



TAKRA- A TIME TESTED ELIXIR

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda mentions a vast variety of food and dietary products to gain and maintain health. In *Ayurveda*, food has been given equal importance as the treatment proper. It has been classified based on many parameters like taste, action on *doshas*, method of preparation etc. A person is said to be healthy if all *tri dosha*, *sapta dhatu* and *tri mala* are in balanced state.^[1] To attain that balance *agni* i.e., digestive power has to be properly functioning. Therefore, one should protect *agni* at all costs. *Takra* is lauded to have *tridosha shamaka* properties along with having excellent role in the gastrointestinal disorders. It has been mentioned in almost all the scriptures of *Ayurveda* stating its benefits.

KEYWORDS: *Takra*, *agni*, *tridosha shamaka*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the science of life thus it has everything from food, basic daily activities, seasonal activities to maintain health and to prevent diseases. *Ayurveda* has always been a holistic system of medicine where all aspects of health and disease are taken into consideration.

In *Ayurveda*, *agni* is of prime importance. One's health, longevity, liveliness depends on proper functioning of *agni*. It is mentioned that all diseases stem from derangements in *agni*.^[2]

In natural state, *agni* digests the food and nourish the body with the nutrients present in the ingested food. If the *agni* is not functioning properly then any amount of nutrients present in the food cannot be utilized. Its thus important to maintain the *agni* to reap the benefits of optimum health.

Takra (buttermilk) is an important dietary substance especially for maintaining and alleviating illnesses of the gastrointestinal tract, particularly related to *agni*. Properties and benefits of *takra* have been mentioned in the *Ayurvedic* classics from *Samhita* to *Nighantu*.

Synonyms of *takra*.^[3]

In *Kaideva Nighantu* following synonyms of *takra* are there:

दण्डाहतं कालशेयं गोससश्च विलोडितम् |

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. <i>Dandahatam</i> | 3. <i>Gorasa</i> |
| 2. <i>Kalashayam</i> | 4. <i>Viloditam</i> |

Method of preparation:^[4]

Takra is prepared in many different methods and there are various types available around the world. It is widely used in diet.

भाण्डस्य मध्ये दधि सन्निधाय, दध्नस्तु यन्त्रेण शनैर्हतं यत् |

तोयं निषिञ्चन् प्रहरं विनीय तोयेन तक्रं दशधा क्रमेण ||

Curd is slowly churned with a *mathani* (dasher) while gradually adding water for a *prahara* (three hours).

Types of *takra*

In *Charaka samhita takra* is classified based on fat/cream content.^[5]

1. *Ruksha*-without fat
2. *Ardhodhrita sneha*- with Half removed fat
3. *Anudhrita sneha*- with full fat

In *Sushruta samhita*, *Takra* varga is mentioned:^[6]

1. *Takra*- made after fat is removed from curd and then churned with half part water
2. *Ghola*- when fat is not removed at all and curd is churned without adding any water.

Sushruta samhita also mentions *Madhura* and *Amla takra*.

In *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu*, it is classified based on the method of preparation^[7]

1. *Ghola*: No fat is taken out of curd and it is just churned as it is. Since, no fat is extracted this type of *takra* is heavy to digest and increases *Kapha* and

decreases *Vata*.

2. *Mathita*: Fat is removed from curd and then it is churned without adding water. It is easier to digest.
3. *Takra*: Curd is churned with four times water. It is *kashaya* (astringent) and *amla* (sour) in taste and on digestion it becomes *madhura* (sweet). It is easily digestible and hot in potency. It pacifies *Vata*.
4. *Udashvita*: Curd is churned with half part water. It aggravates *Kapha* and detoxifies the body.
5. *Chachhika*: Curd is churned and cream is removed, plenty of water is added to it and churned once again. It is cold in potency, easily digestible. It pacifies *Vata* and increases *Kapha*.

Kaideva Nighantu mentions ten types of *takra*^[8]

मथितमुदञ्चितक्रं दण्डाहतकालशेयकरमथितम् | घोलं गलितश्चेतमथषाडवमिति कथ्यते दशधा ||

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|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <i>Mathita</i> | 6. <i>Karamathita</i> |
| 2. <i>Udashvit</i> | 7. <i>Ghol</i> |
| 3. <i>Takra</i> | 8. <i>Galita</i> |
| 4. <i>Dandahata</i> | 9. <i>Shwetamatha</i> |
| 5. <i>Kalashaya</i> | 10. <i>Shadava</i> |

Properties of *takra*

It is compared to ambrosia for deities. It has been mentioned that one who uses *Takra* daily does not suffer from ailments.^[9]

In *Charaka samhita* it is mentioned that *Takra* has *Deepana*, *Grahi* and *Laghu guna* due to which it provides immense benefit in *Grahani roga*. It is sour in taste but has *Madhura vipaka*. It is also having *Kashaya rasa* and *ushana*, *Vikasi* and *Ruksha guna*. By virtue of all these properties *Takra* is lauded as *Tridosha shamaka*.^[10]

Takra has cleansing properties due to which it mitigates one hundred diseases caused by *Vata* and *Kapha* (80 of *Vata* and 20 of *kapha*). Thus, there is no medicine as good as *Takra* for *Vata kapha* disorders.^[11]

Based on the method of preparation *takra* also has different properties:^[12]

1. *Ghola*: if it is taken with *sarkara* (sugar) then it alleviates *Vata* and *Pitta*.
2. *Mathita*: it alleviates *Kapha* and *Pitta*.
3. *Takra*: it is astringent, sour and sweet. It is hot in potency. It aids in digestion and pacifies *Vata*.
4. *Udashvita*: it increases *Kapha* and strength. It is *aama nashaka* (helps in indigestion)
5. *Chachhika*: it is cold in potency, light and decreases *Vata* and *Pitta*, and increases *Kapha*. If it is taken with *Saindhava lavana* (rock salt) then it helps to stimulate appetite.

If fat content is taken out then it is easier to digest. If some fat is removed then it is heavy to digest, aphrodisiac and alleviates *Kapha*. If fat is not removed at all then it nourishes the body and aggravates *Kapha*.

Use of *Takra*

It is mentioned that *takra* should be used for 7/10/15 days or a month in patients with *agnimandya* i.e. reduced digestive power.^[13]

It is important to note that *takra* intake should be increased and then reduced gradually over a month. Food intake also should be decreased and increased along with *takra* in opposite manner i.e., while increasing *takra* food intake should be reduced and vice versa. Its use should not be stopped abruptly.^[14]

In *Bhavaprakasha*, its use has been specified based on *dosha* predominance:^[15]

Vata: Sour in taste with added *shunthi* (dried ginger) and *Saindhava lavana* (rock salt).

Pitta: Sweet in taste with added sugar.

Kapha: with added *shunthi* (dried ginger), *pippali* (long pepper) and *maricha* (black pepper) and *Yavakshara* (alkalies)

Takra with roasted *hing* (asafoetida), roasted *jeeraka* (cumin) and *Saindhava lavana* (rock salt) is excellent for pacifying *Vata*, *arsha* and *atisara*.

Ghola with *guda* (jaggery) for *mutrakrichhra* (dysuria) and with *chitraka* for *Pandu roga* (anaemia)

Indications of *takra*:^[16]

In *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu*, following indications are there for *takra*

शीतकालेऽग्निमान्द्ये च तथा वातामयेषु च | अरुचौ स्रोतसां रोधे तक्रं स्यादमृतोपमम् ||

तत्तु हन्ति गरच्छर्दिप्रसेकविषमज्वरान् | पाण्डुमेदोग्रहण्यशौमूत्रग्रहभगन्दरान् ||

मेहं गुल्ममतीसारं शूलप्लीहोदरारुचौः | श्वित्रकोष्ठगतव्याधीन् कुष्ठशोथतृषाकृमीन् ||

1. *Sheet kala* (winters)
2. *Agnimandya* (reduced digestive power)
3. *Vata Amaya* (diseases due to *Vata dosha*)
4. *Aruchi* (aversion to food)
5. *Strotasa rodha* (obstruction in channels)
6. Conditions like *gara visha* (artificial poisoning/food poisoning), *chhardi* (vomiting), *visham jwara* (fever), *pandu* (anaemia), *medo roga* (obesity), *grahani* (sprue), *arsha* (haemorrhoids), *mutragraha* (obstructed micturition), *bhagandar* (fistula in ano), *meha* (diabetes) *kushtha* (skin disorders) etc.

Takra has also been mentioned as *anupana* or adjuvant of various *Ayurvedic* formulations.

Anupana is defined as something which is taken along with or after medicine. It helps in its better digestion and absorption and provides complete benefit. Therefore, to have maximum benefit use of proper *anupana* along with

specific drug therapy is equally important.

In *Charaka samhita* it has been mentioned as *anupana* in *Pandu roga* for following.^[17]

1. *Mandoora vataka*
2. *Punarnava mandoor*

Buttermilk is one kind of organic acid and such acid helps to lower the ph of the proximal duodenum which aids in absorption of iron, an important and essential element for RBC formation. Moreover, it also contains vitamin B 12 which also is necessary for development of red blood cells. Thus, due to these two-i.e. being an organic acid and containing vitamin B 12 it can be interrelated that *takra* is useful in both-prevention and treatment of *pandu* i.e. *anaemia*.^[18]

In *Charaka samhita* it has been mentioned as *Agreya gana*.^[19]

In the same treatise it is mentioned as treatment for *ghritavyapada* and with *pinyaka* in *tailvyapada*.^[20]

Takra has also been used as a base for local application of drugs in *Udara shoola*.^[21] *Takra* when taken with *abhya* and *triphala* helps to mitigate *prameha*.^[22]

Since, *Takra* has *kashaya rasa*, *ushana virya* and *vikasi guna* it proves to be a good *medohara*.^[23]

Due to this, *takra* as *ahara* or *anupana* is often prescribed in obesity and also diabetes.

Contraindications of *takra*:^[24]

नैव तक्रं क्षते दद्यान्नोष्णकाले न दुर्बले | न मूर्च्छाभ्रमदाहेषु न रोगे रक्तपित्तजे ||

1. *Kshata*(trauma)
2. *Ushana kala*(summers or high temperature)
3. *Daurbalya*(extreme weakness)
4. *Murchha* (unconsciousness)
5. *Bhrama* (state of confusion)
6. *Raktapitta*(bleeding disorders)

Takra should not be used in these conditions because its *virya* i.e. potency is hot and in aforementioned conditions it can cause more harm than benefit.

CONCLUSION

Takra is an easily available dietary item and has many potent actions in health as well in disease. It promotes strength and *vigour*. It is beneficial in life style disorders like diabetes. It is also helpful in diseases of respiratory tract and also promotes absorption of iron from the gastrointestinal tract thus alleviating *anaemia*. Thus, it is indeed an elixir in modern times and its use should be encouraged among the masses.

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