



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

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## 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:

“यत्राश्रिताः 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 (pṛthvī, āpaḥ, tejaḥ, vāyu), while others are intangible (ākāśa, kāla, dik, 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. **Pṛthvī** (Earth element)
2. **Āpaḥ** (Water element)
3. **Tejaḥ** (Fire element)
4. **Vāyu** (Air element)
5. **Ākāśa** (Ether)
6. **Kāla** (Time)
7. **Dik** (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):
  - *pṛthvī, 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.

### Rūpi Dravya (Possessing Form/Color)

Dravyas that have a perceivable color or form.

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

### Sparsavat Dravya (Possessing Touch)

Dravyas that possess tactile qualities.

- *pṛthvī, 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, manaḥ* plus the paramāṇu form of *pṛthvī, 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):
  - *Pṛthvī*
  - *Āpaḥ*
  - *Tejaḥ*
  - *Vāyu*



- Ākāśa
- Kāla
- Dik
- Ātmā
- Manaḥ

- 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 Saṃhitā (C.Sū.1/48)** mentions:

“खादीन्यात्मानः कालोदिशश्च द्रव्यसंग्रहः”

Indicating the enumerations of fundamental dravyas, including ātman, manas, kāla, dik, and so on.

- **Caraka Saṃhitā (C.Sū.26/20)**:

“सर्वद्रव्यं पाञ्चभौतिकमस्मिन्नर्थे”

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 (manaḥ, ātmā), **spatial-temporal** factors (dik, kāla), and **material** constitution (pṛthvī, 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 Saṃhitā 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.