EXPLORING **TIKTA RASA AND ITS THERAPEUTIC UTILITY**

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**ABSTRACT**

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 isruksha (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 (Picchrrirhiza kurroa), Kiratikta (Swertia chirayta), Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia), Vasa patra (Adhatoda vasica), Patola patra (Tricosanthes dioca) which are widely used in various diseseas 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, Atreyabhadrakapiya 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).\textsuperscript{[1]} 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 panchbhrotik 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.\textsuperscript{[2]} 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.\textsuperscript{[3-5]} Characteristics of Tikta rasa are laid down in table: 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Psychological Symptom</th>
<th>Symptom on Other Parts of Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RASANAM PRATIHANTI (diminishes the perception of tongue for other tastes)</td>
<td>PRAHALADKARAM (removes tastelessness)</td>
<td>VISADAYATI VADANAM (blanches face)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUKH VAISHADYA &amp; VISHODHYATI KANTHAM (cleansing in the mouth and throat)</td>
<td>BHAKTA RUCHIM APADAYATI, ROCHAN (promotes desires for food)</td>
<td>HARSHAM (hair raising)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASASYA SAITYAM (coolness in the mouth)</td>
<td>GALE CHOSAM (dryness in throat)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GALE CHOSAM (dryness in throat)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**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.\textsuperscript{[6]} 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guna of Tikta rasa</th>
<th>Ruksha, Sheet, Laghu&lt;sup&gt;[7]&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virya of Tikta rasa</td>
<td>Sheet&lt;sup&gt;[8]&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vipaka of Tikta rasa</td>
<td>Katu&lt;sup&gt;[9]&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 dhatus 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 Brihattrayi. 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.

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

Exceptionally, there are some dravyas which do not follow general rule of the properties Tikta rasa exhibits.\(^{[16]}\) 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 dioca).
- Arka, Agaru (Aquilaria agallocha) 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.\(^{[17]}\)

- Agnimandya occurs due to kapha vridhhi because kapha has jaliya tatva.\(^{[18]}\) 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.\(^{[19]}\) 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><em>Pachan</em> (Digestant)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td><em>Stanya sodhan</em> (Breast purifier)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><em>Kanthya sodhan</em> (Voice promoter)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><em>Lekhan</em> (Scraping)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td><em>Kleda, meda, vasa, majja, puya upsoshan</em></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td><em>lasika, sweda upsoshan</em> (Absorbant of various body fluids)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td><em>mutra, purisha upsoshan</em> (Absorbant of urine and stool)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td><em>Pitta- Sleshma upsoshan</em> (Absorbant of pitta &amp; sleshma)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td><em>Chedan</em> (Cutting)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td><em>Utklesh, daha jayeta</em></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td><em>Sodhan</em> (Purifying body)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td><em>Medhya</em> (Brain tonic)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 dhatus.\(^{[20]}\) 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 dhatu 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 Amlapitta gets cured. Patoladi kwatha is the best example.\(^{[21]}\)

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.\(^{[22]}\)

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).\(^{[23]}\) 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.\(^{[24]}\)

6. Tikta rasa dravyas are beneficial in Kustha.\(^{[25]}\) Kustha is a tridoshaj vikara which involves rakta dushti.\(^{[26]}\) 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.\(^{[27]}\) 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.\(^{[28]}\) 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 (Picchirirhiza kurroa) etc.\(^{[29]}\)
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 uposha (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).[30-31]

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, kustaghana 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 ins 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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