

## AYURVEDIC ASPECT OF PATHYA APATHYA AHAR - A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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**ABSTRACT**

According to Ayurveda, *Pathya Aahar* (wholesome diet) nourishes, balances doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), and promotes healing, whereas *Apathya Aahar* (unwholesome diet) exacerbates imbalances and causes disease; it is customized based on each person's constitution (Prakriti) and illness (*Vyadhi*), with Pathya emphasizing foods that promote health (such as warm, unctuous foods) and *Apathya* avoiding harmful ones (such as dry, cool foods) to preserve general physical and mental well-being. According to *Ahara Sambhavam Vastuh Rogaschahara Sambhavam*, Ayurveda views the body and illness as being dependent on diet. Among the three *Upastambhas*, *Ahara* is ranked as the most important for survival. Only food and medicine are scheduled at *Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa*. *Upashaya* is the term for these medicinal *Ahara* and *Vihara*, while *Anupashaya* is the opposite. *Upshay-Anupshay* and *Pathya-Apathya* share similar principles. Acharyas have cited particular *Pathya* and *Apathyas* according to sickness in order to promote the significance of Pathya. The purpose of this conceptual study is to shed light on the significance of Pathya-Apathya in both health and illness. The idea of Pathya and *Apathya* is crucial for treating all illnesses, preventing them, and preserving one's health.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurveda, *Ahar*, *Pathya*, *Apathya*.**INTRODUCTION**

As is well known, Ayurveda's goals are to maintain healthy individuals while also preventing and treating illnesses. According to Ayurveda, eating (*Aahara*) is the key to preserving the equilibrium of the physical, mental, and *Adhayatmik* qualities. The word "Pathya," which meaning "path," is the source of the word Pathya. Pathya has an impact on the body and the mind. Charak Samhita states that Pathya Ahara is a diet that benefits a person's body and mind without having any negative effects.<sup>[1]</sup> *Pathya* or *Apathya* is mentioned in every major Ayurvedic concept, including *Ritucharya* and *Dincharya*. Additionally, a certain *Pathya* or *Apathya* is designated for each medical condition. Adhering to a strict diet or avoiding specific foods is typically the doctor's advice for treating "Pathya." It increases the efficacy of treatment and expedites recovery. *Apathya* causes illness, while *Pathya* Ahara promotes healthy physical

development. The basic term Patha, which literally means a path or channel, is whence the word Pathya originates. The terms "*pathya*" (wholesome) and "*apathya*" (unwholesome) refer to substances or regimens that do not negatively impact the body and mind.<sup>[2]</sup> As the description above makes clear, *Pathya* (wholesome) and *Apathya* (unwholesome) refer to both material goods and particular routines; nevertheless, in Ayurvedic texts, these terms are typically employed only for dietary items. According to Charak, healthy eating contributes to human development and well-being, whereas unhealthy eating is the source of all illnesses.<sup>[3]</sup> In addition to sleep and restrained sexual activity, Charak had identified food as the first of the three pillars of existence.<sup>[4]</sup> Sushrut provided additional evidence for this claim by claiming that food is the source of strength, life, complexion, and Oja.<sup>[5]</sup>

**Synonyms<sup>[6]</sup>**

- *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 of Pathya and Apathya Ahar and vihar**

Every Acharya has discussed the importance of *Pathya* and *Apathya* in their Samhitas, therefore it is clear how important they are. According to Acharya Charaka, *Pathya* is something that is suitable for the path and is memorable, whereas *Apathya* is the contrary. He said that *Pathya* helps to soften circulatory channels and lessen vitiated *Dosha* when they become hard due to exacerbated *Dosha*.<sup>[7]</sup> In the Sutrasthan chapter "Hita-Ahita," Acharya Sushruta defined terminology such as *Ekant-Hita*, *Ekant-Ahita*, and *Hita-Ahita*. Both the body and the diet are *Panchbhautik*, and a *pathya* diet is necessary for good health. Diet is the only source of nourishment for bodily organs. While bad eating leads to illness, healthy eating promotes physical development. The fundamentals of a body are *dosha*, *dhatu*, and *mala*. *Pathya* aids in their nourishment and equilibrium maintenance. *Ahara* is referred to as *Bheshaj* by Acharya Kashyapa. "Food is the best medicine," he said. A person's health can only be maintained by the *Hitkar-Ahara*. The medicinal potential of *Ahara* (food) and its preventative health benefits are discussed by Acharya Kashyap.<sup>[8]</sup> Acharya Harita emphasized that disease will never leave the body if one does not accept the idea of *Pathya-Apathya* and consumes *Apathya* (unhealthy).<sup>[9]</sup> Vaidya Lolambraj emphasized the importance of *Pathya Ahara* in Vaidya Jeevanam, stating that if a patient takes *Pathya Ahara*, they don't need medication, and if they take *Apathya* consistently, they don't need medication because it won't work. Acharya Charak has mentioned a few things which should always be consumed and a few which should be avoided.

- ***Ekantha Hita*** - The things which are absolute suitable to use continuously without causing any harm to the body. Eg. *Jala*, *Ghruta*, *Dugdah*, *Audan*.
- ***Ekantha Ahita*** - The things which are absolute unsuitable to use, can cause harm in short period. Eg. *Dahan*, *Pachan*, *Maran*.
- ***Hita-Ahitha*** - which are suitable in some conditions and unsuitable in certain conditions. Eg. some items suitable for *Vata* not suitable for *Pitta*.

There are five *Ekanta-Pathyam* things mentioned by Acharya Sushruta.<sup>[10]</sup>

*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<sup>[11]</sup>

- *Matra* (measure)
- *Kala* (time)
- *Kriya* (mode of preparation)
- *Bhoomi* (habitat)
- *Deha* (constitution)
- *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 (*Ghruta*) 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.

**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 diarrhoea. 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)** - g. *Medasavi* person should not consume *Rakta Shali* because they are *Laghu* in nature.

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

**Pathya or Apathya in various season**

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

**Diet routine**

*Pathya* - Unctuous, sweet, tart 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.

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

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

##### Diet routine

**Pathya** - foods having *Amla* (tarty), *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.

## DISCUSSION

As one of the *Trayopastambha* (three pillars of life), Ayurveda places a high value on *Ahara* (food), stressing that eating habits have a significant impact on both health and illness. The Ayurvedic belief that food should not only nourish the body but also maintain the equilibrium of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, and *Agni* is reflected in the concepts of *Pathya* and *Apathya Ahara*.<sup>[12]</sup> Food that is healthful, friendly, and helpful for both maintaining health and managing illness is referred to as *Pathya Ahara*. *Prakriti* (constitution), *Vikriti* (disease state), *Agni* (digestive fire), *Kala* (season and time), *Desha* (environment), and *Satmya* (adaptability) are some of the variables that go into its selection. *Apathya Ahara*, on the other hand, refers to foods and eating habits that disrupt *doshic* balance, hinder digestion, and aid in the onset or advancement of sickness. According to traditional Ayurvedic texts, if *Pathya* is not followed, even the most potent drugs may be ineffective, yet occasionally *Pathya* alone is sufficient to restore health. This highlights the superiority of dietary therapy over medication. The concept also reflects the preventive approach of Ayurveda, where avoiding *Apathya* is crucial to *Nidana Parivarjana* (removal of causative causes). *Pathya Apathya* is not the same for every person or illness. As an illustration of Ayurveda's customised approach, foods that are *Pathya* in *Vata* diseases may act as *Apathya* in *Kapha* circumstances. Furthermore, even if the food is otherwise healthy, inappropriate food combinations (*Viruddha Ahara*), irregular eating habits, overeating, or eating without proper digestion are all regarded as *Apathya*. From a contemporary standpoint, diet therapy, lifestyle change, and preventive nutrition are tied to the idea of *Pathya-Apathya*. Avoiding bad eating habits, incompatible food combinations, and processed meals is in line with current recommendations for reducing lifestyle problems like diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases. As a result, the Ayurvedic idea of *Pathya-Apathya Ahara* is a thorough food recommendation that incorporates environmental, mental, and bodily aspects. In the modern period, when poor eating habits are a key contributor to chronic illnesses, its relevance is still substantial. By applying these ideas to daily life, one can prevent illness, improve health, and increase the efficacy of treatment interventions.

## CONCLUSION

*Pathya-Apathya* is essential for treating and preventing sickness. But the previously mentioned facts (*Matra*, *Kala*, *Kriya*, *Bhoomi*, *Deha*, and *Dosha*) must be considered in order to determine what is good or bad. Without considering them, it is impossible to categorise something as healthy or ill. If administered appropriately in accordance with the *Matra*, *Kala*, *Kriya*, etc., *Dravyas* can still be used as a therapeutic even though some of them are *Apathya*. Since each person's *Pathya-Apathya* is unique, analysis is required. Additionally, according to *Vaidya Lolambraj*, individuals who use *Pathya Ahara* do

not need medication; yet, they will not benefit from medication if they take *Apathya* on a regular basis.

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