Principles of Dravyaguna

Jyoti Sahebrao Sose
P.G.Scholar,
Dept. of Dravyaguna,
CSMSS Ayurved Mahavidyalaya,
Aurangabad

Dr.A.M.Ghotankar
Professor and HOD,
Dept. of Dravyaguna,
CSMSS Ayurved Mahavidyalaya,
Aurangabad

Abstract

The existence of medicine shows its prehistoric antiquity. The knowledge regarding medicinal value of plants has been collected in a course of several centuries. The acceptability of alternatives medicine particularly the herbal medicine has now become a critical need of time. In this article, fundamental of Dravyaguna (Ayurvedic Pharmacology) has been taken in accounts so that one can understand the action of various drugs properly. It is the time when Ayurvedic concept should be proved on modern parameters. Ayurvedic pharmacology is being dealt with these terms- Rasa (taste), Guna (Properties), Veerya (active principles), Vipak (Biotransformation) and Prabhav (Specific action).

Key words: Dravyaguna, Rasa, Veerya, alternative medicine.

Introduction

The word ‘Dravyaguna’ means the science dealing with properties and actions of drugs. This is counterpart of modern pharmacology. It would be necessary, at first, to understand the fundamentals of Ayurveda in general before one can grasp the concepts of Dravyaguna. Panchamahabhutas (Akasha, Vayu, Agni, Jala and Prithivi) are regarded as physico-chemical basis of the material objects. When life evolved, out of these five, three came forward to control and regulate the biological functions. These three (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) are known as tridhatu (tridosha in pathological state) having specific functions of Vikshepa (movement), Adana (assimilation) and Visarga (growth) respectively.

Primarily based on this fundamental background, the following concepts were developed to explain the drug action.

1. Dravya (Substance-drug & diet)
2. Guna (Property)
3. Rasa (Taste)
4. Vipaka (Final transformation)
5. Virya (Potency)
6. Prabhava (Specific potency)
7. Karma (Action)

Dravya

‘Dravya’ means drug in this context. It is the sub stratum of properties and actions. Drug was studied extensively and intensively in ancient times. In Rigveda, we find the ‘Oshadhisukta’ (Hymns on herbs) dealing with nature and classification of drugs. Charaka has classified drugs from various angles, e.g. according to source, effect on doshas, composition, properties, actions, etc. Marvelous piece in the Charaka Samhita is the description of fifty groups of drugs according to their main action. Similar classification is found in the Sushruta Samhita where thirty-seven groups of drugs are defined according to their effect and therapeutic uses. In this connection, two broad propositions are established: as Applicatory or Paradi gunas.
1. There is no substance which can not be used as drug.
2. All drugs are composed of *Panchamahabhutas*.

- **Gunas**
  
  *Guna* (quality or property) is defined as that which is inherently existent in substance and is non-inherent cause (of its effect). *Gunas* are forty one in number and are classified into four groups- somatic, psychic, physical and applicative.

**They are further elaborated as follows**

Somatic, also known as *Gurvadi*, are twenty in number which can be arranged in pairs one opposite to the other such as-

1. *Guru* - Heavy
2. *Laghu* - Light
3. *Shita* - Cold
4. *Ushna* - Hot
5. *Snigdha* - Unctuous
6. *Ruksha* - Rough
7. *Manda* - Dull
8. *Tikshna* - Sharp
9. *Shlakshna* - Smooth
10. *Khara* - Course
11. *Sandra* - Solid
12. *Drava* - Liquid
13. *Mridu* - Soft
14. *Kathina* - Hard
15. *Sthira* - Stable
16. *Sara* - Unstable
17. *Sukshma* - Minute
18. *Sthula* - Gross
19. *Vishada* - Nonslimy
20. *Pichhila* - Slimy

**Psychic qualities**

These are six in number such as *Sukha* (pleasure), *Duhkha* (pain), *Ichheha* (desire), *Dvesha* (aversion), *Prayatna* (will) and *Buddhi* (determinative intellect).

**Physical or material qualities**

These are five in numbers such as *Shabda* (sound), *Sparsha* (touch), *Rupa* (vision), *Rasa* (taste) and *Gandha* (smell). They are specific objects (*artha* or *vishaya*) of five sensory organs.

1. *Paratva*
2. *Aparatva*
3. *Yukti*
4. *Sankhya*
5. *Samyoga*
6. *Vibhaga*
7. Prithaktva
8. Parimana
9. Samskara
10. Abhyasa

- **Paratva** - is whole someness.
- **Aparatva** - is unwhole someness.
- **Yukti** – Rational and effective combination of multiple factors.
- **Sankhya** - is accurate marking.
- **Samyoga** - is non-eternal combination of two or more factors.
- **Vibhaga** - is viyoga (disjunction), vibhakti (excision) and bhagashograham (division).
- **Prithaktva** - is separateness or difference in terms of place, time, class and individuals.
- **Parimana** –is estimation in terms of measurement or weight.
- **Samskara** -is processing for refinement.
- **Abhyasa** -is constant use or practice.

**RASA**

*Rasa* is the object of gustatory sense organ and is located in *dravya*. *Rasa* is manifested by permutation and combination of *panchamahabhutas* in *dravya* and as such is dependent on it. On the other hand, from *rasa* one can infer the particular *bhautika* composition of the *dravya* generally. Thus, though subjective it is a reliable means for the same. *Charaka* says that *Aap* and *Prithivi* are material cause of *rasa* in its origin while the other three *bhutas* serve as instrumental cause in their variations. Commentators on the basis of double ‘cha’ interpret that *Aap* and *Prithivi* too act as agents in variation and the other three *bhutas* also in origin.

*Rasa* is perceived through *Nipata* (contact with the gustatory sense organ). Thus *Rasa* is known from perception and also from inference on the basis of its characters such as effect on salivation etc.

*Rasa*’s are six in number - *Madhura* (sweet), *Amla* (sour), *Lavana* (salty), *Katu* (pungent), *Tikta* (bitter) and *Kashaya* (astringent).

- **Madhura Rasa**
  - It pacifies *Vata* and *Pitta* and increases *Kapha*, promotes strength and helps excretions.
  - If it is used excessively it causes disorders like *Prameha* etc. While its non use may cause disorders due to aggravation of *vata* and *pitta*.
  - As said above, *Madhura rasa* has effects on *dosa*, *dhatu* and *mala*. Effect of *dravyas* and *gunas* on *dosha*, *dhatu* and *mala* should be examined carefully.

- **Amla Rasa**
  - It increases *kapha* and *pitta* and pacifies *vata*, decreases semen, is carminative, appetizer, digestive.
  - Its excessive use causes *Amlapitta* (acid gastritis) etc.and its non-intake may cause *Agnimandya* (diminution of digestive fire) etc.
  - *Dipana-pachana* effects are due to its action on *Agni*. That is why due to non-use it leads to loss of appetite etc.

- **Lavana Rasa**
  - It increases *Kapha* and *Pitta* while pacifies *vata*, destroys semen,is carminative, appetizer,digestive and bmoistening.
  - Used in excess it vitiates blood and causes oedema etc and if not used loss of appetite etc and *vatika* disorders take place.’*Vishyandi’ (moistening)is the specific feature of salt.
Katu Rasa increases vata and pitta while decreases kapha, destroys semen, movements of wind, stool and urine and stimulates digestive fire.

If used excessively it generates disorders caused by vata and pitta and if not used at all disorders caused by kapha arise. Due to aggravation of vata it causes constipation and obstruction in urine. Due to igneous nature it stimulates digestive fire.

Tikta Rasa
It pacifies kapha and pitta while increases vata, is absorbent and cleans channels.

If used in excess vatika disorders and if not used kaphaja, pittaja and raktaja disorders arise. Due to predominance of vayu in its nature it absorbs moisture, rasa and dhatus by roughness.

Kashaya
It pacifies kapha and pitta while increases vata, along with checking and depressing digestive fire.

By excessive use it causes vatika disorders etc. and by non-use kaphaja and pittaja disorders and loss of dhatus take place.

Stambhana (checking) effect of kashaya is specific due to its shita and prithivi mahabhuta and because of this leads to loss of appetite. That is why it is prescribed in diarrhoea and not in grahaniroga where appetizers are required.

Vipaka
‘Vipaka’ is the term for final transformed state of drugs after digestion. In most cases, the rasas pass on as such and there is no change in their nature but in certain cases there is a definite change with consequent different vipaka which determines the future course and action of the drug. For example Shunthi (dryginger) is pungent (katu) in taste but is transformed in Madhura Vipaka which determines its action on that basis.

It is of three types according to taste and effect on doshas – Madhura (sweet), Amla (sour) and Katu (pungent) and two types according to properties-Guru (heavy) and Laghu (light).

Charaka has describes three types of vipaka according to the rasa emerged at the completion of digestion and the effect on three doshas Sushruta has criticized this view and has held that because of being only two groups of five bhutas-guru and laghu-there can be only two vipaka-guru and laghu. When there is predominance of Prithivi and Jala it is guru and in that of the other three bhutas it is laghu. Guru is Madhura and Laghu is katu including amla-vipaka. Thus the view so Charaka and Sushruta apparently contradictory, can be synthesized.

Madhura vipaka increases kapha and semen and helps excretions. Amla vipaka increases pitta, decreases semen and is carminative. Katu, vipaka increases vata, decreases semen and is constipative.

According to Charaka’s view actions of the three types of vipaka have been said as vipaka is inferred from actions and thus the knowledge of action is essential for knowing the type of vipaka. Here actions of three types of vipaka are described on dosha, dhatu and mala. Madhura, amla and katu increase kapha,pitta and vata respectively. Madhura promotes semen while the other two decrease it. Katu vipaka obstruct the excretion of faeces and urine while the other two promote it. The knowledge of vipaka from the increase of doshas is evident and so from that of semen. If some drug is carminative the vipaka may be either Madhura or amla which can be further differentiated by their action on semen. If it promotes semen it is Madhura otherwise Amla. In the same way, if some drug decreases semen its vipaka can be decided by its action on mala, if it carminates it would be amla otherwise katu.

Vipaka is chief as the fate (or further course) of the substance depends there on.
The ingested substances produce good or bad effects according to vipaka. It is only after final transformation that substances exert accordingly wholesome or unwholesome effect on body.

- **Veerya**
  Veerya is shakti (power or potency) which is the means of action (of a substance).

  Shakti (power or potency) is nature of veerya and means of action its purpose. That is why Charaka has said – Veerya is that by which drug acts as instrument. Again he has established logically the cause-effect relationship between Veerya and Karma on the law of agreement in presence (Anvaya) and absence (vyatireka) by saying that none can act without veerya and all actions are caused by Veerya. Sushruta also says– Veerya is chief as drug action depends thereon. Thus drug is the active agent, veerya is the instrument and pacification of dosha etc action.

  In common practice, grossly it is represented by the active fraction of drug which is the concentrated essence of the panchamahabhutas (comprising) the substance.

  The power is located inherently in the active drug, there also it is concentrated in a particular portion having essence of panchabhuta and known as active fraction. Thus the active fraction of a drug is the particular substratum of the power as stated by Shividasha in his commentary on Dravyaguna–veerya is power which is in the form of the concentrated essence of panchamahabhutas.

- **Prabhava (Specific Power)**
  This specific power is based on the specific nature (bhautika composition) and exerts specific action. It is known from the specific nature initiated by specific combination (of bhutas) as said by Vridhha Vagbhata that Prabhava is Swabhava (nature) exceed in gall. This specific nature leads to specific action like emesis, purgationetc.

  For example, the specific natural composition comprising of the specific bhautika composition of the active fraction of danti causes specific action e.g. purgation whereas chitraka devoid of it does not possess that power. Some dividing power as of two types based on explicable and inexplicable actions say that the power behind explicable action is virya while that causing inexplicable one is Prabhava. This is not correct because in scripture power is said as of two types according to generality or specificity. General power is known as Veerya while the specific one is Prabhava. This has been stated by Charaka clearly as follows ‘where there is similarity of Rasa, Veerya and Vipaka but specific difference in action it may be taken as caused by Prabhava. Vagbhata also follows the sameline– ‘The specific action in spite of similarity in rasa etc is caused by Prabhava’. In these definitions there is no mention of explicable or inexplicable. Wherever there is some case like that it can be included in prabhava because of its specific action as has been said by Charaka in case of wearing of gems. Here the word ‘achintya’ has been used in the context of wearing of gems and not as a part of the definition of Prabhava.

- **Karma (Action)**:
  
  Karma (action) is defined as that which is the cause of conjunction and disjunction, characterized by movement (oractivity) and located in dravya.

  Karma is instrumental cause in conjunction and disjunction, these cannot take place without karma. The word ‘kriya-lakshanam’ means that which is indicated by movement as said by Charaka–‘karma is movement initiated by conscious will’. It may be elaborated further as follows- In living organs or tissues response caused by conscious will, a quality of self, in the form of movements is karma. For example danti on ingestion, stimulates movements in living intestines resulting in purgative action. In emesis etc. also the similar phenomena are observed. Like Guna, Karma is also located in dravya. Charaka defines Karma as follows–‘Karma is that which is the cause of conjunction and disjunction,is located in dravya and does not require any other factor as its cause. Karma does not require any other karma for its operation as it has been said in the Vaisheshika sutra that karma is not caused by karma. Chakrapanidatta has explained it as follows – dravya, though
cause in conjunction and disjunction, when created requires karma for its above activity where as karma when emerged operates immediately without requiring any other cause (like dravya).

In Ayurvedic parlance karma means performance of desirable measures such as panchakarma.

Inter-relations of basic principles of Dravyaguna in mode of drug action. Before entering the drug action following points must be kept in mind because they are basic fundamentals:

- Concept of Loka-purusha-samya (macrocosm-microcosma-continuum)
- Properties are similar in substances and the body and as such normally, increase and decrease in the body are caused by substances.
- The internal Prana strength of the person combined with the qualities of external Prana sustains by non-antagonism the body made of Panchbhutas.
- Expernal prana – diet, agneya, saumya, vayavya, dravyas, day, night, air, sound, touch, sight, taste and smell.

Following principles affect the drug action:

1. In general drug possessing Madhura rasa, will have Madhura vipaka and shita Veerya. Similarly Amla rasa will have Amla vipaka, Ushna Veerya and Katu rasa will have Katu Vipaka and Ushna Veerya. Drug having lavana rasa will have madhura vipaka and Ushna Veerya. But drugs containing Tikta and Kashaya rasa possess katu vipaka and shita veerya.

2. Naturally when Rasa etc. are of in equal strength, Rasa is subdued by Vipaka, both by Veerya and all by Prabhava.

3. In case the Rasa etc. are of unequal strength, the potent overcomes the weaker one, which is governed by the rule of nature as the stronger overpowers the weaker in case of incompatible combination.

4. Even incase of inequality of strength rasa etc performs their own action due to their inherent property.

- Conclusion:-

Rasa (Taste of Substance), Guna (Properties), Vipaka (Final Transformation), Veerya (Active Principle) and Prabhava are properties which reside in dravya which exerts action on this basis. While exploiting the drug action one has to keep in mind all these factors considering their relative strength. Rasa is the basic thing which is overpowered by Vipaka which again is subdued by Veerya and Prabhava stands above all.

References