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Concept of *Hita-Ahita Ahara* and its relevance in preservation of good health w.s.r. to *Pathyatam Ahara*

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ABSTRACT

The science and methodology of living a physically, physiologically, spiritually, and mentally balanced life is what we call as *Ayurveda*. It does not merely focus on curing the diseases of the unhealthy people but it also prioritises preservation of good health in already healthy individuals. The lifestyle we have moulded ourselves into after the modern civilization took place has kept us at a bay from having a perfect health, a healthy mind, and a healthy body. When it comes to maintaining good health or even curing the diseases of the patients, first thing we should take care of is the diet. i.e. '*Ahara*' as we call it in *Ayurvedic* terminologies. *Ayurveda* has also coined the term '*Trayopasthamba*' which literally means the three pillars of human health. It includes- *Ahara*, *Nidra* & *Bramhacharya*.^[1] *Ahara* is the utmost important factor when it comes to leading a disease free, healthy life as per *Ayurveda*. Today, even modern science cannot deny the impact of diet on human health. A German Philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach coined a famous phrase 'we are what we eat' which *Ayurveda* approves of and supports with many theories. This article focuses on *Acharya Sushruta's* perspective of '*Hita-Ahita Ahara*' along with *Pathyatam Ahara* and how it directly impacts human health.

Key words: *Ahara*, *Ayurveda*, *Hita*, *Ahita*, *Diet*, *Pathyatam*, *Health*.

INTRODUCTION

'*Praninam Punarmulamaharo Balavaranaoujasam Cha*' meaning food is the cause of strength, colour (complexion) of person and vitality of all living beings.^[2] It is made clear from above statement that how important it is to consume food which is nutritious and provides good health. *Ayurveda* has always focused on

the concept of '*Agni*' digestive fire along with the proper food consumption. Every single human has different digestive capacity according to their *Prakurti*, body type, body physique etc. so what you eat on the daily basis becomes even more important in terms of maintaining good health. Diet regimen, how to eat, what to eat, when to eat etc all these concepts have been made clear in *Ayurveda* textbooks. The way food impacts our daily activities is remarkable and however busy our routine lives may have become, we need to draw our attention to what we eat and how is it beneficial to our overall health, is it providing all the *Rasas* that are required for growth & development, is it providing enough energy to perform daily activities, is it keeping you active all day etc. WHO also recognises the challenges and opportunities related with the food safety and hence understands and approves importance of food under the slogan for 2015 "From farm to plate, make food safe".^[3] This article thus helps us get the clear understanding of how some *Ahara*

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Dravyas are effortlessly, naturally always beneficial, and helpful in maintenance of good health while some are not, *Pathyatam Dravyas* and how they are truly beneficial to human health as put forth by *Acharya Sushruta*.

Concept of Hita-Ahita

Some *Acharya* suggest that the substances which are beneficial for *Vata Dosha* can cause disturbance in *Pitta Dosha* and this is the reason that no substance can be completely beneficial i.e., *Hita* or completely non-beneficial i.e., *Ahita*. *Acharya Sushruta* has quoted otherwise. According to him, substances can be completely beneficial (*Hita*) or completely non-beneficial to the living beings (*Ahita*) naturally or by combination. '*Swabhavatah*' i.e., due to its basic '*Prakruti*'. In all the state of the substances, its true nature i.e., '*Prakruti*' remains the same. Like the heat in fire, fluidity in water etc. '*Sanyogatah*' means by mixing or by combination with one, two, three substances. *Desha, Kala, Matra* and *Sanskar* all work in cohesion and in accordance with the true nature (*Swabhav*) of any substance. This helps to determine whether the *Dravya* (substance) is *Swabhavatah Ekanta Hita, Swabhavatah Ekanta Ahita, Sanyogtah Ekanta Hita, Sanyogtah Ekanta Ahita* or *Hita-Ahita*.^[4]

SN	Term	Definition	Example
1.	<i>Hita</i>	The <i>Ahara</i> or <i>Vihar</i> which is suitable, beneficial, can provide proper nutrition either by its true nature or by any combination is called ' <i>Hita</i> '	<i>Jala, Ghrita, Dugdha</i> etc.
2,	<i>Ahita</i>	The <i>Ahara</i> or <i>Vihar</i> which is always unsuitable disadvantageous for human health is called ' <i>Ahita</i> '.	<i>Agni, Kshar, Visha</i>

Dravya Bhedas / Classification of substances^[5]

Acharya Sushruta has divided *Ahara Dravyas* overall into three categories-

1. *Ekanta Hita*
2. *Ekanta Ahita*
3. *Hita- Ahita*

Ekanta Hita

These are the substances which are always suitable and accustomed to living beings (man) by birth like water, ghee, milk, Porridge (Boiling rice).

Acharya Dalhana has explained the concept of *Satmya- 'Jati Satmya'*. It is defined as the substance which settles with the soul and body, that it does not create any disorder. The word '*Satmya*' literally means the substances which are in complete alignment with the natural constitution of an individual, *Satmya* means wholesomeness, agreement with nature, suitability or simply habit. For the body to remain in healthy state, understanding the notion of '*Satmya*' is essential. It plays crucial role in management of disease as well. *Jati Satmya* substances can be logically called as *Ekanta Hita* substances to the body.

Ekanta Ahita

The substances which are always unsuitable and performing actions like burning, cooking, and destroying/ killing such as fire, caustic alkali, poison etc. These substances are consciously used considering its proper quantity for treatment purposes but *Acharya Dalhana* has mentioned that they are still *Ekanta Ahita* since '*Teshamev Sanyogtah*' i.e., while combined with any other substances, the combined other substances turned *Ahita* due to these fire, caustic alkali, poison.

Hita-Ahita

These are the substances which are suitable and unsuitable both, those which are mentioned as suitable to *Vata* and unsuitable to *Pitta* etc.

Pathyatama Ahara / Best Suitable Diet

Best suitable food materials for human health are mentioned in the table below according to their respective categories:

SN	Food Category	Food Materials Included
1.	<i>Shuka Dhanya</i> (Paddy/ Rice)	<i>Raktshali, Shastika, Kanguka, Mukundaka, Panduka, Pitaka, Pramodaka, Kalaka, Asanpushpaka, Kardamaka, Shakunahruta, Sugandhak, Kalama</i>

2.	<i>Kudhanya</i>	<i>Nivara, Kodrava, Uddhalaka</i>
3.	<i>Sudhanya</i>	<i>Godhuma, Shyamak, Venuyava</i>
4.	<i>Vaidala/ Shami Dhanya</i> (Pulses)	<i>Mudga, Vanamudga, Makushtaka. Kalaya, Masura, Mangalaya, Chanaka, Harenu, Adhaki, Satina</i>
5.	<i>Jangala</i> (Animal Meat)	<i>Harina</i> (Ena), <i>Kuranga, Mrugamatruka, Shwadanshra, Karala</i> (Different types of deer)
6.	<i>Vishkir</i> (Types of birds)	<i>Lava, Tittir, Kapinijal, Vartika, Vartir</i>
7.	<i>Pratuda</i> (Types of birds)	<i>Kapota</i>
8.	<i>Falavarga</i> (Fruits)	<i>Dadima, Amalaka</i>
9.	<i>Shaka Varga</i> (Green leafy Vegetables)	<i>Chilla, Vastuka, Sunishannak, Jivanti, Tanduliyaka, Mandukaparni</i>
10.	<i>Ghrita Varga</i> (Ghee)	<i>Gavya Ghrita</i>
11.	<i>Lavana</i> (Salt)	<i>Saindhava</i>

Apart from these *Yava*, *Krakar* are also included in *Pathyatama Ahara*.

Relevance of *Pathyatama Ahara* in preservation of good health

1. *Shali Varga* is sweet in taste, cold in potency, *Laghupaka* (pungent after digestion), bestow strength, mitigate *Pitta*, increase *Vata* and *Kapha* slightly, unctuous (creates unctuousness) cause constipation and less faeces. Among these, *Lohitaka* i.e., *Raktashali* is the best, it mitigates all the *Doshas*, increases semen and urine, good for vision, colour, strength, voice, and heart (mind), relieves thirst, good for ulcers, cures fever, mitigates all the *Doshas* and poison. Other varieties are inferior to this (*Lohitaka*) in properties in their respective order.^[7]
2. *Kudhanya Varga* (millets) are hot in potency, astringent, sweet, in taste, dry, pungent after

digestion, mitigate *Kapha*, binds the urine and aggravate *Vata* and *Pitta*. *Kodrava, Nivara, Syamaka* are astringent sweet in taste and mitigate *Pitta* and cold in potency.^[8]

3. *Godhuma* is said to be sweet, not easily digestible, bestows strength and stability, augments semen and taste is unctuous, very cold in potency, mitigates *Vata* and *Pitta*, increases *Kapha*, unites fractures and is laxative.^[9]
4. *Venuyava* is dry, hot in potency, pungent after digestion, binds urine, mitigate *Kapha*, astringent in taste and aggravates *Vata*.^[10]
5. *Mudga*, is not aggravating *Vata* greatly (aggravates slightly), bestows clear vision; the green coloured variety is superior, *Vanamudga* (wild variety) is similar to *Mudga* in properties.^[11]
6. *Masura* is sweet after digestion and causes constipation. *Makushtaka* destroys worms, *Kalaya* aggravates *Vata* greatly. *Adhaki* mitigates *Kapha* and *Pitta* and does not aggravate *Vata* greatly. *Chanaka* increases *Vata*, cold in potency, sweet and slight astringent in taste, causes dryness, mitigates *Kapha, Rakta* and *Pitta*, diminishes virility in males; when combined with ghee it is a best mitigator of all the three *Doshas*. *Harenu* and *Satina* are to be understood as binding the faeces.^[12]
7. *Yava* is astringent, sweet and pungent after digestion, cold in potency, mitigates *Kapha* and *Pitta*, good for wounds always like *Tila*; produces retention of urine greatly and increases flatus and faeces greatly; bestows stability, digestive power, intelligence, good voice and colour (complexion), is slightly slimy, mitigates Fat, *Vata* and thirst, is very dry (creates dryness) and purifies blood and *Pitta*.^[13]
8. Meat of *Jangala Varga* i.e., group of swift runners especially deers is astringent-sweet in taste, easily digestible, mitigate *Vata* and *Pitta*; is penetrating, good for the heart (pleasant) and cleanse the urinary bladder.^[14]
9. Meat of *Vishkira* i.e., Scatterers type of birds, generally is easily digestible, cold in potency sweet

and astringent in taste and mitigates all the *Doshas*.^[15]

10. Meat of *Pratuda* birds (*Kapota*) generally is astringent-sweet in taste, aggravates *Vata*, mitigates *Pitta* and *Kapha*, cold in potency, binds urination, defaecation and produces less of faeces.^[16]
11. *Dadima* is astringent in secondary taste, does not cause increase of *Pitta* greatly, kindles digestion, help taste, good for heart (or mind) and binds the faeces, produces constipation. It is of two kinds, sweet and sour - the sweet kind mitigates all the three *Doshas* and the sour kind mitigates *Vata* and *Kapha*.^[17]
12. *Amalaki Phala* is sour, slightly sweet, bitter, astringent, and pungent, laxative, good for vision, mitigates all the *Doshas*, is aphrodisiac; it mitigates *Vata* by its sourness, *Pitta* by its sweetness and cold potency and *Kapha* by its dryness and astringency hence best among fruits.^[18]
13. In *Shaka Varga*, *Jivanti* is good for eyes and mitigates all *Doshas*. *Tanduliyaka* is sweet both in taste and after digestion, cures bleeding diseases and intoxication, very cold potency, causes dryness and removes poison. *Vastuka* is pungent after digestion, kills worms, augment intelligence, digestive power, and strength of the body, slightly alkaline in taste, mitigates all the three *Doshas*, helps taste and laxative. *Chilla* is similar to *Vastuka* in properties. *Mandukaparni* is astringent, mitigates *Pitta*, sweet in taste and also after digestion, cold in potency and easily digestible. *Sunishannak* does not cause heartburn, mitigates all the three *Doshas* and causes constipation.^[19]
14. *Gavya Sarpi* (Ghee obtained from cow's butter) is sweet after digestion, cold in potency, mitigate *Vata*, *Pitta* and poison; best for eyes, bestows strength and very good in properties.^[20]
15. *Saindhava Lavana* is good for eyes, heart, and taste, easy for digestion, kindles digestion, unctuous, slightly sweet, aphrodisiac, cold in potency and best to mitigate *Doshas*.^[21]

16. Meat of *Krakar*, mitigates *Vata* and *Pitta*, aphrodisiac, increases the power of intelligence and digestion, easily digestible and good for heart (or mind).^[22]

DISCUSSION

Hita-Ahita Ahara concept by *Acharya Sushruta* is exclusive and very important in terms of following a proper diet to acquire good health. But the concept of *Ekanta Hita* and *Ekanta Ahita* substances is bit of a complex since according to *Ayurveda* every living being has a different physical constitution so either *Ekanta Hita* or *Ekanta Ahita* substances can have different levels of effects in terms of health in different people. It also depends on the state of living being i.e., health or illness. That is why there is this practical concept by modern *Acharyas* called *Swabhavatah Ekanta Hita*, *Swabhavatah Ekanta Ahita*, *Sanyogatah Ekanta Hita* or *Sanyogatah Ekanta Ahita*. It is easy to understand and hence apply the power of healthy diet with help of this concept originally coined by *Acharya Sushruta*.

Acharya Sushruta has also explained the concept of *Pathyatam Ahara* which is much more efficient when we understand and learn why certain substances are termed as *Pathyatam* i.e., best suitable than others. Here, the list of fifty-three substances has been given in order to suggest their health benefits. We have compiled the references about how these substances help in keeping our being in alignment with good health. The properties all the *Pathyatam* substances possess are the reason they are termed as *Pathyatam* i.e., best suitable substances for good health of living beings. Learning the properties of all the *Pathyatam* substances only helps us, physicians to understand human health and the need of good diet i.e., *Ahara* better.

CONCLUSION

The concept of *Hita-Ahita Ahara* is root of understanding what it required to have good health. Though the substances can be broadly classified as *Ekanta Hita* and *Ekanta Ahita* but in terms of actual application as a physician there can be many diverse situations where we will have to use *Yukti Pramana* to

decide what is *Ekanta Hita* and *Ekanta Ahita* for our patient in the given circumstances. In case of *Pathyatam Ahara*, with the help of knowledge of properties of these substances, it will be a lot easier to help patient and even healthy individuals to maintain good health.

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