in Ayurvedic Literature**

Definition and Classification

The term *Ghrita* is derived from the Sanskrit root "*Ghri*", meaning "to shine" or "to spread," symbolizing its nourishing and unctuous nature. Ayurveda describes eight types of *Ghrita* based on their source, including cow, buffalo, goat, camel, sheep, elephant, human, and horse milk. However, *Goghrita* (cow's ghee) is regarded as the most superior due to its exceptional therapeutic potential.

Pharmacodynamics of *Goghrita*

Rasa (Taste): *Madhura* (sweet)

Guna (Qualities): *Guru* (heavy), *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Mridu* (soft)

Veerya (Potency): *Sheeta* (cooling)

Vipaka (Post-digestive effect): *Madhura*

Prabhava (Special action): *Medhya* (enhances intellect), *Vishaghna* (detoxifying)

Doshic Effect: *Vata-Pitta Shamaka* (balances *Vata* and *Pitta* doshas)

The concept of *Samskarasya Anuvartanam* states that *Ghrita* retains the properties of the herbs and substances it is processed with, making it a potent carrier (*Yogavahi*) in Ayurvedic medicine.

Therapeutic Applications of *Ghrita*

1. Cognitive Health and Neurological Disorders

Due to its *Medhya* properties, *Goghrita* is extensively used in the management of neurological conditions such as:

- *Unmada* (psychosis)
- *Apasmara* (epilepsy)
- *Mada* (delirium)
- *Murccha* (fainting)

Modern research suggests that *Goghrita* contains essential fatty acids, which play a crucial role in neuronal health, reducing neuroinflammation, and improving cognitive function. It is also used in *Medhya Rasayana* (brain tonics) to enhance memory, intelligence, and focus.

2. Digestive Health and Metabolic Regulation

Ghrita has digestive stimulant properties (*Deepaniya*) and acts as a natural lubricant for the gastrointestinal tract. It is beneficial in:

- *Grahani* (irritable bowel syndrome)
- *Agnimandya* (weak digestion)
- *Udararoga* (gastric disorders)
- Studies have shown that Ghee enhances gut microbiota, supports digestion, and helps in the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins.

3. Rejuvenation and Longevity (*Rasayana* Therapy)

In Ayurveda, *Goghrita* is classified as a *Rasayana*, meaning it helps in:

Slowing down the aging process (*Vayasthapana*)

Strengthening immunity (*Ojovardhaka*)

Enhancing cellular regeneration (*Brihmana*)

Regular consumption of *Goghrita* is believed to maintain youthfulness, improve skin health, and promote overall vitality.

4. Immunomodulation and Anti-inflammatory Effects

- Rich in antioxidants and healthy fats, *Goghrita*:
- Enhances Ojas (vital immunity)
- Balances inflammatory responses (*Shotha*)
- Protects against chronic inflammatory conditions
- Its cooling (*Sheeta Veerya*) nature makes it effective in managing *Pitta* disorders, reducing excess heat in the body.

5. Cardiovascular Health and Lipid Profile

- Contrary to popular misconceptions, studies suggest that moderate consumption of *Goghrita*:
- Increases HDL (good cholesterol)
- Maintains cardiovascular function
- Prevents arterial stiffness
- Ayurveda recommends its use in individuals with Vata disorders to provide nourishment and strengthen the heart.

6. Skin and Eye Health

Goghrita is an important ingredient in Ayurvedic dermatology and ophthalmology. It is used in:

Netra Tarpana (eye nourishment therapy) Management of dry eyes and conjunctivitis. Treatment of eczema, psoriasis, and burns. Its soothing and moisturizing properties make it ideal for maintaining skin hydration and healing wounds.

Discussion:

Modern Scientific Validation of *Ghrita*

Recent scientific research has validated many of the Ayurvedic claims regarding *Goghrita*. Studies show that ghee derived from grass-fed cows contains:

- Omega-3 fatty acids (anti-inflammatory effects)

- Butyric acid (gut health and anti-cancer properties)
- Vitamin A, D, E, and K (essential for cellular functions)
- Moreover, Ghee has been recognized for its role in improving brain health, enhancing digestion, and supporting metabolic functions.

Conclusion

The incorporation of *Goghrita* into daily nutrition and therapeutics is deeply rooted in Ayurvedic wisdom and is increasingly supported by modern scientific research. As one of the most revered Nitya *Sheelaniya* Ahara Dravya, *Ghrita* serves multiple functions—nourishing the body, balancing Doshas, enhancing cognitive function, improving digestion, modulating immunity, and promoting longevity. Its unique *Samskarasya Anuvartanam* property allows it to retain and amplify the medicinal qualities of other substances, making it an exceptional carrier in Ayurvedic formulations.

The extensive references to *Goghrita* in classical Ayurvedic texts, including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, highlight its role as a vital *Rasayana* (rejuvenator) that supports systemic health. Its neuroprotective effects make it particularly valuable in enhancing mental clarity, memory, and cognitive function, which is now being explored in contemporary research on neurodegenerative disorders like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. Additionally, its ability to nourish and stabilize the gut microbiome further underscores its significance in maintaining digestive health and overall metabolic balance.

In light of emerging scientific findings, *Goghrita* should not be dismissed as merely a source of dietary fat but rather as a functional food with vast therapeutic potential. Studies have shown that ghee

derived from grass-fed cows contains omega-3 fatty acids, conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), and butyric acid—compounds known for their anti-inflammatory, cardioprotective, and gut-healing properties. Its role in promoting Agni (digestive fire) and enhancing nutrient absorption makes it particularly relevant in addressing modern digestive disorders and metabolic syndromes.

Despite concerns about its lipid content, recent evidence suggests that moderate consumption of *Goghrita* does not contribute to cardiovascular disease when consumed within a balanced diet. Instead, it may help in maintaining a healthy lipid profile, particularly by increasing HDL (good cholesterol) and reducing oxidative stress. This aligns with Ayurvedic principles, which advocate the importance of individualized dietary recommendations based on a person's Prakriti (constitution) and prevailing health conditions.

The therapeutic applications of *Goghrita* extend beyond dietary use, as it plays a crucial role in Ayurvedic therapies such as *Snehapana* (internal oleation), *Netra Tarpana* (eye nourishment), and *Ghrita Kalpana* (medicated ghee formulations). The ability of *Goghrita* to penetrate deep tissues and enhance the bioavailability of herbs makes it invaluable in Panchakarma procedures and *Rasayana Chikitsa* (rejuvenation therapy).

Looking ahead, there is a need for more extensive clinical trials to further explore and validate the therapeutic potential of *Goghrita* in modern medicine. Research on its impact on gut microbiota, cognitive function, inflammatory pathways, and chronic diseases could provide deeper insights into its health benefits and applications. Integrating Ayurvedic dietary principles with contemporary nutritional science can bridge the gap between traditional wisdom and modern healthcare, offering

holistic solutions for maintaining optimal health.

In conclusion, *Goghrita* is not just an ancient dietary staple but a time-tested therapeutic agent that continues to hold relevance in today's world. Its inclusion in daily life, as prescribed in Ayurveda, can serve as a natural and holistic approach to enhancing overall well-being. By fostering a balanced perspective that incorporates both traditional knowledge and scientific validation, we can ensure that *Goghrita* remains a vital component of preventive healthcare and sustainable nutrition.

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