

**EXPLORING TIKTA RASA AND ITS THERAPEUTIC UTILITY****Monika Agrawal\*<sup>1</sup> and Makhan Lal<sup>2</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

Article Received on  
26 May 2018,

Revised on 17 June 2018,  
Accepted on 08 July 2018

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr201814-12847

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Rasa is that padartha of dravya which is perceived by tongue. According to Ayurveda there are six rasas viz. madhura (sweet), amla (sour), lavana (salt), katu (pungent), tikta (bitter) and kashaya (astringent). Taste buds for tikta rasa are located at the back of the tongue where it is perceived. Tikta rasa is predominantly composed of vayu and akash mahabhuta. Tikta rasa is ruksha (dry), sheet (cold), laghu (light) in guna (property), sheet (cold) in virya (potency) and katu in vipaka (metabolism). It pacifies pitta and kapha while aggravates vata. Uniqueness about tikta rasa is that though it is somya (cold) in nature still it ignites digestive fire which is perhaps due to its kapha pacifying nature, stimulating Samanya vayu and the vishadata of srotas (cleaning of channels) it causes due to its akash entity. There are

many tikta rasa pradhan dravyas e.g. Katuki (Picchirrhiza kurroa), Kiratikta (Swertia chirayta), Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia), Vasa patra (Adhatoda vasica), Patola patra (Tricosanthes dioica) which are widely used in various diseases like Medoroga (obesity), Madhumeha (Diabetes), Jwara (Fever), Kustha (Skin diseases), Amlapitta (Acidity), Stanya sodhan (purifies breast milk) etc., hence an effort has been made to scan Tikta rasa and its functioning for its rational use in treatment.

**KEYWORDS:** Tikta, Rasa, Ayurveda, Taste, Bitter, Mahabhuta.

**INTRODUCTION**

Rasa is that padartha of dravya which is perceived by tongue. In Charak samhita, Atreyabhadarakapiya chapter, in a symposium held to decide the number of rasa, various

*rishis* proposed different number of *rasa* to exist ranging from one to infinity. *Agnivesh* finally concluded that there are only six *rasas* viz. *madhura* (sweet), *amla* (sour), *lavana* (salt), *katu* (pungent), *tikta* (bitter) and *kashaya* (astringent).<sup>[1]</sup> The tongue is covered with approximately 10,000 taste buds, grouped in areas sensitive to sweet, sour, salty and bitter flavours. Chemicals from the food we eat stimulate receptors in each of these areas and nerves transmit this input to the brain, thus taste is perceived. Taste buds for bitter are located at the back of the tongue where it is perceived.

*Rasa* is the representative of the *panchbhotik* composition of a *dravya*. *Rasa* attributes to various pharmacological actions of *dravya*. Hence a thorough understanding of each *rasa* is definitely necessary. Since *tikta rasa* dominant drugs are widely used in various diseases like *Jwara*, *Kustha*, *Amlapitta* etc., hence an effort has been made to scan *tikta rasa* and its functioning for its rational use in treatment.

**Definition of *Tikta Rasa*:** According to *Shabdkalpdrum 'TEJYATITI TIKTAM'* i.e. which spreads all over the tongue within no time.<sup>[2]</sup> By this we can infer that the action of *tikta rasa* occurs very fast.

**Characteristics of *Tikta Rasa*:** The changes (physically or reflexly) observed in mouth or body or psyche after taking a *dravya* predominant with a particular *rasa* give guidelines in ascertaining the characteristics of *rasa*.<sup>[3-5]</sup> Characteristics of *Tikta rasa* are laid down in table: 1.

**Table. 1. Characteristics of *tikta rasa* in *Brihatrayi*.**

| Symptoms In Oral Cavity and Throat   | Psychological Symptoms   | Symptoms on Other Parts of Body  |
|--|--|--|
| <i>RASANAM PRATIANTI</i> (diminishes the perception of tongue for other tastes)<br><i>MUKH VAISHADYA &amp; VISHODHYATI KANTHAM</i> (cleansing in the mouth and throat)<br><i>ASYASYA SAITYAM</i> (coolness in the mouth)<br><i>GALE CHOSAM</i> (dryness in throat) | <i>PRAHALADKARAM</i> (removes tastelessness)<br><i>BHAKTA RUCHIM APADAYATI, ROCHAN</i> (promotes desires for food) | <i>VISADAYATI VADANAM</i> (blanches face)<br><i>HARSHAM</i> (hair raising) |

***Panchbotik Composition:*** All the *rasas* are *panchabhotika*. However, their specific expression as *madhur*, *amla* etc. is due to specific and proportionate configuration of *panchmahabhutas*. *Tikta rasa* has predominance of *vayu* and *akash mahabhuta*.<sup>[6]</sup> Due to *akash mahabhuta* it has *vishada* (cleansing) property and due to the *vayu mahabhuta* it is

*ruksha* thus *upsoshak* (absorbing) in nature. *Vayu* and *akasha* both are *laghu*, hence *tikta rasa* is also *laghu*.

**Properties:** Each *rasa* has its some individual qualities which are in form of characters of the given *dravya* to which it belongs. But when specifically described they are considered as qualities of *dravyas*. Table: 2 lays down the *guna*, *virya* and *vipaka* of *tikta rasa*.

**Table. 2. Guna, Virya and Vipaka of tikta rasa.**

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <i>Guna of Tikta rasa</i>   | <i>Ruksha, Sheet, Laghu</i> <sup>[7]</sup> |
| <i>Virya of Tikta rasa</i>  | <i>Sheet</i> <sup>[8]</sup>                |
| <i>Vipaka of Tikta rasa</i> | <i>Katu</i> <sup>[9]</sup>                 |

**Action on Dosh, Dhatu, Updhatu and Mala:** *Tikta rasa* is *ruksha*, *laghu* and *sheet*. All these qualities are similar to *vata* while opposite to *pitta* and *kapha*. So on the basis of *samanya vishesha* principle, it pacifies *pitta* and *kapha* while aggravates *vata*.<sup>[10]</sup>

*Tikta rasa* causes *upshoshan* of *meda* and *majja dhatu*. It causes *twaka*, *mansa* and *asthi sithirikaran* (stability). It causes *stanya sodhan*. Perhaps due to its *ruksha guna* it dries *dhatu*s and *updhatus* having *snigdha* and *guru gunas* e.g. *kleda*, *vasa*, *lsika*, *sweda*, *mutra* and *purish*.<sup>[11]</sup>

*Tikta rasa* causes *badhavidmurta* (Constipation) because of its *rukshatwa* (dryness).<sup>[12]</sup>

**General Action:** A *dravya* performs wide range of action through its *tikta rasa*. Table: 3 displays various action of *tikta rasa* according to *Brihatrayi*. A thorough understanding of these action helps in proper *usage* of *tikta rasa dravya* in therapy.<sup>[13-15]</sup>

**Table. 3. Action of Tikta rasa.**

| S. No. | Action of Tikta Rasa                                  | Charak | Sushruta | Ashtang Hridaya |
|--------|---|--------|----------|-----------------|
| 1      | <i>Swayamrochishnurapyarochakghna</i>                 | +      |          | +               |
| 2      | <i>Rochak</i> (Tasty)                                 |        | +        |                 |
| 3      | <i>Vishahar</i> (Anti poisonous)                      | +      |          | +               |
| 4      | <i>Krimighana</i> (Deworming)                         | +      |          | +               |
| 5      | <i>Murca prashmana</i> (Alleviating syncope)          | +      | +        | +               |
| 6      | <i>Daha prashmana</i> (Alleviating burning sensation) | +      |          |                 |
| 7      | <i>Kandu prashmana</i> (Alleviating itching)          | +      | +        |                 |
| 8      | <i>Kotha prashmana</i> (Alleviating pruritus)         |        | +        |                 |
| 9      | <i>Kustha prashmana</i> (Alleviating skin disease)    | +      |          | +               |
| 10     | <i>Trishna prashmana</i> (Thirst alleviating)         | +      | +        | +               |
| 11     | <i>Jwaraghana/ Jwara prashmana</i> (Anti pyretic)     | +      | +        | +               |
| 12     | <i>Deepan</i> (Stimulant of digestive fire)           | +      | +        |                 |

|    |  |   |   |   |
|----|--|---|---|---|
| 13 | <i>Pachan</i> (Digestant)  | + |   |   |
| 14 | <i>Stanya sodhan</i> (Breast purifier)                                       | + | + | + |
| 15 | <i>Kanthy sodhan</i> (Voice promoter)  |   |   | + |
| 16 | <i>Lekhan</i> (Scraping)   | + |   |   |
| 17 | <i>Kleda, meda, vasa, majja, puya upsoshan</i>                               | + | + | + |
| 18 | <i>lasika, sweda upsoshan</i> (Absorbant of various body fluids)             | + |   |   |
| 19 | <i>mutra, purisha upsoshan</i> (Absorbant of urine and stool)                | + | + | + |
| 20 | <i>Pitta- Sleshma upsoshan</i> (Absorbant of <i>pitta</i> & <i>sleshma</i> ) | + |   | + |
| 21 | <i>Chedan</i> (Cutting)  |   | + |   |
| 22 | <i>Utklesh, daha jayeta</i>  |   |   | + |
| 23 | <i>Sodhan</i> (Pifurifying body)   |   | + |   |
| 24 | <i>Medhya</i> (Brain tonic)  |   |   | + |

### Exception of Properties of *Tikta Rasa Dravyas*

Exceptionally, there are some *dravyas* which do not follow general rule of the properties *Tikta rasa* exhibits.<sup>[16]</sup> Some of them are as follows:

- *Tikta rasa* is *vata* aggravating and causes loss of semen excluding *Vetagra*, *Guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia*) and *Patola patra* (*Tricosanthes dioica*).
- *Arka*, *Agaru* (*Aquilaria agalocha*) and *Guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia*) all being *tikta* in *rasa* are still of *ushna* (hot) *virya*.
- *Brihatpanchmula* is *ushna* though it is *kashaya* and *tikta* in *rasa*.

### How is *Tikta Rasa Agnivardhaka* ?

*Agneya rasa* can cause *Agni deepan* (ignite digestive fire). *Tikta rasa* is *somya* still it ignites digestive fire. How? Perhaps probable modality could be as follows:

*Tikta rasa* has *vayu mahabhuta*, which stimulates *saman vayu*. *Saman vayu* being situated near *Agni* ignites the *jatharagni*.<sup>[17]</sup>

- *Agnimandya* occurs due to *kapha vriddhi* because *kapha* has *jaliya tatva*.<sup>[18]</sup> *Vayu mahabhuta* present in *tikta rasa* absorbs *kapha*, thus by removing the causative factor it ignites *agni*.
- *Akash mahabhuta* in *tikta rasa* perhaps provide space in *srotas*.<sup>[19]</sup> The channels get cleaned. This has dual positive effect. Firstly movement of food in *mahasrotas* gets proper and secondly various secretions properly reach to *mahasrotas* which results in proper digestion.

### Therapeutic Application of *Tikta Rasa Dravya*

*Tikta rasa dravyas* are widely used in *Ayurveda* in various disorders. Some of the important therapeutic applications of *tikta rasa dravyas* are following:

1. *Tikta rasa dravyas* are highly useful in *Medoroga* (obesity). *Meda* and *kapha* share same *panchbhottik* composition. As such when a person consumes *kapha vardhak ahar vihar* his *kapha* as well *meda* gets increased. These obstruct the *srotas*. This leads to improper nutrition to other *dhatu*s.<sup>[20]</sup> *Tikta rasa* being *ruksha* and *laghu* absorbs the *kapha* and *meda*. The *akash* element of *tikta rasa* provides space i.e. cleans the channels, obstruction gets removed and proper nutrition restores down. Thus *tikta rasa dravyas* remove obesity.
2. Due to the above said reasons *tikta rasa dravyas* are similarly useful in *Madhumeha* etc. disease where the functioning of *dhatwa agni* is hampered due to obstruction of *srotas* by *Meda, kapha, kleda* etc.
3. In *Amlapitta dravatva* part of *pitta* is increased and *agni* is *mandya* (down). As such *pitta* gets *vidagdha*. *Vidagdha pitta* is *amla*. Due to the increased *dravata* regurgitation of *pitta* occurs every now and then in oral cavity. *Tikta rasa* has absorbing nature. It absorbs away the *dravata* of *pitta*, improves the *agni* thereby removes the *vidagdhata* of *pitta*. Thus *Amalpitta* gets cured. *Patoladi kwatha* is the best example.<sup>[21]</sup>
4. Basic cause of *Jwara* is *aam*. *Ama dosh* also leads to *dorbalya* in fever. *Tikta rasa* not only ignites fire but also removes *aam vish* (*tikta rasa* is *vishaghana* according to *Charak* and *Ashtang hridaya*) thus relieves fever.<sup>[22]</sup>
5. To relieve *trishna* in *jwara* *Shadangpaniya* is prescribed. *Shadanpaniya* is *shritshit jala* prepared by six *dravyas* viz. *Mustak* (*Cyperus rotundus*), *Parpat* (*Fumaria valintii*), *Ushir*, *Chandan* (*Santalum album*), *Udichya* and *Nagar* (*Zingiber officinalis*).<sup>[23]</sup> All of them except *Nagar* are *tikta rasa pradhan*. *Tikta rasa* is *trishnaprashmak* because *tikta rasa* digests the *ama* which is the causative factor of *jwara* and its complication *trishna*.<sup>[24]</sup>
6. *Tikta rasa dravyas* are beneficial in *Kustha*.<sup>[25]</sup> *Kustha* is a *tridoshaj vikara* which involves *rakta dushti*.<sup>[26]</sup> *Tikta rasa* pacifies *pitta* and *kapha* as well as it is *rakta prasadak*. E.g. *Nimba* (*Azadirachta indica*), *Guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia*) etc.
7. Most of the *Medhya dravyas* (brain tonics) are *tikta* in *rasa*.<sup>[27]</sup> *Tikta rasa* perhaps by correcting *Sadhak pitta* improves *medha* because it is the *pitta* especially *sadhak pitta* which is responsible for *medha* and *buddhi*.
8. *Stanya* is an *updhatu* of *rasa dhatu*.<sup>[28]</sup> *Tikta rasa* by being *deepan* and *pachan* (digestion) causes proper formation of *rasa dhatu* and hence its *updhatu stanya*. *Stanyashodhak mahakashaya* of *Charak* consists of mostly *Tikta rasa* dominant *dravya* e.g. *Patha* (*Cissampelos pariera*), *Mustaka* (*Cyperus rotundus*), *Guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia*), *Kiratikta* (*Swertia chirayta*), *Katuka* (*Picchrirhiza kurroa*) etc.<sup>[29]</sup>

### Disorders Due to Excessive Use of *Tikta Rasa*

With the single and excessive usage of *tikta rasa dravyas* there is *rasa etc dhatu soshana* (reduction of all tissues), *rokshayat* (dryness), *kharta* (hardness) among channels, *bala kshaya* (weakness), *karshya* (emaciation), *glani* (lassitude), *moha* (syncope), *bhrama* (vertigo), *vadan upsosha* (dryness of mouth) and other *vataj* disorders. It also causes *gatra stabdhata* (immobility in the body), *manyastambha* (torticollis), *akshepak* (convulsions), *shirah shula* (headache), *toda* (pricking), *bheda* (breaking), *cheda* (cutting) types of pain in body, *aasya vairaya* (tastelessness).<sup>[30-31]</sup>

### DISCUSSION

From pharmacological point of view *tikta* plays a great role in our body. It pacifies *kapha* and *pitta*. It not only ignites *agni*, removes *aam dosha*, improves digestion, cleans the channels, removes toxins, stabilizes dermal, bony and muscular tissues, purifies breast milk but also cures Obesity, Diabetes, Fever, Acidity, Thirst, Skin diseases, Itching, Burning disorders etc. Most of the brain tonics of *Ayurveda* are *tikta rasa* dominant. *Tikta rasa* is wholesome for body if properly used.

### CONCLUSION

From the above study it can be concluded that.

- *Tikta rasa* occupies a great importance in therapy because of its multidimensional activities like *stanya sodhan*, *vishghana*, *jwaraghana*, *kusthaghana* etc.
- The *panchbotik* composition seems to be responsible for the various actions it exhibits.
- Proper usage of *tikta rasa* is required because its excessive use can arise various troubles in body which are mainly *vataj* in nature.
- Its complete inns and outs should be known to a physician to benefit the patients and healthy ones.

### SOURCE OF SUPPORT

None.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

None.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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