

3 **Differential biochemical response among Banana (*Musa spp.*)**
4 **genotypes against Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV)**
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10 **ABSTRACT**
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The present study was carried out to explore the adaptive mechanism and biochemical responses in two banana cultivars viz., Rasthali and Grand Naine against the banana bunchy top virus (BBTV). In the leaf samples of BBTV infected Rasthali and Grand Naine, estimated the total chlorophyll, carbohydrates, phenols and enzyme activities such as peroxidase (POX), polyphenol oxidase (PPO), catalase (CAT), ascorbate peroxidase (APX), guaiacol peroxidase (GPX) and superoxide dismutase (SOD). The infected samples of both the cultivars revealed a significant increase in the defense enzymes such as PPO, POX, APX, GPX and CAT over the healthy sample. Higher total phenols in Rasthali healthy plants which further significantly increased after BBTV infection was observed in comparison to Grand Naine. In contrast to Grand Naine, Rasthali showed higher polyphenol oxidase (PPO) activity contributing to increased polyphenol formation. The higher superoxide dismutase (SOD) activity in virus infected Rasthali was observed in comparison to Grand Naine. The increased amount of total phenols, polyphenols and SOD activity in Rasthali might have contributed to less susceptibility to bunchy top virus. However, total protein and chlorophyll content were reduced after BBTV infection in both the banana cultivars.

12
13 *Keywords: [Banana Bunchy top virus, Rasthali, Grand Naine, Biochemical changes and*
14 *Defense enzymes]*
15

16 **1. INTRODUCTION**

17 Plants are frequently exposed to infection by a wide array of pathogens that show different
18 responses in the host plant. During compatible plant-pathogen interaction, along with the
19 development of visible symptoms, the pathogen also adversely affects the growth and

20 development, physiological status and yield of a plant [35]. Plants have evolved various pre-
21 existing physical and chemical barriers, as well as inducible defense responses that restrict
22 pathogen colonization [18,37,38]. Globally, bananas and plantains are the fourth most
23 important agricultural produce which is attacked by various pests and pathogens causing
24 major production problems. Grand Naine (AAA subgroup Cavendish) is one of the most
25 commonly cultivated commercial Cavendish cultivar in the world. Rasthali (AAB subgroup
26 Silk) is cultivated mostly in India and is popular in the local and world market as a premium
27 dessert variety similar to Cavendish bananas. Plant viral diseases cause significant losses
28 by reducing plant growth and yield. Among the banana viral diseases, Banana bunchy top
29 disease (BBTD) is one of the most destructive viral diseases affecting various banana
30 cultivars. There is no resistance germplasm available in bananas and plantains; however,
31 the level of susceptibility varies among the banana cultivars.

32

33 Banana bunchy top disease affects the fruit and foliage and is caused by a single-strand
34 DNA virus, the banana bunchy top virus (BBTV; Genus *Babuvirus*; Family *Nanoviridae*).
35 The BBTV virus colonizes in the phloem tissue, which is damaging the host cells. The name
36 of the disease comes from the symptom which occurs in banana plants, in which the
37 emerging new leaves are narrower than usual, yellow and flat, which causes a "bunchy"
38 appearance at the top. In addition, few distinctive symptoms are 'morse code streaking,'
39 'green J hooks' and 'keikis'. Viruses depend on the host for their replication and other
40 metabolic processes, which instigate significant changes in their usual physiological
41 processes such as loss of pigment contents, increasing respiration rates, soluble sugar, and
42 starch accumulation and production level of enzymatic antioxidants. Due to the viral
43 infection, various changes occur in the host plants at the molecular level, thereby leading to
44 various biological and physiological changes. Hence, it is necessary to estimate the
45 physiological and biochemical changes in banana cultivars Rasthali and Grand Naine to
46 know the biochemical changes occurring due to BBTV infection. The present investigation
47 will lead to better understanding of the defense mechanism in two banana cultivars, which
48 will be useful for adopting suitable control strategy against bunchy top disease in banana.

49 **2. MATERIAL AND METHODS**

50 **2.1 Plant material and source of infection**

51 Banana cultivars Rasthali and Grand Naine were used in the present investigation. Leaf
52 samples were collected from BBTV infected plants in Orchard of Tamil Nadu Agricultural
53 University, Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu, India. The leaf samples from the healthy plants
54 of each cultivar were taken as control.

55 **2.2 PCR confirmation of BBTV presence in the infected banana samples**

56 The plant genomic DNA was extracted from healthy and infected (showing characteristic
57 symptoms of BBTV) samples of Rasthali and Grand Naine by cetyl trimethyl ammonium
58 bromide (CTAB) method with some modification as described by [10] from 100 mg leaf
59 samples and subjected to PCR using the BBTV specific primer designed for Replicase gene
60 F-5' ACGACAGAATGGCGCGA3' and R- 5'TCAGCAAGAAACCAACTTTATTC3'. The PCR
61 products were resolved on 1 % Agarose gel, electrophoresed at 70 V for one h and the
62 amplicons were assessed with 1.0 kb DNA ladder.

63 **2.3. Leaf samples for biochemical analyses**

64 The most recent fully expanded leaves of BBTV infected samples were collected for various
65 analyses. All biochemical parameters were measured using a spectrophotometer (Jasco V-
66 730 BIO spectrophotometer, USA).

67 **2.4 Estimation of photosynthetic pigments:**

68 The photosynthetic pigments such as total chlorophyll, chlorophyll 'a' and chlorophyll 'b'
69 contents of healthy and infected leaves were estimated according to the non-destructive
70 DMSO method [16]. The absorbance was recorded at 663 and 645 nm, respectively in a
71 spectrophotometer, taking full concentration of the DMSO has blank. Chlorophyll a, b and
72 total chlorophyll were calculated by the following formulas:

73 Chlorophyll a (mg g⁻¹ tissue) = $\frac{[12.7(OD_{663}) - 2.69(OD_{645})] \times V}{1000} \times W$

74
75 Chlorophyll b (mg g⁻¹ tissue) = $\frac{[22.9(OD_{645}) - 4.68(OD_{663})] \times V}{1000} \times W$

76
77 Total Chlorophyll (mg g⁻¹ tissue) = $\frac{[8.02(OD_{663}) + 20.20(OD_{645})] \times V}{1000} \times W$

78
79 Where OD, Optical density at respective nm, V, Final volume of chlorophyll extract, W, Fresh
80 weight of the tissue extracted.

81 **2.5 Total sugars and starch content:**

82 Total reducing sugars were calculated according to the method described by [11] and the
83 total starch content method explained by [26]. About 0.5 gm of healthy and infected leaves
84 were taken and homogenised with 80 % ethanol and centrifuged at 5000 rpm for 15 min.
85 The supernatants were pooled and heated in a water bath at 85 °C until the ethanol was
86 evaporated entirely from the samples.

87
88 For total reducing sugar determination, healthy and virus-infected pooled supernatants were
89 taken and cold anthrone reagent was rapidly added to each tube and incubated for 10 min

90 on ice and cooled at room temperature. The absorbance of the samples was recorded at
91 625 nm in a spectrophotometer along with the blank sample. The amount of total sugars was
92 estimated by using a standard curve prepared for D-glucose. The content of reducing sugar
93 was expressed as mg g⁻¹ fresh weight.

94 For starch determination, the extract for total sugar was solubilized in five ml of 52 %
95 perchloric acid (PCA) and boiled at 80 °C for 10 min in a water bath. Three ml of distilled
96 water and five ml of anthrone reagent was added, incubated for 10 min on ice. The
97 absorbance of the samples was recorded at 625 nm in a spectrophotometer. The amount of
98 starch was determined by using D-glucose standard curve. The content of total starch was
99 expressed as mg g⁻¹ fresh weight.

100 **2.6 Phenolic content:**

101 Phenol content was measured using the Folin-Ciocalteu reagent. One-gram of fresh plant
102 material was homogenized using 80 % ethanol. The extract was subjected to centrifugation
103 at 3000 rpm for 15 min and the supernatant was separated. Then, 0.1 ml of ethanol extract
104 was evaporated on a water bath, to which six ml water was added and shaken well before
105 the addition of 0.5 ml Folin-Ciocalteu reagent. Two ml of 20 % sodium carbonate solution
106 was added to each test tube and after 30-45 min of incubation, the absorbance was
107 recorded at wavelength 660 nm against a reagent blank. Using pyrocatechol as standard, a
108 standard curve was generated to determine the concentration of total phenols in the leaf
109 extract [12].

110 **2.7 Measurement of total protein content**

111 Total protein was estimated by using the Bradford method [3] and absorbance was recorded
112 at 595 nm. Bovine serum albumin was used as a standard. Protein contents in leaf samples
113 were recorded as µg of protein per gram of leaf tissue.

114 **2.8 Preparation of enzyme extract:**

115 To obtain the total enzyme extract, a one-gram leaf sample was homogenized at 4°C in 1 ml
116 of extraction buffer [50 mM potassium phosphate buffer (pH 7.0), 1 % Triton X-100 and 7
117 mM 2-mercaptoethanol]. The obtained homogenate was then centrifuged at 12000 rpm for
118 20 min at 4°C. The resulting supernatant was used for analysis of enzymes.

119

120 **2.8.1 Peroxidase activity**

121 POX activity was assessed following the oxidation of pyrogallol [23]. For the assay, 3.5 ml of
122 phosphate buffer (pH-6.5) was taken in a clean and dry cuvette to it, 0.2 ml of enzyme

123 extract and 0.1 ml of freshly prepared pyrogallol solution were added. Then 0.2 ml of 0.2 M
124 H₂O₂ was added and instantly the absorbance of the reaction mixture was recorded at 430
125 nm at every 30-sec intervals up to 3 min. The specific activity of the enzyme was expressed
126 as micromoles pyrogallol oxidized per minute per milligram protein.

127

128 **2.8.2 Polyphenol oxidase activity**

129 PPO activity was determined according to the method described by [28]. For the assay, 0.2
130 ml of the enzyme extract was taken, to which 1 ml of catechol and 3.5 ml phosphate buffer
131 was added. The extract was incubated at 30 °C for 30 min. The activity was measured by
132 monitoring the increase in absorbance for 3 min at 410 nm. The specific activity of the
133 enzyme was expressed as micromoles catechol oxidized per minute per milligram protein.

134

135 **2.8.3 Catalase activity**

136 Catalase activity was calculated by measuring the rate of disappearance of H₂O₂ using the
137 method followed by [22]. The reaction mixture containing 2.5 ml of 50 mM phosphate buffer
138 (pH 7.4), 0.1 ml of 1 % H₂O₂ and 50 µl of enzyme extract was diluted to keep measurements
139 within the linear range of the analysis. The decrease in H₂O₂ was followed as a decline in
140 absorbance at 240 nm. Catalase activity was expressed as micromoles of H₂O₂ oxidized per
141 minute per milligram protein.

142

143 **2.8.4 Ascorbate peroxidase activity**

144 APX activity was determined using the method described by [6]. The one ml reaction mixture
145 consists of 50 mM phosphate buffer (pH 7.0) containing 0.1 mM EDTA, 0.5 mM ascorbate,
146 1.54 mM H₂O₂ and 50 µl of enzyme extract. The oxidation of ascorbate was followed by a
147 decrease in the absorbance at 240 nm. The enzyme-specific activity is expressed as
148 micromoles ascorbate oxidized per minute per milligram protein.

149

150 **2.8.5 Guaiacol peroxidase activity**

151 GPX activity was calculated using the method described by Upadhyaya et al. [36]. The
152 reaction mixture contained 2.5 ml of 50 mM phosphate buffer (pH 6.1), one ml of 1 % H₂O₂,
153 one ml of 1 % guaiacol and 20 µl of enzyme extract. The increase in absorbance at 420 nm
154 was recorded for 1 min. The enzyme-specific activity is expressed as micromoles guaiacol
155 oxidized per minute per milligram protein.

156

157 **2.8.6 Superoxide dismutase activity**

158 SOD was assayed by measuring its ability to inhibit the photochemical reduction of nitroblue
159 tetrazolium (NBT) using the method described by [8]. The reaction mixture consists of 50
160 mM phosphate buffer (pH 7.8), 13 mM methionine, 75 M NBT, 2 M riboflavin, 0.1 mM EDTA
161 and 50 μ L of enzyme extract. Riboflavin was added last and the tubes were subjected to
162 intermittent shaking. The absorbance of the reaction mixture was recorded
163 spectrophotometrically at 560 nm.

164

165 **2.9 Statistical analysis:**

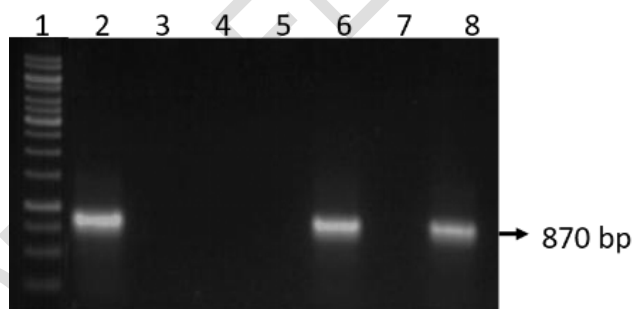
166 All the experiments were performed in two duplicates (n=4). The significance of differences
167 between healthy and infected samples was determined by using one-way analysis of
168 variance (ANOVA) and means and standard errors were calculated. Differences in means
169 were considered significant when the *P*-value was <0.05.

170

171 **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

172 **3.1 PCR based confirmation of BBTV**

173 The presence of BBTV in symptomatic leaves of Rasthali and Grand Naine was confirmed
174 by PCR amplification of 870 bp BBTV Rep gene using designed gene specific primers
175 (Fig.1.)



176

177 **Fig. 1. PCR amplification of BBTV Rep gene in symptomatic Rasthali and Grand Naine**
178 **plants**

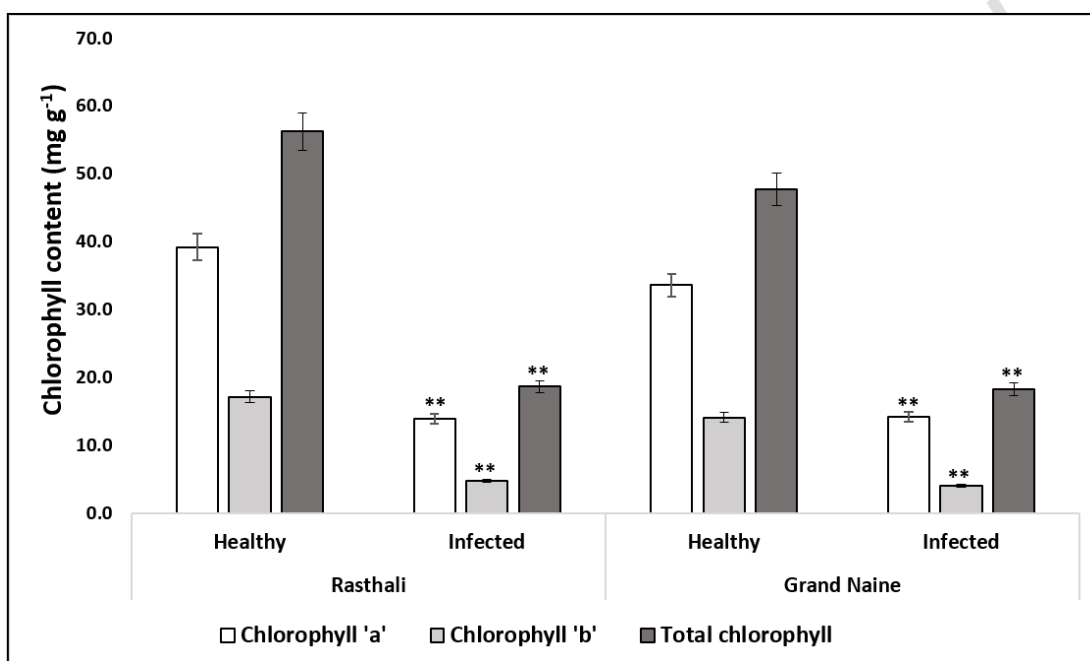
179 *Lane 1, 1 kb ladder; 2, positive control; 3, negative control; 4, water control; 5-6, Rasthali healthy and*
180 *infected sample; 7-8, Grand Naine healthy and infected sample.*

181

182 **3.2 Effect of BBTV incidence on the photosynthetic pigment**

183 The BBTV infected cultivars exhibited a two- fold significant reduction in photosynthetic
184 pigment contents (chlorophyll a, chlorophyll b and total chlorophyll) compared to healthy
185 cultivars (Fig. 2). The reduction in the chlorophyll content in the infected plant reduces the
186 photosynthetic capacity and plant growth, leaving the plant stunted and chlorotic resulting in
187 the symptom expression. This difference in the chlorophyll content was attributed to the

188 stimulation of cell enzymes like chlorophyllase that degrades chlorophyll [14], or it may be
 189 the effect of the virus on pigment synthesis [2, 33] which disturbs the physiological
 190 processes like photosynthesis. A recent study suggests the possibility of BBTv utilizing the
 191 chloroplast for the synthesis of viral proteins [39]. They found during BBTv infection, outer
 192 membranes of chloroplasts are disrupted and crystalline aggregation of virus- like particles
 193 accumulates in it.
 194



195

196 **Fig. 2. Chlorophyll content of healthy and infected Rasthali and Grand Naine plants.**

197 *Data represent the mean ± standard error of mean of four independent replications. Significant*
 198 *differences in healthy and infected from each cultivar analysed by Student's t test (*P<0.05, **P<0.01)*
 199 *are shown.*

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3.3 Carbohydrates

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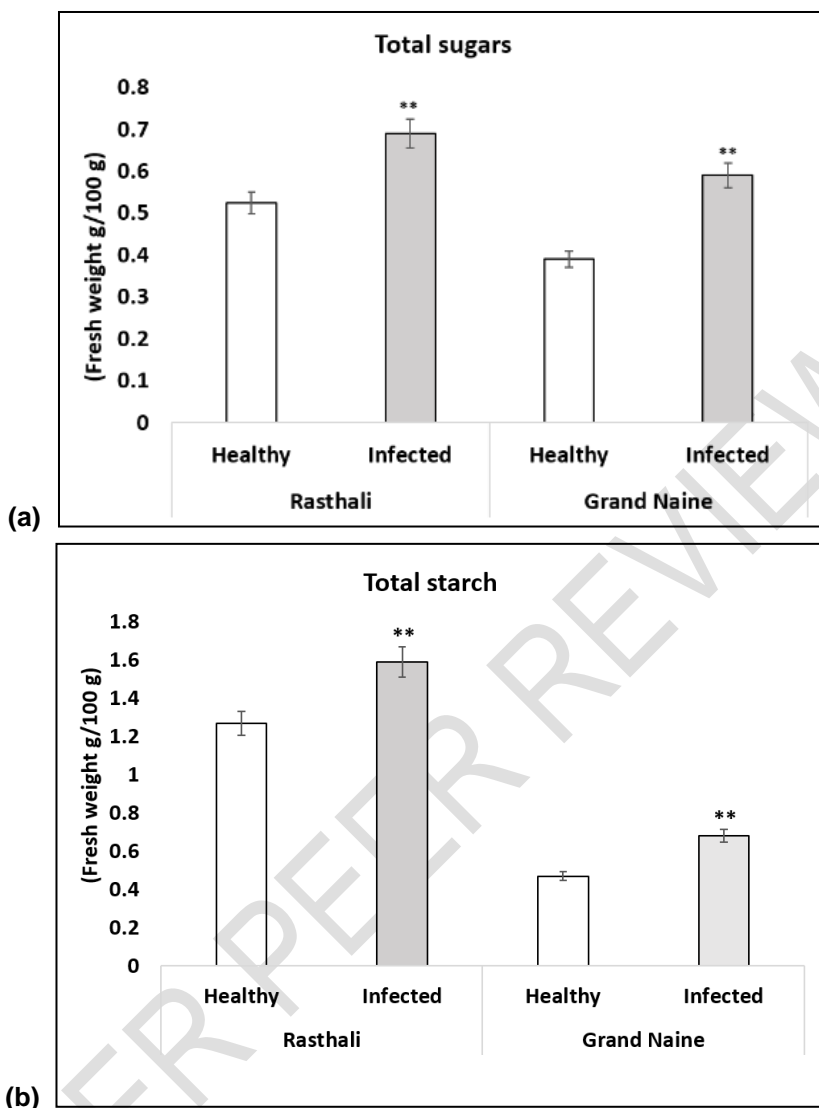
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The total sugars and starch were significantly high in infected plants compared to healthy in both the cultivars of banana (Fig. 3 a-b). Our study suggests that sugar increases during BBTv infection may control photo inhibitory processes and produce symptoms. The carbohydrate content reported by [1] was similar to the findings of our study where changes in the sugar and starch content were the same in all the banana cultivars viz., Virupakshi, Grand naine and Rasthali. Some viruses appear to have little effect on carbohydrates in the leaves, while others may alter both their rate of synthesis and rate of translocation which affects the overall growth of the plant [13].

210



211

212 **Fig. 3. Carbohydrate content (a) Total sugars and (b) Starch of healthy and infected**
213 **Rasthali and Grand Naine plants.**

214 *Data represents the mean \pm standard error of mean of four independent replications. Significant*
215 *differences in healthy and infected from each cultivar analysed by Student's t test (* P <0.05, ** P <0.01)*
216 *are shown.*

217 **3.4 Total Phenol**

218 In the present investigation showed a significant variation in the total phenolic compound of
219 banana cultivars in response to infection with BBTv (Fig. 4a). The amount of total phenol
220 was significantly higher in virus-infected leaves in both the cultivars of banana and the
221 increased quantity of phenols might be attributed to a defense mechanism where plant
222 polyphenols act as secondary metabolites. It was reported that the resistance to disease
223 caused by pathogen was attributed to the presence of a high amount of phenol

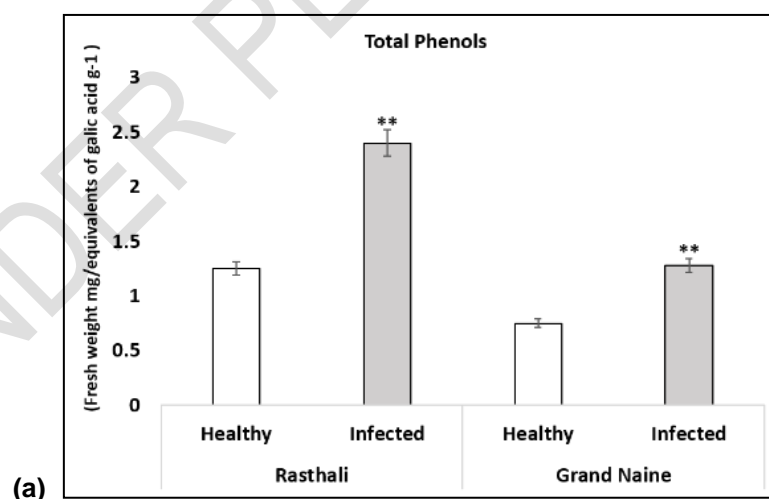
224 [17,21,23,29,33]. It has been reported that the Rasthali takes viral infection later than the
225 Grand Naine cultivar because of the difference in the genome [27]. Although no Musa
226 genotype is known to be resistant to BBTV, cultivars in the AA and AAA genomic groups are
227 highly susceptible, whereas cultivars containing the B genome are regarded as less
228 susceptible. The less BBTV susceptible Rasthali had higher total phenol content in healthy
229 plants which further increased >2 fold after BBTV infection. This is in contrast to Grand
230 Naine displaying lower total phenol content in healthy plants which increased to lower level
231 after BBTV infection. Hence, the increased quantity of phenolics in the infected plant of the
232 banana may be contributing to the resistance against the infection of viral pathogens [24].

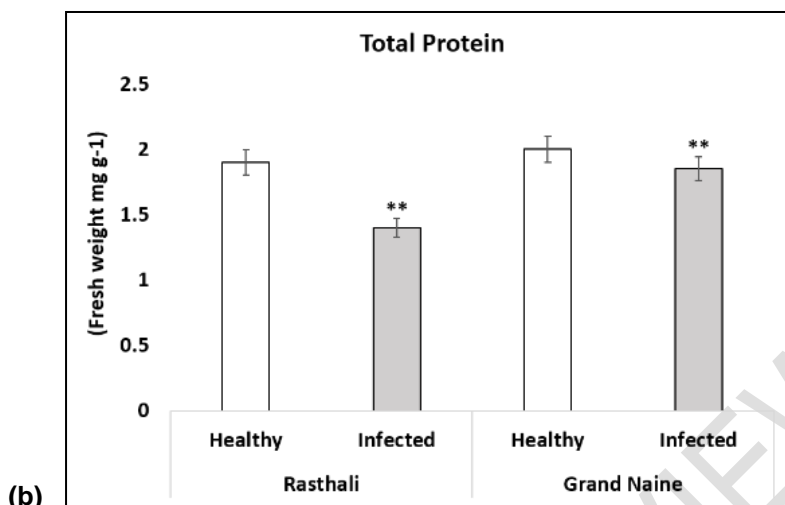
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234 3.5 Total Protein

235 Protein content was found to decrease significantly in the BBTV infected plants of both the
236 cultivars (Fig. 4b). Results in our study showed that the total protein content changes
237 regarding viral infection in both the cultivars thereby confirming the accumulation of protein
238 as a response to viral infections. The involvement of host protein components in plant
239 disease resistance has been documented in various plant pathogenic interactions [4, 36].
240 This result is in accordance with the results of Tobacco mosaic virus-infected tobacco plants
241 [19], Tomato yellow leaf curl virus-infected tomato plants [9], Banana bunchy top virus-
242 infected cultivars of banana [7], geminivirus infected *Capsicum annum* [25] and cotton with
243 CLCuBuV [34].

244





245

246 **Fig. 4. (a) Total phenol content and (b) Total protein of healthy and infected Rasthali**
 247 **and Grand Naine plants.**

248 *Data represents the mean \pm standard error of mean of four independent replications. Significant*
 249 *differences in healthy and infected from each cultivar analysed by Student's t test (* P <0.05, ** P <0.01)*
 250 *are shown.*

251 **3.6 Enzyme activities**

252 **3.6.1 Peroxidase**

253 The POX activity was increased significantly in BBTv infected plants of both cultivars, in
 254 comparison to healthy (Fig. 6). In an earlier report, a similar increase in the activity of POX
 255 was observed in Virupakshi and Grand Naine cultivar [1]. The peroxidases are enzymes
 256 whose primary function is to oxidize hydrogen donors at the expense of peroxides which is
 257 known to be involved in oxidative damage in response to stress to the plant. POX activity
 258 was found to be increased in chilli against chilli leaf curl virus as reported by [30].

259

260 **3.6.2 Poly Phenol Oxidase**

261 The polyphenol oxidase is involved in the formation of insoluble polyphenols in plants by the
 262 oxidation of the soluble phenols. The higher poly phenoloxidase activity was observed in
 263 Rasthali in healthy plants which marginally reduced after BBTv infection, in contrast, Grand
 264 Naine showed lower activity in healthy plants which increased during BBTv infection (Fig. 6).
 265 Higher total soluble phenols, together with higher PPO play a role in resistance to viral
 266 pathogens [1, 28].

267

268 **3.6.3 Catalase**

269 A significant elevation was observed in the CAT activity of BBTv-infected samples in both
 270 the banana cultivars tested (Fig. 5). Changes in catalase activity have been found to be a

271 significant monitoring index of plant responses under abiotic or biotic conditions. An increase
272 in foliar CAT activity was observed in leaves of *Arachis hypogaea* infected with Peanut
273 mottle virus [20] and cotton plants infected with the Cotton leaf curl burewala virus [34].

274 **3.6.4 Ascorbate Peroxidase**

275 The activity of ascorbate was significantly higher in BBTV infected plants of both cultivars
276 when compared to the healthy (Fig. 5). APX acts as an antioxidant response triggered by the
277 increasing presence of H₂O₂ within cells. One of the major peroxide detoxifying system in
278 plant cells is the ascorbate-glutathione cycle, in which ascorbate peroxidase (APX) enzyme
279 has a key role catalyzing the conversion of H₂O₂ into H₂O, using ascorbate as a specific
280 electron donor. The increase in APX activity in BBTV infected banana was similar to that
281 reported for *Hibiscus cannabinus* infected with begomovirus *Nicotiana benthamiana* infected
282 with Pepper mild mottle virus [15] and sunflower infected with sunflower chlorotic mottle virus
283 [31].

284 **3.6.5 Guaiacol Peroxidase**

285 Guaiacol peroxidase (GPX) activity was found to be significantly higher in BBTV infected
286 cultivars when compared with healthy (Fig. 5 and 6). GPX is an essential group from
287 peroxidase enzymes, which oxidize guaiacol and is found in cellular cytoplasm and
288 apoplasm fractions, involved in a range of processes related to plant growth and
289 development. GPX activity was found to be higher in mesta plants infected with yellow vein
290 mosaic virus as reported by [5]

291 **3.6.6 Superoxide dismutase**

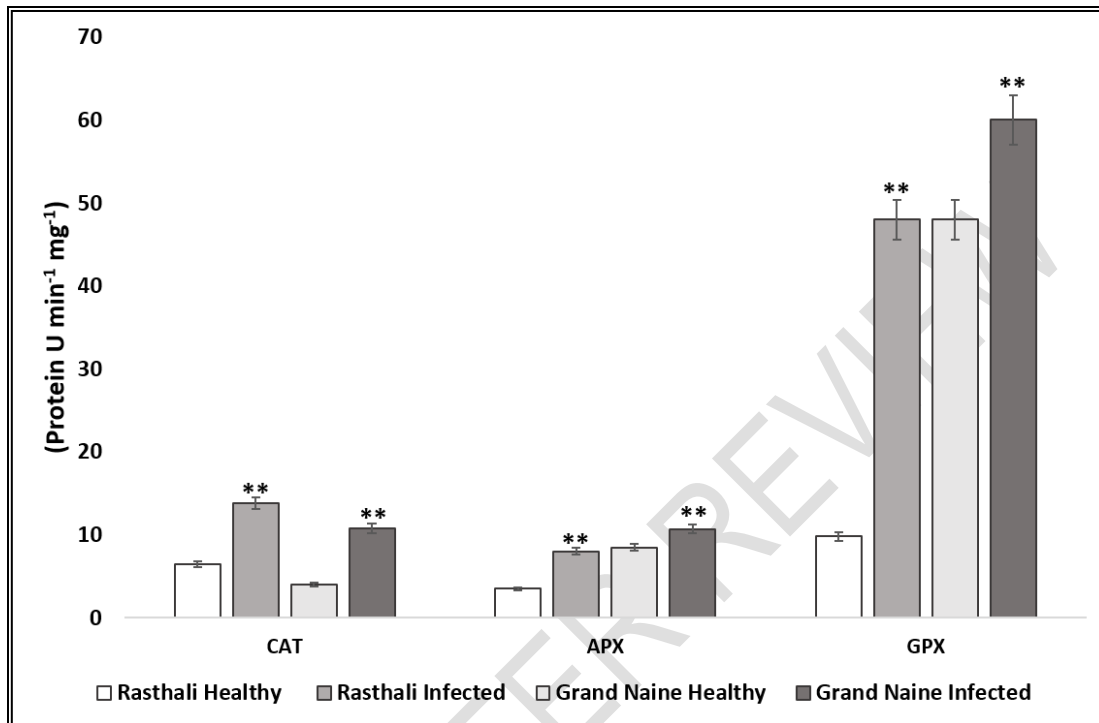
292 The superoxide dismutase (SOD) is an enzyme that breaks down superoxide radical
293 generated during stress into molecular oxygen or hydrogen peroxide thereby preventing cell
294 damage. The SOD activity was significantly higher in the leaves of healthy plants of Rasthali
295 in contrast to healthy plants of Grand Naine (Fig. 6). Upon BBTV infection, Rasthali showed
296 increased SOD activity, whereas, Grand Naine showed decrease in SOD activity. In
297 contrast, early reports show increase in SOD activity upon BBTV infection in Grand Naine
298 [1]. SOD constitutes the front-line of defense against ROS and oxidative stress in plant cells
299 and it is one of the most important scavenging enzymes. It is also reported that the induction
300 of antioxidant enzymes, including SOD, is vital for the development of plant stress tolerance.
301 Based on the present result, it can be concluded that higher SOD activity in Rasthali
302 compared to Grand Naine might contribute to increased level of tolerance to BBTV infection
303 in Rasthali and Grand Naine.

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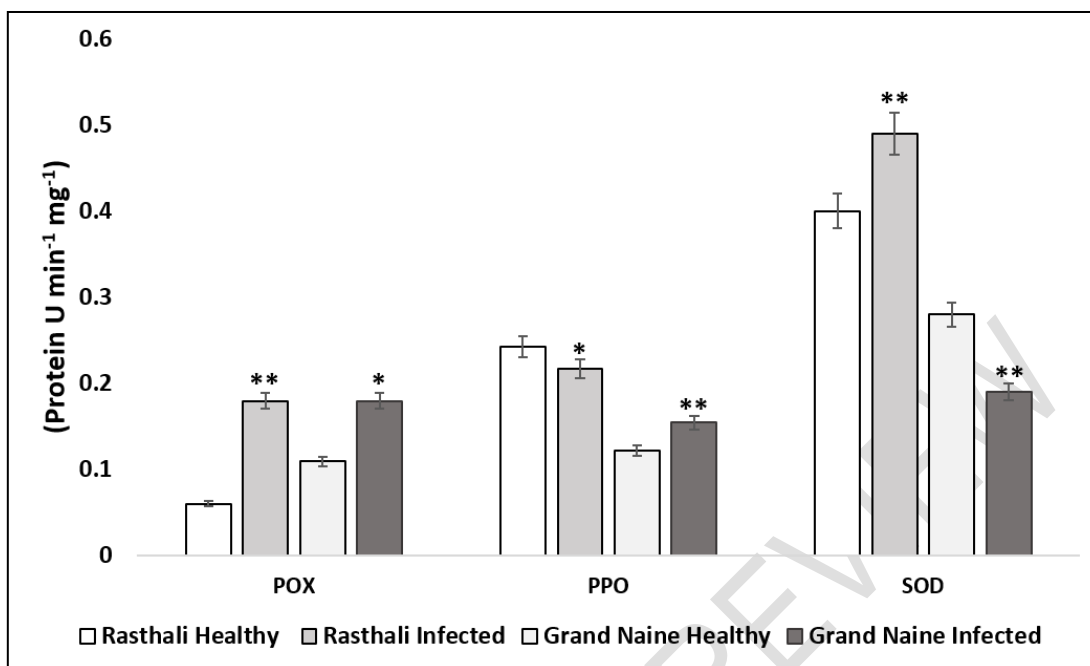
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Fig. 5. Changes in enzyme activities of CAT, APX and GPX in healthy and BBTV infected Rasthali and Grand naine banana plants.
Data represents the mean \pm standard error of mean of four independent replications. Significant differences in healthy and infected from each cultivar analysed by Student's t test ($P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$) are shown.*



316

317 **Fig.6. Changes in enzyme activities of POX, PPO and SOD in healthy and BBTV**
 318 **infected Rasthali and Grand Naine banana plants.**

319 *Data represents the mean ± standard error of mean of four independent replications. Significant*
 320 *differences in healthy and infected from each cultivar analysed by Student's t test (*P<0.05, **P<0.01)*
 321 *are shown.*

322 4. CONCLUSION

323 It is well known that plant defense mechanism is complex, and the evolution of new strains
 324 of pathogens makes it a very difficult task to study. Various physiological and biochemical
 325 parameters were analyzed in BBTV infected and healthy banana cultivars Grand Naine and
 326 Rasthali. Our results indicated significant increase in defense enzyme activities in the BBTV
 327 infected cultivars compared to the healthy. There was a significant increase in amount of
 328 phenol and polyphenols in Rasthali in comparison to Grand Naine. The level of difference of
 329 biochemical constituents between the genotypes reverberates the variation of genotypes in
 330 defense against the BBTV. The findings of this study will help in better understanding of
 331 various physiological changes that occur in banana species against the BBTV and will
 332 contribute to plant resistance mechanisms which in turn will provide new tools for crop
 333 improvement.

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442 **ABBREVIATIONS**

443 APX Ascorbate Peroxidase

444 CAT Catalase

445 GPX Guaiacol peroxidase

446 PPO Poly Phenol Oxidase

447 POX Peroxidase

448 SOD Superoxide dismutase