



viii. padārtha

viii. Padārtha - Theories of Dravya, Guṇa, Karma, Sāmānya, Viśeṣa, and Samavāya

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Padārtha: The Conceptual Framework

Etymology and Purpose

- **Padārtha** translates to “the meaning of a word” or “an object that can be known.”
- In **Indian philosophy**, particularly **Vaiśeṣika** and **Nyāya**, padārtha refers to **basic categories** or **ontological realities** through which the world (and experience) is **classified**.
- **Ayurveda** leverages this framework to systematize how **substances (dravyas)**, their **properties (guṇas)**, and **actions (karmas)** interact, thus aiding in diagnosing **imbalance** and formulating **therapies**.

Scriptural Roots in Ayurveda

Caraka Saṃhitā (Sūtrasthāna 1/28) references sāmānya-viśeṣa as critical for understanding doṣic augmentation or reduction, thus using fundamental padārtha logic in establishing **therapeutic principles**.

Dravya (Substance)

Definition

- **Dravya** is the substratum in which **guṇas** (qualities) and **karma** (actions) inhere. It is the **foundation** or **locus** for attributes and processes.
- In Ayurveda, **dravya** forms the basis of **pharmacology** and **dietary regimens**, as each substance exerts influences via its inherent properties.

Types of Dravya

According to **Vaiśeṣika** philosophy (which Ayurveda often parallels), there are **9 classical dravyas**:

1. Pṛthvī (Earth)
2. Āpah/Jala (Water)
3. Tejas/Agni (Fire)
4. Vāyu (Air)
5. Ākāśa (Space)
6. Kāla (Time)
7. Diśā (Direction/Space)
8. Ātmā (Soul)
9. Manas (Mind)

- **Ayurveda** typically focuses on the first five as **mahābhūtas** for corporeal substances, plus the elements of **consciousness** (ātman) and **mind** (manas).

Ayurvedic Application

- **Medicinal Dravyas**: Herbs, minerals, animal products are dravyas carrying specific guṇas and karmas.
- **Dietary Dravyas**: Foods are classified by their **rasas (tastes)**, **vipāka (post-digestive effect)**, etc., reflecting the interplay of **dravya + guṇa + karma**.



Guṇa (Quality)

Definition

- **Guṇa** refers to **attributes or properties** residing in a substance (dravya).
- They are **identifying characteristics** that define how a substance **behaves** or **interacts** with other substances.

Classification in Ayurveda

This comprehensive compilation on the **41 Gunas (qualities)** in Ayurveda, along with their classifications, provides a detailed understanding of their fundamental nature, effects, and applications. Below is the refined and structured version to organize and summarize the information for better readability:

Total 41 Gunas in Ayurveda

According to **Charaka Samhita Sutra Sthana 1/49**, the **41 Gunas** are categorized into four main headings:

1. Physical Properties (Sharira Guna): 20 qualities
2. General Properties (Samanya Guna): 10 qualities
3. Spiritual Properties (Adhyatmika Guna): 6 qualities
4. Properties of Sense Objects (Indriyarth/Vishishta Guna): 5 qualities

1. Physical Properties (Sharira Guna)

These 20 properties form **10 opposite pairs** and define the physical and functional characteristics of substances.

Property	Opposite Property	Fundamental Elements (Mahabhuta)	Effects on Dosha	Biological Effects	Applications	Examples
Guru (Heavy)	Laghu (Light)	Prithvi, Jala	↑ Kapha, ↓ Vata	Nourishes, increases density	Brimhana, Snehana	Black gram, sesame seeds
Sheeta (Cold)	Ushna (Hot)	Jala	↑ Kapha, ↓ Pitta	Pacifies burning, thirst	Stambhana, Brimhana	Sandalwood, cold water
Snigdha (Oily)	Ruksha (Dry)	Jala	↑ Kapha, ↓ Vata	Lubricates, softens	Snehana, Brimhana	Ghee, oils
Manda (Dull)	Tikshna (Sharp)	Prithvi, Jala	↑ Kapha, ↓ Pitta	Mild effects	Snehana, Stambhana	Guduchi, rice
Sthira (Stable)	Chala (Mobile)	Prithvi	↑ Kapha, ↓ Vata	Provides stability	Brimhana, Rukshana	Bala (Sida cordifolia)
Mridu (Soft)	Kathina (Hard)	Jala, Akasha	↑ Kapha, ↓ Vata	Softens, reduces inflammation	Snehana, Brimhana	Ghee, milk
Vishada (Clear)	Picchila (Slimy)	Vayu, Akasha	↑ Vata, ↓ Kapha	Cleans channels, reduces moisture	Langhana, Rukshana	Neem, alkalis
Shlakshna (Smooth)	Khara (Rough)	Jala	↑ Kapha, ↓ Vata	Soothes	Brimhana, Stambhana	Milk, ghee
Sthula (Gross)	Sukshma (Subtle)	Prithvi	↑ Kapha, ↓ Vata	Causes obstruction	Brimhana, Snehana	Curd, heavy food
Sandra (Dense)	Drava (Liquid)	Prithvi, Jala	↑ Kapha	Increases compactness	Brimhana	Butter, milk

2. General Properties (Samanya Guna)

These 10 universal properties apply to substances and their actions:

1. **Paratva (Superiority)**: Shows excellence of substances (e.g., Amalaki for anti-aging).
2. **Aparatva (Inferiority)**: Represents dormant or inferior quality (e.g., sheep's milk vs. cow's milk).
3. **Yukti (Reasoning)**: Logical application of substances (e.g., poison as medicine).



4. **Sankhya (Enumeration):** Relates to countable aspects (e.g., doshas, dhatus).
5. **Samyoga (Conjunction):** Combination of substances (e.g., compound formulations).
6. **Vibhaga (Disjunction):** Separation into components (e.g., isolating active principles).
7. **Prithakatva (Separation):** Differentiation between substances (e.g., oil and water).
8. **Parimana (Measurement):** Quantitative assessment (e.g., blood volume).
9. **Samskara (Transformation):** Changes through processing (e.g., medicated ghee).
10. **Abhyasa (Repetition):** Effects of repeated use (e.g., long-term milk consumption).

3. Spiritual Properties (Adhyatmika Guna)

These 6 qualities represent the psycho-spiritual aspects:

1. Buddhi (Intellect)
2. Sukha (Comfort)
3. Dukha (Discomfort)
4. Ichcha (Desire)
5. Dvesha (Aversion)
6. Prayatna (Perseverance)

4. Properties of Sense Objects (Indriyarth Guna)

These 5 sensory properties align with the **Panchamahabhuta**:

Sense Property	Sense Organ	Mahabhuta
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Shabda (Sound)	Ears (Shravan)	Akasha
Sparsha (Touch)	Skin (Sparshan)	Vayu
Rupa (Form/Color)	Eyes (Darshan)	Agni
Rasa (Taste)	Tongue (Rasan)	Jala
Gandha (Smell)	Nose (Ghran)	Prithvi

Fundamental Universal Properties (Mahaguna)

These **three primary qualities** arise from **Prakriti**:

1. **Sattva (Goodness):** Enlightenment and balance.
2. **Rajas (Passion):** Activity and movement.
3. **Tamas (Ignorance):** Inertia and obstruction.

Clinical Applications

Understanding these properties is integral to:

- Formulating treatments based on individual constitutions.
- Selecting appropriate therapies (e.g., Snehana, Swedana).
- Conducting research and applying logical reasoning in Ayurveda.

This structured framework bridges traditional knowledge with modern applications, emphasizing the relevance of **Gunas** in holistic healthcare.

Clinical Relevance

- **Diagnosis:** Gauging the **gunas** prevalent in a patient's symptoms or in doshic aggravations clarifies the nature of imbalance.
- **Therapy:** Treatments rely on **opposite gunas** (viparita guna) to **counteract** an excess property, exemplifying the principle "like increases like, opposite reduces (sāmānya viśeṣa)."



Karma (Action)

Definition

- **Karma** means **action** or **activity**. In the context of padārtha, karma is **movement** or **dynamic** process that belongs to a dravya.
- Ayurveda also uses the term to denote **functions** or **therapeutic actions** of substances.

Types in Vaiśeṣika Logic

1. Utkṣepa (Throwing upward)
 2. Avakṣepa (Throwing downward)
 3. Ākuñcana (Contraction)
 4. Prasāraṇa (Expansion)
 5. Gamanāgama (Locomotion / approach and departure)
- Ayurveda conceptualizes **karma** more broadly—like how an herb or therapy “acts” in the body.

Ayurvedic Use

- **Pharmacodynamic** Approach: A drug’s “karma” includes **pācana** (digestion), **dīpana** (appetizer), **śoṣaṇa** (absorbent), **bṛṃhaṇa** (nourishing), etc.
- **Lifestyle Guidelines**: Activities like vyāyāma (exercise), abhyanga (oil massage), or śodhana (cleansing) are considered **karma** forms.

Sāmānya and Viśeṣa

Sāmānya (Generality)

Definition

- **Sāmānya** signifies **commonality** or **similarity** among substances, leading to **vṛddhi** (increase or growth) when similar substances combine.

Caraka’s Principle

Caraka Saṃhitā (Sūtrasthāna 1/44-45) states:

“Sarvadā sarvabhāvānām sāmānyam vṛddhikāraṇam.”

Meaning: “Generality (sāmānya) causes **increase** or **aggregation**.”

Therapeutic Corollary

- “Like increases like.” If a person with a **hot** pitta constitution consumes **hot** (uṣṇa) foods excessively, pitta aggravation occurs.
- Understanding sāmānya helps in **avoiding** aggravations or intentionally using **similar** substances to **nourish** a depleted tissue.

Viśeṣa (Particularity)

Definition

- **Viśeṣa** denotes **distinctiveness**; it causes **hrāsa** (reduction or decrease) by applying **opposite** qualities or attributes.

Caraka’s Principle

- “Viśeṣastu prthaktvakṛt” — Particularity (viśeṣa) brings **differentiation**, counteracting an excess property.



- “Opposite reduces.” If the doṣa is hot, you use a **cool** regimen to calm it.

Therapeutic Corollary

- If there is an **excess** of cold, **hot** (uṣṇa) therapy is indicated.
- Hence the foundation of **gunasiddhānta**—**opposite** qualities rectify imbalance.

Samavāya (Inherence)

Definition

- **Samavāya** is the **inseparable relationship** between a substance (dravya) and its attributes (guṇa, karma).
- In **Vaiśeṣika** logic, samavāya ensures that a quality **cannot exist independently** but is **inherently tied** to its substrate.

Ayurvedic Significance

- Explains why **guṇas** and **karmas** are **not** free-floating—they **reside** within substances.
- For instance, the **coolness** (guṇa) of water is inseparable from water itself (the dravya).
- Medicinal properties (karma) are likewise **inherent** to the herb’s dravya and **cannot** be abstracted as a separate entity.

Application in Herb Action

- The diuretic effect of a herb is **samaveta** (inherent) in the herb’s molecular composition.
- Understanding samavāya underscores that **therapeutic** potency is innate to the **material** used in treatment.

Integration in Ayurveda’s Diagnostics and Treatment

1. **Analyzing a Substance (Dravya):**
 - Identify **guṇas** (qualities), **karma** (actions), dosage forms, and **prabhāva** (special potency).
2. **Determining Dosha Influence:**
 - Sāmānya-viśeṣa logic identifies if the substance will **increase** or **decrease** a doṣa.
3. **Prescribing:**
 - Select herbs/therapies that exhibit **opposite** or complementary guṇas to correct the patient’s imbalance.
4. **Ensuring Samavāya:**
 - Recognize that the **potency** (karma) is **inseparable** from the herb’s nature—so the correct herb (dravya) must be chosen for a particular condition.

Summary and Clinical Relevance

The six **padārthas**—**dravya**, **guṇa**, **karma**, **sāmānya**, **viśeṣa**, **samavāya**—provide the **structural logic** behind how Ayurveda:

- **Classifies** substances (both food and medicine) according to their qualities and actions.
- Understands **therapeutic** relationships (like “like increases like,” or “opposites balance”).
- Ensures a **scientific** approach to **drug action** and **holistic** patient management.

Key takeaways:

- **Dravya** is the **substrate** or medium of properties and actions.
- **Guṇa** are the **identifiable attributes** (hot, cold, heavy, light, etc.).
- **Karma** is the **function** or process, how the substance acts.
- **Sāmānya** (similarity) fosters **increase**; **Viśeṣa** (oppositeness) induces **decrease**.



- **Samavāya** (inherence) cements that **properties** and **actions** are **inseparably** tied to a substance.

This system underscores the **rational, systematic** way Ayurveda approaches the world of **medicinal** and **dietary** substances, ensuring **precision** and **consistency** in diagnosis and therapy across millennia.

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