



Review Article

A CRITICAL REVIEW ON CONCEPT OF PRABHAVA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda 'The science of life' has been practiced in India from time immemorial and has stood test of time. This is due to the vast conceptual canvas and framework of Ayurveda. It is important to realize that, Ayurveda is not confined to medicines only, it tackles the whole subject of 'Life' in its various ramifications. The basic fundamentals of Ayurveda are to be understood and thoroughly implemented to achieve the target of 'promotion of health' in its true sense and complete cure from disease. According to Ayurvedic pharmacology the drug action is attributed to certain principles namely *Rasa, Guna, Virya, Vipaka* and *Prabhava*. It was observed that both the drugs as well as the living body have *Panchabhutika* composition in common and if the drugs are used sensibly, they can alter the body components accordingly. However if the Ayurvedic concepts are not properly understood and interpreted in globally accepted language; the tremendous efforts in research would go meaningless and futile. It is therefore strongly needed to utilize the tools derived from the advancement in technology in the new millennium for re-establishing concepts of *Ayurveda* in current perspectives. Although many Ayurvedic concepts described in the *Samhitas* seem very easy, but they are actually very difficult to understand, as the *Samhitas* presented everything in a concise form. There are certain concepts which need to be explored and evaluated through their practical applicability. One of such concepts is the concept of *Prabhava*. In a nutshell there is an urgent need to develop a process and scientific method to understand these principles. This review is an attempt to highlight the concept of *Prabhava* and its significance in present era.

KEYWORDS: *Prabhava, Achintya, Anavadharaniya, Amimansya*, Specific action.

INTRODUCTION

Some drugs act on the basis of their tastes, some on the basis of their attributes, some on the basis of their potency and some on the basis of their *Vipaka*. Actions of some drugs do not belong to any of these categories. They have specific actions to cure diseases which cannot be explained on the basis of *Rasa, Guna, Virya* and *Vipaka*. This specific action is called *Prabhava*. Two drugs may be similar in taste, attribute, potency and *Vipaka*, but their action might vary from each other. This is because of the *Prabhava* or specific action of the drug¹.

The term *Prabhava* has been used by several *Acharayas* under different contexts and different meanings to denote the "non-specific effects" of a drug. *Prabhava* can be considered under different synonyms like: *Shakti, Vichitra Pratyayarabdha, Vikriti Visham Samveta, Achintya Virya* or *Achintya, Anavadharaniya, Swabhava* etc².

Classical Review on *Prabhava*

Etymology of *Prabhava*

"*Prabhavati samarthyā visishtam bhavati dravyamaneneti prabhavam*"

The property which is responsible for a special or peculiar action of a *Dravya* is known as *Prabhava*³.

Definition of *Prabhava*

Charak defines *Prabhava* as

"*Rasaviryavipakanam samanyam yatra lakshyate Viseshah karmanam caiva prabhavastasya sa smritah*" (C.Su.26/67)

Prabhava is the property which is characterized by specific actions of substances which cannot be explained in terms of pharmacological actions of various constituents of *Dravya* when they are considered individually in relation to each other⁴.

Sushruta did not mention about *Prabhava* directly. However he indicated *Prabhava* through the concept of "*Achintya virya*". He is of the opinion that the *Prabhava Janya karma* is *Achintya* (unpredictable) and *Amimansya* (un-questionable). One has to follow the classical texts in their understanding. For example: we cannot make the *Ambashtadi gana* to act as purgative in any form⁵.

Vagbhata mentioned about *Prabhava* as -

“Rasadi samye yat karma visishtam tat prabhavajam”
(A.H.Su.17/52)

Prabhava may also be defined as the special property which produces actions which are different from and contrary to those attributed to *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, *Vipaka*⁶.

Chakrapani considered *Prabhava* as *Achintya* since its effect is not comparable to the effects expected generally from the constituents of a *Dravaya*. He also quoted *Virya* as *Chintya* and *Achintya*. The “*Achintya Virya*” is considered as *Prabhava*⁷.

Arundatta comments about *Prabhava* as -

“Rasaviryavipakadigunatisayivanalam/
dravya svabhavo nirdishtah yah prabhavam sa
krititah//”

Prabhava is said to be that attribute of the drug which overwhelms other principles of drug actions like *Rasa*, *Guna*, etc⁸.

Acharya Nagarjuna while discussing *Virya* used the words *Achintya* and *Anavadharaniya* for the specific property of a *Dravaya* instead of *Prabhava*⁹.

Some Examples of *Prabhava*

Chitraka and *Danti*

Here both *Chitraka* and *Danti* have *Katu rasa*, *Katu vipaka* and *Usna virya* but *Chitraka* act as *Dipaka* where as *Danti* acts as *Virechaka*. The *Virechana karma* exhibited by *Danti* is considered as *Prabhavajanya karma*.

Yastimadhu and *Mridwika*

Here both *Yastimadhu* and *Mridwika* are having *Madhura rasa*, *Madhura vipaka* and *Sheet virya dravaya* but their actions are different. *Mridwika* cause *Virechana*, whereas *Yastimadhu* won't. Here the karma of *Yastimadhu*, which doesn't cause *Virechana* is an example of *Prabhava*.

Kshira and *Ghrta*

Even though both *Kshira* and *Ghrta* are having *Madhura rasa*, *Madhur vipaka* and *Sheet virya*, but *Kshira* will act as *Agnimandya kara* where as *Ghrta* increases *Agni*.

Kaphavatahara karma of *Lasuna*

Lasuna because of its *Katu rasa* and *Katu vipaka* act as *Kaphashamak* and owing to its *Snigdha* and *Guru gunas* does *Vata Shamana*. Even though it is having *Katu rasa* and *Katu vipaka* won't aggravate *Vata* and *Snigdhatwa* and *Gurutwa* won't aggravate *Kapha*. Here the *Karma Vatakaphahara* is considered a *Prabhava*.

Raktashali and *Yava*

Here both *Raktashali* and *Yava* have similar properties i.e both are *Madhur* in *Rasa*, *Snigdha* and *guru* in *Guna* and *Sheet Virya dravaya* but *Raktashali* is *Vatahara* and *Yava* is *Vatakara*. *Raktashali* has *Vatahara*

action on the basis of its properties, but *Yava* is not. *Vatakara* action of *Yava* is *Prabhava*.

Vishaghna Karma of *Shirisha*

Shirisha and *Haridra* are considered as *Vishaghna dravayas* (one which reduces poisonous effects) and *Swapana* (sleep) and *Megha* (cloudy atmosphere) are aggravating the poisonous condition. Here both *Vishaghna* and *Vishvardhaka* Karmas are said as *Prabhavajanya Karma*.

Vamana and *Virechana*

If a *Dravaya* is having *Vamana karma*, then it is attributed to *Urdhwabhaghara Prabhava*. Eg. *Vamana Karma* by *Madanphala*.

Virechana Karma done by the *Dravaya* is attributed to *Adhobhaghara Prabhava* of that *Dravaya*. Eg. *Anulomana karma* of *Hari taki*.

Manidharana

Sometimes wearing precious stone will yield good effects.

Shalyaharana

Removal of foreign body by certain *Dravayas* are also an example of *Prabhavajanya Karma*¹⁰.

Nature of *Prabhava*

In the context of *Virya Shivdas Sena* has mentioned two types of potencies found in *Dravayas* – *Chintya* and *Achintya* to exert actions. The former is *Virya* while latter is called *Prabhava* which cannot be explained as effect of *Rasa*, *Virya* and *Vipaka*. *Chakrapanidatta* in this context states that *Prabhava* is *Shakti* (power or potency) of the substance which is the same as the particular associated with the generic attribute, as *Shakti* is nothing but the own nature of the substance and not any characteristics. But it is not appropriate. In real sense, the difference between *Virya* and *Prabhava* is not based on *Chintya* and *Achintya* characters but on *Samanya* and *Vishesha* as has been mentioned by *Charak* and *Vagbhata* where *Virya* is responsible for general action and *Prabhava* for the specific ones. *Naiyayikas* have described several instances of specific actions where *Prabhava* operates have been given as in context of wearing gems, antipoisons etc. They cannot be explained with *rasa* etc. hence, should be known due to *Prabhava*. In opinion of *Gangadhara*, *Prabhava* is the specific natural character which cannot be explained with *Rasa*, *Vipaka* etc. and as dissimilar and inexplicable effect where *Prabhava* has been taken as 'Karma' not the cause of karma. In this concern there appears three aspects of *Prabhava* as.

- Natural character
- Specific potency
- Dissimilar effect

P.V Sharma in this context gives his view that *Prabhava* is the specific potency based on the specific natural (*Bhautika*) composition of the substance. So it is called as “*Dravayasvabhava*”, which means that the natural chemical composition of the *Dravaya*

responsible for exerting specific action. On this basis the mode of action of *Vamana*, *Virechana dravayas* can be explained. In this condition how can it would be treated as 'Achintya'? Some *Acharayas* and commentators of ancient time have stated *Prabhava* as *Achintya* because of inexplicability of the nature of the *Dravayas*. On account of subduing *Rasas* etc. it has been mentioned as "Sarvatishyayi" (exceeding all properties) as has been advocated by *Vagbhata*.

Sushruta has not mentioned *Prabhava* directly but has used the word 'Amimamsya' and 'Achintya' for few *Ausadha dravayas* that seems to be an indication for *Prabhava*. According to him the drugs which have evident characters and effects and are popularly well known by nature should not be subjected to the arguments and further discussion but should be used as prescribed by the scripture because even by thousand arguments their nature cannot be comprehended so, they are 'Amimamsya' and 'Achintya'. For example – *Ambasthadi gana* of drugs cannot cause purgation, liquidity of water and hotness of fire etc. *Nagarjuna* has mentioned the words 'Achintya' and 'Anavadharaniya' for *Prabhava* in the explanation of *Virya*. On the basis of above discussion it is clear that the followers of *Atreya* school (*Charaka*, *Vagbhata* etc.) have accepted *Prabhava* as *Dravaya svabhava* (nature of the *Dravaya*) while of *Dhanvantari* school (*Sushruta*, *Nagarjuna* etc.) do not accept *Prabhava* as a separate entity but have included in the context of *Virya* as 'Achintya' and 'Anavadharaniya'. The possible reason behind this is that both are 'Shakti' where one is general (*Samanaya shakti*) and the other is specific one (*Vishishta shakti*)¹¹.

Functions of Prabhava

According to *Charak* drug action is possible by means of three aspects viz.

Dravaya Prabhava – drug action independent of the constituents (i.e., *Achintyatwa*). **Guna Prabhava** – drug action depending up on the constituents (i.e., *Chintyatwa*) **Dravaya- Guna Prabhava** - drug action depending up on the *Dravaya* as well as *Guna*.

The following actions may be exhibited through *Prabhava*.

Agdiya karma (Antidotal activity) e.g. *Shirisha Virechna karma* (Purgative property) e.g. *Danti Rakshoghna karma* (Antimicrobial activity) e.g. *Guggulu, Jatamansi Mansa karma* (Psychotropic activity) e.g. *Kushta, Rakta-chitrak* All the examples of non-specific activity may be considered as *Prabhavjanya karma*¹².

The actions can be categorized by modern classification as follows:

Pharmacological – *Danti (Baliospermum montanum)*, *Dravanti (Croton tiglium)*, *Madanphala (Randia dumetorum)*

Antidotal actions – *Shirish (Albizia lebbek)*

Antibacterial effects – *Guggulu (Commiphora wightii)*, *Ral (Shorea robusta)*, *Vacha (Acorus calamus)* etc.

Psychodynamic effects – on mania etc.

Physical actions – The effects are due to a physical property e.g. Drawing of iron particles by a magnet¹³.

BASIS OF PRABHAVA

Prabhava can be discussed on the basis of *Bhautika* composition of the drug. Drugs having similar composition of itself and its dependent properties act by virtue of *Virya* while those having difference in composition between itself and its properties act in a different way by its specific composition in respective of properties which are subverted. The former and the latter groups of *Dravayas* are known as *Samanaya-pratyayarabdha* (composed of similar *Bhutas*) and *Vichitra-pratyayarabdha* (composed of dissimilar *Bhutas*) respectively¹⁴.

Kaviraja Gangadhara mentions that *Dravaya*, *Guna* and *Karma* will have similarity in genesis usually. This is because similar will produce similar. However it need not be compulsory always. Whenever there is similarity then *Sajatiya karma* will occur (*Samaya-pratyayarabdha*). Otherwise *Vijatiya karma* will occur (*Vichitrapratyayarabdha*). Among the three (*Dravay*, *Guna* and *Karma*); the *Dravaya* produces similar *Dravaya*, *Guna* produces similar *Guna* but in case of *karma* it is not so because there is no such indication regarding *karma* that can produce another *karma*. Thus in the situation where *Dravaya*, *Guna*, *Karma* are similar; *karma* produced is said to be on account of *Virya*, on the other hand if *karma* is dissimilar, is accepted to be due to *Prabhava* (C.Su26/67-GD). **Gangadhara** accepts *Prabhava* as *karma* but when *karma* is not produced by another *karma*, then how a drug becomes able to perform the action like purgation etc. by specifically advocated potency, is a matter of cordial consideration¹⁵. In this context *Acharya P.V.Sharma* questioned that **Gangadhara** considers *Prabhava* as *Karma* but *Karma* cannot produce another *karma*. Then how *Prabhava* can be considered as *Karma*?. Hence it is concluded that *Prabhava* is *Shakti-Sadhana* (mean or instrument) not the *Karma sadhya* (accomplishment)¹⁶.

Samanaya-pratyayarabdha (Regular cause effect) and *Vichitra-pratyayarabdha* (Anomalous cause effect)

"Iti samanayataha karma dravayadinama punashcha tata | Vichitra-pratyayarabdha dravayabheden bhidhyate ||" (A.H.Su. 9.27)

On the basis of *Pancha-bhautika* composition, *Dravyas* are of two types :

- *Samanaya-pratyayarabdha*
- *Vichitra-pratyayarabdha*¹⁷

Dravayas are evolved from a combination of specific ingredients. As *Mahabhoota* combinations are infinite, *Dravayas* are infinite too. These *Dravayas* have two modes of physical phenomena or formations. One is of *Samanaya-pratyayarabdha* type and other is of *Vichitra-pratyayarabdha* type. *Pratyaya* mean cause. The effects and results generated by a *Dravaya* are

dependent on the *Gun*as of that *Dravaya* as causes. This means that the *Mahabhootas* and their *Rasas* etc. which constitute the *Dravayas* are primal causes. When the effects of a *Dravaya* are congruent with the properties of its constituent *Mahabhootas* then it will be called *Samanaya-pratyayarabdha*. But eventually this is a concept. On the contrary, it is *Vichitra-pratyayarabdha* when a *Dravaya* having *Madhur rasa* constituted by *Prithvi* and *Jala mahabhootas* does not have the effect of *Madhura Rasa* but different and of other *Mahabhootas*. *Dravyas* which have effects as per their *Rasa* are said to have *Samanaya-pratyayarabdha* but when an effect is

different from the *Rasa*, *Vipak* etc. that is *Vichitra-pratyayarabdha*. The distinction between *Vichitra-pratyayarabdha* and *Prabhava* is that, for the latter cause effect connection cannot be made. Whereas for *Vichitra-pratyayarabdha dravayas* that is made possible by the very adjective. *Samanaya-pratyayarabdha* and *Vichitra-pratyayarabdha* are relative terms as to the results. Those *Dravayas*, as per *Rasa-veerya-vipak* have comparable results then the term *Samanaya* is used for them and for those not comparable, the term *Vichitra* is used. But the connection is not applicable in all instances¹⁸.

Examples of both types as follows¹⁹

S.No	Dravya	Guna	Karma	Prakara
1.	Wheat	Sweet-heavy	Vatahara	Samanaya-pratyaya
2.	Barley	„	Vatakara	Vichitra-pratyaya
3.	Milk	„	Sheet virya	Samanaya-pratyaya
4.	Fish	„	Ushna virya	Vichitra-pratyaya
5.	Wild Boar meat	„	Madhur vipak	Samanaya-pratyaya
6.	Lion's meat	„	Katu vipak	Vichitra-pratyaya
7.	Ghee	Sheet virya	Deepan	Vichitra-pratyaya
8.	Fat	Ushna virya	Agnisadan	Vichitra-pratyaya
9.	Moonga	Katu vipak	Pittashaman	Vichitra-pratyaya
10.	Udid	Madhur vipak	Pittavardhak	Vichitra-pratyaya
11.	Curd	Heavy	Deepan	Vichitra-pratyaya
12.	Paravat	Heavy	Adeepan	Vichitra-pratyaya
13.	Dadima	Amlarasa	Grahi	Vichitra-pratyaya
14.	Amla	Amlarasa	Sara	Samanaya-pratyaya
15.	Dhatakpushpa	Kashayaya rasa (Astringent)	Sheet-virya, Grahi	Samanaya-pratyaya
16.	Haritaki	Kashayaya rasa (Astringent)	Ushna-virya, Rechan	Vichitra-pratyaya

Difference between Prabhava and Vichitrapratyayarabdha²⁰

	Prabhava	Vichitra pratyayarabdha
1.	One among <i>Saptapadarthas</i> .	Not one among <i>Saptapadarthas</i>
2.	<i>Rasadis</i> being <i>Samya</i> , it does special action.	<i>Rasadis</i> being <i>Asamya</i> , does different action.
3.	<i>Prabhava</i> is <i>Dravaya svabhava</i> .	<i>Dravaya asvabhava</i> .
4.	Similarity in the <i>Panchmahabhoutika</i> composition with special effects.	Dissimilarity in the <i>Panchmahabhoutika</i> composition on properties.
5.	Effect of the drug in difficult to analyse (<i>Achintya</i>).	Effect of the drug can be analysed (<i>Chintya</i> and <i>Achintya</i>).
6.	<i>Prabhava</i> directly acts on disease.	Acts on disease indirectly.
7.	<i>Prabhava</i> acts on i. Specificity of chemical composition. Eg. Cinchona Bark ii. Specificity of the site of action. Eg. <i>Vidanga</i>	Does not act on chemical composition and site of action.
8.	<i>Prabhava</i> can be included under <i>Dravya prabhavat</i> .	It can be included under <i>Dravaya guna prabhavat</i> .
9.	There is <i>Pradhanya vada</i> for <i>Prabhava</i> .	There is no <i>Pradhanya vada</i> for <i>Vichitra Pratyayarabdha</i> .
10.	Examples a) <i>Danti</i> b) <i>Ghrta</i> c) <i>Shankapushpi</i> d) <i>Shirisha</i> e) <i>Arjuna</i>	Examples a) <i>Bhallataka</i> b) <i>Guduchi</i> c) <i>Haritaki</i> d) <i>Dadima</i> e) <i>Kapittha</i>

Predominance of Prabhava

Prabhava is the most important amongst drug constituents like *Rasa*, *Guna* etc. belonging to the *Dravaya*. *Prabhava* can supersede all these drug

constituents (*Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, *Vipak*) but none of these can supersede *Prabhava*. Therefore, *Prabhava* assumes the most important place among all. A few *Dravayas* have their action through their *Rasas*. These

Dravayas can be substituted by other *Dravayas* having the same *rasa*. In case sugar is not available, tea can be prepared by using jaggery also. Some act through their *Vipaka*. Here also, another *Dravaya* having the same *Vipak* can be used as a substitute. While obtaining the actions of *Ushna* and *Sheet virya*, another *Dravaya* having the same *Virya* can be used as substitute. The same is true for the various *Gunas*. But when a substitute does not have the desired action, then the original *Dravaya* is must. Such an action of the *Dravaya*, which cannot be substituted, is brought about by the *Prabhava* of the *Dravaya*. It should be said that *Prabhava* can be produced by that specific *Dravaya* only. It is imperative to have the original *Dravaya* for obtaining its *Prabhava*²¹.

According to Vagbhata

Apradhana pritahk tasmad rasadya sanshritastu te | Prabhavasch yato dravayay, dravayam shresthamato matam || (A.S.Su.17/51)

Vagbhata concluded that the drug action is ultimately controlled by *Prabhava* and it is superior among the drug constituents²².

According to Nagarjuna

Badhanata Nagarjuna proposed the following factors to high-light the superiority of *Achintya Virya (Prabhava)*.

Achintayata, daivapratighata, vishapratighata, darshanata, shravanata, tulyarasaguneshu visheshata, darshanachadhbhutaadinaam karmana, aagamaach || (R. V.Su. 1/132-140)

- **Achintyata** (unpredictable): Its effects are quite unpredictable and therefore it is considered as superior.
- **Daiva Pratighata** (Super natural power): It exhibits super natural power. Hence it is important.
- **Visha Pratighata** (antidotal effects): It helps in antidotal activity irrespective of drug constituents. Hence it is superior.
- **Darshana** (practically visible): Its extra-ordinary effect is practically seen.
- **Sravana** (praise): Many scholars praise its efficacy and superiority.
- **Tulya Rasa Guna Vishesha** (non-specificity): It will exhibit very special action independent of other drug constituents or their qualities.
- **Adbhuta Karma** (magic effects): Using precious stones, hypnotism, etc., will yield some magic effects. Hence *Prabhava* is superior.
- **Agama** (classical treatises): All the classical texts high-lighted *Prabhava* as the main quality of a *Dravaya*. Therefore *Prabhava* is considered as superior²³.

Difference between Virya and Prabhava

On the basis of above descriptions there exists a clear line of demarcation between *Virya* and *Prabhava* as has been on the following grounds:

- **Sadhya (effect):** The effect exerted due to *Virya* is general while that of *Prabhava* is specific one. Some of the scholars accept cause of *Chintya karma* (explicable action) is *Virya* and of *Achintya karma* (inexplicable action) is *Prabhava*. In real sense these are included into *Samanaya* and *Vishishta* karmas respectively, for example the *Sadhya karma* of *Nirgundi* is *Vata* pacifying due to *Virya (Ushna)* and *Vishishta karma* of *Shankpushpi* is *Medhya* due to *Prabhava*.
- **Aushadiya Swarupa (Pharmacological aspect):** A *Dravaya* exerting effect due to *Virya* is called *Dosha pratyanyika* i.e., *Shatavari* pacifies *Pitta* due to *Sheet virya* is *Doshapratyanika*. But those *Dravayas* who exert their effect due to *Prabhava* on a specific *Vyadhi* are called *Vyadhipratyanika*, for example, *Kriminashak - Vidanga* and *Kusthagna - Khadira*. etc.
- **Adhara (criterion- basis) :** The criterion of action due to *Virya* is '*Guna-vaisheshya*' (property or quality excellence) while that of *Prabhava* is '*Dravaya-vaisheshya*' (*Dravaya*-substratum excellence), for example : the *Pitta* pacifying effect of *Chandana* is due to excellence of sheet *Guna (Virya)* while *Nidrajanana* (hypnotic) *karma* of *Sarpagandha* is due to specificity of *Dravaya* itself so, it is *Prabhavajanya*²⁴.

Prabhava in the present era

Many of the *Prabhavjanya karmas* which are quoted to be *Achintyas* shall be explicable today with the advent of scientific technology. Therefore the emphasis to *Prabhava* should be reduced than the earlier days. The following are the substantiating factors.

Mani dharana: Diamond which is a C₅ isotope emits certain radiations which may help in various disease conditions including cancer. **Pumsavana and Virechana:** Human fetus is bisexual till 2-3 months of intrauterine life. Though sex is genetically predetermined, a substance called 'differentiator' is finally deciding the sex of the human fetus before 3rd month. **Virechanopaga:** These are prodrugs and analogues. Prodrugs are used to improve pharmacological or biological properties. Analogues are used to increase potency and to achieve specificity of action. **Ubhayabhaga:** The dosage of *Virechana dravayas* and *Vamana dravayas* is different. Therefore their actions, emesis and purgation are dose dependent.

In spite of all these facts still there are many pharmacological properties mentioned in modern pharmacology which result in the non-specific activity of the drugs. Usually it is believed that drugs with similar chemical structure will have similar

pharmacological actions. But it is not possible to predict their activity on the basis of chemical structure alone. Sometimes drugs with similar chemical structure may have entirely different actions. Example; Morphine and Papavarine are structurally similar but their pharmacological action is different. The former is narcotic and CNS depressant while the later is non-narcotic and muscle relaxant. There are certain drugs like phenobarbitone, chloral hydrate, paraldehyde etc., which are structurally different but they all are CNS depressants. In pharmacology the drug activity can be classified as (a) structurally non-specific or (b) structurally specific²⁵.

It is said in the scriptures that the *Dravaya* acts through its *Rasa, Guna, Vipak, Veerya*, or *Prabhava*. The cause-effect relationship can be elicited in *rasa* etc., but the action in which the cause-effect relationship cannot be elicited is called "*Prabhava*". Precisely for this reason, *Prabhava* has been called "*Achintya*".

It is not only Ayurveda that has concept of *Prabhava*. It is wrong to assume that medicine is faced with such situations where in it is impossible to demonstrate the cause-effect relationship; such situations arise in other fields of knowledge as well. This is so because the evident is limited while that which is not evident is very vast. Even in modern medicine there are instances where it is not possible to totally explain the pharmacological actions of certain drugs. The cause-effect relationship of the drug and its action has been indirectly established.

For example

- Ergot is not included in the group of analgesic drug. Yet, the pain in migraine is alleviated by it. Explanations such as the vaso-constricting property of ergot may be given to explain this phenomenon, but the fact remains that it has no direct analgesic action.
- Colchicine is extremely useful in pain related to gout, but it is ineffective in other types of pain and arthralgia related to osteoarthritis. Its effectiveness only on gout can be thus related to *Prabhava*.
- Chlorthiazide is used to increase the production of urine so that the extra fluid is drained off, reducing oedema. But in diabetes insipidus, the same medicine causes a reduction in the quantity of urine. This has to be considered as its *Prabhava*.

Modern medicine has admirably absorbed the discipline of phytochemistry. It is possible that we might find some explanation for *Prabhava* through such analyses. Until and unless the cause-effect relationship can be demonstrated scientifically, the unexplained action should be considered as being produced by *Prabhava*. Once the explanation is found, then there is no reason to call it *Prabhava*. Thus *Prabhava* is a relative term. Unless the tricks of a magician are understood, it remains magic. But once the mechanism

underlying the trick is understood, it ceases to be magic. The same can be said about *Prabhava*²⁶.

SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATION OF CONCEPT OF PRABHAVA

In ancient times, it was not possible to link the cause-effect relationship through disciplines like phytochemistry. Certain actions, in which the cause-effect relationship was not known despite its being present, were included under *Prabhava*. This classification should not be considered unchangeable. Demonstrable causes must be sought first. Even if such demonstrable causes are not found, there has to be some cause to which that particular action can be attributed. Such a cause is called as undemonstrable cause, meaning "not found", invisible. Once found, its undemonstrability ceases to exist. Same is the case with *Prabhava*.

It is true that *Haritaki* and *Dhataki* are both examples of *Dravayas* having *Kashayaya rasa* but *Haritaki* acts as a laxative whereas *Dhataki* causes constipation. It is the natural property of *Kashayaya rasa* to cause constipation; but chemical analysis of *Haritaki* revealed the presence of anthroquinone which has laxative properties. Thus, laxative action of *Haritaki* could be explained. It is possible to obtain similar explanations in case of *Danti* and *Chitraka*.

We have still not acquired optimum knowledge about chemical components and their actions on each other. Phytochemistry has now started discovering and understanding them. It is possible to illustrate the difference between two identical plants by analysing their molecules after enzymatic lysis. Various strong substances (acidic and non-acidic) having different properties and actions have to be used to separate the molecules from their complex interrelated structures. This is similar to the number of minute instruments which a watchmaker has to use to place the spare-parts of a small watch in order.

To identify the main cause of *Prabhava, dravayas* have to be tested in many ways viz,

- a) Their identification
- b) Their chemical composition
- c) Their in-vivo action on the body and various organ of the body
- d) Their use as medicine in diseases

Two plants may have a single chemical component in common and yet the remaining chemicals may be slightly different. Even then, the required changes in the analytical tests have to be made.

These advances in analytical tests will have an invaluable role to play in standardization, determination of efficacy of active components and prevention of adulteration²⁶.

CONCLUSION

The drug's power to act (*Shakti*) is two-fold: 1). That which can rationally be understood (*Chintya*); and

2). That which cannot be so understood (*Achintya*). The former is known as 'potency' (*Virya*), while the latter 'specific power' (*Prabhava*). The specificity in the latter is something which cannot be inquired into (*Amimamsya*), which cannot be thought about (*Achintya*). Therefore, this factor must be understood by the physician, and utilized by him only by traditional wisdom (scriptural authority, agama) or oral instruction by competent authority (*Aptopadesa*). But in modern era with the development of phytochemistry various active fractions have been isolated and their specific actions are ascertained. So, once the explanation is found, then there is no reason to call it *Prabhava*.

So, It may be concluded that due to limitations of knowledge about drug action and effect, term *Prabhava* is being used to explain specific actions and effect produced by some drugs which remained unexplained normally. So, proper identification, standardization of the drug and pharmacognostical and phytochemical study of the drug is most important to explain the action of drug. So, there is a need for further research.

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