

RELATION BETWEEN AMLA RASA AND RAKTA DHATU – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Aahara (food), one among the *trayopastambhas* (three pillars) maintains *Prana* (life) in the body. *Aahara* sustains or maintains human body by its different attributes. *Rasa* (taste) of *Aahara dravya* (food items) is more important in this process. Being *Panchabhautika* in origin, it has direct action on *Dosha* (basic humors), *Dhatu* (tissue) and *Mala* (by-products). To maintain health, the proper use of *Shadrasa* (six tastes) is insisted. The knowledge of their actions on the body systems with reference to taste helps in supplementing the body's requirements. The judicious incorporation of each *Rasa* should be done in *Aahara* in order to get the best benefits out of these *Rasas*. *Rakta* (blood) is accountable for the *Utpatti* (origin) *Sthiti* (maintenance) and *Pralaya* (destruction) of human and consequently it should be sheltered. A detailed study on *Amla rasa* (sour taste) and *Rakta Dhatu* brings out some of the interesting facts regarding them. One among them is the similarity between *Amla Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatu* especially in the context of *Panchabhautikatwa* (five basic elements), *Guna* (property) and *Dosha*. Another relation is that *Amla Rasa* acts as a *Nidana* (cause) for *Rakta Dushti* (vitiation of blood) in turn causing several diseases. Interestingly it can also be noted that *Amla Rasa* is also told as a *Chikitsa* (treatment) in certain conditions where *Rakta* is getting vitiated. This paper is intended to discuss some of the attention grabbing points related to *Amla Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatu*.

Keywords: *Rasa, Aahara, Amla rasa, Rakta dhatu, Nidana*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda considers *Aahara* (food) as one of the prime factor in the path of maintaining positive health¹. *Aahara*, *Swapna* (sleep) and *Abramhacharya* (indulgence in sex) are termed as *Traya-upastambha* (three pillars) or three supports of human life². Human body is maintained for lifetime by intake of proper food. Though the food exists outside the human body, according to *Panchabhautika* theory it is also made up of *Panchama-haabhuta*³ (five basic elements). *Aahara* maintains *Prana* (life) in the body which is responsible for life. Both are *Panchabhautika* in nature and exert effect on each other. *Aahara* sustains or maintains human

body by its different attributes. *Rasa* of specific *Aahara dravya* (food item) is more important in this process. Being *Panchabhautika* in origin, *Aahara* has direct action on *Panchabhautika* components of the human body like *Dosha* (basic humors), *Dhatu* (tissues) and *Mala* (by products) according to *Samanya-Vishesha siddhanta* (theory of similarity and dissimilarity). To maintain the health, proper use of *Shadrasa* is always insisted.

Shadrasa is an exclusive concept put forth by *Ayurveda*, which states that these not only render the differentiation of tastes but also execute specific function in the body. For a virtuous and sustained healthy living, it is important to cultivate

the habit of using all the six tastes in our daily diet⁴. They have their own distinct effect on *Doshas* and *Dhatu*s. Their *Karma* (function) is attributed to *Panchabhautika* constitution and their *Gun*as (properties). Detailed analysis of these attributes is essential for the proper assessment of their mode of action. The knowledge of their actions on the body systems can prove helpful so as to supplement the desired taste, in accordance to the requirements.

Dhatu, the attribute which holds the body together and provides it nutrition is a further typical thought in Ayurveda⁵. *Rakta* (blood) is one amongst the *Saptadhatus*⁶ (seven tissues). *Rakta* otherwise called as the *Jeeva Rakta*⁷ (life blood) is accountable for the *Utpatti* (origin), *Sthiti* (maintenance) and *Pralaya* (destruction) of human and consequently it should be sheltered. It withholds *Prana* and is the gauge of life in man. *Rakta*, the *Aadhara* (source) of *Jeeva* (life) should be given prime significance and the concept should be understood in its appropriate way⁸.

But in vast areas of studies there are high chances that one might get perplexed with some of the concepts which are there in offer. Keeping that in mind, one such point which could strike attention is the relation of *Amla Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatu*, here by examining some of the points which are worth discussing.

Amla rasa: *Amla Rasa* is one among the *Shadrasas*⁹ which is comprised of *Agni* (fire) and *Pruthvi* (earth) *Mahabhutas*¹⁰, allied with *Gun*as like *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Laghu* (light) etc¹¹. It is *Hrudya* (good for heart) and *Ushna* (hot) in nature. It promotes digestion and has a mild warming effect on the body as a whole. *Indriya bodhana* (stimulates sense organs), *Rochana* (improves taste), *Brumhana* (produces stoutness), *Tarpana* (satisfaction), *preenana* (nourishment), *Kledana* (moist-

ness to the body), *Anulomana* (causes movement of faeces and flatus) etc are other *Karm*as endorsed to *Amla Rasa*. Its specific action on *Dosh*as can be listed out as *Vatahara* (mitigates *vata*), *Pitta sleshma kara* (increases *pitta* and *sleshma*) and *Raktakrut*¹² (increases *rakta*).

According to basic principles of Ayurveda any entity when taken in excess will have detrimental effects over the body. Likewise even *Amla* when taken in excess hampers the normalcy of the body i.e., it leads to the *Sithilata* (looseness) of *Dhatu*s, *Vilayana* (liquefaction) of *Kapha* and other disorders like *Kandu* (itching), *Pandu* (pallor), *Visarpa* (herpes), *Raktapitta* (bleeding diseases), *Swayathu* (swelling), *Pipasa* (severe thirst) etc¹².

Rakta dhatu: The *Bhautik* predominance in *Rakta* is *Agni* and *Jala*¹³ (water). *Rakta* is also said to be *Panchabhautika*¹⁴ and the *Gun*as are listed out with respect to its *Bhuta*s. It is endowed with *Gun*as like *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Laghu* (light), *Drava* (liquid) etc¹⁴. It is *Anushnaseeta* (neither hot nor cold) in nature because of the predominance of both *Agni* and *Jala Mahabhutas*. Since *Rakta* is *Ashrayi* (which takes shelter) to *Pitta* it possesses all other *Gun*as of its *Ashraya* (which gives shelter), the *Pitta*¹⁵. Other than *Jeevana* (enlivening); *Varnaprasada* (increases complexion), *Mamsapushti* (nourish the muscle tissue), offering *Bala* (strength), *Sukha* (happiness), *Ayu* (life) etc are the *Karm*as ascribed to *Rakta*¹⁶.

Realation of amla and rakta

As samanya: *Samanya* (similar) can be defined as “*Ekatwakaram*”¹⁷, the uniqueness or the one which renders similarity. The very basics of *Amla Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatu* expose some of resemblances between them. First and foremost similarity is the *Bhautik* predominance, i.e., both are *Agni Mahabhuta* dominant. Bearing in mind the

Guna aspect, we can point out the uniqueness in the *Gunas* like *Snigdha* and *Laghu* in both. More over considering the *Dosha* relationship, both *Amla Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatu* are concurrent to *Pitta Dosha*. Another interesting point is that *Rakta* is involved in the formation of *Hrudaya*¹⁸ (heart) where as *Amla Rasa* acts as *Hrudya*¹². *Hrudaya* is also told as one of the sites of *Pitta Dosha*¹⁹. This also provides the *Samanyata* (similarity) between the three – *Amla Rasa*, *Rakta* and *Pitta*.

As *nidana*: “*Nidana*” (cause) can be defined in a very precise way as the basis for the manifestation of the disease, and the course it takes²⁰. The knowledge of *Nidana* of specific diseases is helpful in the selection of a treatment to cure the disease, as well as the method used for alleviating the vitiated *Doshas*. In other words, treatment restricts itself to countering the causes of the disease.

Other than performing some needful functions in body, *Amla Rasa* even acts contrary to the well being of the body when used in excess. Some diseases where intake of *Amla Rasa* plays a crucial role as their *Nidana* are *Pandu*, *Raktapitta*, *Swayathu* and *Visarpa*¹². In *Pandu* the functional impairment of *Rakta* is observed where as in *Raktapitta* quantitative increase and qualitative decrease of *Rakta* is noted. In *Visarpa*, *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting) is told to be the best treatment from which the importance of *Rakta* in the same can be very well pointed out. In the *Samprapti* (pathogenesis) of all these diseases we can appreciate the *Dushti* (vitiation) of *Pitta* as well as *Rakta Dhatu* in turn. There by the innate relationship between *Rakta* and *Amla Rasa* is well appreciated in the context of *Nidana* also.

As *chikitsa*: *Nidana parivarjanameva cikitsa*²¹, the first and foremost step in order to cure a disease is to keep oneself

away from the cause. Here in case of the above mentioned *Rogas* (diseases) like *Pandu*, *Raktapitta*, *Swayathu* and *Visarpa*, to begin with one should avoid the excess use of *Amla Rasa*, which is a way in for the remedy of these diseases. *Acharyas* have also cited the use of *Amla Rasa* in the *Cikitsa* (treatment) of *Sakhashrita Kamala* (Jaundice).

Also in the treatment mentioned for *Rakta Kshaya* (decrease of blood) *Acharya Susrutha* specifies the use of *Dravyas* (substances) which are of same *Yoni* (category), to be precise *Dalhana* stipulate the administration of *Dravya* which are *Tejogunabhuyishta* (predominant in properties of fire) by nature. *Rakta* and *Amla Rasa* comes under the same category i.e., both have the supremacy of *Agni Mahabhuta* and there by *Amla Rasa* can be the absolute solution in *Rakta Kshaya*.

Amla Preeti (desire for sour taste) is one of the salient features of *Rakta Kshaya*²². *Dalhana* commenting on this elaborates the reason for this craving. *Rakta kshaya* sequentially results in the *Vruddhi* of *Vata* and to pacify this *Vata* the longing for *Amla Rasa* is fashioned by the body itself, there by the balance of the system can be restored.²²

DISCUSSION

The similarities and dissimilarities in the concept of *Rakta Dhatu* and *Amla Rasa* prompt us at undertaking a critical review of this concept. As in the *Samanya Vissha Siddhanta* (Theory of similarity and dissimilarity), the similar ones render *Vruddhi* (increase) of the same. Similarly *Samanyata* of *Rakta Dhatu* and *Amla Rasa* especially *Panchabhautikatwa*, *Guna* and *Dosha*, is a point likely to be noted. This principle can be applied in the case of *Rakta Kshaya* where in *Amla Rasa* can be a best remedy. Since there will be increase of *Rakta* upon intake of *Amla* due to their

Samanya Gunas this principle will hold good in treating *Rakta Kshaya*.

Contrary to resemblance between *Amla* and *Rakta*, we have also citations showing *Amla Rasa* as a *nidana* for *Rakta Dushti*. Here we can make out that the excess intake of *Amla Rasa* results in the *Gunataha Vrudhi* of *Pitta Dosha* i.e., *Amlarasa* aggravates *Pitta* due to *Ushna-Snigdha*guna. This sequentially results in the *Dushti* of *Rakta* leading to the above mentioned diseases like *Pandu*, *Raktapitta*, *Swayathu* and *Visarpa*.

Another controversial point to be discussed is the use of *Amla Rasa* in the *Chikitsa* aspect of several conditions like *Kamala* and *Rakta Kshaya*. This in turn can be explained with the help of *Samanya Siddhanta* itself as the *Amla Rasa* and *Rakta Dhatu* belongs to the same *yonis* especially the *Bhautik* predominance. In case of *Rakta Kshaya* the body itself tries to work out this problem by generating the desire for *Amla Rasa*. This longing for *Amla Rasa* can also be explained in terms of the maintenance of normalcy of *Vata Dosha* which undergoes *Vruddhi* in case of *Rakta Kshaya*. It alleviates *Vata* by *Ushna-Snigdha Gunas*. One of the main properties of *Amlarasa* is *Vatanulomana*. Another reason may be in *Rakta Kshaya* simultaneous *Kshaya* of *Pitta* will be there and *Agnimandya* (diminished digestive fire) will be present. *Amlarasa*, being *Deepana* (kindles hunger) and *Pachana* (helps in digestion) acts best as *Agnideepana* (kindles the digestive fire) also.

CONCLUSION

Aahara composed of *Shadrasa* exerts direct effect on *Tridosha* (three basic humors) and *saptadhatu*s (seven tissues) in *Sharira* (body). When consumed in right way-*Samyakyoga*, *Aahara* maintains *Sharira* while *Ati* (excess), *Mithya* (improper), *Hinayoga* (inadequate manner)

leads to awful effects on *Sharira*. As *Aahara* is composed of *Shadrasa*, this *Ati-Mithya-Hinayoga* is related to *Shadrasa* mainly. Therefore *Amlarasa* can also act as a boon or bane based on its way of usage. Henceforth the judicious incorporation of each *Rasa* should be done in *Aahara* in order to get the best benefits out of these *Rasas*.

The basic principles of *Ayurveda* are built upon a pavement of multiple *Siddhanthas* (theories) and *Nyayas* (principles). Therefore any relationship between two entities also will be following these different theories. In the case of *Rakta Kshaya* the relationship between *Amla* and *Rakta dhatu* will facilitate each other due to their *Samanyata* of *Gunas*. In other contexts of the relationship between *Rakta* and *Amla* like *Pandu*, *Raktapitta* etc this relationship takes an impending effect over the body due to association with other *Nidanas* of those diseases. The relationship between *Rakta* and *Amla* can be best explored by adapting these different principles of *Ayurveda* in different contexts for better understanding of *Rakta* and *Amla rasa*.

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