

Manifestation of Ayurvedic Dravya (Pharmacology) in the West

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Abstract

Pharmacology is the study of the interactions between a living entity-human or animal and resultant biochemical activity of substances with therapeutic properties. In Ayurveda, the Sanskrit term is Dravya Guna Vijnana. Dravya is the therapeutic substance we call herb. Guna is the qualities of the substance and Vijnana is the science and knowledge behind it. Ayurvedic Pharmacology in India is used to its full capacity for both treating and curing disease. However, in the west Ayurveda is a different modality. It is a complimentary medicine that is not allowed to treat, cure, or prevent any disease. In this scenario, the objective of Ayurvedic Pharmacology in the west changes to an adjuvant support system that can address symptomatic side effects of western drugs, or support general discomfort, and be integrated with the Ayurvedic dietetics of following correct Pathya and avoiding Apathya (Activities and Dietetics that are indicated and contraindicated).

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Introduction

In ancient times, Vaidyas (Ayurvedic Practitioners) used to personally collect the herbs, process it and prepare the formulations to ensure the maximum benefit. However, that is not possible in a modern world. Urban Ayurvedic Practitioners mainly depend on various commercial firms for their herbs and formulations. This has led to many problems like Adulteration of traditional formulas with non ayurvedic herbs or chemical contamination, Substitutions of one herb with another, Premature harvesting of herbs [1]. Incorrect preservation techniques. Therefore, it is necessary to know the source of our Ayurvedic Kalpanas, and, whether they follow sustainable farming practices, harvest at the proper time and, pay a decent amount to the farmers. It is also important to know that herbs are 100% free from any adulterants and contaminants. Making sure our suppliers have the formulations tested in third party labs is essential. The Ayurvedic Dravya that have been properly grown, harvested and processed have the highest efficacy support the causative factors (Hetu) causing symptoms- dosha, dhatu, Ama, Dusti (Vitiation of Dhatus and organs by Vata, Pitta and Kapha). Dravya formulations can affect doshas, dhatus and organs simultaneously. They are multi-faceted and focus is on six aspects of the Dravya. These are called Rasa-Pancadi. Rasa-Taste, Virya-Heating or Cooling energetics, Vipaka-After taste; taste perceived by taste receptors in stomach, Guna-Qualities. Karma- Action due

to Qualities Prabhava- Unique ability of the dravya given to it by Mother Nature and divine [2]. Western Nutritional supplements are aimed and focused at a single issue. Idea is to take what is lacking and fulfill that need. The supplements may also be aimed at addressing symptoms. Western supplements mostly rely on the extracts of a plant or its biochemical manifestation [3]. Compared to the western nutrition supplements, Ayurvedic Dravya formulations do not believe in extracting the therapeutic botanical and prefers the use of whole plant. Example, Turmeric is best used cooked in oil, as curcumin is fat soluble. This also helps with the absorption of turmeric and makes it bio available. Using all parts of the whole herb leads to a synergistic action in the body and mind. An individual doesn't need to be unwell to try Ayurvedic herbs. Many Ayurvedic herbs are for the use of both well individuals and individuals with disorders. When herbs are converted into a formula that has been processed, it is no longer called a dravya [4]. Then, it is called a Kalpana or a formulation. Triphala Churna powder is a gentle support for bowel movements and may be suggested for regular use. The same Triphala Churna cooked with many other herbs and processed in ghee is called Triphala Ghritam. This is a far more complex formulation with the chief ingredient being Triphala, but, with many supportive adjuvants that increase the efficacy of Triphala. This Kalpana of Triphala Ghritam may be given for supporting digestive imbalances. Another example is Cumin cooked in food, as a tea, or Miraka Kashaya for indigestion. Some formulations

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contain combination of herbs (even up to 20-30 herbs in single formulation) [5]. This make a powerful combined action formula. Example is tonifying kalapanas like Chyavanprasha for energy support, or, Agastya Rasayana for respiratory support. Another phenomenon that Ayurveda uses just like Pharmacokinetics (Science of drug delivery) is how and where to deliver the herb. This delivery system is called Anupana [6]. Anupana may assist as both adjuvant, as well as a vehicle that carries the chief therapeutic dravya deeper into the tissues, or, helps the herb to go where it needs to go. An adjuvant may be aloe, or madhu (Honey). Madhu is yogavahini, easily digested, can help transport the ingredient in its sappy layers and augments and increases the efficacy of what it carries within in it. Hence it is both a vehicle and adjuvant. Sometimes, Ayurvedic herbs are used for lubrication on skin, other times as nasya for application in nose, sometimes as herb infused oils for processes like Shirodhara, Karnapurnam (ear treatment) or oil pulling in the mouth.

Classification of dravya

Based on their source dravyas are classified into two types. These are listed below. Jaṅgama-Animal source (milk, honey) Aubidha-plant source. Aubidha is subdivided further into 4 types- Vanaspati-fruit without the flower, Vānaspatya-fruit and flowers, Auśadha grains (die after one eating) Virūdha climbers/creepers [7]. Depending upon their morphological structure, dravyas are classified into 4 types Trṇa- Grasses like Dūrva, lemon grass,

Gulma-Shrubs like Tulsi, rose, Vrksā-Trees like Arjuna, Amalaki Valli-Creepers and climbers like Marīca, Ayurvedic Herbs are also classified based on five mahabhutas or great elements. These are listed below. Parthiva Earth Element, Apa-Water, Element, Teja-Fire, Element, Vayaviya Air Element Akashiya-Space Element Herbs also get classified based on habit, family of plant and morphology: Sthalaja Plant that grow on the ground, Jalaja- They need medium of water to grow. Vrksaruha Non-Parasitic plants that live on a tree, however, their own nutrition. Vrksadana Parastic plant that's live in a tree and source their nutrition from the tree itself. Herbs can also be classified based on their effect on doshas and dhatus. Herbs that pacify doshas-SAMANA herbs, or SODHANA (remove doshas) Herbs that vitiate the dhatus- Dhatu-Pradushana. These are KOPANA herbs that maintain wellness Svastha-hita. Last, but, not the least the effect the herbs have on different systems of the body. Some examples are mentioned below. Annavaha Srotas (Digestive channels, Gastro Intestinal Tract) Agni dipana (kindles agni), pachana (digestive ability), vamana (emetic), virecana (purgative), grahi (absorbs excess water from intestines). Raktavaha Srotas (Blood) - shonitsthapan (Maintenance of blood cells) Pranavaha Srotas (Respiratory Channels) kasa (cough support), svasa (breathing support). In conclusion, we have talked about how Ayurvedic Herbs are complex and powerful, can be made into powerful formulas called Kalpanas, and, have different effect on different systems of the body.

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