



The Role of Pathya and Apathya in the Management of Hikka, Kasa, and Shwasa Roga: A Review Article

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Abstract:

Ayurveda places strong emphasis on *Ahara* (diet) as the foundation of health, strength, and disease prevention. Central to this approach are the principles of *Pathya* (wholesome practices) and *Apathya* (unwholesome practices), which guide dietary and lifestyle choices based on individual constitution and disease condition. This review explores the role of *Pathya* and *Apathya* in the management of *Hikka* (hiccough), *Kasa* (cough), and *Shwasa* (respiratory disorders), drawing from classical texts such as *Charaka Samhita* and *Vaidyajivanam*. The analysis reveals that therapeutic procedures like *Swedana*, *Dhoomapana*, and *Vamana*, along with specific dietary recommendations, are consistently prescribed. Foods that are light, warm, and *Kapha-Vata* reducing are encouraged, while heavy, cold, and mucus-forming items are contraindicated. These traditional guidelines are supported by modern nutritional principles, emphasizing balanced intake and digestibility. The study underscores the value of incorporating *Pathya-Apathya* into clinical practice to improve outcomes and highlights their preventive and curative potential in *Ayurveda*.

Index Terms - Pathya, apathya, ayurveda ahara, Hikka, Kasa, Swasa.

Objective

To explore the classical Ayurvedic concepts of *Pathya* and *Apathya* and their application in the management of *Hikka*(hiccough), *Kasa* (cough), and *Shwasa* (respiratory disorders), while drawing parallels with modern nutritional understanding.

Methods

This conceptual review is based on classical *Ayurvedic* texts including *Charaka Samhita* and *Vaidyajivanam*. A comparative analysis was made with current dietary science to understand the relevance of traditional dietary guidelines in clinical care.

INTRODUCTION

The root cause for the strength, complexion and vitality of living beings is *Ahara* (food). It has the ability to control the disease pathology and promote health as well [10]. When consumed in a proper way (*Samyak yoga*), *Ahara* maintains the body, while *Ati* (excess), *Mithya* (improper), and *Hinayoga* (inadequate manner) lead to awful effects on the body. The cautious incorporation of each *rasa* (taste) should be done in *Ahara* in order to get the best benefits out of these *Rasas*. Health is the supreme foundation of virtue, wealth, enjoyment

and salvation. Ayurveda gives the highest importance to the maintenance of health and to promoting positive health rather than curing disease. The goal of Ayurveda is more on prevention rather than curing diseases; thus, Ayurveda emphasizes the ideal food to be consumed to attain and sustain good health. Food is essential for a good life, and the same food, if taken improperly, becomes the root cause of many diseases. All human beings should have proper information about food and its importance to obtain better benefits from it.

In Ayurveda, diseases are not categorised as fixed entities like in modern medicine—such as tumors, typhoid, or appendicitis—but are instead understood through patterns of symptoms. For example, various causes of fever—ranging from infections like malaria or viral illnesses to chronic conditions and even neoplasms—are all addressed under the general symptom of fever. This contrasts with the modern biomedical model that evolved after the discovery of germs and pathogens, which shifted the focus to disease-specific diagnoses and treatments[1].

When it comes to treatment in Ayurveda, the approach is broad and holistic. Management strategies are chosen based on the patient's symptom presentation and the underlying cause. Alongside medicinal interventions, equal emphasis is placed on lifestyle and dietary conduct—specifically, what should be followed (*Pathya*) and what should be avoided (*Apathya*)[2]. These guidelines extend beyond food and drink to include daily routines, psychological and social behavior, and environmental factors.

In the classical Ayurvedic texts, *Acharya Charaka* places significant emphasis on the consumption of foods that are inherently wholesome and supportive of health. These include items such as rice, green gram, rock salt, gooseberry (*Amalaki*), barley, rainwater, milk, ghee, meat, and honey. He advocates for their regular inclusion in the daily diet to promote overall well-being and prevent the onset of diseases[3].

When analyzed through the lens of modern nutritional science, these *āhāra dravyas* (dietary substances) can be correlated with essential nutrient groups: carbohydrates (e.g., rice, barley), proteins (e.g., green gram, meat), fats (e.g., ghee), natural sugars (e.g., honey), minerals (e.g., rock salt), and a combination of vitamins and minerals (e.g., milk, gooseberry). Collectively, these food substances reflect the principles of a balanced and nutritious diet, aligning traditional Ayurvedic wisdom with contemporary nutritional understanding.

In Ayurvedic consultations—whether for treating illness or maintaining wellness—the guidance given on *Pathya* and *Apathya* often holds more value than medication itself. Personalized treatment is at the core of Ayurveda, and this includes a deep understanding of the individual's unique constitution. It's important that the public and even some practitioners recognize this foundational concept, as it underscores the significance of individualised care in achieving true health and balance.

Description of *Pathya* and *Apathya*:

Pathya and *Apathya*:

षथ्ये सति गदार्थस्य किमौषधनिषेवणैः।

पथ्येऽसति गदार्थस्य किमौषधनिषेवणैः॥" *Vaidyajivanam* 1/10

When a patient consistently follows a wholesome and appropriate diet, the necessity for medicinal intervention diminishes significantly. Conversely, if the patient neglects proper dietary practices, the effectiveness of any medical treatment is greatly compromised[4].

Pathya and *Apathya* are fundamental Ayurvedic concepts that refer to dietary and lifestyle guidelines tailored to an individual's health condition. *Pathya* includes foods and habits that support healing and promote health, while *Apathya* refers to those that may worsen a condition or hinder recovery.

Pathya of *Hikka*:

स्वेदनं वमनं नस्यं धूमपानं.....|

In the treatment of *hiccough*, several therapies and dietary measures are found to be beneficial. These include induced sweating, therapeutic vomiting, inhalation of herbal smoke, and getting adequate rest or sleep. Consuming unctuous (oily) foods and using salt in moderate amounts also help relieve symptoms.

Useful dietary items include *Kulattha* (horse gram pulses), aged wheat, old red *Sali* rice, and aged barley. Additionally, certain herbs and foods like garlic bulbs, radish, basil seeds, honey, and cow urine are effective in managing hiccough[5].

Other helpful practices include breathing exercises and inhaling steam produced by pouring water over heated soil, which can soothe the respiratory passages and reduce the intensity of hiccups.

Apathya of Hikka :

वातमूत्रोद्गारकासशकृद्वेगविधारणम्.....|

In the management of *Hikka* (hiccough), several dietary and lifestyle practices are identified as aggravating factors and should be strictly avoided. The suppression of natural urges, such as defecation or sneezing, and exposure to environmental irritants like dust, strong wind, and intense sunlight are considered harmful. Similarly, engaging in strenuous physical activity may worsen symptoms.

From a dietary perspective, the intake of incompatible, constipating, hot, sour, and *Kapha*-provoking foods is contraindicated. Specific items to avoid include *Nispava* (tofu-like soy derivatives), processed pastes, *Urad dal* (black gram), sesame seed cakes, and the meat of birds from marshy or wetland regions. Consumption of sheep's milk, fish, mustard leaves, citrus fruits, deep-fried snacks like potato chips, *Kanda* (tuber leaves), mint, and cold beverages is discouraged due to their potential to disturb the doshic balance[6].

Additionally, therapeutic interventions such as *Basti* (medicated enema) and the habitual use of hard tooth-sticks for oral hygiene should be avoided during episodes of hiccough.

Pathya of Kasa :

स्वेदो विरेचनं छर्द्धिर्मपानं समाशिता.....|

In the treatment of *Kasa* (cough), several supportive measures are recommended. These include therapies such as *Swedana* (sudation or sweating therapy), *Virechana* (purgation), *Vamana* (therapeutic emesis), and *Dhoomapana* (medicated smoke inhalation). It is also important for the patient to eat meals at appropriate times and in moderate quantities.

The diet should consist of easily digestible and nourishing foods such as the gruels or juices made from *Salidhanya* and *Sathi* rice varieties, wheat, *Syamaka*, *Yava* (barley), *Kodarva*, and legumes like *Atmagupta* (*Mucuna* seeds), *Urad* (black gram), *Mudga* (green gram), and *Kulattha* (horse gram).

Animal protein sources beneficial in such cases include the meat of goat, domestic animals, aquatic animals, buffaloes from marshy regions, and animals inhabiting desert areas. Additional recommended items include aged ghee, goat's milk, and liquor in therapeutic doses.

Useful herbs and food items include *Vastuka*, *Makotha* leaves, *Vyaghri*, *Kasaundi*, *Jivanti*, *Draksha* (raisins), *Bimbi*, *Jambira* lemon, *Kamalkanda* (lotus stem), *Adusa* (*Vasa*), small cardamom, cow urine, *Haritaki*, and *Trikatu* (a combination of black pepper, long pepper, and ginger)[7].

The patient should drink lukewarm water, consume honey, use rice poppy, and take foods that are light and easy to digest. In some cases, daytime sleep is also advised as part of the healing regimen.

Apathya of Kasa :

बस्तिं नस्यमसृमोक्षव्यायामं.....|

Certain activities and substances are considered harmful for individuals experiencing *Kasa* (cough). These include therapies like *Basti* (medicated enema), *nasya* (nasal administration of medicines), and bloodletting using leeches or needles. Physical exertion such as wrestling, intense exercise, or even excessive walking, especially on sandy terrain, can worsen the condition.

Daily habits like brushing teeth with hard twigs or abrasive powders, inhaling foul smells, and engaging in activities where dust enters the mouth or nose should be strictly avoided.

Dietary habits that can aggravate the condition include consuming constipating foods, *Vidahi* (spicy or irritant) and *Ruksha* (dry) foods, eating in excess, and consuming heavy, cold rice, or drinking cold water.

It is also important not to suppress natural urges, such as vomiting, coughing, burping, or defecation, as doing so can worsen symptoms. Additionally, certain foods like fish, *Kandu*, potato, mustard leaves, *Tumbiphala*, and *Upodika* should be avoided during this time[8].

Pathya of Swasa :

विरेचनस्वेदनधूमपानप्रच्छेदनानि स्वपनं.....|

In the management of *Shwas Roga* (respiratory diseases), several beneficial practices and dietary recommendations are suggested. Therapies like *Swedana* (induced sweating) and *Dhoomapana* (inhalation of medicated herbal smoke) are helpful in relieving symptoms.

Recommended foods include red rice, *Kulatha* (horse gram), wheat, and barley. Meat from animals and birds that dwell in dry, arid regions—such as rabbit, peacock, partridge, woodcutter bird, chicken, and parrot—is considered beneficial. Additionally, the use of aged ghee, goat's milk, and goat ghee, along with honey and liquor in suitable quantities, is encouraged.

Certain vegetables and herbs also support healing, such as the leaves of *Nidigdhika*, *Vastuka*, *Tanduliya*, *Jivanti*, young radish plants, Patola, brinjal, and garlic. Other helpful items include *Haritaki*, *Jambira* and *Matulunga* lemons, *Bimbi* fruits, dates, small cardamom, *Pushkarmoola*, *Trikatu* (a combination of black pepper, long pepper, and ginger), hot water, and cow urine. All these substances help reduce *Kapha* and *Vata doshas*, which are commonly aggravated in respiratory conditions.[9]

In certain cases, cauterization is also advised—on both sides of the chest, the middle fingers, and around the throat area—as part of the therapeutic process to relieve severe symptoms.

Apathya of Swasa

मूत्रोद्गारच्छर्दिर्तृत्कासरोधो नस्यं.....|

For patients suffering from *Shwas Roga*, certain actions and food items are considered detrimental and should be avoided. These include suppressing natural urges like urination or defecation, undergoing therapies such as *nasya* (nasal treatment) and *basti* (medicated enema), and chewing on hard wooden sticks for dental hygiene.

Physical strain such as heavy labor, excessive walking, lifting heavy loads, or exposure to dust and direct sunlight can aggravate the condition. Dietary factors also play a significant role—consuming heavy, hard-to-digest meals, engaging in sexual activity, and eating meat from animals living in marshy areas are all considered harmful.

Food items that increase *Kapha*, such as deep-fried foods, *Urada* (black gram), and fish, should be strictly avoided. Additional harmful practices include bloodletting, exposure to cold or windy weather, drinking water right after meals, and consuming sheep's milk or ghee, impure water, and vegetables like mustard leaves, *Kanda* (tubers), and similar leafy greens[10].

Avoiding these aggravating factors is essential for effective management and relief from respiratory conditions.

Results

The article highlights specific *Pathya* and *Apathya* recommendations for *Hikka*, *Kasa*, and *Shwasa*, emphasizing the importance of food choices, timing, and behaviour. Foods like aged rice, barley, green gram, garlic, honey, and goat milk are frequently advised. Avoidance of heavy, *Kapha*-promoting foods, suppressing natural urges, and overexertion is stressed.

Conclusion

The Ayurvedic principles of *Pathya* and *Apathya* are central to the prevention and management of diseases such as *Hikka*, *Kasa*, and *Shwasa*. These guidelines emphasise individualised, holistic care, highlighting the importance of diet, lifestyle, and behavioural practices in maintaining health and supporting recovery. Classical texts provide detailed recommendations that align with modern nutritional science, reinforcing their relevance in current clinical settings. Integrating these concepts into daily practice can reduce disease progression, enhance therapeutic outcomes, and promote long-term wellness. Greater awareness among practitioners and the public can ensure the effective application of these time-tested *Ayurvedic* principles.

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