

The Essence Of Takra: A Comprehensive Overview Of Buttermilk In Ayurveda

Dr. Dharmesh Pandey^{1*}, Dr. Vijay Vitthal Bhagat²

^{1*}PG Scholar, Parul Institute of Ayurved, Parul University, VPO- Limda, Tal - Waghodia, Vadodara - 390019

²PG Guide, Professor, Ayurved Samhita Siddhant, Parul Institute of Ayurved, Parul University, VPO- Limda, Tal - Waghodia, Vadodara - 390019

Abstract-

In *Ayurvedic* medicine, *Tākra* (buttermilk) is celebrated as a life-giving substance akin to *Amrita* (nectar), which grants immortality to the gods. While *Amrita* is rare for humans, *Tākra* is considered a precious resource that bestows longevity and health, nurturing individuals to feel like they possess immortality. It is posited that those who regularly consume *Tākra* are protected from ailments and diseases, like *Amrita*'s joy to the divine.

Tākra's significance extends beyond traditional beliefs. Modern research highlights its role in digestive health due to the presence of beneficial bacteria like *Lactobacillus*, which serve as natural probiotics. These probiotics enhance digestion and nutrient absorption, making *Tākra* a valuable addition to the diet. Ayurveda recommends personalized consumption of buttermilk, considering individual dosha balance, digestive strength, and physical vitality.

This paper explores the multifaceted benefits of *Tākra*, emphasizing its unique properties and therapeutic applications in healthy individuals and patients. The resurgence of interest in innovative preparations of buttermilk presents promising opportunities for further research in *Ayurveda*, positioning *Tākra* as a vital component in promoting overall well-being and digestive health.

Keywords – *Takra*, buttermilk, probiotics, amrita, sasneha takra

Introduction -

Takra (buttermilk) is a product derived from curd used as *Ahara* and *Aushadhi Dravya*. *Takra* is also included under the *Pathya Aahar*, called Nectar on Earth in *Bhav Prakash Samhita*. ⁹*Takra* is advised to be taken in winter in *Ayurvedic* scriptures its use is commonly found in the summer. So proper knowledge of the different properties of *Takra* is also necessary. Buttermilk, known as *Takra* in *Ayurveda*, is a valued beverage consumed for centuries due to its numerous health benefits. Traditionally made by churning curd, buttermilk is rich in probiotics, enzymes, and essential nutrients. Modern research recognizes the importance of buttermilk as a natural probiotic, promoting gut health and aiding digestion. In *Ayurveda*, it is highly valued for balancing *doshas*, especially *Vata* and *Kapha*, and for its cooling and nourishing properties.

Derivation of word Takra –

- According to *Amarkosh* – Buttermilk with four parts of water
- According to *Kalpa Druma*- “*Takram*, (means it contracts and transforms milk into buttermilk, in the form of water and curds).” Curd mixed with water,” which is essentially buttermilk.
- According to *Monier Williams*- Buttermilk mixed with (a Third part of) water
- According to *Shabd Sagar*- Buttermilk with four parts of water.
- According to *Apte* – Buttermilk is rare for *Indra* (the king of Gods). The substance of buttermilk mixed with ¼th of water remaining after making it pass through a piece of cloth

Preparation methods –

1. According to *Kaidev Nighantu* - Placing curd in a vessel (Pot), and then churning it slowly with a churn, while sprinkling water for about three hours. One-fourth water becomes buttermilk, and the other half remains as water.¹⁰
2. According to *Sushrut Samhita* - Buttermilk is that which, after churning, separates into butter (*Sneha*) and half water (*Ardhaudaka*). It is not too thick or too watery.³
3. According to *Bhav Prakash* – Buttermilk is a fourth part of water.⁹
4. According to *Dhanvantari Nighantu* - Buttermilk is separated into three parts.¹³
5. According to *Raj Nighantu* - one part curd + 1/3-part water - churning - Till butter formed - Remove butter.¹²

CLASSIFICATION OF TAKRA ACCORDING TO AYURVEDA CLASSICAL TEXTS:

A. Charak Samhita –²

- 1. *Ruksh*
- 2. *Ardhoddhrita Ghritam*
- 3. *Anuddhrita Ghritam*

B. Harita Samhita – ⁷

1. **Samuddhrita-Ghritam**: Buttermilk from which all the butter (fat) has been removed.
2. **Ardhoddhrita-Ghritam**: Buttermilk from which half of the butter (fat) has been removed.
3. **Anuddhrita-Ghritam**: Buttermilk from which no butter (fat) has been removed.

C. Ashtanga Hridaya – ⁵

1. **Sajala Takra** (with water):
 - **Sasneha** (with fat): This type of buttermilk, having retained fat, is slightly heavier and hence its properties are milder in potency.
 - **Asneha** (without fat): This is more potent in its properties than the *sasneha* variant, as the removal of fat increases its digestive efficacy and makes it lighter.
2. **Nirjala Takra** (without water): When buttermilk is churned without adding water, it retains the highest heaviness and, therefore, the mildest properties among these types. Its digestive effect is lesser, as its density and heaviness make it more challenging for digestion.

The key properties of **Asneha Takra** (fat-free buttermilk with water) include:

- **Laghu (light)**: It is light for digestion, which makes it suitable for people with digestive issues.
- **Deepana (appetizing)** and **Pachana (digestive)**: It stimulates Agni (digestive fire) and helps in proper digestion.
- **Vatahara**: It alleviates Vata dosha imbalances, making it beneficial for Vata-related conditions.
- **Kapha-pitta balancing**: Due to its lightness and ease of digestion, it helps maintain Kapha and Pitta in balance.

D. Kaidev Nighantu -¹⁰

1. Mathita – "Churned" or whipped churned devoid of essence.
2. Udashvit – "Buttermilk mixed with half water".
3. Takra – "Buttermilk"; when water is added to buttermilk in a ratio of 1:4.
4. Dandahata – Buttermilk churned with half water using a stick or churner.
5. Kalaseya – Buttermilk churned with twice the amount of water
6. Karamathita – Buttermilk churned by hand
7. Galita – "Strained buttermilk," specifically passed through a cloth.
8. Ghola – Thin buttermilk without butter.
9. Svetamantha – Buttermilk with water.
10. Sadava – Buttermilk mixed with fruits or flavored with fruits.

E. Dhanvantari Nighantu –¹³

1. Svetapaya – "Buttermilk mixed with twice the amount of water".
2. Udashvit – "Buttermilk mixed with half water"
3. Takra – "Buttermilk" that is "separated into three parts".
4. Mathita – "Plain churned buttermilk" or "Simply churned"

F. Raj Nighantu -¹²

1. Takra
2. Gorasaj
3. Ghola
4. Kalashaya
5. Vilodita
6. Dandahata
7. Arishta Amla
8. Udashvita
9. Mathita
10. Drava

G. Priya-Nighantu – ⁸

According to Sneha Matra (Amount of Oiliness)-

1. Ruksha
2. Arddhasneha
3. Purnasneha

According to Jala Matra (Amount of Water)

1. Mathita

2. Takra
3. Udashvita
4. Chhachhika

H. Shodhal Nighantu – ¹¹

1. Sasaram
2. Nirjalam
3. Ghola
4. Mathita
5. Nihsara
6. Ard hondaka
7. Udasvit
8. Padajalanvit

J. ACC TO BHAV PRAKASH – ⁹

1. GHOLA - 1 part curd + no water –churning –homogeneous mixture.
2. MATHIT - 1 part curd +no water –churning –till butter formed - removed butter.
3. TAKRA – 1 part curd +1/4part water –churning -till butter formed-remove butter
4. UDASHWITA- 1 part curd +1/2part water –churning –homogeneous mixture.
5. CHHACHIKA- 1 part curd water –churning – remove butter -again add water & churn – homogenous mixture.

QUALITY OF TAKRA ACCORDING TO SNEH CONTENT – ACC TO BHAV PRAKASH –⁹

The clarified butter (Ghrita) that is well-prepared and light is beneficial, especially in small quantities. It is therefore known to be heavy, nourishing, and useful for alleviating Kapha dosha. However, unrefined or thick clarified butter is heavy and promotes nourishment and Kapha.

ACC TO DHANVANTARI NIGHANTU –¹³

Previously, what is light and beneficial is said to be less heavy and highly nourishing. Therefore, what is most nourishing is to be understood in the same order.

ACC TO YOGRAKTNAKAR ASTAGUNA –¹⁶

1. Kshudhavardhana
2. Netra-Rujapaham
3. Pranapradam
4. Shonita
5. Mamsa
6. Amabhigatam
7. Kaphanashak
8. Vatanashak

PAKVA AND APAKVA TAKRA – ACC TO KAIDEV NIGHANTU –¹⁰

The substances that have the quality of being heavy and dense, like 'Takra' (buttermilk), obstruct the throat and harm the respiratory system. However, the Takra that is mixed with 'Khali' (grains) is considered beneficial, particularly in cases of asthma, cough, and respiratory diseases. Among the eight substances that are combined with yogurt, Takra is praised for its qualities.

ACC TO DHANVANTARI¹³ /BHAV PRAKASH ⁹/ SHODHAL NIGHANTU ¹¹–

Takra (buttermilk) destroys the Kapha in the body and obstructs the throat. It is especially beneficial in the treatment of asthma and cough.

MODE OF ACTION –

ACC TO CHARAK SAMHITA –¹

The body channels being purified, the nutrient fluid circulates well to all the parts of the body, and hence the patient acquires plumpness, vitality, healthy complexion and cheerfulness. All the hundred diseases comprising the specific diseases of Vata and Kapha disappear by the buttermilk treatment. There is no better therapy than that of buttermilk in diseases of Kapha and Vata.¹

INDICATION –

ACC TO BHAV PRAKASH-⁹

In the cold season, during digestive weakness, and in cases of vata disorders, when there is a lack of appetite and obstruction in the channels, buttermilk (Takra) becomes like nectar. It destroys diseases like vomiting, cough, fever with poison, pallor, fat-related disorders, urinary issues, and fistula.

It is beneficial for conditions such as edema, digestive disorders, abdominal pain, tuberculosis, ailments located in the abdomen, and those caused by skin diseases, swelling, thirst, and worms.

ACC TO KAIDEV NIGHANTU – ¹⁰

In the cold season, when there is digestive weakness and irregular appetite, in conditions of kapha disorders with obstruction in the channels, and in cases of vata disorders located in the abdomen, the consumption of buttermilk (Takra) is like nectar. It is beneficial for conditions such as tumors, hemorrhoids, and abdominal disorders.

ACC TO CHARAK SAMHITA ²

The buttermilk is to be administered in edema, piles, assimilation, disorders, suppression of urine, abdominal affections, anorexia, and complications arising from the oleation therapy and in anemia and toxicosis.

ACC TO SUSHRUT SAMHITA ³

It is beneficial for the following conditions:

- Fistula
- Dropsy (edema)
- Diarrhea
- Jaundice
- Abdominal disorders
- Tumors
- Anorexia
- Irregular fever
- Excessive thirst
- Vomiting
- Cough
- Abdominal pain
- Disorders caused by the imbalance of phlegm and vata

ACC TO ASTANGSANGRAH –⁴

It helps in conditions such as:

- Edema (swelling)
- Abdominal tumors
- Diarrhea disorders (Grahani)
- Urinary issues
- Loss of appetite
- Tumors of the spleen
- Conditions related to the liver and jaundice.

CONTRAINDICATION –

Acc to Bhav Prakash -⁹

1. In cases of injuries or wounds
2. During the hot season
3. To weak individuals
4. In conditions of fainting, dizziness, or burning sensations
5. In diseases associated with Rakta pitta (blood disorders).

Acc to kaidev nighantu -¹⁰

Buttermilk (Takra) should not be used in the following situations:

- In summer During the autumn season. In cases of injuries or wounds. In conditions of cough, burning sensations, dizziness, or depletion. In states of fainting. In disorders related to Rakta pitta.

Acc to Harita Samhita - ⁷

"In conditions like edema due to Vata, and debilitated individuals, during the hot season or autumn, but not in cases of fainting, dizziness, or thirst, and also not in conditions where there is a combination of blood and Pitta disorders, Takra

(buttermilk) is not recommended. It can cause various disorders. It increases Kapha (excess water content), stimulates digestion, and aggravates Rakta Pitta (blood and Pitta disorders). In conditions like nasal congestion, asthma, and cough, it is also not considered beneficial.

ACC TO SHODHAL NIGHANTU – ¹¹

Takra (buttermilk) should not be given in cases of wounds, nor conditions affecting the chest, throat, or head caused by Kapha. It should also not be administered in cases of fainting, dizziness, burning sensations, or diseases caused by a combination of blood and Pitta.

Takra-sevana-kaal-

Acc to charak Samhita- ²

The physician, skilled in constitutional pathology and climatology should give a course of buttermilk for seven days, or ten days, or a fortnight or even a month. The physician, skilled in dietetic therapy, should not abruptly stop the buttermilk diet. A gradual withdrawal of the course of buttermilk which has lasted for a month is beneficial. The decrease should be as gradual as the increase in the buttermilk course; no reduction should, however, be made in the solid food. This course has been prescribed for the restoration and maintenance of strength for strengthening the gastric fire and for the promotion of vitality, plumpness, and complexion.

according to Shodhala Nighantu¹¹, a traditional Ayurvedic text, Takra (buttermilk) should be consumed for a period ranging from a minimum of 7 days to a maximum of 1 month consecutively, depending on the individual's health condition and the desired therapeutic benefits. This usage is recommended for promoting health and balancing the doshas, particularly for digestive disorders and conditions related to Vata and Kapha imbalance.

Important of Takra in Ayurveda –

ACC TO CHARAK SAMHITA - ²

The physician skilled in humoral, gastric, and constitutional pathology should prescribe buttermilk of the following three kinds: one with all the butter removed, the second with half the butter removed and the third with none of the butter removed. The piles destroyed by buttermilk will never recur; when buttermilk sprinkled on the ground burns up even tenacious grass, what need be said of mere dry piles in the body of a person whose vital fire is active? The body channels being purified, the nutrient fluid circulates well to all the parts of the body, and hence the patient acquires plumpness, vitality, healthy complexion, and cheerfulness. All the hundred diseases comprising the specific diseases of Vata and Kapha disappear with the buttermilk treatment. There is no better therapy than that of butter milk for diseases of Kapha and Vata. There is no better remedy in this world than buttermilk for the piles of Vata-cum-Kapha type. It should be used with or without unctuous substance according to the nature of the morbid humor.

ACC TO ASTANGHRIDYA ⁶

Hemorrhoids do not recur when treated with Takra (buttermilk). Just as buttermilk destroys even grass when poured on the ground, similarly, it eliminates hemorrhoids.

ACC TO KASHYAP KALPA – ¹⁴

Freshly churned Takra (buttermilk) is fragrant, improves taste, enhances strength, and promotes nourishment. It is slightly sour, hot (in potency), clear, light, and sharp. When consumed, it kindles the digestive fire and stimulates the digestive process.

DISCUSSION-

In Ayurveda, Tākra (buttermilk) is esteemed not only as a nutritional beverage but also as a potent medicinal agent. Its rich composition of probiotics, enzymes, and nutrients makes it an invaluable resource for promoting overall health and well-being. Classical texts such as Charaka Samhita and Bhava Prakasha provide detailed accounts of Tākra's preparation methods and their therapeutic applications, highlighting their significance in Ayurvedic practices.²

Therapeutic Properties of Takra

The medicinal properties of Tākra are attributed to its ability to support digestive health, enhance nutrient absorption, and promote gut microbiota balance. Tākra is known to be light, easily digestible, and cooling, making it suitable for balancing Pitta dosha, which is associated with heat and metabolism. Additionally, its properties can also help pacify Vata and Kapha doshas when prepared with specific herbs and spices tailored to individual needs.²

Preparation Methods

Ayurvedic texts outline various methods for preparing Tākra, emphasizing the importance of the ingredients used. For instance, the combination of Tākra with **ginger** or **coriander** can enhance its digestive qualities and provide additional therapeutic benefits. Each preparation method can be adjusted according to the individual's doshic constitution, current

health status, and seasonal changes. This personalized approach is a hallmark of Ayurvedic practice, ensuring that Tākra not only nourishes but also heals.²

Customization for Dosha Balance

One of the unique aspects of Tākra in Ayurveda is its adaptability. By incorporating different herbs and spices, practitioners can create formulations that specifically target imbalances in the doshas. For example, adding cumin may help soothe Vata, while incorporating turmeric can provide anti-inflammatory benefits suitable for Pitta imbalances. This customization allows Tākra to serve as a versatile remedy for various health conditions, including digestive disorders, inflammation, and metabolic issues.²

CONCLUSION-

Just as amrita (nectar) grants immortality to the gods in heaven, similarly, on earth, Takra (buttermilk) bestows longevity and health to humans, making them feel as if they are immortal. Amrita (nectar) is rare for humans, just as water is rare for the gods, a son is rare for the ancestors, and Takra (buttermilk) is rare and precious even for Indra (Shakra).

A person who regularly consumes Takra (buttermilk) never suffers from ailments, and no diseases can affect those who are nourished by Takra. Just as amrita (nectar) brings happiness to the gods, so too is Takra considered the source of health and happiness for humans on earth.¹³

If Shiva (Girish) is present on Mount Kailash, why wouldn't the blue-throated one (Neelkanth) be in Vaikuntha? If Krishna (Keshava) experiences the essence of the dark complexion, then why (is he not present)? Indra, having caused a decline in the state of the unfortunate, is he (the deity) able to enjoy the benefits of the long-bodied one (Lambodara)? The group (of deities), which includes the one afflicted by leprosy (Kuber), and Agni (the god of fire) in his state of burning, what do they enjoy?"¹⁶

Takra, commonly known as buttermilk, is recognized in Ayurveda for its significant role in digestive metabolism. Modern research supports this, revealing that it contains beneficial bacteria such as *Lactobacillus*, which function as natural probiotics. These probiotics aid in proper digestion and nutrient absorption.⁹

According to Ayurveda, healthy individuals should consume butter milk based on their personalized state, which includes considerations of dosha balance, digestive strength, and physical strength.

Recent preparations and formulations of Buttermilk may open new avenues for research in Ayurvedic practices, enhancing its applications. Properly prepared buttermilk is beneficial not only for healthy individuals but also for patients seeking digestive support.²

References –

1. Charaka. Charaka Samhita. In: Chikitsa Sutra. Verses 2/3/21, 25, 27.
2. Charaka. Charaka Samhita. In: Chikitsa Chapter. Verses 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 26, 27, 30.
3. Sushruta. Sushruta Samhita. Sutra Sthana. Verse 45.
4. Vagbhata. Ashtanga Sangraha. Sutra Sthana. Verse 10.
5. Vagbhata. Ashtanga Hridaya. Sutra Sthana. Verse 5.
6. Vagbhata. Ashtanga Hridaya. Chikitsa Sthana. Verses 8, 9.
7. Harita. Harita Samhita.
8. Priya Nighantu: Acharya Priyavrat Sharma
9. Bhavamisra. Bhavaprakash
10. Kaideva Nighantu
11. Shodhala Nighantu: Tākra Section.
12. Raja Nighantu: Kshiradi Section
13. Dhanvantari Nighantu: Suvarnaadi Section.
14. Kashyapa. Kashyapa Samhita. Kalpa Sthana. Verse 5.
15. Anonymous. Bhaishajya Ratnavali.
16. Anonymous. Yoga Ratnakara.
17. Anonymous. Vaidikīya Subhashitani