



# Hetu and its Role in Health, Disease and Treatment- A Review Article

Author: Deepak Verma<sup>1</sup>

Co Authors: Shivangi Kunwar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dept. of Sharira Rachana, Shivalik institute of Ayurveda and research, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

<sup>2</sup>Dept. of Sharira Rachana, Smt. Manjira Devi Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand, India

## ABSTRACT

*Ayurveda* is a vast science. Every term used in *Ayurvedic* literatures has a sea of knowledge comprises in it. *Hetu* is one of them. *Hetu* has a relation with health, disease and treatment. In this study we aimed to clarify the term *Hetu* and its bonding with healthy life, disordered life and the treatment. *Hetu* maintains health by means of the routines considered by *Acharayas*. We elaborated *Hetu's* role in disease development and treatment through *Swabhavoparama Waad*. As the conclusion we see that *Sama Hetu* is the cause of maintaining health and on diseased condition these *Sama Hetu* are introduced as the treatment. On the other hand the *Vishama Hetu* is factor which develops diseases and continues exposure makes the disease worse.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Ayurveda* is an ancient and holy life science. All the facts and knowledge mentioned in it is well established and extracted by hundreds of *Maharishi* and *Acharayas*. *Ayurveda* is serving humanity since ancient time. It has two basic modes of action, one by maintaining the healthy life and the other by curing the disease that troubles the human body. Almost all the related *Granthas* are giving priority to maintaining a healthy life first, that's why the early chapters of these *Granthas* are filled with those factors and routines which promote disease less healthy life. These routines comprises morning routine, month routine, routines for eating habits, sleeping habits, intercourse, drinking, bathing, personal hygiene,

etc. and good behaviour and positive social activities are also included in these routines. Unfollowing these routines or following them in unethical manner can cause abnormalities in human body. These routines show dual action i.e. either makes a healthy life or can create abnormalities in body, overall it can be the cause (*Hetu*) of both the conditions.

The next important moto of *Ayurveda* science is to identify the current stage of disease and thereafter treat it accordingly. In ancient *Ayurvedic* literature a much sequenced process is mentioned to diagnose the disease. The tools of diagnosis are *Hetu*, *Purvarupa*, *Rupa*, *Upsaya* and *Samprapti*. Combinedly it named as *Nidan Panchaka*. These *Nidan Panchaka* elaborates how progressively the



## REVIEW ARTICLE

disease developed? What is exact stage of the disease? And what should be the treatment? From the *Nidana panchaka*, *Hetu* has an ability to identify the developing disease as well as it has a great role in curing disease.

In both of these modes there is a common thing called “*Hetu*”. It has a great role in entire *Ayurveda* science. *Hetu* is linked with both; the healthy life and the diseased one. As it is a major component of *Ayurveda* science, so it should be elaborated thoroughly. In this study we will clarify the different aspect of *hetu* and its role in health, disease and treatment.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To clarify the *Hetu*

To elaborate the role of *Hetu* in healthy life, disease and treatment

To clarify the concept of *Hetu* through the theory of *Swabhavoparama Vaad*

### **HETU:-**

Basically the meaning of *Hetu* is *Kaarana* or cause. *Madhavakar* has defined *Hetu* as, ‘The cause which develops disease after going through different processes<sup>1</sup>’. According to *Acharaya Charaka* ‘The cause which lights the knowledge or through which the true knowledge is gained’ is *Hetu*<sup>2</sup>. In other context *Chakarapani* define it as ‘The cause of developing disease is *Hetu*<sup>3</sup>’. *Charaka* has mentioned *Sama Hetu* and *Visama Hetu* in relation to various contexts. The factors which maintain normalcy of *Dhatu* are called

*Sama Hetu* and the factor which disturbs the *Dhatu* are called *Visama Hetu*.

“*Hetu, Linga* and *Ausadha*” are called *Trisutra*<sup>4</sup>. These three components are essential to understand the *Ayurveda* science and to establish the moto of *Ayurveda*. *Hetu* is the 1<sup>st</sup> component in it. The knowledge of *Hetu* is essential to dealing both, the healthy and the diseased person. *Linga* and *Ausadha* are the factors which are only related to disease condition.

### **SYNONYMS OF HETU<sup>5</sup> –**

*Nimitta, Ayatana, Karta, Karana, Prataya, Samuthana, Nidana, Beeja*

### **HEALTHY LIFE AND ROLE OF HETU TO MAINTAIN IT:-**

In *Ayurvedic* literature there are numerous references which define health. According to *Acharaya Charaka* - a person with ‘Appropriate muscle mass, good will power and physical power, with good functioning sense organs, ability of suffering less in diseases, one who can bear the hunger, thirst, temperature and physical work; with good digestion and natural ageing process’ is healthy one<sup>6</sup>. *Acharaya Charaka* has also quoted that ‘abnormality of *Dhatu* is called disease and its normality indicates good health<sup>7</sup>’.

*Maharishi Sushruta* has mentioned physical, mental and spiritual signs to define a healthy individual. According to him a healthy individual is with ‘Appropriate and good functioning of *Dosha, Agni, Dhatu* and *Mala* combined with delights *Aatma, Indriya* and *Mana*<sup>8</sup>’.

The primary moto of *Ayurveda* is “*Swasthasya Swasthya Raksanama*<sup>9</sup>” (maintaining the health of

September 10<sup>th</sup> 2021 Volume 15, Issue 2 Page 122



## REVIEW ARTICLE

healthy individuals). That's why the ancient authors are much focused in that habits and routines which are mandatory to maintain good health in human being. In earlier chapters they mentioned the organized system for maintaining healthy life, instead of describing disease and their treatment. This arrangement of chapters is seen in the *Sutra Sthana* of *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Astanga Shamgraha* and *Astanga Hridaya* e.t.c. These routines are *Dincharya*, *Ritucharya*, *Aahar Vidhi* and *Ratricharya* etc. From a different perspective, these rules and routines are seems like the *Hetu* or causes which secures good health. Means if these routines and habits are followed genuinely and adopted as a part of life, it works as *Hetu* of healthy life. i.e. "waking at *Bhraham Muhurata*", "taking *Madhura Rasa* in *Hemant Ritu*", "taking *Laghu Aahar* in *Grisama Ritu*", "never ignore the urges of hunger, thirst, defecation, micturation, flatulus, sleep" etc. So the proper and sequenced implement of these *Hetu* fulfill the primary moto ("*Swasthasya Swasthya Raksanama*") of *Ayurveda*.

On the other hand, ignoring these routines act as a *hetu* of different disease and abnormalities i.e. 'disobeying *Sadachara*, insulting of teachers, god and elders is a cause of *Unmaad* (lunacy)', 'excessive eating habit and holding the urges of *Mala*, *Mutra* etc are the *Hetu* of *Grahini Roga*', 'day sleeping, excessive intercourse and exercise is a cause of *Pandu*(anemia)'.  
In Ayurvedic literature '*Kaal*', '*Artha*' and '*Karma*' are combinedly termed as *Hetu Traya*

(three *hetu*)<sup>10</sup>. These three factors are the *Hetu* of health if followed sincerely, on the other hand overuse, misuse or avoidance of these factors causes different disease and abnormality.

A) *Kaal* means time. *Kaal* or a peculiar time has a significant role to maintain health. In *Sutra Sthana* of *Charaka Samhita* a quotation "*Kaal Bhojanama Arogya Karanama*"(taking meal timely create health) proves the importance of *Kaal*.

*Karma* is also an important factor which maintains the health. *Dincharya Palana*, *Ritucharya Palana*, *Ratricharya Palana*, *Aahar Vidhi*, *Sadavritta Palana* etc. are health promoting *Karma*. Following these routines systematically and classically act as the cause of good health.

B) *Artha* means *Indriyartha*. Our five *Indriyan* senses the external environment and generates *Buddhi* (knowledge). By utilizing the *Indriya* in controlled way and divert it towards good subjects as mentioned in ancient literature; then it maintains the quality of life.

### ROLE OF HETU IN DEVELOPMENT OF DISEASE:-

#### DISEASE (ROGA OR VIKRATI):-

*Vikrati* or disease is the condition of the body other than healthy state. *Acharaya Charaka* quoted that '*Vikara* is the disturbance of *Dhatu*'. Here *Dhatu* is a broad term and comprises *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*. *Acharaya Charaka* also mentioned that *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha* (*Dosha*) as the generator of various diseases to make suffered human body<sup>12</sup>.

*Acharaya Vagbhata* follows the later view of *Charaka* that '*Vikara* or *Roga* are the disturbance



## REVIEW ARTICLE

of *Dosha*<sup>11</sup>. In other reference *Maharishi Vagbhata* mentioned that “vitiating *Srotus* are developed into disease<sup>13</sup>”. *Maharishi Sushruta* combine it all and describe that “vitiating *Dosha* are subsequently increased in the body, Then it collaborated with specific *Dhatu*, *Mala* and *Srotus* to develop specific *Vyadhi* or *Vikara*”.

### RELATION BETWEEN HETU AND DISEASE:-

In *Ayurvedic* literatures *Panch Nidana* is a major component to understand and to diagnose diseases. *Hetu* or *Nidana* (cause) is the first part of it. According to *Chakarapani* ‘*Hetu* is for *Vyadhijanaka* (one which generate disease) and *Vyadhi Bodhakara*’ (one which give the knowledge of disease)<sup>14</sup>.

*Acharaya Charaka* mentioned that *Nidana*, *Dosha* and *Dushya* are combinedly causing diseases. A Specific combination of these three converts into specific diseases<sup>15</sup>. Similar concept is given by *Acharaya Himadri* that ‘*Hetu* are of two types: one is *Antaranga Hetu* and the other one is *Bahiranga Hetu*<sup>16</sup>. *Antaranga Hetu* comprises ‘*Dosha and Dushya*’. *Bahiranga Hetu* comprises ‘*Aahar and Vihara*’. Both are combinedly involved in the development of disease.

Every *Hetu* which maintains a good health could be a *Hetu* for generating a disease. Like *Asamyaka Yoga of Trividha Hetu* causes disease. Involvement of *Hetu* is the first step towards a future disease. These *Hetu* vitiating the *Dosha*. In the reference of *Shada Kriya Kaal*<sup>17</sup>, *Maharishi Sushruta* mentioned that the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of treatment is called *Sanchaya*. This is the initial stage where

*Dosha* which are vitiating through *Hetu* are increases in their natural locations. Means the *Hetu* disturb the *Doshas* and eventually *Sanchayavastha* of *Dosha* occurs. But there is an exception in this theory. Some *Hetu* which are called *Aagantuja Hetu* (external injury or animal bite etc), are initiate the process of generating disease with more potency, so the *Dosha* vitiating through these *Hetu* are directly goes to *Prakopavastha* (next stage of developing disease in which *Dosha* are fully filled and start travelling in body). So there is absolute necessity of *Hetu* to initiate the process of developing disease. In the fourth stage of *Kriyakaal*, which is called *Sthana Sansraya*, the involvement of *Dushya* (*Dhatu*) and *Srotus* occurs. From this stage the disease starts showing there signs (*Lakshana*).

### ROLE OF HETU IN TREATMENT:-

*Acharaya Charaka* defines treatment as<sup>18</sup> ‘the process which normalizes (*Sama*) body’s *Dhatu* and the main function of *Bhishaka* (doctor) is to treat disease by normalizing *Dhatu*’. How can we protect *Dhatu* from getting disturb (*Vaishamyia*) and in what manner we can maintain the normality (*Samatva*), is the moto of treatment.

*Maharishi Sushruta* quoted that<sup>19</sup> ‘*Sanchevataha Kriya Yogo Nidan Parivarjanama*’ means the “treatment is to restrict the *Nidana* or the cause of disease”. It clearly defines the role of *Hetu* in the treatment, but a vast clarification of this quotation is mentioned in the *Charaka Samhita*’s *Sutra Sthana*. Here *Maharishi Charaka* gives the theory of ‘*Swabhavoparama Vaad*’ and clarifies the



## REVIEW ARTICLE

concept and relation of 'Hetu and treatment' by mean of it.

### SWABHAVOPARAMAVAAD<sup>20</sup> AND ITS RELATION WITH HETU, DISEASE AND TREATMENT

According to *Charaka* the Hetu are of two types<sup>18</sup>, one is *Sama Hetu* or the causes which are maintaining the normal constituent of body *Dhatu*. The other *Hetu* are *Vishama*, these are the causes which altered the normalcy of *Dhatu* of body.

If our body is in connection or associated with *Vishama Hetu*, it produces *Vishama Dhatu* in body. If we treat this condition with *Sama Hetu*, *Dhatu* returns to normality. It simply means that at a particular time the *Sama Dhatu* or *Vishama Dhatu* which formed in our body requires a *Sama Hetu* or *Vishama Hetu*. Subsequently formed *Sama* or *Vishama Dhatu* by means of *Sama* or *Vishama Hetu* is naturally destructed. The destruction is occurs naturally (by *Swabhava*) and didn't need any cause. The process of destruction occurs very quickly. It indicates that formation of *Sama* and *Vishama Dhatu* and their natural destruction happens continuously and quickly.

*Acharaya Charaka* quoted next that "Origin needs *Hetu* but the destruction didn't require any *Hetu*". Here *Chakarapani* gives an example of an illuminating lamp i.e. there are multiple essential factors which involved in illuminate the lamp like oil, cotton, fire etc but after a certain time the fire naturally extinguish. Similarly when *Dhatu* becomes *Sama* or *Vishama*, it naturally ends without need of any cause or treatment.

According to *Chakarapani* there are two possible clarifications which are responsible for the absence of 'cause of destruction' –

1] There is complete absence of any cause (E.g. Presence of horns in rabbit) – rabbits didn't have horns because there is no cause exists for this condition. According to *Karya Karana Waad*, every *Karya* (function) needs a *Karana* (cause). Here complete absence of the cause of rabbit's horn clarifies the complete absence of the cause of destruction.

2] There must be a cause but it is out of reach or the cause cannot be elaborated or known by human intelligence. [Example – like an iron nail is buried in earth, it is present beneath the surface but cannot be seen from outside or from earth surface]. *Aatreya Punarvasu* gives the example of *Nityaga kaal* (continuous running time) to clarify the second point. *Kaal* is continuously and vigorously spending. The cause of its destruction is wouldn't elaborated till now. This natural destruction phenomenon is seen in the all things of the universe. Things are destructing continuously with spending of every fraction of time and without any cause.

*Aatreya Punarvasu* clarifies that 'time is continuously running and producing past as a byproduct'. This process is occurred in every existing thing in this world. This concept is similar as the concept of *Parivartana Vaad* of *Bodddha dharma*. *Chakarapani* clarifies that how the formed things fastly ends or destructed. The thing which is originated is continuously and fastly transformed into other things. This is due to the



## REVIEW ARTICLE

instability of matters or transforming nature of the originated thing. This law says ‘everything is changing or transforming is every fraction of time. The next thing originated is the *Santana* (progeny) of previous thing. That’s why this theory is also called the “*Santana Vaad*”. Ultimately the result is there is not any cause of destruction and we can’t make any change or do anything to alter destruction.

It means that we can’t convert the *Vishama Dhatu* into *Sama Dhatu* because formed *Vishama Dhatu* is always transformed into other thing (the transformation of previous *dhatu* is basically its destruction) and we cannot interfere in the process of transformation. So treating the *Vishama Dhatu* is not possible because it changes fast and continuously.

Similarly the destruction of diseases (*Vishama Dhatu*) occurs naturally but it doesn’t mean that there is no need of treatment. They clarified the role of treatment too. *Acharayas* says that absence of *Hetu* is the cause of natural destruction. Means if we cut the connection of *Hetu* of *Vikara*, the *Vishama Dhatu* formation is interrupted. Later on, introducing *Sama Hetu* starts *Sama Dhatu* production. *Charaka* defines treatment as “the process which makes the body *Dhatu Sama*”.

*Chakarapani* elaborated the role of treatment as “The process in which the *Vishama Dhatu* is transformed into *Sama Dhatu* has been done is called treatment.

*Dhatu* is only stable for a minimal time, and then it is destructed naturally. But at its destruction it converts into or formed another *Vishama Dhatu*.

This new formed *Dhatu* is called *Dhatu Santana*. *Chakarapani* clarifies that, this newly formed *Dhatu Santana* is *Sama* if it is formed from *Sama Dhatu* and if it is formed from the *Vishama Dhatu* it is called *Vishama Dhatu Santana*. Means the nature of *Hetu* (*Sama* or *Vishama*) defines the nature of *Dhatu Santana*. This concept of *Chakarapani* is similar to the concept of *Parivartana Waad* or *Santana Waad* of *Boddha Darshana*.

*Vishama Hetu* → *Vishama Dhatu* → *Vishama Dhatu Santana* → continuously transforming into *Vishama* progeny

Then *Chakarapani* clarify that to break this chain we have to introduce *Dhatu Samya Utpadaka Hetu*. These *Hetu* formed a chain of generating *Sama Dhatu* and *Dhatu Santana*. Leaving *Vishama Hetu* and introducing *Sama Hetu* to the body, breaks the chain of *Vishama Dhatu* transformation and body is proceeds towards *Sama Dhatu*. Charging body with *Sama Dhatu* is called the treatment.

### APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF HETU:-

*Nidan Parivarjana*<sup>19</sup> – This term is introduced by *Maharishi Sushruta*. *Nidan* means ‘*Hetu* (cause)’. *Parivarjana* means ‘to avoid’. Avoiding *Hetu* (or the cause) is a common line of treatment in all the diseases and it is also act as prophylaxis for all the diseases. By avoiding the cause of disease or abnormality, we break the chain of forming *Vishama Dhatu*. Discontinuation in the *Vishama Dhatu* formation automatically interrupts the ‘*Vishama Dhatu Santan*’ formation. Now



## REVIEW ARTICLE

introducing *Sama Hetu* makes body's *Dhatu Sama*. *Vagbhata* also gave this concept in *Astanga Hridaya*. He mentioned a term *Swa Nidan Viparyaya* treatment<sup>21</sup>. According to him the priority should be *Hetu Viprita Chikitsa*. If it doesn't work then switch to *Vyadhi Viprita Chikitsa* or *Hetu-Vyadhi Vipritarthkari* treatment. It means *Nidan Viparyaya* treatment is act on all of the diseases, if didn't work then the doctor should have switch to *Vyadhi Viprita* or *Hetu Vyadhi Viprita Chikitsa*.

It clarifies the concept of *Shamana* and *Shodhana*. These *Shamana* and *Shodhana* are two types of treatment which are followed in our Ayurveda science. *Sanshodhana* is to finish the *Dosha* from its root<sup>21</sup>. It is complete eradication of vitiated *Dosha* from body. So the *Visama Dhatu* which is converting in *Santana* dhatu are expelled outside from the body On the other hand *Sanshamana* treatment is to suppression of the vitiated *Dosha*. Drugs used in *Sanshamana* treatment are act as the *Sama Hetu*. It initiates a chain of *Sama Dhatu* formation but not completely jam the *Vishama Dhatu* transformation into *Vishama Santana*. Here *Doshas* are not eradicated, so they may provoke or disturb again on connecting with similar *Hetu*.

Knowledge of *Hetu* is essential to maintain a healthy life. Knowing and following *Sama Hetu* and avoiding *Vishama Hetu* maintain a good health. If there are any abnormality in body, the doctor elaborates it and find out the hetu which must be avoid and the hetu which should be followed as a treatment.

## CONCLUSION

*Hetu* is a vast term. Every ongoing process or a result has a *Hetu* and it initiate the process of change. In *Ayurveda Hetu* is an essential component to understand healthy life, development of disease and the treatment of the disease. *Sama Hetu* promotes health by forming *Sama Dhatu* in body. Vitiating of *Dhatu* (*Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*) develops disease and it is due to the contact with *Vishama Hetu*. *Vishama Dhatu* transformed into *Vishama Dhatu Santana* and this *Vishama Santana* continuously transform into *Vishama* progeny. This chain of *Vishama Santana* transformation is stopped by introducing *Sama Hetu* as a treatment.



## REVIEW ARTICLE

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## REVIEW ARTICLE

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