

Conceptual Review on *Ayurvedic* Methodology of *Shaman Chikitsa*

Bhanudas Kaluram Chatse*¹, Tarkeshwar Sukhadeo Wankhade², Minal Bapurao Sardar³,

1. Professor In Kaychikitsa, Sau. Shantadevi Vedprakas Patil, Ayurvedic Medical College And Hospital And Research Centre Hatta Tq Basmat Dist Hingoli Maharashtra;
2. Associate Professor, Dept. of Shalaky Tantra , G S Gune Ayurved College, Ahilayanagar, Maharashtra; E mail. drtswankhade@gmail.com; Mob. no. 8788709730
3. Assistant Professor, Dept. of Shalaky Tantra , G S Gune Ayurved College, Ahilayanagar, Maharashtra; Email- dr.minal sardar@gmail.com; Mobile -9834233878

*Corresponding author: E mail: bhanudaschatse187@gmail.com; Mob.no.9822249446

Abstract:

This review conceptually analyzes *Shaman Chikitsa* (palliative therapy), a primary therapeutic strategy in *Ayurveda* that focuses on normalizing aggravated bodily humors (*doṣas*) without physically eliminating them from the body. The methodology of *Shaman* is rooted in the principle of employing substances (*dravya*) possessing qualities (*guṇa*) antagonistic to the vitiated *doṣa*, thereby pacifying the disease state (*rog śānti* or *śānti*). *Shaman* substances are one of the three broad classifications of medicinal *dravya*. Techniques encompassed within *Shaman* methodology include internal procedures like *Dīpana* (appetizing or enhancing digestion) and *Pāchana* (digestion-promoting), as well as a variety of targeted formulations known as *Mahākaṣāya* (Great Groups of Decoactive Drugs) designed to soothe specific symptoms and *doṣa* imbalances.

Keywords:

Shaman Chikitsa, *Ayurveda*, *Doṣa Śamana*, Palliative Therapy, *Dīpana*, *Pāchana*, *Mahākaṣāya*

Introduction:

Ayurveda, characterized as the science of life (*Āyu*), defines the scope of existence through the combined presence of body (*śarīra*), sense organs (*indriyas*), mind (*sattva* or *mana*), and soul (*ātmā*). Therapeutic strategies involve the calculated use of substances (*dravya*), qualities (*guṇa*), and actions (*karma*) to maintain the harmonious state of the body, mind, and spirit.^[1]

Ayurvedic treatment is traditionally categorized into two broad branches: *Śodhana* (purification or elimination therapy, such as *Vamana* and *Virechana*), which aims to forcefully expel excess *doṣas*; and *Śamana* (*Shaman*), which aims for the therapeutic pacification of the aggravated *doṣas* where they reside, without causing evacuation. *Shaman Chikitsa* is a foundational approach aimed at restoring the natural balance of the humors, thereby achieving stability (*śānti*) and health.

Aim and Objectives:

The aim of this conceptual review is to delineate the core methodological principles of *Shaman*

Chikitsa based on the theoretical and categorical descriptions provided in the *Charak Samhita* excerpts.

The objectives are:

1. To define *Shaman* therapy in relation to the use of opposing qualities (*guṇa* and *rasa*) in drugs (*dravya*).
2. To identify core physiological actions (e.g., *Dīpana*, *Pāchana*) categorized under *Shaman*.
3. To establish the fundamental role of *Shaman* in mitigating disease by pacifying *doṣas*.

Methodology

The methodology of *Shaman Chikitsa* is fundamentally governed by the principle of **similarity (*Sāmānya*) and dissimilarity (*Viśeṣa*)**. All therapeutic measures seek to reduce (*hānī*) the exaggerated qualities of the *doṣa* or disease through the application of opposite properties.^[2]

1. **Use of Opposite Qualities (*Viparita Guṇa*)**: *Shaman* involves the use of substances or actions possessing qualities contrary to the heightened *doṣa*.
 - For **Vāta** (characterized by roughness, lightness, coldness), therapy uses opposing attributes such as unctuousness, warmth, heaviness, and stability.
 - For **Pitta** (characterized by sharpness, heat, lightness), therapy employs substances with opposite qualities, such as coolness, heaviness, and sweetness.
 - For **Kapha** (characterized by heaviness, coldness, stability), therapy utilizes opposite qualities like lightness,

dryness, and heat. The objective is that the use of these antagonistic qualities in drugs will result in the pacification (*śānti*) of the disease without causing aggravation or depletion.

2. **Classification of *Shaman* Substances**: *Shaman* is explicitly one of the three ways in which medicinal substances (*dravya*) act on the body. A substance can either perform *Śamana* (pacification of *doṣas*), *Śodhana* (expulsion of *doṣas*), or maintain the health of a healthy person (*svasthya rakṣaṇa*). The *Shaman* substances pacify *Vāta*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*, such as oil (*taila*) for *Vāta* and Ghee (*ghṛta*) for *Pitta*.
3. **Specific Palliative Actions**: The *Shaman* methodology encompasses specific functional categories of therapy designed to pacify the *doṣas* in situ. These actions include *Dīpana* and *Pāchana*, which are utilized to improve digestion and metabolism, thus correcting the source of vitiation. Other palliative actions are grouped into various classes of *Mahākaṣāya*, defined by their therapeutic function, such as *Śītaprāśamana* (pacifying cold) and *Dāhaprāśamana* (pacifying burning/heat).

Discussion:

The principle underpinning *Shaman Chikitsa* is that health (*ārogya*) is attained by rectifying imbalances in the *doṣas* using substances having specific properties. By relying on the rule of dissimilarity (*viśeṣa*) to induce pacification (*śaman*), the physician ensures that the healing process is gradual and less disruptive than elimination therapies (*Śodhana*).

The incorporation of actions like **Dīpana and Pāchana** within the *Shaman* paradigm

highlights the crucial role of correcting the digestive fire (*Agni*). *Dīpana* drugs are those that promote appetite and digestive power, while *Pāchana* drugs facilitate the digestion of undigested food products. These activities are fundamental palliative treatments, as efficient digestion inherently prevents the buildup and subsequent vitiation of *doṣas*.

Furthermore, the detailed classification of drugs into functional *Mahākaṣāya* groups in the source texts illustrates the methodological sophistication of *Shaman*. For instance, drugs acting as **Dāhapraśamana** (*śīta*—cooling, anti-burning) or **Śītapraśamana** (warming, anti-cold) are direct applications of the *viparita guṇa* principle tailored to pacify extreme conditions of *Pitta* or *Vāta/Kapha*.^[3]

The success of *Shaman Chikitsa* ultimately depends on the skillful use of logic (*yukti*) by the physician (*Bhaiṣajya*), aligning the drug (*dravya*) properties with the patient's constitution (*prakṛti*), condition, time (*kāla*), and dose (*mātrā*), as discussed in the context of successful treatment strategies. When performed correctly, *Shaman* treatment eliminates the root cause of the disease, ensuring recovery.

Conclusion:

Shaman Chikitsa constitutes the sophisticated palliative branch of *Ayurvedic* therapeutics. Its

methodology is entirely based on the core cosmological principle of dissimilarity (*viśeṣa*), employing substances with qualities opposite to the aggravated *doṣas* to induce pacification (*śānti*). The therapy avoids physical evacuation (*Śodhana*) and instead relies on actions such as enhancing digestion (*Dīpana* and *Pāchana*) and employing symptom-specific herbal groupings (*Mahākaṣāya*) to restore *doṣa* balance. This subtle, non-emissive approach confirms *Shaman* as an essential and precisely detailed conceptual framework for long-term management and resolution of disease in *Ayurveda*.

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