

Role of Rasayan in Promotion of Health and Prevention of Disease

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दीर्घमायुः स्मृतिं मेधामारोग्यं तरुणं वयः।
प्रभावर्णस्वरौदार्यं देहेन्द्रियबलं परम्॥७॥
वाक्सिद्धिं प्रणतिं कान्तिं लभते ना रसायनात्।
लाभोपायो हि शस्तानां रसादीनां रसायनम्॥८॥

- स्वस्थस्योर्जस्करं यत्तु तद्वृष्यं तद्रसायनम्॥५॥
प्रायः, प्रायेण रोगाणां द्वितीयं प्रशमे मतम्।
प्रायःशब्दो विशेषार्थो ह्युभयं ह्युभयार्थकृत्॥६॥

- Ayurved science is the life science having two aims, one is to maintenance of health of healthy person and the second is to cure diseases of diseased person. The current modern definition of health is “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely absence of disease. (W.H.O.) which is already mentioned by Sushrut. Ayurveda has best provision to achieve good healthy life. Rasayan therapy works for it; to promote healthy life by preventing the diseases. Rasayana means the science of Rejuvenation. The branch of rasayana or rejuvenation is one of the eight specialized branches of Ayurveda that primarily deals with the maintenance of health. Rasayan chikitsa consist of certain dietary & therapeutic measures like herbal preparations which are able to correct as well as improve dhatus immunity by a proper nutrition. Preparatory procedures for Rasayan therapy works to correct dosha disturbances & improve agni .

What is Rasayan?

- The word Rasayana is composed of two words **Ras + Ayan**. Techniquely the term Rasayan refers to the means of obtaining “augmentation of rasa”. Rasa is the vital fluid produced by the digestion of food. Rasa provides nutrition, enhances the immunity, and sustains life. Rasayana is the method of treatment through which the rasa is maintained in the body. The purpose of rasayana is to give strength, immunity, ojus, vitality, will power and determination. It also attains longevity, memory, intelligence, excellence of lustre, complexion and voice, optimum strength of physique and sense organs.

- In today's era, because of fast and stressful lifestyle and eating habits of junk food; the immunity of Dhatu goes on decreasing. Rasayana is actually that which increases the essence of each Dhatu, starting from Rasa. Taking Rasayana is helpful to increase the immunity of person to keep him away from diseases. The person becomes healthy and strong. According to Acharya Sushrut, the substances which decreases aging process, increases the longevity and increases the mental as well as physical strength & which destroys the disease process is called as Rasayan.

Historical Background of Rasayan therapy

- Rasayana therapy is as old as the Vedas because many references on Rasayana therapy are available in the Atharva Veda. Extensive descriptions of divine Rasayana agents like Soma are available in classics. References about Achara Rasayana and Sadvrita are also available in the vedic texts similar to Charaka description. Rasayana drugs like Pippali, Jivanti and Punarnava etc. Similarly a concept of Ajasrika Rasayana also appears in vedic literature.

Why Rasayan is required?

- Our diet and lifestyle is totally responsible for vitiation of Doshas in our body. These vitiated doshas are responsible for generation of diseases. The doshas get vitiated because of substandard diet and ingredients of food which are sour, saline, pungent and alkaline. Intake of dry vegetables, meat, ingredients which are mutually contraindicated like fruit salad, banana with milk, fish and milk, abhishandi diet (eg. Eating curd in night), heavy, putrid and stale food, habits like irregular time of diet, taking food before the previous meal is digested. Lifestyle like addiction of day sleep and alcoholic beverages, exposed to stressful life, irregular and excessive exercise, subjected to excess of fear, hunger, grief, greed and overwork. These factors vitiated the Doshas. Vitiated doshas vitiate the body. Muscles become flabby; fat which is accumulated in excess gets liquefied. There is impairment in the ejaculation of semen & the ojas undergoes diminution. Because of these, person feels exhausted and becomes a victim to excess of morbid sleep (Tandra), loses initiative, gets dyspnoea and becomes incapable of physical and mental work. He also loses memory, intellect and complexion.

Types of Rasayana (Rejuvenation) therapy:

- **I: According to achievable outcome:**
- rasayana is of three types: Naimittika rasayana, Ajasrika rasayana, and Kamyas rasayana. **(A)Naimittika rasayana:**
- Naimittika rasayana is given to combat or balance a specific cause, which is causing a disease in the body. It is also called as Rogapaharan or Curative type of Rasayan. It hastens the recovery from prevailing diseases. Some examples of this rasayana are Dhatri rasayana, Mandookaparni rasayana, Brahmi rasayana, and Triphala rasayana.

(B)Ajasrika rasayana:

- Ajasrika rasayana is used to maintain good health and improve the quality of life through a healthy lifestyle, diet, or exercise. It is also called as Vayasthapan Rasayan. It includes use of milk, ghee, honey and adopting the principles of proper sleep and celibacy.

(C) Kamya rasayana:

- Kamya rasayana is used to fulfill a wish or desire or to serve a special purpose (kama - desire). It is of four types:
 - • Prana Kamya; used for achieving or maintaining the best quality of prana (life energy) in the body.
 - • Medha Kamya; used for enhancing the memory and intellect.eg. Shankhapushpi Rasayan
 - • Ayush Kamya; used for increasing longevity.
 - • Chakshu Kamya; used for maintaining healthy eyes.

II: According to mode of Administration:

- The rasayanas are further classified into two types: Kutipraveshika and Vatatapika. **(A)Kutipraveshika** (kuti – cottage, pravesha – enter) is a therapy in which the person lives in a specially prepared cottage for a long period while taking various rasayana herbs. It is indoor management.
- **(B)Vatatapika**, on the other hand, does not bear stringent rules and can be practiced in your routine life. It is outdoor management. This is rightly indicated in the name “vatatapika”, where “vata” means air, and “atapa” means heat or sun. So this is a method of taking rasayana, while a person remains exposed to air and heat. Vatatapika method is good for people who are engaged in everyday life activities. A total of 63 combinations of various rejuvenation formulae are described in the Charaka samhita.
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III: According to modalities:

There are three types of Rasayanas.

- **Achar Rasayan** (Behavioural modalities)- Being a holistic science with equal focus on the body, mind, and soul, Ayurveda also describes a type of rasayana for psychological and spiritual health. called as “Achara rasayana”, this type does not require internal administration of rejuvenating formulas. “Achara” literally means “discipline”.
- **Ahar Rasayan** (Dietary modalities) Following the rules relating to eating, sleeping, and celibacy create rejuvenation in a person. In addition, following a sattvik diet and life style, speaking the truth, practicing non-violence, living in harmony with the nature, following social ethics and conducts, are all included under this category of rasayana. Following these principles leads to formation of high quality dhatus (tissues) and increases the quantity and quality of ojus, a vital factor for health and immunity. Hence, a person can get the same benefits as attained by internal administration of rasayana.

Dravya (Aushadha) Rasayan

- (Drug based modalities) This type of Rasayana therapy includes some herb and food types that are indeed beneficial for the optimum functioning of the body as well as the brain.
- All therapies in Ayurveda aim to provide complete health – physical, mental, and spiritual - so that people can engage in achieving the real goal of life—self-realization. The rasayana therapy makes it easily possible with its remarkable benefits on health, immunity, and longevity.

Benefits of Rasayanthrapy

- According to Acharya charak, the person undergoing the Rasayanthrapy benefits
 - Enhancement the intelligience, memory power, will power, body strength, skin luster, sweetness of voice & physical strength.
 - It nourishes the saptadhatu & prevents chronic degenerative changes & illness. So it increses strength of dhatus & protect from chronic degenerative disorders like arthritis & senile diseases.
 - Rasayan deals with preventive health for enjoying normal life. Rasayan was designed in classical Ayurveda as an effective tool to synthesize the excellent quality of dhatu that entails the prevention and alleviation of senility and diseases.
 - It helps to attain optimal physical strength & sharpness of the sense organs.
- Sharangdhara (1300 AD) describes the rasayan therapy in terms of sequential loss of certain biological qualities specific to different decades of life. Rasayan therapy for different constitution & for different dhatus is mentioned.

Table 1: Classification of Rasayan According to Deh Prakriti:

Prakriti Dosha Dominance	Rasayan Drugs
Vata	Bala, Nagabala & Ghrit
Pitta	Amalaki, Shatawari
Kapha	Bhallatak, Rasna, Guggul, Pippali

Table 2: Specialized Rasayan Drugs to specific Dhatu:

Dhatu	Rasayan Drugs
Rasa	Draksha, Shatawari, Dates
Rakta	Amalaki, Bhringaraj, Suwarnamakshik Bhasma
Mamsa	Masha, Ashwagandha, Bala, Kupilu, Rajat Bhasma
Meda	Guggul, Shilajit, Haritaki, Guduchi
Asthi	Sukti Bhasma, Kukkutandatwak Bhasma, Vamshalochan
Majja	Shankhapushpi, Suwarna Bhasma, Lauha Bhasma
Shukra	Ashwagandha, Suwarna Bhasm, Ghee & cow milk

Table 3: Classification of Rasayan according to Sharangdhar in different decades:

Age in years	Effectively on	Rasayan Drugs
1-10	Balyam (Childhood)	Vacha,Kashmari, Suwarna Bhasma
11-20	Vridhdi (Growth & Development)	Kashmari,Ashwagandha, Bala
21-30	Chhavi(Complexion)	Lauha Bhasma, Amalaki
31-40	Medha(Perception Sharpness)	Shankhapushpi, Brahmi, Jyotishmati
41-50	Twaka (Skin)	Jyotishmati, Priyal, Somaraji, Bhringaraja
51-60	Drushti (Visual acuity)	Jyotishmati, triphala, Lauha, Shatawari, Amalaki
61-70	Shukra (Fertility)	Atmagupta, Vajikaran drugs
71-80	Vikram	Drugs may not be effective
81-90	Buddhi (Memory)	Drugs may not be effective
91-100	Karmendriya(physical Capacity)	Drugs may not be effective

- **Advanced Findings validating claims of Rasayan Chikitsa**
- Experimental studies done on various rasayana drugs prove that they have immune stimulant, antioxidant, and anti-stress etc properties. They work like-
- **Immunomodulator-** a substance that alters the immune response by augmenting or reducing the ability of the immune system to produce antibodies or sensitized cells that recognize and react with the antigen that initiated their production.

- **Adaptogen** – An adaptogen is a metabolic regulator which increases the ability of an organism to adapt to environmental factors, and to avoid damage from such factors. Environmental factors can be either physiological (external), such as injury or aging, or psychological(internal), such as anxiety .Some adaptogenic herbs- are Ashwagandha, Tulsi, haridra, Pippali,Amalaki, Guduchi, shatavari etc.
- **Antioxidant-** Antioxidants are defined as 'substances whose presence in relatively low concentrations significantly inhibits the rate of oxidation of targets'. Being present in serum, these antioxidants circumvent the damage caused by oxygen free radical.

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- **Nootropic-** they are substances which promote intelligence and functions of brain. These drugs can be categorized as Medhya Rasayana drugs . Acharya Charaka has described four important medhya Rasayana drugs namely- Mandookparni, Guduchi, Yashtimadhu and Shankhpushpi.

- Thus, the formulations of Rasayanas are elixirs of life which enhance & preserve vigor & promote intellectual abilities. Rasayanas promotes vitality and maintain it. Rasayana therapy aids in reviving the health of a healthy person as well as in combating the disease of the diseased one. It enables the body to develop its own vital energy or the defensive mechanism against disease. Rasayanas are believed to build a barrier against stress and infection. These act principally by strengthening the immune system of the body acting as both brain and body tonic.

- Clinical studies have proved rasayanas to be anti-toxic and anti-infective drugs. Ashwagandha (*withania Somnifera*) , Vacha(*Acorus Calamus*) , Brahmi (*Centella asiatica*) improves antioxidant levels & reduced oxidative damage of nervous system. Amalaki(*Embelica Officinalis*), Shatavari (*Asparagus racemosa*), all improves GIT functions & have very good antihepatotoxic activity. Rasayana are perhaps the only 'wonder' drugs that can be taken safely for long stretches of time, even in a healthy state, without any specific contradictions.

- Rasayan therapy really works for preservation of positive health of body as well as mind. According to the Panchabhautic concept of Ayurveda, it reveals that predominance of Prithvi & Apa mahabhuta of the dravyas provide Sthairyata, Ghanata, Kledan, Snighnata, Apyayan & Sandhankar (Sanyogakar) to the dhatus. So work as Vayasthapak (prevents degeneration) of dhatus & work to improve quality of dhatus. The most of the rasayan dravyas are Ushnavirya. So because of predominance of Teja mahabhuta they improve the metabolic activities of dhatwagnis & improve quality of dhatu by nourishing them. Rasayana chikitsa drugs selectively enhance the activity of certain antioxidants, they reduce the oxidative damage of cells & prevent the degenerative changes of dhatus. It has nutritive function. It is a specialized type of treatment which promotes activities of basic fundamentals of body i. e. Dosha, Dhatu Agni & srotas, which comprehensively results in good health. Basically acting on agni they impart best qualities of Dhatu.

- Rasayan drugs consist of the substances which are rich in Vitamin C, Vitamin E, Beta carotene, riboflavin. So these substances are capable of counteracting the damaging effect of oxidation. So they work as anti-oxidants. In Amalaki main constituents are Vitamin C, carotene, riboflavin. So it has role in cellular oxidation reduction. Withanolide in Ashwagandha increase levels of three natural antioxidants like super oxide, dismutase, Catalase, Glutathione peroxidase & helps to prevent damage of cells. So work to prevent aging process.
- Rasayan therapy definitely helps to improve immune system. The nourishing Rasayanas provide supplements and replenishes the nutrients robbed by ageing, and is said to alleviate disease and promote optimum health. Rasayana helps to restore the youthful state of our physical and mental health.

Lehana karma

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- Similar to the vaccination to prevent bacterial & viral diseases in the
- present day world, Kashyapa indicated lehana karma in children for
- homeostasis of dosas and to improve the immunity of the child. Some of
- the lehas are as follows:
- (a) Brahmi, Mandukaparni, Triphala, Chitraka, Vacha, Saunf, Satavari,
- Danti, Nagabala, Nisotha, use single above drugs with madhu & ghrita.

- b) Manjishtha, Triphala, Brahmi, Bala, Chitraka equal parts with honey
- & ghrita.
- (c) Kalyanaka ghrita
- (d) Pancagavya ghrita
- (e) Brahmi ghrita
- (f) Samvardhana ghrita
- (g) Abhaya ghrita
- (h) Astamangala ghrita
- (i) Astanga ghrita
- (j) Saraswat ghrita
- (k) Vachadi ghrita

Suvarna prashana:

- Done by rubbing the gold on a clean stone & then mixing it with honey
- & ghrita (in asymmetrical quantity) and make the child lick it. It
- increases the intellect, strength, digestion & longevity of the child. It
- makes the child intellectual within one month and he does not get the
- disease. Further, he becomes shrutadhara within 6 months

Some herbal recipies with gold are:

- a. Swarna, sweta vacha & kushtha with madhu & ghrita
- (b) Swarna, Arkapushpi with madhu & ghrita
- (c) Swarna, matsyaksha & shankhabhasma with madhu & ghrita
- (d) Kayaphala, swarna, balvacha with madhu & ghrita
- (e) Swarna, vacha, bilva churna with ghrita

Dhoopana karma:

- . To destroy various toxins present in the atmosphere Ayurveda directs
- for Dhoopana karma. For example Guggulu (*Commiphora wightii*),
- Jatamansi (*Nardostachys jatamansi*), Dhoopana is for destroying micro-
- organisms and thus protecting the health.

Dravya:

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- There are many dravya which enhance immunity viz.
- (a) Taila pradhan ahara for female & ghrita pradhan ahara for male is
- prescribed before gramya dharma (copulation).
- (b) Specific drugs are prescribed in different months of pregnancy for
- better foetal growth.
- (c) Different ahar kalpana is prescribed according to age for enhancing
- the bala (strength) of children.

- (d) Stanya is quoted as Arogyakara. Harita samhita says that breast milk
- purifies strotas, keeps dosas in balanced state, increase & improve
- digestion and keeps a person free from various ailments. Kashyap
- samhita described about breast milk in detail & said that it provides
- nourishment, growth, increase strength, produces ojas and carries quality
- of life. It is also therapeutically indicated for diarrhea, fever,
- malnutrition anaemia, loss of appetite, influenza, worm infestation and
- specially for eye diseases. Breast feeding to child acts as a health
- promoter for the mother too.
- (e) Rasayana drugs which fortify dhatus are described in all texts for
- enhancing bala and preventing old age & disease.

Some Single Drugs Used To Enhance Vyadhikshamatva:

- In the classics, no direct reference of drugs increasing vyadhikshamatva
- was found. But, practically many drugs are utilized for the purpose
- which are otherwise termed as Jivaniya, Balya, Vayahsthapana,
- Brimhaniya or Rasayana in the classics. Some of them are:-
- Vidarikanda (*Pueraria tuberosa* DC.), Satavari (*Asparagus racemosus* Willd.), Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera* Dunal), [Varahikanda

- (*Dioscorea bulbifera* Linn.), Mudgaparni (*Phaseolus trilobus* sensu),
- Mashparni (*Teramnus labialis* Spreng.), Jeevanti (*Leptadenia reticulata*
- W. & A.), Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia* Willd. Miers ex Hook. f. &
- Thoms.), Karkat shringi (*Pistacia integerrima* Stewart ex Brandis),
- Vanshalochana (*Bambusa arundinaceae* Willd.), Sweta kamala
- (*Nelumbo nucifera* Gaertn.), Draksha (*Vitis vinifera* Linn.), Yashtimadhu
- (*Glycyrrhiza glabra* Linn.), Vidhara (*Argyreia speciosa* Sweet)

- Ksheeravidari (*Ipomea digitata* Linn.), Bala (*Sida cordifolia* Linn.),
- Atibala (*Abutilon indicum*), Mahabala (*Sida rhombifolia* Linn.),
- Amalaki (*Emblica officinalis* Gaertn.), Rishabhi (*Mucuna prurita*
- Hook.), Endri (*Baccopa monnieri* Linn.), Punarnava (*Boerhavia diffusa*
- Linn.), Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula* Retz.), Pippali (*Piper longum*
- Linn.), Gokshura (*Tribulus terrestris* Linn.), Kantakari (*Solanum*
- *surattense* Burm f.), Bhallataka (*Semecarpus anacardium* Linn. f.),
- Kharjura (*Phoenix sylvestris* Roxb.)

- Every Ahita Ahar is not equally harmful, all dosas are not equally
- powerful, and all persons are not capable of resisting diseases. Over
- obese individual; over emaciated person; whose muscles and blood are
- diminished markedly; debilitated person; one who consumes
- unwholesome food; one who consumes less amount of food; who is
- mentally weak are incapable to resist diseases & vice versa. Factors
- which contribute for resistance to diseases are equilibrium of dosa,
- dhatu, agni; patency of srotas etc.

- Ayurveda presents with the concept of vyadhikshamatva (resistance
- against any disease) equivalent to the immunity of modern medicine
- which refers to the ability of the body to defend itself against specific
- invading agents such as bacteria, toxins, viruses and foreign tissues. It is
- of two types, innate and adaptive. The innate immunity is the first line of
- defence without antigenic specificity. The innate immunity can be
- compared with the Sahaja Bala of a person which is gained by birth. The
- second type of immunity is the adaptive immunity, which is
- characterised by antigenic specificity. The adaptive immunity can be
- compared with the Kalaja Bala and Yuktikrita Bala.

- It is possible to increase Vyadhikshmatva at the time of conception,
- during gestational period and even after birth. Among all factors
- responsible for increasing the strength of body, Desha and Kula are such
- factors which cannot be changed. The Kala & Kshetra are changeable,
- the age & time of conception being plannable and the health of Kshetra
- (Uterus) improvable. But these factors are internal factors, the external

- factors used after conception for healthy progeny being the good quality
- of food, adaptability of food and environment, mental relaxation. After
- birth, daily & seasonal regimes play a major role.
- The vitiated Doshas during particular season should be removed through
- Shodhana as a preventive measure for occurrence of disease. In Vasanta
- Ritu Kapha is expelled through Vamana while Pitta is expelled through
- Virechana in Sarad Ritu