

Concept of Daiva Vyapashraya Chikitsa (Divine Therapy) A Critical Review

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Abstract

Ayurveda being the Upaveda insisted the importance of Daiva vyapashraya chikitsa (Divine therapy) as one of the three main channels of treatment to link the inner spirit with cosmic energy which is still common in general practice but not widely practised by physicians. In many occasions we observe that the ill effects of our past life karmas are not cured by mere scientific methods of medicine etc. In such occasions these methods do help the individual to rebuild the confidence and to some extent in curing the sufferings. Plenty of techniques have been mentioned under the heading of Daiva vyapashraya chikitsa namely, Mantra, Aushadhi dharana, Mani dharana, Mangala, Bali, Upahara, Svastyayana, Upavasa, Prayashchitta etc. This article gives a comprehensive knowledge about the concept of Daiva vyapashraya chikitsa in terms of modern knowledge. To conclude, the techniques of Daiva vyapashraya chikitsa followed in those days are still relevant in present days and can be explained through logical as well as scientific ways. By following these methods one can imbibe a sense of confidence in him/her and further can turn into optimistic and positive.

Keywords: Divine therapy; Daiva Vyapashraya Chikitsa; Daiva; Mantra; Bali chikitsa.

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Introduction

Man has been a victim of one or the other disease throughout the journey of evolution, be it related to the body or mind or both. Many diseases disappeared into extinct and many newer diseases came into existence. With advancement of science and technology, man became a victim of not only psychosomatic diseases but also of many stress related diseases, infectious diseases, immunodeficiency diseases, metabolic diseases, occupational diseases and a lot more. Whatever be the nature of the disease, in Ayurveda, all these diseases can be explained with the help of involvement of the physical doshas (bodily

humours) as well as doshas related to the mind and treatment can be planned accordingly by observing several factors.

The aim of Ayurveda is to protect the health of the healthy (Preventive aspect) and to alleviate disorders of the diseased (Curative aspect).¹ The Preventive aspect deals with methods, recommendations and ways of life those can boost the strength and resistance of human beings physically, mentally and emotionally in such a way that they can protect themselves from diseases. On the other hand, the Curative aspect deals with providing relief to the diseased. Ayurveda primarily deals with various physical treatment modalities

and also deals with the mental and spiritual aspects of life. Ayurveda recommends three types of the therapies (Trividha chikitsa) based on their nature viz., Daiva Vyapashraya (Divine therapy), Yukti Vyapashraya (Rational therapy or therapy based on reasoning) and Sattvavajaya (Psychic therapy).² Among these three, Daiva Vyapashraya has been mentioned first because, as per Chakrapani, it is this therapy which has the faster result in curing the diseases when compared to the other two.³

Literally the word 'daiva' refers to non physical causes i.e., those relating to divinity belonging to or coming from the gods or a deity or divine or celestial, to the deeds of past life.⁴ In Ayurveda, 'Daiva' is termed as 'Adrishta', i.e., that which is beyond the reach of observation or unseen or invisible.⁵ Also, it has been used in the sense of those karmas or actions which are related to our previous life.⁶ The evils of our past life karmas cannot be cured by mere scientific methods of medicine etc., because the diseases, so happened, are related to our past deeds. As we believe in purvajanma (past life), it is a rational need to devise methods which can effectively deal with Daivakrita diseases which are not in any way related to our present life. Hence, this therapy is designed to exhaust evil acts of the past to combat Daivikrita diseases. The word 'Vyapashraya' refers to depending on or taking refuge with or having recourse to.⁷ The term Daiva vyapashraya is concerned with all the unknown circumstances, which are beyond the purview of reasoning. According to Indu, these are the techniques that destroy the effect of the paapa (sinful acts) by bringing the equilibrium of dhatus without the involvement of Jatharagni (digestive fire) like mantra, aushadhi etc.⁸ In other words to say, these are the different techniques used as external methods of treatment which have no role with jatharagni that bring about the equilibrium of doshas and dhatus.

Divine therapy is as old as the history of medical science. When we scrutinize the Vedic literatures we can find that the Atharvaveda literature is full of Divine therapy. Ayurveda is believed to be a descendent of Atharvaveda and hence it is quite obvious that our ancient Ayurveda expounders might have thought to include faith method as a recognized method of treatment. Secondly, as these methods were in practice in those days and the persisting treatment methods cannot be neglected while writing any manuscript. These may be the reasons for the inclusion of such type of treatment methodology in the classification of diseases became more necessary. This treatment is still practised in

many parts of the world. It is prevalent in some classes of Indians even today, and the persons of higher class with higher education are also found to adopt this as a last resort when they become disappointed with all the scientific treatment and the patient is not cured. In short, faith has become part and parcel of our Psychology.

Discussion on Methods of Daiva Vyapashraya

The techniques of Daiva vyapashraya chikitsa (Divine therapy) enlisted in Ayurvedic classics can be better understood in a logical way and with scientific basis. The rationale behind the functioning of each technique is explained as follows:

1. Mantra: (The Sound Vibration Treatments or The Audio Effects)

The word 'Mantra' literally means revealed sound. It means a sound or a combinations or sequence of sound developed spontaneously. Their power is not in the words themselves but in the sound vibrations created when they are uttered verbally.

Every mantra has some contents of the words, the sound, the vibrations, the tone, the rhythm, the tunes, definite pitches, and certain intensity of frequency. These contents of mantra have particular impact on humans, and helpful in correcting the deranged rhythm of body as well as the mind. Because of human beings have rhythmic features like heartbeat, respiration, and intestinal functions, the functions of each and every cell and tissue and the mind functions too, therefore mantra has given profound effect on mind, which in turn reorganize and tone up the normal rhythm of the body organs. For ex: Gayatri mantra is said to be Sarva roghahara, Panchakshari mantra is indicated in Bhuta baadha etc.

Mantra therapy to some extent can be compared with music therapy in modern words. Modern science is also having the same opinion with a different approach. Neurolinguistics and Psycholinguistics are the two sciences which deal with the language (sound). Neurolinguistics is the study of the neural mechanisms in the human brain that control the comprehension, production, and acquisition of language. Psycholinguistics is the study of language acquisition and linguistic behaviour as well as the psychological mechanism responsible. As per this science, when a mantra is chanted in rhythmic tone with ups and downs, Neurolinguistic creates a melodious effect in the body. The Neurolinguistic effect will be possible even if the meaning of the mantra is not known. Hence knowing the meaning of every mantra is

not compulsory. At the same time if the meaning is known it has got an additional effect which is known as Neurolinguistic effect (NLE) + Psycholinguistic effect (PLE). The NLE and PLE are due to the production and spreading of curative chemicals in the brain. These curative chemicals give smoothening and curing effect in the body, probably first in psyche and ultimately in body as both are interconnected.⁹ Different sounds have different effects on human psyche. Soft sound soothes nerves, the musical note enchants heart; but the sound of thunders may cause awe and fear. Modern doctors advise the people under high tension to sit and listen to music or mantras for few minutes. This has become an accepted procedure just like the yoga and Pranayama practices. Even chanting the kirtanas, melodious bhajans, songs etc. have the good effect almost similar to the NLE and PLE.

Aushadhi Dharana (Wearing amulets)

It is a common practice to wear amulets is called Aushadhi dharana. The drugs usually worn are Vacha (*Acorus calamus*), Sahadevi (*Vernonia cinerea*), Tulasi (*Ocimum sanctum*), Durva (*Cynodon dactylon*) and Rudraksha (*Elaeocarpus ganitrus*). Most of the drugs are having penetrating smell and antiseptic effect. While discussing about the drug Rudraksha (*Elaeocarpus ganitrus*) we get the references regarding how Rudraksha (*Elaeocarpus ganitrus*) will act. Researches prove that these drugs consist of Magnetic, Electric Inductive properties.¹⁰ Depending upon the polarity and intensity of this induced magnetic field, these drugs transmit electrical and inductive impulses with opposing polarity and intensity. According to M.S. Valiathan, who is a prominent researcher in Ayurvedic field, in Vedic practice particularly in Atharvaveda, certain medicinal plants were tied as amulets in specific disease conditions but their function was supposed to be divine and the efficacy of such plant-based drugs was the result of supernatural forces. Amulets or talisman made of plants were as good as their oral intake (if not more effective). That was essentially a faith based system of medicine. During the transition from Vedic medicine to Ayurvedic medicine shifting of faith-based system (Daiva vyapashraya chikitsa) to reason-based system (Yukti vyapashraya chikitsa) also started very slowly over the thousands of years. Ayurvedic system discussed the same medicinal herbs in the conditions which were discussed in Atharvaveda with more inclusions, the difference being oral medications. While the

practice has changed beyond recognition, elements of continuity endured at the conceptual level. In other words to say, Daiva vyapashraya chikitsa was also remained as one among the three treatment principles even though reason based system gained more popularity.¹¹

Mani Dharana (Gemstone Therapy)

It means wearing of different jewels. It is equated with Gemstone therapy in modern practice. Gemstones are related to the various planets and produce a balancing effect to counter specific diseases related to that planet. The scientific reason behind the action of wearing the Gemstones may be considered as follows: Rays and radiations which are emitted from gems and stones are very useful in the treatment of human beings, because human beings have been emitted certain frequency and particular variety of rays from the body.¹² These rays and radiations are called 'Aura'. Simultaneously certain frequency and particular kind of rays and radiations have been absorbed by the human beings from the nature and from other human beings. This phenomenon is happening continuously in cyclic and reciprocal process from nature to human beings and from human beings to nature.

Mangala (Rituals)

The word 'Mangala' refers to happiness, welfare, bliss, felicity.¹³ If we look into the different classical literatures we can find that almost all the literatures or manuscripts have started their work with Mangalacharana. That means, they have initiated the work by praying or saluting the God. Mangalacharana has also been mentioned in Ayurveda while beginning the purificatory procedures.¹⁴ It denotes that these are the offerings made to God in the beginning of a particular occasion to have fruitful end without any obstacles in the middle. Thus, it helps to remove the initial fear of performance and pessimistic tendencies present in the person. Thereby this method indirectly helps to increase the confidence level in the person. In short, benediction or the influence of auspicious ceremonies for obtaining the blessings of others can be referred to as the Mangala.

Bali (By means of Sacrificing)

The word 'Bali' has been extensively used in Indian literature and religious books. We find different understandings in general public regarding Bali. People think Bali is involved in just killing the animals, as a ritual of satisfying the God and the

evil spirits. Traditionally, offering vegetable or non-vegetable Bali is quite common, although people don't know the exact intention. This tradition and religious practice have been inculcated in the Indian culture even today and the same knowledge has been passed from generations to generations with addition of myths regarding Bali.

Bali should be considered as a method of mass disinfection or community disinfection adopted by Ayurveda. This is a method employed to control or prevent the rapidly spreading infection in the locality or community. Commonly used Non-vegetarian Bali material like meat of different animals, necrosed materials, blood of different animals provide an alternative artificial host and habitat for the growth of micro-organisms. By positive chemotaxis, all the micro-organisms scattered in the locality gets accumulated over the Bali material and finds a non-resisting host easily (living organisms encounter resistance to its entry). Certain vegetarian foods are also used to offer Bali like boiled rice, wheat preparation, milk, curd, payasa, green gram etc, which on exposure to air undergo fermentation as they are rich in carbohydrates. Fermenting media is favourable for growth of microbes and microbes of the surrounding area is attracted towards it. Hence, local area is disinfected or cleared off from micro-organisms. More importantly its further spread is restricted.¹⁵ These Bali materials should be allowed to be kept open for certain days in a particular area and thereafter suggested to be discarded in a remote, safe area, situated out of city, so that infectious materials may not come in contact with basic needs of the people like air, water, milk etc.

Upahara (By making offerings or Gifts)

There are very few descriptions available in the classical textbooks of Ayurveda regarding this. As per the descriptions of Dalhana, Upahara means offerings of cow, horse etc animals to Devas.¹⁶ Dalhana further states that according to some, Upahara represents the bali of different animals given to Gods for pleasing them[16]. Literally, the word 'Upahara' denotes offering, oblation (to a deity), complimentary gift or present.¹⁷ This means one is showing his affection towards someone special to whom he is presenting the gift. Nothing is more important in this world than to make someone feel special by showing the love and affection through gifts. Sometimes words are inadequate to some people who are enduring a crisis or tragedy. Platitudes fail and advice often falls flat. In such situations the Upahara along with good words support them which they really

needed at that circumstances and motivate them to rethink about their lives in a positive way. This helps to improve the ability to cope with stressful situations, alleviates the effects of emotional stresses and enhances self esteem thereby promoting good mental health.

Homa (Offerings in Fire)

Homa or Yagya is an ancient Aryan performance in which sacrifice of Ghee and fragrant disinfecting substances are accompanied by auspicious prayers. Here some scientific explanations can be given for the reason how Homa or Yagya will be effective.

There are two basic energy systems in the physical world - Heat and Sound. In performing Yagya, these two energies, namely, the heat from the fire of homa and the sound of the chanting of the Vedic Mantras, are blended together to achieve the desired physical, psychological and spiritual benefits. Ghee used in the Homa helps in rapid combustion of cellulose of wood and keeps the fire alight. While performing Yagya, volatile oils get diffused in the surrounding atmosphere along with steam and smoke. Since these oils have distinct good smell, the foul odours are automatically replaced. Today we find increasing number of diseases including malfunctioning of body organs due to increasing severity of pollution in the atmosphere. Experimental studies show that the incidence of physical ailments, sickness and disease are reduced in the houses, where the Yagya is regularly performed. Yagya creates a pure, nutritional and medicinal atmosphere. It renews the brain cells, revitalizes the skin, purifies blood and prevents growth of pathogenic organisms. Purification of environment through the constituent electrons of the substances fumigated in the Yagya is an obvious effect of this process.¹⁸

During the process of combustion, the partial oxidation of hydrocarbons and decomposition of complex organic substances produce formaldehyde which is a powerful antiseptic. It is also interesting to note that germicidal action of formaldehyde is only effective in the presence of water vapour which is also produced in large quantities during Yagya. The oxidation of hydrocarbons also produces formic acid and acetic acid both of which are good disinfectants. Use of formic acid for preservation of fruits and that of acetic acid in preserving vinegar is a common practice. The antiseptic and antibiotic effects of fumes of Yagya have also been examined by conducting suitable experiments and it has been established that fumes emitted in Yagya are powerful antibiotic.¹⁹

Niyama (Following Rules and Regulations)

According to Indu, these are nothing but abandoning or avoiding the things that have to be abandoned or avoided.²⁰ It means the rules and regulations, which are to be strictly followed. It can be considered as ethical or moral practices. It means to keep away from the misdeeds. In Patanjali's yoga sutras, five niyamas are mentioned.²¹ They are,

- Shoucha (purity or clearness of mind, speech and body).
- Santosha (contentment or acceptance of others and of one's circumstances as they are).
- Tapa (austerity or self-discipline or persistent meditation).
- Swaadhyaya (study of self or self reflection).
- Ishwara pranidhana (attunement to the supreme consciousness or devotion or surrender of the fruits of one's practice to a higher power like God).

So, in short, Niyamas are nothing but practice of healthy habits and a self control. The practice of Niyama helps us maintain a positive environment in which to grow, and gives us the self-discipline and inner strength necessary to progress along the path of yoga.

Prayashchitta (Atonement for evil deeds/ Confession)

Prayashchitta is nothing but reparation of sin or getting rid of "paapa bhavana (guilty feelings)". This is applied as a therapeutic measure for the treatment of both physical and mental diseases. The practice of Prayashchitta makes the person not to commit any sinful act again which will reduce the mental agony and more importantly this helps in self realization.

Prayashchitta is one of the synonyms for Chikitsa according to Charaka.²² These acts are performed in order to get relieved from 'past or sinful acts' and by undergoing the confession or Prayashchitta that relieves the distresses present in one's mind by self realization.

Upavaasa (Fasting Therapy)

Fasting is primarily the act of willingly abstaining from some or all food, drink, or both, for a period of time. Fasting therapy is an important treatment modality for health preservation. In fasting, mental preparedness is an essential pre-condition. The duration of the fast depends upon the age of the patient and the nature of the disease. During fasting, the body burns up and excretes huge amounts of accumulated wastes.

Benefits and physiological effects of fasting: Prominent among the physiological effects conferred by fasting (calorie restriction and intermittent fasting) are the following: increased insulin sensitivity that results in reduced plasma glucose and insulin concentrations and improved glucose tolerance, reduced levels of oxidative stress as indicated by decreased oxidative damage to proteins, lipids and DNA, increased resistance to various types of stress including heat, oxidative and metabolic stresses and enhanced immune function.

Both gross and cellular physiology is profoundly affected by Caloric restriction or Intermittent fasting regimes. With respect to gross physiology there is of course a significant reduction of body fat and mass, which supports a healthy cardiovascular system and reduces incidents of myocardial infarction. In addition to cardioprotection a greater tolerance to stress is induced in the liver. The presence of alternative energy stores such as ketone bodies (e.g. β -hydroxybutyrate) enable to survive additional stresses of life. Excessive and deleterious blood glucose is curtailed by an enhanced sensitivity to insulin and glucose and its utilization as an energy source.²³

Svastyayana (Prayers)

These are the collection of mantras recited for good luck. The word indicates the means of securing prosperity, blessing, benediction, congratulations.²⁴ According to Indu, Svastyayana are the different actions depicted in Vedas (Vedokta karma).²⁵ It includes the averting of evil by the recitation of mantra or performance of expiatory rites, benedictions of Brahmans after presentation of offerings etc; fasting other ways as a mean of self purification. More feeling of gratitude showing gratitude to the nature, for everything received from nature. Like Mangala (rituals), this also helps to remove the negative tendencies present in the person and to induce positivity in him, thereby helps to build the level of self-confidence. The main difference between Mangala and Svastyayana is, the former is at the beginning of any offerings and the latter one is during or at the end of the presentation of offerings. The mechanism of action of both is the same.

Pranipaatam (Surrendering)

Vagbhata mentions Pranidhana in the place of Pranipata.²⁶ Both the words mean surrendering one's ego. Ego will become flexible by surrendering. Submission or surrender to god (Ishwara Pranidhana) starts when an individual is aware of

himself and his limitations. Ego is the main cause of any miseries and surrendering one's ego to the Supreme God paves the way for getting rid of all the miseries. This is one of the quickest ways to achieve self realizations. Once the person attains self realization then very rarely negative thoughts will affect his mind and if at all, these negative thoughts affect the mind of a person then recovery from this is also very fast as he can analyze himself very fast. Every religion and society has their own principles while practicing religion rites, through which they get their physical and mental health.

Gamanam (Pilgrimage)

The word literally means to move from one place to another. According to classical descriptions, it can be considered as going to pilgrimage centres or other holy places. We can say that the change of Place or environment in certain situations will help half of the treatment. As with physical, mental and social aspects of health, spiritual health leads to improvement of general health and coordinates other aspects of health, and therefore enhances adjustment and psychological functioning. Generally, spiritual health is a state beyond religious sentiments, and is often manifested as a relationship with God. Besides that, religious behaviours and beliefs can have a special effect on the meaning of people's lives. Certain behaviours such as worship, pilgrimage, and trust in God can create inner peace through creating hope and encouraging positive attitudes. It seems that religious people experience lower levels of stress because of having meaning in life and hope for God's assistance in critical situations.

If we consider Gamana as mere change of place and not pilgrimage, then also we can justify that change of place can have the psychological impact on the person. The person will be more energetic and enthusiastic and works with fresh mind after the change of place.

Conclusion

Ayurveda is not merely a compendium of therapeutics based on herbal, animal and mineral resources of medicament but deals with philosophy of life and living. These Daiva vyapashraya methods create confidence and remove the fearing and pessimistic tendencies. These methods alert our family and friends to support the suffering person not only physically but also with emotions, good wishes, prayers and moral support. Most probably it is the faith that counts much and these practices

include faith and confidence in the patients which is more essential than to inject invaluable medicines or giving precious herbs to them. It is basically achieved through methods of propitiation of supernatural elements through which one can maintain emotional and optimistic balance of mind. To conclude, the techniques of Daiva Vyapashraya chikitsa followed in those days are still relevant in present days and can be explained through logical as well as scientific ways.

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