



## Review Article

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### A REVIEW ON HETUVIPARITA CHIKITSA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AYURVEDA AND CONTEMPORARY MEDICINE

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#### ABSTRACT

Contemporary medicine has achieved significant success through standardized, symptom-oriented treatment protocols, especially in acute and infectious conditions, but it often overlooks individual variability and deeper etiological factors, leading to recurrence or incomplete cure. Ayurveda explains disease causation through Asatmyendriyarthasamyoga, Prajnaparadha, and Parinama, and emphasizes Hetuviparita Chikitsa-treating disease by counteracting its root cause. Unlike the disease-focused modern approach, Ayurveda prioritizes correction of faulty lifestyle, diet, and behavior, particularly Prajnaparadha, to restore systemic balance. Classical Ayurvedic texts and contemporary medical literature were systematically reviewed to examine the principles of Hetuviparita Chikitsa and to enable a comparative analysis with modern treatment approaches. Ayurveda explains disease through the Karya-Karana Siddhanta, emphasizing that Dosha imbalance triggered by causative factors (Nidana) leads to pathology, and hence prioritizes Hetuviparita Chikitsa-counteracting the root cause to restore Dhatusamyoga. Classical texts highlight that removal of Hetu, particularly Prajnaparadha, is central to both treatment and prevention. In contrast, contemporary medicine largely focuses on pathogen eradication and symptomatic relief, which may result in recurrence after discontinuation of therapy. Thus, Ayurveda adopts a holistic, immunity-enhancing and causation-based approach, whereas modern medicine emphasizes acute intervention and disease control. Hetuviparita Chikitsa is a core Ayurvedic principle focused on restoring balance by correcting the root cause of disease. Although modern medicine is highly effective in acute and infectious conditions, its symptom-centered approach may overlook systemic harmony. An integrative approach combining Ayurvedic causative correction with modern medical advances can promote more comprehensive and sustainable healthcare.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, Hetuviparita Chikitsa, Prajnaparadha

#### INTRODUCTION

Contemporary medical science has made extraordinary progress, and it has come out with standard treatment protocols for most of the diseases. Western medicine often employs a generalized approach, using standardized drugs and procedures to manage symptoms across different patients having similar diagnosis. Although this is a good and standard method, it fails to pay attention to individual and geographical characteristics and the root cause of the diseases, and in many cases, late or incomplete cure or recurrence of diseases is observed.

Ayurveda has identified "Asatmyendriyarthasamyoga, Prajnaparadha and Parinama" as the root causes of disease. Asatmyendriyarthasamyoga refers to the improper interaction between sensory organs and their respective objects, leading to imbalance of Doshas. Prajnaparadha arises from unhealthy dietary habits and inappropriate behaviors caused by a lack of control over the mind. Parinama pertains to the Kala which means diseases that arise due to aging and seasonal changes, that influence the Doshas in the body, resulting in their aggravation or pacification. The specific causative factors provoke specific dosha in the body and produce countless specific disorders.<sup>2</sup> Treating a disease using the qualities opposite to the qualities of any of these three that has caused the disease is known as "Hetu Viparita Chikitsa" and is the fundamental principle of Ayurvedic medicine.

The term "Hetu" means cause, and "Viparita" means opposite, so Hetuviparita Chikitsa aims to counteract the causes of the disease

with therapies possessing opposing qualities. Ayurveda is a science that believes in the Karya-Karana Siddhanta (principle of cause and effect). According to this principle, no effect occurs without its definite cause.<sup>3</sup> This fact is as true for the body as for the external universe. In the eighth chapter of Nidanasthana, Maharishi Charak says that both health and disease depend on their own causes. And that is why Ayurveda has given great importance to the knowledge of the cause and its opposite treatment in the treatment of disease.<sup>4</sup>

In contemporary science, diseases are categorized into metabolic disorders, infectious diseases, and lifestyle disorders etc.<sup>5</sup> Metabolic disorders often result from hormonal imbalances, poor diet, alcohol consumption, and irregular sleep patterns. Infectious diseases are caused by pathogens such as bacteria, viruses, and germs. Lifestyle disorders stem from sedentary habits, stress, poor nutrition, and excessive use of electronic devices.<sup>6</sup>

In infectious diseases modern medicine primarily uses pharmacological treatments such as antiviral, antibacterial drugs. More over according to the condition and diseases steroids, gene therapy, radiation etc. are also been used. Supplementation of essential nutrients (vitamins, minerals etc.) is the principal treatment for diseases caused by nutritional deficiencies along with regenerative medicines. These approaches are effective in treating infections, providing symptomatic relief, replacing defective elements in the body, and supplementing missing components. Moreover, such therapies support the body temporarily but repairing and nourishing tissues permanently does not occur that could prevent future recurrence.

Supplementary therapies are useful but often require lifelong consumption. Discontinuing these treatments can lead to the recurrence of deficiencies in vitamins, minerals, or other elements. While being effective, this approach often focuses on treating the immediate cause rather than the underlying cause that creates such imbalance in the body. In some cases, it can lead to side effects, such as the destruction of beneficial microorganisms or the development of antibiotic resistance. However, this disease-focused model manages to treat disorders, the high cost of healthcare, complications arising from the drugs, compulsiveness of medicine lifelong, and a lack of awareness about the fundamental and most significant cause of almost diseases nowadays, i.e.; Prajnaparadha i.e. faulty understanding of intellect. Ayurveda has given great importance to Prajnaparadha as a cause of diseases and has considered it as the main reason behind any wrong behaviour a person commits. Wrong behaviour here includes faulty lifestyle, faulty diet pattern and faulty thinking etc. All these leads to the various physical and psychological diseases, hence the treatment should focus to remove the root cause which is responsible for the entire vicious cycle. It is also to be noted that Prajnaparadha is also considered as root cause of Agantuja Roga (diseases occurring due to external factors).

Hetuviparita Chikitsa (treatment opposite to the root cause) encompasses not only medications but also dietary modifications, lifestyle adjustments, and other therapeutic measures aimed at neutralizing or counterbalancing the root cause of the disease. It highlights the importance of root causes and adopt therapy that does not cause side-effect, beneficial economically, prevent recurrences, avoid complications and mainly focuses on holistic health to improve the equilibrium of the body system.

This article aims to explore the differences between the Ayurvedic concept of Hetuviparita Chikitsa and the contemporary medical approach to disease treatment. By comparing these perspectives, we seek to highlight the unique principles of Ayurveda to pacify the disease by its root cause.

Various references from classical Ayurvedic texts have been reviewed to understand the fundamental principles of Hetuviparita Chikitsa. Additionally, the modern treatment approaches concerning its treatment methods have been thoroughly reviewed to provide a comprehensive comparison between the principles of Ayurveda and contemporary medicine.

### **Importance of Hetu in Ayurveda**

Ayurveda, recognized as a Sarvaparishada Shastra, incorporates philosophical foundations from multiple Darshanas, prominently adopting the Karya-Karana Siddhanta, principle of Samkhya which emphasizes that no effect occurs without an underlying cause. This causal framework is applied in understanding disease through the three types of Karana: Samavayi (inherent cause), Asamavayi (non-inherent cause), and Nimitta (efficient cause). The Doshas Vata, Pitta, and Kapha serve as Samavayi Karana forming the inherent basis of pathology. In this context, Acharya Chakrapani, while commenting on the types of diseases based on their nature, states that Prakriti refers to the Vatadi Doshas, which are the primary and foremost cause of Niija Roga. (diseases arising from within the body).<sup>7</sup> Disease emerges only when these Doshas get aggravated and interact pathologically with Dushyas, constituting the Asamavayi Karana. The Trividha Nidana-Asatmyendriyarthasamyoga, Prajnaparadha, and Kala act as Nimitta Karana and serve as external triggers that convert Dosha imbalance into clinical manifestation. Although Doshas remain inseparably associated with the body; disease does not

continuously manifest because in normal state they perform physiological functions. As Sushruta explains, the presence of Nimitta is essential for their vitiation.<sup>8</sup> Nimitta Karana here are the Nidana or Hetu (causative factors) which alters the properties of Dosha further resulting in disturbance or abnormality in their function, which leads to manifestation of diseases. This underscores the primacy of Hetu-viparita Chikitsa, wherein removal or counteraction of causative factors becomes central to treatment. Acharya Charaka accordingly defines therapy as both the adoption of measures that promote Dhatusamya (equilibrium of body tissues) and the avoidance of disease-causing Nidana.<sup>9</sup> The Swabhavoparama Siddhanta accepts that Dhatusamya and Vaishamya are naturally destroyed, so Ayurveda emphasizes that pathological pathways reestablish themselves unless the causal sequence is actively disrupted. Hence, sustained restoration of Dhatusamya requires therapeutic intervention aimed at breaking the cycle of vitiation through the avoidance of similar Nidanas and the adoption of opposite qualities.<sup>10</sup> This integrative causal approach forms the cornerstone of Ayurvedic disease prevention and management.

In Mahachatushpada Adhyaya, Acharya Charaka emphasizes the critical role of the Hetu (cause) in the treatment process, highlighting its significance at the most advanced stage of a disease. He explains that treatment should be aimed at counteracting the nature of the disease, a concept referred to as Mulaviparyaya (opposite to the root cause). In this context, Chakrapani comments that Mulaviparyaya is synonymous with Karanaviparyaya, where Mula correlates to the Karana, or underlying cause, often referred as Nidana or Hetu.<sup>11</sup> Acharya Charaka further elaborates that this treatment, which opposes the disease's nature, works through the principle of Prabhava (specific effect). Additionally, in the Nidanasthana, he introduces the term Karta for Hetu, which denotes the factor entirely responsible for an action or occurrence, reinforcing the idea that the root cause (Hetu) is central to the treatment process.<sup>12</sup> Indu, the commentator of Ashtanga Samgraha states that Hetu is the reason for manifestation of disease.<sup>13</sup>

The key difference between Ayurvedic and contemporary approaches lies in the foundational treatment strategies. While modern medicine focuses on targeting and eradicating pathogens like bacteria and viruses which primarily addresses the symptoms and cause of disease using pharmacological agents or surgery focusing on acute interventions. This kind of medication may provide short-term relief; the condition may recur once the drug is discontinued. Additionally, long-term use of such medications can result in side effects that impact other organs. For example, in cases of hormonal imbalance, medications (mostly the chemically synthesized hormones) are given to bring hormone levels back within a normal range, thereby correcting the disturbances caused by the imbalance. However, a significant gap is the lack of focus on identifying the root cause of the hormonal imbalance. It can stem from a variety of causes, including stress, lifestyle factors, nutritional deficiencies, or even chronic diseases. Without understanding and addressing these root causes, the solution remains superficial. If the fundamental reasons behind the hormonal imbalance were identified and treated, it would offer a more comprehensive and effective long-term solution, reducing the need for ongoing medication and minimizing the risk of recurrence. That is why, Ayurveda approaches the condition of hormonal imbalance as well as in all the diseases by identifying the root cause that focus on Dosha and Dhatusamya means disequilibrium of the Doshas and Dushyas along with their pathological interaction.

**Table 1: Key differences between Ayurveda and Contemporary Perspectives**

Feature	Ayurveda perspective	Contemporary medicine perspective
Primary Focus	Elimination of root cause and reestablishment of balanced systems <sup>14</sup>	Pathogen eradication and symptomatic relief.
Methodology	Lifestyle and Diet planning <sup>15</sup> and purification (Shodhana) <sup>16</sup>	Pharmacological agents, Supplementation, surgery
Recurrence	Focuses on prevention of recurrence	Risk of recurrence if therapy discontinued.

As per contemporary medical science management of NCDs predominantly emphasizes symptomatic treatment supplemented with long-term lifestyle and dietary modifications. These measures include avoidance of processed, fermented, high-fat, and junk foods, along with the adoption of a light, balanced, and nutritionally adequate diet. Lifestyle interventions such as regular physical exercise, yoga, meditation, regulation of sleep, reduced screen exposure, and avoidance of sedentary habits are strongly advocated to restore physiological homeostasis.<sup>17</sup> This therapeutic approach inherently reflects the Ayurvedic principle of Hetuviparita Chikitsa, which focuses on eliminating or counteracting etiological factors responsible for disease manifestation.

In the management of vector-borne and infectious diseases, medicine primarily targets the causative organisms through antimicrobial or antiviral therapy, along with symptomatic care. However, it is well acknowledged that pathogenic microorganisms are omnipresent in the environment, yet disease develops only in a susceptible host. This observation highlights the critical role of host immunity and resistance. For instance, in the case of tuberculosis, although the causative bacteria may be prevalent in a crowded environment, only a few individuals become infected. Ayurveda explains this susceptibility in terms of poor Vyadhikshamatva (immunity) and diminished strength of bodily tissues, which fail to resist pathogenic invasion. Hence, strengthening the host becomes as important as eliminating the pathogen.

Ayurveda emphasizes that enhancement of Vyadhikshamatva is achieved through appropriate dietary practices, disciplined lifestyle, and adherence to ethical and behavioural guidelines described under Sadvritta (code of good conduct). These measures strengthen the body's intrinsic defence mechanisms and reduce vulnerability to both infectious and lifestyle-related disorders. Thus, irrespective of the apparent differences in disease aetiology, the fundamental therapeutic principle remains the avoidance of causative factors and avoidance of Prajnaparadha. That is why Acharya Charaka says that, abandonment of intellectual blasphemy (Prajnaparadha), control of the senses, cultivation of memory (mindfulness), knowledge of place, time, and the self, and adherence to righteous conduct this is the path indicated for the prevention of exogenous (Agantuka) diseases.<sup>18</sup>

This highlights the fundamental difference between the two systems: Ayurveda seeks to eradicate the disease from its root cause, while modern medicine offers quick symptom relief with the possibility of recurrence. Although contemporary medicine gives due importance to the proximate causes of disease, such as microorganisms or pathological agents, the core etiopathogenic factors- Asatmyendriyatha Samyoga, Prajnaparadha and Parinama- largely remain beyond its scope of consideration.

## CONCLUSION

Hetuviparita Chikitsa represents a foundational Ayurvedic principle that emphasizes harmony, balance, and causative correction in disease management. While contemporary medicine excels in acute care and infection control, it often prioritizes symptomatic relief over systemic balance, potentially disturbing microbiome integrity. Integrating the holistic, causation-oriented

perspective of Ayurveda with modern medical advances can facilitate comprehensive healthcare.

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