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 (vitiating 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 health\(^1\). Aahara, Swapna (sleep) and Abramhacharya (indulgence in sex) are termed as Trayapastambha (three pillars) or three supports of human life\(^2\). 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 Panchamaahaabhuta\(^3\) (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 diet\(^4\). They have their own distinct effect on Doshas and Dhatus. Their Karma (function) is attributed to Panchabhautika constitution and their Gunas (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 Ayurveda\(^5\). **Rakta** (blood) is one amongst the Saptadhatus\(^6\) (seven tissues). **Rakta** otherwise called as the Jeeva Rakta\(^7\) (life blood) is accountable for the Upatti (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 Aadharra (source) of Jeeva (life) should be given prime significance and the concept should be understood in its appropriate way\(^8\).

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 Gunas like Snigdha (unctuous), Laghu (light) etc\(^11\). 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), preenanana (nourishment), Kledana (moistness to the body), Anulomana (causes movement of faeces and flatus) etc are other Karmas endorsed to Amla Rasa. Its specific action on Doshas 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 Dhatus, Vilayana (liquefaction) of Kapha and other disorders like Kandu (itching), Pandu (pallor), Visarpa (herpes), Ratapitta (bleeding diseases), Swayathu (swelling), Pipasa (severe thirst) etc\(^12\).

**Rakta dhatu**: The Bhautik predominance in Rakta is Agni and Jala\(^13\) (water). Rakta is also said to be Panchabhautika\(^14\) and the Gunas are listed out with respect to its Bhutas. It is endowed with Gunas like Snigdha (unctuous), Laghu (light), Drava (liquid) etc\(^14\). 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 Gunas of its Ashraya (which gives shelter), the Pitta\(^15\). Other than Jeevana (enlivening); Varnaprasada (increases complexion), Mamsapushhti (nourish the muscle tissue), offering Bala (strength), Sukha (happiness), Ayu (life) etc are the Karmas 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
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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 in heart where as Amla Rasa acts as Hrudya. Hrudaya is also told as one of the sites of Pitta Dosha. This also provides the Samanaya (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 takes. 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. 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, 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) Acharyar Susrutha specifies the use of Dravyas (substances) which are of same Yoni (category), to be precise Dalhana stipulate the administration of Dravya which are Tejogunabhyuisha (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. 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.

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 Visesha 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-Snigdhaguna. This sequentially results in the Dushti of Rakta leading to the above mentioned diseases like Pandu, Raktaapitta, 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 yoni 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 Vataunolomana. 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 experts direct effect on Tridosha (three basic humors) and saptadhatus (seven tissues) in Sharirra (body). When consumed in right way-Samyakyoga, Aahara maintains Sharirra while Ati (excess), Mithya (improper), Hinayoga (inadequate manner) leads to awful effects on Sharirra. 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 Siddhantas (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, Raktaapitta 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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