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Importance of *Ghrita* as *Abhyantara Sneha* in *Vruddhavastha*

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of illness increases as we age; at the same time, life expectancy decreases. Ayurveda, as ancient science has potential for prevention of diseases by health promotion and management of geriatric. Management needs not only curative but also preventive, rehabilitative and terminal care. In Ayurveda, *Ghrita* is indicated *Nityasevaniya Rasayana* and also in old age being best among all the *Snehas* and *Vayasthapana*. *Ghrita* plays an important role in controlling *Vata Dosha*, which is the main causative factor of old age. The presence of *Mahabhutas* and *Gunas* in *Ghrita* helps to maintain the health of old age persons from deterioration. Being best among all the *Snehas* and *Vayasthapana*, maintains the normal functions of *Doshas*, *Dhatus*, *Malas* and adds to the essence of *Ojas*. Therefore *Ghrita* is considered as par excellence and drug of choice in old age. It is the need of the time to develop an effective holistic approach for geriatric care by combining *Rasayana*, *Panchkarma* and Dietetics, Ayurvedic medicines, lifestyle and *Yoga*.

Key words: *Ghrita*, *Ghee*, *Old Age*, *Geriatric Care*, *Abhyantara Sneha*, *Rasayana*.

INTRODUCTION

Ghrita (Ghee) has a inseparable relation with that of Indian tradition, may be a cuisine or any auspicious occasion to light a lamp or to perform any holy rituals, it is considered to be incomplete without Ghee. Ageing is a process of physical, psychological and social change in multi-dimensional aspects. The world's elderly population is increasing. By 2050, one-fifth of the world population will be older than 65 years. Ageing is a slow process that refers to the impact of passage of time on structure and function of

different systems of body. Full growth potential is realized up to the third decade of life beyond which significant structural and functional changes of ageing slowly begins to appear. By age 50 or 60, these changes begin to clinically reflect as functional limitations like reduced power, vision, memory, locomotory function, exertional breathlessness.^[1] Different opinion to consider an individual old.

- Age - Above 70 yrs (*Sushruta*)
- Age - Above 60 yrs (*Charaka*)
- Age - Above 65 yrs (WHO)^[1]

The ageing process described by *Acharya Sharangadhara* states the decline of structural and functional components of body in every decade of life from birth to death.^[2] Currently, population ageing is occurring at a rapid rate particularly in the developing regions of the world like India. Consequently more and more people are surviving into old age, having increased life expectancy. Hence a multi-dimensional approach is essential to provide a good quality life to older people. It comprises not only curative but also

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non-curative methods of care such as preventive, rehabilitative and terminal care.^[3]

The focused branch *Rasayana* (rejuvenation) or *Jarachikitsa* promote healthy longevity. In Ayurveda, *Ghrita* is indicated in old age being best among all the *Snehas* and *Vayasthapana*.

Problems in Vruddhavastha

In old age, *Vata Dosha* is predominant causing *Vataja* disorders. As *Ghrita* is having opposite *Gunas* of *Vata* it is considered as best to mitigate *Vata*.^[4] *Ghrita* contains *Prithvi* and *Jala Mahabhutas*. *Prithvi* and *Jala Mahabhutas* helps in nourishment of the body, promotion of strength, downward movement of *Vata*. Hence useful in restriction of muscle wasting, general weakness, loss of strength in old age. *Ghrita* contains *Snigdha* and *Guru Gunas*. *Snigdha* and *Guru Gunas* helps in mitigation of *Vata Dosha* and maintenance of *Kapha Dosha*, hence useful in physical inactivity, myalgia, fatigue, constipation in oldage. *Ghrita* as *Madhura Rasa*. *Ghrita* having *Madhura Rasa* which is *Sapta Dhaturvadhaka*, *Marutaghna*, *Tarpana*, *Balakara*, *Shadindriya Prasadaka*. It is useful in weight loss, decreased sensorial Functions, insomnia, impaired memory in old age. Due to *Madhurata*, *Avidaahita*, *Ghrita* can be used right from the birth onwards. *Ghrita* can be taken along with other food items even in old age.

Use of Ghrita along with food items

In general one who desires good eye sight (*Chakshu Kama*), longevity (*Ayu-Prakarsha Kama*), *Bala-Swara*, *Smriti-Medha-Agni-Buddhi-Indriya Bala* are considered to be *Yogya* for *Ghrita Sevana*.^[5]

- *Bhujyamanam Swadatte*: one can take the food with pleasant mind.
- *Anudirnamagnim Udirayati* : helps in loss of appetite condition.
- *KshipramJaram Gachati* : Helps to digest the food fast.
- *Vatam Anulomayati*: Useful in *Vata Anuloman*.
- *Shariram Upachinoti*: Useful in undernourishment.

- *Dhrdi Karoti Indriyani*: Useful in decreased sensorial functions.
- *Balabi Vridhim Upajanayati*: Useful in loss of *Bala*.
- *Varna Prasadam Nirvartayati*: Useful in decreased complexion.

Ghee is composed almost entirely of saturated fat. Fat in the diet is needed for efficient absorption of crucial lipid soluble vitamins such as A, D, E and K. A totally fat free diet can actually accelerate ageing of the skin, nerves and brain cells. Without an adequate quantity of the right kind of fat in the diet, cell regeneration can be adversely impacted. Hence diet containing fat is needed to check the ageing process. Due to predominant of *Vata Dosha* in oldage, *Snehamsha* will be decreased which leads to generalized weakness, insomnia, constipation, fatigue, myalgia etc. So *Ghrita*, which is *Sneha Dravya* is to be taken in oldage to protect the life from senile problems. Nutritional status of older persons is commonly inadequate. As *Ghrita* is best *Sneha Dravya* is useful in under nourishment and loss of strength in old age.

Ghrita is not only useful in *Vataja* disorders but also in *Pittaja* and *Kaphaja* disorders. *Ghrita* is best *Vayasthapana Dravya*, hence necessary in old age. That which makes life happier without causing any Senile problems are termed as *Vayasthapana*.^[6] As *Ghrita* controls *Vata Dosha* which is necessary to sustain all the activities of the body, maintains *Sapta Dhatus* which is necessary to perform all the functions of the body and adds to *Ojas* which is essential to lead a life. Hence *Ghrita* which maintains the normal health and delays ageing process is considered as best *Vayasthapaka*. As *Ghrita* is *Brimhana*, *Snehana*, *Medhya*, *Balakara*, *Chakshushya*, *Marutaghna*, *Swarya*, *Mridukara* is useful in *Jarashosha*.

Ageing is one of the biological phenomenon affecting physical as well as mental disorders in people. *Rasa Dhatu* residing in the heart gets diminished due to the following factors. *Shoka* - Due to loss of occupation, loss of adaptation, loss of status and loss of skill. *Chinta* - Due to loss of physical strength and loss of income. *Krodha* - Due to loss of freedom and loss of confidence. In fact, loneliness, depression, events of

bereavement and negative attitude of family and society are other accompaniments. Also, intake of food in lesser quantity or fasting due to above reasons. From the above factors, due to diminution of *Rasa Dhatu*, the individual will be afflicted with *Shosha*. As *Ghrita* is *Shoshahara*, Hence advisable in old age to combat with problems of senility.

DISCUSSION

Aged state is a condition in which decline of functional capacity; physical, mental or both has become manifest, measurable and adoptively significant. Hence a necessary check to resist old age problems is needed. *Ghrita* plays an important role in controlling *Vata Dosha*, which is the main causative factor of old age. The presence of *Mahabhutas* and *Gunas* in *Ghrita* helps to maintain the health of old age persons from deterioration. The *Madhura Rasa* of it not only nourishes the body and maintains strength but also initiates the desire of intake of food. Being best among all the *Snehas* and *Vayasthapana*, maintains the normal functions of *Doshas*, *Dhatu*s, *Malas* and adds to the essence of *Ojas*. Hence *Ghrita* is considered as par excellence and drug of choice in old age. Cholesterol in the body serves functions that are crucial to health, such as building cell membranes, hormones and bile balance. It is when cholesterol is damaged by harmful free radicals that it leads to clogged arteries and heart problems. Low levels of antioxidants may enhance the production of oxidized LDL and are important independent risk factors for coronary disease.^[8] Population is advised to eat a mixed diet with fruit and vegetables as well as meat and dairy products, to prevent coronary disease. As Ghee contains antioxidants can be used in the diet to maintain the health. Thus Ghee is necessary in restriction of ageing process and related disorders.

CONCLUSION

Ghrita plays an important role in controlling *Vata Dosha*, which is the main causative factor of old age.

Ghrita is not only useful in *Vataja* disorders but also in *Pittaja* and *Kaphaja* disorders in *Vriddhavastha*. *Ghrita* is best among *Vayasthapana Dravya*, hence necessary in old age. Being best among all the *Snehas* and *Vayasthapana*, maintains the normal functions of *Doshas*, *Dhatu*s, *Malas* and adds to the essence of *Ojas*. Hence *Ghrita* play a vital role in old age by combating with senile problems and delaying ageing process.

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