

Daiva as Dravya: Expanding the Concept of Dravya in Ayurveda

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Abstract—Ayurveda emphasizes holistic health through the balance of Sharira (body), Indriya (senses), Satva (mind), and Atma (soul). Among its three principal therapeutic modalities, Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa represents the spiritual approach to healing and is indicated for conditions associated with Daiva, Purvakrita Karma, and other subtle causes. While Dravya is traditionally regarded as a material therapeutic substance, Daiva may be understood as a non-material therapeutic principle that influences health through faith, consciousness, and spiritual practices. This review critically examines the concept of Daiva as Dravya based on classical Ayurvedic texts, including the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, and the Atharvaveda. Classical literature describes interventions such as Mantra, Homa, Bali, Upavasa, and Gamana as components of Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa that promote holistic well-being. The concept of Daiva as Dravya broadens the scope of Ayurvedic therapeutics beyond material medicines and highlights the relevance of spirituality in holistic and integrative healthcare.

Keywords— Daivavyapashraya, Daiva, Ayurveda, spiritual therapy, holistic healing.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurvedic Concept of Health and Trividha Chikitsa

Ayurveda is a holistic system of medicine that defines Ayu as the harmonious union of Sharira (body), Indriya (sense organs), Satva (mind), and Atma (soul). Health is maintained by the equilibrium of Dosha, Dhātu, Mala, and Agni, while disease results from their imbalance. The primary objectives of Ayurveda are Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam (preservation of health) and Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam (management of disease).¹

Classical Ayurvedic literature describes Trividha Chikitsa (three therapeutic modalities): Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa, Satvavajaya Chikitsa, and Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa. Yuktivyapashraya includes rational therapies such as medicines, diet, Panchakarma, and lifestyle modification, while Satvavajaya focuses on mental health through psychological and behavioural interventions.^{2,3}

Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa represents the spiritual dimension of Ayurvedic therapeutics and is indicated for disorders attributed to Daiva, Purvakrita Karma, Adrishta, and Graha Dosha. It employs spiritual interventions such as Mantra, Japa, Homa, Bali, Upavasa, Prayaschitta, and Mani Dharana to restore harmony between the body, mind, and consciousness.^{1,2} The philosophical basis of this therapy originates from the Atharvaveda, which describes healing through prayers, sacred rituals, and spiritual practices.⁴ Today, growing evidence from integrative medicine suggests that practices such as meditation, prayer, and mantra chanting improve psychological well-being and support the Ayurvedic concept of holistic health.^{3,4}

Daiva, Purushakara and the Concept of Daiva as Dravya

The term Daiva, derived from the Sanskrit root Div ("to shine" or "to be divine"), refers to divine influence or the

effects of Purvakrita Karma (actions performed in previous lives). Ayurveda does not interpret Daiva as fatalism but considers it one of the determinants of health and disease, along with Purushakara (present effort).⁵⁻⁷ According to the Charaka Samhita, health outcomes are governed by the interaction of Daiva and Purushakara, emphasizing that appropriate diet, lifestyle, medicines, and ethical conduct can modify the effects of past karma.⁵

Among the three therapeutic modalities, Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa is indicated for conditions attributed to Daiva, Graha Dosha, Adrishta, and Purvakrita Karma. It employs spiritual interventions such as Mantra Japa, Homa, Bali, Upavasa, Prayaschitta, Mani Dharana, and Tirtha Gamana to restore harmony between the body, mind, and consciousness.^{5,6}

The concept of Dravya in Ayurveda traditionally refers to substances possessing Guna and Karma that produce therapeutic effects. However, Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa broadens this concept by suggesting that healing can also occur through non-material influences, including faith, devotion, intention, and spiritual discipline.^{5,7} This interpretation supports the concept of Daiva as Dravya, wherein psycho-spiritual interventions contribute to healing by promoting emotional stability, resilience, and mental well-being.

Modern concepts of mind-body medicine and psychoneuroimmunology provide a plausible scientific basis for this approach. Spiritual practices such as meditation, prayer, and mantra chanting have been shown to reduce stress, improve emotional regulation, modulate neuroendocrine and immune responses, and enhance quality of life.^{8,9,10} Thus, the concept of Daiva as Dravya expands the scope of Ayurvedic therapeutics by integrating spiritual dimensions with evidence-based holistic healthcare.

Historical Evolution of Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa

The concept of *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* is one of the oldest therapeutic approaches described in Ayurveda, with its origins in the Vedic period. During this period, disease was considered the result of disturbances affecting the body, mind, soul, and the effects of *Karma*. Consequently, healing involved prayers, sacred rituals, mantras, and ethical conduct to restore harmony between the individual and the cosmic order.^{11, 12}

The *Atharvaveda*, regarded as the earliest source of spiritual healing in India, contains numerous hymns on disease prevention, longevity, protection, and healing through *Mantras*, rituals, and offerings. These Vedic concepts laid the philosophical foundation for *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa*, which was later systematically incorporated into Ayurvedic therapeutics.^{12, 13}

During the *Samhita* period, *Charaka* formally classified *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* as one of the three principal therapeutic modalities, alongside *Yuktivyapashraya* and *Satvavajaya Chikitsa*. He recommended spiritual interventions such as *Mantra Japa*, *Homa*, *Bali*, *Mangala*, *Upavasa*, *Prayaschitta*, and *Mani Dharana* for disorders attributed to *Daiva*, *Purvakrita Karma*, *Graha Dosha*, and *Adrishta*.^{11, 14}

The *Sushruta Samhita* expanded its application by integrating spiritual practices with surgical care, recommending prayers, worship, fasting, and *Homa* before operative procedures. Likewise, *Vagbhata*, in the *Ashtanga Hridaya*, emphasized *Sadvritta*, devotion, and spiritual discipline as essential measures for maintaining health and preventing disease.^{15, 16}

During the medieval period, these concepts became embedded in Indian healthcare through temple medicine, pilgrimage, devotional worship, fasting, and community healing rituals. Scientific interest in these practices has been rekindled in recent decades by advancements in psychoneuroimmunology, mind-body medicine, and integrative medicine. Evidence suggests that meditation, prayer, and mantra chanting can reduce stress, improve emotional well-being, and positively influence neuroendocrine and immune functions, thereby providing a scientific perspective for the holistic principles of *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa*.^{17–19}

Thus, *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* has evolved from Vedic spiritual healing traditions into a systematic therapeutic modality in classical Ayurveda and is now increasingly recognized as a complementary approach within integrative healthcare.

Daiva in Charaka, Sushruta and Ashtanga Hridaya: A Comparative Review

The concept of *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* is consistently described in the *Brihat Trayee Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridaya*, although each text emphasizes different clinical applications. *Charaka* classifies it as one of the three principal treatment modalities for disorders caused by *Daiva*, *Purvakrita Karma*, *Graha Dosha*, and *Adrishta*, recommending practices such as *Mantra Japa*, *Homa*, *Bali*, *Upavasa*, *Prayaschitta*, and *Mani Dharana* to

restore harmony between the body, mind, and consciousness.^{20, 21}

In *Sushruta Samhita*, *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* is closely associated with surgical practice. *Sushruta* advocates prayers, worship, fasting, and *Homa* before surgical procedures and in conditions such as epidemics, poisoning, and mental disorders, emphasizing spiritual support alongside rational treatment.²² *Vagbhata*, in the *Ashtanga Hridaya*, further integrates *Daivavyapashraya* with *Yuktivyapashraya* and *Satvavajaya Chikitsa*, highlighting *Sadvritta*, devotion, and self-discipline as essential for disease prevention and health promotion.²³

Although their emphasis differs, all three classics regard *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* as a complementary therapy rather than a substitute for rational medical treatment. Together, they demonstrate Ayurveda's holistic approach, recognizing that physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being collectively influence health and recovery.^{20–23}

II. DISCUSSION

The present review proposes the concept of *Daiva* as *Dravya*, extending the conventional understanding of *Dravya* beyond material substances to include non-material therapeutic principles. Classical Ayurvedic texts describe *Dravya* as the substratum possessing *Guna* (qualities) and *Karma* (actions), while also emphasizing that health depends upon the harmonious interaction of *Sharira*, *Manas*, *Indriya*, and *Atma*.^{24, 25}

Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa reflects this holistic philosophy by promoting healing through faith, devotion, mantra chanting, meditation, fasting, and ethical conduct. Unlike *Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa*, which primarily acts through pharmacological interventions, it complements conventional treatment by addressing the psychological and spiritual dimensions of health. The concept of *Daiva* and *Purushakara* described in the *Charaka Samhita* further emphasizes that present efforts can modify the influence of past actions, encouraging active participation in the healing process.^{24, 25}

From a contemporary perspective, many components of *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* can be explained through mind-body medicine and psychoneuroimmunology. Spiritual practices such as meditation, prayer, mantra chanting, and fasting have been associated with reduced sympathetic activity, improved parasympathetic tone, regulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, decreased cortisol levels, enhanced immune function, improved emotional well-being, better sleep quality, and greater treatment adherence.^{26–29} Although Ayurveda explains these effects through the concepts of *Daiva*, *Satva*, and *Manas*, and modern medicine through neuroendocrine and immune mechanisms, both recognize the close interaction between the mind, body, and consciousness in maintaining health.

The philosophical basis of *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* can be traced to the *Atharvaveda*, whose hymns describe prayers and healing rituals intended to restore harmony between the individual and the cosmic environment. These principles continue to influence traditional healthcare practices and are

increasingly being recognized within integrative medicine, particularly in chronic disease management, mental health, palliative care, and quality-of-life improvement.^{25,28,29}

Nevertheless, the available evidence is derived largely from classical literature and observational studies, with limited high-quality clinical trials. Future interdisciplinary research involving Ayurveda, psychology, neuroscience, and immunology is needed to establish standardized protocols and scientifically validate the therapeutic role of *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa*.³⁰

Overall, the concept of *Daiva* as *Dravya* broadens the scope of Ayurvedic therapeutics by recognizing that healing may occur through both material and non-material influences. Integrating *Daivavyapashraya*, *Yuktivyapashraya*, and *Satvavajaya Chikitsa* may provide a comprehensive, patient-centred approach that addresses the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of health.

III. CONCLUSION

Ayurveda recognizes health as a holistic state of body, mind, and consciousness. The concept of *Daiva* as *Dravya* extends the understanding of *Dravya* beyond material substances by emphasizing the therapeutic role of faith, spirituality, and ethical living. Classical Ayurvedic literature and emerging evidence from mind-body medicine support its potential to promote psychological well-being and overall health. Rather than replacing conventional treatment, *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* should be viewed as a complementary approach that strengthens holistic, patient-centred care. Further interdisciplinary research is needed to validate its mechanisms and clinical applications in contemporary integrative medicine.

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