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Research Article

CONCEPT OF HITA-AHITA AHARA

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ABSTRACT

In medical practice, many practitioners give *Hita & Ahita* diet to patients. Sometimes these wholesome & unwholesome dietary items are universal but occasionally these dietary items are belongs to specific disease. As considering importance of *Hitatva & Ahitatva* of *Ahara*, ancient *Acharyas* also have given a very good classification of *Ahara* according to its effect on body. But *Hitatva & Ahitatva* of *Aharadravyas* are depends on many factors. Hence an attempt is made here to throw light on *Hita-Ahitata* in accordance to individual body.

Keywords: *Hita, Ahita, Aharadravyas, Ahara, Acharyas.*

INTRODUCTION

Ahara is prime important in everyone's life as *Hitakara Ahara* causes the growth of human beings whereas *Ahitakara Ahara* is the cause for the growth of diseases. *Ahara* is very important topic hence *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned one chapter under the name as *Hitahitiya Adhyaya*. *Hitahitiya Ahara* of *Sushruta Samhita* is unique in its subjects & various *Siddhants* are incorporated in this chapter but this article is confined to throw light mainly on *Hitahita* concept regarding *Ahara*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

All available authentic books viz. *Samhitas* & their respective commentaries have been referred for the specific materials. The discussion is mainly based on conceptual part & the effort is made to draw a final conclusion which again depends upon discussion.

CONCEPTUAL VIEW

To get an idea about *Hita & Ahita Ahara*, the conceptual study is divided into literary meaning of *Hita & Ahita* along with textual classification & examples of *Hita-Ahita* mentioned by *Acharya Sushruta*. One more topic i.e. *Avasthanusara Hita-Ahita* is also mentioned in conceptual part.

Meaning of Hita-Ahita

In day to day life the terms *Hita & Ahita* are use very frequently; now what does these terms actually mean has quoted in following table.

Table 1: Meaning of Hita-Ahita^{1,2}

Terms	Meaning
<i>Hita</i>	Suitable, Proper, Good, Useful, Advantageous, Beneficial, Wholesome, Salutary etc.
<i>Ahita</i>	Unfit, Improper, Hurtful, Detrimental, Harmful, Injurious, Disadvantageous etc.

Classification & examples of Hita-Ahita according to Acharya Sushruta

Acharya Sushruta divides the substance into 3 categories & these categories are deals with *Swastha* who are having *Samadosha, Samagni & Samadhata*³. In *Vyadhiti Avastha Hita-Ahitata* of *Dravya* changes according to the conditions, so in *Vyadhiti Avastha Hitakara Dravya* cannot be *Hitakara & Ahitakara* may act as *Hitakara*. The following division is when there is no other factor is in action. Division done by *Acharya Sushruta* is follows⁴ -

Table 2: Classification of Ahara according to its Hita-Ahita effects on body

<i>Ekanta Hitakara</i>	Absolutely wholesome
<i>Ekanta Ahitakara</i>	Absolutely unwholesome
<i>Hitahitakara</i>	Both wholesome unwholesome

1. Ekanta Hitakara

Substances become *Ekanata Hitakara* because of their biological suitability such as- water, *Ghruta*, milk, rice⁵. These are *Aharatah Pathya*. The following groups are prescribed as diet for all persons.

Table 3: Examples of Ekanta Hitakara Ahara⁶

<i>Ahariya Varga</i>		<i>Pathyatam Ahariya Dravya</i>
<i>Shuka Dhanya Varga</i> (Preferred cereals)		<i>Raktashali, Shashtika</i>
<i>Kudhanya</i> (Less Preferred cereals)		<i>Godhuma</i>
<i>Jangal</i> (Animal Meal)		<i>Ena, Harina</i>
<i>Vishkira</i>	Bird meat	<i>Lava, Titara</i>
<i>Pratuda</i>		<i>Kapota</i>
<i>Vaidala</i> (Pulses)		<i>Mudga, Makushta, Kalaya, Masura, Canaka, Aadhaki, Harenu</i>
<i>Shaka</i> (Greens)		<i>Vastuka, Jivanti</i>
<i>Ghrita</i> (Ghee)		<i>Gavya Ghrita</i>
<i>Lavana</i> (Salt)		<i>Saidhava</i>
<i>Falavarga</i> (Fruits)		<i>Dadima, Amalaka</i>

Viharatah Hitakara:

Celibacy, sleeping in windless place, hot water bath, sleeping in night & physical exercise are absolutely wholesome⁷.

2. Ekanta Ahitakara

The substances become absolutely unwholesome by combination (*Samyoga*) or are absolutely unwholesome by nature (*Swabhava*) itself. Many other substances become noxious by the combination. This in turn becomes absolutely unwholesome⁸.

Hence according to *Acharya Sushruta* there are 2 types of *Ahitakara*-

Swabhavatah Ahitakara - *Agni, Kshara, Visha*

Samyogatah Ahitakara- *Viruddhahara*

Viruddhahara - Whatever food aggravates *Dosha* but does not expel it or vitiates *Rasadi Dhatus* and give rise to disorders are termed as *Viruddhahara*. Here mainly *Samyoga Viruddha, Virya Viruddha, Matra Viruddha* are to be included in *Samyogatah Ekanta Ahitakara*.

3. Hitahitakara

Substances which are wholesome for one are unwholesome for other are stated as both wholesome & unwholesome. For example the one which is wholesome for the *Vayu* is unwholesome for *Pitta*⁹.

Here the *Hitata* & *Ahitata* of the *Dravya* is for the same *Shareera Adhishthana*. Our body is made up of various factors which are differing from one another by their qualities. As *Vata* possess *Ruksha, Sheeta* etc. *Guna*¹⁰ whereas *Pitta* is having *Sasneha, Ushna Guna*¹¹. For this reason the *Dravyas* which are similar to *Vata Dosha* are opposite to that of *Pitta Dosha* causing raise of *Vata Dosha* & reduction in *Pitta Dosha* at the same time. For example- *Tail* is *Hitakara* for *Vayu* but at the same time it is *Ahitakara* for *Pitta*.

Hence these types of substances are included under *Hitahita* i.e. both *Hitakara* & *Ahitakara* which means *Hitakara* to one part of body but *Ahitakara* to other portion of body at the same time.

Avasthanusara Hitahitahara

The classification of *Ahara* as *Ekanta Hitkara, Ekanta Ahitkara, Hitahita* are only related to *Swasthavastha* because in *Aturavastha* many factors are present to change *Hitata* & *Ahitata* of the *Ahariya Dravya*. These factors are mentioned by *Acharya Sushruta* as follows-

Sometimes incompatibles can be also used in accordance to disease (*Roga*), suitability (*Satmya*), place (*Desha*), time (*Kala*), body (*Deha*), digestive power (*Agni*) etc¹². Thus the wise endowed with rational thinking may use even exclusively unwholesome in patient after considering disease (*Roga*), suitability (*Satmya*) etc. For example, intake of a little poison & sugar-cane bitten by cobra in *Udararoga* is considered as wholesome¹³. Some other examples are given below to elaborate the topic in detail.

Roga- Meat of peacock is not very good for health generally but it is ideal for hearing, voice, age & vision. Though it is *Ahitakara* in general but can be considered as *Hitakara* for those who are suffering from diseases of *Karana, Swara, Netra*¹⁴.

Satmya- Though *Kshara* is *Ahitakara* generally but it is suitable (*Satmya*) for those who are belonging to *Prachya Desha*¹⁵. Milk is stated as *Ekanta Hitakara* but in some people it is seen that people suffer from loose stool after taking milk. Here milk is not suitable for those people though it is wholesome universally.

Kala- *Kala* has been divided into *Nityaga* (cold, hot, rains.) & *Avasthika* (different *Avastha* of *Vyadhi*), therefore variations in *Hitata* & *Ahitata* of *Dravya* also differ accordingly.

Nityaga- *Madhura, Snigdha Ahara* is usually considered as good but in *Vasant Ritu* such *Ahara* is contraindicated.

Avasthika- Milk is usually *Hitakara* but in case of *Navajwari* it is harmful, & again in *Jirnajwari* it act as *Amrit*¹⁶.

Deha - Milk though is anti-poisonous used for the increase of poison in the snake¹⁷.

So due to all these, physicians do not want to specify the items exclusively as wholesome or unwholesome because of great variations in conditions of disease etc. but do not so in the maintenance of health¹⁷.

That is why the common saying that milk & poison are exclusively wholesome & unwholesome respectively is interpreted in relation to healthy only. The same course should be adopted in case of other similar substances like water, fire etc. but it is not same for those who are having disease¹⁸.

DISCUSSION

Hitakara & Ahitakara

The action of *Hitakara* & *Ahitakara Dravyas* is not depending on any other factors. Their action is same in *Sarva Kala* (all time) and *Sarva Avastha* (all conditions) independent of various factors but this is impossible to get such kind of substances hence this *Ekanta Hitata* & *Ahitata* hence it is belonging to *Swasthavastha* only.

Ekanta Hitakara substances are those which are not only helpful in maintaining the health of the healthy person but also to improve their health status whereas *Ekanta Ahitakara* substances are those which destroy the health of the healthy person & make them prepared for diseases.

Hitahitakara substances

Our body is nothing but the combination of *Dosha, Dhatu* & *Mala*. The *Gunas* of these *Dosha, Dhatu* & *Malas* are different from each other. Hence it is not possible to nourish these all factors simultaneously because the *Dravyas* which causes rise of the similar factors also causes reduction in different factors.

Therefore one can say that *Hitahitakara Dravyas* are those which are causing *Hitakara* effect on one part of the body & *Ahitakara* effect on other part of the body at the same time.

So the question is arising that these *Ekanta Hitakara Dravyas* can also play this kind of effect. Though it is true but then also the rise & reduction of different element of body by them is too minimum hence count negligible. Therefore this classification of *Acharya Sushruta* is considered most important in accordance to *Swasthavastha* but not in the case of *Vyadhit Avastha*.

Avasthanusara Hitahitahara

Sushruta has given 3 categories of *Dravyas* for *Swasthavastha* but it is not so in the condition of *Aturavastha* because there are lots of factors present to change *Hitatva* & *Ahitatva* of the *Dravyas*. Not only *Sushrutacharya* has mentioned this concept but also *Acharya Charaka* gives positivity to this *Siddhant* by mentioning below quotation.

Even acute poison is converted into excellent medicine by the right method of preparation; while even a good medicine may act as an acute poison if improperly administered¹⁹. The “*Pathya*” in fact changes its qualities, depending on the *Matra* (dose), *Kala* (time), *Kriya* (method of preparation), *Bhumi* (habitat), *Deha* (body) and *Dosha* (*Vatadi* body component), as *Charaka* has mentioned in *Charaka Sutra* 25²⁰. Now how these all factors can change their character is given below.

Factors deciding Avasthanusara Hitahitahara according to Charakacharya²¹

Matra- Wholesome diet also when used in excessive quantity or in less quantity results in adverse effects. Poison if used in proper quantity work as best medicine (*Amrit* was said by *Acharya Charaka*), while *Madhu* and *Ghritha* both are wholesome but if used after mixing in same quantity may be proven poison.

Kala: According to time *Hitakara* may become *Ahitakara*. For e.g. wholesome diet having *Laghu* property like *Rakta Shali* is not wholesome in *Hemant Ritu*. *Kala* can be understood as time of meal also because any types of wholesome diet will not prove beneficial if not taken according to time of meal.

Kriya: *Kriya* can be understood as different food processes and their effect on unwholesomeness of food. Though *Madhu* is *Hitakara* but *Agnikriya* makes it unwholesome (*Vishavat*).

Bhumi: Wholesome diet may become unwholesome if produced in improper land for e.g. Cereals produced in marshy land prove unwholesome.

Deha: Wholesome diet may become unwholesome if used in some type of body for e.g. despite of being wholesome *Rakta Shali* is not wholesome for *Sthula* person.

Dosha: Wholesome and unwholesomeness can be thought in context to *Dosha* as *Rakta Shali* is unwholesome in dominancy of *Vata*.

Purusha: Bitter substances are wholesome for child but not for aged person.

While describing these types of criteria for deciding *Hitatva* and *Ahitatva* of food, *Acharya Charaka* announced that there is no any type of fixation is possible for wholesomeness and unwholesomeness of particular diet. These two can change according to criteria described above.

Both the *Acharyas* have stated that *Dravyas* which are administered not only depends upon their *Gunas* but also on

various factors such as proper administration, *Matra*, *Kala*, *Desha* etc.

CONCLUSION

Hitakara, *Ahitakara* & *Hitahitakara* category of *Dravyas* are limiting to *Swasthavastha* only. It is easy to classify the *Dravyas* as *Hitakara* & *Ahitakara* broadly but for fine classification many factors are responsible such as *Matra*, *Kala*, *Bhumi*, *Dosha*, *Satmya*, *Agni* etc. So during practice, physicians has to be customised *Dravyas* according to the *Avastha* of disease & of patients.

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