

## CONCEPT OF DIK/DISHA: ITS IMPORTANCE IN AYURVEDA, TRADITION, AND MODERN ERA

Prof. Manohar Ram\*

Professor &amp; HOD, Samhita &amp; Siddhant Department, Government Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Varanasi.



\*Corresponding Author: Prof. Manohar Ram

Professor &amp; HOD, Samhita &amp; Siddhant Department, Government Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Varanasi.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17222791>

Article Received on 24/07/2025

Article Revised on 13/08/2025

Article Accepted on 02/09/2025

## ABSTRACT

*Dik / Disha* holds great importance in Indian philosophy, *Ayurveda*, and cultural traditions. They are considered eternal, all-pervading entities that orient life, guide perception, and establish harmony with the cosmos. Classical texts explain their definitions, qualities, and associated deities, while *Ayurveda* applies them in anatomy, diagnosis, dosha movement, and therapeutic practices. *Rasashastra* prescribes directions for *Aushadhashala* formation. Collection of herbs from medicinal plants are performed in particular direction with chanting of specific mantras. Furthermore, Indian practices such as *Vastu Shastra*, astrology, rituals, and spirituality emphasize their cosmic significance. Even in the present age, directions remain vital in architecture, GPS, navigation, and lifestyle, bridging the gap between ancient wisdom and modern science.

**KEYWORDS:** Directions, *Dik*, *Disha*, *Ayurveda*, *Doshas*, *Vastu Shastra*, *Rasashastra*, *Prashastapada*, *Vaisheshika*, *Tarkasangraha*, Anatomy, Deities of Directions, Properties of Air, Indian Tradition, Modern Applications.

## INTRODUCTION

Directions are not limited to geographical indicators such as east, west, north, and south; in Indian philosophy and *Ayurveda*, they are all-pervading principles that provide order and orientation to life. Ancient Indian thinkers described directions not only as spatial markers but as eternal realities that enable human beings to perceive nearness, farness, distinctness, and positional relationships. Texts such as the *Tarkasangraha*, *Vaisheshika Sutras*, *Muktavali*, and *Amarakosha* define directions as one, eternal, and infinite, yet conventionally subdivided for practical use. Their attributes and deities are deeply embedded in metaphysics, medicine, rituals, and daily practices. *Ayurveda* associates directions with the movement of doshas, organ locations, and therapeutic procedures, while *Rasashastra* relies on them for *Rasashala* construction and processing of *Ayurvedic* medicines. Some of the investigation of ayurvedic system depends on *Disha*. *Disha* thus serve both spiritual and scientific purposes, reflecting India's holistic integration of nature, health, and cosmic order.

## Dik / Disha

Etymology of the word *Disha*

The word *Disha* is derived from the root meaning "to indicate / to send forth."

Synonyms of *Dika*According to *Amarakosha*<sup>[1]</sup>

*Disha*, *Kakubha*, *Kastha*, *Asha*, *Harita* are synonyms of *Dika*.

दिशस्तु ककुभः काष्ठा आशाश्च हरितश्च ताः

(Amarkosh, Prathamkand(Swargadikand))

Definition of *Disha*According to *Tarkasangraha*<sup>[2]</sup>

प्राच्यादिव्यवहारहेतुर्दिक्। सा चैका नित्या विभु च ।-

*Tarkasangraha*

Prachi and other such usages have a substance as their basis, which is called *Dika*. It is single(*Eka*), eternal (*Nitya*), and all-pervading (*Vibhu*).

That substance which is the cause of practical usage such as "This is East, this is West" is called *Disha*.

- It is one, eternal, and all-pervading.
- The distinctions such as East and West are conventional, but the underlying substance is one.

According to *Vaisheshika Darshan*<sup>[3]</sup>

इत इदमित्यतस्तद्दिश्यं लिङम् ।- (Vaisesika Darsana, Chapter 2, Aanhika 2, Sutra 10)

That substance by which the perception arises that one object is nearer or farther in comparison to another, is called *Disha*.

The substance in which the sense of 'from here to there' is experienced is called *Disha*.

**For example:** From Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh appears far, and Gujarat appears near — this perception is possible due to *Dika*.

Thus, to differentiate between similar objects in terms of distance, the independent substance called *Disha* is accepted.

According to *Muktavali*<sup>[4]</sup>

**दूरान्तिकादिधीहेतुरेका नित्या दिगुच्यते। (मुक्तावली)**

That substance by which the knowledge of an object being near or far is obtained is called *Disha*.

*Disha* is one and eternal in nature, yet due to *Upadhibheda*, it is distinguished into divisions such as east, west, and so forth.

According to *Yogindranath Sen*<sup>[5]</sup>

**अस्मादिदं पूर्वेण अस्मादिदं पश्चिमेन इत्यादयः प्रत्यया यतो भवन्ति सा दिक् । -**

(Commentary of Yogindranatha Sena on Ch.Su.1/48)

That by which the cognition such as 'this is east, this is west' arises, is called *Dik/Disha*.

According to *Aacharya Charak*<sup>[6]</sup>: *Disha* is one of the nine *karandravayas*.

**खादीन्यात्मा मनः कालो दिशश्च द्रव्यसङ्ग्रहः। (Ch.Su.1/48)**

**Attributes (Qualities) of *Disha***

According to *Prashastapada Bhashya*

**संख्यापरिमाणपृथक्त्वसंयोगविभागा**

- ***Sankhya*** (Number): Direction is essentially one, but appears many due to convention.
- ***Parimana*** (Magnitude): Being infinite, its measure is vast.
- ***Prithakatva*** (Distinctness): It is distinct from other eternal substances.
- ***Samyog*** (Conjunction): An object can be connected with a particular direction.
- ***Vibhag*** (Disjunction): An object can be separated from a particular direction.

Thus, *Disha* has five qualities: *Sankhya*, *Parimana*, *Prithakatva*, *Samyog*, *Vibhag*.

**Types of *Disha***

Although Direction is essentially one, conventionally they are classified as follows:

**प्राच्यवाची प्रतीच्यस्ता पूर्वदक्षिण पश्चिमाः। उत्तरादिगुदीची स्याद् दिश्यं तु त्रिषु दिग्भवेत् ॥ (Amarkosh)<sup>[1]</sup>**

**1. *Prachi* (East)** – The direction where the sun rises. Associated with *Indra*.

**आदित्य संयोगात् भूत पूर्वात् भविष्यात् भूताश्च प्राची।**

- **Synonyms:** *Purva*, *Mahendri*.

**2. *Pratichi* (West)** – व्याख्याप्रत्यक् अंचति इति प्रतीची।

The direction where the sun sets. Presided over by *Varuna*.

- **Synonyms:** *Paschima*, *Varuni*.

**3. *Udichi* (North)** – उदयश्यामंचति सूर्य इति उदीची।उदगंचतीति उदीची।

The direction linked with the *Meru* mountain, perceived as the left side when facing the sun. Presided over by *Kubera*.

- **Synonyms:** *Uttara*, *Kauberi*.

**4. *Avachi* (South)** – उदयश्यामंचति सूर्य इति उदीची।उदगंचतीति उदीची।

The direction linked with the *Vindhya* mountains, perceived as the right side when facing the sun. Presided over by *Yama*.

- **Synonyms:** *Dakshina*, *Yamya*.

**5. *Ishan* (North-East)** – The intermediate direction between North and East. Presided over by *Surya* (the Sun).

- **Synonyms:** *Ishani*.

**6. *Vayavya* (North-West)** – The intermediate direction between North and West. Presided over by *Vayu* (Wind God).

- **Synonyms:** *Vayavya*.

**7. *Nairrityakona* (South-West)** – The intermediate direction between South and West. Presided over by *Nirrti* (Goddess of destruction).

- **Synonyms:** *Nairrti*.

**8. *Aagneyakona* (South-East)** – The intermediate direction between South and East. Presided over by *Agni* (Fire God).

- **Synonyms:** *Vaishvanari*.

**9. *Urdhva* (Upward)** – The vertical upward direction. Presided over by *Brahma*.

- **Synonyms:** *Brahmi*.

**10. *Adhah* (Downward)** – The vertical downward direction. Presided over by the *Nagas* (serpent deities).

- **Synonyms:** *Nagi*.

**Table: Directions, Synonyms, and Presiding Deities.**

Disha	Synonyms	Presiding Deity
<i>Prachi</i> / East	<i>Purva, Mahendri</i>	<i>Indra (Mahendra)</i>
<i>Pratichi</i> / West	<i>Pascima, Varuṇi</i>	<i>Varuna</i>
<i>Udichi</i> / North	<i>Uttara, Kauberi</i>	<i>Kubera</i>
<i>Avachi</i> / South	<i>Dakṣiṇa, Yamyā</i>	<i>Yama</i>
<i>Isanya</i> / North-East	<i>Isani, Aisani</i>	<i>Surya</i>
<i>Vayavya</i> / North-West	<i>Vayavya</i>	<i>Vayu (Wind God)</i>
<i>Nairṛtya</i> / South-West	<i>Nairṛti</i>	<i>Nirṛti (Goddess of Destruction)</i>
<i>Agneya</i> / South-East	<i>Vaisvanari</i>	<i>Agni (Fire God)</i>
<i>Urdhva</i> / Upward	<i>Brahmi</i>	<i>Brahma</i>
<i>Adhah</i> / Downward	<i>Nagi</i>	<i>Naga (Serpent Deity)</i>

**Importance of Directions in Ayurveda****In Anatomy & Physiology**

Directions are used to describe locations of body organs.

**Example:** Below the heart, on the right side lie the liver and pancreas; on the left side lie the spleen and lungs. They help in describing the positions of *Marmas* (vital points).

The natural movement of *Doshas* follows directions:

*Apana Vayu* flows downward (*Adhah*).

*Udana Vayu* flows upward (*Urdhva*).

**In Nomenclature of Body Parts**

Certain organs and regions are named directionally:

- Upper rectum (*Uttara-guda*)
- Lower rectum (*Adhara-guda*)

**From the perspective of *Rasa Shastra* and *Dravyaguna***

the construction of the *Rasa-shala*<sup>[7]</sup> (alchemical/processing laboratory) is guided by directions.

**Table: *Dishas* and Their Functions.**

S.No.	Dishas	Function
1	<i>Purva</i> / East	Establishing <i>Rasalinga</i> / ritual-alchemical installations
2	<i>Paschima Disha</i> / West	<i>Prakṣhalana</i> – Washing / Cleansing / Purification
3	<i>Uttara Disha</i> / North	<i>Dhatukarma</i> – Metallurgical work / Processing of metals
4	<i>Dakshina Disha</i> / South	<i>Paṣaṇa Karma</i> – Stone work / Masonry
5	<i>Isana Kona</i> / North-East	<i>Nirmita Kalpa-saṅgrahaṇa</i> – Storage of prepared materials / finished constructs
6	<i>Vayavya Kona</i> / North-West	Drying functions / Preservation work
7	<i>Nairṛtya Kona</i> / South-West	<i>Sastra Karma</i> – Weapon-related work / Use of instruments
8	<i>Aagneya Koṇa</i> / South-East	<i>Agni Karma</i> – Fire-related work / Heating / Combustion processes

**Influence and Importance of Directions****Effect of *Disha* on Substances**

Directions also influence the qualities of natural substances.

Substances found in the north, especially in the Himalayan region, are considered more potent and powerful.

Medicines should be collected while facing the east or the north direction.

**In Diagnosis and Treatment**

Directions are used in naming diseases. For example, conditions are described as “upward-moving or downward-moving” such as upward or downward *Amlapitta* and *Raktapitta*.

Directions help describe the movement of *doshas* in the body. For instance, in certain disorders, the movement of *Vata* is upward.

Directions are also used in differentiating types of diseases, e.g., left- or right-sided paralysis.

In prognostic signs, dreams associated with directions are significant. **For example:** if a person dreams of riding a dog, camel, or donkey and moving towards the south, it is interpreted as an ominous sign indicating decline due to *Rajyakshma*, leading towards death.<sup>[8]</sup>

**Practical Applications in Ayurveda**

For the *Kutipraveshik Rasayana kuti* formation, the direction should be in the north-east direction.<sup>[9]</sup>

In *Jentak Swedan* (Sudatorium Sudation), the place for sudation should be in the north or east direction from the residence.<sup>[10]</sup>

The base of the division of *Desha* on geographical level (*Jangal, Aanup, and Sadharan desha*) is *Disha*<sup>[11]</sup>

At the time of Admission of pregnant women in the Maternity Ward, follow the right foot of the pregnant cow from behind and enter the maternity ward.<sup>[12]</sup>

**Dhatrikarma:** The midwife/mother should seat the facing east and have the infant suckle first from the right breast.<sup>[13]</sup>

The construction of the *Sutikagara* (maternity chamber) is prescribed to have either an eastern-facing or a northern-facing door.<sup>[14]</sup>

### Properties of Air/Wind from Different Directions (Su.Su.20/23-30)<sup>[15]</sup>

#### Air from the East

पूर्वः समधुरः स्निग्धो लवणश्चैव मारुतः । गुरुविदाहजननो रक्तपित्ताभिवर्द्धनः ॥

क्षतानां विषजुष्टानां व्रणिनः श्लेष्मलाश्च ये । तेषामेव विशेषेण सदा रोगविवर्द्धनः ॥

वातलानां प्रशस्तश्च श्रान्तानां कफशोषिणाम् । तेषामेव विशेषेण व्रणवलेदविवर्द्धनः ॥

Sweet, unctuous (oily), slightly salty, heavy, heat-generating, and increases disorders caused by excess blood.

Harmful for people with wounds, ulcers, poisoning, or excessive phlegm, as it aggravates their conditions.

Beneficial for those with a predominance of *Vata*, those who are tired or depleted of phlegm. However, in case of wounds, it increases discharge and moisture.

#### Air from the West

विशदो रूक्षपरुषः खरः स्नेहबलापहः ॥

पश्चिमो मारुतस्तीक्ष्णः कफमेदोविशोषणः । सद्यः प्राणक्षयकरः शोषणस्तु शरीरिणाम् ॥

Clear, dry, rough, harsh, removes natural unctuousness and strength.

Sharp, depletes fat and phlegm.

Quickly causes exhaustion, reduces vitality and moisture in the body, and can be life-threatening if exposure is prolonged.

#### Air from the North

उत्तरो मारुतः स्निग्धो मृदुर्मधुर एव च । कषायानुरसः शीतो दोषाणां चाप्रकोपणः ॥

तस्माच्च प्रकृतिस्थानां वलेदनो बलवर्धनः । क्षीणक्षयविषातानां विशेषेण तु पूजितः ॥

Smooth, gentle, sweet, astringent in aftertaste, cool, and non-aggravating to the doshas.

For healthy persons, it increases strength and nourishes tissues.

Especially beneficial for patients suffering from weakness, loss of vital tissue, wasting disorders (consumption), or poisoning.

#### Air from the South

मधुरश्चाविदाही च कषायानुरसो लघुः ।

दक्षिणो मारुतः श्रेष्ठश्चक्षुष्यो बलवर्धनः ॥ रक्तपित्तप्रशमनो न च वातप्रकोपणः ॥

Sweet, non-burning, slightly astringent, and light in quality.

Good for the eyes, strength-promoting, pacifies blood-related diseases, and does not aggravate *Vata*.

### Importance of Directions in Indian Tradition *Vastu Shastra* (Architecture)

Directions play a vital role in traditional architecture.

Each direction is recommended for specific activities or structures.

Proper use of directions is believed to enhance positive energy and prosperity.

#### Astrology

Directions are used to study planetary influences and the flow of cosmic energy.

Remedies often involve facing or moving in specific directions.

#### Spirituality

Directions are frequently mentioned in ancient scriptures. The north-east and upward directions are believed to be linked with divine and cosmic energies.

#### Rituals and Ceremonies

In fire rituals and other ceremonies, attention to directions is crucial.

Each direction has a presiding deity whose influence determines the outcome of the ritual.

In the ritual of *Pumsavana Samskara*, the banyan tree is used, specifically its branches from the eastern and northern directions are employed in the ceremony.<sup>[16]</sup>

### Importance of Directions in the Modern Context *Architecture and Construction*

Modern architects still consider directions for natural light and ventilation.

#### GPS and Navigation

Directions are foundational to mapping and navigation technology, helping us locate places and travel routes.

#### Feng Shui

Similar to *Vastu*, Chinese *Feng Shui* emphasizes proper use of directions for balance and energy flow in life.

#### Psychology and Lifestyle

Directions also affect daily life. For instance, the direction one sleeps in is believed to impact health, mood, and overall well-being.

### CONCLUSION

Directions are far more than mere geographical markers; they embody principles of orientation, balance, and purpose in life. In Indian tradition, they serve as a bridge between the human body, nature, and the cosmos, guiding practices in philosophy, medicine, and spirituality. Ayurveda utilizes them in diagnosis, dosha movement, anatomy, and therapeutic planning, while *Rasashastra* prescribes their application in laboratory and pharmaceutical processes. Cultural sciences such as *Vastu Shastra*, astrology, and rituals further highlight their cosmic and spiritual roles. Even in the modern world, directions remain essential in architecture,

navigation systems, and lifestyle practices. Thus, the concept of directions transcends time, uniting ancient wisdom with contemporary relevance, and continues to guide humanity toward health, harmony, and alignment with the universe.

## REFERENCES

1. Amarasinha. *Amarakosha, Prathamkand (Swargadikand)*, verse on synonyms for *Dika*.
2. Annambhatta. *Tarka-Sangraha*, verse on *Dika* and *Prachi*. 17th century CE.
3. Kanada. *Vaisesika Darsana*, Chapter 2, *Aanhika 2, Sutra 10*.
4. Maherchand Lakshmandas. *Nyayasiddhant Muktavali*, verse 4.
5. Yogindranatha Sena. Commentary on *Chandogya Upanishad 1.48*.
6. Charaka, Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana 1.48, in Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha, edited by Kashinath Shastri and Gorakhnath Chaturvedi, vol. 1 (Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2020; 17).
7. K. R. Srikantha Murthy, *Rasa Shastra* (Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2010; 125–127).
8. Charaka, Charaka Samhita, Indriya sthan 5.7-9, in Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha, edited by Kashinath Shastri and Gorakhnath Chaturvedi, vol. 1 (Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2020; 874).
9. Charaka, Charaka Samhita, Chikitsa Sthan 1.1/18, in Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha, edited by Kashinath Shastri and Gorakhnath Chaturvedi, vol. 2 (Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2020; 9).
10. Charaka, Charaka Samhita, Sutra Sthan 14.46, in Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha, edited by Kashinath Shastri and Gorakhnath Chaturvedi, vol. 1 (Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2020; 256).
11. Astanga, Astangahrudayam, Sutra Sthan 1.23 by Kaviraj Atridev Gupta, Chaukhambha Prakashan.
12. Charaka, Charaka Samhita, Sharirsthan 8.35, in Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha, edited by Kashinath Shastri and Gorakhnath Chaturvedi, vol. 1 (Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2020; 832).
13. Charaka, Charaka Samhita, Sharirsthan 8.58, in Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha, edited by Kashinath Shastri and Gorakhnath Chaturvedi, vol. 1 (Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2020; 848).
14. Charaka, Charaka Samhita, Sharirsthan 8.33, in Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha, edited by Kashinath Shastri and Gorakhnath Chaturvedi, vol. 1 (Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2020; 831).
15. Sushruta, Sushruta Samhita Sutra 20/23-30 by Dr. Ambikadutta Shastri, Vol.1, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan.
16. Charaka, Charaka Samhita, Sharirsthan 8.19, in Charaka Samhita of Agnivesha, edited by Kashinath Shastri and Gorakhnath Chaturvedi, vol. 1 (Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2020; 820).