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Importance of *Pathya-Apathya* in Ayurveda : A Review Article

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ABSTRACT

In Ayurveda both the body and disease are considered to be food dependant - *Ahara Sambhavam Vastuh Rogaschahara Sambhavah*. *Ahara* is given the first place among three *Upastambha* which are the most essential for living. In *Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa*, only medicine and food are planned. These medicinal *Ahara* and *Vihara* are called *Upashaya* and opposite is *Anupashaya*. Principle of *Pathya-Apathya* is similar to *Upshay-Anupshay*. To advocate importance of *Pathya*, *Acharyas* have mentioned specific *Pathya* and *Apathyas* in accordance to disease. This conceptual study is an attempt to throw light on the importance of *Pathya-Apathya* in disease as well as normal life. The concept of *Pathya* and *Apathya* is important in the treatment of every disease as well as for prevention or for maintaining a healthy life.

Key words: *Ayurveda, Pathya, Apathya*

INTRODUCTION

As is generally known, the aims and objectives of Ayurveda are to prevent and treat diseases as well as keep healthy people healthy. Ayurveda advocates the importance of maintaining balance of physical, mental and *Adhayatmik* aspects and to maintain this equilibrium, diet (*Aahara*) is the key.

Pathya is derived from word '*Pathya*' which means path. *Pathya* is a factor contributive to both body and mind. According to *Charak Samhita*, *Pathya Ahara* is such diet which has beneficial effect over the body and mind of an individual without causing any untoward effect.^[1] Every fundamental principle in Ayurveda, such

as *Ritucharya* and *Dincharya*, mentions *Pathya* or *Apathya*. Each disease condition also has a specific *Pathya* or *Apathya* specified.

The doctor's prescription for treating '*Pathya*' usually involves sticking to a tight diet or eliminating certain foods. It speeds up recovery and improves the effectiveness of treatment. *Pathya Ahara* results in healthy bodily development and *Apathya* leads to disease.

Synonyms^[2]

Pathya - *Satmya, Swavasthaparipaalaka, Swasthitakara, Hita Ahara, Swasthaaurjaskara, Sharmakara, Sukha-Parinaamkara, Dhatua-Avirodhi, Dhatu-Saamyakara.*

Apathya - *Asatmya, Ahitkara, Anupashaya, Swastha-Ahitkara, Asukha-Parinaamkara, Dhatu-Asamyakara, Ashrmakara.*

Importance

Importance of *Pathya* and *Apathya* can be understood as every *Acharya* has mentioned its significance in there *Samhitas*. *Acharya Charaka* says whatever is appropriate for the path and is dear to mind is *Pathya* and opposite is *Apathya*. He mentioned that when channels of circulation become hard by aggravated

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Dosha, *Pathya* helps to soften those channels of circulation and alleviate vitiated *Dosha*.^[3]

Acharya Sushruta has written a specific chapter named “*Hita-Ahita*” in *Sutrasthan*, where he gave terms like *Ekant-Hita*, *Ekant-Ahita*, *Hita-Ahita*.

पञ्चभूतात्मके देहे ह्याहारः पाञ्चभौतिकः | (Su.Su.46/526)

Pathya diet is essential for health and both body and diet are *Panchbhautik*. Body organs are nourished only through diet. Healthy eating causes physical development while unhealthy eating causes disease. *Dosha-Dhatu-Mala* are the basics of a body. *Pathya* helps nourishing them and maintain the equilibrium.

Acharya Kashyapa has called *Ahara* as *Bheshaj*. He stated that food is the best medicine. Only the *Hitkar-Ahara* can keep a person healthy. *Acharya Kashyap* describes the therapeutic potential of *Ahara* (food) and its preventative health benefits.^[4]

Acharya Harita stressed that if a person does not acknowledge the concept of *Pathya-Apathya* and consumes *Apathya* (unhealthy), illness will never leave the body.^[5]

The significance of *Pathya Ahara* was focused by *Vaidya Lolambraj* in *Vaidya Jeevanam*, who said that if a patient takes *Pathya Ahara*, they do not require medication, and if they continuously take *Apathya*, they do not require medication because it will not be effective.

Acharya Charak has mentioned a few things which should always be consumed and a few which should be avoided.

SN	Ahara Dravya	Hita-Ahara Dravya ^[6]	Ahita-Ahara Dravya ^[7]
1.	Sukadhanaya	Lohita Shali	Yavaka
2.	Shamidhanya	Mudga	Masha
3.	Udaka	Antariksha Jala	River water
4.	Lavana	Saindhava Lavana	Ushra
5.	Saka	Jivanti	Sarshapa

6.	Mriga Mansa	Ena	Go Mamsa
7.	Meat of birds	Lava	Kanakapota Mamsa
8.	Vilesya	Godha	Bheka
9.	Matsaya	Rohita	Chilchima
10.	Sarpi	Go Ghrita	Aavika Sarpi
11.	Milk	Go Ksheera	Aavi Ksheera
12.	Sthavara Sneha	Tila Taila	Kusumbh Taila
13.	Anupmriga Vasa	Varaha Vasa	Mahish Vasa
14.	Matsya Vasa	Chuluki Vasa	Kumbhira Vasa
15.	Jalchara Vihanga Vasa	Pakahamsa Vasa	Kakmudaga Vasa
16.	Visikravasa	Kukkuta Vasa	Chatak Vasa
17.	Sakhada Medsam	Aja Meda	Elephant Meda
18.	Kanda	Shringvera (ginger)	Aaluk (potato)
19.	Phala	Mridwika	Nikuch
20.	Ikshu Vikara	Sharkara	Phanita

Similarly, *Acharya Sushruta* has also given few terms.^[8]

Ekantha Hita - The things which are absolute suitable to use continuously without causing any harm to the body. Eg. *Jala*, *Ghrita*, *Dugdah*, *Audan*.

Ekantha Ahita - The things which are absolute unsuitable to use, can cause harm in short period. E.g. *Dahan*, *Pachan*, *Maran*.

Hita-Ahitha - which are suitable in some conditions and unsuitable in certain conditions. E.g. some items suitable for *Vata* not suitable for *Pitta*.

There are five *Ekanta-Pathyam* things mentioned by *Acharya Sushruta*:^[9]

Brahmacharya (celibacy), *Nivatshyana* (sleeping at a place devoid of breeze), *Ushan Udak Snana* (bathing in hot water), *Ratrishayan* (sleeping at nights), *Vyayam* (physical exercise).

Acharya Charaka has further added in the context of *Pathya-Apathya* “*Nityam Tann Lakshayet*”. It means that the characteristics of *Pathya-Apathya* are not fixed because no *Bhava* is always *Pathya* or *Apathya*, rather depends on many factors.

The main components which regulate the diet and unhealthy diet depending on it are as follows-^[10]

1. *Matra* (measure)
2. *Kala* (time)
3. *Kriya* (mode of preparation)
4. *Bhoomi* (habitat)
5. *Deha* (constitution)
6. *Dosha* (morbid humours)

1. **Matra (measure)** - The action of the diet might alter from good to unhealthy based on *Matra*; for example,

- Equal amounts of clarified butter (*Ghrita*) and honey (*Madhu*), cause *Apathy*.
- *Pippali* is bitter, *Guru*, neither too sweet, nor too hot and sweet in *Vipak*. If *Pippali* is used in equal quantity for a short period of time then it is very beneficial. but when used in excess quantity, it accumulates *Doshas*. Therefore, it should not be used continuously.

2. **Kala (time)** - Certain things should not be consumed or followed at a certain weather condition or time of day. For example, in context with *Ritucharya*, certain things should not be done in particular season like

a. **Hemant Ritu (Late Autumn/Pre-Winter)** (Ch.Su.6/11-18)

Diet routine

Pathya - Unctuous, sweet, tarty and salty foods. Different meats milk, milk items, *Sidhu* (fermented preparations, *Tila* (sesame), warm etc. are likely to be consumed.

Apathya - one should not consume *Vata* aggravating foods such as *Laghu* (light), cool, dry foods.

Lifestyle - exercise, body and head massage, sunbath is suggested. Exposure to cold wind should be avoided.

b. **Shishir Ritu (Winter)** (Ch.Su.6/19-21)

Diet routine

Pathya - Foods having amla taste is preferred. Cereals, pulses wheat items, new rice are suggested. Ginger, garlic, *Haritaki* (*Terminalia chebula*), *Pippali* (piper longum), sugarcane items and milk are to be incorporated into eating regimen.

Apathya - *Laghu* (light), *Shita* (cool) foods and foods with *Katu* (pungent), *Tikta* (bitter), *Kashaya* (astringent) dominating *Rasa* should be avoided.

Lifestyle - massage with oil, sunbath, wearing warm clothes is suggested.

c. **Vasant Ritu (Spring)** (Ch.Su.6/23-26)

Diet routine

Pathya - easily digestible foods, wheat rice old barley lentils, *Mudga*, *Katu* (pungent), *Kashaya* (astringent) foods should be consumed. Honey should be added to the diet.

Apathya - heavy, cold and viscous foods should be avoided.

Lifestyle - exercise, *Kaval* (gargle), *Dhooma* (smoking), *Anjana* is suggested and sleeping during day is not advised.

d. **Grishma Ritu (Summer)** (Ch.Su.6/27-29)

Diet routine

Pathya - Foods which are light to digest having *Madhur* (sweet), *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Sheeta* (cool) and *Drava* (fluid) *Guna* should be taken. Different fluids cold water, juices, butter milk should be consumed.

Apathya - *Lavan* and *Katu* (sharp), *Amla* (tarty) and *Ushna* (warm) should be avoided.

Lifestyle - wearing light dresses, napping at daytime, remaining in cold spots is suggested. Extreme exercise and sexual liberality should be avoided.

e. Varsha Ritu (Monsoon) (Ch.Su.6/35-40)**Diet routine**

Pathya - foods having *Amla* (tart), *Lavana* (salty) and *Sneha* (unctuous) qualities should be taken. One should consume boiled water.

Apathya - foods which are not easy to digest, excessive fluid and wine should not be taken.

Lifestyle - massage with oil, medicated *Basti* (enema) is prescribed. Drenching in rain, napping in day exercising, sexual indulgence should be avoided.

f. Sharad Ritu (Autumn/Fall) (Ch.Su.6/42-45)**Diet routine**

Pathya - Foods having *Madhura* (sweet), *Tikta* (sharp) and light to process should be eaten.

Apathya - hot, bitter, fat, oily, curd should be eliminated from diet amid this season.

Lifestyle - Eating food only when feeling hungry, water sanitized by beams of sun in day time and beams of moon during evening (*Hansodak*) for drinking and bathing is suggested. Napping during day, exposure to sunlight and excessive eating should be avoided.

3. Kriya (mode of preparation) - Certain preparations can cause harm. For example- *Poi* herb (pointed gourd) cooked in sesame paste is contraindicated as it causes diarrhea.

If *Pippali* (long pepper) and *Makoy* (*Solanum nigrum*) are cooked in the same oil in which fish has been cooked.

4. Bhoomi (habitat)

Consuming dry and pungent substances in *Dhanvan* country i.e., wild country or desert and consuming moist, greasy, cold grounded things in *Anup-desha* (moisture places).

5. Deha (constitution) - E.g. *Medasavi* person should not consume *Rakta Shali* because they are *Laghu* in nature.

6. Dosh - According to the predominance of *Dosha* one should follow the diet and lifestyle which counters the *Dosha*.

DISCUSSION

Pathya keeps the person healthy, and maintains the normal functions of body. Moreover, *Acharya* has given three reasons for how a person remains healthy in case of unhealthy intake - 1. *Atulayata*, 2. *Dosha*, 3. *Sharir*.^[12]

Due to some reasons, in those who consume unhealthy food, unhealthy food does not have immediate effect. Not all *Apathya* are equally harmful and not all *Apathya* are of equal strength. Similarly, not all bodies are equally capable of tolerating disease. Any bad thing becomes worse due to the influence of factors like *Desha*, *Kala*, *Samyoga*, *Virya* and *Matra* etc. Like if the *Desha* and *Kala* are similar to the unhealthy food, then the harmful consequences of that unhealthy food will be more quick and intense. On the contrary, if they do not have similar qualities then the effect of *Apathya* is reduced. Due to the difference in the strength of the *Dosha* and the strength of the body, *Apathya* is not equally effective everywhere and due to these reasons, diseases are also mild, severe and chronic.

CONCLUSION

Pathya-Apathya is important in both prevention as well as diseased condition. But consideration of the above facts (*Matra*, *Kala*, *Kriya*, *Bhoomi*, *Deha*, *Dosha*) is necessary to determine what is healthy or unhealthy. Without considering them, we cannot definitely call anything as healthy or unhealthy; While some *Dravyas* are *Apathya*, they can nonetheless be used as a treatment if used properly in accordance with the *Matra*, *Kala*, *Kriya*, etc.^[11] The *Pathya- Apathya* changes from person to person and it needs analysis. And as *Vaidya Lolambraj* stated that patients do not need medication if they take *Pathya Ahara*; if they take *Apathya* consistently, however, they will not benefit from taking medication.

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