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Takra (Buttermilk): A Boon to Mankind

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Abstract:

Buttermilk's (*Takra*) importance has been mentioned in many of the Ayurvedic classical texts. It is included in diet and taken as medicine worldwide. Ayurveda says our *Ahara* (diet) itself is medicine. *Takra* (buttermilk) is used in the form of diet, various recipes are prepared from it. *Takra* (buttermilk) has been used as a medicine internally and externally. It's also given in the form of after drink with various medicines according to disease condition. It is also called Granny's probiotics. This article discusses the various uses of buttermilk in various conditions externally and internally. Ayurvedic utility of buttermilk and precautions while consuming it, as well as those who should not take it and how it should be taken. The supremacy of buttermilk over curd has also been discussed along with its nutritive value. All these points are discussed in a nutshell in this article.

Keywords: *Takra*, buttermilk, Ayurveda, Granny's probiotics, diseases

INTRODUCTION

The fermented dairy drink is known by the name buttermilk. Buttermilk in Sanskrit is known by the name *Takra*. Contrary to its name buttermilk, it contains no butter. After churning out the butter from fermented cream, the liquid portion left behind forms the buttermilk. Buttermilk can be taken alone or used in preparations like making soda bread, marinating chicken, pork, etc. Traditionally buttermilk is common in many Arabic, Indian, Nepalese, Pakistani, Polish, and Dutch households, not found in Western countries. It is very common in Indian and Nepalese homes.[1] Preparation of buttermilk is very easy. Take a cup of milk and add one tablespoon of Vinegar to it. Then gently stir the mixture and let it sit for some time. At this time lactobacillus bacteria ferment the milk. This helps to churn the butter and fat from cream and lowers PH. The acidic environment created prevents the harmful microorganisms from growing, increasing their shelf life. Then it is churned in a mixer jar after adding four times water, the butter is separated and the leftover liquid is used as *Takra*(buttermilk).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A literary review of Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita, Ashtangasangraha, Ashtangahridaya, Bhavaprakasha, Kshemakutuhalam and Vaidyakiyasubhashitam was done. Also referred to various articles published in international journals.

Takra [buttermilk] has been used throughout the world in different forms as diet as well as medicine for centuries. *Takra* [buttermilk] is known by the name “Chhaachh” in Hindi “Buttermilch” in German, “Babecurre” in French, “*Jocoque*” in Spanish, “*Kurdish*” in Persian, “*Moru*” in Tamil and Malayalam, “*Ghol*” in Rajasthani etc. In Ayurveda, Samhitas *Takra* (buttermilk) has been described as having tremendous health benefits.

Takra(buttermilk) in ayurveda

It is told even for Lord Indra the *Takra* (buttermilk) is scarce. [2] It's recommended by almost all the Samhitas for daily intake. It's used to prepare medicine and taken as *Anupana* [after drink]. In Bhavaprakasha, one among the *Laghutrayees* (lesser triad) written by Bhav Misra *Takra* (buttermilk), it is told that a person who takes buttermilk doesn't suffer from a disease and the disease is cured by *Takra* (Buttermilk) do not recur again, just as divine nectar is for Gods.

Properties of Takra (buttermilk)

Rasa (Taste): Astringent, Sour and Sweet

Virya (Potency): Hot

Vipaka (Post digestive effect): Sweet

Guna: Binding, light, dry

Prabhava (Actions) digestive, promotes immunity, pacifies Vata

Different types of Takra(buttermilk) are based on the preparation and water content.[3]

1. *Ghola*: When curd with cream is churned without adding water. It is pleasing and similar to *Rasala* in properties and pacifies Vata and Pitta dosha. (These are the humour told in Ayurveda which should be in a balanced state to maintain the state. the imbalance in Vata, Pitta and Kapha results in disease.)
2. *Mathita*: When churned without cream and water. It pacifies Kapha and Pitta and is charming.
3. *Takra*: When one-fourth of water is added and churned, it is called *Takra*. It is an appetizer, that promotes semen, satisfying and pacifies Vata. It is very useful in dysentery, as it is light and absorbs water from the large intestine by hardening the faeces. As it is sweet in post-digestive effect, it does not increase Pitta. As it is sour, hot in potency, appetizer, promotes semen and is satisfying, it pacifies Vata. As it is astringent in taste, hot in potency, absorbed fast and drying, it is pacifying Kapha.
4. *Udasvit*: When half of the quantity of water is added and churned it is known as *Udasvit*. It enhances Kapha, strengthens the body and removes the undigested material.
5. *Chacchika*: When butter is removed from the curd by churning and after adding plenty of water, churned again, it is known as *Chacchika*. It is cooling, light to digest alleviates Pitta, tiresomeness, thirst and diseases of Vata and Kapha. If rock salt is added to it, it is still more appetizer.

Medicinal use of Buttermilk as told in Caraka Samhita

Acharya Charaka says *Takra* (buttermilk) can be used in treating diseases like *Sopha* (oedema), *Arsas* (haemorrhoids), *Grahanidosa* (Sprue), *Udara* (abdominal disorders), *Mutragaha* (retention of urine), *Aruci* (anorexia).[4] Acharya Vagbhata says the utility of buttermilk in *Snehavyapat* (complication during oleation therapy), and *Pandu*(anaemia).*Garavisa* (artificial poisoning).[5] Also, *Takra* (buttermilk) has been told in the *agryaoushadhi*(best drug) to be used, regularly for the cure of dysentery, oedema, and haemorrhoids.[6]

That buttermilk is wholesome, not very thick, sweet, and devoid of fat. One suffering from *sannipatodara* (a type of ascites) should take buttermilk added with trikatu, *yavakṣara* and salt. Those suffering from *Vatodara* (a type of ascites) should take the same added with pippali and salt. The patient of *pittodara* (type of ascites) should take sweet buttermilk added with sugar and *madhuka*. One suffering from *kaphodara* should take warm

and defatted buttermilk added with *yavani*, *saindhava*, *jiraka*, *trikatu*, and honey. The patient of *plihodara* should take buttermilk added with honey, oil, *vaca*, *sunthi Satahva*, *Kuṣṭha* and *saindhava*. One suffering from ascites should take the same added with *trikatu*. One suffering from an obstructive abdomen should take buttermilk added with *hapuṣa*, *Yavani* (Carom seeds), *jiraka* and *saindhava*. The patient with a perforative abdomen should take buttermilk added with *pippali* and honey. Buttermilk is like nectar for those suffering from heaviness, anorexia, poor digestion, diarrhoea and *Vata-Kaphaja* disorders.

That buttermilk is wholesome, not very thick, sweet, and devoid of fat. One suffering from sannipatodara should take buttermilk added with *trikatu*, *yavakṣara* and salt.

Those suffering from Vadodara should take the same added with *pippali* and salt.

The patient of pittodara should take sweet buttermilk added with sugar and madhuka.

One suffering from Kaphodara should take warm and defatted buttermilk added with Yavani (Carom seeds), *saindhava* (rock salt), *jīraka* (cumin seeds) and *trikatu* (ginger, black pepper and *pippali*) along with honey.

The patient of plihodara should take buttermilk added with honey, oil, *vaca* (*Acorus calamus*), *Sunthi*, (*Zingiber officinale*), *Satahva* (*Antheum graveolans*), *Kuṣṭha* (*Saussurea lappa*) and *saindhava*.

Internal use of *Takra* (buttermilk) in various disease conditions

* For the management of complications arising due to improper administration of ghee, the gruel prepared from *Takra* (buttermilk) is given [7]

* For the management of complications arising due to improper administration of *Taila*(oil) prepared with oil cake and *Takra* (buttermilk) is given, [8]

* In *Krimi roga* (worm infestation) prepare the gruel by adding six times buttermilk and *Vidanga*, *Pippalimula*, *Sigru*, and *Marica*. Also, add *Sarjaksara*, which is taken internally [.9]

* In *Mutrakrechra* (dysuria) *Takra* {butter milk) mixed with a fine powder of the drugs of *Kuṣṭha*, *Gomedaka*, *Hingu*, *Kraunca- asthi*, *Trayusana*, *Vaca*, *Vasa*, *Ela*, *Svadamstra*, *Ajamoda*, *Asmabhedaka* and taken as Anupana. [10]

* In *Prameha* (diabetes mellitus) *Takra* (butter milk given with *Haritaki* or *Triphala*, [11]

* For *Amapacaka* (digestion of toxic substances), the *Takra* (butter milk gruel prepared from *Kapittha*, *Bilva*, *chengeri*, *Dadima* helps digest the toxic and holds the Body fluid. [12]

* In *Vatika hrdroga*, warm oil added with *Saravika*, curd water, buttermilk and salt should be taken.[13]

* In the *Kaphaja* type of *Chardi* (vomiting), the patient should be given a diet of old wheat, Sali rice and barley with soup of *Patola*, and *Nimba* cooked with buttermilk, soured with fruit and spiced with pungent substances. [14]

* In *Kaphaja Mutrakrichra* (dysuria) oral intake of buttermilk is advised.[15]

* *Mandura Bhasma* should be taken by the patient in the appropriate doses according to his *Agni* (power of digestion and metabolism) along with buttermilk.[16]

Punarnava Mandura pills should be taken with buttermilk, it cures *Pandu*, *Pleeha*, *Arsha*, *vishama Jvara*(fever), *Sotha*(oedema), *Grahanidosha* (sprue syndrome), *Kuṣṭha* (skin disease), *Krimi* (parasitic infestation) [17]

*Put milk in a pot coated with a paste of *Chitraka* and curdle it. Churn this curd well to get butter which is heated to ghee. Add to the ghee all the buttermilk (which contains mixed *Chitraka*) from the pot and prepare the medicated *Ghrita*. It is best to cure oedema. It also provides relief in piles, diarrhoea, *Vāta-gulma*, and polyuria and stimulates digestion. During the management, the diet should be taken with buttermilk prepared as above with *Chitraka* along with ghee prepared from the above butter or gruels prepared with this buttermilk and ghee [18]

Use of Takra externally

In *Kustha* (skin disorders) *Caturangula parna* (leaves of *Aragvadha*), *Kakamaci Parna* and leaves of *Karavira*, all these are pounded in buttermilk and the paste is applied to the affected area. This is called *Aragvadhadi lepa*. [19]. In *Kusthadi lepa Kustha*, *Haridra*, *Daruharidra*, *Surasa*, *Patola*, *Nimba*, *Asvagandha*, *Suradaru*, *Sigru*, *Sarsapa*, *Tumburu*, *Dhanyaka*, *Vanya* and *Chandana*. All these drugs are taken in equal quantities and made into fine powder pounded with *Takra* (buttermilk) [20] In *Udarasula* (colic pain) *Nasaka lepa Yava* and *Yavakshara* are taken and pounded well. The *Takra* (buttermilk) was applied over the abdomen [21] In the case of *Stri Roga* (diseases of women) like vaginal discharge washing with the decoction of *Triphala* mixed with buttermilk, cow's urine and *Sukta* removes with discharge [22].

* *Takradhara* [23]

The matured gooseberry fruits exposed to sunlight take 80 Karsha and the seed is removed cooked in 288 Karsha of water and reduced to 1/16th. To this equal amount of sour buttermilk is added and churned properly This is used for *Siro Dhara*.

Takradhara is a special Panchakarma therapy which is a kind of sudation therapy using medicated buttermilk to help the brain and mind relax and reduce stress. In *Takradhara*, the medicated buttermilk, similar to *Siro Dhara*, will be poured continuously onto the forehead or over the entire body. It is helpful in psychosomatic disorders, psoriasis, hypertension and lack of sleep. It also cures migraine headaches and ear, nose, throat diseases, greying of hairs etc. Relieves insomnia and enhances blood circulation to the brain. Helps the brain and mind to ease and relax. Reduces mental stress and prevents hair fall, greying of the hair, scalp and dandruff problems. The lactic acid in buttermilk helps in the transdermal absorption of drugs like *Amalaki*, and *Musta* and helps in producing anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant effects, thus helping to cure psoriasis

Takrarishta.

Hapusa, *kurcika*, *dhanyaka*, *jiraka*, *karavi*, *Sati*, *pippalimula*, *citraka*, *gajapippali*, *Yavani* (Carom seeds) and *ajamoda*-all powdered together are mixed with buttermilk together so that it becomes mildly sour and pungent and be kept in a ghee vessel. When sourness and pungency are manifested, it becomes *Takrarista*.

Take *yavani*, *Amalaki*, *Haritaki* and *maricha* each in three pala (144 gm) and *pancha-lavana* in one pala (48 gm) and powder together and add buttermilk to it and ferment till sour taste is obtained. This preparation called *Takrarishta* stimulates the digestive power and relieves *Sotha*, (swelling) *gulma* (tumour) *arsha* (piles), *Krimi*(worm,) *Prameha* (diabetes)and *Udara roga* [(abdominal disease)]. [24]

It is palatable and should be taken in appropriate doses in conditions of thirst before, mid and after meals. *Takrarishta* is an appetiser, improves relish, promotes complexion, carminates *Kapha* and *Vata*, alleviates swelling, itching and pain of the anorectum and promotes strength.

One suffering from ascites should take the same added with *trikatu*.

One suffering from an obstructive abdomen should take buttermilk added with *hapusa*, *Yavani jiraka* and *saindhava*.

The patient with a perforative abdomen should take buttermilk added with *pippali* and honey.

Buttermilk is like nectar for those suffering from heaviness, anorexia, poor digestion, diarrhoea and *Vata-Kaphaja* disorders

Indication and contraindications of *Takra* (buttermilk)

It's beneficial to have *Takra* (buttermilk) during the winter season, for indigestion, diseases of *Vata*, distaste and blocked channels. It cures chronic poisons, vomiting, nausea, malarial fevers, anaemia, obesity, dysentery, haemorrhoids, retention of urine, glycosuria, intestinal growths, diarrhoea, colic, splenic diseases, distaste, vitiligo, intestinal problems, diseases of skin, oedema, thirst, and worm infestation.

It is contraindicated in case of wasting, during hot seasons, emaciations, syncope, vertigo, burning sensation and haemorrhage. It should not be consumed following immediate exposure to heat, severe constipation, asthma, or rheumatic fever.

Nutrition facts of buttermilk (amount 100grams) [25]

Calories

Total fat 0.9g	1%
Saturated Fat 0.5g	2%
Cholesterol 4mg	1%
Sodium 105mg	4%
Potassium 151mg	4%
Total carbohydrates 4.1g	1%%
Dietary fibres 0g	0%
Sugars 4.8g	
Protein 3.3g	6%
Vitamin C	1%
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium	11%
Iron	0%
Magnesium	2%
Cobalamin	3%

Various recipes of buttermilk for daily use

- *A glass of buttermilk with black pepper and coriander helps instantly ease our symptoms of acidity
- *Temper buttermilk with a little oil, kadhi patta, asafoetida, coriander, cumin seeds, black salt, pepper, ginger, green chillies, mint etc
- *Buttermilk can be added to baked food items like lemon cake, chocolate cake etc
- *Can make salad dressings with buttermilk, honey, apricot, celery, vinegar, mint leaves and cheese.
- *For making yummy pancakes also buttermilk can be used.

Some home remedies using Buttermilk

These are the home remedies done by Indians at their home.

- *Take buttermilk mix it with 2 tablespoons of chickpea flour, and a pinch of turmeric make it into a paste. Apply on the face and leave it for 10 to 15 minutes It will enhance your skin tone.
- *Take a glass of buttermilk and add black pepper and coriander, it helps to cure acidity.
- *Drinking buttermilk lowers cholesterol levels and also helps to maintain cardiovascular health.
- *Buttermilk mixed with rosewater, organic honey and 2 tablespoons aloe vera gel reduces sun tan.
- *To condition the hair, we can use 200 ml buttermilk, add 1 bowl of rice blend it into a paste and mix it with a vitamin E capsule. Apply on hair, after 30 minutes to 1 hour of application. Shampoo the hair as usual.
- *To buttermilk add 2 tablespoon gram flour and 1 tablespoon olive oil Mix it well and apply to the scalp. Later wash with a mild shampoo after 30 minutes. It cures dandruff.

Discussion: Supremacy of *Takra* (buttermilk) over *Dahi* (curd)

Following are the properties of curd.

Rasa (Taste): Amla

Virya (Potency): Hot

Vipaka (Post digestive effect): Amla

Guna: Binding, Heavy

Prabhava (Actions) digestive, promotes immunity, pacifies Vata

The difference is in *Vipaka*; Buttermilk is having sweet *Vipaka*, but curd is Sour in *Vipaka*. Also, curd is heavy to digest whereas buttermilk is light to digest. This suggests that it's better to take buttermilk than to take curd. There is a world of difference between both buttermilk and curd, though both are bi-products of milk. The supremacy of buttermilk is that curd will start the fermentation process more aggressively when it comes in contact with the heat of the stomach and it, in turn, produces heat, instead of cooling it heats the intestine and stomach. In buttermilk the minute water is added to curd the fermentation stops, making it cool compared to curd. As buttermilk has less fat content it will not increase body fat. 90% of buttermilk is water, taking it helps to maintain the water balance in our body. It is easy to digest so it's a good option for people who cannot tolerate glucose. As buttermilk has a cooling effect and has less fat and high vitamin content it is preferred over curd. Buttermilk is suitable for all body types.[26] *Takra* (buttermilk) has been mentioned in 55 different places in Charaka Samhita which throws light on its utility of it.

Conclusion:

Buttermilk keeps one hydrated and energetic and makes a feeling of fullness thus reducing unnecessary consumption of junk foods. Hence it is an ideal drink for those who want to reduce their weight. It contains riboflavin which helps to convert food to energy. It helps in hormone secretion, improves liver function and facilitates detoxification of the body. Buttermilk is a boon to mankind as when included in the diet it provides us immunity and also acts as medicine for various diseases. It helps to increase digestion, given in case of low digestive fire. In diarrhoea, oedema, piles, fistula in ano, anorexia, vomiting, and obstruction to channels of circulation it is taken internally. Buttermilk is one of the *Dravya* (substances) that can be used to treat diseases where both Vata and kapha dosa together produce a disease, *kapha Vata vikaras*. It's cheap compared to other health drinks and easily available in all homes.

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