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## The “Magic” of Masala: An Analysis of Indian Spices as a Psychological Healer based on Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *The Mistress of Spices*

Gutimali Goswami

### Abstract

India, the land of Ayurveda, is regarded as the cradling ground of knowledge relating to being and healing. The methodical and holistic system of medicine suggested by various Vedas and Purana-s of India often targeted the diseased and not the disease. Hence, utmost importance was given to the internal of a human being, its mind or *manas*. An imbalance in the psychological existence or functioning was believed to be the root cause of every subsequent *vyadhi* or ailment that followed up and impacted the human body. To maintain a sound relationship between the mind and the body various readily available *banaspati* or plant-derived were also suggested. They were introduced in form of spices which were popularly known as *masala*. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her novel *The Mistress of Spices* utilizes the “magic” of these spices, both literally and metaphorically, and presents it as a psychological healer. She, through this novel, reminds us of the “medical charms” of the Indian spices which is undoubtedly a fundamental part of our cultural landscape. This paper, in a brief and comprehensive manner, attempts to analyze the ancient Indian belief system surrounding the key terms “health” and “healing” and presents it to the readers with the support of a fictional plot for better understanding.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, Mind, Spices, Health, Healing, Culture.