



x. dravya in accordance with karma and its uses in health and disease

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Overview: Dravya and Karma in Ayurveda

1. **Dravya:** A substance or entity (herb, mineral, animal product, etc.) that houses **guṇa** (quality) and **karma** (action).
2. **Karma:** The *therapeutic effect* or *action* exerted by dravya on the body—ranging from purgation and digestion to rejuvenation and aphrodisiac effects.
3. **Synergy:** The net effect of a dravya is determined by its **rasa** (taste), **guṇa** (qualities), **vīrya** (potency), **vipāka** (post-digestive effect), and **specific action** (prabhāva).

Classification of Dravya by Karma

Ayurvedic texts offer multiple frameworks for grouping dravyas according to **dominant actions**. While broad categories like *samshodhana* (eliminative) and *samshamana* (pacifying) are well-known, numerous **subcategories** exist to describe more nuanced therapeutic effects.

Samshodhana vs. Samshamana (High-Level Division)

1. **Samshodhana Dravyas** (Purificatory)
 - **Definition:** Expel aggravated doṣas and toxins from the body.
 - **Examples:**
 - *Vamana* (emetics): Madana (*Randia spinosa*)
 - *Virecana* (purgatives): Trivṛt (*Operculina turpethum*), Devadālī (*Luffa echinata*)
 - **Application:** Pañcakarma procedures (*vamana*, *virecana*, *basti*, *nasya*, *raktamokṣa*).
2. **Samshamana Dravyas** (Pacifying)
 - **Definition:** Balance and neutralize doṣas internally without forceful expulsion.
 - **Example:** Gudūcī (*Tinospora cordifolia*) – alleviates pitta, supports immunity.

Common Pharmacological Karmas

1. **Bṛṃhaṇa (Nourishing)**
 - **Action:** Builds tissues, strengthens the body.
 - **Examples:** Aśvagandhā (*Withania somnifera*), Śatāvārī (*Asparagus racemosus*).
2. **Lekhana (Reducing/Scraping)**
 - **Action:** Scrapes out excess fat or kapha doṣa.
 - **Examples:** Guggulu (*Commiphora mukul*), Vacā (*Acorus calamus*).
3. **Dīpana-Pācana (Appetizer-Digestive)**
 - **Action:** Enhances agni (digestive fire) and/or digests ama (toxins).
 - **Examples:** Trikaṭu (*Pippalī*, *Marica*, *Śuṇṭhī*) for both dīpana and pācana.
 - **Subtypes:**
 - Āma-pachana but no agnīdīpana → e.g., Nagakesara (*Mesua ferrea*), Mustā (*Cyperus rotundus*)
 - Agnīdīpana but no āma-pachana → e.g., Mīśri (Sugar candy)
 - Both dīpana & pācana → e.g., Citraka (*Plumbago zeylanica*)
4. **Stambhana (Astringent/Retentive)**
 - **Action:** Reduces excessive discharge (e.g., diarrhea).
 - **Examples:** Kuṭāja/Vatsaka (*Holarrhena antidysenterica*), Tuṇṭuka (*Psoralea corylifolia*).
5. **Rasāyana (Rejuvenative)**
 - **Action:** Promotes ojas, longevity, and overall vitality.
 - **Examples:** Gudūcī (*Tinospora cordifolia*), Harītakī (*Terminalia chebula*), Guggulu (*Commiphora mukul*).
6. **Vājīkaraṇa (Aphrodisiac)**



- **Action:** Enhances reproductive tissues (śukra dhātu) and sexual vigor.
- **Examples:** Nāgabala (Grewia hirsuta), Kapikacchu (Mucuna pruriens).

Extended Karma-Based Categories (Detailed Subclassifications)

1. Anulomana

- **Definition:** Breaks the bond of mala (waste) and expels downward, regulating bowel movements.
- **Example:** Harītakī (Terminalia chebula).

2. Srāṃsana

- **Definition:** Loosens or liquefies mala.
- **Example:** Kṛtamālaka (a specific variety of amalaka or an herb known for mild laxative effect).

3. Bhedana

- **Definition:** Breaks compact mala (bound or unbound).
- **Example:** Kaṭukī (Picrorhiza kurroa).

4. Rechana

- **Definition:** Completely liquefies mala (strong purgation).
- **Example:** Trivṛt (Operculina turpethum).

5. Chedana

- **Definition:** “Uprooting” or “excising” doṣas (especially kapha).
- **Examples:** Kṣāra (alkali preparations), Marica (Piper nigrum), Śilājatu (mineral pitch).

6. Grāhī

- **Definition:** Acts as dīpana & pācana but also absorbs fluids due to uṣṇa property.
- **Examples:** Śuṇṭhī (Zingiber officinale), Jīraka (Cuminum cyminum), Gaja-pippalī (Piper chaba).

7. Śukra-Related Actions

- **Śuklakara** (enhancing semen quality/color): Aśvagandhā, Muśalī, Śarkarā, Śatāvarī
- **Śukra Pravartaka & Janaka:** (promoting semen flow/production): e.g., Dugdha (milk), Māṣa (black gram), Bhallātaka phala majjā, Āmalaka
- **Śukra Rechaka** (expelling): e.g., Bṛhatī phala
- **Śukra Stambhaka** (astringent action on semen): e.g., Jātīphala (Myristica fragrans)
- **Śukra Śoṣaka** (drying semen): e.g., Harītakī
- **Śukra Janaka:** e.g., Jīvaka, Rṣabhaka
- **Śukra Śodhana:** e.g., Kuṣṭha (Saussurea lappa), Uśīra (Vetiveria zizanioides)

8. Lekhana

- **Definition:** Scraping out doṣas or excessive dhātus.
- **Examples:** Kṣaudra (honey), Uṣṇa-jala (hot water), Vacā (Acorus calamus), Yava (barley).

9. Pramādhī

- **Definition:** Eliminates doṣas from subtle channels (srotas), can also disturb the mind if misused.
- **Examples:** Marica (Piper nigrum), Vacā (Acorus calamus).

10. Abhiṣyandī

- **Definition:** Causes heaviness and stickiness, leading to obstruction.



- **Example:** Dadhi (curd).

11. Sūkṣma

- **Definition:** Extremely subtle, penetrates minute channels.
- **Examples:** Saindhava (rock salt), Kṣaudra (honey), Nimba taila (neem oil), Eranda taila (castor oil).

12. Vyāvāyī

- **Definition:** Spreads quickly throughout the body *before* complete digestion.
- **Examples:** Bhaṅgā (Cannabis sativa), Ahiphena (Opium).

13. Vikāṣī

- **Definition:** Loosens the joints or body tissues.
- **Examples:** Kramuka (Betel nut), Kodrava (Paspalum scrobiculatum).

14. Madakārī

- **Definition:** Intoxicating substances altering mind or senses.
- **Examples:** Madya (alcoholic beverages), Surā (fermented liquor).

15. Prāṇahara

- **Definition:** Life-threatening if misused; often have sūkṣma, vyāvāyī, vikāṣī properties.
- **Example:** Viṣa (poisons)—various plant or mineral toxins.

Dravya in Health Maintenance

1. Preventive Use

- **Rasāyana** dravyas (e.g., Gudūcī, Harītakī) for overall vigor and immunity.
- Mild **dīpana-pācana** dravyas (like cumin, coriander) in daily meals to maintain digestive health.

2. Seasonal Adaptation

- Incorporate or avoid certain karmas based on **ritu** (season). E.g., in hot seasons, use cooling or stambhana dravyas if needed; in cold windy seasons, prefer unctuous, warming substances.

3. Balanced Diet

- Utilizing a combination of tastes (rasa) and karmas ensures doṣas remain stable over time, preventing disease onset.

Dravya in Disease Management

1. Stage-Specific Intervention

- In early disease (with āma), strong dīpana-pācana or mild bhedana may be necessary.
- In chronic disease with tissue depletion, bṛṃhaṇa or rasāyana dravyas help rebuild.

2. Customized to Doṣa

- **Vāta** disorders → warm, oily karmas (Anulomana, Vatanulomana).
- **Pitta** disorders → cooling, bitter dravyas (Śamana, Prāṇa rakṣa, etc.).
- **Kapha** disorders → pungent, hot karmas (Lekhana, Chodana).

3. Pañcakarma Protocols

- **Virecana** with purgatives (e.g., Trivṛt) for pitta-based disorders,
- **Vamana** with emetics (e.g., Madana) for kapha-based disorders.

4. Poly-herbal Formulations

- Combining multiple karmas ensures synergistic effects while mitigating adverse reactions. E.g., *Triphala* (Harītakī, Bibhītakī, Āmalakī) exerts lekhaṇa, rasāyana, and mild anulomana simultaneously.



Practical Considerations

1. Individualization

- A dravya's karma is tailored to each patient's **prakṛti** (constitution), **vikṛti** (imbalance), age, strength, and environmental factors.

2. Dosage and Anupāna

- The *medium* (e.g., honey, ghee, water) and *time* of administration can enhance or alter a dravya's karmic expression.

3. Safety and Contraindications

- Potent karmas like strong *bhedana* or *madakāri* require **careful dosing** and professional supervision.
- *Viruddha* (incompatible) combinations can cause new imbalances.

4. Integration with Other Therapies

- Dravyas often complement **yoga, lifestyle modifications, mental well-being** practices to achieve holistic healing.

Conclusion

In Ayurveda, each **dravya** is distinguished by its **innate karmas**—ranging from mild pacification (*śamana*) to intense purification (*śodhana*). By systematically classifying these karmas—*dīpana-pācana*, *anulomana*, *bhedana*, *rasāyana*, *vājīkaraṇa*, etc.—clinicians can **precisely target** doshic imbalances, metabolic blocks, and tissue deficiencies. This **karma-based approach** ensures that **health-promoting** measures (for prevention) and **disease-alleviating** strategies (for treatment) remain rooted in the fundamental Ayurvedic principle: restoring harmony between the individual's internal environment and the external world.