

iv. Origin of dravya, Definition and types - kāraṇa and kārya dravya

Table Of Contents

Add a header to begin generating the table of contents

Introduction to Dravya

In **Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika** philosophy and Ayurvedic thought, **dravyas** are fundamental entities that form the substratum for **guṇas** (qualities) and **karma** (actions). They are the building blocks of the manifest universe, serving as both the cause and locus of various attributes and activities.

- **Vaiśeṣika Sūtra** emphasizes:

“यत्राधिता: कर्म गुणाः कारणं समवायि यत्तद् द्रव्यं”

Dravya is that in which karma (action) and guṇa (quality) inhere. This is its defining feature.

- **Suśruta** echoes a similar view:

“द्रव्यं लक्षणं तु क्रिया गुणवत् समवायि कारणम्”

Dravya is that entity which, by its inherent nature, is the cause for guṇa and karma.

In other words, **dravyas** are *samavāyikāraṇa* (inherent causes) that enable qualities and actions to exist.

Definition and Essence of Dravya

- Dravya literally means a “substratum” or “substance.” It is considered the fundamental entity that supports qualities and actions.
- In **Ayurveda**, dravyas are not just inert substances; they also encompass living beings (Ātmā, Mind) and intangible factors (Time, Space) that shape the material and conceptual realms.

Core Characteristics

- It is the **inherent cause (samavāyikāraṇa)** of guṇa and karma.
- It has **concrete or abstract existence**: some dravyas have physical form (pr̥thvī, āpah, tejah, vāyu), while others are intangible (ākāśa, kāla, dīk, ātmā, manah).
- It may be **eternal (nitya)** or **non-eternal (anitya)**, depending on whether it undergoes destruction or transformation at the fundamental level.

Number of Dravyas

Classical Vaiśeṣika Enumeration: 9 Dravyas

1. **Pr̥thvī** (Earth element)
2. **Āpah** (Water element)
3. **Tejah** (Fire element)
4. **Vāyu** (Air element)
5. **Ākāśa** (Ether)
6. **Kāla** (Time)
7. **Dīk** (Space/Direction)
8. **Ātmā** (Soul)
9. **Manah** (Mind)

These nine represent the complete range of substances that exist—physical, spatial-temporal, mental, and spiritual.

Vedānta & Mīmāṃsā Perspective: 10 Dravyas

- They include **Tamas** as a 10th dravya, apart from the nine listed by Vaiśeṣika.
- While this is less common in mainstream Vaiśeṣika or Nyāya, it appears in certain Vedantic and Mīmāṃsā

discussions.

Types of Dravya

Dravyas can be classified in various ways based on their physicality, pervasiveness, and constancy. Below are some common taxonomies:

Mūrta and Amūrta Dravya

1. Mūrta (With Form):

- *prthvī, āpaḥ, tejaḥ, vāyu, manas*
- “Mūrta” often implies tangible or perceptible form, though mind (manas) is subtly included in some lists because it operates with a certain locus.

2. Amūrta (Without Form):

- *ākāśa, kāla, dik, ātmā*
- These are intangible, not perceivable by the external senses in the conventional sense.

Vibhū Dravya

Dravyas that are all-pervasive or can exist everywhere simultaneously.

- Includes *ākāśa, kāla, dik, ātmā*.
- “सर्व मूर्त द्रव्य संयोगित्वं विभुत्वम्”—they do not require physical contact with objects to coexist with them everywhere.

Rūpī Dravya (Possessing Form/Color)

Dravyas that have a perceivable color or form.

- *prthvī, āpaḥ, tejaḥ*
- These can be directly observed through their *rūpa* (color/form).

Sparśavat Dravya (Possessing Touch)

Dravyas that possess tactile qualities.

- *prthvī, āpaḥ, tejaḥ, vāyu*
- Each has distinct tactile properties: Earth (rough), Water (fluidity), Fire (heat), Air (movement).

Nitya Dravya (Eternal)

Nitya: Dravyas that are eternal (non-destructible at the paramāṇu or fundamental level).

- Includes *ākāśa, kāla, dik, ātmā, manah* plus the paramāṇu form of *prthvī, āpaḥ, tejaḥ, and vāyu*.
- In this view, while gross forms undergo change and decay, the **paramāṇus** (indivisible atoms) of the bhūtas are eternal.

Kāraṇa and Kārya Dravya

A key Ayurvedic viewpoint divides **all of creation** into **Kāraṇa** (causal) and **Kārya** (effectual) dravyas:

Kāraṇa Dravya (Causal Materials)

- The fundamental substrates that **cause** or give rise to subsequent manifestations.
- Classical Ayurveda identifies **9** fundamental dravyas as *kāraṇa* (matching the Vaiśeṣika list):
 - Prthvī
 - Āpaḥ
 - Tejaḥ
 - Vāyu

- Ākāśa
- Kāla
- Dik
- Ātmā
- Manah
- These are the **root causal entities** from which the multiplicity of the universe emerges.

Kārya Dravya (Effectual Materials)

- All **derivative or manifested** substances formed from the **pañca-mahābhūtas** and other causal factors.
- They are **infinite** in nature (countless forms, shapes, combinations).
- Examples include specific **herbs, animals, minerals**, complex objects, etc.
- Ayurvedic texts mention countless entities such as **Aśvagandhā, Śatāvarī**, or any compounded formulation—these are *kārya dravyas* derived from the basic elements.

Scriptural References

- **Caraka Samhitā (C.Sū.1/48)** mentions:
“स्वादीन्यात्मामनः कालोदिशश्च द्रव्यसंप्रहः”
Indicating the enumerations of fundamental dravyas, including ātman, manas, kāla, dik, and so on.
- **Caraka Samhitā (C.Sū.26/20):**
“सर्वद्रव्यं पाञ्चभौतिकमस्मिन्नर्थं”
Meaning “All dravyas are essentially made of (or related to) the five great elements (pañca-mahābhūtas)” in terms of their tangible manifestation.

Thus, **kāraṇa dravyas** form the universal causal substratum, and **kārya dravyas** are the manifested products in various material or functional forms.

Relevance in Ayurveda

1. **Pharmacology (Dravyaguṇa-vijñāna)**
 - Understanding dravya as a causal substrate helps in analyzing the inherent properties (*guṇas*) of herbs and minerals, which in turn guide their **pharmacological actions** (*karma*).
2. **Pathology and Therapy**
 - Diseases arise when fundamental dravyas (especially *doṣas*, which themselves are derived from *mahābhūtas*) become imbalanced.
 - **Kārya dravyas** (medicinal substances) are employed to restore balance, leveraging their elemental (*bhūta*) composition.
3. **Concept of Samavāya**
 - *Guṇas* and *karma* inhere in dravyas inseparably, reinforcing that any **medicinal property** or **biological function** is always grounded in a dravya.
4. **Holistic Understanding**
 - Knowing dravya classification is vital for comprehending **mind-body** interplay (manah, ātmā), **spatial-temporal** factors (dik, kāla), and **material** constitution (pr̄thvī, āpaḥ, tejaḥ, vāyu, ākāśa).

Key Takeaways

- **Definition:** Dravya = Substratum for *guṇa* and *karma*; the samavāyikāraṇa for all existence.
- **Number and Classification:**
 - **Vaiśeṣika:** 9 dravyas
 - **Vedānta/Mīmāṃsā:** 10 dravyas (adding *tamas*)
 - Types: mūrtha/amūrtha, vibhū, rūpī, sparśavat, nitya, etc.
- **Kāraṇa vs. Kārya Dravya:**
 - **Kāraṇa:** 9 fundamental dravyas.
 - **Kārya:** Infinite manifestations from *pañca-mahābhūtas*.
- **Scriptural Citations:** Caraka Samhitā references, Vaiśeṣika Sūtra clarifications, Suśruta's definitions.



- **Clinical & Theoretical Implications:**

- Ties into **drug action** (dravya → guṇa → karma).
- Groundwork for diagnosing and formulating treatments in Ayurveda.

Conclusion

Dravya stands at the core of Ayurvedic ontology, providing the **substratum** where qualities (guṇas) and actions (karma) reside. In its **kāraṇa** aspect, dravya forms the ultimate cause of the universe's multitude of **kārya** forms—herbs, minerals, living entities, and more. Recognizing this foundational principle helps Ayurvedic scholars and clinicians systematically understand and categorize the vast array of therapeutic substances and physiological processes, ensuring a coherent, holistic approach to health and healing.