

Ashtanga Hridayam with Dr. Rekha Radhamony

All About Substances & The 6 Tastes

(Dravyadivijnaneeyam & Rasabhedeeyam)

Importance of Substances

“Panchabhutatmakam dravyam”

Dravya is important because the rasa, virya, vipaka etc are dependent on it.

Dravya is made up of 5 elements

With the inseparable combination of 5 elements, Dravya is formed

Each dravya's characteristics depends on the predominance of the 5 elements

Universe is made of 5 elements – called “Prapancha”



Panchamahabhutas
(The 5 Elements)

Elements	Name	Qualities of Element	Qualities of Dravyas	
Earth	Prithvi	Heavy Bulky Stable Smell	Guruta (heaviness) Sthairya (stability) Samghata (compactness) ~ Well nourished qualities	Moves downwards
Water	Ap	Liquidity Cold Heavy Unctuous/oily/moisture Dull Thick/dense Rasa (taste)	Snehana (lubrication, moistness), Avishyanda (secretion, moisture) Kleda (wetness) Prahlada (satiation, contentment, satisfaction) Bandhakrut (cohesion, binding, holding together)	Moves downwards
Fire	Tejas	Dry Penetrating/sharp Hot Non-slimy Minute Appearance, form	Daha (burning sensation) Bha (luster) Varna (expression of colour) Pachana (digestion, transformation, putrefaction)	Moves upwards
Air	Vayu	Dry Clear, non-slimy Light Tactile sensation/ touch	Rooksha (dryness) Laghava (lightness) Vishada (clarity, transparency) Vichara (movement, activities)	Moves upwards
Space	Akasham	Minute Clear, transparent Light Sound	Soushiryam (hollowness) Laghavam (weightlessness)	

The 5 Elements & Qualities of Dravyas

Everything is Medicinal!

”Jagatyevam anoushadham”

There is nothing in the universe, which cannot be used as medicine. One should have the knowledge of purpose of each substance to use any substance as medicine



Rasa (Taste)

Tastes	Name	Characteristics
Primary Taste	Rasa	Perceived clearly
Secondary Taste	Anurasa	Not perceived clearly or manifests in the end


Primary & Secondary Tastes (Rasa & Anurasa)

Taste in a substance arises out of Pancha mahabhuta (5 element) combination.

Hence, because of the combination of the 5 elements, there is no substance having only one taste.

Similarly, there is no disease arising out of a single Dosha.

Any disease will be involved of more than one Dosha.



Potency (Virya)

Virya (Potency)

Charaka says that Virya is that property which is responsible for the specific action of a drug

No drug action is possible without Virya

All actions are possible only by Virya

Guru (heavy)	Laghu (light)
Snigdha (unctuous/ oily)	Rooksha (dry)
Hima (cold)	Ushna (hot)
Mridu (soft)	Kathina (hard)

8 Qualities of Virya

Out of the 20 qualities, these 8 qualities are predominantly seen in any substance, these 8 qualities are stronger than the rest qualities, are important in day-to-day life, applicable in majority of substances. Hence, these 8 have been given importance

Types of Viryas

Though substances are of many kinds and qualities, fire and water are the most powerful ones

VIRYA	ELEMENT
Ushna (Hot)	Fire
Sheeta (Cold)	Water

Action of Hot Potency (Ushna Virya)

Delusion

Excess thirst

Exhaustion

Perspiration

Burning sensation

Transformation/ Digestion

Reduction of Vata & Kapha

Action of Cold Potency (Sheeta Virya)


Satiation/ happiness

Enlivening/ promotes life activities

Withholding/ Stoppage (Stambhana)

Purification of Blood

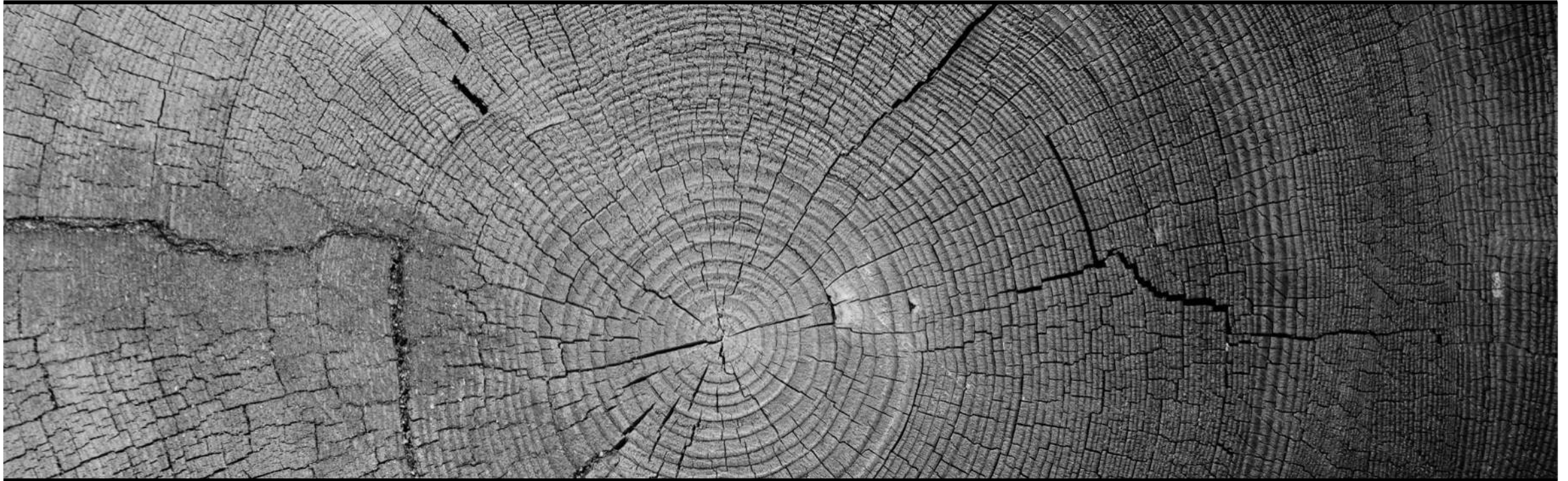
Calms Pitta

A photograph of a light-colored cup of coffee on a matching saucer, placed on a light-colored wooden table. To the right of the coffee is a small glass vase containing green ferns and red flowers, tied with a yellow ribbon. The background is a blurred window with some text visible. The text 'Vipaka (Post-digestive Taste)' is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

Vipaka
(Post-digestive
Taste)

Vipaka

The change that a Rasa (taste) undergoes at the end of digestion, due to the action of Agni (Jatharagni)



Taste	Vipaka
Sweet	Sweet
Salty	Sweet
Sour	Sour
Bitter	Pungent
Pungent	Pungent
Astringent	Pungent

Types of Vipaka

The effects of the tastes which are felt in the mouth and of the Vipaka (taste conversion after digestion) are similar

That means the effect of sweet taste and sweet Vipaka are similar

Mechanism of action of substances

Substances have specific action due to its

- Rasa
- Virya
- Vipaka
- Prabhava

Out of the 4, the powerful one suppresses the qualities of the others

Power of Action

When two opposing qualities are present in equal strength

- Vipaka > Rasa
- Virya > Rasa & Vipaka
- Prabhava > Rasa, Vipaka & Virya



Prabhava
(The Special
Effect)

What is Prabhava


Special action exhibited by a substance

Prabhava is more powerful than Rasa, Virya & Vipaka

Though Rasa, Guna, Vipaka, and Veerya in a drug may be similar, sometimes the herb may exhibit entirely different action opposite to these qualities. That special effect of the drug overruling inherent qualities is called as Prabhava.

Examples of Prabhava

- Danti and Chitraka – Though Danti – *Baliospermum montanum* is identical with Chitraka (*Plumbago zeylanica*) with respect to Rasa (taste) etc, Danti is a purgative while Chitraka is not. Hence, purgation is the Prabhava of Danti
- Madhuka – Licorice – *Glycyrrhiza glabra* and Mridvika (black raisins)
Madhuka and black raisins – both have similar qualities. But black raisins has mild purgative action, but licorice does not.
- Milk and ghee – both possess similar qualities. But ghee increases digestion strength, but milk does not. Hence increasing digestion strength is the Prabhava of ghee

A top-down view of a wooden surface covered with various dried herbs and flowers. In the center, there is a mortar and pestle with green leaves inside. Surrounding it are several small wooden bowls containing different types of dried plant material, including yellow flowers, blue and yellow petals, green buds, dark seeds, and various green and brown powders. A brass scale is visible in the upper left. The overall scene is rich and textured, representing a variety of medicinal substances.

Extraordinary
Substances (Vichitra
Pratyarabdha Dravya)

Extraordinary Substances



Both wheat and barley possess sweet Rasa and are heavy. Yet wheat reduces Vata but barley aggravates it.



Fish and milk are sweet and heavy, but milk is cold, and fish is hot



The 6 Tastes (Rasabheddeeyam)

The Origin of Taste (Rasa Utpatti)

Taste	Primary Element 1	Primary Element 2
Sweet	Earth	Water
Sour	Fire	Water
Salty	Fire	Water
Bitter	Air	Space
Pungent	Air	Fire
Kashaya	Air	Earth



Characteristics of Taste (Rasa Lakshana)

Sweet

Sticks to the oral cavity

Gives a feeling of contentment
and pleasure

Gives comfort to the sense
organs

It is liked even by ants



Sour

Makes the mouth watery

Causes horripilation, tingling of the teeth and leads to closing of the eyes and brows.



Salty

Increases salivation

Causes burning sensation in the
mouth and throat



Pungent

Stimulates the tip of the tongue

Causes irritation of the tongue

Produces secretions from the eyes, nose and mouth

Causes burning sensation of the mouth



Bitter

Cleanses the mouth

Makes perception of other tastes
difficult



Astringent

Inactivates the tongue &
diminishes its capacity to perceive
taste

Causes the feeling of obstruction
in the throat





Action of Rasa (Rasakarma)

Action of Sweet Taste

Habituated since birth

Gives strength to the body tissues

Very good for children, aged, wounded, emaciated

Improves skin complexion

Improves hair

Improves strength of sense organs

Increases Ojas (essence of the tissues, immunity)

Causes weight gain

Action of Sweet Taste (contd.)

Increases breast milk

Heals fractured bones

Not easily digestible

Prolongs life

Helps in day-to-day activities

Unctuous

Balances Pitta, Vata and Visha (poison)

Good for the throat

Sweet Taste in Excess

Diseases due
to Medas (fat)
and Kapha

Obesity

Asthma

Diabetes

Enlargement of
glands around
the neck

Tumours, etc.

Action of Sour Taste

Stimulates Agni, digestive, increases appetite & satiating

Unctuous

Good for the heart

Hot in potency

Cold on touch (coolant, on external application relieves burning sensation)

Moistening

Causes aggravation of Kapha, Pitta and Rakta (blood)

Makes the inactive Vata move downwards

Sour Taste in Excess

Looseness of the
body

Loss of strength

Blindness

Giddiness

Itching (irritation)

Pallor

Visarpa – Herpes,
spreading skin
disease

Swelling

Visphota
(pustules/boils)

Excessive thirst

Fevers

Action of Salty Taste

Relieves rigidity of the body

Clears obstruction in the channels and pores

Increases digestive activity

Lubricative

Causes sweating

Penetrates deep into the tissues

Improves taste

Salty Taste in Excess

Causes vitiation of
Rakta (blood) and
Vata

Causes baldness

Graying of hair

Wrinkles, skin
diseases,
spreading skin
diseases (Visarpa)

Excessive thirst

Decrease of
strength of the
body

Action of Bitter Taste

Not pleasant to tastebuds but cures anorexia, worms, thirst, poison, skin diseases, loss of consciousness, fever, nausea & burning sensation & increases intelligence, cleanses breastmilk, cleanses throat

Bitter taste balances Pitta and Kapha

Dry. Causes dryness. Dries up moisture, fat, muscle-fat, bone marrow, feces and urine

Easily digestible, increases intelligence

Cold in potency

**Bitter
Taste in
Excess**

**Causes
depletion of
Dhatus (tissues)**

**Diseases due to
Vata**

Action of Pungent Taste

Cures diseases of throat, allergic rashes, leprosy and other skin diseases, Alasaka, swelling, reduces ulcers

Dries up the unctuousness (greasiness), fat, and moisture (water); dries up moisture of the food

Pungent taste increases hunger, it is digestive & improves taste

Shodhana (cleansing, eliminates the doshas)

Breaks up hard masses

Dilates the channels

Balances Kapha

Pungent Taste in Excess

Causes thirst

Depletes Sukla (sperm)

Depletes overall strength

Causes fainting & tremors

Causes pain in the waist, back etc.

Action of Astringent Taste

Balances Pitta and Kapha

Not easily digestible

Cleanses the blood

Helps healing of ulcers (wounds)

Has cold potency

Dries up the moisture and fat, water-absorbent, causing constipation & dryness

Hinders digestion of undigested food

Cleanses the skin

Astringent

Taste in

Excess

Causes stasis of food without digestion

Causes flatulence

Pain in the heart region

Excess thirst, emaciation

Loss of virility

Obstruction of the channels

Constipation

Group of Sweet Substances (Madhura Gana)

- Ghrita - Ghee
- Hema - Gold
- Guda - Jaggery
- Milk
- Sugarcane
- Kshaudra - Honey
- Draksha - Grapes
- Madhuka – Licorice

Others like Akshoda, Mocha, Chocha, Parushaka, Abhiru, Vira, Panasa, Rajadana, the three Bala (Bala, Atibala and Nagabala), the two Medas – Meda and Mahameda, the four Parni – Shalaparni, Prishnaparni, Mudgaparni, Mashaparni, Jivanti – *Leptadenia reticulata*, Jivaka – *Malaxis acuminata* D.Don / *Microstylis wallichii* Lindl. , Rishabhaka, Madhooka – *Madhuka longifolia*, Bimbi – *Coccinia indica*, Vidari – *Pueraria tuberosa*, the two Sravani – Mundi and Sravani, Ksheerasukla, Tugakshiri, the two Ksheerini, Gambhari, the two Saha, Gokshura

Group of Sour Substances (Amla Gana)

Amla

Tamarind

Matulunga (Citron)

Pomegranate

Silver

Buttermilk

Curd

Mango

Wood Apple

Others like Amlavetasa (*Garcinia pedunculata*), Chuka, Palevata, Amrataka, Bhavya – *Dillenia indica*, Karamardaka – Bengal currant

Group of Salts (Lavana Gana)

Rock salt

Sochal salt

Black salt

Bida salt

Table salt

Kshara (alkalies from the salt group)

Others like Audbhida, romaka,
pamshuja, seesa

Group of Bitters (Tikta Gana)

Sandalwood

Neem

Bael fruit

Giloy/ Guduchi (Tinospora)

Turmeric

Bronze (Kamsya)

Iron

Others like Patoli, Trayanti – Gentiana kurroa, Valaka, Usira – Vetiveria zizanioides, Bhunimba – the creat (whole plant) – Andrographis paniculata, Nimba – Neem – Azadirachta indica, Katuka – Picrorhiza kurroa, Tagara – Indian Valerian (root) – Valeriana wallichii, Agarū, Dhanvayasaka, Mahat Pancamula – Bilva, Agnimantha, Shyonaka, Gambhari, Patala the two, Vyaghri – Brihati and Kantakari, Visala, Ativisha, Vacha, Vatsaka – Holarrhena antidysenterica, Naktamala, Musta – Nut grass (root) – Cyperus rotundus, Murva, Atarushaka – Adhatoda vasica, Patha – Cyclea peltata, Apamarga – Prickly Chaff Flower – Achyranthes aspera, etc

Group of Pungents (Katu Varga)

Asafetida

Black pepper

Long pepper

Ginger

Urine and bile of animals

Others like Krimijit – Vidanga,
Panchakola – Chitraka, Pippalimoola,
Chitraka and ginger, leafy vegetables
such as Kutheraka, Arushkara etc.

Group of Astringents – (Kashaya Varga)

Honey

Pearl

Coral

Dates

Lotus

Others like Pathya – Chebuic Myrobalan (fruit rind) – Terminalia chebula, Aksha – Terminalia bellirica, Shireesa, Khadira – Black catechu (heart wood extract) – Acacia catechu, Kadamba, Udumbara, Anjana – Aqueous extract of Berberis aristata (antimony), Gairika – Purified Red Ochre, Bala kapittha, Utpala – Nymphaea stellata

TASTE	USUAL ACTION	EXCEPTION
Sweet	Increases Kapha	Shali (more than one year old rice), barley, green gram, wheat, honey, rock sugar and meat of animals of desert doesn't increase Kapha
Sour	Increases Pitta	Pomegranate & Amla balances Pitta
Salty	Bad for the eyes	Rock salt is good for the eyes
Bitter	Non- aphrodisiac & increases Vata	Amrita (Giloy/ Guduchi), long pepper, dried ginger, garlic decreases Vata & aphrodisiac
Pungent		
Astringent	Cold in potency & obstructive	Abhaya (T.chebula) helps purgation

Exceptions

Tastes & Potency

Potency	Tastes
Hot	Pungent, Sour, Salty
Cold	Sweet, Bitter, Astringent
Dry	Bitter, Pungent, Astringent
Oily	Salty, Sour, Sweet
Heavy	Salty, Astringent, Sweet
Light	Sour, Pungent, Bitter

Rasa Samyoga Samkhya

Each taste separates = 6 Rasas

Two tastes together = 15 combinations (Sweet + Sour, Sweet + Salty)

Three tastes together = 20 combinations (Sweet + Sour + Salty, etc)

Four tastes together = 15 combinations

Five tastes together = 6 combinations

Six tastes together = 1 combination

Total = 63 combinations

Q+A

