

## A critical review on classification of *Dravya* and its importance in Ayurveda

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### Abstract:

In Ayurveda, *Dravya* (substance) serves as the fundamental substratum for all therapeutic interventions. This article reviews the systematic classification of *Dravya* as presented in classical texts and its pivotal role in the science of *Dravyaguna Vijnana*. By categorizing substances based on their origin, composition, and pharmacological action, Ayurveda provides a structured framework for the judicious use of medicines (*Aushadha*) and diet (*Ahara*). The review highlights how these classifications enable a physician to achieve precise clinical outcomes by understanding the inherent properties (*Guna*) and actions (*Karma*) of a substance.

### Keywords:

*Dravya*, *Ayurveda*, *Dravyaguna*, *Panchamahabhuta*, *Chikitsa*, Classification.

### Introduction:

Ayurveda is described as the science of life that promotes longevity through the analysis of substances (*Dravyas*) and their effects on health.<sup>[1]</sup> Within the framework of *Sapta Padartha* (seven categories), *Dravya* is considered the primary constituent as it acts as the shelter for qualities like *Rasa* (taste), *Guna* (property), *Virya* (potency), *Vipaka* (post-digestive effect), and *Prabhava* (special action). A *Dravya* is defined as a substance that maintains an inherent relationship (*Samavaya Sambandha*) with its qualities and actions. As one of the four pillars of treatment

(*Chatuspada*), the medicine or *Dravya* stands second only to the physician in importance.<sup>[1]</sup>

### **Aim and Objects:**

The primary objective of this review is to explore the multi-dimensional classification of *Dravya* found in the sources and to interpret their significance in clinical practice (*Chikitsa*).

### **Interpretations:**

The classification of *Dravya* is not monolithic but varies according to the perspective of utility, origin, and composition:

1. **Chetana and Achetana (Consciousness):** *Dravyas* are divided into **Chetana** (animate/conscious), which possess sense organs (*Indriyas*), and **Achetana** (inanimate/unconscious). Plants, though often used in inanimate forms, are fundamentally considered *Antaschetana* (internally conscious).<sup>[2]</sup>
2. **Karana and Karya (Causality):** There are nine **Karana Dravyas** (causal materials) including the five elements (*Panchamahabhuta*), time (*Kala*), direction (*Dik*), soul (*Atma*), and mind (*Manas*). All other substances in the universe are **Karya Dravyas** (effectual materials) derived from these.<sup>[3]</sup>
3. **Panchabhautika Classification:** Every substance is composed of the five *Mahabhutas*: *Prithvi*, *Ap*, *Teja*, *Vayu*, and *Akasha*. Based on the predominance of an element, they are

classified as *Parthiva*, *Apya*, *Agneya*, *Vayavya*, or *Akashiya*, each having distinct pharmacological properties.<sup>[4]</sup>

4. **Yoni Bheda (Source-based):** *Dravyas* are categorized by their origin into **Jangama** (animal origin), **Oudbhida** (plant origin), and **Parthiva** (mineral/underground origin). Plant-based drugs are further divided into *Vanaspati*, *Virudha*, *Vanaspatya*, and *Oushadhi* based on their botanical characteristics.
5. **Prayoga Bheda (Usage):** Substances are classified as **Aushadha Dravya** (medicinal) or **Ahara Dravya** (dietary). Medicinal substances are dominated by *Virya* (potency), while dietary substances are dominated by *Rasa* (taste).
6. **Prabhava Bheda (Action):** Based on their effect on the body, they are categorized as **Dosha Prashamana** (pacifying vitiated humors), **Dhatu Pradushana** (vitiating tissues), or **Swastha Hita** (maintaining health).<sup>[1]</sup>
7. **Taxonomical Groupings:** Classical texts group drugs into specific clusters such as the **50 Mahakashayas** of Charaka and the **37 Ganas** of Sushruta based on shared therapeutic actions.<sup>[2]</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

The systematic classification of *Dravya* is indispensable for the practice of Ayurveda. It transforms a vast array of natural substances into a structured pharmacopoeia. Because

*Dravya* is the **substratum** for all therapeutic properties, a physician (*Vaidya*) must possess in-depth knowledge of these classifications to select the most suitable drug for a patient,. Proper classification ensures that even potentially toxic substances can be utilized as excellent remedies when administered with logic and skill.

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