

A PURVIEW OF *SHAD RASA* AND *VIPAK*: ITS ATTRIBUTES AND ACTIONS AS MENTIONED BY VARIOUS TEXTS

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Article Received date: 21 June 2025

Article Revised date: 11 July 2025

Article Accepted date: 01 August 2025



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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda emphasizes Rasa (taste) as the foundation of dietetics and pharmacology. The six tastes (*Shad Rasa*)—*Madhura* (sweet), *Amla* (sour), *Lavana* (salty), *Katu* (pungent), *Tikta* (bitter), and *Kashaya* (astringent)—each possess distinct *Mahabhuta* compositions, attributes (*guna*), and actions (*karma*). Their effects extend to *doshas*, *dhatu*s, and *malas*, with imbalances resulting in disease. Beyond *Rasa*, *Vipaka* (post-digestive transformation) and *Virya* (potency) govern the deeper pharmacodynamics of substances. The hierarchy of action—*Rasa* → *Vipaka* → *Virya* → *Prabhava*—reflects the multi-layered Ayurvedic approach to therapeutics. Classical texts, including *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, provide elaborate accounts of *Shad Rasa* and *Vipaka*, their physiological roles, and the complications of excess intake. Select modern studies affirm these concepts, linking *Vipaka* with metabolic transformations and *Rasa* with pharmacological action. This article presents a comprehensive review of the attributes and actions of *Shad Rasa* and *Vipaka* as detailed in authoritative texts, along with their clinical and applied significance.

KEYWORDS: *Shad Rasa*, *Vipaka*, Ayurveda, Pharmacodynamics, *Dosha*, *Rasa*, *Virya*.

INTRODUCTION

Rasa, as described in Ayurveda, transcends sensory perception to encompass therapeutic function. The *Shad Rasa* influence body and mind through their *Mahabhuta* composition and interactions with *doshas*. *Vipaka*, the post-digestive effect, further refines their long-term impact on metabolism and tissue transformation. *Virya* and *Prabhava* contribute additional dimensions, making Ayurvedic pharmacology both systematic and holistic. By revisiting classical sources and correlating with modern insights, this article evaluates the enduring significance of *Shad Rasa* and *Vipaka*.^[1-3]

Origin of Rasa

All *Rasas* arise from *Panchamahabhutas*, with *Aap* (water) as the substratum for manifestation. Moon is the governing deity of water. the atmospheric water or *Antariksha Jala* is *Sheeta* (cold in potency), *Laghu* (light in nature) and *Avyakta rasa* (unmanifested state of *Rasa*). The moment it starts falling from the sky it gets filled with the Properties of *Panchamahabhuta*. *Madhura* arises from *Prithvi* and *Jala*, *Amla* from *Prithvi* and *Agni*, *Lavana* from *Jala* and *Agni*, *Katu* from *Vayu* and *Agni*,

Tikta from *Vayu* and *Akasha*, and *Kashaya* from *Vayu* and *Prithvi*. This elemental basis explains their inherent attributes and actions.

All *Panchamahabhuta* exists in all *Rasa* but the *Rasa* are formed due to the dominance of two *Mahabhoot*, and acts due to dominance of one *Mahabhoot* in each of them. In *Lavana Rasa* *Aap* and *Agni Mahabhuta* are the dominant *rasa* hence it should be *Sheeta* and *Ushna*, but *Lavana* is *Ushna Veerya* as the *Mahabhuta* manifests only some *Guna* and not all as it is the nature of *Mahabhuta* this is explained by *Chakrapani*. In case of *Makushtha Jala Mahabhuta* manifests as *Madhura Rasa* not *Snigdha guna*. The attribute of *Ushna* is not exhibited in case of *Saindhav Lavana* even though it is formed from the dominancy of *Agni Mahabhuta*.^[2-5]

Attributes and Actions of Shad Rasa

Madhura (Sweet): *Prithvi* + *Jala* as per *Charak*. Explication when kept in the mouth it spreads in the entire mouth (*Asyam Vyapnum*) *Guna*: *Guru*, *Snigdha*, *Sheeta*. *Karma*: Nourishes *dhatu*s, enhances longevity, strengthens immunity. Excess leads to obesity, *Kapha*

aggravation, diabetes, and sluggish metabolism. Amla (Sour): Prithvi + Agni as per Charak. (Jala + Agni as per Sushrut) Explication Clarity of mouth, (Mukha bodhanat) Burning sensation in the mouth and throat (Asya Kantha Viddaha) Guna: Laghu, Snigdha, Ushna. Karma: Improves appetite, energizes. Excess causes hyperacidity, skin diseases, and Pitta aggravation.

Lavana (Salty): Jala + Agni as per Charak, Vagbhatand Nagarjuna.(Pruthvi+ Agni as per Sushrut Explication Burning sensation in the mouth (MukhaViddaha) Guna: Snigdha, Ushna. Karma: Improves digestion, softens tissues. Excess results in hypertension, premature aging, alopecia. Katu (Pungent): Vayu + Agni. Explication Pricking pain in the tongue (Tudati)Due to burning

sensation (Vidaha) it causes watering in the mouth, nose and eyes (Mukha, Nasa, Akshi Srava) Guna: Laghu, Ruksha, Ushna. Karma: Clears channels, reduces Kapha. Excess leads to emaciation, infertility, and Vata disorders.

Tikta (Bitter): Vayu + Akasha. Explication it produces freshness in the mouth (Mukha Vaishadya) dryness of mouth (Sosha) Guna: Laghu, Ruksha, Sheeta. Karma: Detoxifies, reduces Pitta-Kapha. Excess causes debility, dryness, and Vata aggravation. Kashaya (Astringent): Vayu + Prithvi. Explication It obstructs the throat (Kantham Badhnati) Guna: Ruksha, Laghu, Sheeta. Karma: Healing, anti-inflammatory. Excess leads to dryness, constipation, and infertility.^[4-6]

Effects of Excessive intake of Rasa	
Madhura	Kasa (cough), Shwas (Dysnoea), Pratishaya (Coryza), Alasaka (Intestinal hypotony), Shita Jwara, Galaganda (Goitre) Ganda mala (Scrofula) Vasti Dhamani Gala Upalepa (Coating in the bladder vessels and throat) Aksha amaya (Eye diseases) Abhisya (Conjunctivitis)
Amla	Tarshayati (Thirst), Raktam dusayati (Vitiation of blood), Pittam abhivardhayati (Increases Pitta) Mansam Vidadhati (Decomposition of muscles) Uras Kantha and Hrudaya Daha (Burning sensation in the Kantha, Chest and cardiac region)
Lavan	Pittam Kopayati (Vitiates Pitta), Raktam Vardhayati (Aggravates blood), Tarshayati (Causes Thirst) Murcchayati (Causes fainting) Tapayati (Induces hotness), Darayati (Causes erosion, Kushnati Mamsani (Depletion of muscle tissue) Pumsatva Upahanti (Causes Impotency), Vali Palitya, Khalitya Apadayanti (Produces premature wrinkling, graying of hair and baldness). V Lohita Pitta janayati, Amlapitta janayati, Visarpa Janayati, Vata rakta, Janyati, Vicharchika, Janayati Indralupta janayati (excess lavan rasa causes Hemorrhagic disorders, Hyper acidity, erysipelas, Gout, excema, alopecia etc.
Katu	Punsatva Upahanti (Causes impotency) Mohayanti (Can induce unconsciousness) Glapayati, Sadayati, Karsayati, Sarir Tapa Upajanayati, Balam Kshinoti, Kampa, Toda, Bheda (Causes exhaustion, Weariness, emaciation, Increases the body temperature, Reduces the body strength, Stabbing pain and tremors in the hand legs and all over the body)
Tikta	Raukshtva, Kharatva, Vaishadya (Increases, Dryness, Roughness and non sliminess in the body) Shoshayati- Rudhira, Mansa, Meda, Asthi, Majja, Shukra (Reduces the above Dhatu in the body). Reduces strength. Glyapayati (Causes weariness in the body) Mohayati, Bhramayati, Vata Vikar Upajanayati (Causes confusion, giddiness, increases Vata diseases.
Kashay	Punsatva upahanti (Decreases virility), Vistambhya Jaram (Delays digestion) Stambayati (Causes Stiffness) Dues to Khara – rough, Visada- non sliminess and Rukshata- dryness it causes Pakshavada (hemiplegia) Graha (Spasm) Ardita (Facial Palsy), and Vata disorders.

Rasa Examples and Exceptions				
Rasa	Actions	Exceptions		Examples
Madhura	Usually Increases Kapha	Jeerna Shali, Mudga, Godhuma, Kshoudra, Seeta, Jangam Mansa	Gold	Shatavari, Parushaka, Panasa, Ghruta
Amla	Usually Increases Pitta	Dadima, Amalaki	Silver	Takra, Dadhi, Amrataka, Kapitha
Lavan	Usually Apathyakara and Achakshushya	Saindhav	Lead	Sauvarchala, Krushna, Beeda, Samudra
Katu	Usually Vata Prakopak	Pimpili, Rasona		Hingu, Maricha, Vidanga, Mutra
Tikta	Usually Vata Prakopak	Amruta, Patola, Shunthi,		Patol, Trayanti, Chandan, Ushir
Kashay	Usually Sheeta and Stambhan	Abhaya	Mukta	Kadamba, Udumbara, Pravala, Karjura, Utpala

Rasa	Mahabhuta	Rutu	Veerya	Vipaka	Guna
Madhura	Pruthvi+Jala	Hemant	Sheeta	Madhura	Uttam- Snigdha-Sheeta-Guru. As per Sushrut it is Snigdha and Guru
Amla	Pruthvi+ Agni	Varsha	Ushna	Amla	Madhyam Snigdha-& Ushna. As per Sushrut it is Snigdha and Guru
Lavan	Jala+ Agni	Sharad	Ushna	Madhura	Avara Snigdha & Guru Uttam Ushna. As per Sushrut it is Snigdha and Guru
Katu	Vayu + Agni	Greeshma	Ushan	Katu	Madhayam Ruksha& Laghu Avara Ushna. As per Sushrut it is Ruksha and Laghu
Tikta	Vayu+ Akasha	Shishira	Sheeta	Katu	Avara Ruksha& Sheetata, Uttam Laghu. As per Sushrut it is Ruksha and Laghu
Kashaya	Vayu+ Pruthvi	Vasant	Sheeta	Katu	Uttam Ruksha- Madhyam Sheetata& Guru.As per Sushrut it is Ruksha and Laghu

Concept of Vipaka

Vipaka is the final post-digestive transformation that determines the systemic effect of food and drugs. Ayurveda described three major types of Vipaka as mentioned in **Figure 1**. Madhura supports anabolic processes and dhatu nourishment; Amla promotes catabolism and Pitta increase; Katu aggravates Vata and leads to depletion. Madhura and Amla Vipak are Snigdha in nature and they help in the easy excretion of Vata ,

Mutra and Purisha. Where as Katu Vipak is Ruksha in nature and it causes difficult exertion of Vata, Mutra, and Purisha. . Madhura vipaki dravya are usually Shukrala, improves pShukra dhatu production, and Katu ad Amla Vipaki Dravya usually act opposite. Madhur Vipak is Guru in nature and Amla and Katu Vipak is Laghu in nature. An experimental validation with *Bridelia stipularis* in rats confirmed its Madhura Vipaka, showing measurable metabolic changes.^[5-7]

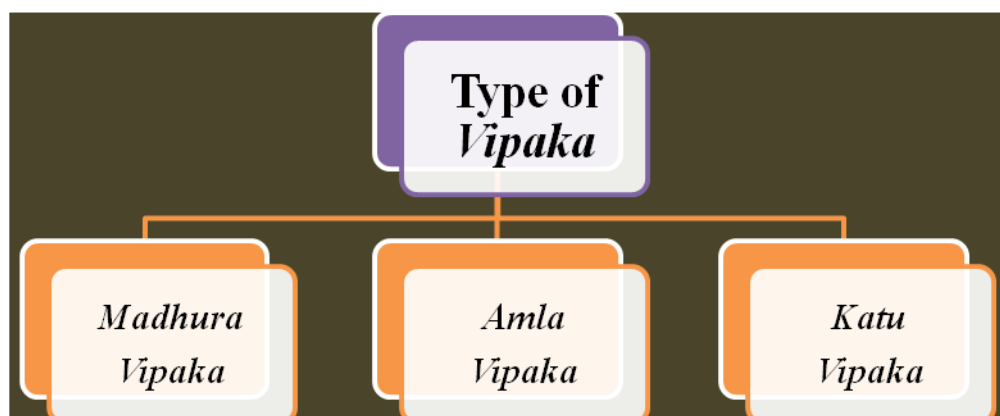


Figure 1: Major type of Vipaka.

Rasa can be determined when in contact with the tongue, Vipak can be assessed by its action. And Virya can be determined with the association with the body or when in immediate contact. Vipak can be identified by the Knowledge of its Rasa in Samanya pratyarabdha dravya. As per Arunadutta the Mahabhuta which are the causative factors for the uttpatti of the dravya are in accordance to the causative factors of the Rasa Virya Vipak then they are known as Samanya Pratyarabdha dravya and if they are not it is known as Vichitra pratyarabdha Dravya. The actions of Vipak are similar to the Rasa of that dravya.

Clinical and Applied Significance

The principles of Shad Rasa and Vipaka are vital for dietetics, pharmacology, and preventive medicine. In modern terms, they may be compared with receptor

biology, digestion-absorption pathways, and metabolic transformations. Their integrative potential provides scope for further validation and application in lifestyle disorders, chronic diseases, and holistic therapeutics.^[1, 6, 7]

CONCLUSION

Madhura, Amla, Lavan, Katu, Tikta, Kashay are Shad Rasa. Madhura, Amla and Katu are the two Vipak as per Charakacharya. Shad Rasa and Vipaka, as described in authoritative Ayurvedic texts, embody a detailed and dynamic understanding of diet-drug actions. Their attributes, therapeutic roles, and complications on imbalance make them timeless guides for maintaining health and treating disease. Supported by emerging modern validations, these principles remain profoundly relevant for integrative medicine.

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