Uses of ghee (ghṛta) in the vedic sacrifices and its impact on the environment

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Abstract
Ghee (ghṛta) is the essential offering to Agni in all the sacrifices. Agni is the mouth of the Gods and Ghee is the food that feeds them. The Anuśāsana Parva of the Mahābhārata (Parva-13) says that Ghee is sacred because of its use in sacrifices. As the Ghee is burnt in the fire its smoke and fragrance covers the entire environment and the medicinal values embedded on it goes to all. It purifies the environment. Experimental studies show that the incidence of physical ailments, sickness and disease are reduced in the houses, where the Yajña (Agniṣṭhra) is regularly performed because it creates a pure, nutritional and medicinal atmosphere.

The observation of some distinguished scientists is noteworthy in this regard. Dr. Hafkine has mentioned that "mixing ghee and sugar and burning them creates smoke which kills the germs of certain diseases and secretion takes place from some glands relate to the wind-pipe, which fill our heart and mind with pleasure."

Sugars present in Haviṣhya have great power to purify the atmosphere. It kills the germs of T.B., measles, smallpox and cow-pox --- remarks Prof. Tilward.

This paper is an attempt to highlight the scientific values of oblations specially Ghee and its effect on environment.

Key words: ghee, yajña, veda, environment

Introduction
Ghee is the most important substances amongst the various substances used in Yajña. Ghee is essential because it helps in rapid combustion of cellulose of wood and keeps the fire burning. The smoke comes from the wood, where ghee is given as oblation; covers the whole atmosphere and reduces the pollution level. Two offerings of unbroken raw rice with ghee are offered during each Agniṣṭhra. According to Āyurveda, cow’s ghee is a tonic and cardiac stimulant. The gases produced by the burning of cow ghee helps in balancing the cycle of the nature. Ghee removes all pathogenic bacteria and works effectively in purification of the atmosphere making it sufficiently fit for mankind, plant and life on the earth.

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Methodology
The study is basically an analytical one. It is based on descriptive method of research. This study is also based on secondary sources like books, journals etc.

Objectives of the study
The following are the main objectives:
1. To highlight the uses of ghee in the vedic sacrifices.
2. To highlight the effect of the sacrifices.
3. To highlight the impact of sacrifices on the environment.
The Vedic Sacrifices (Yajña)
The word Yajña is derived from the root ‘Yaj’ with the suffix ‘ghiy’. ‘Yaj’ expresses three senses – devapujā, i.e. glorification of the deities, Saṅgatikarana i.e establishing a connection between man and the gods and dāna, i.e offering of oblations to the gods. In the Srautasutra of Kātyāyana, Yajña has been defined as ‘dravya devatā tyāgaḥ’ Yajña is made up of three factors I) dravya i.e materials meant for offerings (hāvis) such as virhi, yava, pāsū, soma etc. II) devatā i.e the vedic deities like Agni, Indra, Vāyu etc and III) tyāgaḥ i.e the act of offering to the deities. In the Vedas the sacrifice is often referred to as dāśvān i.e the giver of hāviṣ.

The Vedic Yajñās are primarily of four types i.e. Agnihotraḥoma, Somayajñā, Īṣṭi and Pasuyajñā. The Karmaṇāṇḍa has prescribed these four types of rituals for attaining the three primary goals of material existence viz. dharma, artha and kāma. The deity is invoked by the singing of Stotras by the Sāma Vedic Udghāt. Then the Rgvedic priest Hoṛ invites the deity to the sacrificial ceremony by reciting the Śastras. The Yajurvedic Advaryu performs the Yajñā on behalf of the Yajamāna. The Atharvedic priest Brahmā acts as the supervisor of the entire ritual. The Yajamāna seeks to establish a connection between himself and the deity through the combined efforts of these priests. The need of the Yajamāna is placed before the supernatural forces i.e the deities through the act of Yajñā. It is found in the Aitareyabrāhma [2] that in reality the Yajmāna himself becomes the pāsū to the deity whose blessings he seeks. However as this cannot be done, he offers an animal in his stead and frees himself from his debts towards the deities.

Ghee and its importance
Ghee or ghṛta comes from the root ghṛ means to shine, which comes from the milk of cow. It is a nourishing and healing element. It normalises the vāta, pitta etc. It increases intelligence, memory power energy etc. Also it improves our digestive system and considered as the best form of fat which maintains our cholesterol level. The usages of ghee improve the immnunity of a person.

The Anuśāsana Parva of Mahābhārata [3] mentions that it is sacred because of its uses in sacrifice. Ghee brings excess of goodness to our life. So it is rightly said that “Ayurgrhtam” i.e. ghee is our life.

Bhopal Gas Tragedy and Agnihotra
The harrowing incidence of Union Carbide plant’s gas leak tragedy took place on the deadly night of December 3, 1984. Hundreds of people died and thousands were hospitalised due to inhaling the poisonous gas. There were, however, two families ---Shri. Sohan Lal S Khushwaha and Shri. M.L. Rathore, which lived in the worst affected area, one mile away from the plant, came out unscathed. In these families, no one died. The common thing observed in these two families is that both the family regularly performed Agnihotra (Havan). Nobody was even hospitalized despite of being present in the area worst hit by the toxic gas. This observation proves that Agnihotra is a powerful antidote to pollution [4].

Ghee and sacrifices
The great theme of the Vedas is Yamaha and ghee is an essential offering to Agni in all the Yajñās. Agni is the mouth of all the Gods. Whatever we offer to Agni, it directly goes to the other gods also. Ghee is the food of all the Gods. Experiments say that 10 grams of ghee used in the fire (sacrifice) produces one ton of oxygen. As the ghee is burnt in the fire it covers the entire environment and purifies it. The smoke comes from this fire strengthens the lung of the body and makes the person healthy. The Ethylele oxide and formaldehyde crated from it gives immunity against bacteria those spreading all over the air [5]. The gas generated from havan cures the wounds.

References
1. Internet
2. Aitareyabrāhmana, 2.1.
7. Rgveda, 7.61.4.

Purification of environment
The industrialisation, rapid urbanization, deforestation, and modernisation of agriculture have disastrously affected our ecological balances. Air and water pollution, disturbances in the ozone layer –formation, radioactive waves etc., have destabilized the human, animal and plant life cycles. Experimental studies show that the incidence of physical ailments, sickness and disease are reduced in the houses, where the Yajña (Agnihotra) is regularly performed because it creates a pure, nutritional and medicinal atmosphere. It renews the brain cells, revitalizes the skin, purifies blood etc.

Conclusion
In simple words, Yajña is a process of give and take. Offerings are made to the deities and they bestow blessings in turn to the Yajamāna. This is how the cosmic balance and order is maintained.

Ghee is one of the most important elements used in the sacrifices. By the usages of ghee the environment is benefited. Lord Kṛṣṇa also mentions in the Gita [6] that Yajñā is the source of all that causes rain and it purifies all vegetations and herbs. It is said in the Rgveda [7] that Yajñā solves all the problems. Yajña done with cow ghee reduces the pollution level. Thus we get pollution free environment.

The medicinal fumes emanating from Agnihotra have been observed by researchers in the field of microbiology to be clearly bacteriolethal in nature. These eradicate bacteria and other micro-organisms, which are the root cause of illness and diseases. This must be the reason why the incidence of physical ailments, sickness and diseases becomes less in the households, where Agnihotra is regularly performed. Even without going into detailed chemical bacteriology, it can be stated that performance of Yajña leads to purification of air by removing foul odours, removing harmful insects, killing bacteria and creating a climate conducive for the growth of plant and vegetation.

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