International Research Journal of Ayurveda & Yoga Vol. 8(1), pp. 32-37, January, 2025

Available online at http://irjay.com

ISSN: 2581-785X

DOI: 10.48165/IRJAY.2025.80106



### **REVIEW ARTICLE**

## Critical analysis of the Concept of Hitayu

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### ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received on: 07-12-2024 Accepted on: 11-01-2025 Available on: 31-01-2025

### Key words:

Ayu, Hitayu, Social wellbeing, Spiritual wellbeing, Swasthya

### **ABSTRACT**

**Introduction:** Ayurveda emphasizes holistic health, considering physical, mental, sensory, and spiritual balance, with practices such as *dinacharya*, *ritucharya* and *rasayana* promoting long, disease-free life. Acharya Charaka describes four types of life - *hitayu*, *ahitayu*, *sukhayu*, and *dukhayu* which deals various shades of one's life on the view of physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects of wellbeing.

Materials and Methods: A comprehensive review of existing literature was conducted. In addition, journals and articles were reviewed.

**Observation and Discussion:** *Hita* in Ayurveda focuses on actions and practices that nourish and support life, promoting longevity and well-being. *Hitayu* is closely related to *sadvritta*, ethical behavior that supports holistic health, and includes principles such as compassion, truthfulness, and self-discipline. It also connects with *achara rasayana*, which incorporates daily conduct and practices such as mindfulness, positive relationships, and self-care to promote overall health. Social, spiritual, and mental well-being are integral to *hitayu*, with an emphasis on kindness, honesty, and mindful decision-making, all contributing to a balanced and harmonious life. Features of *hitayu* can be classified into eight domains.

**Conclusion:** An analysis of the features of *hitayu* reveals that it describes the aspects of social, spiritual, and mental well-being of a person by outlining its *lakshanas*, more to the social and spiritual wellbeing of people. *Hitayu* can be considered the best standard for understanding social and spiritual health in Ayurveda and it can be taken as basis for measuring them.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Health is a foremost factor in life of an individual. A long and healthy life has been cherished by the man since ages. Ayurveda describes health by the word "Swasthya" which is a state of physical, mental, sensorial and spiritual equilibrium and evenness. [1] It does not only talk about the treatment of disease but basically provides importance on each and every aspect of one's physical, psychological, social and spiritual health at both personal and social level. According to Ayurveda various means such as dinacharya, ritucharya, sadvritta, and rasayana help a person to lead a healthy and long life as well as to prevent disease. [2] All these principles help a person who wishes to lead a healthy and long life irrespective of age. Acharya Charaka describes four types of ayu or life, ie hitayu, ahitayu, sukhayu and dukhayu in

the definition of Ayurveda. It also explains what is beneficial (*hita*) and what is harmful (*ahita*), as well as what brings happiness (*sukha*) and suffering (*duhkha*) to life. It describes how these factors affect one's life span.<sup>[3,4]</sup> Among the four ayu(life) *sukhayu* and *dukhayu* seems to be more limited to personal sphere of physical and psychological well-being, where there is a scope to compare *hitayu* and ahitayu in the background of social and spiritual health. Our concern of health and its dimension has greatly increased in recent decades. Especially growing awareness and recognition of social and spiritual health aspects. Hence here comes the need to explore the concept of *hitayu* which is mentioned by Acharya Caraka centuries ago, in the background of health dimensions so as to increase our understanding of health and *swasthya*.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

## 2.1. Study Design-Narrative Review

The literature was extensively reviewed by consulting original texts such as the Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita, and Ashtangahridaya,

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which were further elucidated by commentaries. The information regarding *ayu* and technical terms present in the characteristics of *hitayu* were collected from these Ayurveda texts and were critically analysed. In addition, journals and articles were reviewed.

### 3. RESULT OF REVIEW

### 3.1. Concept of Ayu

The term ayu refers to lifespan and is typically understood as age, though ancient texts attribute a broader significance to it. According to acharya Charaka the definition of ayu is the combination of body, conative and cognitive apparatus.<sup>[3]</sup> Ayu signifies the balanced integration of the body, senses, mind, and soul, ensuring that their functions remain consistently aligned throughout life. The elements of ayu are arranged in a particular order to demonstrate the progression of knowledge and experiences. Shareera refers to the physical body, made up of the pancabhuta (five great elements), [5] and atma and sometimes called purusha is one who experiencing pleasures and pains. [6] The indrivas, or senses, such as sight (chakshurindriva) and hearing (srotrendriva), etc. are conative and cognitive organs however commonly considered as sense organs and they interact with the external world.<sup>[7]</sup> Satva represents the mind, which acts as the thinker and processor of the information received from the indrivas. [8] Atma with the help of satva is uniting or connecting agent for the knowledge and it help to achieve jnana or meaningful knowledge derived from other component.[8] Proper combination of all these four is life; in the event of absence of even one, the life is not possible. Furthermore, ayu is also described as the duration of life or continuation of consciousness, characterized by chetana, [9] or consciousness. The verse implies that life is essentially the ongoing connection or association (anubandhah) between consciousness and existence. This connection is what sustains life.

## 3.2. Synonyms of Ayu<sup>[3]</sup>

There are four synonyms are mentioned by Acharya Caraka. *Dhari*, means that which sustains *shareeram*, preventing it from degeneration. *Jeevitham*, means the one that preserves the vital energy. *Nityaga*, means that reflects the dynamic nature of ayu, which continually undergoes the process of catabolism. *Anubandha*, means *Ayu* (life) is described as a form of the union with the body, which involves the continuity or connection (*anubandha*) and other aspects, and is related to the combination with the physical body and other factors.

## 3.3. Ayu and Ayurveda

The ultimate aim of human life is the attainment of its principal objects, namely *dharma*, *artha*, *sukha*. In order to attain *purushartha*, a long and healthy life is necessary. And Acharya Vagbhata said that one who seeks life should extremely respect and abide the norms of Ayurveda. *Sukha* includes *kama* and *moksha*. [10] *Kama* is desire and *moksha* is the ultimate liberation. *Artha* indicates the means of life. *Dharma* is the function reasonably expected by virtue of one's structure in the social fabric. The definition of Ayurveda by Acharya Charaka underscores the role of Ayurveda in understanding and implementing practices that are beneficial and avoid harmful ones, contributing to overall happiness, reduced suffering, and a longer, healthier life. Charaka mentions that concepts of happiness, well-being, and factors influencing longevity according to Ayurvedic principles. [4]

## 3.4. Swasthya and Ayu

Acharya Sushrutha give definition of health as a state of perfect balance in all bodily functions and mental states, where the *doshas*, *agni*,

dhatus, and malas are in equilibrium, and the individual has a peaceful and content state of mind and senses. [1] These components require their own specific nourishment. While the food we consume nourishes the body, senses, and mind, each requires specific forms of sustenance: The body or shareera needs air, food, and water; the senses (indriya) require a balanced range of sensory inputs i.e. samyoga of indriyartha; the mind needs suitable subjects for contemplation i.e. samyoga of chintyadyartha; and the soul or atma seeks peace and bliss through qualities such as compassion, forgiveness, non-anger, and pure emotions such as bhootadaya, karuna, kshaama, akrodha, and sattvikabhava.

The components of swasthya (health) and ayu are closely related. Ayu comprises sareera, indriya, sattva, and atma, and the balanced state of these factors produces swasthya. Samadosha, samagni, samadhatu, and malakriya fall under the domain of shareera. Along with prasannatma (serene soul), prasannendriya (serene senses), and prasannamanasa (serene mind), these aspects contribute to swasthya. This holistic view encompasses not only the normal physiology and anatomy of the body but also a comprehensive sense of well-being. Indriya swasthya (health of the senses) is a unique concept in Ayurveda, but its importance has grown in recent times. This is because the senses serve as the channels through which the mind and atma receive input. In other words, the senses are the pathways through which the mind and soul are nourished. The concept of prasannatma or atma swasthya is closely related to philosophical ideas and can be correlated with spiritual health. The definition of health by the World Health Organization[11] is also consistent with this statement. Both definitions converge on the idea that health encompasses more than just physical fitness or the absence of illness. They highlight a comprehensive balance of various aspects of life.

## 3.5. Hitayu and Ahitayu

In Acharya Caraka's discussion on the four types of *ayu*, *hitayu*, or beneficial life, is described with 16 distinct characteristics mentioned in table 1.

## 3.6. Sukhayu and Dukhayu

A happy life is characterized by the absence of physical or mental disorders, youthful vitality, strength, energy, reputation, and prowess. It includes self-awareness, knowledge of scientific texts, strong senses, and sense objects. In addition, it involves abundant wealth, various enjoyable experiences, successful outcomes from actions, and the freedom to go wherever one wishes. In contrast, an unhappy life or *dukhayu* lacks these attributes.<sup>[4]</sup>

## 3.7. Hitayu and Sukhayu

While *sukhayu* and *hitayu* might appear similar, they are distinct concepts. *Sukhayu* refers to immediate pleasure, whereas *hitayu* may not offer instant pleasure but benefits both the individual and society in the long term. Both *sukhayu* (pleasurable life) and *dukhayu* (unpleasurable life) can be either beneficial (*hitayu*) or non-beneficial (*ahitayu*). For instance, intake of sweets may provide temporary pleasure but is harmful in the long run, so a life centered around regular sweet consumption is *sukhayu* but *ahitayu*. Conversely, exercise might be uncomfortable initially, but incorporating it into one's routine is advantageous over time. Thus, a life that includes regular exercise may be *dukhayu* but *hitayu*. *Hitayu* represents individual choices, while *sukhayu* is sometimes determined by fate.

## 3.8. Concept of Hita

The term *hitayu* is composed of two elements: *Hita* and *ayu*. According to grammatical rules, *hita* is derived from the root meaning to inspire

movement, motivate progress, or provide support, nourishment, and sustenance. [13] Acharya Chakrapani defined *hita* as that which is beneficial for life. Acharya Charaka explanation on *ayu* focuses on identifying what contributes to or detracts from a long and healthy life. In this framework, Cakrapani described *hita* as *ayuṣaḥ pathyam*, [3] referring to what is advantageous for longevity. *Pathya* is a distinctive concept described in Ayurveda. Dietary items and activities that are beneficial to the body and pleasing to the mind are classified as *pathya* (wholesome). On the other hand, those that are detrimental to the body and unpleasant to the mind are considered *apathya* (unwholesome). *Hita* in classical Indian literature embodies a comprehensive approach to well-being, encompassing physical, mental, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

### 3.9. Relation between Hitayu and Sadvritta

Hitayu and sadvritta (good conduct) are related concepts in Ayurveda. Both encompasses a set of moral and behavioral guidelines that contribute to a person's physical, mental, and spiritual health. Both sadvritta and hitayu aim to improve overall health and longevity, though they approach it from different angles. Sadvritta emphasizes ethical and moral behavior, which supports health indirectly by promoting a balanced and disciplined lifestyle. Hitayu focuses directly on actions and practices that are known to extend life and improve health. In Ayurveda, holistic health is seen as a combination of proper conduct (sadvritta) and beneficial practices (hitayu). By adhering to virtuous conduct, individuals naturally align with practices that promote longevity and health. Sadvritta emphasizes the importance of: Being compassionate and tender-hearted, renouncing personal desires and self-interests for the greater good, exercising control over one's body, speech, and mind, limiting self-interest and focusing on the welfare of others, recognizing these qualities as marks of virtuous behavior.[14]

Acharya Vagbhata mentioned all should follow the path of *dharma*. [15] The same idea also came in *hitayu* concept. Acharya also mentioned ten sins related to body, speech and mind that have to be avoided: violence (*himsa*), theft (*steya*), infidelity (*anyathakama*), slander (*paisunya*), harshness (*parusha*), lying (*anrita*), meaningless talk (*sambhinnalapa*), harmful intent (*vyapada*), and coveting others' possessions (*abhidya*). [15] This guidance promotes a beneficial life, or *hitayu*. All that related to social and spiritual health. In brief the concepts of *hitayu* and *sadvritta* are interconnected, with good conduct being seen as a key factor in achieving and maintaining well-being and longevity or *hitayu*. Understanding the concept of *ayu* reveals that the goal of life is not merely to seek instant pleasure, as such pleasure does not constitute true happiness.

# 3.10. Relation between the Concept of *Hitayu* and *Achara Rasayana*

"Achara rasayana" is a special concept described by Acharya Charaka in Chikitsa sthana "Rasayanadhyaya," [16] which include the codes of conduct which helps in attaining physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being. Acharya said that the one who possess all the qualities like who is truthful, free from anger, non-violence, prashantha bhavam or calmness, cleanliness, perseverance, charity work, loving and compassionate, etc., if consumes rasayana gets all the qualities mentioned in phalashruthi of rasayana seva. Rasayana that which can be use daily. Hence, achara rasayana need to be practice daily which can improve our satvika quality. This includes practices such as: dinacharya, mindfulness and meditation, dietary items such as ksheera and ghrita, positive relationships, self-discipline. This

practice also helps in forming a harmonious lifestyle that highlights interconnectedness. In a society where stress and lifestyle disorders are widespread, *Achara rasayana* serves as a cost-effective approach to alleviate these issues.<sup>[17]</sup>

### 3.11. Hitayu and Social Wellbeing

Among the dimensions of health, physical and mental wellbeing have been extensively explored by the medical world. Social and spiritual health began to be explored only in recent years, though they have been described in Ayurveda through concepts such as *sadvritta*, *hitayu*, and *achara rasayana*.

Social well-being means feeling balanced and connected both internally and with others, as well as having a good relationship with the world around us.<sup>[17]</sup> *Hitayu*, the concept of a healthy and long life, is intricately linked with social health, recognizing that individual well-being is deeply influenced by social connections and community support.

In the characteristics of *hitayu*, the terms which can be considered to explain social health includes: *Hitaishi punarbhootanam*, when individuals prioritize the well-being of others, they contribute to stronger social bonds and a more cohesive society, through acts of kindness, volunteering, or advocating for social justice. *Paraswaduparata* promotes ethical social behavior. When individuals refrain from exploiting others' resources, it fosters an atmosphere of trust, respect, and cooperation. People are more likely to engage in honest transactions, and this reduces the prevalence of unethical behaviors such as greed, corruption, and exploitation.

Satyavadina, truthfulness is the foundation of trust, and trust is essential for healthy social relationships. A society where people speak the truth fosters transparency, reliability, and accountability. The social health aspect of pareekshyakarina lies in fostering a society where careful, responsible decision-making reduces conflicts, promotes thoughtful actions for the collective good, and enhances long-term social harmony and well-being. The social health aspect of apramattasya emphasizes a society where individuals are mindful, responsible, and attentive in their actions, leading to greater safety, trust, and stability. Satatam vividha pradhanaparasya considers a person or community where resources are shared equitably, reducing disparities and ensuring that the marginalized are supported. This continuous act of giving strengthens social bonds, promotes empathy, and creates a culture of mutual care. Vridhopasevina gives importance to intergenerational support and person with this quality can be considered socially wellbeing. It cultivates a culture of care and responsibility, encouraging younger generations to value and support the wisdom and experiences of elders.

Trivarga parasprenanupahatamupasevamanasya includes key concept of life that everything in life should be kept in a balanced way. It also includes spending habits and financial approach, satisfaction to wealth, righteous attitude towards earning wealth which helps in social harmony. Poojarha sampoojakasya involves showing reverence in interactions with respectable individuals. This practice fosters a harmonious social environment, encourages mutual respect, and enhances social harmony. However, today, we often witness irreverence towards authority figures, which reflects a deficiency in social health. Suniyata raga rosha irshya mada mana vegasya - Socially, it results in better relationships, conflict resolution, and peaceful interactions. The person with this quality can handle differences in opinions and situations without letting emotions like anger or envy dictate their

actions. Tapo jnana prashamanityasya, in which taponitya considers dedication of oneself. Dedication toward work ethics not only produce personal growth but also contribute community development, as humans are social being. Prashamanitya, upashamasheela and shamapara can be understood as qualities of a person with a positive attitude and practices aimed at creating a peaceful environment. A person who embraces this positive attitude towards peace can be considered to possess social well-being.

### 3.12. Hitayu and Spiritual Wellbeing

Spiritual health is about seeking meaning and purpose in life. It's a vague "something" that goes beyond physical and mental health. Being a relatively new idea, it's hard to define clearly.[18] It includes integrity, principles and ethics, the purpose in life, commitment to some higher being and belief in concepts that are not subject to "state of the art" explanation.[19] Hitayu and its relation to spiritual health lies in its focus on achieving a deep sense of purpose and well-being by aligning one's actions and lifestyle with personal values and natural principles, thus fostering a sense of inner peace and fulfilment. A person who wishes well-being for all creatures must have spiritual well-being, because only someone who believes that everything in the universe is the same and originates from the same supreme power can think in this way. Moreover, this is the sense of hitaishina punarbhootanam. Pareekshyakarina aligns with the principles self-awareness, and discernment, which are fundamental in many spiritual traditions. The feature lokamimam chamum avekshamansya, mainly related to spirituality of one's life. One who is oriented to spiritual life further improved in spiritual well-being. Satatamvividhapradanaparasya also related to spiritual well-being. In the view of spiritual wellbeing, it includes selflessness and detachment, compassion, and align an individual with divine or cosmic principles. The person with the quality vridhopasevina can be considered as spiritually wellbeing. Because they understand the philosophy of life. People who serve the elderly often demonstrate a strong sense of humility, respect, and devotion, all of which are key aspects of spiritual well-being. Poojarha sampoojakasya, in spiritual aspect it cultivating humility and reducing ego, enhancing wisdom. Jnanasheela and vinjanasheela is related to spiritual wellbeing. Both helps in finding ultimate truth of life. Vijnana takes the seeker beyond theoretical knowledge to direct personal experience of the ultimate truth. Smritimatimata, these qualities are closely related to cognitive faculties. Spiritual wellbeing often involves mindfulness which is the ability to be fully present and aware in the moment. A person with Smritimatimata can reflect deeply on their experiences, which allows them to align their thoughts and actions with higher spiritual principles. Adhyatmavidastatparasya it specifically related to the spiritual aspect of life. Considers deep connection to the divine or higher self. This spirituality is something different from religiosity. When individuals are devoted to understanding and embodying spiritual truths, they learn to detach from the transient worries and desires of the material world. Suniyata raga rosha irshya mada mana vegasya, spiritually, it develops detachment, humility, and a closer connection to higher truths. It creates a person who is emotionally composed and mentally stable. Trivarga parasperananupahatam upasevamanasya in which a person with dharma - righteousness or moral duty can be considered to have spiritual wellbeing, as dharma is the corner stone of the spiritual health. Only someone with spiritual well-being can earn wealth righteously and find true satisfaction in it.

## 3.13. Hitayu and Mental Wellbeing

Positive social relationships and spirituality are only present in a person with proper mental health. For emotional balance, proper coping mechanisms such as suniyata raga, rosha, irshya, mada, mana vega are mentioned. In terms of mental health, vigilance or awareness plays a crucial role in maintaining a balanced and calm mind. The practice of being apramatta or mentally vigilant can positively impact one's mental state in terms of emotional regulation, focus and clarity, self-awareness etc. Satatamvividhapardanaparasya in which charity, particularly when done consistently and with a joyful heart, is the evidence of good mental health. which include sense of purpose, building positive relationships, gratitude and contentment etc. Pareekshyakarina can be consider as cognitive balance and resilience. Serving the elderly also contributes positively to mental health. The act of caregiving requires patience, empathy, and emotional intelligence, all of which strengthen emotional resilience and coping abilities. Upashamasheela helps in mental resilience and emotional regulation in handling stress and anxiety. A person with taponitya can be considered to have mental well-being, as they are able to perform tasks with dedication.

### 3.14. *Hitayu*: Relation to Health Dimensions

The features of *hitayu* includes social, spiritual and mental health dimensions. On the basis of analysis, the features can divide into 8 domains mentioned in table 2.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Hitayu is a unique concept discussed by Acharya Caraka in his explanation of the four types of  $\bar{a}yu$ , along with their 16 characteristic features. Hitayu is a term rooted in Ayurveda that denotes longevity or a long, healthy life achieved through practices and behaviors that promote well-being. The concept of hitayu encompasses various aspects of life that contribute to longevity and vitality according to Ayurvedic principles. Hitayu which mainly includes social, spiritual and mental dimensions of health. In Ayurveda, hitayu and sadvritta are interconnected concepts focused on promoting health and longevity. Sadvritta emphasizes moral and ethical behavior, while hitayu directs actions that directly enhance physical, mental well-being through social and spiritual well-being. Both encourage a disciplined, compassionate lifestyle and adherence to principles that foster harmony and sustainable living. In Ayurveda, hitayu emphasizes the importance of social health, recognizing that strong social support, positive relationships, and cultural connections are crucial for emotional resilience, mental well-being, and longevity. Healthy communication, empathy, and shared traditions help reduce stress and foster a sense of belonging, all contributing to overall health and well-being. Positive social relationships and spirituality thrive in individuals with balanced mental health, supported by healthy coping mechanisms for emotional balance. By the analysis of features of hitayu it is evident that hitayu belongs more to the social and spiritual wellbeing of people.

### 5. CONCLUSION

Hitayu refers to a life that is beneficial for both oneself and society. It involves personal choices to live in accordance with hitayu or not, and encompasses three dimensions of health: Social, spiritual, and mental. Hitayu represents the idea of sustainable living, emphasizing long-term well-being over fleeting gratification. Among four types of ayu, one always incorporates hitayu into their life. This is because, unlike sukhayu, hitayu which is more influenced by personal choices. Hitayu can be considered as a good standard for understanding social and spiritual health in Ayurveda and it can be taken as basis for measuring them.

## 6. AKCNOWLEDGMENT

I express my sincere gratitude to my guide Dr Vinodkumar Professor and Head, Department of Samhita Sanskrit and Siddhanta.

### 7. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All the authors contributed equally in the design and execution of the article.

### 8. FUNDING

Nil.

### 9. ETHICAL APPROVALS

This study is not required ethical clearance.

### 10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

### 11. DATA AVAILABILITY

This is an original manuscript and all data are available for only review purposes from principal investigators.

### 12. PUBLISHERS NOTE

This journal remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published institutional affiliation

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### How to cite this article:

Joseph S, Vinodkumar MV. Critical analysis of the concept of *hitayu*. IRJAY. [online] 2025;8(1);32-37.

Available from: https://irjay.com

**DOI link-** https://doi.org/10.48165/IRJAY.2025.80106

**Table 1:** Features of *hitayu* 

Sl. No.	Constructs	Simple meaning available as per translation[12]	
1.	Hitaishina punarbhootanam	Well-wisher of all living beings	
2.	Parasvaduparatasya	Who do not aspire for the wealth of others	
3.	Satyavadina	Who speaks truth	
4.	Samaparasya	Who loves peace	
5.	Pareekshyakarina	Who examine things before acting upon them	
6.	Apramattasya	who are vigilant	
7.	Trivarga parasprenanupahatamupasevamanasya	Who enjoy three important desires of life i.e., <i>dharma</i> , <i>aṛtha</i> , <i>kāma</i> without the one affecting each other.	
8.	Poojarha sampoojakasya	Who respect respectable persons	
9.	Jnana vijnana upashamasheelasya	Who are endowed with knowledge of arts, sciences and tranquillity	
10.	Vridhopasevina	Who serve the elders	
11.	Suniyata raga rosha irshya mada mana vegasya	Who have full control over passion, anger, envy, pride and prestige	
12.	Satatam vividha pradhanaparasya	Who are constantly given to various types of charity	
13.	Adhyatmavidastatparasya	Who have full knowledge of the spiritual power and devoted to it.	
14.	Tapo jnana prashamanityasya	Meditation, acquisition of knowledge and solitude life	
15.	Lokamimam chamum avekshamansya	Who makes efforts for both for existing as well as the next life.	
16.	Smritimatimata	Who are endowed with memory and intelligence	

And the features opposite to these are considered as ahitayu

Table 2: Health dimensions in relation with hitayu

Sl. no	Domains	Features	Social/spiritual/mental health
1.	Benevolent harmony	Bhootanam hitaishi Satatam vividha pradhanapara paraswaduparata	Social health Spiritual health Mental health
2.	Reverent interactions	Vridhopasevi Poojarha sampoojaka	Social health Spiritual health Mental health
3.	Emotional stability	Suniyata raga rosha irshya mada- mana vega Upasamasheela Shamapara Prashamanitya	Social health Spiritual health Mental health
4.	Cognition	Smritimata Matimata Vijnanasheela	Mental health Spiritual health
5.	Decision making and discernment	Pareekshyakari Apramatta	Mental health Social health
6.	Spirituality	Jnanasheela Jnananitya Adhyatmavidastatpara Lokamimam chamum avekshamana	Spiritual health Mental health
7.	Truth speaking	Satyavadi	Social health Mental health Spiritual health
8.	Dutiful nature	Taponitya Trivarga-parasparenanupahatamupasevamana	Social health Spiritual health Mental health

From this table it is evident that hitayu can be taken as the basis for assessing social and spiritual health of individuals