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A review article on the concept of *Rasayan* in Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the ancient system of medicine in the world. This science of life deals with every aspect of life. *Ayurveda* has two aims i.e., Promotion of Health and Cure from disease. *Rasayan* may be employed for fulfilling both of them. *Rasayan* are the ways of attaining excellent *Ras* i.e., Attains longevity, memory, intelligence, freedom from disorders, youthful age, excellence of luster, complexion and voice, ultimate strength of physique and sense organs, wisdom and successful words and brilliance. *Rasayan* also called a Rejuvenation therapy is one considered under *Ashtang Ayurveda*. *Rasayan* drugs are those which are capable of importing superior *Rasas and Dhatus* to the body and toning up the system of healthy persons. *Rasayan* aids in increasing natural immunity enhancing general wellbeing, improving the functioning of all the fundamental organs of the body and keep the signs of early ageing at bay. Moreover, it involves two opposite processes that simultaneously come into operation i.e., growth and atrophy. Ageing represents structural and functional changes of an organism over its entire life span. *Rasayan* is not a drug therapy but it is a specialized procedure practiced in the form of rejuvenate recipes, dietary regimes and special health promoting conduct and behaviour i.e., *Achar Rasayan*.

Key words: *Rasayan, Ashtang Ayurveda, Rasa, Dhātu, Achar Rasayan, Ayurveda*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a science of life which deals with physical, psychological as well as spiritual wellbeing of an individual. *Ayurveda* on one hand emphasizes on maintenance of health whereas on the other hand have very scientific and sound fundamental principles for curing the ailments.^[1] Keeping in view different

areas of expertise required to manage different aspects of health and diseases, *Ayurveda* was divided into eight specialized branches.^[2] Among the eight specialities of *Ayurveda*, *Rasayana Tantra* is a branch exclusively devoted to nutrition, immunology, rejuvenation and geriatrics.

Word *Rasayana* is derived from "*Rasasya Ayanam Rasayanam*" which means the way of obtaining a good *Rasa* is *Rasayana*.^[3] *Acharya Dalhana* has explained that the methods which improve youth and enhance longevity by attaining best quality body tissues are termed as *Rasayana*.^[4]

The word *Rasayana* is comprised of two terms i.e., "*Rasa*" and "*Ayana*". Term *Rasa* has many connotations. It is used for juice, alchemy, taste, first *Rasa Dhātu* etc. Word *Rasa*, in relation to *Rasayana* therapy means the *Rasa Dhātu* and *Ayana* means the path of circulation. Thus, it can be said that *Rasayana* is related to the nutrition and its transportation in the body.

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Why Rasayana is needed?

In this fast moving world our life style has become very hectic. Stress is an in escapable part of personal and professional life. In order to achieve the things for better and pleasurable living there is hardly any time for exercise. Dietary habits have become faulty as many people are into the habit of fast food.^[6] Timings of eating have become irregular due to change in the duties and more and more persons are using stale foods with preservatives. More and more people are becoming addicted to alcohol, smoking and drugs.^[7] All these factors are responsible for vitiation of *Doshas* and *Agni*, thus causing improper nutrition to the tissues, low immunity, fatigue, debility, inability to adapt to stress and premature aging. *Rasayana* foods, herbs and regimens help to re-establish this balance.

1. Classification of Rasayana^[8]

Dravyabhuta-Rasayana: When *Rasayana* effect is obtained using *Dravyas* like herbs, minerals, herbo-mineral drugs, food, milk etc. it is known as *Dravyabhuta-Rasayana*.

Adravyabhuta-Rasayana: Where no substance is used and *Rasayana* effect is obtained by good moral conduct, meditation etc. then it is called as *Adravyabhuta-Rasayana*. e.g., *Achara-Rasayana*.

2. According to scope of use

Kamyar-Rasayana: These are used in healthy persons for further promotion of health. It is further subdivided into;

- Pranakamyar* - one which promotes longevity.
- Srikamyar* - promotes body lusture.
- Medhakamyar* - promotes memory & intellect

Naimittika-Rasavara: The *Rasavaras* which are used specifically in the prevention or treatment of specific diseases are termed as *Naimittika-Rasayana*. This is the prime area where *Rasayana* drugs are mainly studied and tested in present times. Some of the examples are

- Pandu* - *Loha*, *Mandura*, *Swarnmakshika*
- Prameha* - *Haridra*, *Shilajatu*, *Amalaki*

- Kushtha*- *Khadira*, *Tuvaraka*, *Triphala*, *Bhallatak*
- Mutravahasrotas Vyadhis* - *Gokshuru*, *Punarnava*, *Shilajatu*
- Vata Vyadhi* - *Shilajit*, *Guggulu*, *Rasna*, *Bala*
- Eye diseases - *Triphala*, *Madhuyashti*
- Respiratory diseases- *Pippali*, *Sirisha*, *Chyawanprasha*
- Psychiatric disorders- *Ashwagandha*, *Shankhpushpi*, *Brahmi*

Ajasrika Rasavara

Food substances which we consume in our daily life on regular basis in moderation for nourishment of body tissues. Examples are daily usage of milk & ghee.

3. According to method of administration**Kuti Praveshika Rasayana**

This is basically the indoor method of *Rasayana* administration. As per the textual reference person was made to stay in a specially designed *Trigarbha* chamber for a particular period and *Rasayana* drug was administered after biopurification with *Panch-Karma*. Along with *Rasayana* drug patient is also advised to follow strict diet schedule and specific code and conduct of life. Thus, it is administration of *Rasayana* under strict controlled conditions. This is superior method of administering the *Rasayana* as maximum benefits can be obtained from this.

Vatatapika Rasavara

Vata means air and *Atapa* means sunlight. In this method of *Rasayana* administration person is exposed to air and sunlight hence it is termed as *Vatatapika*. In this method person while on *Rasayana* therapy continues his normal daily routine. Here the diet and lifestyle are flexible as per the lifestyle of patient and therefore the outcome of the *Rasayana* therapy administered by this method is lesser than the indoor method of *Rasayana* administration.

Dronipraveshika-Rasayana

This method of *Rasayana* administration is not in use in present times. But treatise *Charak Samhita* has

described this method in which person after consuming specific herbs stays in *Droni* (boat) made of *Palash* (*Butea monospermea*) and stays inside it for six months. After six months person attains health, lusture, intellect and vigour.

4. Other types of Rasayana

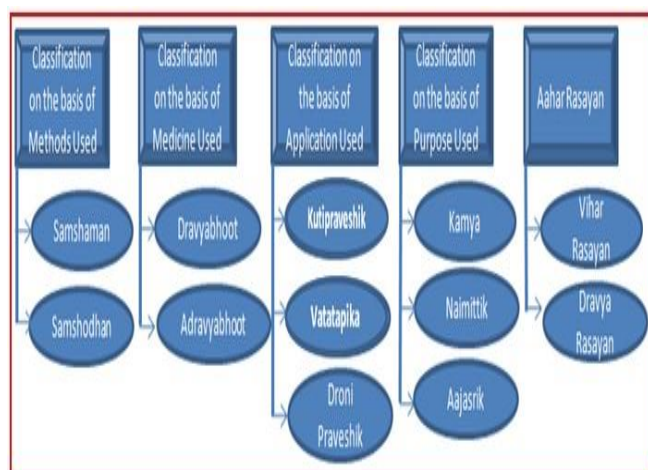
Medhya Rasayana^[9]

This group of *Rasayana* have memory and intellect enhancing properties. They improve the (intellect) *Dhi*, (retention power) *Dhriti* and (recalling power) *Smriti*. Although all the *Rasayana* drugs are having these properties but special four drugs have been mentioned in improving the higher mental functions. They are *Guduchi*, *Madhuyashti*, *Mandukparni* and *Shankhpushpi*.

Aachara Rasayana^[10]

Achara-Rasayana is basically the non pharmacological way of acquiring the *Rasayana* effect with the good personal, moral and social behaviour. In this type of *Rasayana*, the ways of living, role of *Satvika* diet, what to do and what to avoid have been described. By following the principles of *Achara Rasayana*, person can achieve psychological and social satisfaction which is essential for a healthy living.

Classifications of Rasayan



Construction of Kuti

Kuti should be constructed in a good site inhabited by the king, physician, *Brahmins*, saints and those who perform virtuous acts and place well ruled and freed

from disturbances. The place is having adequate water storage. The *Kuti* should face towards the east or the north direction. It should have three concentric courts '*Garbha-Grihas*' (inner homes) and should be furnished with narrow ventilators. It should not be very tall, long or low. The wall should be thick and it should be pleasant to reside in all season. It should be well lighted and pleasant to the mind and be free from undesirable noise etc. The most important point in the construction is '*Ritu-Sukha*' that means heat, cold and light should be adequate. The seasonal changes outside should not affect the *Kuti* inside. The *Kuti* should be surrounded by compound wall, having lot of useful trees and medicinal herbs grown in the compound. The outer *Griha* should have its entrance in east, the centre *Griha* should have the entrance in west and the inner one should have the entrance in north. It is designed so because north is the conceptual abode of Lord of Medicinal herbs. Also, one can easily enter the inner-house clockwise. Whatever may be the style it should be in such a way that there will be only minimum exposure to light and wind. None other than the physician and patient should be allowed to enter the *Kuti* during the course of treatment. Toilet and washing facilities should be there inside the *Kuti*. Only warm water should be used for all needs. If needed, a believable attendant can be employed. The physician should either stay there or come and visit the patient quite often.^[11]

Mode of action of Rasayana

Our body is sum total of *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*.^[12] Everyone on this universe cherishes a healthy life and for that it is essential that these three elements remain in a balanced state. Health of an individual is again dependent on the quality of food he takes and on the status of *Agni*^[13] which will help in digestion, absorption and assimilation of the ingested food. Nutrition to the body elements is provided by the *Ahara-Rasa* which is the first *Dhatu* formed during the digestion of food. *Rasa* nourishes our body, boosts immunity and helps to keep the body and mind in best of health. Thus, it is very important for health of a living being that *Ahara-Rasa* formed after digestion of food

must be of best quality and it must get circulated in body unhindered in order to nourish the body tissues. *Rasayanas* help in achieving the above-mentioned objective. Thus, we can conclude that *Rasayana* act at the level of *Agni* to enhance the nutritional quality of *Ahara-Rasa* and helps in better circulation and assimilation of the nutrients at cellular level. The *Rasayana* by improving digestion and enhancing the bioavailability of nutrients of *Ahara-Rasa* thus helps in attaining longevity, memory, intelligence, health, youthfulness, excellence of lustre, complexion and voice, optimum development of physique and sense organs, mastery over phonetics, respectability and brilliance.^[14]

Time of administration & selection of *Rasayana*

The ageing starts right from the birth. Old cells are replaced by new cells in the growing phase of life. But when the catabolic process dominates over anabolic process, we start growing old. In today's fast pace world stress is an inescapable part of life due to which this degeneration starts early which can be prevented by *Rasayana*. Now the question arises what is the appropriate time of administration of *Rasayana*? *Acharya Shusruta* has said "*Purvevayasivamadhaye*"^[15] means best time for administration of *Rasayana* is late adult or middle age i.e., 3rd-5th decade of life. During selection of a particular *Rasayana* various factors like *Desha, Kala, Vaya, Prakriti, Dhātu, Agni, Dosha, Dushya* & *Vayadi* (disease) condition should be kept in consideration.

Acharya Sharangdhara has advocated that with every decade of life some important aspect of life is lost.^[16] The order of loss of these ten elements in consecutive order is *Balya* (childhood), *Vridhi* (growth), *Chhavi* (beauty), *Medha* (intellect), *Tvak* (skin health), *Drishti* (visual acuity), *Shukra* (sexual power), *Vikrama* (physical strength), *Budhi* (wisdom), *Karmendriya* (locomotor power). Hence, the selection & administration of *Rasayana* drugs should be done keeping in mind these losses. Similarly different *Rasayana* drugs act at different tissue level hence the affected tissue should also be kept in mind while selecting *Rasayana*.

Decade wise specific loss and desirable *Rasayana*

Decade of life (Years)	Specific loss from body	Desirable <i>Rasayana</i>
1-10	<i>Balya</i>	<i>Vacha, Suvarna</i>
11-20	<i>Vridhi</i>	<i>Bala, Ashwagandha</i>
21-30	<i>Chhavi</i>	<i>Amalki, Lauha</i>
31-40	<i>Medha</i>	<i>Shankpushpi, Jyotishmati</i>
41-50	<i>Tvak</i>	<i>Bhringraja, Somraji</i>
51-60	<i>Drishti</i>	<i>Saptamritalauha</i>
61-70	<i>Shuskra</i>	<i>Ashwagandha, Kapikachu</i>
71-80	<i>Vikrama</i>	<i>Amalki, Bala</i>
81-90	<i>Budhi</i>	<i>Brahmi</i>
91-100	<i>Karm-endriya</i>	<i>Bala, Ashwagandha</i>

DISCUSSION

Health is a complex phenomenon. To maintain health and balance of mind & body at any time numerous interrelated physiological, biochemical and hormonal functions need to act together in harmony with great precision. The ancient *Ayurvedic* physicians have explained the delicate anatomy and physiology of human body in a very holistic way. They saw the living entity as sum total of physical body, senses, the psyche and the soul. *Ayurveda* describes the healthy person as one whose anatomy and physiology in terms of *Dosha, Dhātu* and *Mala* are in a state of balance and who is in a state of sensorial, mental and spiritual well being.^[17]

Avurveda describes its objectives in two broad ways one is preservation of health and second is treating the disease. For preservation of health there is detailed description of measures like *Dincharya, Ratricharya, Rittucharva, Sadvritta* and periodic seasonal *Panch-Karma*. Details about lifestyle, diet, exercise, personal and social hygiene have been described. Similarly, *Rasayana-Chikitsa*, a separate speciality branch of *Ayurveda* is devoted mainly for preservation and promotion of health by revitalizing the metabolism and

enhancing immunity. It has therapeutic potential in combating many dreadful diseases of present times like tuberculosis, diabetes, atherosclerosis, dyslipidemia, stroke, Alzheimer's, cancer etc.^[18]

However, this holistic science cannot be entirely tested on parameters of the today's science which is having reductionist approach but still there has been a plenty of research work done on the *Rasayana* in order to reason them in the modern context. Different studies on *Rasayana* drugs have proven their efficacy to treat epilepsy, convulsive disorders, and psycho-somatic stress. *Rasayana* have also shown positive results in alleviating anxiety, apprehension and keeping the mind calm and cool.^[19] Maximum studies on *Rasayana* have been done on their antioxidant & immune-modulation properties. Studies have concluded that *Rasayana* regulate the immunological and endocrine systems without damaging the auto-regulative functions of the organisms. *Rasayana* drugs have been reported to treat generalized weakness and afford protection from cyclo-phosphamide induced leucopenia.^[20] Possible protective mechanism of *Rasayana* may be by immune-modulation, quenching free radicals, enhancing cellular detoxification mechanisms, repairing damaged non proliferating cells, inducing cell proliferation and self renewal of damaged proliferating tissues and replenishing them by eliminating damaged or mutated cells with fresh cells.^[21]

CONCLUSION

Rasayana is a specialized branch of *Ayurveda* practiced in the form of drug, diet and special health promoting conduct and behaviour. Studies have proven the efficacy of *Rasayana* drugs mentioned in *Ayurvedic* texts in management of various disorders like infections, diabetes, cancers, inflammations, neuro-degenerative conditions and atherosclerosis etc. *Rasayana* drugs are believed to act as immune-modulators, adaptogens, free radical scavengers, anabolic, nutritive and anti-ageing agents etc. But still there is lacuna in existing knowledge and lot of work is required to generate scientific evidence in support. It can be concluded that if worked out in a systematic way, *Rasayana* drugs will be future medicine in

combating dreadful diseases of current times and future.

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