



DAIVAVYAPASHRAYA CHIKITSA: A DIVINE THERAPEUTIC MODALITY IN AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa, or divine therapy, is one of the three main pillars of Ayurvedic treatment, as described in classical texts like the Charaka Samhita. This unique modality is based on the principle of treating ailments believed to be caused by supernatural, spiritual, or karmic factors that are beyond the scope of conventional biomedical and psychological treatments. The term literally translates to "depending on or taking refuge in the divine." This approach utilizes various rituals, prayers, and practices aimed at appeasing divine forces and correcting the effects of past deeds (karma). This paper critically reviews the components of Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa, including its methods, applications, and its relevance in a modern context, where the mind-body-spirit connection is gaining increasing recognition in holistic healthcare.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa, Divine Therapy, Spiritual Healing, Karma, Mantras, Rituals, Holistic Medicine.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, embodies a holistic paradigm for health and healing that transcends the alleviation of physical symptoms alone. Rooted in profound philosophical insights, it categorizes diseases into three fundamental origins: Adhyatmika (spiritual or karmic), Adhibhautika (physical), and Adhidaivika (supernatural). In alignment with these etiologies, Ayurveda delineates three therapeutic modalities: Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa (divine therapy), Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa (rational therapy,

encompassing diet, lifestyle, and pharmacotherapy), and Sattvavajaya Chikitsa (psychotherapy or mind-control therapy). Among these, Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa stands as the most distinctive, targeting ailments that defy conventional physical or psychological explanations—such as chronic, idiopathic conditions resistant to standard interventions.

This therapeutic approach, often sidelined in contemporary discourse, merits renewed attention for its potential integration into modern healthcare systems. As

articulated by Acharya Charaka, the foundational text of Ayurveda conceptualizes the discipline through the Trisutra framework: Hetu (etiology or causative factors), Linga (symptomatic manifestations), and Aushadha (therapeutic measures).^[1] Furthermore, Chikitsa (treatment) is defined as the restorative process that normalizes vitiated doshas (bio-energetic principles), fostering equilibrium and sustaining health:^[2]
चतुर्णांभिषगादीनांशस्तानां धातुवैकृते।
प्रवृत्तिर्धातुसाम्यार्थचिकित्सेत्यभिधीयते। (Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana 9/5)

Classifications of Chikitsa vary—Dwividha (dual), Trividha (tripartite), Chaturvidha (quadripartite), and beyond—but the Trividha Chikitsa holds paramount significance. As expounded by Acharya Charaka:
त्रिविधमौषधमिति—दैवव्यपाश्रयं, युक्तिव्यपाश्रयं, सत्त्वावजयश्च। (Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana 11/54)^[3]

This triad comprises:

1. Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa (Divine/Spiritual Therapy)
2. Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa (Rational/Physical Therapy)
3. Satwavajaya Chikitsa (Psychological/Mental Therapy)

1) Daivavyapashraya (Divine Therapy)

Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa is a spiritual or divine therapeutic approach that addresses diseases caused by unseen forces.

The word Daiva refers to divine factors, fate, or the unseen effects of Karma (actions from past or present lives). According to Ayurveda, a person's health is influenced not only by their lifestyle and environment but also by the consequences of these karmic factors. Diseases that arise from this unseen cause are known as Karmaja Vyadhis.

Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa is the prescribed treatment for such ailments. It is a form of divine therapy, primarily derived from the Atharvaveda, and is often used in the management of Manasa Roga (mental or psychological disorders).

This treatment works on the principle of Prabhava, which is an unexplainable or mystic mode of action. Because it functions as a "faith therapy," its efficacy is highly dependent on the patient's psychology. The treatment is considered a "play of faith," wherein the patient must have full belief in the medicine, the practitioner, and the method of treatment for it to be successful.

The term 'Daiva' in Ayurveda essentially refers to the divine, the celestial, or the action resulting from past lives (fate). Consequently, Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa (Divine Therapy) is a therapeutic modality specifically designed to exhaust the effects of negative or evil past

acts in order to combat diseases that are rooted in Daiva (fate-caused diseases).^[4]

The word 'Daiva' refers to different but related entities:

1. Daivam Adrustam (Unseen Fate/Potency)

This interpretation, according to commentators like Chakrapani, refers to destiny, fate, or fortune—that which is not seen or known.

दैवमदृष्टं तद्व्यपाश्रयं, तच्च यददृष्टजननेन व्याधिप्रत्यनीकं मन्त्रादि। (च.सू.11/54)

The therapeutic method that relies on Daivam adrustam (unseen fate) is that which counteracts the disease by generating the unseen merit or potency (adrusta) through means such as sacred chants (mantra) and similar practices.^[5]

2. Daivam Karma (Past-Life Action)

This defines Daiva as the actions performed in the previous life (paurvadehika).

निर्दिष्टं दैवशब्देन कर्म यत् पौर्वदेहिकम्। हेतुस्तदपिकालेन रोगाणामुपलभ्यते॥ (च.शा.1/116)

The action (karma) that was performed in the previous body, which is designated by the word Daiva (fate), also constitutes, in due course, a causative factor for the manifestation of diseases.^[6]

3. The Influence of Daiva and Individual Nature (Prakriti)

The concept of Daiva (fate or divine influence) relates to all qualities and tendencies acquired before birth through descent, inheritance, and a long course of evolution. Hereditary factors relating to Jati (species or birth), Kula (lineage), Desa (place/region), and Kala (time/era), as well as age, all profoundly influence the development of an individual's characteristics, whether good or bad.^[7]

तत्र प्रकृतिर्जातिप्रसक्ता च, कुलप्रसक्ता च, देशानुपातिनी च, कालानुपातिनी च वयोऽनुपातिनी च, प्रत्यात्मनियता चेति। जातिकुलदेशकालवयः प्रत्यात्मनियता हि तेषां तेषां पुरुषाणां ते ते भावविशेषा भवन्ति॥ (च.इ.1/5)

"The individual's constitution (Prakriti) is associated with (factors like) species (Jati), lineage (Kula), region (Desa), time (Kala), and age (Vayas), and it is individually determined (Pratyātma Niyatā). Indeed, the specific characteristics of every individual are determined by these factors: species, lineage, region, time, age, and individual determination."

The word 'Vyapashraya' means "to depend on," "takes refuge in," or "have recourse to."^[8] Therefore, 'Daiva Vyapashraya' is literally translated as any therapy that depends on or is linked to Daiva—a concept referring to the divine, the unknown, or supernatural forces.

This treatment modality is concerned with all unknown circumstances that lie beyond the purview of human reasoning, which is why it is often referred to as spiritual

therapy. The methods involved can include religious rituals, such as benedictions and offerings, as well as other measures that have led to it being aptly described as a "magico-religious practice."

Other terms commonly used to describe this approach include "occult practice" and "faith practices."

In the Atharvaveda and Kousitski Sutra, considered authentic sources for these healing practices, many esoteric methods are described for dealing with demons and witchcraft. This focus arose because the Atharvans were among the first to establish a direct relationship between demonic influences and the causation of diseases.^[9]

This perspective is reinforced in the Rigveda, where a physician is defined as one who has the power to destroy demons. Consequently, many diseases were directly linked with supernatural entities, and esoteric or occult methods were employed in their management.^[10]

However, while classical Ayurveda acknowledges this historical concept and the methods derived from it (known as Daiva Vyapashraya or Divine Therapy), it significantly differentiates its core philosophy by refusing to accept demonical influences as the primary agent in disease causation.

Charaka emphasizes that no external force can harm a person who is mentally and morally pure, establishing the individual's conduct as the primary defence against spiritual or mental distress.

नैव देवान् गन्धर्वान् पिशाचान् राक्षसाः।
न चान्ये स्वयमक्लिष्टमुपक्लिशन्ति मानवम्॥ (च.नि.7/19)

The verse clearly states that neither the gods, nor Gandharvas, nor Pishachas, nor Rakshasas, nor any other external entities, can afflict a human being who is himself free from misdeeds (svayam akliṣṭam). This underscores the Ayurvedic view that the primary cause of afflictions, such as insanity, lies in the individual's own misdeeds (or lack of virtue), and external agents like gods or spirits act only as secondary consequences or triggers of these self-inflicted misfortunes.^[11]

Charaka states that the fundamental cause of disease is often rooted in one's own actions and judgment, particularly the concept of Prajnaparadha (intellectual error or misdeeds).

प्रज्ञापराधात्सम्भूते व्याधौ कर्मज आत्मनः।
नाभिः संसेदुर्बुधो देवात्तृपितृत्रापिराक्षसान्॥
आत्मानमेव मन्येत कर्तारं सुखदुःखयोः।
तस्माच्छ्रेयस्करं मार्गं प्रतिपद्येत नो त्रसेत्॥ (च.नि.7/21-22)

"When a disease arises, resulting from one's own misdeeds (Karma) and intellectual error (Prajnaparadha), a wise person should never blame the gods, the ancestors, or the demons. One should hold oneself alone

responsible as the creator of one's own happiness or miseries. Therefore, one should diligently follow the path leading to auspiciousness and goodness, and should not give way to fear."^[12]

Charaka considers Daiva (Fate or Divine influence) to be a foundational causative factor for the manifestation of certain diseases, equating it with the moral and ethical residue of past actions.^[13]

दैवमात्मकृतं विद्यात्कर्मयत्पौर्वदैहिकम्। (च.वि.3/30)

"One should know Daiva (Fate or Divine influence) to be the action (karma) performed by the individual self (atmakṛtam) in a previous existence."

The methods adopted by Charaka as part of Daivavyapashraya (Divine Therapy), which focuses on nullifying or mitigating the effects of this past karma, are:

तत्र दैवव्यपाश्रयं- मन्त्रौषधि मणि मङ्गलबल्युपहार होम नियम प्रायश्चित्तोपवास स्वस्थ्यन प्रणिपातगमनादि।
(च.सू.11/54)^[14], (च.वि.8/87)^[15], (च.नि.7/16)^[16],
(च.वि.3/36)^[17]

1. Mantra (Chanting of sacred hymns)
2. Aushadha (Ritualistic use of medicinal herbs)
3. Mani (Wearing of gems)
4. Mangala (Auspicious ceremony)
5. Bali (Offering to god)
6. Upahara (Gift)
7. Homa (Fire sacrifice rituals)
8. Niyamana (Adherence to moral codes and observances)
9. Prayascita (Atonement or penance)
10. Upavasa (Fasting)
11. Svastyayana (Chanting of auspicious, Hymns)
12. Pranipata (Observance to the god)
13. Gamana (Going to pilgrimage)

1. Mantra (Chanting of sacred hymns)

Mantra refers to the use of sacred hymns or words believed to possess spiritual potency. The cosmos is charged with energy, and so is a mantra. A mantra chanted with a specific pitch can unfold the energy contained within the uttered word. Mantras are believed to possess healing energy and can be used to pacify negative forces and promote positive change.

Here are the specific examples from Ayurvedic texts:

1. For Begetting Proper Progeny

Ayurveda advises specific mantras for begetting a healthy and virtuous child.^[18]

तत्र मन्त्रं प्रयुञ्जीत-“अहिरसि आयुरसि सर्वतः प्रतिष्ठाऽसि
धातात्वाददतु विधातात्वाद धातु ब्रह्मवर्चसाभव” इति। “ब्रह्मा
बृहस्पति विष्णुः सोमः सूर्यस्तथा ऽश्विनौ। भगोऽथ मित्रा
वरुणौ वीरंददतु मे सुतम्। (च.शा.8/8)

"You are Ahi (the cosmic serpent, or life-force), you are Ayu (life), you are the foundation from all sides. May Dhata (the Creator) give you, may Vidhata (the Ordainer) bestow upon you. Be full of Brahma-varchasa

(divine radiance)." and "May Brahma, Brihaspati, Vishnu, Soma (Moon), Surya (Sun), and the Ashvins, as well as Bhaga and Mitra-Varuna, grant me a heroic son."

2. For Induction of Normal Delivery

To help induce a normal and safe delivery, a supportive woman should recite this mantra in the labouring woman's ear.^[19]

कर्णेचास्यामन्तमिममनुकूलास्तीजपेत्-
क्षितिर्जलं वियत्तेजोवायुर्विष्णुः प्रजापतिः।
सगर्भात्वासदापान्तु वैशल्यं च दिशन्तु ते। प्रसूषत्वमविक्लिष्टमवि-
क्लिष्टाशुभानने॥ कार्तिकेयद्युतिपुत्रं कार्तिकेयाभिरक्षितम् इति॥
(च.शा 8/39)

"May Earth (Kshiti), Water (Jala), Ether (Viyat), Fire (Tejas), Air (Vayu), Vishnu, and Prajapati always protect you and your pregnancy. May they grant you a safe and easy delivery. O auspicious-faced one, may you deliver without trouble, a son radiant as Kartikeya and protected by Kartikeya."

3. To Cure All Types of Fever

The chanting of Vishnu's thousand names is recommended as a remedy for fevers.^[20]

विष्णुं सहस्रमूर्धनं चराचरपतिं विभुम्॥
स्तुवन्नामसहस्रेण ज्वरान्सर्वानपोहति॥ (च.चि.3/311)

"By praising Vishnu—the thousand-headed, the lord of all moving and unmoving things, the all-pervading one—with his thousand names (Vishnu Sahasranama), one can overcome all fevers."

4. For Agantuja Unmada (Exogenous Insanity)

Agantuja Unmada (insanity caused by external factors) is said to be tackled by chanting mantras to please Lord Rudra (Shiva) and his attendants.^[21]

भूतानामधिपं देवमीश्वरं जगतः प्रभुम्॥
पूजयन् प्रयतो नित्यं जयत्युन्मादजं भयम्॥
रुद्रस्य प्रमथानामगणालोके चरन्ति ये।
तेषां पूजां च कुर्वाण उन्मादेभ्यः प्रमुच्यते॥ (च.चि.9/91-92)

"By diligently and daily worshiping the Lord of beings (Bhutas), the god, the supreme Ishvara, the master of the universe, one conquers the fear born of Unmada." and "Those attendants (Ganas) of Rudra, the Pramathas, who roam the world—by performing their worship, one is liberated from Unmada."

5. For Collection of Rasayana Drugs

Sushruta suggests chanting a specific mantra to consecrate rejuvenating herbs (like Somalata) before collection, noting who is unqualified for the task.^[22]

मन्त्रेणानेनमतिमान्सर्वा एवाभिमन्त्रयेत् |
अश्रद्धा नैरलसैः कृतघ्नैः पापकर्मभिः ॥ सु.चि.30/28)

"With this mantra, the wise person should consecrate all (the herbs). (This ritual should not be performed) by those who are faithless, lazy, ungrateful, or sinful."

2) Aushadha (Ritualistic use of medicinal herbs)

This modality pertains to the tactile application or adornment of potent herbs, gems, and other auspicious items as amulets or talismans. This practice is chiefly recommended for the prevention (prophylaxis) and management of fevers (Jvara).

मणीनामोषधीनांचमङ्गल्यानां विषस्य च ॥
धारणादगदानांच सेवनान्न भवेज्ज्वरः ॥ (Charaka Chikitsa 3/309)

"By wearing (dharana) gems (Mani), potent herbs (Oushadhi), and auspicious objects (Mangalya), and by the (appropriate) use of (purified) poisons (Visha) and antidotes (Agada), one can prevent the occurrence of fever."

Such practices are understood to harness the items' intrinsic energies to avert febrile disorders through a ritualistic or divine-based approach (Daiva Vyapashraya Chikitsa).^[23]

3) Mani (Wearing of gems)

This entails the adornment or tactile application of precious stones and gems, which wield dual influences—benevolent or adverse—upon fortunes and destinies; Ayurveda prescribes planet-specific gems to avert afflictions from malefic Grahas (celestial influences) and spectral entities, harnessing their astrological affinities to harmonize ethereal impacts on the individual.

4) Mangala (Auspicious ceremony)

This involves the orchestration of propitious rituals and festivities designed to garner the blessings and benevolent aspirations of deities and sages, thereby channelling positive ethereal energies to mitigate karmic adversities and enhance overall vitality.

5) Bali (Offering to god)

This sacred practice entails the ritual presentation of offerings to deities—often food, flowers, or symbolic items—embodying profound self-denial and sacrifice to appease higher powers, dissolve karmic impediments, and invoke divine benevolence for the restoration of health and harmony.

6) Upahara (Gift)

This practice involves the charitable offering of gifts, exemplified by feeding lower animals as an emblem of mercy—known in Indian tradition as Bhutayajna, one of the five great Yajnas^[24]—thereby cultivating compassion, mitigating karmic debts, and harmonizing one's spiritual essence with the cosmic order.

7) Homa (Fire sacrifice rituals)

This ancient Aryan ritual involves the ceremonial offering of ghee and fragrant, disinfectant substances into consecrated fire, accompanied by auspicious mantras and prayers, to invoke purification and divine appeasement.^[25]

8) Niyamana (Adherence to moral codes and observances)

This modality prescribes the assiduous adherence to healthy regimens and religious injunctions, which cultivate physical cleanliness and mental discipline, thereby purifying the psyche and ameliorating karmic encumbrances that precipitate disease.

9) Prayascita (Atonement or penance)

This encompasses expiatory rites for past misdeeds—committed knowingly or unwittingly—termed Prayashchitta, which Acharya Charaka equates as a synonym for Bheshaja (medicine),^[26] with the intent to purify the psyche and expunge karmic debts underlying illness.

10) Upavasa (Fasting, spiritual purification)

This modality encompasses total or partial abstinence from food intake, serving as a profound means of self-purification for both mind and body, thereby promoting universal harmony and individual well-being.^[27]

11) Svastyayana (Chanting of auspicious, Hymns)

This solemn rite involves the recitation of benedictory hymns to beseech divine favor for cosmic harmony and personal prosperity, as delineated in Ayurvedic texts, thereby engendering a profound sense of well-being and karmic appeasement through vibrational sanctity.^[28]

12) Pranipata (Observance to the god)

This entails humble surrender and obeisance to the gods—conceptualized by Chakrapani as "प्रणिपातो देवादीनां शारीरो नमस्कारः" (Charaka Sutrasthana 11/54)^[29]—wherein physical prostration yields to devotional reverence, particularly as the ultimate recourse when conventional therapies falter, fostering profound spiritual alignment and karmic resolution.

13) Gamana (Going to pilgrimage)

This modality entails undertaking journeys to distant sacred sites for worship and supplication, as explicated by Chakrapani: "गमनं विदूरदेवादिगमनम्" (Charaka Sutrasthana 11/54).^[30] Such pilgrimages are revered for their capacity to purge spiritual impurities, foster inner tranquillity, and invoke divine grace, thereby alleviating karmic burdens and restoring holistic equilibrium.

Applications and Relevance in Modern Context

While Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa may appear mystical, it can be interpreted through a modern psychological lens. Practices like mantra chanting and prayer have a profound effect on the psyche, promoting mental resilience, reducing stress, and fostering hope. Furthermore, the faith placed in these methods can activate the placebo effect, a well-documented phenomenon in modern medicine.

This modality is particularly relevant for the following applications:

- **For Psychosomatic and Lifestyle Disorders:** Many modern diseases are driven by stress, anxiety, and

moral imbalances (adharma). Spiritual practices, such as meditation (mantra), mindfulness, and therapeutic fasting (upavas), can directly address the root psychological and energetic causes of these conditions.

- **As an Adjunctive Therapy:** Instead of being a standalone treatment, this can be a powerful complementary tool alongside Yuktivyapashraya (rational, pharmacological treatments) and Sattvavajaya (psychotherapy). This offers a more comprehensive and holistic healing experience.
- **Chronic and Incurable Diseases:** When all other treatments have failed, this approach can provide comfort, hope, and an alternative path to healing.
- **Mental and Emotional Distress:** Practices like meditation and chanting can be used effectively to calm the mind and manage symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- **Empowering the Patient:** By engaging in spiritual practices, patients take an active role in their own healing process, shifting their mindset and fostering a sense of control and empowerment.

It is important to note that Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa is not meant to replace conventional medical treatment but to be used as a **complementary therapy**. It emphasizes a holistic, integrative approach to health, recognizing that true well-being encompasses the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of a person.

CONCLUSION

The Trividha Chikitsa (Threefold Treatment) approach in Ayurveda serves as the main framework for therapeutic intervention. It consists of three fundamental modalities: Daivavyapashraya (Divine/Spiritual Therapy), Yuktivyapashraya (Rational/Physical Therapy) & Satvavajaya (Psychological/Mental Therapy)

Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa underscores the comprehensive and holistic nature of Ayurveda. It provides a framework for addressing diseases that may have origins extending beyond the conventional understanding of a purely physical imbalance. By incorporating spiritual and ritualistic practices, this therapy offers a pathway to healing that directly addresses the deep-seated karmic and psychological roots of illness. Given the growing contemporary interest in holistic and spiritual health, the principles of Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa offer valuable insights into the profound connection between the divine, the mind, and the body. While empirical validation remains an area for future research the mechanisms behind this divine therapy, its cultural and historical significance in promoting health and well-being remains undeniable.

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