

RASAYANA SANKALPANA IN CLASSICAL LITERATURE OF AYURVEDA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The word *rasayana* refers to nutrition and its transportation in the body. *Rasayana* replenish the vital fluids of our body, thus keeping us away from diseases. The *rasayanas* are rejuvenators, nutritional supplements and possess strong antioxidant activity. They have antagonistic actions on the oxidative stressors, which give rise to the formation of different free radicals. *Rasayana* helps to improve *vyadhikshamatva*.^[1] *Vyadhikshamatva* can be correlated with immunity of the body. According to Chakradatta, *vyadhikshamatva* means the power on the part of the body to prevent the development of the disease or the power to successfully resist a developed disease.^[2] In this article we will discuss the concept of '*Rasayana*' according to different *samhitas*.

KEYWORDS: *Rasayana*, Ayurveda, *Vyadhikshamatva*, Immunity.

INTRODUCTION

Rasayana is one of the eight clinical specialties of classical Ayurveda.^[3] The term '*Rasayana*' is derived from words '*Ras*' and '*Ayana*', having various meaning. *Rasayana* constitutes a very important class of Ayurvedic herbs, which act as rejuvenators and tonic.^[4] The '*Rasayana*' is the drug which destroys aging process and diseases by re-establishing youth and is beneficial for eyes, increases body weight and act as a virilific.^[5] Ayurveda remains one of the most ancient and yet living traditions practiced widely in India. Atharvaveda (around 1200BC), Charak Samhita and Sushrut Samhita (1000-500 BC) are the main classics that give detailed descriptions over 700 herbs. According to Charak '*bheshaj*' is of two types *Swathaurjaskar* and *Aartasya rognut*.^[6] The one which promotes strength and immunity in healthy and the other that alleviates disorders in ailing hence the drugs are of two types, one that goes for positive health and other belongs to curative group. The group of drugs for positive health are divided into two kinds one is *vrushya* that is the virilific and the other is *Rasayana* or the vitalizer. '*Rasayana*' means the way for attaining excellent *rasa*. The substance which delays aging process and destroys disease is known as *Rasayana*.^[7] Also it enhance the qualities of *rasa*, enriches it with nutrients so one can attain longevity, memory, intelligence, freedom from disorder, youthfulness, excellence of luster, complexion.^[8] The

definition of *rasayana tantra* in Sushrut Samhita is not so elaborate, though one finds an appropriate classification of *Rasayana* in Dalhan's commentary. One finds an emphasis on '*Naimittika Rasayana*' described as adjuvant to specific curative treatment of certain disease. Ashtang Samgraha and Ashtang Hridaya have omitted the description of the divine *rasayanas* and have incorporated many newer drugs of medicinal use such as *palandu*, *rason*. Later works on '*Rasa Chikitsa*' labeled many minerals and toxic drugs as '*Rasayana*' if used in proper ways and dosage.

The word immunity means resistance to a disease because of the formation of humoral antibodies or the development of cellular immunity or both. We can correlate *Vadhyakshamatva* with immunity and it is of two types.

i) **Pratibandhakatwa** -Type of immunity, which prevents the production of disease.

ii) **Vyadhibala-Virodhitwa** -means that type of resistance, which minimizes the force or severity of diseases after the disease has already been produced.

Classification of Rasayana

In different *granthas* classification of *Rasayana* done with different ways they are as follows.

A):-1)Jaranashak Rasayana

Rasayana which helps to promote positive health, arrest ageing process.
Eg. *Chyavanprash*.

2)Vyadhinashak Rasayan

Rasayana which breaks the pathophysiology of disease and improve the health.

B):-1)Sharir Rasayan

Drugs acting on body like *Haritakyadi avleh*, *Agastyaharitaki* etc.

2)Manas Rasayan

Rasayana which act mind like *Aachar rasayana*.

C):-1)Kamyā Rasayan

Application of rasayan by adhering to specific wish.
Eg. To strengthen the body administration of *balya rasayana*.

2)Naimittik Rasayan

Specific rasayanas have been advocated for specific diseases to be used as adjuncts to general treatment. Such rasayana drugs are known as *naimittik rasayana*.
Eg. *Shilajit* for *Madhumeh*.

3)Ajastrik Rasayan

Rasayana to be used on daily basis or frequently all the time.
Eg. *Ghrut*, *Ksheer*.

D):-Vardhaman Rasayana or Utkarsha Rasayana

Eg-*Vardhaman pippali rasayana*

E):-1)Dravyarup Rasayana

Application of *rasayana* by using certain substances like *Amalaki rasayana*.

2)Adravyarup Rasayana

Application of *rasayana* without using any substance like *Aachar rasayana*.

F):-1)Vatatkik Rasayana

Outdoor regimen which is considered as practical method of application of *rasayana*.^[11]

2)Kutipraveshik Rasayana

This rasayana is indoor regimen which is supposed to be the ideal method of application of *rasayana*.^[12]

G)Classification based on purpose of application of rasayana**1)Promotive and prophylactic rasayana**

Rasayana used to promote positive health, arrest ageing process and diseases eg. *Chyawanprash*.

2) Curative and preventive rasayana

Use of *rasayana* in order to cure certain ailments and prevent their recurrence .eg. *Pippali rasayana*:-For *pranavah strotogat vyadhis*.

3) Medhya rasayana

Application of *rasayana* for specifically enhancing the *medha* i.e the memory, will power and intelligence.
Eg. *Shankhapushpi*

4) Aachar rasayan

Application of *rasayana* suggested through the improved code of socio-behavioral conduct for betterment of overall health.

H) Some other classification**1)Sampraptibhang rasayana**

Which breaks the pathophysiology of disease.
Eg-*Bhallatakavaleh* in *Aamvaat*

2)Dhatvagni rasayana

Eg –*Musta*, *Pippali* for *rasdhatvagi*

3)Dhatu Rasayana

Which improves quality of *rasadi saptadhatu*.
Eg. *Mamsa* for *mamsa dhatu vrudhhi*.
Ghrut, *Majja* for *meda dhatu*.

4)Avayav Rasayana

Yakrut(Liver) *Rasayana*-*Bhrungraj*
Pleeha Rasayana:-*Sharpunkha*

5)Strotas rasayana

Eg-*Pippali* for *pranvah strotas*

Concept of Bala

According to Ayurveda body strength that is *Bala* depend upon *saptadhatu*.^[13] Natural defence mechanism of the body is maintained with the help of *rasa*, *rakta*, *shleshma*, *shukra* and *oja*. *Acharya Sushrut* defined *Bala as Oja* and it is of two types.

1) *Para Ojas*:- *Ashtabindu* in *matra* and present in the heart.^[14]

2) *Apara Ojas*:- *Ardhanjali* in *matra* and situated in *dhatu*.^[15]

The ultimate excellent extract of all *sapta dhatu* is *Ojas*. According to *acharyas* there are many factors which are responsible for maintenance and deficiency of immunity-*Ojas*, *Prakruti*, *Sara*, *Satva*, *Ahar*, *Vihar*, etc.

Poorvakarma for Rasayana therapy

It is important for a person who want to undergo *rasayana* therapy to take *panchakarma* that is *samshodhan*. The *samshodhan* process detoxifies both body and mind. A detoxified body and minds like a clean cloth which readily absorbs the colour which it has been dipped unlike a soiled cloth even after colouring with best colours. *Acharya Vagbhat* also emphasis for the same. According to him a self controlled person in his

early age (before 25 years) or in the middle age (before 50 years) should take *rasayana* therapy.

Panchakarma

Rasayana becomes more effective if it is preceded with suitable *Panchakarma*. There are five karmas:-*Vaman*, *Virechan*, *Aasthapan Basti*, *Anuvasan Basti* and *Nasya*. *Panchakarma* is biocleansing regimen comprising of five main procedures that facilitates better bioavailability of the pharmacological therapies, helps to bring about homeostasis of body humors, excrete disease causing complexes from the body and checks the recurrence and progression of disease. Prior to *Panchakarma Snehana* and *Swedan* done to make the body system conducive for elimination of bio-toxins and cleansing of channels. This is effective in managing autoimmune, neurological, musculo-skeletal and psychiatric diseases of chronic and metabolic origin.

Rasayana Anarha i.e people unfit for Rasayana karma

The intemperate, the lazy, the indigent, *vyasani*(addictions like alcohol,tobacco,etc),the unwise, the sinful and the triflers of medicine are unfit to take *rasayana* therapy on account of their respective ignorance, inactivity, poverty, vacillation, intemperance, impiety and inability to secure the genuine medicines.

Drug selection criteria for rasayana therapy

Rasayana therapy is to be used in consideration of the age, individual constitution, adaptability, digestive capacity, state of body tissues and the metabolic status. Different *rasayana* drugs are used for different age groups. For obtaining desired results a suitable *rasayana* agent has to be selected for a particular person in consideration of these factors. It is important because these factors greatly influence the requirements of an individual coming for *rasayana* therapy. As per Sharangdhar samhita due to ageing, a person loses certain virtues.

Balya(Childhood), *Vruddhi*(growth), *Chabi*(beauty), *Medha*(intelligence), *Twak*(skin luster), *Drushti*(vision), *Shukra*(Reproductive factors), *Vikram*(strength), *Buddhi*(wisdom) and *Karmendriya* during first to tenth decades of the life respectively.^[9] Hence during different decades of life one needs different *rasayana* drugs. Also *Prakruti*, *Satmya*, *Dosha-dushya*, *Agni* and other similar internal and environmental factors should be considered while selecting *rasayana* drugs.

Effect of Rasayana on the body

Rasayana act as '*Jara nashan*' that is it delays ageing process and '*Vyadhi nashan*'. First *dhatu* in the body is *ras dhatu*, which nourishes all the other *dhatu*s. *Rasa dhatu* can be correlated with plasma. *Rasayana* drugs improve the nutritional value of the plasma and in turn enhance tissue nourishment eg; *Milk*, *Ghrut*, *Shatavari* etc. *Rasayana* drugs activate the gastrointestinal digestion and stimulate tissue metabolism by influencing digestive juices, enzymes and hormones. The person who

uses this category of *rasayana* is able to draw best use of whatever diet he consumes and develops best quality of tissues in the body. *Rasayana* act at the level of – '*Jatharagni*', '*Dhatvagni*' and '*Bhootagni*' by enhancing proper assimilation of digested food eg; *Pippali*. *Strotas rasayana* produce classical effects by improving the microcirculation and the tissue perfusion irrespective of quality of nutrition and the rate of digestion and metabolism. *Strotas rasayana* helps in *strotas shodhan* and allow efficient blood circulation and improve the tissue nourishment eg; *Guggule* has hypocholesterotemic and anticoagulant actions which supports its *rasayana* effect at *strotas* level.

In humans ageing represent accumulation of changes in a human being over time and can encompass physical, psychological and social changes. Ageing increases the risk of human diseases such as Cancer, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases. Around 1,50,000 people who die each day across the globe, about 2/3rd die from age-related causes. According to Ayurveda balanced *Dosha*, *Dhatu*s and *Mala* are the roots of *Sharir*. *Dhatu*s are formed from assimilation of food and supported by *Dosha*. *Rasa dhatu* which is formed from digested and assimilated food first enriches further *Raktadi dhatu*s. When all the basic constituents are at their best quality the person is healthy and full of vital spirit. Ageing will not set in as long as this balanced state is maintained. *Rasa dhatu* can be correlated with plasma. Whenever there is decrease in holding capacity of plasma proteins and water then it slower regeneration, ageing process start. Due to reduced quantity of water and plasma volume in body *Rasa dhatu* cannot be replenished and consequently fails to nourish other *dhatu*s, causing progressive decline in the *dhatu*s. The decreased tissue perfusion leads to poor nutrition of overall body tissue. Hence decreased muscle mass, osteoporosis, tiredness, increased risk of fractures, decreased sexual function, memory loss, declined perception, graying of hairs, dry and wrinkled skin. In order to retard ageing process, it is necessary to strengthen *Rasa dhatu* so that tissue nutrition is improved and gradual up gradation of tissue is promoted. *Rasayana* therapy restores *rasa dhatu*. It increases water holding capacity of plasma which ultimately improve tissue perfusion and nutrition. This will be associated with a reversal of the signs of ageing.

Rasayana is also considered as a therapy which revitalize, rejuvenate and increase the resistance power and immunity of various disease. '*Rasayana*' are the inducers of enzymes, hormones which body needs for adaptation and survival during health, stress and disease. *Rasayana* drugs act as neuroprotective also known as *medhya rasayana* as they promote intelligence and functions of brain, eg-*Brahmi*^[16], *Shankhapushpi*^[17] etc. *Medhya* drugs has varying degree of psychotropic action. They produces neurotrophic effect by improving cerebral metabolism. *Medhya rasayana* helps individual to attain sedation, calmness, tranquility or stimulation of

activities of brain.eg-*Yashtimadhu*^[18] increases the circulation into CNS improves learning.

Rasayana drugs shows antioxidant properties. Antioxidants delays oxidative damage such as that caused by free radicals. It include a number of enzymes, Vit.C, Vit. E, Vit.A, etc. They neutralize free radicals and reduce peroxide concentrations and repair the oxidized membranes. *Dravya rasayana* helps to prevent oxidation eg-*Amalaki* –it is the richest source of vit.C, collagen and act as scavenger for free radicles. *Rasayana* also shows anabolic and adaptogenic effects. Eg-*Masha*, *Mamsa*, *Ashwagandha* helps to improve muscle mass.^[19] *Ashwagandha* contains active components such as saponins, steroidal lactones, alkaloids like isopelletierine.^[20] Adaptogen is nothing but a herb with phytonutrients that regulate metabolism when a body is perturbed by physical or mental stress and help the body adapt by normalizing system functions. Adaptogens are used for stress relief, brain health and for ameliorating HPA axis dysfunction. *Rasayana* therapy also act as immunomodulator. An immunomodulators are the substances which can influence any function of immune system in a specific or non specific manners.

OBSERVATION AND RESULT

Ayurveda is a science of life, therefore it is the science by the knowledge of which life can be prolonged. *Rasayana* is the way which keeps the person young. Also it act as health promotive as well as disease preventive.

CONCLUSION

According to Acharya Charak the physio-pharmacological action of *rasayanas* results in correction and promotion of the *Dhatus*. *Rasayana* therapy plays vital role in the management of chronic lifestyle related diseases and degenerative changes. *Rasayana* is preventive therapy which helps in maintaining healthy body and mind which retard ageing and promote immune system to fight against infection.

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