

Upashaya (advantageous medicine, food and activities) and Anupashaya in Ayurveda: Diagnostic and Therapeutic Significance

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ABSTRACT:

Upashaya (therapeutic compatibility) and Anupashaya (incompatibility) are important diagnostic and therapeutic tools described in Ayurveda, particularly in Charaka Samhita. These concepts help in differentiating diseases with similar presentations and guide treatment selection based on trial and error of drugs, diet, and lifestyle. Upashaya refers to factors that bring relief to disease symptoms through drugs, food, or regimen that may be opposite to the cause, disease, or both, or even indirectly beneficial. Anupashaya represents factors that aggravate the disease or are not suitable for the patient's condition. Charaka Acharya elaborates eighteen types of Upashaya based on the relationship between cause (hetu), disease (vyadhi), and therapeutic measures (ausadha, āhāra, vihāra). This classification provides a rational framework for clinical diagnosis, prognosis, and individualized treatment planning. The present article systematically reviews Upashaya–Anupashaya concepts with special emphasis on their eighteenfold classification and clinical significance...

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda emphasizes a holistic approach to diagnosis and treatment where understanding of disease is not limited to etiology and symptoms but extends to therapeutic response. Among the diagnostic tools described in *Charaka Samhita*, Upashaya and Anupashaya play a crucial role in resolving diagnostic ambiguity and confirming disease identity.

Upashaya is defined as that which provides relief or comfort (*sukha-janaka*) and helps in disease alleviation through appropriate use of drugs, diet, and regimen. Conversely, Anupashaya refers to factors that aggravate symptoms or are incompatible with the disease condition. These concepts are particularly useful in conditions with overlapping symptomatology where direct diagnosis is difficult.

Aims and Objectives

Aim

To study the concept of Upashaya–Anupashaya and its 18 types described in Ayurveda with their clinical significance..

Objectives

- To understand the conceptual framework of Upashaya and Anupashaya
- To classify Upashaya into 18 types as described in Charaka Samhita
- To analyze clinical applications in diagnosis and treatment
- To highlight diagnostic and prognostic importance in Ayurveda

Materials and Methods

This article is based on classical Ayurvedic literature review including:

- *Charaka Samhita* (Nidanasthana, Chikitsasthana, Vimana Sthana) with Chakrapani commentary
- *Ashtanga Hridaya* with Sarvangasundari commentary
- *Madhava Nidana* with Madhukosha commentary
- Other classical interpretations and secondary Ayurvedic texts

A descriptive and analytical approach was used to compile and organize the 18 types of Upashaya–Anupashaya with clinical examples.

Discussion

Upashaya and Anupashaya

Upashaya (Therapeutic Suitability)

That which is **sukhavaha (brings comfort and relief)** in a disease condition is called **Upashaya**. It includes the proper use of **drugs, food, and lifestyle regimens** that relieve disease symptoms and restore comfort.

Such a response is also called **Sātmya (wholesomeness/compatibility to the body)**.

Definition of Upashaya

Aspect	Description
Sanskrit term	Upashaya
Meaning	Therapeutic comfort / relief
Nature	Produces happiness and disease alleviation
Components	Drugs (Aushadha), Food (Anna), Regimen (Vihara)
Effect	Reduces symptoms and supports recovery
Synonym	Sātmya

Table 1. Types of Therapeutic Applications (Upashaya Components)

Component	Meaning	Examples
Aushadha	Medicines	Herbal drugs relieving disease
Anna	Food substances	Diet supporting recovery
Vihara	Lifestyle/regimen	Sleep, exercise, behavior

Upashaya–Anupashaya acts as a **diagnostic trial method (therapeutic test)** in Ayurveda. It is particularly useful when diseases present with similar symptoms but different etiologies. The classification into 18 types is based on three primary variables:

- Cause (Hetu)
- Disease (Vyadhi)
- Therapeutic measures (Dravya, Anna, Vihara)
- Nature of action (Viparita / Viparitarthakari)

Table 2 : 18 Types of Upashaya

No.	Type of Upashaya	Description
1	Hetu Viparita Aushadha	Drug opposite to cause
2	Hetu Viparita Anna	Food opposite to cause
3	Hetu Viparita Vihara	Regimen opposite to cause
4	Vyadhi Viparita Aushadha	Drug opposite to disease
5	Vyadhi Viparita Anna	Food opposite to disease
6	Vyadhi Viparita Vihara	Regimen opposite to disease
7	Hetu-Vyadhi Viparita Aushadha	Drug opposite to both cause & disease
8	Hetu-Vyadhi Viparita Anna	Food opposite to both
9	Hetu-Vyadhi Viparita Vihara	Regimen opposite to both
10	Hetu Viparitarthakari Aushadha	Drug indirectly opposing cause
11	Hetu Viparitarthakari Anna	Food indirectly opposing cause
12	Hetu Viparitarthakari Vihara	Regimen indirectly opposing cause
13	Vyadhi Viparitarthakari Aushadha	Drug indirectly acting on disease
14	Vyadhi Viparitarthakari Anna	Food indirectly acting on disease
15	Vyadhi Viparitarthakari Vihara	Regimen indirectly acting on disease
16	Hetu Vyadhi Viparitarthakari Aushadha	Drug acting on both indirectly
17	Hetu Vyadhi Viparitarthakari Anna	Food acting on both indirectly
18	Hetu Vyadhi Viparitarthakari Vihara	Regimen acting on both indirectly

Clinical Interpretation

- Upashaya helps in **differential diagnosis** when symptoms overlap
- Example: Relief of pain with oil suggests Vata involvement
- Improvement with heat indicates cold-dominant pathology
- It assists in **trial-based diagnosis (Yukti Prayoga)**

Table 3: Diagnostic Importance

Aspect	Clinical Utility
Disease identification	Helps confirm suspected diagnosis
Differentiation	Distinguishes similar diseases
Prognosis	Strong Hetu = poor prognosis
Treatment selection	Guides personalized therapy

Table 4: Therapeutic Importance

Factor	Role
Hetu avoidance	Primary preventive measure
Viparita therapy	Opposes disease pathology
Viparitarthakari	Indirect corrective action

Factor	Role
Trial therapy	Helps confirm treatment line

Table 5. Examples of Upashaya (Clinical Illustration)

A. Hetu Viparita Examples

Type	Example
Aushadha	Hot drugs in cold-induced diseases
Anna	Light diet in exertion-induced fever
Vihara	Night awakening in Kapha aggravation

B. Vyadhi Viparita Examples

Type	Example
Aushadha	Pātha in Atisara
Anna	Masura diet in diarrhea
Vihara	Straining (Pravahana) in Udavarta

C. Hetu–Vyadhi Viparita Examples

Type	Example
Aushadha	Dashamoola in Vataja Shopha
Anna	Takra in Grahani
Vihara	Day sleep avoidance in Kapha disorders

Anupashaya (Non-beneficial Response)

That which is **opposite to Upashaya** and produces **discomfort or aggravation of disease** is called **Anupashaya**. It is also known as **Asātmya (unwholesome to the body)**.

Concept of Anupashaya

Aspect	Description
Meaning	Opposite of Upashaya
Effect	Aggravates disease or causes discomfort
Synonym	Asatmya
Diagnostic value	Helps in identifying disease nature

Clinical Importance

Diagnostic Importance

Upashaya–Anupashaya serves as a form of **therapeutic diagnostic testing** in Ayurveda. In clinically

ambiguous or hidden conditions (*Gudha Linga Vyadhi*), the response to specific therapies helps in identifying:

- Dominant Dosha involvement
- Etiological factors
- Disease stage
- Functional disturbances
- Disease severity

Contemporary Correlation

This principle resembles modern concepts such as:

- **Therapeutic trials**
- **Response-based diagnosis**
- **Empirical treatment assessment**
- **Functional medicine approaches**
- **Personalized medicine**

For example:

- Symptomatic relief following a specific intervention may confirm a suspected pathology.
- Aggravation after inappropriate therapy corresponds to Anupashaya and indicates reconsideration of diagnosis or treatment strategy.

Therapeutic Importance

The concept provides a scientific basis for individualized treatment planning in Ayurveda. The physician selects therapies according to:

- Dosha predominance
- Disease causation
- Patient constitution (*Prakriti*)
- Strength of disease and patient
- Environmental and seasonal factors

Modern Relevance

The principle aligns with:

- Precision medicine
- Patient-centered care
- Lifestyle medicine
- Integrative therapeutics
- Evidence-based symptomatic monitoring

Upashaya also emphasizes the role of:

- Diet therapy
- Behavioral interventions
- Preventive medicine
- Holistic rehabilitation

Prognostic Significance

The therapeutic response observed through Upashaya provides prognostic insight:

- Quick positive response → favorable prognosis
- Poor or paradoxical response → chronicity or difficult prognosis
- Persistent Anupashaya → possibility of complications or incurable state

Thus, Upashaya functions not only as a treatment principle but also as a prognostic indicator.

Contemporary Clinical Perspective

In present-day healthcare, Upashaya–Anupashaya can be interpreted as an early model of:

- Clinical decision-making
- Dynamic patient assessment
- Feedback-based therapeutics
- Outcome-oriented treatment modification

The Ayurvedic approach recognizes that:

- The same disease may respond differently in different individuals.
- Continuous assessment of therapeutic response is essential.
- Treatment must be adaptive and individualized rather than disease-centered alone.

This reflects current biomedical emphasis on:

- Personalized therapeutics
- Systems biology
- Integrative clinical practice
- Biopsychosocial models of disease

Conclusion

Upashaya–Anupashaya represents a sophisticated Ayurvedic clinical principle integrating diagnosis, therapeutics, prognosis, and individualized patient care. The eighteenfold classification described in classical Ayurvedic literature demonstrates a highly systematic understanding of disease response mechanisms. Its relevance extends beyond traditional medicine and resonates strongly with contemporary concepts of personalized medicine, therapeutic trials, integrative healthcare, and response-based clinical assessment. Consequently, Upashaya–Anupashaya continues to remain an indispensable tool in Ayurvedic clinical practice, particularly in conditions associated with diagnostic uncertainty and complex pathophysiology.

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